

Decolonizing the Colonial Mind: A Personal Journey of Intercultural  
Understanding, Empathy, and Mutual Respect

by

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## Dedication

To my wife, Joyce, whose confidence in me, encouragement, and support, have always been important in everything I choose to do.

To my Granddaughter, Rebekah, who, while in her first year at the University of Manitoba, uttered the words: “Grandpa, why don’t you take a class too?” To my other grandchildren Kaleb, Quintin, Alexis, and Clark, for the many ways in which they enhance my life. I hope I can play some small part in ensuring the five of you have the bright and fulfilling future you all deserve. I am confident that each one of you is capable of realising your dreams.

In Memory of our daughter, Heather, who met the difficulties she faced with fortitude, courage, and determination, all the while retaining her sense of humour; an inspiration to all who were privileged to know her.

## Acknowledgements

I want to express my appreciation to those without whose mentorship and assistance these theses would still be confined to the recesses of my mind.

I begin with my appreciation of Dr. Renate Eigenbrod, (1944-2014) who, as Department Head of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba, took the time to interview me. It was she who suggested that I begin by meeting with Dr. Mark F. Ruml at the University of Winnipeg. Dr. Ruml not only agreed to meet with me, but to become my advisor as well. In a subsequent meeting with Dr. Carlos Colorado (UofW), Dr. Kenneth MacKendrick (UofM), and Dr. Ruml, I discovered that Dr. Ruml had already been advocating for my acceptance into the Joint Masters Program in Religious Studies. When Dr. Colorado and Dr. MacKendrick agreed to my acceptance into the program, Dr. Ruml's continued advocacy, forbearance, and ability to retain his sense of humour throughout the trials of mentoring me, as well as his gift for comprehending and helping me make sense of my thoughts, have proven invaluable to me up to, and including, my defense and subsequent editing to arrive at this final version.

I enjoyed the classes I attended and thank those professors for their time and ability to present the material in a cohesive, comprehensive, and comprehensible fashion. They are, in alphabetical order: Dr. David Drewes, Dr. Danielle C. Dubois, Dr. Justin Jaron Lewis, Dr. Kenneth MacKendrick, Dr. Sherry Farrell Racette, and Dr. Mark F. Ruml.

Thank you as well with Patricia M. Ningewance for her patience as I tried to learn "Gookom's Language," and to Elder Dan Thomas for giving me the opportunity to experience a Midewiwin Sweat Lodge, and for sharing some of the teachings and symbolism.

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There are many others to thank for their assistance throughout. Linda Albanese (UofM), Rachel Berg (UofW), Rose Fiorillo (UofM), and Sara Payette (UofM) have always been helpful as I navigated the administrative maze. If I left anyone out, my memory has failed me. Please accept my apology.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Positional Statement

The following thesis is an articulation of a personal journey reflecting upon a lifelong process of decolonizing my colonial mind.<sup>1</sup> In the chapters that follow I offer somewhat of a “roadmap” of my personal journey in self-decolonizing. In sharing what I have experienced both in life and learning, I invite those who read it to consider embarking on such a journey for themselves. I previously felt I had a healthy appreciation of Indigenous culture and spiritual concepts, along with knowledge that was gained from my personal experiences with Indigenous people, classes I have taken, and additional reading that my desire to learn more lead me to pursue. In other words, I felt I possessed more than a general knowledge of Indigenous spirituality. So, for me, the most difficult aspect of committing myself to a decolonisation process was coming to the realization and admitting that it is a process I must involve myself in at a deep and personal level, learning, not only through deliberate research of the available written material, but, importantly, through experiencing Indigenous spiritual approaches by attending ceremonies (in which I have some limited introductory experience) and listening to Elders. I have come to realise that knowledge in the Indigenous *Weltanschauung* belongs to a different category than those normally found in academia.

I situate myself within my research as a seventy-one year old Caucasian male, with a history of Euro-Western academic training in the selfsame Christian tradition (in the general sense) that was espoused by the first European persons who set foot on Turtle Island; the

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<sup>1</sup> Note that because this thesis focuses on my personal journey, my thesis examiners gave the reading of it much more latitude than would be afforded a typical MA thesis. There are interpretations that the examiners may not have agreed with and places where the examiners normally would have requested more sources to support my assertions, but this thesis is intended to be an articulation of my understanding, my perception.

tradition which has been instrumental in marginalising, discounting and dismissing Indigenous spiritual concepts, approaches to life, and belief systems. I currently have a B.A. in Philosophy and Political Science from The University of Alberta, as well as a Master of Divinity, and a Master of Sacred Theology, both from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon. After my ordination into the ministry in 1977, I served as a Parish Pastor in the Lutheran Church in rural and urban settings in Alberta and Manitoba until 1994 when the congregation I was with could no longer afford a pastor's salary. After that, I was considered retired and continued with a rural congregation that I had been serving since 1992 as a second congregation. I was also called upon to serve in various other congregations who were temporarily without a pastor. A change of church policy after some time led to retired pastors being dropped from the roster, meaning they could no longer serve in a congregation, even temporarily. The rural congregation I had been serving subsequently voted to become an independent Lutheran congregation so that they could still retain me as their pastor and not run afoul of official church policy. When their furnace stopped functioning a few years ago and they could not afford to replace it, we ceased gathering for regular Sunday worship services. Since I retired from being a full-time pastor in 1994, I have been employed full time in property management. In 2016, I shortened the portfolio of properties I managed so that I could teach the class "Introduction To Indigenous Spirituality" for the Winter Term at the University of Winnipeg, but have since resumed all previously held property management responsibilities and added more.

Situating myself within my research has always been an important aspect in all my knowledge-gathering to this point in my life and is critical in this field. As Kathleen Absolon put it: "I want my words to reflect my way of thinking, being and doing, and it's difficult at times to

balance what I think I'm supposed to write with my sense of self, so I get knotted up inside."<sup>2</sup> I, too, have experienced a similar sensation in countless situations where I felt like critiquing the official dogmas and policies of the church, but knew my future might be in jeopardy if I did. I also need to acknowledge the difficulties I faced from both the institution and the congregation when I was bold enough to vocalise my critique. It is imperative, therefore, that I acknowledge the influences, sometimes conflicting, that have impacted who I am and who I see myself as. If these influences are not acknowledged, it could not only adversely impact my research, but my analysis and presentation of it as well. "When listeners know where the storyteller is coming from and how the story fits into the storyteller's life, it makes the absorption of the knowledge that much easier."<sup>3</sup> If I am to gain any knowledge and/or share it in the hope that others will come to share that which I have gained, I need to be honest with myself and others about the influences that have shaped my life and thinking, as well as the nature, scope and purpose of my research. I need to communicate, not only my openness to learning, but that I am not a researcher who will view everything from a pre-conceived Euro-Western perspective, then write from that perspective, ignoring or remaining indifferent to the cultural and spiritual thoughts, concepts, and knowledge Indigenous spiritual traditions are meant to convey.

I was raised in a traditional agricultural setting, just on the cusp of traditional family farming practices and today's agribusiness. I was taught that, because the land was my family's livelihood, we existed in a symbiotic relationship with the land and with nature. It was important that we cared for the land because we knew we depended on it. For instance, portions of the land we farmed were purposely kept fallow every fourth year, and that was the year we spread

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<sup>2</sup> Kathleen E. Absalon (Minogiizhigokwe), *Kaandossiwin, How We Come to Know* (Fernwood Publishing; Halifax and Winnipeg, MB, 2011), 15.

<sup>3</sup> Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony, Indigenous Research Methods* (Fernwood Publishing, Black Point NS and Winnipeg, MB, 2008), 32.

manure (from the cattle we raised) and worked it into the soil to replenish it, also working the soil periodically throughout that Summer to aerate it and control any weeds or “voluntary” cereal grains that might grow. My father and I also used the occasion when the land was fallow to scour the field and remove any larger rocks that could damage our implements. My appreciation for, and connection to, the land and all that it provided for us was enhanced by our frequent forays into the bush country on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, to land my grandfather had West of where we lived, for gathering berries and mushrooms. Part of the land we lived on was also treed, including willows for fence posts, mushrooms, cranberries, gooseberries, chokecherries, with the occasional wild strawberry to enjoy. A few years ago, I visited the farm where I spent the first fifteen years of my life, South-West of Leduc, Alberta, and a coyote’s howl in the evening seemed to reassure me that the spirit of the land lived on, in spite of the clearing of trees, application of fertilizers and disease and pest control chemicals, zero tillage, and bio-modified crops of today.

During my childhood, I was present during transactions involving my father and the Indigenous people from the Cree nation South-West of us who fished in some of the nearby lakes and came around with tubs of freshly caught Whitefish in their car trunk to sell or barter. We would either purchase the fish or barter for chickens that we had raised, processed, and frozen. Occasionally, we would offer a sack of flour that we had obtained from the wheat we had taken to the mill. I remember that, occasionally, there would be children who I wanted to engage in conversation or play with while the adults went about their business. As I have always been rather extroverted, I remember that they seemed quite shy and I did not quite understand why they would be (I can appreciate why now). But I was fascinated by the people I met and I began to learn what I could about their culture and their customs. I was always quite conscious of the

fact that they were here first, which to me meant that they possessed valuable information about the land, the environment, and the beings that inhabited the land, that we newcomers probably hadn't had the time to accumulate.

I was also, at an early age, aware that, just to the South-East of us, the City of Wetaskiwin was so named from the Cree word *wītaskiwinihk*,<sup>4</sup> meaning "the hills where peace was made,"<sup>5</sup> between the Plains Cree and Blackfoot. The Ponoka Stampede,<sup>6</sup> near where I lived, was an annual event that showcased the talents of the best cowboys, many who were Indigenous, from across Turtle Island (North America, as I knew it then). Indigenous cowboy talent was also evident at both the Edmonton Rodeo (now moved to Red Deer Alberta),<sup>7</sup> and Calgary Stampede,<sup>8</sup> which I sometimes attended, but followed even when I didn't attend. Indigenous culture was showcased at these events, and I tried to learn as much as I could about it, rather than just be a spectator. Unfortunately, the best I could do on most occasions was to be a spectator, read what was available, watch and listen to what was happening while I was in attendance, and listen to experiences others had while they lived and worked among Indigenous peoples. The principal of my school and my teacher from grade 5 to grade 8, was a fascinating source of information, having spent quite a few years teaching on or near reserves in Northern Alberta. Then, for a Summer, during my time at the University of Alberta, I worked as the Purser on the Radium Trader (a tugboat) on Lake Athabasca, where the skipper, Gilbert (Northern Cree) was a patient mentor, as was "Jernim" a resident of Fort Chipewyan, our most frequented port of call. In addition, while at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, at the University of Lethbridge, and

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<sup>4</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wetaskiwin>. Last accessed November 28, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wetaskiwin.ca/699/History-of-Wetaskiwin>. Last accessed November 28, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> <https://ponokastampede.com/information/history-of-the-stampede/>. Last accessed November 28, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian\\_Finals\\_Rodeo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_Finals_Rodeo). Last accessed November 28, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.calgarystampede.com/homepage>. Last accessed November 28, 2019.

the University of Saskatoon, my desire to learn more about and appreciate Indigenous culture and viewpoints was at least partially realised in classes I availed myself of and people I managed to meet and hold conversations with.

I mentioned that I felt some connection with Indigenous peoples as I learned about their relationship to the land,<sup>9</sup> based on the appreciation I had been taught while living on the farm. I have always been struck by the contrast between how Indigenous peoples were/are described, analysed, and portrayed in the material I read, and my personal experiences with them as a people I was in contact with while I was young, then as professors, spiritual leaders, and political activists. Even before I reached my teens, I came to view Indigenous narratives as not substantially different or less plausible than the equivalent Christian tomes I heard then and have studied in some depth since. I have always used, even before I became acquainted with the terminology, a multi-disciplined, “historical-linguistic-critical” approach to Christianity (including my own tradition) as well as major World Religions, augmented by studies in political science, anthropology, sociology, and psychology, including participatory experiences where possible, not to mention the pragmatism and wry analysis gained from life and experience on a farm. I could, for instance, appreciate the statement of an Indigenous person whom I came to know, as he greeted the latest self-congratulatory announcement of a new scientific discovery of some immutable law of the universe with the words: “So you’ve just discovered/proven what the Elders have always taught.” Throughout my studies, I have attempted to maintain an understanding of various spiritual approaches that is both empathetic and analytic.

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<sup>9</sup> D’Arcy Linklater, Barry Bone, and the Treaty & Dakota Elders of Manitoba with contributions by the AMC Council of Elders, *KA’ESI WAHKOTUMAHK ASKI Our Relations With The Land Treaty Elders’ Teachings Volume 2* (Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba & Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Secretariat, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2014).

While reading (as part of one of my University of Alberta classes) some of the attempts to analyse post-contact Indigenous spiritual approaches as some synergistic form of Christian and traditional Indigenous belief systems, I couldn't help but notice that it seemed that Euro-Western researchers' sense of superiority had clouded their understanding to the point where they confused synergy (which I certainly had felt and experienced) with synergism; immediately assuming that Indigenous spiritual thought and understanding could not possibly have developed the depth and understanding that Christianity had. What I have always felt was missing in traditional Euro-Western approaches to Indigenous thought was an appreciation of traditional Indigenous spirituality, unclouded by the assumptions and biases of a researcher who approached the subject through a strictly Euro-Western academic discipline and sense of (Christian) superiority. That has been my approach to Indigenous spirituality in the past (difficult as it has sometimes been in a Euro-Western cultural and academic setting) and continues to be as I attempt to shed any colonial baggage I may still be carrying.

It is therefore my intention to present the results of my research in Indigenous spirituality, which I feel I have now gained a somewhat fuller and deeper understanding and appreciation of. I also wish to compare what I have learned about Indigenous spirituality with my knowledge of Christian spirituality, attempting to determine how a fuller understanding of both can assist in reconciliation, leading to a future where both the Indigenous peoples and the Christian-influenced coloniser society can come together to write a new narrative. My methodology is based somewhat on previous work I have done involving other major World religions, while remaining cognisant and appreciative of the Indigenous approach to gaining knowledge, as well as the enduring (well-founded, I may add from personal experience) suspicions the Indigenous

community may have concerning “outsiders” and the misappropriation of knowledge and culture.

In her approach to researching *The Kabbalah Centre in America*, Jody Myers writes:

When, in early 2005, I finally decided to write a book on the Kabbalah Centre, I abandoned this ‘fly on the wall’ approach. I employed a methodology of ‘disciplined empathy,’ the term used in the field of religious studies to describe a scientific and objective approach that incorporates an insiders’ view of the religious phenomenon under study. Although I did not adopt the spiritual practices of the Centre, I became a more engaged listener and observer. I informed the directors and teachers of my project and received their assistance in interviewing teachers and staff. I went to additional classes and events, including an international Rosh Hashanah retreat...Had I relied only on written sources for my study of the Kabbalah Centre, I would have remained ignorant about much of what is contained in this book.<sup>10</sup>

Betty Bastien notes that, among the Blackfoot (*Siksikaitstapi*):

Traditional learning is premised on a ‘knowing’ that is generated through a participatory and experiential process...The traditional *Siksikaitstapi* pedagogical method teaches children to listen, and then they are encouraged to meditate and reflect on what they see and hear. This requires self-discipline and a conscientious effort to understand how to apply the stories to one’s life. The stories are holistic, and encompass all aspects of life.<sup>11</sup>

My previous experience and research involvement with Judaism, Hinduism, Yogism, and Islam, as well as Christian traditions in a variety of denominations, and now Indigenous spirituality, has helped me understand and appreciate the validity and functionality of the approach common to those quoted above. Interestingly enough, in Myers, we find that one must consciously suspend a Euro-Western “objectively analytical” approach, while in Bastien, we find an approach to learning that is engrained in the culture, so that one must not only suspend traditional Euro-Western objectivity, but must familiarise oneself with a new cultural approach to learning. Based on my limited participation in an Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) Midewiwin Sweat Lodge ceremony, I

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<sup>10</sup> Jody Meyers, *Kabbalah and the Spiritual Quest: The Kabbalah Centre in America* (Praeger Publishers, Westport CT, 2007), Preface, x.

<sup>11</sup> Betty Bastien., *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing, The Worldview of the Siksikaitstapi* (University of Calgary Press, Calgary, Alberta, 2004), 119.

can personally attest to the validity and functionality of the approach that assumes that one must become a “child” in Bastien’s cultural approach to learning. Since, among Indigenous people (who have suffered at the hands of those they trusted), trust may take a great deal longer to achieve, patience and self-discipline continue to be integral to my approach, true to Bastien’s cultural model of coming to know. As I have learned (and continue to learn) and appreciate Indigenous spiritual approaches, I have, among other things, learned how to shake hands properly (if at all) and gained a greater appreciation of the customary cultural attitude of one who seeks knowledge.

I will elaborate further by quoting the following:

If by this stage in your life you have received any training/indoctrination in the linear style of logic, you are going to see my way of doing things as representing a circular movement. Circular arguments are considered disorganized and illogical from a linear perspective. I have used that which I set out to discover in the process of making that discovery. Now remind yourself of the relational context of knowledge, and your view of logic can change.<sup>12</sup>

For me, this resonates with the “theses-antitheses-synthesis” approach that began with Fichte,<sup>13</sup> an approach which I have come to appreciate as inherent in the process of my gaining knowledge and growing in the process. Often, life serves as an antithesis to that which I know. That does not mean I abrogate everything I have come to know and begin anew. I use what knowledge I am confident in to analyse the antithesis. Through this, I am able to postulate a course of action (approach, synthesis) that remains true to that which I am confident I know, while at the same time addressing the difficulty (antitheses) that I have just encountered. The synthesis I have arrived at is conscious of retaining that which I am confident of and so it is related to that, while

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<sup>12</sup> Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony, Indigenous Research Methods* (Fernwood Publishing, Black Point, NS and Winnipeg, MB, 2008), 127.

<sup>13</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte. *Science of Knowing, The J. G. Fichte’s 1804 Lectures on the Wissenschaftslehre* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 2005.

at the same time being related to the antitheses which I address, since the antitheses is that which caused me to reflect on what I know.

As I seek to incorporate Indigenous research methodology to augment the methodologies I am familiar with, it is my intention to better understand and appreciate Indigenous spirituality, as well as contribute to fostering a better understanding and appreciation of Indigenous spirituality among those trained in Euro-Western academic disciplines. In my initial “baby steps,” it is my hope that those steeped in Indigenous spirituality will see enough in me to grant me the opportunity to come to know more. For knowledge is not something that a person can claim or own for themselves, it is part of the process of knowing. Knowledge is also part of my relationship with the community, owned, and therefore shared by and with the community. Useful knowledge is to be integrated into the community’s future practices, to become the base from which further knowledge is gained.

I have taken a few “baby steps” in learning. I have had no extensive personal involvement in the traditional Indigenous learning process, nor have I developed a relationship with Elders and the keepers of knowledge. This thesis is only a starting point in my knowledge quest, but an important one in my personal decolonisation process. I feel therefore that it is my responsibility to share my journey to this point, not only to seek validation of what I have learned, but as I share what I have learned, hopefully some in the non-Indigenous community can come to appreciate Indigenous spirituality and the extensive need for decolonisation as I have. and build their capacity for “intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.”

### **Terminology**

To begin, I feel it is important to provide a frame of reference for the terms I will be using. “Spirituality” (with a nod to Nicholas of Cusa and the concept of *Docta Ignorantia*, and

those who followed Cusa) can be thought of as an awareness of being known in a manner that supersedes one's ability to know how one is known (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12 and its analysis of what *is*, versus the expectation of what is possible/desired). Fichte (cited above, Pg. 10) suggests (a) that I know you, (b) that you know me, (c) that I don't know you, (d) that you don't know me, and that (e) we are both fully known by someone else. So "spirituality" seems to be the consciousness of the fact that there are limits to human knowledge, but not to knowing itself. "Religion" is derived from the Latin "religio" as a noun denoting an obligation to the state, binding its citizens. "Religare" as a verb in Latin is "bind fast." In Christian usage, a person "bound" themselves to the tenets of Christianity and were expected to obey its doctrines and leaders as they formulated their response to "being known" more fully than they realised. This took a form that mirrored the expectation of citizens of The Roman Empire in relationship to their Emperor. Therefore, the language itself is hierarchical in nature, something I will return to in Chapter One as I explore coloniser attitudes at contact. Spirituality and religion are distinguished from "faith" which, to use one definition (Hebrews 11:1) supersedes normal human knowledge and reasoning, while at the same time implying that it gives access to knowledge beyond the normal human capacity to know. Spirituality, then, gives rise to religion, whose leaders purportedly have access to knowledge unavailable to the majority of people, and who then suggest that the majority accept "in faith" and obey the precepts and guidelines put forward by these same leaders. I use the terms "Christianity," "Judeo-Christian," and "Indigenous Spirituality" when I could have perhaps more accurately referred to Christian, Judeo-Christian, and Indigenous "belief systems." Even "belief system" is somewhat of a Euro-Western construct in this context, since all of the above suggests a delineation and divide between ethereal and physical that does not necessarily exist in Indigenous thought, since, as

many narratives illustrate, beings that Euro-Western thought relegates to one or the other realm seem to “travel” between this world and the sky world on many occasions. My goal, however, is to discover if there is any synergy that can become the basis for a future narrative written together, so to me the awareness of being known beyond one’s capacity to know oneself seems to be the most fruitful place to begin.

There is a multiplicity of Christian belief systems that fall under the large umbrella of “Christianity,” as there is a multiplicity of belief systems that fall under the umbrella of the term “Indigenous Spirituality” as I employ them. Catholic, Protestant, Reform, Coptic, are further differentiated into ethnic groups (German, English, Italian, Spanish Egyptian) and even ethnic sub-groups (Normandy, Corsica, Volhynia, Galacia, Andalusia). Indigenous Spirituality is as prolific, with Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Lakota, Blackfoot, Salishan, Haida (to name a just a few) also containing their regional sub-groupings and local refinements. I do not wish to suggest that there is One Indigenous Spirituality any more than there is One Christianity. Failed attempts to generate a “Pan Indian” spiritual movement fifty or sixty years ago speak to that, as do the many failed alliances between so-called Christian nations or groupings over the centuries. I wish, instead, to deal with core approaches germane to both, fully cognisant that, in both cases, proceeding from the “core” instead of from local refinements that have been made to it implies, for many, a loss of identity and connection to a great deal of history and the people responsible for it.

### **A Call to Action**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Call to Action, number 60, reads:

We call upon leaders of the church parties to the Settlement Agreement and all other faiths, in collaboration with Indigenous spiritual leaders, Survivors, schools of theology, seminaries, and other religious training centres, to develop and teach curriculum for all students clergy, and all clergy and staff who work in Aboriginal communities, on the

need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right, the history and legacy of residential schools and the roles of the church parties in that system, the history and legacy of religious conflicts in Aboriginal families and communities, and the responsibility that churches have to mitigate such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence.<sup>14</sup>

As I read “the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own right,” I found a deep resonance with the personal view I have always held, as well as those expressed by Dr. Mark Ruml, my advisor, in lectures, publications, and personal conversations. However, resonance and empathy, as I discovered through my experiences in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s with the Indigenous response to the “White Paper” of 1969,<sup>15</sup> emphatically *do not* absolve one of responsibility for past and current systemic attempts to eradicate Indigenous culture and spiritual worldviews and approaches, as well as the responsibility of being involved in redressing the wrongs and reimagining and reconstituting the future. For, in my observations and personal experience, possessing an academic knowledge and comprehension is to hold the subject at arm’s length, avoiding the internalisation of the knowledge sufficiently to arrive at a sense of culpability that stems from the realization that we benefit from, and therefore tend to exacerbate colonial attitudes (prejudices) and actions vis-a-vis Indigenous Peoples. From my perspective, a sense of supremacy, and a presumption that violence is an acceptable approach, are inherent in the spiritual cultural, political, and legal approaches of colonisers to Indigenous Peoples. I therefore spend quite some time examining the historical development of this approach in the first chapter concerning Christian pre-contact history and spiritual (theological/political/cultural) approaches. It is important that we understand how insidiously these colonial approaches have become entrenched in our ways of thinking and doing. To continue to enjoy the fruits of these approaches

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<sup>14</sup> *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2012, Public Domain) <http://www.trc.ca>, 2015, Pg.7. Last accessed November 28, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969, <https://www.aadncaandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010189/1100100010191#chp1> last accessed May 4, 2018.

that marginalize and predicate against Indigenous Peoples and thereby perpetuate them, even if our motivation is based on nothing more than pragmatism, is to adopt and perpetuate the coloniser attitude and approach. We must realise, and hopefully admit to, our continued culpability and active involvement in continuing the process of colonising. For instance, I have heard “nation-to-nation approach” as political rhetoric, while at the same time hearing the legal term of “extinguishing” Indigenous Peoples’ rights to the land more often than “recognising” it. In this, and other instances, the concept of “terra nullius” holds more sway in our thinking than the concept that Indigenous Peoples initially welcomed us (colonisers) to share the lands they inhabited, allowing us to live on and use portions of it for our benefit. As I discuss Constantine and the centuries that followed him, it is my hope that the reader will come to understand that “conquering” rose from the spiritual approach of Christianity he seems to have refined and utilised, while “sharing” has been the premise upon which Indigenous Spiritual approaches are based. One Elder I heard speak of the history of his people concerning the signing of Treaty 7 talked about the fact that, just beyond the view of the coloniser delegation and police/military support, just behind the hills, but near enough and at the ready to burst forth if needed, were enough armed Indigenous Peoples to offer serious military resistance to the treaty signing if their delegates determined it was necessary. The Indigenous delegates chose to share but the people were certainly not conquered.

From my perspective in 1969, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Call to Action should have appeared *instead* of Trudeau and Chretien’s White Paper, which Harold Cardinal described as “a thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation.”<sup>16</sup> Upon further reflection, however, I have come to appreciate that the Truth and Reconciliation

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<sup>16</sup> Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society The Tragedy of Canada’s Indians* (M.G. Hurtig Ltd. Publishers, Edmonton, Alberta, 1969).

report and calls to action are the fruits of the activism and the bold, determined, and courageous leadership Indigenous people have demonstrated over the past 50 years. As a self-acknowledged, empathetic “outsider” who has been involved (cautiously and only when invited) with these issues in the past, I feel that elements of the Truth and Reconciliation Call To Action are indeed, now calling me to action. What I have written is part of my response to that call.

I have had the uncommonly good fortune to have been a “student” who has been assisted (both formally and informally) in “building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect.”<sup>17</sup> This thesis is therefore intentionally focused on the call to action indicated above. It is my intention to contribute to reconciliation (as well as to further my own de-colonisation), based on my respect of the Indigenous spiritual world views which inform the cultures of the Indigenous people I have had the good fortune of interacting with at various stages throughout my life.

In Plains Cree, having respect is “manatcihiwewin;”<sup>18</sup> in Ojibwe, when a person is respected, the word “dababdebdamowin”<sup>19</sup> is used; in Dakota, we find “ohoda, ahopa, or kinishan”<sup>20</sup> to speak of treating one with respect; in Blackfoot, “iniiyi’taki”<sup>21</sup> is used to denote to be appreciative of or grateful for, value, or respect, along with the derivations “ini’yimm”<sup>22</sup> (feel respect for) and “sskaim”<sup>23</sup> (to be in awe of); and in Haida, “yahkwdamggang”<sup>24</sup> is used. Based

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<sup>17</sup> TRC Calls to Action, 63 iii.

<sup>18</sup> Earle Waugh, Nancy LeClaire, & George Cardinal (Ed.) *Alberta Elders’ Cree Dictionary* (University of Alberta Press, 1998), 404.

<sup>19</sup> Bishop R.R. Baraga, *A Dictionary of the Otchipwe Language* (Ross & Hains Inc. Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1966), 212.

<sup>20</sup> John P. Williamson, *An English-Dakota Dictionary* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), 177.

<sup>21</sup> Donald G. Frantz, & Norma Jean Russell (*Blackfoot Dictionary of Stems, Roots, and Affixes, Third Edition* (University of Toronto Press, 2017), 73.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 74.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 266.

<sup>24</sup> Erma Lawrence, *Haida Dictionary* (The Society for the Preservation of Haida Language and Literature Inc., 1977), 403.

on this rudimentary search of dictionaries and translations, all the languages indicated above have multiple words that designate respect, each specific to the occasion or person that is respected.

However, these are the results I obtained by looking for an English word as it is *might* be translated into one of Indigenous languages mentioned. If we begin with an Indigenous language (Ojibwe) and explore the concepts it embodies and attempt to communicate by using the English word “respect,” we encounter concepts that tend to underline the fact that “spirituality” is also a word not suited when referring to an Indigenous Weltanschauung:

*Mangade osiseon* - respect. And *mangade osiseon* is the same thing as *mangade'e*, the only thing is that it is inside the huge heart that echoes. *Osision...ose* is, it is put in life, like *diz, ose* is the same. The life that has been given. *Eon* is "so be it". However life is created in each and every one of us. However creator has put us here on earth. This is the ultimate truth to life of our being. It doesn't say that I am a Native American Indian, it doesn't say that I am Caucasian, Black, Oriental, any of the peoples of this world. It is all the same. When we look at each other in darkness we all are the same because we can speak and communicate with one another. *Mangade osiseon* is respect at its greatest when we live it. When we live it, and I stress this very, very strongly, is to know all of these seven teachings is to be all the seven teaching all at once in balance with ourselves.<sup>25</sup>

The “Seven Teachings” mentioned are the Seven Grandfather Teachings that I will deal with in chapter three concerning Indigenous spiritual concepts at contact. In chapter one, I deal with both the literal and cultural implications of attempting to “translate” Indigenous concepts into a coloniser language and coloniser-constructed cultural environment.

### **Thesis Goals**

As quoted in my Positional Statement previously, Shawn Wilson writes:

If by this stage in your life you have received any training/indoctrination in the linear style of logic, you are going to see my way of doing things as representing a circular movement. Circular arguments are considered disorganized and illogical from a linear perspective. I have used that which I set out to discover in the process of making that

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<sup>25</sup> Richard Morrison, in Mark F. Ruml, “The Indigenous Knowledge Documentation Project--Morrison Sessions: The Eternal Natural Laws” (*Journal of Religious Studies and Theology* Volume 30, Issue 2, 2011), 164.

discovery. Now remind yourself of the relational context of knowledge, and your view of logic can change.<sup>26</sup>

As integral to my own reconciliation process, I seek to better understand and appreciate the relationship paradigm of Indigenous spirituality, so that I can contribute to a better understanding and appreciation of it by those trained in traditional Euro-Western methods and thought (“linear logic”) which has often ignored, demonised, and vilified Indigenous spiritual and knowledge-gathering approaches while itself embodying similar theories and processes in acquiring knowledge. In the Indigenous approach, knowledge comes through storytelling and ceremony, rather than the perusal of written tracts explaining a thought process or analysis of observations. In the Indigenous approach, furthermore, knowledge is not something that a person can claim or own for themselves. It is part of the process of knowing because knowledge is part of the relationship with the community, owned, and therefore shared by, and with, the community. Useful knowledge is then integrated into the community’s future practices, to become the base from which further knowledge can be gained.

By contrast, in the Euro-Western approach to gaining knowledge that I was initially trained in, it seems that one begins with a critique, and often even a denial, of previous knowledge and concepts as a means of furthering knowledge. In the denial of the knowledge that may be previously held, this method abrogates its own framework of “theses-antithesis-synthesis” instead of embracing it. In Indigenous knowledge building there is full confidence in the traditional knowledge possessed by the Elders, so there is no need to question it; there is only the desire to build upon the solid foundation which they represent. No need to step back and re-examine (which implies denial), only the opportunity to embrace and enhance what is already

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<sup>26</sup> Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony, Indigenous Research Methods* (Fernwood Publishing, Black Point NS and Winnipeg MB, 2008), 127.

there, with the goal of building a better life. It is therefore my intention and responsibility, as an academic, to understand Indigenous cultural values and spiritual beliefs, so that reconciliation can be grounded in recognising and appreciating Indigenous spiritual approaches and focus, recognising and building upon what is already there, instead of attempting to force conformity to linear logic and Euro-Western research disciplines that all too often proceed with questioning and denying the foundation it may have to work from.

By presenting my understanding of Indigenous spirituality within, and to, members of the Euro-Western academic community and possibly beyond to those not within the world of academia, I wish to illustrate how recognition and respect for Indigenous spirituality and an appreciation of its foundational importance for the culture of the people is a necessary component of the reconciliation process. In the general context of the relationship between religion and reason, Jürgen Habermas has noted that, if mutual understanding and respect is to be fostered, “it makes a difference whether we speak with one another or merely about one another.”<sup>27</sup> Certainly, Euro-Western society has spoken *about* the Indigenous community and its spiritual heritage, and the Indigenous community (increasingly in print over the past fifty years) has spoken *about* Euro-Western society and what its dominance has meant for the Indigenous community. But mutual understanding, respect, and the appreciation that leads to reconciliation can only result from the intersubjective communication of those who are willing to speak *with* one another and experience each other’s culture and spiritual heritage. Admittedly, this is a difficult process, requiring the overcoming of many identifiable obstacles that are evident in the history of the relationship, or are latent within it and yet to be identified. Certainly, Indigenous

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<sup>27</sup> Jürgen Habermas, et. al., Ciaran Cronin, Translator, *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* (Polity Press, Cambridge 2010), 16.

people have been coerced, in the Residential School System,<sup>28</sup> to experience Euro-Western culture when it comes to education, as well as coerced by other means to accept Euro-Western cultural values because governments and legal systems are grounded in colonial attitudes. To exacerbate the situation this has originated, not only from the dominant society, but it has also been encouraged by many of their own colonised (assimilated) leaders as well. On the other hand, Euro-Westerners have been bombarded in so many ways with negative (or sometimes even romanticised) stereotypes of Indigenous people, that they find it difficult to find the courage to relate to an Indigenous person as an individual rather than a stereotype.

Johanna Wenzel, in her introduction to William I.C. Wuttunee's book "*Ruffled Feathers*", observes: "the Twentieth Century races ahead, threatening to leave behind those who bemoan unjust treatment by white settlers and legislators."<sup>29</sup>

Further, Wuttunee himself states:

So long as the treaties are held in solemn reverence and so long as Indians continue to lick their wounds in the memories of the past, Canada will have the problem of a people unable to stand on their feet in a new society. The signing of the treaties hastened the crumbling of an old culture which had seen its day.<sup>30</sup>

As we have ample evidence, this attitude that assimilation is necessary if Indigenous peoples are to "stand on their own feet" has resulted in the loss of traditional culture, heritage, and identity. Even when *political* identity has not been completely lost, often spiritual, and hence, cultural identity has been lost or suppressed, for the two are inextricably intertwined. Many in the Indigenous community, especially those with whom I have had the good fortune of being acquainted with in the 1960's (even before) and since, have recognised this, and have been

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools>, last accessed February 16, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> William I.C. Wuttunee, *Ruffled Feathers: Indians in Canadian Society* (Bell Books Ltd. Calgary, Alberta, 1971), Introduction, v.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 103.

attempting to reclaim what has been lost, forgotten, or suppressed. However, on the Western side of the equation, the sense of superiority in spirituality, knowledge, culture, along with the practical application of these, has been the roadblock that has prevented any move toward recognition, respect, and certainly, reconciliation. Although there may not be many in the Euro-Western community who might experience Indigenous spirituality through ceremony personally, just as not many will personally experience a Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, or Hindi festival as a participant, it is my hope that I am instrumental in assisting those with whom I share the results of my research in arriving at the necessary appreciation of Indigenous spirituality that encourages intersubjective “talking with” rather than objective “talking about.”

## Methodology

Betty Bastien’s words concerning the Blackfoot (Siksika) bear repeating:

Traditional learning is premised on a ‘knowing’ that is generated through a participatory and experiential process.”<sup>31</sup> Further: “The traditional *Siksikaitsitapi* pedagogical method teaches children to listen, and they are encouraged to meditate and reflect on what they see and hear. This requires self-discipline and a conscientious effort to understand how to apply the stories to one’s life. The stories are holistic, and encompass all aspects of life.”<sup>32</sup>

As stated previously, I am a Caucasian male, with a history of Euro-Western academic training in the same Christian tradition (Lutheran) that has historically been in the forefront of attempts to marginalise and dismiss Indigenous spiritual thought. I cannot (and would never presume to or be so disrespectful as to pretend to) claim any Indigenous ancestry whatsoever. I have never been “adopted” by a clan, never been given an Indigenous spiritual name, nor have I ever asked for one. I have read a lot of material, both by Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors, about Indigenous spirituality, taken classes, been to symposiums, forums, discussions (mostly

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<sup>31</sup> Betty Bastien, *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing, The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi* (University of Calgary Press, Calgary, Alberta, 2004), 119.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 125.

informal), attended only a couple of ceremonies, and participated in a few formally organised talking circles. I have never approached anyone for permission to use content from any of the ceremonies I have attended or discussions I have been involved with, and I will demonstrate my respect by not presuming to share or quote without permission, except anecdotally. I will proceed by accessing the written material that is available concerning Indigenous spirituality found in several Indigenous traditions, including, but not limited to, those of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Dakota, Blackfoot, and Haida, because these are the cultures I have become most acquainted with in my life to this point. I have availed myself of some of this material preserved in the form of narratives that have been rendered from the original oral tradition to the printed word, including Black Elk, Lamé Deer, Siksika narratives and others. I have also read some material concerning the analysis and history of specific Indigenous spiritual approaches, recently concerning the Midewiwin among the Anishinaabe, and, some years ago, the religion of Cornplanter among the Seneca, Wovoka and the Ghost Dance, and the Iroquois Book of the Great Law. This theses augments and organises the work I have completed and personal experiences I have had, and attempts to identify core (and common) elements of selected Indigenous spiritual approaches from various Indigenous cultures that, as I have come to appreciate them, can readily be appreciated by non-Indigenous peoples as well. However, by identifying core and common elements, I do not suggest that they are alike. It must be noted that Pan-Indian attempts (both spiritual and political) of the 1960's and 1970's to arrive at a generic Indigenous culture, tended to fail (as I observed at the time) because they lacked an appreciation for local traditions.

However, this method alone would be to assume a Euro-centered approach, without the scope of understanding that an intersubjective, experiential approach would open to me.

Although I feel a certain spiritual and emotional empathy with Indigenous cultures as stated above, I have not, for the purposes of researching this thesis, been able to immerse myself in Indigenous spiritual and cultural approaches as thoroughly as I would aspire to. To accomplish this, a great deal more participation in ceremony and listening to teachings of Elders is necessary. It is therefore my intention to continue to experience Indigenous spirituality through participation in ceremony whenever I am invited, build relationships over the long term, and thereby gain a fuller and deeper understanding and appreciation of it. I have come to appreciate that growth, emotional and spiritual, as well as physical, is the process of a lifetime. I can only appreciate where I am situated in this spectrum by listening and reflecting on the words of those whom I respect as having reached a more mature stage than I. It is my intention to respect (as a verb) Indigenous spiritual approaches by, in what I have written, attempting to enhance non-Indigenous persons' understanding of them and foster inter-subjective discussions that may lead to better mutual understanding and enable the scripting of a new narrative for the future.

My methodology is based somewhat on previous work I have done involving other major World Religions which involved intersubjective relationships. I am cognisant and appreciative of the Indigenous approach to gaining knowledge through experience. Again, from an Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) point of view:

*Nibwaakan* - wisdom. *Nibwaa* is a whole lot of things that are happening around us whether we like it or not. Like every day the sun comes up, the wind, the rain, the sun, people's voices, every noise that we hear. Everything that speaks, we learn to feel a balance and a peace of it. In the city it is hard to hear natural sounds. Here today when we are living life in the city all we hear is man-made poison we hear in our everyday life that obscures us from hearing the natural sounds that soothes our heart and makes it peaceful again. *kan*-is your bones, everybody has a skeleton. And what that means is everything that you have experienced in life, good and bad, is stored inside your bones, that's your wisdom. That's what *nibwaakan* is in a general way.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Richard Morrison in Mark F. Ruml, "The Indigenous Knowledge Documentation Project--Morrison Sessions: The Eternal Natural Laws." (*Journal of Religious Studies and Theology* Volume 30, Issue 2, 2011) 155-169.

I am cognisant as well of the enduring suspicions the Indigenous community has concerning outsiders and their misappropriation of knowledge and culture. Based on much of the material that I have read concerning Indigenous spirituality published in the past, this suspicion is certainly well-founded. It is imperative that we recognize the difficulty of “decolonizing in a colonial education system and ...doing so in English, the colonizer’s language.”<sup>34</sup> I began this theses with a statement concerning my own realization of how I needed to decolonize myself and suggested that what I’m writing is somewhat of a “roadmap” of the process as I have experienced it thus far. I feel that I have begun the process, and wish to share, within the limited scope of this theses, how the process of decolonization has affected me to date. Ideally, continued involvement, experience, and research will enable me to continue to decolonize myself further, so that I can share and contribute much more. I wish to convey my appreciation for Indigenous spirituality, and perhaps identify some common inherent approaches that may lead to deeper mutual understanding and meaningful conversations.

Currently, an organisation called “Lutheran Indian Ministries”<sup>35</sup> has an active Manitoba presence, with their stated goal being: “to reach the First Nations people with the healing and support they need to move forward in the life Christ has created for them.”<sup>36</sup> I recall something of the concept and, possibly even the inception of this approach in my undergraduate and graduate years at Lutheran Theological Seminary in the 1970’s. The presumed superiority of a Christian approach and perspective vis a vis an Indigenous approach and perspective has always seemed rather pretentious and dismissive to me, since I had already (in the late ‘60s and early

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<sup>34</sup> Kathleen E. Absalon (Minogizhigokwe), *Kaabndossiwin How We Come to Know* (Fernwood Publishing, Halifax, and Winnipeg 2011), 19.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.lutheranindianministries.org> last accessed May 4, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.lutheranindianministries.org/manitoba/> last accessed May 4, 2018.

70's) become knowledgeable of Indigenous political, legal, human rights, and spiritual issues, and had met people (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) whom I held in high esteem, both personally and academically, who were involved in these areas.

When I reflect on the life (learning) experiences I have had the fortune to participate in up to this time in my physical existence, I find personal resonance with the following:

It seems to me necessary to introduce, along-side space, time, and causality, a category which not only enables us to understand synchronistic phenomena as a special class of natural events, but also takes the contingent partly as a universal factor existing from all eternity, and partly the sum of countless individual acts of creation occurring in time.<sup>37</sup>

It seems that I may have been witness to, and a beneficiary of “countless individual acts of creation occurring in time.” Some of these are included in my positional statement, but that is a mere synopsis, not an autobiography. I have always sensed, and later understood, that my Indigenous neighbors did not exist in some spiritual vacuum that needed to be filled by a substantial belief system. I also sensed, and grew to appreciate, that their belief system, as I understood it at the time, centers on regenerative cycles and seasons that I was also aware of from my agricultural background, as opposed to the apocalyptic, cataclysmic end to history that I heard while sitting in a church pew. Yet, I also heard of regeneration and renewal while sitting in the pew. This, I often found confusing. How could regeneration and renewal that I experienced as part of my daily life fit with the inevitability of an apocalyptic and cataclysmic end to everything? Later, I came to understand this as self-fulfilling prophecy, based on a belief system of dominance, as opposed to an approach based on the symbiotic relationships that I had come to know and appreciate from my own experiences, especially in my version of “living on the land,” i.e. a rural agricultural setting.

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<sup>37</sup> C.G. Jung, *Synchronicity An Acausal Connecting Principle (The Collected Works of C.G. Jung Volume 8, Bollingen Series XX, Bollingen Foundation, New York, 1960, Princeton University Press, 1969, 1973, R.F.C. Hull, translator)*, 103.

I therefore intend to bring my range of intuitive, academic, and experiential resources to my discussions concerning the (my) reconciliation process. By combining my previous work in Christian theology and my recently intensified study of Indigenous spirituality, I hope to be able to identify common ground from which to proceed toward reconciliation. I also hope to identify elements from both traditions that can assist in rectifying past “wrong turns,” so that, collectively as a society, we may walk “the straight and narrow path,” or the “red road,” according to the language of Indigenous tradition. I hope that we are able to collectively achieve what I believe is our inherent possibility of “mino-bimaadiziwin,”<sup>38</sup> (the good life in Anishinaabe, Ojibwe), or, to use a term from my Christian tradition, “realised eschatology,”<sup>39</sup> and the “now, not yet” approach to the person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as suggested in with the work begun by Geerhardus Vos and expanded and expounded upon by others since. I mentioned previously that I have also felt a certain sense of synergy between Indigenous spiritual approaches and Christianity. The terms “mino-bimaadiziwin” and “realised eschatology” which, in my understanding and appreciation are synonyms, is as concise a statement of this as any.

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<sup>38</sup> [http://www.7generations.org/?page\\_id=104](http://www.7generations.org/?page_id=104), last accessed January 5, 2020.

<sup>39</sup> <http://scriptoriumdaily.com/c-h-dodd-and-realized-eschatology/>, last accessed January 5, 2020.

## CHAPTER TWO: The European Spiritual Mind-Set at Contact

Speaking of her experience, Kathleen Absalon writes: “I am decolonizing in a colonial education system and am doing so in english (sic), the colonizer’s language.”<sup>40</sup> However, when a non-Indigenous person with a Christian background seeks to engage in *their own* decolonization as a first step in shedding the assumptions that make colonization possible, Absalon’s observation concerning language is indicative of a much larger problem that only *begins* with written and spoken language. It is not, after all, the *words and sentences alone* that we are dealing with in the difficult task of decolonizing the language, but the subliminal *spiritual* connotations and assumptions embedded in the narrative(s) of the language used. For the current active colonizers, and those who remain (or choose to remain) ignorant of the systemic and deep-rooted negative effects of the process of colonisation while they blissfully enjoy its benefits, decolonization must first deal with the fact that, behind the colonizer’s approach, there is a mind-set that assumes superiority in all matters. This is in part based on the development of their belief system from their perceptions and interpretations of their own (Christian) narratives. Bolstering this mind-set, we have not one (English) language, but as many as four, and probably even more, that preceded the current English translation and interpretive methodologies of the Christian narratives which define the underlying attitude and assumptions of Euro-Western approaches to the Indigenous people of Turtle Island.

The oral narratives of the colonizer’s Christian legacy were first committed to a written language in Hebrew (but the “Hebrew Scriptures” included narratives from many dialects of the Hebrew language family). From the Hebrew, there was a linguistic, social, and cultural

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<sup>40</sup> Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogizhigokwe), *Kaandossiwin How We Come To Know* (Fernwood Publishing, Halifax and Winnipeg), 19.

*transliteration* to Greek (Septuagint, circa 250 B.C.E). To complicate matters further, we have, added to the Septuagint, the recording, in Greek, of first century narratives, some of which were first transmitted in the Aramaic of that day, with the addition of interpretive material to those narratives which was (i.e. the interpretive material) originally written in Greek, forming Christianity's scriptures, dating to mid-first century, but not formally accepted until the fourth century. After this, we have the rendering of the entire body of work in Latin (Jerome, *Vulgate*, circa 400 C.E.). Finally, the "language of the colonizer," in the case of the first colonizers of Turtle Island, was primarily an interpretation of the Vulgate by Popes, scholars, cardinals, priests, and monks, expressed in the vernacular of the people, if it wasn't simply read in Latin. The "official" English translation (King James Version) of the Latin Vulgate was not sanctioned until 1611 (although Tyndall's translation into English was completed in 1525). By then, Henry VIII had declared himself the head of the Church of England (1534) and thus created a separation between the English church and the Papacy. There was scholarship that strove to translate the Hebrew and Greek narratives of Christianity into the vernacular of German-speaking people of Continental Europe (Martin Luther's work of 1522 to 1534), but this scholarship, and any other analysis and critique of Christianity's narrative legacy, had already been compromised by the accepted theological interpretations of the day, based on the Vulgate's rendering of the Greek Septuagint into Latin. The general populace's appreciation (if any) and interpretation would have come from an understanding that was determined by the work of scholars who were sanctioned by the contemporary episcopal authority. Therefore, the language that Absolon finds it so difficult to work with, although she encountered it as English is, in reality, the "spiritual language" of Christianity, which, for Turtle Island, was embedded in the understanding and lingua franca of the colonizers, whether it be English, French, or Spanish.

Because the spiritual language of the colonizer (i.e., spiritual presumptions embedded in the language) has not changed for many, despite the scholarship of the past century or so, which, while available, is not availed, or is even discounted by the colonial mind-set, it becomes necessary to decolonize the spiritual language, that is, to examine the validity of the spiritual presuppositions and inherent sense of superiority that are embedded in the language and the narratives which Christianity used to succeed in becoming as influential as it was/is in the colonial mind-set. Perhaps, because the narratives of Christianity had, for centuries, beginning with the codification of various dialects of Hebrew into the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament), with the narratives (Aramaic) concerning Jesus of Nazareth added to them (as above) and translated into Greek (koine Greek, not classical), Christianity lost sight of the fact that the original transmission of their narratives were oral. So, when they encountered the oral narratives of Indigenous Peoples, the first reaction was to dismiss them as certainly more “primitive” than the written prosaic forms of their narratives that they were accustomed to. The study by scholars of the transmission of Hebrew and Christian narratives in a poetic format best suited to cultic usage in ceremony and oral transmission has been a post-contact development (the past century or two). Work on the Psalms comes immediately to mind.<sup>41</sup> Some of the work has been made available in translations available to the Christian in the church pew,<sup>42, 43</sup> but, in my experience, hasn’t been as enthusiastically accepted in the pew as I would have hoped.

As noted, the spiritual language of Christianity underwent numerous linguistic modifications transformations, transcriptions, and translations before it was codified in the Latin

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<sup>41</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *Offersang og Sangoffer* (H. Aschehoug & Co. Oslo; English translation by D.R. AP-Thomas as *The Psalms In Israel’s Worship*, Abingdon Press, Nashville & New York, 1962).

<sup>42</sup> Alexander Jones, (Editor), *Illustrated Psalms of the Jerusalem Bible* (Doubleday & Company, Garden City, New York, 1977).

<sup>43</sup> *The New Jerusalem Bible*, (Doubleday & Company, Garden City, New York, 1985).

(Vulgate) format, which was the language of episcopal authority and the official spiritual touchstone (the Old and New Testament canon) of the colonizers at contact. If we examine *only one single word* as it made its way through the various translations (or perhaps, better yet, *transliterations*), we discover how tenuous one spiritual tenet of the assumed spiritual superiority of the narratives underpinning the Christianity of the colonizers was/is. For it is from the interpretive translations of this word that much of Christianity's sense of superiority derives.

In an encounter between King Ahaz of Judah (ca. 735-715 B.C.E.)<sup>44</sup> and the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, during Ahaz's defense of Jerusalem against a two-pronged attack by marauding princes, recorded in Isaiah, chapter 7, Isaiah (presumably speaking with spiritual clarity) is recorded as uttering the words of verse 14, which read in part: "a young woman will...bear a son,"<sup>45</sup> in the process of assuring Ahaz that the attack against him (and perhaps successive attacks as well) will be unsuccessful. The passage itself offers assurance that there is reason for optimism in the current situation, and all like future situations, as successive generations will produce strong leaders who will ensure the longevity of the reign of the king's dynasty and/or the continued freedom from oppression for the people of the kingdom. Most scholars agree that this material not only originated with Isaiah himself, but was part of a collection of prophetic oracles he published, circa 700 B.C.E.

The Hebrew word 'אִשָּׁה יוֹנֵגָה (almah), found in Isaiah is the word that should be translated into English as "young woman," or "maiden." However, the Septuagint translation of this word, "almah," is Παρθένος<sup>46</sup> (parthenos), "virgin" in English. Some Greek translations (Aquila, 130

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<sup>44</sup> George Arthur Buttrick, Thomas Samuel Kepler, John Knox, Herbert Gordon May, Samuel Terrien, and Emory Stevens Bucke (Editors), *The Interpreter's Dictionary Of The Bible, An Illustrated Encyclopedia in Four Volumes*; (Abingdon Press, New York and Nashville, 1962, Vol.1.), 64.

<sup>45</sup> *New American Standard Bible* (The Lockman Foundation, Published by: The Foundation Press Publications, La Habra, California, 1971).

<sup>46</sup> Henry Barclay Swete, D.D, *The Old Testament In Greek According To The Septuagint* (Vol III, Hosea – Maccabees, Cambridge University Press, 1894).

C.E.; Symmachus, 200 C.E.; and Theodotion, possibly as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Century publication meant to correct errors in the Septuagint) do use the word νεαρή γυναίκα (neare gunaika), rendered as “young woman” in English.<sup>47</sup> Why, then, was “parthenos” chosen for the Septuagint? Martin Luther chose the German term jungfraw (Jungfrau), “virgin” for his German translation of the Hebrew: “eine jungfraw is schwanger, vnd wird einen son gebehren,”<sup>48</sup> even though he was well versed in Hebrew. He therefore follows the tone of the Septuagint, rather than the literal translation of “almah”, which would have been two words: “jung frau” in German. Page upon page has been written addressing this question of why the Septuagint translators set the tone of translation and interpretation by using “partheonos,” not the least of which points out that, if the author of the verse (Isaiah) had wanted to specify “virgin,” he would have used the Hebrew term תולדה (bethulah).

The translators responsible for the Septuagint seem to have made a conscious decision to reflect the hopes and expectations of their age, centering around a miraculous intervention by their deity into world affairs to alleviate the condition of the people, and restore to them their sense of national identity and supremacy on the known world stage, much as was reputed to (in their collection of sacred narratives) have existed centuries before, and which they certainly were not experiencing when the Septuagint was published. The Vulgate, the official translation used by the Christian church of the colonizers, followed the Greek by using the word: virgo “virgin”: “ecce virgo concipiet, et pariet fileum.”<sup>49</sup> So, at the time of the Vulgate translation, the *literal* translation of the passage in question was superseded by the *spiritual* longing, and expectation

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<sup>47</sup> George Arthur Buttrick (Editor), *The Interpreter's Bible In Twelve Volumes* (Abingdon Press, New York & Nashville, 1956, Vol. V), 218.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Luther, *Die Gantze Heilige Schrift Deutsch* (Wittenburg, 1545, Vol. II, Rogner & Berhard, Munchen, 1972).

<sup>49</sup> Aloisius Claudius Fillion (Editor), *Biblica Sacra Vulgate* (Liberairie Letouzey Et Ane', Paris, Omnia Jura Vindicabuntur), 801.

expressed in the Septuagint, combined with the belief that their deity *had indeed* intervened in human affairs, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He was believed to be divinely imbued in a two-fold way. First was his spiritual genealogy, in that he was considered to have been “declared with power (or: *in an act of power*) to be the Son of God by (*as a result of*) the resurrection of the dead, according to the spirit of holiness.”<sup>50</sup> The uniqueness of Jesus is that he is deemed a son by the fact that, unlike the experience of other humans, he was raised from death by the power of the deity. “Sonship” in this approach, is a state of being that can be/is enjoyed by everyone by virtue of the grace of the divine.<sup>51</sup> However, human real time experience begs to differ, for the absoluteness of death is a regular experience. The question, therefore that posits itself is: Is it human lethargy which, in spite of this new-found status of “sonship” that lies behind the failure to experience the full “adoption” that seems to indicate a physical resurrection is possible, or, is there something about Jesus in addition to his spiritual adoption that makes him unique? The answer seems to have been found in the concept that Jesus was divinely conceived and is therefore divine in his nature, thereby allowing him to enjoy fully what normally conceived humans can only anticipate in some future time. There are admittedly hints that, since eternity (the new state in which all those adopted exist) is a concept wherein time is of no essence, in fact, time does not even exist. Therefore, that which the spiritually adopted anticipate at some future time is essentially a reality that is experienced now. But, since humanity is presumably limited by its physical senses, it seems more pragmatic and plausible to speak of an inherent divine nature in Jesus of Nazareth than to try to bring people to the understanding that their adoption and the benefits of that adoption are a current and present reality, in spite of the fact

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<sup>50</sup> Romans 1:4.

<sup>51</sup> Romans, Chapters 8&9, Galatians 4:4, Ephesians 1:5, and, some would argue, even the narrative concerning the “daughter” in Mark 5:22-24, 35-42, and Lazarus in John 11\_1-4, 11-44.

that they are incapable of fully comprehending it due to the limitations inherent in being human. Recall the earlier discussion concerning “spirituality,” “religion,” and “faith” on page 12.

The Septuagint and the Vulgate were, therefore, not merely an echo of the Hebrew narratives which spoke of the people’s establishment as a unique and special people by their deity, but spoke of a new and better intervention to create a new and better people who would succeed where past generations had failed. Therefore, when the passage from Isaiah 7:14, along with similar passages of expectation, were associated with the narratives concerning the life of Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 1:23), not only did this lead to his deification, but to the conviction that the longing and the expectations of divine intervention were said to have been fully realized in him, and that the sense of privilege, entitlement, superiority, and the power that accompanies these had been passed on to a new generation and a new people, i.e. those who were convinced that this person was the human embodiment of their deity as well as the harbinger of a new age. Most notable were those privileged to share a personal relationship with this same Jesus of Nazareth, his twelve closest friends, and later, Saul of Tarsus, who later also claimed to have had historical (in a vision) physical contact with Jesus when Saul’s (now renamed Paul) validity as a leader among the new people was questioned. From these, augmented by those who had a more casual contact with Jesus, grew a body of narratives. People who assumed the responsibility of interpreting the narratives as they understood them felt it was their mission (responsibility) as well, to acquaint (convince) as many others as they could of their veracity and functionality.

As one reads Christian and Hebrew narratives that speak of their unique position and relationship with their deity, we find, in the Hebrew, an immediate contact with the deity in various guises, as reported by their spiritual leaders; and in the Christian, immediate contact with their deity in human form. It becomes evident that, not only do these people feel privileged,

superior (because they are privileged), and empowered, because of their close physical contact with their deity, but also responsible for using that empowerment to ensure that all people, and even all of nature, be subjected to that same deity. The language indicates that, if one is subject to the people so privileged, then one is subject to the deity. So subjecting people and nature to themselves is seen by Christians as subjecting all to their deity, as their deity desires. I will return to this concept later, when I examine the hierarchical assumptions of the Judeo-Christian heritage. The new movement's presumed *spiritual* supremacy was augmented by their (for the most part, uncritical) inheritance of the template of Roman Imperialism, which informed their organisations and institutions. That, then, is the "language of the colonizer" that we are left to deal with when attempting to decolonize, especially if we, as the non-Indigenous beneficiaries of colonization, wish to engage in the process of spiritually decolonizing ourselves.

It is evident that this new generation of people (Christians), in their zealotry to legitimize their existence as *the* privileged, superior, and empowered people in relationship to their deity, rely heavily on Jesus of Nazareth's genealogical lineage. I find it interestingly contradictory that, along with his supposed miraculous birth (to a virgin mother, Mary), the narratives go to great length to trace his lineage through his father, Joseph all the way back to the supposed progenitor of the Hebrew-speaking people (Matthew 1:1-25). Much ink has been used to deal with the inherent contradiction of tracing Jesus of Nazareth's lineage through his father, Joseph, instead of through his mother, Mary, since, if his birth was indeed as miraculous as described, then Joseph was not part of his genealogical lineage. As well, not too much thought has been dedicated to dealing with the logical conclusion that, if Jesus was/is the divine son of a *single unified deity*, as is Christianity's assertion, he is essentially his own father. That analysis is beyond the scope of our current discussion. But reliance of lineage, whether physical or spiritual,

to establish spiritual legitimacy have important implications for the thought patterns and approach of a society or people.

If a person legitimizes themselves (or is given legitimacy) and defines their place and function in society, as well as their spiritual identity (or has it defined for them), through lineage, genealogy, and associations inherent in that lineage and genealogy, that person must necessarily rely on linear progression, as evidenced by the narrative from Matthew referred to above. Today, we keep records in government vaults of everyone's *immediate* lineage, but there are also the unofficial "record keepers" within communities who, if asked (and sometimes without being asked) will proceed to go into detail concerning any given person's lengthy lineage. Linear progression as defined by genealogical records, whether formal or informal (that is, committed to memory), fosters linear thinking. One person sires or conceives another, then they in turn sire or conceive, and so on. One concept or idea leads to another, which in turn leads to another, etc. is an overly simplistic method of describing the process, perhaps, but the comparisons between genealogical identification and that which legitimizes one's spiritual identity and linear thinking, are certainly evident. Christianity could not justify its sense of superiority through any other means. If it didn't use the concept of lineage (physical and spiritual) to define the status of its presumed founder, Jesus of Nazareth, it would simply have been one of many spiritual approaches existing at the time in the territories the people inhabited and even as it spread to the neighbouring territories.

In the section of Matthew referred to above (Matthew 1:1-16), the sense of spiritual uniqueness and relationship to the divine is traced through a physical, linear, genealogical, progression. By virtue of the unique position of the progenitor of the people due to his relationship to the divine (a relationship initiated by the divine), it was assumed that all

descendants of the progenitor also enjoyed a unique relationship with the divine. This unique position dependent on lineage is important for the Christians as well, as the reference above indicates. However, to cope with the inclusion of non-Abrahamic descendants in the new spiritual movement, the concept of lineage was modified to the assertion that the *spiritual lineage*, heretofore assumed by genealogical lineage, superseded genealogical lineage itself. The champion (Saul of Tarsus, Paul) of this successful concept, was himself of the old genealogical lineage, but opposed to the idea that genealogical lineage was a prerequisite to inclusion in this new era or spiritual lineage. In fact, in Romans 2:25-29, he presumably indicates that one's spiritual association with the divine is equivalent, or better than, any genealogical or physical association. Later, in Romans 8, he uses the term “υιοθεσία ως υιοί,” (adoption as sons) as a present spiritual reality (vs.15) shared equally with those who trace their genealogical lineage to the progenitor of the race (Romans 9:4) and then also as an expected future reality (Romans 8:23).

There is, therefore in Christianity a definite sense of a spiritual beginning, be it the institution by the divine of a relationship with a people through the progenitor of a race, or the institution by the divine of a relationship with an individual, where the divine is said *to have become* an individual (Jesus) who formed a special bond with a select few, and through them, with all who accepted his divinity. Had it not been for the interpretation (as evidenced by the choice in translation of one word (“virgin”), this intimate relationship with the divine Jesus of Nazareth through his representatives would have been along the lines of relationships formed with those people referred to as “prophets” in earlier literature, who were “called” by the deity for a special purpose and entrusted with a specific message. For the Christian church, there is a clear line of progression drawn between the initial establishment of a relationship between the

progenitor of a race, and the beginning of a new relationship based, not on genealogy, but on concepts that were important to the initial relationship with the progenitor, that is, divine initiation of that relationship, most often referred to as the divine issuing a “call” to an individual, whether it be a physical “call” by the divine man that was thought to have been Jesus (as in the case of his twelve friends and later, those who responded to the “call” issued by them), or a spiritual “call” through some other method, usually through the agency of someone or some group who self-identifies as a spiritual descendant. For some (and this proved to be problematic for Christian institutions) there was, as in Saul of Tarsus, the assertion that their “call” was directly with the divinity, and therefore perhaps even more valid than any “call” mediated through an individual within the new community. There is also a clear expectation that there will be a culmination of the relationship in an idyllic spiritual existence (with an implied idyllic physical existence as well) that supersedes any physical or genealogical description or lineage.

Although the fortunes of those who claimed to be in this unique relationship with the divine waxed and waned as the centuries have unfolded, there has always been an expectation that there is a linear progression to an event that will ultimately favor those who are in that special relationship with the divine. Even though empirical observation would indicate a cyclical movement through the ages, as evidenced by the cycles of the seasons in nature; and also by the history of those people who see themselves in this special relationship with the divine, as illustrated by days of glory, followed by apostasy, decline, repentance and renewal, leading again to days of glory, their literature reflects a linear progression from a defined beginning to an expected end, that supersedes, and will finally eradicate, all cyclical movement (including that of nature) and replace it with a continuous sublime existence (both spiritual and physical) that is divinely initiated and instituted.

The observation is made (1 Corinthians 15:20-28) that the idyllic existence expected at the end of this linear progression is the culmination of what seems to be one grand, all-encompassing cycle. However, it is not a cycle in the normal definition of the word, since “cycle” presupposes a beginning and an end to that cycle, with each “end” being a new beginning. Christian theology, with its understanding of the divine, seems to indicate that there is no beginning nor end to speak of, since the divine supersedes time, space, and all imaginable (and not yet imagined) dimensions, and therefore has no beginning or end. And, if everything is encompassed and contained within the divine, there is, therefore, no beginning nor end to anything, only human observations that are expressed in those terms. The logical conclusion that all that “exists” is simply, therefore, some manifestation of the divine, is however, not vocalised in the accepted canonical literature of Christianity.

There are references to such a concept in Christian Mysticism, which was viewed by the papacy as undermining the church’s authority from within, because it emphasised spiritual experiences as opposed to academic analysis, conclusions, and pronouncements of “truth.” So insidious did the papacy view mysticism, that Pope John XXII, in his encyclical “In Argo Dominico” of 1329, condemned seventeen propositions of the mystic Meister Eckhart, and declared eleven of his propositions as suspect, *almost a year after Meister Eckhart had died*.<sup>52</sup> One of the most threatening aspects of mysticism was that it viewed the contemporary interpretation of the collected Christian narratives (Scripture) and the sacraments, as secondary to the experienced λόγος (word), the communication of the divine to humans in whatever form it may come to them, be it visions, reflections, or spiritual insights gained from observation of life experiences.

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<sup>52</sup> Hubert Jeden & John Dolan (Editors) *History of the Church, Vol. IV* (A Crossroad Book, The Seabury Press, New York, 1980), 378.

The expectation of an idyllic existence mentioned above, however, is not simply a static expectation that Christians were/are willing to wait patiently for. Given that their expectations were/are so idyllic, they felt/feel that, not only they, but everything that exists, is suffering until that idyllic existence (which is after all the will and desire of the divine) is realised (Romans 8:18-25). Therefore, everything *must be* “subjected” to the divine-man, Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:28: “και όταν όλα τα πράγματα υπόκεινται σε αυτόν”) before this idyllic existence can be realized. And, following the formula referred to in Romans above, Christianity, as the only bona fide agent of the divine, has not only the right, but the duty, of “subjecting” everyone and everything to it/them, so they can, in turn, subject everything and everyone (along with themselves) to the deity, so all this longing (groaning) can be brought to a decisive end.

This, then, is the language of the colonizer, containing the embedded message of spiritual superiority and premising the need to subject everything to the Church first, then to Jesus, so it can ultimately be subjected to the divinity. This is based on conscious translations from Hebrew to Greek, to Latin, to German and English, that did not follow the original, but reflected the attitudes and expectations of the translator’s spiritual mind-set. It is therefore not the physical language that Absalon finds so difficult to deal with, but the subliminal interpretations contained in the language used. One may speak or write about the need to “decolonize the language,” but, when the language itself contains, or is premised upon, centuries of presumed spiritual superiority and the need to “subject” everyone and everything to this superiority, the task of “decolonizing” requires the identification of so many nuanced expressions that it becomes a daunting task indeed.

Initially, “subjecting” was considered a spiritual subjecting that formed a direct linear connection to Jesus of Nazareth (the divine human) and then to his closest acquaintances, the

apostles (including Saul of Tarsus, now known as Paul). Even though militaristic language was often used, it was symbolic, for this band of followers certainly did not have the power or the wherewithal to employ anything but the power of persuasion and their personal examples to achieve their goal. Beginning as a millenarian movement, then evolving to a real-life struggle to maintain their optimism in the face of oppression, looking forward to a final triumphant verification of their beliefs in a cataclysmic apocalyptic event, they borrowed militaristic language to speak of their spiritual struggles.

The coloniser attitude toward Indigenous Peoples, the land they occupied, and the need to conquer in the name of their belief system seems to have had its conception in 312. Constantine had ensconced himself in power in most of the northern provinces of the Roman Empire, and he and his weary troops were at the Milvian Bridge, the doorway to Rome, the capital of the empire. The night before the battle for control of Milvian Bridge, Constantine claimed to have had a vision of a cross in the sky above the legend “In Hoc Signo Vincens”: “In This Sign Conquer,” or “with this sign you will be victorious.” The word of this vision quickly spread among Constantine’s troops, invigorated them, and they won the battle, led by standard-bearers who no longer carried their standards on lances, but on lances with a cross bar on them, as a reminder of the vision Constantine claimed to have had. Consequently, it is said that Constantine and his army converted en masse to Christianity, adopted the lance and cross piece as their new method of displaying their standards, and thus elevated a common method of execution in the Roman Empire to a symbol of triumph and victory. Although this is not the first time that the cross was associated with Christianity in a victorious fashion, it seems that it is the first time that this symbol was considered a physical symbol of triumph in a militaristic fashion. If we jump ahead to 1864 and Sabine Baring Gould’s *children’s* processional lyrics, “Onward Christian

Soldiers”<sup>53</sup> and the image of the cross leading a quasi-military procession, we find that there is room for discussion concerning the confluence of spiritual victory over spiritual enemies and the British triumphalism of the day that echoed the theocracies that were Constantine’s legacy, even though his dream and legacy didn’t achieve its full expression until 800 in Charlemagne’s Holy Roman Empire.

It has been suggested that Constantine was shrewd enough to know how many factions and how many “protective deities” were at odds with each other within the empire, and chose to cultivate the faction best organized and most fiercely devoted to their deity as his best chance of assuring himself not only this victory, but other victories as well, in fulfilment of his appetite for dominance. Some may point to the Edict of Milan of 313 as Constantine’s instigation of religious freedom, but it can also be argued that Constantine was again simply shrewd enough to form an ad-hoc allegiance between himself (and his appetite for military and political conquest) with the most well-organized and zealously devoted of the many factions in the empire at the time<sup>54</sup> in his quest to arrive at a theocracy. His attempt to organize this Christian faction in 325 at Nicaea can be considered a laudable exercise on the part of a devoted emperor, or simply a method of cementing his power base. The banquet he gave at the conclusion of this meeting or “council,” with leaders of the Christians invited, as it is described in the literature, evokes the description of the final meal Jesus of Nazareth is said to have had with his closest friends (Luke 22:14-20), and Da Vinci’s much later (late 15<sup>th</sup> Century) depiction of that meal, with the suggestion that Constantine may have been seated as prominently at his table as Jesus of Nazareth may have been at his. The image would have been that Constantine’s political ambitions to dominate were

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<sup>53</sup> <https://www.hymnary.org>.

<sup>54</sup> James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword The Church and the Jews, A History* (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston & New York), 171, 175; 180-182; 192, 195.

an expression of Christianity's spiritual ambitions to dominate and "subject," with the subliminal message that Constantine was the divinely appointed leader of the people, both spiritually (he had called the council together to bring unity to Christianity), and politically (he was the emperor, after all). There is, however, nothing in the literature concerning this occasion, any mention of Constantine washing anyone's feet, as Jesus of Nazareth was purported to have (John 13:3-5), thereby suggesting, even then, that in a theocracy, the people served the empire and the emperor without any reciprocal consideration.

Constantine's efforts to bring unity to both church and state, and indeed, to unify the two, thus "subjecting" all people to *one* authority that encompassed both the temporal and spiritual realms, however, seem impossibly idealistic when I contemplate both the political (temporal) and church histories in the years leading up to and including contact with Turtle Island. Politically, the Roman Empire became a shamble of intrigue and unrest, attacked from both outside and from within. The church, which he sought to bring to unity at Nicaea, soon deteriorated into an unrecognizable cacophony of dissenting voices, marked and marred by political intrigue and even outright armed hostilities, as individuals sought to gain supreme control over its vast physical resources and riches, as well as all its subjects, including the princes and kings who claimed allegiance to it. Notably, the various spiritual (ecclesiastical) leaders (popes and cardinals) proved more capable of political intrigue, violence, and outright bribery than that exhibited by "worldly" princes in their attempts to subject all to themselves as self-declared emissaries of their deity. But so embedded was the concept of theocracy in the coloniser mind, that even those who found themselves in dissent with Papal or even other religious authorities, looked to establish theocracies of their own in this "new land" they often journeyed to

in groups comprising the same ethnic and spiritual values. Some even succeeded quite well, with their legacies and colonised territories still evident on our maps today.

The history of the Church and its popes working to “subject” everything and everyone (including emperors and empires) to themselves as self-appointed “Vicars of Christ,” and, therefore “subjecting” everything and everyone to Christ, who in turn would “subject” everything to the supreme deity (God), is a long and complicated one, so I’ll confine myself to highlighting the few just before, and during, first documented European contact with Turtle Island.

The era of 1049 to 1294 has been described in these words:

In this period the church and the papacy ascended from the lowest state of weakness and corruption to the highest power and influence over the nations of Europe. It is the classical age of Latin Christianity: the age of the papal theocracy, aiming to control the German Empire and the kingdoms of France, Spain, and England.<sup>55</sup>

Schaff further comments: “The Pope coveted both kingdoms, and he got what he coveted.”<sup>56</sup>

“The monks were the standing army of the Pope, and fought his battles against the secular rulers of Western Europe.”<sup>57</sup> The formula was quite straightforward and direct. The monastic orders lived and taught that one’s physical wellbeing was secondary to one’s spiritual well-being. That being the case, personal considerations such as freedom, living standards, and thoughts of a possible better *physical* life were of no consequence (and even irritating distractions) provided that *spiritual* health and wellbeing were maintained. They taught that it would be better to concentrate all one’s efforts in maintaining and improving one’s spiritual well-being and leave all other decisions in the hands of a beneficent Christian rulers, who, in turn, sought guidance for ruling from the Pope. “Weltanschauung” vs. “Weltbeherrshung” (worldly or physical concerns

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<sup>55</sup> Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1924), 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

vs. self-control in all things “worldly” as the impetus for one’s actions). However, although Innocent III (1198-1216) managed to consolidate all power, both politically and spiritually, in his hands, it has also been observed that:

More blood was shed at the hand of the church during the pontificate of Innocent, and under his immediate successors carrying out his policy, than in any other age except during the Papal Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>58</sup>

During The Reformation (1517 ff.), when the common people (peasants) took Martin Luther’s call for emancipation from the papacy as an encouragement to struggle for their emancipation from the harsh rule of “Christian” princes, he (Martin Luther, educated in an Augustinian Monastery at Erfurt, Germany)<sup>59</sup> contributed to the shedding of blood in his harsh condemnation of the people’s struggle (The Peasant’s War of 1524-25). Luther’s words on this occasion echo Constantine’s premise (based on his vision and subsequent victories) that temporal authority was divinely appointed. In quick succession in the Spring and Summer of 1525, Luther wrote and published his “Admonition to Peace A Reply to the Twelve Articles of the Peasants in Swabia,” followed by “Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants,” and, after the revolt was brutally suppressed by the Princes, his unapologetic “An Open Letter on the Harsh Book Against the Peasants.”<sup>60</sup> In “Admonition to Peace,” Luther refers to himself as being someone from whom the peasants are willing to take advice: “Since I have a reputation for being one of those who deal with Scriptures here on earth, and especially one whom they mention and call upon by name.”<sup>61</sup> In this “Admonition,” Luther suggests that he is in a conciliatory mood, willing to use his respected position to bring about a peaceful solution to the situation. However,

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid. 159-160.

<sup>59</sup>David Crystal, (Editor), *The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia, Second Edition* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 591.

<sup>60</sup> Helmut T. Lehman, (General Editor), Robert C. Schultz, (Editor), *Luther’s Works, Volume 46 The Christian in Society III* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1967), 5-85.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid. 17.

knowing that the peasants have used his opposition to Papal rule as their rationalization (at least in part) for their revolt against secular rulers, he proceeds further to say:

I do this in a friendly and Christian spirit, as a duty of brotherly love, so that if any misfortune or disaster comes out of this matter, it may not be attributed to me, nor will I be blamed before God and men because of my silence.<sup>62</sup>

But he, for all his conciliatory (and self-preserving) rhetoric, indicates his bias is on the side of the “princes.” His suspicions of the peasants and their leaders is stated in the following:

it is impossible for so big a crowd all to be true Christians and have good intentions; a large part of them must be using the good intentions of the rest for their own selfish purposes and seeking their own advantage.<sup>63</sup>

And, while his words to the “Princes and Lords”<sup>64</sup> are far from being conciliatory or complementary, his admonitions “To the Peasants”<sup>65</sup> indicate that their place in society is to be ruled by the princes and lords, even if they happen to be cruel and/or unreasonably harsh in their approach, and even though they (the peasants) have justifiable grievances.

“What do you expect God and the world to think when you pass judgement and avenge yourselves on those who have injured you and even upon your rulers, *whom God has appointed?*”<sup>66</sup>

When the peasants seemed to have ignored (or, perhaps, not yet even been acquainted with) Luther’s “Admonition to Peace,” he began his “Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants” with the accusation that “they forgot their promise (to be counselled by Luther) and violently took matters into their own hands and are robbing and raging like mad dogs.”<sup>67</sup> In which case, Luther feels that: “I must instruct the rulers how they are to conduct themselves in these circumstances.”<sup>68</sup> It is his opinion that the peasants “have abundantly merited

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 17&18.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 19-23

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 23-43.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 27. (*Italics mine*).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 49.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

death in body and soul.”<sup>69</sup> In body *and* soul, thereby equating refusal to submit to authority (Luther’s and that of the princes and lords) with apostasy. It seems that, for Luther, if one refuses to submit to secular authority, one is refusing to submit to divine authority and thereby becomes an enemy (devil) whose intent is to destroy Christianity, and who must, therefore, be engaged and destroyed as part of the continual and all-encompassing war between good and evil, divine and sworn enemy of the divine.

For in this case a prince and lord must remember that according to Romans 13 (:4) he is God’s minister and the servant of his wrath and that the sword has been given him to use against such people.<sup>70</sup>

Further:

If he is able to punish and does not do it-even though he would have to kill someone or shed blood-he becomes guilty of all the murder and evil that these people commit.<sup>71</sup>

For Luther: “These are strange times, when a prince can win heaven with bloodshed better than other men with prayer!”<sup>72</sup> But more unsettling than this, are his further ruminations concerning those peasants who may have unwittingly, and without sober thought, been drawn into the conflict. Not only must they be slain to prevent them from promulgating their heretical beliefs which could lead to the damnation of those who fall prey to their influence, they must also be slain *for their own spiritual salvation!* For, once slain, their souls would proceed to Purgatory, where they would be given a chance to realize and atone for their sins against the rulers, and thereby still gain eternal salvation. It is not difficult, therefore, to understand that when on one occasion 20,000 peasants surrendered to a prince, he ordered that all be executed.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 52&53.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 53.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>73</sup> Henri Daniel-Rops, *The Protestant Reformation Vol I and II* (Image Books, A Division of Doubleday & Company Inc., Garden City, New York, 1963, Vol. II), 54-59.

“Spilling blood” was, it seems, for the Reformer, quite an acceptable means of furthering theological and spiritual goals, with the right of princes and lords to reign being identified as being spiritual (divine) in nature.

The possibility that such a peasant’s revolt had its genesis in Luther’s renunciation and polemic against the Papacy was perhaps not far from King Henry VIII’s mind when he published his refutation of Luther and his ideas in his book “Assertio Septem Sacramentorum” (An Assertion of the Seven Sacraments) in July of 1521. For this effort in the defense of the church, Henry VIII received from Pope Leo X the title he had been coveting, that of “Defender of the Faith.”<sup>74</sup> Luther responded to Henry’s “Assertion” in July of 1522 in a caustic and quite uncomplimentary manner. In a letter of 1523, addressed to the Saxon Princes, Henry observed that the “universally pernicious...Lutheran conspiracy...The poison...has no other end than to instigate the people to make war on the nobles.”<sup>75</sup> Subsequent letters addressed by either Luther to Henry or Henry to Luther seemed a bit more conciliatory in nature, but then Luther, in 1527, saw fit to return to his strong, contemptuous, and adversarial language in a letter aimed at Henry and his supporters. In response, Henry issued a royal proclamation in 1528, blaming Luther for the murderous acts of the princes during the Peasant’s War, presumably because Luther’s fight for emancipation from Papal authority had led to the peasant’s attempt at emancipation from temporal authority. No mention seems to have been made of Luther’s subsequent stance against the peasants.

Henry states further:

that no man within the king’s realm or other of his dominions, subjects to his highness, hereafter presume to preach, teach, or inform anything openly or privily, or compile and

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<sup>74</sup> Neelak Serawlook Tjernagel, *Henry VIII and the Lutherans, A Study in Anglo-Lutheran Relations from 1521 to 1547* (Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, 1965), 10.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

write any book, or hold, or exercise, or keep any assemblies or schools in any manner or wise contrary to the Catholic faith or diminution of holy church.<sup>76</sup>

There is, however, little evidence that Henry had an appetite for anything further than verbal and written decrees and admonitions. No acts of violence or deaths seem to have been perpetrated by him or with his blessing at that time. Books were burned, to be sure, but the authority of the church was not questioned or contested in such a public manner that would call down corporeal punishment upon the person guilty of such an offense. That Henry believed (with Luther) that temporal authority was divinely appointed, and that anyone who would contend against that was, by that very act, contending against divine authority, is however clear. It fell to Sir Thomas More to take an aggressive stance against the heresies of continental Europe in his publication of 1532, where he bemoaned the flood of heretical literature into England *including Tyndale's translation of the Bible into English*,<sup>77</sup> an exercise (i.e. translating the bible into English) that Henry VII seemed to have encouraged in his 1523 letter to the Saxton dukes when he observed: "it is a good thing for the Scriptures to be read in all languages."<sup>78</sup>

The anti-clerical sentiments swirling around in England were expressed by Thomas Cranmer in 1525,<sup>79</sup> and, two years later, "an imperial suggestion was made that national churches, independent of Rome, be established."<sup>80</sup> Initially, Henry seemed to ignore this sentiment of the people. However, that changed with his struggle to have his marriage to his brother's widow annulled. The Papacy and papal meddling in what Henry considered a civil (not ecclesiastical) matter seems to have changed Henry. His change of attitude, in spite of the fact that he had been granted the title of "Defender of the Faith" by the Papacy, may not have been

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 33.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 56 & 57.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 84.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 85.

without the influence of the Boleyn Family, whose daughter, Anne, had become the focus of Henry's amorous attentions.

However, it must be noted that, even his coveted title as "Defender of the Faith" was not, to him, acquiescence to papal authority over Kings and Princes in civil affairs. Rather, it seems, Henry coveted the title because of its subliminal suggestion that the Papacy had recognised that he, the King, held both temporal *and* spiritual authority over the people in his kingdom and all the territories it encompassed. While the Papacy was engaged in attempting to re-assert its authority over the temporal sphere, it seems that Henry was engaged in asserting that he, as a ruler in the temporal sphere had, by virtue of his divinely-appointed position, authority to lead and govern the spiritual affairs of his subjects as well. The annulment of an unconsummated marriage was, after all, a civil (temporal) matter. If the divinely appointed spiritual leader chose to meddle in temporal matters, then it was the responsibility of the divinely appointed temporal leader to draw attention to the error and overrule the spiritual leader. If the spiritual leader persisted in his error in judgement, then the temporal leader became the *de facto* spiritual leader of the people, and was to continue as such until the spiritual leader realized the error of this ways, recanted, and returned to his own divinely-appointed sphere of leadership. This was not necessarily a separation of church and state, but an indication that both spiritual and temporal rulers felt they held their positions by virtue of divine authority. If either felt that the other was either abusing or misusing their divine authority, it was incumbent upon the one who remained true to the divine authority granted them to assume leadership in *both* spiritual and temporal matters, at least until such time that the recalcitrant realised the error of their ways.

When Henry persisted (even against the advice of Martin Luther, it can be noted) in his annulment (divorce) from Catherine of Aragon, Pope Clement VII excommunicated him on July

11, 1533, according to one source.<sup>81</sup> There seems to be some lack of clarity as to whether the excommunication actually took place before Clement was removed. However, Henry and the English Parliament proceeded to solidify the position that it was Parliament and the King, not the Cardinals and Pope, who ruled England, both in temporal and spiritual realms. Henry, “The Defender of the Faith,” now became “Especial Protector and Supreme Head of the English Church and Clergy.”<sup>82</sup> The die had now been cast for the official English attitude toward Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island. To submit to the temporal authority of the English Parliament, its King, or any emissaries of either or both, was to submit to their spiritual authority as well. In fact, there seems to be a strong suggestion that submission to temporal authority may have been a necessary precondition required for submission to spiritual authority.

In the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century there was a practice of kidnapping Indigenous people (by Norman fishermen, who often made landfall and encamped on Turtle Island) to return with them to France as exhibits of curiosity. Despite this, trade between French and Indigenous peoples continued to flourish, since both had access to goods that the other coveted. In 1537, Pope Paul III, in the Encyclical “*Sublimus Dei*,” found it necessary to proclaim:

since man, according to the testimony of the sacred scriptures, has been created to enjoy eternal life and happiness, which none may obtain save through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, it is necessary that he should possess the nature and faculties enabling him to receive that faith; and that whoever is thus endowed should be capable of receiving that same faith.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore:

the said Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians, are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, even though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ; and that they may and should, freely and

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<sup>81</sup> <https://www.papalartifacts.com/july-11-1533-pope-clement-vii-excommunicates-king-henry-viii/>. Last accessed February 12, 2019.

<sup>82</sup> Neelak Serawlook Tjernagel, *Henry VIII and the Lutherans, A Study in Anglo-Lutheran Relations from 1521 to 1547* (Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, 1965), 99.

<sup>83</sup> [www.papalencyclicals.net/paul03/p3subli.htm](http://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul03/p3subli.htm). Last accessed January 13, 2019.

legitimately, enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property; nor should they be in any way enslaved; should the contrary happen, it shall be null and have no effect.<sup>84</sup>

Concluding:

By virtue of Our apostolic authority We define and declare by these present letters, or by any translation thereof signed by any notary public and sealed with the seal of any ecclesiastical dignitary, which shall thus command the same obedience as the originals, that the said Indians and other peoples should be converted to the faith of Jesus Christ by preaching the word of God and by the example of good and holy living.<sup>85</sup>

In 1537, the Papacy at least, seems to have addressed the question of forced conversion and/or assimilation, not to mention annihilation. However, by that time, the English Church had become independent of Rome and was formulating its own approach, as noted above.

But the Papal encyclical begs the questions as to why it was thought necessary. Papal encyclicals are often meant to address a situation that is on-going and considered unacceptable. The fact that the Pope felt it necessary to issue this encyclical suggests strongly that it was not just contemplated by some, but a known practice. If Christian peasants in Europe (i.e. in The Peasant's War of 1522-25, see above) could be slaughtered at will for not bowing to the authority of Christian princes, then certainly "pagans" who were thought of as lesser beings than those peasants, deserved no serious consideration as persons, not only by princes, but by those who presumed to act on behalf of those princes. In addition, the Spanish practice of enslaving peoples they conquered, on the premise that they were not Christian, and therefore warranted little or no consideration as persons, could well have also been weighing heavily on Pope Paul's mind.

It is the attempt (during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation) by the papacy to regain the power and influence that had been lost in the years after Innocent III had gained

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

supreme control, as well as to curtail the increasingly popular concept that temporal rulers are divinely appointed and therefore are also spiritual leaders (as illustrated in Luther's response to the Peasant's War and Henry VIII's and English Parliament's decrees), that is the spiritual backdrop to European colonisation of land and peoples of Turtle Island.

In the case of the Catholic Church and its involvement with the Indigenous people of Turtle Island, the monks that were the standing army of the Pope were not the beneficent lay orders of Innocent III's time, but The Company of Jesus (Jesuits), who reflected the spiritual dedication and militancy (i.e. perseverance) of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, a converted Spanish soldier, who founded the Order in 1534. Known for their loyalty and obedience to the Papacy, they took upon themselves to convert everyone to Christianity, presumably with the encyclical of 1537 as their *modus operandi*.

Succeeding early efforts by the Sulpician and Recollet monastic orders of the Catholic Church, the Jesuits arrived on the northern part of the eastern shore of Turtle Island (Acadia) in 1611, and inland in 1625 and soon became the most active order in attempting to proselytize Indigenous peoples. They seem to have approached the Haudenosaunee and Wendat as persons who had the intelligence and capability to become Christian, to bring them to the certainty of "eternal life and happiness" in the Christian understanding of this term. By this time, it seems, under the auspices of *Terra Nullius*, that is, the right to lay claim to lands not in the possession of any other Christian prince, the land along the St. Lawrence River (1541) and Sable Island (1578) had been claimed as belonging to France. That not claimed, however, was still considered in the possession of the Indigenous peoples who inhabited it. Instructions and proclamations from as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries seem to indicate that Indigenous peoples and their lands be considered independent and be respected by France's subjects. Moreover, if an Indigenous

person was accused of committing a crime, that person was not dealt with by the French temporal authorities, but instead handed over to his/her own people so that they could handle the case in their own manner and in accordance with their own customs.<sup>86</sup>

It seems that the Jesuits were politely received as guests and visitors by the Indigenous people they sought out. However, the Jesuits, if they were overly optimistic that their courteous reception indicated that they would be successful in their proselytizing efforts, were soon disappointed with their lack of success. As politely as the Jesuits were received, their mission efforts were just as politely rebuffed. If a monk or a priest was “martyred,” however, it was probably because he, or a group of his countrymen in that or another location had raised the ire of the Indigenous peoples, and his dispatch was an act of retaliation, rather than a spontaneous (or planned) open act of hostility related to his ecclesiastical position and missionary efforts. Even if there were hostilities leading to death(s) among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons, it seems that they were soon overlooked by the mutual need for a continued trading relationship that benefitted both parties. The activity of the Jesuits (from their point of view) is well documented from 1632 to 1672 in their annual report to their headquarters in France (*The Jesuit Relations*), where we learn that they relentlessly pursued their mission to bring Indigenous peoples to Christianity, learning the languages, and reporting on the customs and practices of the many people they encountered in their travels throughout the territories.

The Jesuits were driven out of Portugal (1759), Spain (1767), and Austria (1770), presumably because their fierce loyalty to the Papacy was a source of irritation and consternation to rulers of those countries, who were seeking a measure of autonomy and freedom from the

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<sup>86</sup><https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-french-relations>. Last accessed February 15, 2019.

church's meddling in the affairs of state.<sup>87</sup> By means of political machinations, Pope Clement was elevated to the Office of the Papacy, with the understanding that he would disband the Order.<sup>88</sup> This he sought to accomplish by the encyclical: "Dominus ac Redemptor" on July 21, 1773.<sup>89</sup> In Britain and Russia, ruling authorities found means of re-constituting the Order,<sup>90</sup> thereby allowing them to maintain their vigour, while French authorities seemed to adopt a somewhat *laisse faire*, often beneficent attitude toward them. Authorities in "New France" (French occupied areas of Turtle Island) didn't expel them or even attempt to curtail their efforts, indicating that they were considered a valuable part of the political and commercial interests of the authorities of the time.

Perhaps, because the militancy of the Jesuits was expressed (in Turtle Island at least) in their zeal and determination to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity (and therefore to the underlying principle that temporal authority was an instrument of spiritual authority), their presence was welcome among the authorities of the new settlements of France. Perhaps because their approach became subtler as time progressed, they were not completely rebuffed by the Indigenous peoples. If, for instance, an alliance between the French and an Indigenous nation were formed, the Jesuits seemed to be on hand to convince the Indigenous people that their being baptized was a means of cementing the alliance as one between equals. Given the fact that most alliances and agreements between Indigenous peoples themselves ended with ceremony to formalize the agreement, it is quite probable that, if baptism was thought to be a "ceremony" (or was presented as such) that the French used to formalize their agreements, then the Indigenous people would have accepted it as such, and participated willingly. If an Indigenous woman was

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<sup>87</sup> [www.jesuit.org.uk/supression-and-restoration-jesuits](http://www.jesuit.org.uk/supression-and-restoration-jesuits). Last accessed February 09, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> [https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1773\\_dominusacsredemptor/](https://jesuitportal.bc.edu/research/documents/1773_dominusacsredemptor/). Last accessed February 09, 2019.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> [www.jesuit.org.uk/supression-and-restoration-jesuits](http://www.jesuit.org.uk/supression-and-restoration-jesuits). Last accessed February 09, 2019.

married to a French man “a la facon du pays” (according to the custom of the country) a Jesuit would be happy to baptize the woman so that *the man* would not be excommunicated for marrying a pagan. This could also have been presented as a ceremony formalizing the relationship. If a “reserve” or “reduction” was established (as near Quebec, Trois-Rivieres, Montreal, and Lac-Des-Deux-Montagnes in 1637), the concept was “sold” to the Indigenous people as being a place where they could settle, learn pursuits (i.e. agriculture) that would benefit themselves (and, of course, the French), and receive an education. Although the exposure to Christianity was not part of the advertisement, it certainly was part of the program. One could probably argue that the formation of a governing body by the inhabitants of the reserves was a positive indication that the concept was a success, or, conversely, that it was an indication that the Indigenous people involved were determined to maintain their identity and culture in spite of their being convinced to adopt a sedentary lifestyle and face continuous proselytizing pressure. Although there are convincing arguments on both sides, each seems to be premised by an opinion concerning whether the people converted to Christianity or didn’t. The people could have simply followed the established custom of being baptized into Christianity as a means by which they could formalize an agreement that was as beneficial to them as it was to the French (see above).

Although these agreements seem rather amicable, the position of the Christians (people, politicians, and missionaries) is always one of assumed superiority, since they alone possessed the means to acquire “eternal life and happiness,” and it was their duty to convert all other peoples to their belief system and encourage them to adopt their (as presumably sanctioned by their deity) way of life. Therefore, an exemplary life combined with extoling the virtues of

Christianity were considered necessary to bring these new peoples to the same belief system that was, for the Christians, unquestionably and self-evidently superior.

However, if we recall the sentiment that temporal rulers were also considered spiritual leaders and rulers, then Indigenous lack of acquiescence to submission could be considered a pagan act of hostility toward the spiritual right to rule as well. It does not seem to have entered anyone's mind that the Indigenous peoples may have considered *their* belief system and practices as superior, since they had served them well for time immemorial. The Jesuit missionaries fully understood how important it was for themselves that they be able to identify themselves as part of their group (The Jesuit Order, Christianity). Without that identification, (should they be excommunicated), they knew they would be lost and alone.<sup>91</sup> For those whom they wished to convert from the established Indigenous belief systems, they would have attempted to instill the fear of being lost and alone as well. In order to be successful, the Jesuits attempted to establish a new sense of community based on their own values and belief system, where converts could feel the same sense of belonging that they had in their original communities and their original belief systems. The eventual establishment of the initial four "reductions" (reserves) would seem to be an attempt by missionaries to address this concern and amplify their success rate among Indigenous peoples by giving them a new sense of community.

If one argues (see above) that The Seven Nations is evidence of their conversion to Christianity and of their new sense of community, then it could be said that the attempt was a successful one. It seems that the Jesuits attempted to succeed: "not so much in convincing people of the vileness of the established order as in demonstrating its helpless incompetence."<sup>92</sup> This they attempted to do by providing the people with a new sense of community to cope with the

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<sup>91</sup> Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer* (Time Incorporated, 1963), 66.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* 149.

new reality (French colonial presence) they were faced with. On the other hand, they may have succeeded in assisting the people to re-imagine and re-constitute their Indigeneity in a way that used their traditional spirituality and methods to deal with the new reality they were facing, thereby retaining their traditional sense of belonging.

With the formation of the “reductions” or reserves, we have the beginning of the policy of “subjecting” of the Indigenous peoples, not just to ecclesiastical rule, but to a new political rule as well. Although there may have been Indigenous participation in the governance of these “reductions,” there would have been a great deal of oversight on the part of the governing authorities of New France. Any economic pursuits undertaken by the Indigenous people would have to be sanctioned by the governing authorities (Christian Princes), since they would determine which pursuits would best suit the needs of the French populace and commerce of the time. So, no matter if the “Seven Nations” was an association of Indigenous people converted to Christianity, or if it was an Indigenous association employing traditional ways of coping with a new reality, it was a tool that embodied a premise of Christian spiritual superiority used for the spiritual and political domination of the people.

There is a wealth of material available concerning Spanish presence in the South of Turtle Island (Mexico), beginning in the early 1500’s. Sixtus IV had, in 1498 issued “*Exigit Sinceras Divotionis Affectus*” the encyclical granting to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain the right to formally apprehend, hold trials, and execute “heretics” (The Spanish Inquisition), thereby giving temporal rulers the right to act in the realm of spiritual matters as well. Previously, in the encyclical “*Aeterni Regis*” of 1491, Sixtus had confirmed the right to enslave people who had not converted to Christianity.<sup>93</sup> This was the backdrop to the initial Spanish presence on Turtle

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<sup>93</sup> <https://worldhistoryproject.org/1471/8/9/francesco-della-rovere-sixtus-iv-elected-pope>.

Island. Just behind the Spanish “conquerors” (by a few years), came the Franciscans working to convert to Christianity a people who had been victims of conquest and traumatised by the militancy of the Spanish. Having been forced to submit to the temporal (with its nuanced spiritual) rule, the people were now to accept their conquest and all that it entailed as the will of the conquering peoples’ spiritual representatives as well.

On the West side of Turtle Island, Friendly Cove, or Nootka, was named by Captain James Cook on his voyage in 1778, presumably because he misunderstood the local people who were attempting to guide him by repeating “itchme nutka” (go around).<sup>94</sup> The brief Spanish presence in this area (along with missionaries) serves to emphasise that the process of “converting” Indigenous peoples to Christianity was premised on the ability to convince them to settle permanently in one place. Santa Cruz de Nutka, adjacent to their fort, Fort San Miguel, was a Spanish settlement at Yuquot (Nootka) on Mowachaht-Muchalaht territory from 1789 to 1794. It was to guard Spanish claims to sovereignty of the area, not to conquer, settle or colonize, because Spain lacked the resources for such an endeavor and because very few felt that there was anything in the area that would merit the effort (no gold). The Spanish withdrew completely by 1796 as part of their agreement with Britain to end hostilities over claims to the territory, leaving it a “free trade” zone for British, Spanish, and American traders.

In that short time, however, some interesting aspects of life among the Mowachaht-Muchalaht people of the area, and their interaction with the Spanish soldiers and missionaries were reported. To begin with, there seems to be an undercurrent of suspicion and wariness on the part of the Spanish, probably due to the large number of Indigenous peoples in comparison to the small garrison that was given the responsibility for maintaining a Spanish presence in the area.

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<sup>94</sup> [vancouverisland.com/plan-your-trip/regions-and-towns/vancouver-island-bc-islands/yuquot-friendly-cove/](http://vancouverisland.com/plan-your-trip/regions-and-towns/vancouver-island-bc-islands/yuquot-friendly-cove/) last accessed February 4, 2019.

As well, Spanish experiences with Indigenous peoples in southern areas of Turtle Island were not a dim memory from centuries past, but vividly remembered as lessons from history, presumably by both peoples involved at Santa Cruz de Nutka.

Since the Jesuits had been expelled from Spain and all Spanish territories by Charles III in 1767, they were not the missionaries to the people of Yuqot. Missionary activity there was under the auspices of the Franciscans, who had proven their capability in Spain's southern possessions on Turtle Island. They had developed what they felt was a most expeditious means of converting Indigenous people to Christianity. The Franciscan method, employed and developed in their Spanish missions to the South, was to encourage Indigenous people to settle in one place and abandon their practice of moving from area to area as seasons and necessities of life dictated. Unlike the Jesuits, who would travel to where Indigenous peoples were, the Franciscans preferred that the people settle around the Spanish forts and settlements, where they, the Franciscans, could easily interact with them on a regular basis.

To illustrate, the friars of the Colegio de San Fernando of Mexico City enjoyed extensive success in the northern Mexican frontier. They had:

developed a pattern or method for the conversion and civilization of nomadic Indians that had at its core the settlement of villages and creation of an agricultural economy. It was essential to teach the Indians devotion to the soil and to accustom them to the routine of daily labour. Every aspect of life from dawn to dark was controlled by the missionary, who had to maintain absolute control over his neophytes. Certain conditions were essential before the Franciscans felt that a mission could succeed — there must be a good climate, potable water, building materials and pasture lands. Most important of all, however, there had to be an adequate source of agricultural land suitable for vegetables and grain. Without land there could be no harvest, and without a harvest the Indians could not be controlled and kept in the mission.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Christon H. Archer, *Retreat from the North: Spain's Withdrawal From Nootka Sound, 1793-1795* (B.C. Studies, no. 37, Spring 1978), 21.

These “essential conditions” were decidedly lacking at Yuqot. The area was, and still is, heavily forested, beneath which the land *might* be arable between the rocks and cliffs. There are some natural meadows presumably well suited for agriculture or pastoral activities, but nothing close to what the Franciscans envisioned as necessary. In addition, remember that Yuqot, translated into English is “where the wind blows in all directions.” Consider also that fact that it can rain incessantly for days and even months on end, and you can easily understand the Franciscans’ lack of success in their missionary activities.

The Indigenous Peoples of the area moved easily and readily from the coastal waters of Yuqot, where fish were an abundant staple of their diet and plentiful during the summer, to areas inland where hunting provided another source of nutrition in the winter, with all the bounty of the forest’s plentiful supply of edible plants and mushrooms available when in season. But they were not nomadic in the customary sense of the word. Their villages were often quite large, especially their “summer homes,” with as many as 1500 people living in a village like Yuqot. There, they harvested the bounty from the sea to be preserved for future use, traded, or held potlaches hosted by a high-ranking member. They also gathered raw material and manufactured goods from the resources available in that area. While the Spanish were struggling to survive their tenuous foothold on the coast during the winter and complaining incessantly about the climate,<sup>96</sup> the Mowachaht-Muchalaht, were warm and dry inland or on the opposite coast of the island, in smaller villages that were best suited to their winter lifestyle.

As a result:

The Franciscans settled back to minister to the garrison and satisfied their Indian mission by purchasing children who were brought for sale. Like many other observers, they believed that they were saving the children from sacrifice and cannibalism.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 21.

In March 1795, there were reported to have been twenty-eight Indigenous children in the Spanish settlement.<sup>98</sup> In most cases, these children were “purchased” (according to the Spanish) by trading foodstuffs in times of scarcity among the people, or by trading much-needed and much-sought after articles that had become, by virtue of Spanish influence, a necessity for survival for the Indigenous people. Indications are that these children were removed to southern Spanish settlements and subsequently raised as the children of their Spanish purchasers<sup>99</sup> or by Spanish families in the southern colonies.

There was a short-lived hope that some missionary activity might be possible in 1795. In March of that year, many Indigenous people in succession approached the Spanish commander, Saavedra, asking if they could be permitted to live adjacent to the fort.<sup>100</sup> The Spanish (and the Franciscans) were thrilled at the prospect, and a little wary as well, because the Indigenous people, while always outnumbering the few Spanish in the environs of the fort, now swelled to many times their normal number. It was a rather interesting scenario, with the Spanish welcoming the chiefs and their people, but persuading them to settle in areas that were well within range of the fort’s canon.

There were enough feasts given in honour of the Indigenous people that the fort’s food supply was radically diminished, and the garrison was on strict food rationing by the time supplies arrived on June 4<sup>th</sup>. Chief Maquinna<sup>101</sup> had built a longhouse and occupied it on April 8, raising Spanish hopes that this might become a permanent settlement (as it had been before the Spanish set up their fort). The Franciscans hoped that the people might yet be reached and

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 27f.

<sup>101</sup> Although “Maquinna” is used as a surname in much of the literature, and even today, there are some indications that this is a name/title that was/is associated with a ranking chief, assumed when a man is raised to the position as head of the settlement, or chief, although, given the societal practices, it could well be a surname too.

brought under Spanish religious and political authority, but those hopes were short-lived. It seems that Maquinna, the other chiefs, and their people, had wanted to settle near the fort and their Spanish “friends” simply because they had heard rumours that another powerful chief, a Clayoquot, armed with muskets and canon purchased from an American, had designs on their eradication, or at least decimation, by armoured warfare.

Shortly after Maquinna’s house had been built and he and his rather extended family moved into it, he was the recipient of gifts from Wickananish, the chief he was afraid would attack him and his people. The gifts and the gift bearers were a means of indicating that there had been a misunderstanding due to a malicious rumor apparently spread by another band, the Hesquiat, and that Wickananish did not have the ill feelings or murderous intent that the Hasquiat had attributed to him. Within a few days, Maquinna and all his people had moved to their winter villages. With that, the prospect of a permanent settlement that the Franciscans could work with were dashed, and they returned to providing any spiritual guidance and services that the Spanish of the fort seemed to require, and to the afore-mentioned practice of “purchasing” children whenever the occasion arose. When the Spanish finally abandoned the settlement, almost every vestige of it was gone before the final ship left the harbour, having been dismantled by the Indigenous people for the building materials. Soon after, Maquinna’s people had reclaimed the site and rebuilt their village.

If John Jewitt’s account<sup>102</sup> of his life in the village is any indication, life had substantially returned to the way it had been before the Spanish attempted to demonstrate their sovereignty over the area. In less than ten years after they left, Yuqot had again become a major Mowachaht-Muchalaht village, frequented by ships of many nations who came to trade. The people of Yuqot

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<sup>102</sup> John R Jewitt, *White Slaves of Maquinna: John R. Jewitt's Narrative of Capture and Confinement at Nootka*, (Heritage House, Surrey, B.C, 2000).

strengthened their previously held role of facilitators, amassing quantities of goods from neighbouring peoples, then trading with whatever ship happened to arrive at their harbour. And, while some of the Spanish names remained in the geography of the region, nothing of the Franciscan mission efforts, whatever they were, seem to have. As for the children who were “purchased” by Franciscans and others, and removed to Spanish territories to the South, my research to this point has not been able to locate any further mention of them.

The English presence on Turtle Island was permanently established at the present-day site of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, when a fort was built there. The Spanish had lain claim to the territory, so it is possible that the English felt they needed a fort to defend themselves in the event of Spanish attempts to cement their claim to the territory, but this may have been a ruse to hide their intentions of establishing a permanent settlement from the local people and their chief, Powhatan. “John Smith and his friends wrote that the Powhatan were told various tales: the English were refugees from Spanish aggression, they were just curious visitors, and so forth.”<sup>103</sup> However, it seems that Powhatan and his people were not as gullible as the English assumed, and realised at the outset what was happening. And the English, far from being able to assert their superiority and presence in spite of the Powhatan’s objections, found that they were constrained to rely on the largess of the Indigenous people for food supplies, since shipments of food from England were far from regular enough to supply their needs.<sup>104</sup> The archaeological evidence at the site of the fort indicates that the English were in receipt (through purchase or gifting) of venison.<sup>105</sup> The supply of food for the English was further exacerbated by climactic conditions (drought), by Indigenous protocol concerning the gifting of food and/or feasts, and by the

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<sup>103</sup> Helen C. Rountree and E. Randolph Turner, *Before and After Jamestown: Virginia’s Powhatans and Their Predecessors* (University Press of Florida, 2002), 125.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* 127.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 128.

vagrancies of English-Indigenous relations, which were at times tenuously friendly and at others out rightly hostile, as the evidence of a large number of projectiles (flint arrow heads) in the fort excavations seems to indicate.

The most well-known of the Indigenous Peoples was Pocahontas (Matoaka), chief Powhatan's daughter, probably born in 1596,<sup>106</sup> or even as late as 1598,<sup>107</sup> which would mean that she was still a young girl when the English arrived in 1607. The afore-mentioned John Smith, many years later (after 1616), recounted an incident involving himself and Pocahontas, wherein he had feared for his life while in Powhatan's camp, and it was only through Pocahontas' pleading with her father on his behalf that he was not executed. Since this incident was not recorded in his earlier account of his experiences, a great deal of speculation concerning its veracity exists. On the one hand, the incident may have occurred as Smith reported, but he originally omitted it from his letters and journals so as not to raise fear among prospective settlers. On the other hand, it may be possible that Smith misunderstood a ceremony designed to illustrate the military prowess of Powhatan's people. Or, he may have later embellished an existing account of another person's survival with Pocahontas' help and substituted his own name as a means of self-aggrandisement, assuming that the popularity of Pocahontas in England would cause his name and his reputation to appreciate if he could associate himself with her by some memorable means.

In 1613, Pocahontas was kidnapped and held as hostage as a means of negotiating an exchange for some Englishmen that Powhatan was holding captive. But the exchange never took

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<sup>106</sup> Ann Parrish, *Pocahontas*, (8/1/2017, Great Neck Publishing, Ipswich MA.)  
 URL:<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/uml.idm.oclc.org/ehost/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=f859950793eb4cfa9c4be7a88a41d229%40sessionmgr103&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=15316544&db=f5h>.  
 Last accessed February 13, 2019.

<sup>107</sup> Linwood Custalow and Angela L Daniel, *The True Story of Pocahontas: The Other Side of History* (Fulcrum Publishers, Golden, Colorado, 2007), 108.

place. Instead, Pocahontas was moved to another location under the guardianship of Reverend Alexander Whitaker. She caught the attention of John Rolfe, a 28-year-old widower, who sought permission to marry her, noting that the union would be beneficial to the future relationship of the people of Jamestown with their Indigenous neighbours. Whether Pocahontas' first husband, Kocoum, was still alive, or if any consideration of or for him was a factor in this arrangement is not known. We have no record of what Pocahontas thought when she, at approximately 18 (perhaps as young as 16) was married to the then 29-year old John Rolfe in 1614. It seems that nobody thought to ask her what she thought of being kidnapped, held against her will, and coerced into marrying someone more than ten years older than she. The marriage was however, according to existing coloniser records, blessed by the English and by Chief Powhatan alike, with Powhatan granting the newlyweds a parcel of land, and committing his people to an eight-year peace with the English following the nuptials.

Prior to this, Pocahontas had been baptised and given the Christian name Rebecca, thereby becoming the first of her people (presumably) to convert to Christianity.<sup>108</sup> Kidnapped and held captive by temporal authority, and thereby forced to submit to that authority, she was, through being held captive, coerced to accept the spiritual authority of her captives as well. Given her previous history of being among the emissaries of her people and a witness to their diplomatic endeavors on behalf of her father in maintaining a peaceful relationship between them and the new arrivals, she may have seen her baptism, marriage, and subsequent acceptance by the new arrivals as the next step in the mission she had been involved with since childhood,

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<sup>108</sup> Ann Parrish, *Pocahontas* (8/1/2017, Great Neck Publishing, Ipswich MA.)  
 URL:<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/uml.idm.oclc.org/ehost/detail/detail?vid=2&sid=f859950793eb4cfa9c4be7a88a41d229%40sessionmgr103&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtG12ZQ%3d%3d#AN=15316544&db=f5h>.  
 Last accessed February 13, 2019.

somewhat akin to the “alliance marriages” she was accustomed to in her own culture.<sup>109</sup> Her father’s response to the marriage may indicate that he saw these events in the same light. To some extent, if this was her understanding of the situation, she may have been at least partially successful considering the hiatus in hostilities that ensued for a few years thereafter. She, her husband, and their son, journeyed to England in 1616, where she enjoyed a brief notoriety until her death in 1617, poisoned, it is recorded in her people’s history,<sup>110</sup> just as she and her son were about to return to her homeland.

In all this, we can perceive a dangerous precedent being set by the English. First, submission to their temporal rule was required, even if force (abduction in Pocahontas’ case) was necessary to achieve it. After that, Indigenous people were sufficiently “civilised” as Pocahontas was, to be candidates for instruction in the finer points of Christian spirituality, with the goal that they would submit to the spiritual authority of the church as well. After that, they could expect to receive treatment as a bona fide citizen of the land. First, submit to the spiritually appointed temporal authority, then to the spiritual tenets of that authority, then (and only then) be granted citizenship, always remaining conscious of the fact that submission to the temporal authorities was as required at the end as it was at the beginning of the process if acquiescence to it was not already fully understood to be necessary as a result of spiritual conversion. Recall Henry’s and subsequent temporal monarchs’ spiritual designation as “Especial Protector and Supreme Head of the English Church and Clergy” mentioned on page 51.

The colonizers’ spiritual heritage (for they all claimed to be Christian), began with people experiencing the spiritual λόγος (logos, word) in and through Jesus of Nazareth. The only means

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<sup>109</sup> Linwood Custalow and Angela L. Daniel, *The True Story of Pocahontas: The Other Side of History* (Fulcrum Publishers, Golden, Colorado, 2007), 4 & 5.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. 83ff.

they could envision to fulfill their longing for relief from their repressive and oppressive life under foreign rule was divine intervention, since their cultural narratives indicated that this had happened in the past. Perhaps because the spiritual word they experienced (and the experience itself) was such a powerful one, they very quickly deified the bearer of the spiritual word, and began to focus primarily on him, thereby detracting from the spiritual word he had communicated to them. *He* became the embodiment of the new life they were longing for, instead of the spiritual word that he had communicated to them. Because he was now viewed as the embodiment of their deity, worshiping and subjecting themselves to him followed. Experiencing him, not the word he had communicated, became their focus. The word, then, over time, became something that could be analyzed, dissected, and contemplated in an academic manner, as opposed to being experienced. A theocracy became the epitome of desired existence, with the goal of subjecting everyone and everything to a deified Jesus of Nazareth once they were subjected to the divinely appointed temporal and spiritual leaders, ideally, one leader (either a pope or a monarch) who was divinely appointed to hold both positions. So adamant were they that worshiping and ultimate subjection of themselves to Jesus was the goal of their mission, that subsequent reminders that their focus should be on experiencing and living the spiritual word were often met with derision, if not outright condemnation.

No matter from which “Christian” country the colonizers came, there was then a spiritual approach to the Indigenous people they encountered on Turtle Island that bespoke of the colonisers’ assumed superiority. It was their assumption that, to be “civilised,” people first must subject themselves to divinely appointed temporal rule and settle in one place. There, they could be available for instruction in the finer points of the colonizers’ spiritual approach, and subject themselves to ecclesiastical authorities as well. This spiritual education would, it was presumed,

help them to understand why, even if they had been coerced into “settling,” and forced to subject themselves to the temporal powers, this was ultimately the best thing that could have happened to them to ensure their eternal spiritual well-being. Their instruction would presumably help them understand that the spiritual right to rule that lay within the purveyance of the temporal powers was what had given those temporal powers the right to subject people to their rule, even if it necessitated coercion. If persuasion worked to bring the people into settlements and under ecclesiastical authority, they could be lauded and rewarded for their compliance. But, if persuasion didn’t work, the spiritually appointed temporal authorities were bound, by their own spirituality, to force the issue, even if it meant a wholesale slaughter of the recalcitrant (as with the peasants in Germany). For, even if in this life they refused to realise the error of their “pagan” ways, there was always the afterlife, where they would presumably be given a second chance at achieving eternal spiritual bliss.

To complicate matters for Indigenous peoples, one set of colonizers would invariably insist that their approach was valid, and that the approach of colonizers from another background wasn’t, even though they nominally spoke of the same spiritual authority as their *raison d’être* for both colonizing and proselytizing. It was not that the colonizers merely wanted to promulgate their country of origin’s temporal rule over the people they met as being the best, they also were quite convinced that their spiritual approach was the only valid one as well. What they brought with them was their own need to belong, and their solution to the need (cf. pg. 57) as well as their need to legitimize their solution by “persuading” (by whatever means they could) others to espouse that solution. It didn’t matter that the Indigenous peoples they met had their *own* solutions to that deep-seated need. It wasn’t the colonizers solution, and to allow the Indigenous people to retain theirs, would be to acknowledge the validity of other solutions, which would

have been tantamount to heresy, endangering, or even nullifying their (the colonizers') aspirations of eternal spiritual bliss. This, the colonizers were not prepared, socially, mentally, or spiritually, to do. As a result, they wrote their attitude into their laws, and retained it in their administrative and education systems. As Absolon (pg.30) indicates, its just as confusing today for anyone steeped in Indigenous approaches as it was 500 years ago.

### **CHAPTER THREE: Indigenous Pre-Contact Spiritual Precepts**

In this chapter, I examine the spiritual concepts of five Indigenous peoples at contact as gleaned from my research. These five are, in the order that I consider them, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe, the Dakota/Lakota/Nakota, the Blackfoot, and the Haida. I chose the Haudenosaunee because I have had occasion to explore their approach while at the University of Alberta. I chose the Anishinaabe because my recent attendance at a couple of Midewiwin Sweats piqued my interest. I chose the Dakota/Lakota/Nakota because I had some limited contact with people from this nation during my years at the Lutheran Seminary in Saskatoon. I chose the Blackfoot because of my limited acquaintance with this people in my childhood and years of living in and travelling around Alberta. I chose the Haida because of some limited contact while living in British Columbia, and because of my relatively recent perusal of translations of some of their narratives. As noted in my introduction, my earliest contact was with individuals of the Cree nation. However, for some reason I cannot really explain, I considered the North Saskatchewan River (to the North of where I grew up) as the demarcation line (if such a term could even be considered as valid in Indigenous culture) between the Cree and Blackfoot. If anything, I lived so close to “The Hills Where Peace Was Made” that I considered myself on the Blackfoot side of those hills. I do, however, refer to Cree reclaiming of traditional spiritual values when I mention Chief Bob Smallboy and Chief John Snow in chapter five. In addition, many Cree acquaintances were instrumental in fostering a better understanding of Indigenous culture and belief systems, and I mention them throughout this thesis.

#### **Haudenosaunee**

As noted previously, it seems that the colonisers felt no need to record Pocahontas’ thoughts or feelings concerning her marriage to John Rolfe. There *may* be room for conjecture

that she succumbed to “Stockholm Syndrome”<sup>111</sup> while in captivity, subsequently choosing her own future through Christian baptism and marriage, leaving her husband (who she didn’t know had been murdered), father, and family behind. The oral history of her people,<sup>112</sup> however, indicates that she was coerced into baptism and subsequent marriage by her captors, at one point suffering such severe depression that her captors requested that someone from her family be sent to attend her.<sup>113</sup> There is also a possibility that she may have been familiar with the concept of being taken hostage and held pending a subsequent exchange of hostages, since this practise was known among her people. However, raping captive women was not tolerated in her society, and the disclosure to her sister (who had been sent to care for her in her) that she had been raped, perhaps repeatedly, and was pregnant, is probably the underlying contributor to her depression.<sup>114</sup> Her son, Thomas, was born before her marriage to Rolfe. It seems unclear whether Rolfe was her son’s father and his conception was from their consensual liaison before they were married, or if she became pregnant by being raped (either by Rolf or someone else). It seems clear that she felt coerced into marrying Rolfe, but she may have also rationalised this as being like marriages of alliance known among her people,<sup>115</sup> and common among European monarchy as well. If Pocahontas, despite all that she had endured, did consider this a marriage of alliance, she was far stronger than she is usually given credit for being, and her people were certainly as capable in the arts of diplomacy and foreign relations as the Europeans they encountered on the shores of Turtle Island, for she demonstrated exceptional courage, personal strength, and

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<sup>111</sup> A term first used after a 1973 bank robbery in Stockholm, Sweden, when the four hostages held by the bank robbers subsequently refused to testify against them, and even defended the bank robbers, presumably because they (the hostages) had formed a bond with their captors.

<sup>112</sup> Dr. Linwood (Little Bear) Custalow & Angela L. Daniel (Silver Star), *The True Story of Pocahontas: The Other Side of History* (Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado, 2007).

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 62.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 62&63.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 5.

foresight. The Haudenosaunee had lived by The Great Law of Peace (as acknowledged by the English at contact), for at least two hundred years, so perhaps they were even more practised in the arts of diplomacy than the English, who seemed embroiled in conflicts both at home and abroad almost incessantly before, during, and after contact.

Pope Innocent II (1130-1143) adopted as his motto: “Adjuva nos, Deus salutaris noster”: “Help us, O God of our salvation,” (Psalm 78:9 Vulgate, Psalm 79:9, New American Standard Translation). It wasn’t, however, *God* who helped him and his army defeat the armed forces of his rival, Anacletus II, who was ensconced in Rome while Innocent II was either at his family’s estate in Trastevere or dependent on the hospitality of Louis VI of France. Innocent II’s help came from Lothair of Germany and his troops, who, together with Innocent’s army, secured Rome and his place in St. Peters during 1137 and 1138. Innocent wrote:

If the sacred authority of the popes and the imperial power are imbued with mutual love, we must thank God in all humility, since then only can peace and harmony exist among Christian peoples. For there is nothing so sublime as the papacy, nor so exalted as the imperial throne.<sup>116</sup>

The “sublime” papacy and the “exalted” imperial throne, the spiritual and the temporal powers, existing and working in harmony to bring peace. A harbinger of the concept that both are imbued with divine authority, each one doing its part to subject, rule, and thereby bring harmony to the people. That was Europe in mid twelfth century. What of Turtle Island?

After a lengthy process of discussion and deliberation (five years, or five generations?) the League of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederation), the vision of Deganawida and Haiwnwatha (with the powerful assistance and support of Jigonsaseh, the head clan mother) was brought to fruition, when The Great Law was finally ratified by the Seneca, the last “hold out”

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<sup>116</sup> [www.newadvent.org/cathen08012a.html](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen08012a.html) last accessed February 25, 2019.

nation, on the afternoon of August 31, 1142,<sup>117</sup> according to a recent analysis that gives full credence to the people's historical memory. A.C. Parker suggests: "the formation of the League of the Five Nations...took place about the year 1300."<sup>118</sup> In *The Jesuit Relations* from 1654, we read that a "captain" of the "Anniehronnon Iroquois states: "We, the five Iroquois Nations, compose but one cabin; we maintain but one fire; and we have, from time immemorial, dwelt under one and the same roof."<sup>119</sup> The author comments on this assertion by declaring: "In fact, from earliest times, these five Iroquois Nations have been called in their own language, which is Huron, *Hotinnonchiendi*, - that is, the completed Cabin, as if to express that they constituted but one family."<sup>120</sup>

Discussions concerning the Haudenosaunee generally tend to concern themselves with an analysis of its social and political manifestations. Not much has been written concerning the fact that it seems to have been a *spiritual* response to a time when inter-tribal relations had deteriorated to the point where they were governed by animosity and violence. In the First Epoch,<sup>121</sup> that of the Sky World, peace and harmony were given to the people, along with the gift of the "three sisters," corn, beans, and squash, as their staple source of sustenance, augmented by venison brought home by the hunters. With crops well-guarded (as was the village) by the warriors, along with secure storage for the harvested crops, the people had a stable and dependable source of food. There was no need to compete with one another for whatever the

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<sup>117</sup> Barbara A. Mann and Jerry L. Fields, *A Sign in the Sky: Dating the League of the Haudenosaunee* (American Indian Culture and Research Journal 21:2 (1997) UCLA American Indian Studies Center Publications), 105-163.

<sup>118</sup> A.C. Parker, *The Constitution OF The Five Nations or The Iroquois Book Of The Great Law* (New York State Museum Bulletin, Albany, N.Y., No. 184, April 1, 1916, reprinted by Iroqrafts Ltd. Ohsweken, Ontario, Canada, 1991), 61.

<sup>119</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites (Editor), *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610-1791* (Pageant Book Company, New York, 1959), 87.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Bruce Elliot Johansen, & Barbara Alice Mann, (Editors), *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee Iroquois Confederacy* (Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut & London, 2000), 83ff..

hunt would bring them, living a “feast or famine” existence that depended on the vagrancies of the hunt and, in large part, the weather. Venison (and other game) could be taken, assuredly, and the hunt retained its place of importance in the people’s diet, as did wild berries taken in season. But, since the hunt was not the *only* source of sustenance, serving instead to augment the staples of the “three sisters,” it, and the territory in which it took place, could be shared, and need not be as jealously guarded against incursion by another tribe or band of the confederacy.

After the First Epoch, in the time just before the establishment of the Great Law of Peace, it seems that the idea of the “warrior” being the guardian, rather than the hero of armed sorties into other territories and the sole provider of sustenance for the people, fell out of favor with at least one person, Adodarhoh, a deformed, evil man.<sup>122</sup> Through persuasion, coercion, and sheer terror, he gained enough of a following to disrupt the peaceful existence of the people and sow the seeds of animosity and warfare, in opposition to the seeds of the “three sisters” which both brought, and symbolized, peace and harmony.

Then there appeared Dekanawida, of the Wyandots (Huron) born, according to one version, to a virgin.<sup>123</sup> His grandmother instantly disliked him because of her daughter’s refusal to name his father and the disgrace that refusal would bring to the family. Miraculously, despite his grandmothers three attempts to drown the infant, Dekanawida survived. The narrative of his virgin birth is, by some, considered an alteration of the narrative as influenced by contact with Christian missionaries. Primarily based on the moral judgements of the Jesuits, the enduring portrayal of the people as promiscuous and with little or no value placed on a woman’s virginity seems to continue to be quite pervasive. Presumably based on the moral judgements of the

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<sup>122</sup> A.C Parker, *The Constitution Of The Five Nations or The Iroquois Book Of The Great Law* (New York State Museum Bulletin, Albany, New York, No. 184, April 1, 1916, reprinted by Iroqrafts Ltd. Ohsweken, Ontario, Canada, 1991), 17.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* 14.

people contained in the journals of missionaries (Jesuit Relations), a fictionalised Jesuit missionary among the people can observe that, in a lodge constructed for shelter of many people and families: “The fetid smell of the Savages’ breath lay like a low cloud in the confined space, and gradually he became aware of the giggles as young girls and boys crawled about in search of each other.”<sup>124</sup> However, as this same fictionalised account seems to indicate, this noted promiscuity may have been due to the influence and/or sexual appetites of the French and mixed race *coureur du bois* and the alcohol they dispensed, rather than being part of the traditional lifestyle of the people they traded with. In the case of Dekanawida it seems that the narrative addresses the question by means of noting that he survived three attempts by his grandmother to end his life, thereby suggesting that he was, indeed, someone quite different than any other child born to the people.

“The old ones always said that when there was much trouble, a messenger would come from the home of the Creator to help the people.”<sup>125</sup> “It is said that during his (Dekanawida’s) birth, there were very unusual circumstances that were a sign to the *Onkwehonwe* that this baby was special and had special spiritual powers.”<sup>126</sup> It seems, however, that the Wyandots “had no love for such a man” for: “Their hearts were bitter against a man who loved not war better than all things.”<sup>127</sup> It seems nothing much had changed over the years, since the animosity of the Hurons to the Haudenosaunee (and vice versa) was a determining factor in alliances and relationships between Indigenous nations and the newcomers to Turtle Island. It even affected the newcomers themselves, who often incurred the wrath of one or the other Indigenous peoples

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<sup>124</sup> Brian Moore, *Black Robe* (Penguin Books, 1987), 39&40.

<sup>125</sup> Bruce Elliot Johansen & Barbara Alice Mann (Editors), *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee Iroquois Confederacy* (Greenwood Press, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 2000), 245.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* (Parentheses mine for clarification).

<sup>127</sup> A.C. Parker, *The Constitution Of The Five Nations or The Iroquois Book Of The Great Law* (New York State Museum Bulletin, Albany, New York, No. 184, April 1, 1916, reprinted by Iroqrafts Ltd. Ohsweken, Ontario, Canada, 1991), 14.

by forming friendships and alliances with the opposing nation. Although Dekanawida, “was always honest and always told what he believed was right, nevertheless he was a peculiar man and his people did not understand him.”<sup>128</sup>

“A peculiar man” indeed. For, upon his first encounter with another tribe, the Flints, Dekanawidah describes himself as being from “Ka-ka-na-yenh,” born of a virgin mother, who dreamed that he should be named such, and that no other should ever have the same name. He stated that he had come because:

The Great Creator from whom we all are descended sent me to establish the Great Peace among you. No longer shall you kill one another, and nations shall cease warring upon each other. Such things are entirely evil and he, your Maker, forbids it. Peace and comfort are better than war and misery for a nation’s welfare.<sup>129</sup>

Proof of his claim was demanded, and once Dekanawida supplied it in miraculous fashion (a resurrection), the Flints considered him as capable as he had indicated he was of accomplishing his appointed mission of peace among the tribes.<sup>130</sup> I will have reason to return to Dekanawida and his position among the people he came or was sent to later, but it bears noting here that the narratives, while certainly indicating their appreciation of the man, do not indicate that he, or any of those who accepted his message, had any thought that he should be worshipped and venerated as divine, even though circumstances surrounding his birth and life indicate that he was certainly not an “average” person.

Initially, Dekanawida seems to have been content to limit his mission to the Flint people. It would take another, Ayonhwatha (also Hayonwhatha), working as his assistant (younger brother) to accomplish the mission. Ayonhwatha had been manipulated by “a great dreamer” of the Onondaga, whose evil machinations caused him to leave his people in abject sorrow,

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 16.

disillusionment, and despair. Meeting Dekanawida, Hayonwhatha was consoled in his grief and returned to a rational state of mind. Subsequently, Dekanawida demonstrated that the true establishment of peace came from the ability to *transform* the evil Adodarho, rather than *defeat* him, as Ayonhwatha, had unsuccessfully attempted previously.<sup>131</sup>

But before Hayonhwatha could be of assistance in establishing the peace that was Dekanawida's mission, he (Hayonhwatha) needed to deal with the untimely and tragic death of his daughters. He is quoted as saying:

That person skilled in sorcery, Osinoh, has destroyed my family of seven daughters. It was truly a great calamity and I am now very miserable. My sorrow and my rage have been bitter. I can only rove about since now I have cast myself away from my people. I am only a wanderer. I split the heavens when I went away from my house and my nation.<sup>132</sup>

It had become Hayonhwatha's custom to set up two vertical poles, joined by a horizontal pole on top, and to hang from the horizontal pole three strings of wampum shells whenever he made camp. It was his intention that:

If I should see any one in deep grief I would remove these shells from this pole and console him. If what has befallen me should happen to them I would take down the three shell strings from the upright pole and I would address them, and I would console them because they would be covered by heavy darkness.<sup>133</sup>

However, to become the emissary of peace that Dekanawida envisioned he could be, Hayonhwatha needed to realise that, although he had made an admirable beginning in addressing and dealing with his sorrow and all the other emotions he felt concerning the death of his daughters, he had not yet fully completed the task. He had much further to go before he could assume leadership in a movement for peace. His custom of displaying the three strings of shells prominently at his camp, it could be argued, was not just his invitation to anyone who also felt

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 16-28.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

grief to approach him, but also an indication that he felt the need to display the grief he had yet to completely deal with. By putting his grief on display, it can be argued that he was issuing a call (cry) for help in dealing with it. Dekanawida's question: "Have you no more shell strings on your pole?,"<sup>134</sup> followed by his (Dekanawida's) addition of more strings, subsequently grouping them in "bunches,"<sup>135</sup> indicates that the healing process, while admirably begun by Hayonhwatha on his own, was far lengthier and more involved than Hayonhwatha envisioned. More counselling was required if he was to truly deal with his grief and all the associated emotions of the tragic death of his daughters. Then, and only then, would he be ready to perform the task that Dekanawida had in mind for him.

Hayonhwatha had fallen prey to the work of the "Faceless One," "The Great Destroyer," who is constantly present and determined to bring calamity, and even death, to a person. On his own, he had presumably begun to deal with wiping the tears from his eyes, restoring his ability to hear properly again, and restoring his ability to speak without choking on his grief.<sup>136</sup> But, in spite of the invitation implied by the three wampum strings displayed prominently at his camp, nobody had yet responded to him by saying:

It is that, therefore, that this present day we, thou and I, seat ourselves side by side, and that, it is here in the very midst of very many tears (I say)...we wipe away the tears from thy face...Now, therefore, in peace of mind, thou wilt continue to look around thyself, enjoying again the light of day." Each of the steps in the process is competed with the phrase: "Now, therefore, do thou know...that now the Word of thy Adon'ni is on its way hence."<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>136</sup> J.N.B. Hewitt, *The Requickenng Address of the Iroquois Condolence Council* (Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences, Vol. 34 No.3, March 15, 1944), 65-85.

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/39690197#page/87/mode/1up>, Last accessed March 29, 2019.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 70.

Note the absence of any form of coercion on the part of Dedanawida in this process. He didn't hold the mission he had in mind for Hayonhwatha in front of him, and then insist that he (Hayonhwatha) submit himself to a training process so that he could become fit for it. Instead, Dedanawida approached Hayonhwatha with empathy and words of condolence and encouragement, noting and appreciating his progress, and inviting him to journey further along, to the point where he had sufficiently dealt with his personal issues so that he could comfortably use his experiences (grief, abject depression, rage, desire for revenge, etc.) as touchstones (or beads) for the empathy and "grief counselling" he was therefore now capable and competent enough to offer to others. The strings of beads, bunched together and used as part of the process by Dekanawida and Hayonhwatha, thereby becomes the first "wampum belt" (used as a mnemonic device) the "condolences,"<sup>138</sup> establishing The Great Law of Peace and the Confederation firmly upon the grounds of empathy and the invitation to journey on together.

This is a radical shift from the suspicious and antagonistic attitudes heretofore governing interpersonal and inter-tribal relationships. Instead of being wary of another person as a potential threat and enemy, they are approached as a brother or sister who has experienced the vagrancies of human existence and has suffered from those experiences. Whether it be the traumatic loss of a child, a sibling, a parent, grandparent, a close relative, a close friend, or even the sense of loss that accompanies reminiscences of the Fist Epoch, there is a shared experience of loss known to all people, along with shared emotions that accompany that experience. That shared experience became the point of interaction that the empathetic approach of Dekanawida utilised, getting beneath the manifestations of the emotion to identify and deal with the emotion itself and address the negative impact the emotion can have on people's lives.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 110-113.

Furthermore, that shared experience of loss need not necessarily be one of the death of someone close, since, it can be noted, Dekanawida's approach to Hayonhwatha came at a time, not when he was grieving over the loss of his daughters (he thought he had dealt with that), but over the prospect that the people he had spoken to had either not understood his message of peace (re-embracing the First Epoch), or had chosen to ignore it or reject it. "It is useless, for the people only boast what they will do, saying 'I would do this way,' but they do nothing at all."<sup>139</sup> So, lasting peace is established upon the premise of empathy and understanding, not a "law" that is observed in order to avoid punishment.

The Peacemaker was bringing the Good Message, and new understanding that a powerful spiritual act was needed as the threshold of the law. People would not be prepared to accept his message unless their minds were first made good again. ... The path of restoring the rational mind was a deliberate, structured, deeply caring and compassionate ceremony, a ritual of both a spiritual and legal character.<sup>140</sup>

Therefore, it was not a war song (or cry) that straightened the twisted body (and mind) of the chief opponent and obstacle to peace, Adodarhoh, but the Peace Hymn (Song), properly intoned and vocalised, coupled with the reassuring touch of Dekanawida.<sup>141</sup> If Dekanawida was able, by touching (a euphemism for empathy felt and expressed) Adodarhoh, to ascertain Adodarhoh's inherent strength and life, then he could assist him (as he had Hayonhwatha) in calling upon his inner strength to overcome and deal with the twisted and deformed aspects of his thoughts and emotions that blocked his road to peaceful coexistence with others. The miracle of healing, therefore, rests upon the empathetic touching, coupled by the reassuring power the song of peace provides. So, even in the face of the fiercest and most powerful opposition, force is *not* to be met

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>140</sup> Kaanesenh Paul Williams, *Kayanerenko':wa: The Great Law of Peace* (University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 201.

<sup>141</sup> A.C. Parker, *The Constitution of the Five Nations or the Iroquois Book of the Great Law* (New York State Museum Bulletin, Albany New York, No. 184, April 1, 1916, reprinted by: Iroqrafts Ltd. Oswegen, Ontario, Canada, 1991), 28.

with force (at least, not in the first instance),<sup>142</sup> but with an attempt to reach out in empathy and understanding to establish a new relationship.

In the Condolence Ceremony:

The Three Bare Words...recognize people's humanity; they acknowledge their losses, and that the losses have been traumatic; and they are the doorway to the conversation that is necessary to achieve peace.<sup>143</sup>

A new relationship is thereby formed, based on empathy for another who, for whatever reason and by whatever agency, has experienced and known loss and suffering. In the interaction that is part of the condolences, compassion is expressed, mutual ground in suffering is found, and a relationship grows from compassion and empathy to understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of one another through continued conversation, sharing, and understanding. "Compassion is indeed the threshold of the Great Law of Peace."<sup>144</sup> In fact, "law" is a bit of a misnomer, since it isn't a "law" in the judicial sense of the term, but the recognition of a means of existence that is determined by relationships, predicated by mutual compassion and empathy. Furthermore:

By staying focused on the message of peace and the impending peace itself, rather than upon the messenger, the Haudenosaunee avoided becoming adherents to a messianic religion. Instead, the *Kaynerenko':wa*, and not its bringer, became The Way.<sup>145</sup>

The new possibilities for peace and harmony, then, were the incumbent responsibility of everyone within the society, something they could, and would, realize through the power and energy of their own minds-made-right, as each one was touched by another whose mind has been made right. All that was necessary was for one person to understand the concept and begin the process in his compassionate and empathetic encounters with all those he met. The miracle of

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 52ff.

<sup>143</sup> Kaanesenh Paul Williams, *Kaynerenko':wa: The Great Law of Peace* (University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 205.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 202.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. 180.

peace was, therefore, not in the *messenger* of peace, but in the *experience* of peace within one's self: an internal, spiritual awakening. Through this approach, everyone was a potential messenger of peace in the ever-expanding circle of relationships between people whose minds had been made right as they were touched by another in compassion and empathy. Truly, as time progressed and the circle grew to include everyone, the people did become the people of one cabin or lodge.

To be sure, the temptation to a selfish individualism devoid of compassion and empathy was always an on-going threat to the peace that was supposed to be the shared existence of all the people. Ceremonies, counsels, and personal intervention based on compassion and empathy, all designed to maintain and restore a right mind, were part of the on-going life of the people. Note, that in the Condolence Ceremony, it is not only implied, but stated that the calamity brought to bear on one member of the community is perceived as an attempt to deliver a death-blow to the entire communities' cohesiveness.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, it is not only in the community's best interests to counter that blow with its empathetical and understanding approach, but its spiritual duty and prerogative as well. For, to have one person hurting and not in their right mind, filled with grief, self-pity, and thoughts of revenge, is to have the disharmony that erodes peaceful co-existence within the community. If a person persisted and insisted on a rugged individualistic approach, spurning and stubbornly resisting all efforts to bring them back into the community, drastic measures might be called for, lest others' minds became infected with the same un-right mind and attitude. However, that was only after multiple attempts had been made to reach out to that person in gentleness, kindness, and empathy, fully respecting their right to

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<sup>146</sup> J.N.B. Hewitt, *The Requicking Address of the Iroquois Condolence Council* (Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences, Vol. 34 No.3, March 15, 1944), 70.  
<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/39690197#page/87/mode/1up>. Last accessed March 29, 2019.

feel as they did, while gently leading them back into the community. The gift of peace was, therefore, as much a spiritual gift to the people as the gift of the three sisters. Festivals of thanksgiving and appreciation concerning these (and other) gifts to the people were part of their cycle of life. The focus was on guarding, caring for, and nurturing these gifts, whether they be physical in the case of the fields wherein the three sisters grew, or emotional and spiritual, as in the case of the gift of peace that resided within the being of every individual in the community.

Unfortunately, the arrival of the persuasive and self-interested people from Europe on the shores of Turtle Island, along with their individualistic approach to spiritual well-being, gradually eroded the sense of community and peace that the Haudenosaunee had set their sights on centuries before. For, even though the spiritual leaders of the new people seemed to laud the concern the Haudenosaunee had for each other's spiritual welfare, they also insisted that spiritual welfare was ultimately a personal concern, governed, not by one's relationship to others, but to the Christian messiah. Even then, however, it seems that the Haudenosaunee concern for each other moved them to encourage others of their community to embrace this new right mind (i.e. Christian) approach that some of them had embraced. They therefore became missionaries to people of their own community. In this way, the traditional approach became the means through which it was eroded by the incursion of Christianity.

### **Anishinaabe**

This eurocentrism did not only affect the European ability to understand and appreciate the Haudenosaunee. While some euro-centrist scholars *did* recognize that the Great Law of Peace pre-dated European contact, even if only by less than a century, they tended to insist that the spiritual premises of the Anishinaabe (Ojibway), on the other hand, as expressed by The Grand Medicine Society (Midewiwin), *must be* a post-contact phenomenon. Yet, when, in the late

1800's, ethnologists began to seriously study the Society,<sup>147</sup> it was noted that “the Ojibwa first had knowledge of the whites in 1612,”<sup>148</sup> which is quite plausible when one looks at a map of Turtle Island and notes that there are few substantial navigable waterways (the common mode of transportation for early colonisers) in the area between Lake Superior and Lake Michigan and the Red River.

Furthermore:

In the reports of early travelers and missionaries no special mention is made of the Midē', the Jes'sakkīd', or the Wābēnō', but the term sorcerer or juggler is generally employed to designate that class of persons who professed the power of prophecy, and who practiced incantation and administered medicinal preparations. Constant reference is made to the opposition of these personages to the introduction of Christianity. In the light of recent investigation the cause of this antagonism is seen to lie in the fact that the traditions of Indian genesis and cosmogony and the ritual of initiation into the Society of the Midē' constitute what is to them a religion, even more powerful and impressive than the Christian religion is to the average civilized man.<sup>149</sup>

The opposition among the Anishinaabe to Christian missionaries is noted to still exist in 1891, especially among “many bands of whom have been more or less isolated and beyond convenient reach of the Church.”<sup>150</sup> So, “When the Midewiwin is considered from within the context of the Anishinaabe world view, it is clear that it is an integral part of this world view, rather than an appendage grafted from an alien culture.”<sup>151</sup> For, although some narratives concerning the gift of the Midewiwin to the people involve responding to a crises, it is also a clear that the Midewiwin is a gift to the people as their spiritual leaders, intended to guide them in living mino-bimaadiziwin (the good life), which is seen as desirable at all times, not just in response to a crisis situation.

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<sup>147</sup> <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19368/19368-h/19368-h.htm#midewiwin>.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. 149.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Michael Angel, *Historical Perspectives On The Ojibwa Midewiwin, Preserving The Sacred* (The University of Manitoba Press, 2002), 65.

Whereas the Haudenosaunee were a relatively sedentary people, with fields of corn, beans and squash (the three sisters) to tend, the Anishinaabe were a woodlands and water people, settled in villages, with wild rice as their staple cereal grain. Some also cultivated and harvested crops of beans, corn and squash (Manitoulin Island),<sup>152</sup> but they were also required to make extended forays to wherever one of their sources of survival was in season and ready for gathering, harvesting, or otherwise procuring (i.e. wild rice). Their experiences in this environment informed their weltanschauung and their spirituality. The vicissitudes of nature (and the spirit beings of nature who reside in the world) brought them to an acute awareness that survival was based on a harmonious relationship with nature and its multitude of spirit-beings. Survival was a community concern and communal effort, with everyone having their place, whether it be in the hunt, berry picking, fishing, rice gathering, or whatever endeavor was necessary to ensure the survival of the community.

Survival involved harmonious interpersonal relationships with both human and non-human beings, including spirits, animals, birds, and elements of nature; in short, everything that existed. The Anishinaabe, too, had their narratives of an individual (spirit being) whose greedy and insatiable appetite moved him/her to view other people simply as a means of gratifying personal desires and appetite, even to the point of demonstrating their power over others by killing them and eating their flesh. Narratives concerning the wiindigoog (windogo, wendigo) suggest that this malicious spirit has an emaciated, death-like form that is almost skeletal. When such a being is killed moreover, it is often discovered, should the being be cut into pieces so that it could not reconstitute itself and its terror, that the heart was frozen solid.<sup>153</sup> Should a person

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<sup>152</sup> Larry C. Leblanc, *A Compendium of the Anishinabek* (Kenjgewin TEG Educational Institute M'chigeeng Ontario, 2003).

<sup>153</sup> Shawn C. Smallman, *Dangerous Spirits: The Windigo in Myth and History* (Heritage House Publishing, Victoria, 2015) provides a thorough analysis of Windigo related narratives from a variety of Indigenous cultures..

come under the influence of this malevolent spirit, the situation needed to be dealt with for the continued health and well-being of the community, and there were those who were well-versed in the healing arts who could address the situation. William Berens<sup>154</sup> recalls that his great grandfather, Yellow Legs (late 1700's to before 1830), defeated a windigo (or at least his pawaganak, guardian spirit did), bringing back a piece of the little finger of the windigo to use in the Midewiwin (festival) in the Spring. Berens also divulges that his father, Makwa (Bear) was a noted Midewiwin practitioner, and recalls attending a Midewiwin with him.<sup>155</sup>

The primary concern of the Midewiwin was to achieve and maintain mino-bimaadiziwin by nurturing and preserving the normal harmonious community life of the people and the people's relationship with each other and nature. The teachings that the members of the Midewiwin, the spiritual leaders among the Anishinaabe, are responsible for preserving and promulgating include The Seven Grandfather Teachings, or Seven Laws of Nature (also known as Our Seven Grandfathers Niizhwaaswi G'mishomisinaanig).<sup>156</sup> These teachings are spiritual precepts given by the Seven Grandfather Spirits to a little boy. In some versions of the narrative, he embarked on a quest of his own volition for guidance in addressing the malaise his people found themselves in because they had either forgotten or ignored the spiritual precepts of old. Another version of the narrative<sup>157</sup> speaks of him being selected from among his people as a baby to journey to the spirit world and back, passing on the teachings he had received to others.

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<sup>154</sup> William Berens, as told to A. Irving Hallowell (Jennifer S.H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray, Editors), *Memories Myths and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader* (McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca, 2009), 98.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 42.

<sup>156</sup> <https://ojibwe.net/projects/prayers-teachings/the-seven-grandfather-words-by-helen-roy-fuhst/>, last accessed November 22, 2019.

<sup>157</sup> Edward Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book The Voice of the Ojibway* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988), 60-66.

Realizing upon his return from the spirit world as an old man, that physical health, well-being and life are proportionally related to spiritual health and well-being, he gave instructions to the women of the tribe (who symbolize the life-giving force of the earth) for the construction of the first Midewiwin lodge in response to a life threatening illness being suffered by the young boy who he had chosen as his helper.<sup>158</sup> In it, he conducted the first Midewiwin Ceremony, thus founding the Society whose responsibility it was to impart the seven teachings to the community, thereby ensuring the longevity and prosperity of the people. The lodge, the drum used to accompany the songs or chants, and all the accoutrements of the ceremony, are rife with symbolism and act as mnemonic devices to imprint the instructions given to the people in a manner consistent with oral methods of conveying important messages and narratives. The lodge itself is constructed of maple saplings, because maple is a life-giving being. Balsam, spruce, and ferns line the sides of the lodge to give further access to all the life-giving properties of the plant world. The front door of the lodge faces the rising sun, the back, the setting sun. A very important teaching concerning life is not in the sunrise, however, but in the morning star that precedes the sunrise, for she, representing all women, always comes first, before grandfather sun, lighting the way and indicating the correct path to follow. The water drum is reminiscent of the vessel out of which each of the seven grandfathers took one of the seven teachings to give to the boy when he visited them in the spirit world. Made from a hollowed-out log, it symbolises the plant world with whom we are to live in harmony. The head of the drum is of deerskin, representing all the four-legged with whom we are to live in harmony. The seven stones (knobs on some versions of the drum) honour Mother Earth and represent the seven teachings the boy received from the grandfathers in the spirit world. The water in the drum represents the life blood

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid. 67-73.

of Mother Earth. The hoop fastening the deer skin head on the drum is circular, representing the way all life moves, the seasons, and the life of people from birth through adolescence, adulthood, and the advanced years. The drumbeater (stick) is carved with a curve at one end, representing the crane and the loon, which represent leadership among the people.<sup>159</sup>

The import of the seven teachings themselves can be inferred from the mnemonic devices used to assist in remembering them. Each teaching has a being, or an animal associated with it, so that normal living routines would lead to encounters, which would then be reminders of the teachings, or life-directives leading to a balanced, harmonious (with people and nature), and good life. The Seven Teachings are as follows: Wisdom (Nbwaakaawin), Love (Zaagiidiwin), Respect (Minaadendimowin), Bravery or Courage (Aakwade'ewin), Honesty (Gwekwaadiziwin), Humility (Dabbaswndiziwin), and Truth (Debwewin).<sup>160</sup>

Wisdom is represented by the beaver (amik). This industrious fellow works hard at ensuring he and his family are well taken care of. So, wisdom is not simply a disembodied, ethereal, academic concept or a pious platitude. It is using the gifts, abilities, and knowledge one has been given or acquired in a labour of love, that has at its primary concern the well-being of the community. As it turns out, using one's inherent abilities on behalf of others is also beneficial to one's own well-being: "if it (the beaver) doesn't use its teeth (to cut down trees to build dams and lodges for family) they will continue to grow and become useless, making it difficult to sustain its life. It is the same way for us. If we let our spirit go weak, it will not be able to fulfill its use."<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 74 & 75.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 64. See also: <https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/ancient-wisdom-for-modern-times-the-seven-teachings-mtaul.ZdqTU6Uxj0MVlleVg/>, last accessed November 22, 2019.

<sup>161</sup> : <https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/ancient-wisdom-for-modern-times-the-seven-teachings-mtaul.ZdqTU6Uxj0MVlleVg/>, last accessed November 22, 2019.

Love is represented by the bald eagle (migizi). The eagle's domain is closest to that of the Great Spirit, and love is the closest a person can come to emulating the nature of the Great Spirit. Love and wisdom are thereby closely connected, for love is the motivator, and wisdom discerns the means through which love can be expressed in community. Love informs self-sacrifice and is therefore the perfect corollary and antidote for the self-satisfying impulses associated with the spirit of the wiindigo. It informs one's view of self as well, and, when practiced in community, serves to strengthen individuals, and thereby the community. "With love, we are creative, and live with endless energy, and with it, and it alone, we are more able to sacrifice for others."<sup>162</sup>

Respect is associated with the Buffalo/Bison (mashkode biziki). Every being has its place and purpose. To live out one's life according to one's purpose is to respect the creative force(s) that are instrumental in one's existence. By being created to be plentiful, and to provide so many items necessary for the people's survival, the buffalo respects its existence and its creator, thereby garnering the respect of the people in return. To respect one's self is to respect the force that brought on into being. To respect other beings is to respect the same life force, it matters not whether these beings are human or non-human people. To live in mutual respect is to live in harmony, a relationship that I would surmise is integral to survival.

Bravery or Courage is represented by the bear (makwa). As much as one may endeavor to live by the precepts of love and respect, coupling these with wisdom to live a life marked by gentleness that forestalls situations of conflict, these situations of conflict will inevitably arise. It may become necessary to stand up in defense of one's self, one's loved ones, and one's community to preserve integrity. When this happens, despite the odds, courage rises from, not some inner conviction that you are defending a principle, an ideal, or any other ethereal

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

principle, but because you are defending beings (human and nonhuman) who may not be able to defend themselves against the present danger. It is your respect for them and your love for them that moves you to be willing to rise in their defense; willing to sacrifice yourself if need be, for their continued well-being. Wisdom will serve you well in knowing how and when it is necessary, but the courage to defend those you love will be your strength to do so.

Honesty is represented by the sasquatch. This being is commonly described by those few who have seen it as a large, hairy humanoid being, unobtrusive and unclothed, without any self-decorating accoutrements of any type. Honesty is an elusive entity, as is the sasquatch. It is very difficult to connect with a person's spirit or being to ascertain their character. But there are tell-tale signs that we can observe. Most notable of the signs is honesty as personified in a being that is unobtrusive, self-effacing, and comfortable enough with itself to just be there. Honesty with, to, and about yourself comes first; then when you speak, your words embody your honesty and trustworthiness. If you lie to yourself about yourself, you will undoubtedly lie to others about yourself. There is no wisdom in being dishonest, no love of self or others, and no respect. Indeed, you even lack courage, for you cannot even face yourself as you are, let alone face others without lying about who you are. "The Elders say: The highest honor that can be given to a person is someone saying, there goes an honest person who can be trusted."<sup>163</sup>

Humility is represented by the wolf (ma'iingan). The canine stance, by its physiological characteristics, is one of its head inclined downward. This does *not* indicate fear or avoidance, since the eyes, set as they are in the head, are still quite capable of observing all that is in front and to either side. To be humble is also to show respect, not borne of fear or avoidance, but by not being forward or intrusive. Encountering a wolf in the wild, one realises that a wolf will not

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

lift its head to look at you unless it has good reason to (usually because it feels threatened by you). Normally, it will continue unobtrusively on its way, asking only that you afford it the same courtesy it has given you. It is an individual, comfortable with his or her individuality, yet part of its community, and comfortable with its place. If your response is in kind, a harmonious relationship can be preserved.

Truth is represented by the turtle (mikinaak). Even freshwater turtles, it seems, have a longevity that is noteworthy. According to Anishinaabe teachings, Turtle Island is, after all, a body of land that originates from a small clump of earth that was obtained, through great hardship by Nanaboozhoo and his helpers, from the depths of the (primeval) water and placed on a turtle's back to subsequently expand (or be expanded) to form the land mass on which we live, known in Euro-Western literature as North America.<sup>164</sup> All the principles mentioned above played a part in determining the actions of the original team that brought Turtle Island into being, so truth is the embodiment of all of them. In addition, the markings on a turtle's back are a mnemonic device, recalling the 13 moons of each cycle of the earth's rotation around the sun, as well as 28 markings for the number of sunrises in one moon cycle. The cyclical nature of life is therefore demonstrable and true. The fact that Turtle Island exists because individuals were conscious of the previous six tenets of life, and observed them, validates them (the previous six teachings) as well.

One version of the Seven Teachings, shared by Anishinaabe Elder Richard Morrison, lists kindness instead of honesty as one of the Seven Teachings, maintaining that honesty can be

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<sup>164</sup> [https://www.pipekeepers.org/uploads/3/1/3/0/31306445/the\\_ojibwe\\_creation\\_story.pdf](https://www.pipekeepers.org/uploads/3/1/3/0/31306445/the_ojibwe_creation_story.pdf), last accessed November 23, 2019. This is one version, but all versions have the same theme of sacrifice by one member of the community for the benefit of all.

manipulated by thought, as opposed to truth which is naturally felt and expressed.<sup>165</sup> In that article, Morrison cautions against the pitfalls of codifying the teachings into print format. This serves to illustrate the interpretive nature inherent in the oral transmission of these seven teachings. Neither version is right, nor wrong, as traditional Euro-Western scholarship might normally assess them. All versions communicate the necessary information, but each version has evolved to provide the desired maximum impact in the community and situation to which it is being addressed.

It is important to remember that:

The teachings are meant to work together, that's why they are in a circle. If they were linear, they become a memory. When we break one heart, we break them all, as they are interconnected. If you don't have balance, you are part of the problem, because it's an interconnected system. The Teachings help us find that balance.<sup>166</sup>

Life is observed to be cyclical. Therefore, the circle becomes, not only a symbol, but the embodiment of the *weltanschauung* of the Anishinaabe. In fact, the circle is the most common element shared by most Indigenous peoples. The circle, along with the four cardinal directions and their associated colours, contain all of life and all of life's teachings, which, as noted above, makes it another mnemonic device accompanying the oral transmission of the narratives and teachings. "Our earth walk begins when our spirit enters our physical body from the direction of the East."<sup>167</sup> Every sunrise in the East (waabinong, colour: yellow) reminds us of who we are and where we began, as spirits entering (by our birth) this physical world, and beginning our journey through it. We journey clockwise through life. South (zaawanong, colour: red) is the summer

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<sup>165</sup> Richard Morrison in Mark F. Ruml, "The Indigenous Knowledge Documentation Project--Morrison Sessions: The Eternal Natural Laws" (*Journal of Religious Studies and Theology*. Volume 30, Issue 2, 2011) 155-169.

<sup>166</sup> <https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/ancient-wisdom-for-modern-times-the-seven-teachings-mtauLZdqTU6Uxj0MVlleVg/>, last accessed November 22, 2019.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

time of youth and learning, vibrant, and exciting, but “everything is new and growing fast,”<sup>168</sup> and “youth are in a quandary stage”<sup>169</sup> trying to make sense of all the new and exciting information coming their way, and ordering it so that it is applicable to their lives. Often, without proper guidance from Elders and family, this is where everything begins to go awry, and people stumble along, never properly prepared for the next phase of their lives. The West (epangishmok, colour: black) or adult stage of life, if one’s youth has prepared them for it, is the setting of the sun, the autumn when many of nature’s life cycles end, a mature time, and the time that the growth of previous times is brought to fruition. It is a time to enjoy the fruits of the previous years and to prepare for the remaining time of the journey. The North (kiiwendinong, colour: white) stage of one’s life is the stage wherein, if one has progressed well through the previous stages, one gains respect as an Elder, resting from one’s own busy life, reflecting on it, and passing the wisdom of those reflections on to those who are in their beginning, youth, and adult stages of their lives. Winter is the time of the year for storytelling, when Elders share what has been shared with them by Elders throughout the history of the people, along with what they have learned in their own journey. If all the busyness of the Spring, Summer, and Autumn has distracted us somewhat, it is the time to re-connect with all those who have gone before, from whose accumulated wisdom we benefit, and to be thankful for them and what they have shared with us.

And so we correlate Spirit with all that is called Nature, because it is life itself. When we follow natural law, it never lets us down, because natural law was the only law that existed before man put himself on the road to progress.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> <http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/ojibwe.pdf>, last accessed November 22, 2019.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

Within the circle the Anishinaabe teachings are the Seven Grandfathers, connected to each other by the circumference, and interconnected through the centre. In the circle, wisdom is in the North (final) quadrant, but it is the first of the Grandfathers, further strengthening the concept that the Elders, both present and past, are to be the spiritual guides to *mino-bimaadiziwin*.

The Midewiwin, in their “Little Boy Water Drum Sweat Lodge” ceremony, employ both mnemonic devices and symbolism in this purification and renewal rite,<sup>171</sup> often combining the two functions within one object. The crescent-shaped “altar” (as some describe it), or hill opposite the lodge from the fire used to heat the grandfathers (rocks used in the sweat), is a reminder of the narrative that accompanies the establishment of the sweat and the original imparting of the seven teachings to the small boy who embarked on a quest on behalf of his people, and who then brought the gift of them back after they were imparted to him by the Seven Grandfathers. The construction of the lodge itself is also highly symbolic, constructed to have doors in each of the cardinal directions, with the east door being the only one that is ever uncovered and used, because it is reminiscent of the rising sun, new beginnings, and rejuvenation, which is the purpose of the lodge. As the heated grandfathers (rocks) are brought in from outside and placed into the pit prepared for them in the center of the lodge, water (infused with sage and other herbs, or so I was lead to believe in the sweat I participated in, from observing the preparation of the medicines from about 30 feet away) is poured upon them, prompting them to release their energy (in the form of steam), bringing clarity of vision (wisdom), purification of the body, and related rejuvenating energy to the participants.

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<sup>171</sup> I can’t help but be reminded of the fact that “curing” a person affected by a windigo spirit involves intense heat in an enclosed space, as noted in Smallman, cf. footnote 139 above. Heat melts the cold heart and restores a person to normal, with a renewed sense of spiritual identity and relationship to all that exists.

The narrative that preceded the Midewiwin Sweat Lodge that I attended focused on the concept that this is a spiritual experience, connecting participants to the wisdom that was imparted to the people in a time long ago. Variations concerning how this was imparted to the people exist, but they all focus on the gift and the message of the seven teachings, not on the person through whom the gift was given. There is honour and respect, decidedly, for all that is ancient wisdom, and for all the persons and means (beings) by which this wisdom is imparted to the people, including kinship ties, and all the related community, which includes all non-human life (spirits), but nothing that indicates veneration.

In the Anishinaabe society, “Nindinawemaaganag”, translated as: “You who might be relatives”<sup>172</sup> is a verbalisation of respect, always placing the speaker in a position of humility to the being that is addressed. For respect (minaadendimowin), as one of the seven teachings, is the first consideration in relationships, especially in relationships involving an elder: “Proper regard for elders is elemental to the proper functioning of Bimaadisiwin the good life, or true life.”<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, “Significantly, the animals, plants, and weather phenomenon that constitute nonhuman persons are considered elder siblings in a kinship sense and thus claim a certain level of age-related deference.”<sup>174</sup> “What is more, kinship and society exist beyond the circle of human relations not only to the nonhuman persons of the natural world, but also to the nonhuman persons of a spiritual nature...there is no clear conceptual, or even perceptual, distinction between the natural and the supernatural.”<sup>175</sup> So it is only fitting that one would approach all human and nonhuman beings as someone who might be a relative, since, given the people’s understanding,

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<sup>172</sup> Michael A McNally, *Honouring Elders Aging, Authority, and Ojibwe Religion* (Columbia University Press, New York, 2009), 85.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. 93.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 87.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. 88.

the being one is addressing is related to the addressor in some way or another. No one person (human or non-human) is autonomous. Therefore, every being one encounters is deserving of respect, even more so if they are perceived as having the status of an Elder. So, if nonhuman beings are Elders by virtue of their age, (like the grandfather rocks in the sweat), they are approached and addressed with respect, in all humility. This is integral to maintaining harmony in a society that extends beyond the people gathered together to “a society of nonhuman persons, to use Hallowell’s important words, who have moral status, sacred power, and in some cases sentience, independent on what humans confer upon them.”<sup>176</sup>

In striving for balance and harmony in life, therefore, respect is paramount. If a being (human or nonhuman) has been offended, the onus is always on the offender to restore harmony and balance, for it is always assumed, that, even if offence was perceived where non was intended (who in their right mind would deliberately offend and thus upset the harmony that exists), the offender instinctively knows that there was something in his/her approach that lacked humility, thereby opening the situation to the possibility that offence *could* be taken. So, even though there is always a sense of *individual responsibility* to live by the seven teachings, failure to do so impacts negatively *on the community* because it upsets the harmony of relationships, throwing everything (for everything is part of community) into chaos. The onus is therefore on the individual to observe the seven teachings. The extent to which an individual observes and lives by these teachings, resonates, and has its ramifications, throughout the entire community of both human and nonhuman beings, the cosmos.

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid. 86 & 87.

**Dakota/Lakota/Nakota**

The “Plains People” depended heavily on the bison for their survival so it isn’t surprising that this being held a special place of honor in their culture and spiritual approach to life, as it did in other cultures (i.e. the bison representing respect in Anishinaabe culture). The bison were plentiful, to be sure, with some estimates suggesting that the total population was in the millions, and single herds in the thousands. But, before the advent of the horse, the people were constrained to follow the herds on foot or utilize “buffalo jumps” as the buffalo migrated with the seasons. Therefore, organisation and co-operation as a community was necessary for their required mobility. A buffalo is also a rather large animal, and very dangerous to hunt if one is on foot and armed with a bow and arrow, a lance, or a club. I would assume that it took more than one person, in fact, probably several very skilled in the art of hunting, to bring down one of these beasts. And, if the herd was “spooked” in the process (as I have noted happens with herds in the wild as readily as it happens with cattle in a community pasture), it could be a great distance away before it settled down enough to again approach it to harvest one of its members for food. The hunters, therefore, would have had to have been very proficient at disguise and stealth, so that several of the beasts could be taken at a time, allowing the community to prepare them for food, clothing, and everything else that could possibly be obtained from them for survival. No part of the animal that could be used was wasted, for that would not only disrespect the animal, but be detrimental to the community that depended on it. Some locations afforded the opportunity to utilise a “jump”: a high embankment over which the buffalo could be driven to sufficiently immobilize them for slaughter. This, too, required a great deal of skill and community involvement in locating, then driving a selected portion of the herd over the cliff,

followed by all the activities that were required to slaughter and prepare the beasts for the people's use.

Among the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota, “the holy men say...Wakan Tanka...sustains the universe.”<sup>177</sup> It is through, and by, the agency of Wakan-Tanka (The Great Mystery), that everything exists or is given to the people. The gifts of ceremony and teachings were given to the people through the agency of a spiritual being. This being appeared as a beautiful woman, dressed in white buckskin, to two men who were out hunting. She approached them “in a very strange and wonderful manner,” carrying a (medicine) bundle on her back.<sup>178</sup> In a version of the narrative shared by an Elder with a group I was once in,<sup>179</sup> one of the two men seems to have vocalised his sexual arousal and his desire for the woman as his sexual partner. The woman laid down her bundle and invited him over to her, whereupon a great cloud engulfed them both. When the prairie whirlwind subsequently abated, the one with the improper desires was left as nothing more than a skeleton, having been consumed, it seems, by snakes (his own evil desire, presumably). Although “virginity” is not specifically mentioned as a quality of the woman, her purity is implied by the fact that she came from the spirit world where everything and everybody is considered pure (but not necessarily sacred in the sense that they are to be worshiped).

In Anishinaabe teachings, children, too, are considered to be members of the spirit world before they enter their mother's womb and are considered pure and innocent until experience the pain and corruption of the world.<sup>180</sup> In the Lakota Sundance preparations, this concept of the innocent young woman (virgin) is witnessed in the fact that four virgins from among the people

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<sup>177</sup> Joseph Epes Brown (recorder and editor), *The Sacred Pipe Black Elk's Account Of The Seven Rites Of The Oglala Sioux* (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1953), 4.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. Pg. 3.

<sup>179</sup> I address the concept of varying interpretive presentations of narratives to heighten their didactic function for a targeted audience further on.

<sup>180</sup> Edward Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book The Voice of the Ojibway* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988), 60.

pledge to strike the first four directional blows in felling the tree that is to become the focal point of the ceremony.<sup>181</sup> In this instance, since both the ceremony and the designated tree are gifts of the spirit world to the people, only those who are closest to the spirit world are to be allowed the first to be involved in bringing the gift(s) to the people.

In the tradition of the cannibal/windigo, the evil being consumes others. However, in the Lakota tradition of the encounter with the woman from the spirit world we have an instance within which it can be said that one's evil thoughts and desires succeed in consuming oneself. From the concept of individual thoughts and actions affecting the community, we now have the further refinement to how one's impropriety leads to *personal* consequences, independent of what the community may think, or how they may act in the circumstance. This being was, after all, an agent of Wakan-Tanka, and a person's relationship to her indicated a more immediate relationship with the sacred than did a relationship with any other human or nonhuman person, hence the immediacy of the consequences. Other relationships and their consequences worked themselves out over time, but the relationship to Wakan-Tanka (through this special agent) had/has immediate ramifications. Although the circumstances differ, anyone who might have been foolish enough to attempt to enhance his position in the community by taking down a large bull single-handedly, only to have that bull turn on him, might be able to relate, if he indeed had survived the attack.

It was not the needs or desires of one person, after all, that the agent of Wakan-Tanka had come to address, but those of the community. Instructions were subsequently given for the community to prepare for her arrival with the gift she had for them. That gift was the pipe, with

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<sup>181</sup> Mark F. Ruml, "Birds Hill Park, the Dakota Eagle Sundance and the Sweatlodge Ceremony: Establishing a Sacred Site in a Provincial Park." *Religious Studies and Theology*. Vol. 28, Issue 2, 2009: p. 198.

its bowl symbolising the earth, who (notice the personification) is sacred, and therefore every step a person takes upon her “should be a prayer.”<sup>182</sup> Nothing frivolous or ill-conceived encouraged here! Do not go chasing about in every direction, accomplishing nothing, but walk to where you need to be so that you can attend to the community’s survival, knowing where you are going and the purpose of your journey. Carved into the bowl of the pipe is the figure of a buffalo, reminding the people of the source of their survival and the purpose of their journey, representing, not only the buffalo, but all the four-legged creatures upon the earth, all of whose lives are in relationship with the people, since the people’s continued well-being depended of those relationships. The wood of the stem represents all that grows upon the earth and thus sustains the people. The feathers of the spotted eagle, considered closest to Wakan-Tanka, represent, not only all that flies above the earth, but an intimate relationship with Wakan-Tanka that everyone strives to attain. Through the pipe, then, when it is smoked and the thoughts (prayers) of the people rise with the smoke, all that exists joins with the people in a unified voice.

The emissary of Wakan Tanka also gave the people a red stone, with seven circles engraved on it, a mnemonic device to remind the people of the seven rites they were to engage in so as to remain in an harmonious relationship with each other and with all that exists, and to strengthen those relationships.<sup>183</sup> The first of these rites is the “Keeping of the Soul,” which, although its focus is on the soul of the deceased, providing the necessary means to purify it so “that it and the Spirit become one, and thus it is able to return to the ‘place’ where it was born – Wakan-Tanka – and need not wander about the earth as is the case with the souls of bad people.”<sup>184</sup> Note, the soul returns to the place where it was born, further emphasising the purity

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<sup>182</sup> Brown. 6.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. 11.

of the newborn and of children who have not been corrupted by the world. For: “the keeping of the soul helps us to remember death and also Wakan-Tanka, who is above dying.”<sup>185</sup> As the rite is described, the family members of the deceased play an active part in keeping the soul. In the case of a young son who has died, the father of the son and the family are instructed: “From now on you must live in a sacred manner, for your son will live in this tipi until his soul is released. You should remember that the habits which you establish during this period will remain with you always.”<sup>186</sup> “There should be no arguments or dissensions; there should always be harmony in your lodge, for all these things have an influence on the soul which is being purified here.”<sup>187</sup> By remembering that they need to walk in a Wakan (holy) manner, they are not only rendering a service to the soul of the deceased, but they are establishing among themselves a sense of harmony and balance, respect and responsibility, which, as indicated in the text, will remain with them long after the soul of the deceased has been released. Well-established behaviour patterns that are beneficial to one’s life well-being and harmony are, once established, essentially self-perpetuating. If these behaviour patterns are developed in response to a crisis, elements of the behaviour, and the rationalisation behind it, inform one’s response to other crises situations one might encounter.

This “Making of Sacredness”<sup>188</sup> rite has its own preparations, which are usually thought to take a year, but, in some instances, may take even longer. This day upon which the kept soul is to be released is considered a holy day, a day in which all that exists is present and involved. Significantly, there is an identification of individuals through which it is suggested that they embody all that exists within their person. Walking (existing) in a Wakan manner is not

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. 19.

considered, however, as a means *through which* one can influence outcomes positively, but as a means of *preventing* the disharmony and descent to chaos that is inevitable when the delicate, fragile balance of harmony is not maintained. It takes work to maintain harmony and balance. This is the work of Wakan-Tanka, a daily effort to be engaged in by the people who bear this responsibility with Wakan-Tanka because Wakan-Tanka has placed them here for that expressed purpose. The souls of the departed are kept and purified, first, so that they are fit for their journey and place with Wakan-Tanka, and second, so that they, in appreciation of what has been done for them by the people, may look back and remember the people to Wakan-Tanka, and thereby be of assistance to them as they continue to live with, and carry out, the responsibilities that Wakan-Tanka has created them for and entrusted them with.

I mentioned that the mnemonic device of a round, flat, red stone with seven circles drawn on its circumference on one side was given to the people so they could keep in mind the seven rites that would eventually be given to them to observe. The largest circle, representing the first, The Keeping of the Soul, is at the top center of the stone. The smallest, representing the last rite, The Throwing of the Ball, is situated clockwise, to its right. I find this intriguing, for, in the rites themselves, and in the language of cycles that is employed throughout, the motion is always sun wise, or clockwise. In the representation of the rites on the circular stone, however, the movement from first to last rite is *counter clockwise*. The last rite (Throwing the Ball) is described as: “one of our most important rites...it is the seventh and last sacred rite of this period given to us, through a vision, by Wakan-Tanka.”<sup>189</sup> Although there is no designation of “sacred” versus “more sacred”, The Keeping of the Soul is the first rite and The Throwing of the Ball is the last given to the people through the agency and promise of Wakan-Tanka’s emissary, White

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid. 127.

Buffalo Woman. As discussed above, in dealing with the death of a loved one (The Keeping of the Soul), one is counselled that the best way to keep the memory (soul) of the departed is to prepare it for its eventual journey to (and reunification with) Wakan-Tanka by ensuring it is kept in a Wakan (holy) environment, where consciousness of people's relationship with all that exists (and therefore with Wakan-Tanka) is evident in the daily lives of the keepers. The rites that follow seem to be conscious of the need to walk (live) in a wakan manner, and instructional in how this is to be done. Rather than beginning with the rites that deal with daily life, then building to a crescendo with a major rite dealing with death, we have here a beginning with a major rite dealing with death, moving through to the rest of the rites that are part of the life cycle of the people. The major rite dealing with death might be expected to be the last rite (after all the rest deal with the daily existence and experiences of the people), but it is instead the first, suggesting that one deals best with death by living in a Wakan (holy) manner. The counter clockwise positioning of the rites, with the one dealing with death first, and the one (The Throwing of the Ball) that deals with life in a more generalized way being last, suggests to me that the rites are considered a counter-point to the normal, repetitive, cyclical patterns of life, where birth is followed by cyclical deterioration, death, decay, and then new life.

The intent, therefore, seems to be to *reverse* the normal cycle of birth, gradual decay, and death. The responsibility of humans, within whom all that exists resides (see above), is therefore not to progress to a triumph over the forces of deterioration, death, and decay, but, instead, to strive for a state of harmonious perfection from which all that is observable arose (i.e. being at the side of Wakan-Tanka), in complete union with Wakan-Tanka, somewhat akin to the concept wherein The Great Law of Peace is designed to return the people to the First Epoch in Haudenosaunee spiritual teachings. Once set in motion by physical existence, the cycle of birth,

deterioration, death, and decay are established. People are therefore given the responsibility of maintaining harmony, which has the power to transcend the process of decay. Through the pipe, we understand our unity with all that exists and our embodiment of it. Therefore, since harmony is our responsibility to maintain, we must understand that it can only be accomplished if we personify that harmony in our being and our existence. If we choose harmony as our mode of existence, all that is will be returned to (primordial) perfect harmonious existence by our lifestyle and choices. If we choose instead to ignore our responsibility, dis-harmony, and subsequently, deterioration, death, and decay will follow. To think of ourselves as disaffected, objective observers is inaccurate, to say the least. Instead, we are not merely participants, but *the only* beings who define and determine existence, and are thus able to restore everything to its intended natural and spiritual order. We are the definitive agents on whom rests the choice as to whether all that exists disintegrates into chaos and decay, or whether harmony and health are restored. Again, as with the Haudenosaunee and the Anishinaabe, physical health, existence, and even longevity, are the corollary of spiritual health.

### **Blackfoot**

Among the Blackfoot (Niitsitapii “real people:” comprised of Kaninaa “Bloods,” Siksika “Blackfoot,” and the north and south Piikani “Peigan or Pikunis”),<sup>190</sup> in at least two narratives, the agent who brought the pipe bundle to the people was also a woman. However, she was a human who had married a sky being and returned, instead of (as in the Dakota tradition) a sky being who came to the people with the expressed purpose of gifting the pipe and the ceremonies to them. Bullchild<sup>191</sup> recounts the narrative of the girl who married a star, lived in his world in

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<sup>190</sup> Clark Wissler and D.C. Duvall, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1995), Introduction, xii.

<sup>191</sup> Percy Bullchild, *The Sun Came Down, The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1985), 267 – 289.

happiness for some time, but then developed an intense longing to be back with her own people when she pulled out an unusually large turnip during an annual turnip harvest and saw, through the hole from which it came, her own people toiling to survive on the earth far below. In this narrative, this was not an accident, but part of a plan devised by Creator Sun to gift to the people a means of remembering and honoring him and Mother Earth, from whom the people had their origin. It seems that two previous attempts to remind and re-acquaint the people with their need to remember and honour Creator Sun and Mother Earth through other-worldly agents (Napi and Kut-toe-yis)<sup>192</sup> had not had the prolonged impact that Creator Sun had intended. So, this time, instead of sending an other-worldly messenger to the people, the plan was devised to have one of the earth people live in the other world, where life was lived as Creator Sun had intended for it to be from the beginning. A young woman (girl, virgin) was selected for the role, and (through the agency of Creator Sun, it seems) she, finding no suitor pleasing to her among her people, married a Star Being and was taken to his country. Interestingly, “The Star Being told the girl, this is your new place to live, here in this land we live. There isn’t (sic) too many of us here yet, but we are increasing slowly.”<sup>193</sup> Nothing is said of the source of the people who inhabit this alternate existence which, as described, seems the same as this-worldly existence, with all the duties, responsibilities, and work, but without any hints at animosity or strife. There is some consternation when it is discovered that the woman has pulled out the forbidden turnip and created a portal to the world below. But even the problem caused by her act of disobedience stemming from curiosity, seems to have been anticipated as part of Creator Sun’s plan.

There is a noticeable dichotomy here. Even though Creator Sun has a plan for the reunification of the people with him and Mother Earth, the agents of the plan and the means

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid. 269.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid. 274.

through which the plan is worked out involve disobedience and wrongful actions. The woman ignores her husband's precautionary advice concerning the picking of the turnip. The husband, in gifting the pipe bundle to her to give to the people upon her return to them, admits his culpability by saying: "This Ancient Pipe Bundle comes from a long ways back, it is a gift directly from Creator Sun to sanction our thoughts of him always so we would not do bad things. I done wrong in what I done to you, but this Ancient Pipe Bundle will make things right for us both in the eyes of Creator Sun."<sup>194</sup> It seems, because of the power inherent in Creator Sun, two acts that one might construe as wrongful, become the very acts that initiate the relationship with people that Creator Sun had intended from the beginning and not achieved through his spiritual agents. Is Creator Sun, then, so cognisant of human behaviour and foibles that he works *with* them to achieve his desired end, rather than attempting to coerce them or threaten them with his displeasure if they fail in establishing the right relationship with him and Mother Earth and each other?

The pipe bundle and its use is, therefore, two-fold. In the first instance, it embodies redeeming qualities, in that its gifting of the Star Being to the woman and her people, atones for his inappropriate removal of the girl to his own lodge to be his wife. Her passing it on to her people, along with the ceremony associated with its use, is her atonement for opening the portal between two worlds. Then, after the atonement is complete, it serves as a redeeming agent. As the bundle is used in the appropriate and sanctioned manner it also serves as a sanctifying agent, re-connecting the people with Creator Sun and Mother Earth. The process of atonement and re-connecting, however, is an arduous one, for there are a total of four day-long sweats, each with its prescribed songs and prayers, to be conducted before the actual opening of the bundle and the

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid. 281.

smoking of the pipe. The process of re-connecting to Creator Sun and Mother Earth, as well as each other, can, indeed be an arduous one for many.

In another version of the origin of the pipe bundle,<sup>195</sup> a young girl (virgin), who again could not find a pleasing suitor among her people, married a Thunder Being. She bore two sons, and, at her husband's suggestion (based on his consideration of her), she, he, and their two sons visited her family. When they returned to Thunder Being's (and her and her sons) world, she told her people that Thunder would gift them a pipe whose appropriate use would contribute to their longevity. Four days later, as promised, the pipe was given to the people. Thunder and one of their sons returned to Thunder's world, while she and her other son stayed behind with her people, with Thunder promising to return in Spring. As Thunder and his son departed, as loud thunderclap followed by a smaller one were heard. Bullchild, even though he has presented the first-mentioned version of the gifting of the pipe as the definitive version, also mentions thunder in connection with the pipe. "The bundle had to be exposed to the people, honored, at least twice a year—when the first thunder is heard in the spring of the year, and again when the last thunder of the year is heard."<sup>196</sup> I have found several accounts of the gift of a pipe to the people,<sup>197</sup> but the theme and teachings are quite similar, again suggesting derivations based on locational and cultural factors. Bullchild mentions, concerning a young man seeking advice from an elder: "The parents told their son to use the family pipe and have it ready for smoking when he approaches

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<sup>195</sup> Clark Wissler & D.C. Duvall, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1995), 89 & 90.

<sup>196</sup> Percy Bullchild, *The Sun Came Down, The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1985), 290.

<sup>197</sup> Clark Wissler and D.C. Duvall, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1995), 91.

the right old man.”<sup>198</sup> If the old man accepts the offered pipe, the young man should then light it for him, and wait until after it has been finished for the old man to give his advice.

With the proliferation of pipes and medicine bundles revealed by the many narratives recorded over the years, it becomes evident that, in matters of spirituality, “a canonical corpus neither existed nor was desired by the Blackfoot.”<sup>199</sup> The existence of multiple versions of a narrative, as well as multiple bundles among the people, can be attributed to their lifestyle. “To live on the high plains, the Blackfoot spent most of the year in camps of ten to twenty lodges, numbering about 80 to 160 people.”<sup>200</sup> However, the people “congregated in summer into concourses of thousands... found mates...(and) indulged in trading, feasting, gambling, adjudication of disputes, strategic planning among allies, and religious ceremonies.”<sup>201</sup> Spending most of the year in the smaller camps of family and clan allowed for and fostered spiritual approaches (and thus narratives) more specifically appropriate for that family, clan, and situation. Individuals (both male and female) were encouraged to embark upon vision quests. In most instances, the vision quest was personal, giving that individual guidance and spiritual tools that they would require for the life ahead of them. In some instances, an individual would be given a vision that was for the benefit of his or her people. In this case, the vision was not to be withheld as a personal gift but shared. In the pipe and bundle gifts, there is not only the responsibility of sharing as the vision dictates, but also the responsibility of instituting the ceremony that is to accompany the narrative, thus ensuring the future integrity of the gift among the people.

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<sup>198</sup> Percy Bullchild, *The Sun Came Down, The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1985), 293.

<sup>199</sup> Clark Wissler & D.C. Duvall, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1995), xxii.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* xiv.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

In many ways, we can say that the Blackfoot approach to spirituality is more individualistic than what I have examined thus far. It seems that, as one proceeds from the relatively sedentary life of cultivators, fishers, and areas of gathering that are close at hand, to more seasonally determined means of existing and smaller units of survival as determined by the environment, the number of corporate gatherings and corporate spiritual ceremonies decreases. That there is a sense of corporate spirituality among the Blackfoot is illustrated by the following: “Once when discussing this matter with a Blood Indian, the venerable old man pulled up a common ragweed, saying, ‘The parts of this weed all branch off from the stem. They go different ways, but all come from the same root.’”<sup>202</sup> Because the people all come from the same root, they are drawn together for the summer festivals and ceremonies, the most important of which is the “Sundance” or Honoring Creator Sun.

Bullchild’s narration of the inaugural Honoring Creator Sun ceremony<sup>203</sup> is, among other things, essentially a description of a pre-nuptial ceremony which demonstrates a man’s worthiness to become a husband and head of a family. It also contains a lesson concerning pre-judging someone and their abilities and capabilities based solely on their physical appearance. As the narrative unfolds, it places the family unit at the centre of the spiritual values of the people.

The narrative begins with a young woman (virgin) and her parents’ concern that, although she has been approached by many suitable (in their opinion) suitors, she has yet to choose a partner. We are not given the details of how or when it happened, but the woman subsequently revealed that the reason that she had not chosen a partner from among all the desirable suitors, is that she was *already* married, to Creator Sun! This relationship with the spirit

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>203</sup> Percy Bullchild, *The Sun Came Down, The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1985), 325-390.

world (as in spirit world relationships throughout Indigenous thought) implies purity in the individual who is thus associated. While her parents marvel at this news and feel blessed to have a daughter who has been so chosen, others seem to be of the opinion that there is something awry with this young woman, and begin to speculate as to what type of creature she might be, since she is certainly not a “normal” woman. Metaphorically, we are left with the impression that *all* young women are considered special, with a unique relationship with the creative essence of the universe by virtue of the creative power inherent and residing within them. Creator Sun states: “Remember also, that all females are mine until they find a man who will revere them and their virginity is taken from them.”<sup>204</sup> Again, we have the association with the spirit world and the implication that those so associated are pure (virgin). Therefore, not just *any* man can share in the process of creating a new generation of people and a new world with a woman, but only one who proves himself worthy.

In this narrative, after all the other men have failed in their attempts to gain the young woman’s favor, and she seems to have fallen out of favor with her, there is one left, one who has known and felt the prejudicial derision of his peers because of a genetic defect that has gained him the name “Scarface.” Because he is so accustomed to experiencing the scorn and derision of his fellows, his self-esteem is so low that he hasn’t even considered approaching the young woman. However, when in scorn and jest, others suggest he approach her, he decides that because they are both, each in their own way, different than the rest of the community and reside on the periphery, he *might* just have a chance of winning her affection and approval. When he does muster up the courage to approach the woman, he discovers that a relationship is possible, not based on their co-existence on the periphery of the community, different in ways that might

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid. 358.

be considered weaknesses, but on intrinsic and inherent strengths they both possess: the young woman's realised in her special relationship with Creator Sun, and his yet to be fully realised by him and manifested through the journey of self-discovery he had yet to undertake.

Understanding that she perceived strength and ability inherent within him that even he wasn't fully aware of, made her all that more desirable to him, moving him to undergo whatever journey was necessary to acquire (or demonstrate) the laudable qualities he needed to possess to become her mate. So, after seeking the help on an Elder and getting the necessary instructions and directions, he set off on his quest to gain, from Creator Sun, the privilege of marrying the woman he desired.

Scarface found out something in his lifetime. He found out that to achieve something was a very hard thing to do, it had many catches. It had many pains with the good of it too. It had much suffering where one's life is gambled in many ways. One must go through torture for something he wants so very much.<sup>205</sup>

This is a fair synopsis of his arduous journey to the land of Creator Sun. In his first act upon arriving there he forgot his seemingly dire situation and puts himself at risk to save Ibisowaussin (Hanging Jerky, now known as Morning Star) from an attack. Instinctively, he illustrated his willingness to gamble his life to save another. To Scarface's surprise, he discovered that he had just saved the life of Creator Sun's favorite offspring. He also discovered that jealousy existed in this world he was now in, when he met Bahtsidubbi (Doer of Mistakes), and was told of his attitude toward Morning Star and his antics that involved masquerading as Morning Star whenever he thought he could get away with it, thereby (if only momentarily until people realised their mistake) garnering for himself the appreciation and respect normally shown to Morning Star. Other times, Bahtsidubbi tried to get Morning Star into trouble by attempting to spread lies about him, insinuating that he was not the well-behaved boy his parents, Creator Sun

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid. 342,343.

and Mother Earth, knew him to be. This is the first instance mention has been made in this work of less than desirable human traits being manifested in the spirit world, but like narratives exist throughout the various Indigenous spiritual approaches. As with the work mentioned in the Lakota narrative or turnip gathering, the spirit world is not the idyllic world one might, from a Euro-Western perspective, be led to believe it is. Similar situations exist in both the physical and spirit worlds. However, in the spirit world, the problems and turmoil of human existence in the physical world and their debilitating effects are overcome. Even the hint of dis-harmony that portends disaster in the physical world and its existence illustrates that dis-harmony is ineffectual in the spirit world. There, it seems to be treated as a “glitch” while here it seems to become definitive in interpersonal relationships. Meanwhile, Scarface was left wondering about how, in his weakened and seemingly immobile condition as a consequence of his arduous journey, he had found the strength and capability to defend his new-found friend upon his arrival in this new world.

Welcomed into his friend’s tipi (that of Crestor Sun and Mother Earth) and shown appreciation for his bravery and selflessness in the act of saving Morning Star’s life, Scarface was content to enjoy his idyllic existence with his new-found friend and admirer for quite some time. People are often distracted by pleasing personal situations they find themselves in, even to the point of forgetting their noblest intentions and bringing them to fruition. But Scarface’s thoughts soon turned to his people, especially his grandmother, who he had left behind on her own. He began to wonder how she was surviving, and even *if* she was surviving, given the many tasks associated with garnering food and storing it that she faced alone without him there to help her, especially as the Spring and early Summer moons had waxed and waned, bringing the time ever closer to the Winter months, when survival was the most difficult. He had, after all, come

on a mission to gain permission from Creator Sun to marry the girl he desired. It was time he stated his mission and got back to his own people, especially his grandmother. Taking him aside, Creator Sun (who was aware of Scarface's thoughts and the reason for his journey) commended Scarface for his honesty and dedication to his purpose, noting that there were many times he could have succumbed to the arduousness of his journey and given up, but didn't.

What you went through, my boy, it's to show you that to be honest isn't a smooth trail, it's a hard, tortuous trail to follow...Remember, from now on, anything you might want in your life by honesty is never easy...To steal is a wide-open trail to follow, it's the easiest trail, but it never pays.<sup>206</sup>

Encouraged by Creator Sun to express the true reason for his journey, Scarface finally discloses the thoughts and feelings he had kept to himself. It wasn't after all, that he considered the girl to be a misfit like himself, that moved him to go to her and propose out of a sense of pity for her. It was his anger that the people were saying the things about her that they did, just because she didn't feel anyone that approached her to be suitable. He seems to have had in mind some arrangement that would remove any stigma from her that was associated with her remaining unmarried. When he began his journey, perhaps he thought that, if they were married, he could be the sole outlet for their derision since his deformity would remain, but the stigma of her being unmarried would be removed, and perhaps she would even be viewed as a kind soul who took pity on this poor deformed creature. He knew he was the object of their jests because of his deformity, and he felt he could bear that. What he couldn't bear was that this girl whom he thought so highly of could be treated with the same derision, scorn, and prejudicial assumptions he had known all his life. But he requested what the girl had instructed him to ask for: that his deformity be removed, and that he be granted permission by Creator Sun to marry her. Given his close relationship to Creator Sun's son, Morning Star, and the gratitude Creator Sun had

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid. 353.

expressed over his saving Morning Star's life, and with Creator Sun's encouragement, Scarface was finally comfortable sharing his innermost thoughts and feelings, and to disclose the reason for the journey he had undertaken at the behest of the girl.

However, the bond of marriage is not easily or lightly broken. There must be good reason, and there will be consequences. The love that Scarface and the girl have for each other has been proven by their actions, so there is reason to break the bond between the girl and Creator Sun. But the breaking of the bond causes suffering on the part of everyone involved, the girl, Scarface, and even Creator Sun. To illustrate this fact, both the girl and Scarface must endure one more ordeal to prove they are willing to suffer, if it means they need to, to be and remain together as they desire. This is to take place in the Honoring the Sun Ceremony, and that is why, at the outset, I suggested that it, in its inception, is a prenuptial ceremony. Both must now endure a proscribed four-day ordeal that not only proves their commitment to each other and to the vows they are to make to each other, but also prepares them for the many pitfalls and tortures that may lie ahead.

To say that marriage is torturous for both parties involved is (or should be, I would hope) a bit of an overstatement. However, in this ceremony, the difficulties that the married couple can face in their life together are writ large, and thus are accompanied by endurance pushed to its limits. First, there were the four sweats for Scarface, the girl, and six attendants on either side, interspersed with cleansing in a pool of cold water. This, without any food and little to drink, took all of one day. The next day, after both Scarface and the girl had each told their life's story and spoken of their experiences (full disclosure?), the four-day ordeal for them both began. Scarface was tethered at the "crotch" of a forked tree that had been cut and prepared for this occasion, with rawhide thongs binding his wrists and ankles, standing, spread-eagled, high above

the ground, with only the rawhide and a bundle of birch saplings to hold him in place for the next four days, wearing a wreath of juniper fronds on his head. The girl was placed inside a darkened tipi very near to the tree on which Scarface was tethered, completely covered by a heavy buffalo robe, in complete darkness, not allowed to move, and only allowed to go outside (with a chaperone) to relieve herself twice a day. Scarface tethered as he was to the fork of the tree, if he needed to relieve himself, had to do it in place, adding immeasurably to his humiliation. Neither of them was to have any food or drink during this ordeal. The girl always had her six attendants near her, encouraging her as best they could, by refraining from food or drink as well. Scarface's six attendants were below the tree, singing, dancing, and praying for him in his ordeal, themselves also refraining from food or drink until it was over. In addition, all the people of the camp were mindful of what was happening and doing whatever they could to support and encourage Scarface and the girl.

Taking place in the heat of late Summer/early Autumn, the physical ordeal that both endured can only be approximated in one's imagination. However, as preparation for marriage, even though the physical endurance is just barely imaginable, the lessons learned, if one is cognizant of them, are indispensable for two committed people who want to make a life together. As time (days) progressed, the rawhide binding Scarface to the tree would dry and shrink, cutting into his flesh. Perhaps there are times when the marriage bond can feel restrictive, constrictive, and even like a painful tether that all instincts for survival cry to be loosed from. Meanwhile, covered by the heavy buffalo robe, one can begin to feel quite claustrophobic, finding it difficult even to breathe, longing for a breath of fresh air that one's instincts tell one must be out there somewhere beyond the present constraints. And, even if one is willing to endure their individual hardships for the sake of the relationship, there is no way, given the situation, that either of them

can offer any help, support, or even encouragement to the other, no matter how much their entire being cries out for them to do so. All they have is their relationship, and the knowledge and confidence that the strength of the relationship means that they are thinking about one another in this ordeal, and that they will again know the joys of truly being together once the ordeal is over. Obviously, the feelings they have for each other is the cause, or reason behind, the ordeal they are both suffering to begin with. Would it be a selfish, or a *selfless* act on the part of either of them if they called for an end to the ordeal and simply walked away from the relationship? Would the concern be for their own survival, or for that of their partner? There seems to be no provision for such an option. However, each has their cadre of helpers so assist them in any way they are able during the ordeal. And beyond that, we are told of the entire Summer encampment's concern and support through the unwrapping of various bundles, and any other way that anyone could think of to offer their support and encouragement. As in so many cases within the realm of Indigenous spirituality, community is of major importance. What one does affects the community. What the community does serves to support the individual(s) within it. Significantly, once the ordeal is over, the place of endurance for Scarface becomes an harbour of celebration, the place of confinement for the girl becomes the bridal bower. The pain of endurance is transformed, when it is over, into the joyful celebration of their commitment to each other.

The ceremony has subsequently been modified so that there is no longer anyone tethered in the fork of the tree. There is no longer anyone confined for four days under the dark, claustrophobic confines of a buffalo robe in the middle of a tipi. Instead, dancers may be tethered to the fork of the tree by means of long strips of rawhide attached to a stick piercing their flesh. This is to fulfill a vow they have made, usually in gratitude for the endurance and survival of

someone they feel closely associated with. However, in its inaugural form (which, we are given to understand was replicated for some time), the ceremony firmly established the insular family as the source and expression of the peoples' spiritual approach and values. It is established when Scarface (or any man) wins the hand of a young woman who is conscious of her co-creative bond to Creator Sun and the two of them set out to live a life together. Through their relationship, and their unflinching devotion to one another, the values of honest effort and hard work to gain whatever is desired are personified and passed on to the next generation. The place of close friends and community is to be supportive, thereby honoring the commitment the two have made to each other. Everyone is called upon to follow the example set by the couple. The spiritual values, therefore, move from the insular family to their friends, then to the community at large, as concentric circles move outward from a stone dropped in a still pool of water.

### **Haida**

While the insular family seems to be at the centre of the Blackfoot spiritual sensibilities, it is the extended family, or clan, within which the spiritual values of the Haida and Coastal Salish people are generated and promulgated with the Potlatch.<sup>207</sup> Ceremonial gatherings of this type were prominent in the large summer communities. Although not always a funerary ceremony (where a mortuary post is erected at the ceremony's end), the Potlatch seems to be modeled as such, designed to either honor a prominent person who has passed from this existence, or honor a prominent family or clan member as that person passes the reigns of leadership and power to the next generation and firmly establishes that person as the leading member of the clan, or (of late) to honor some great event in a prominent person's life, and thereby increase that person's influence in the society. I use the term "prominent person"

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<sup>207</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *A Story As Sharp As A Knife, The Classical Haida Mythtellers And Their World* (Douglas And McIntyre (2013) Ltd. British Columbia, Canada), 484, Note 10.

specifically, for only such a person within the society had the resources to host such an event, which could take years of preparation, planning and organisation for all that took place: constructing the necessary facilities, carving the totem to be erected as the crowning finale to the event, and amassing the necessary items to be given away to the attending guests, none of which, from the most prominent to the least, was left out.

The Potlatch was, at one and the same time; an ostentatious display of wealth and prominence with an expression of generosity to all the other clans invited; an honoring of the ancestor(s) of the hosting clan; an establishment of a person as the leading member of a clan; an acknowledgement of the prominence of all the leaders of all invited clans; a platform for the re-telling (usually in a series of public performances of narrative and/or dance and pantomime) the narratives that comprise the spiritual heritage of the people; and a social gathering bringing all the invited clans together. To *not* invite a clan would be taken as an affront, equivalent to armed hostility, inviting recrimination(s).

With the arrival of colonial industry and paid work within the colonial system, however, many “usurpers” were able to amass large quantities of goods to distribute to people at their own “potlatch,” in an attempt to gain prominence in the community. Consequently, for a time, the original purpose and meaning of the potlatch was overshadowed by colonial-inspired materialism. Most notably, those who were employed in the lumber industry were able to earn enough money to purchase large quantities of sacs of flour (which had become a staple food) to be given away to everyone they invited. These usurpers who sought prominence for themselves didn’t, it seems, host the events of old. All they were interested in was the status they could earn in the community by giving away large quantities of flour. The rest of the traditional components of the Potlatch were ignored. When the Canadian Government passed legislation in 1885,

making potlatches illegal, the courts were reluctant to enforce the legislation. However, despite the attempts by usurpers to re-define the ceremony for their own self-aggrandising purposes and the Canadian Government's legislation outlawing the ceremony, the people tenaciously held on to their traditions, and the prohibition against Potlach Ceremonies was repealed in 1951.<sup>208</sup>

I am primarily interested in the narratives that were presented at the Potlatch Ceremony, either in spoken form by those who had a gift for oratory and were trained in the oratory disciplines required for the task, or a combination of oration and pantomime. "Potlach oratory was and still remains a major genre all along the Northwest Coast...and fine examples in many languages, Haida included, are still to be heard."<sup>209</sup> As the narratives were shared and transcribed among the Haida, they form two sets. One set is a collection of narratives involving several protagonists, comprised of five parts: "the structure of five fingers, or four fingers and a thumb."<sup>210</sup> The second set "*Raven Travelling* ...is not a sixth digit nor a forearm that is added to this five-part structure – nor is it unrelated. It is another five-part structure. It is the other hand."<sup>211</sup>

Bringhurst describes The Raven narratives, in the following passage:

The Raven...is as mutable and complex as plutonium or sulphur, air or blood, but he is also elemental in this sense. He is a limit beyond which the mythology he lives in does not reach. His status in the mythworlds of the North Pacific Rim is something like the status of the law of gravity in Newtonian mechanics. New events...bring further revelations of the nature of the old, familiar, elements, and further confirmations of old, established theorems, as well as new discoveries and hypotheses that alter and supplement the old...living mythology, not a bundle of ossified stories.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> *Banning The Potlatch In Canada* (The Canadian Encyclopedia),

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/potlatch-to-give-feature>, last accessed May 5, 2019.

<sup>209</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *A Story As Sharp As A Knife, The Classical Haida Mythtellers And Their World* (Douglas And McIntyre (2013) Ltd. British Columbia, Canada), 202.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.* 199.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.* 288.

As such, the Raven narratives are commentaries on the primeval origins of humankind, the development of the people, their present situation and circumstances, and contain templates of understanding and knowledge that can be applied to current events, their outcomes and means of coping, as well as providing a solid footing from which to engage the future. The self-effacing, sardonic tone of some of the narratives remind us that, while we can, in all seriousness, address serious questions and problems, we are, by nature, fragile beings, who are prone to taking ourselves so seriously that we are in danger of missing the point of the lesson to be learned. For example, Raven's discovery of the first humans and his subsequent introduction of the males (which were discovered inside a phalliform mollusk) and the females (found inside a vulviform mollusk),<sup>213</sup> brings to my mind Sigmund Freud,<sup>214</sup> with a rather wry and sardonic sense of humour. Raven introduces sexuality to these timid, naïve beings he finds, as his first and lasting gift to them after freeing them and coaxing them to come out of their respective shells. The sardonic comment is that Raven is first amused by their antics, but soon tires of their preoccupation with this new existence he has given them and, true to his nature, moves on to more adventures.

The narrative about the man who married a goose<sup>215</sup> (part of the first set mentioned above) provides us with important insights into the human condition. We learn of ingratitude, prejudice, determination fuelled by love, the reciprocal relationships developed by kindness and generosity, communication (of sorts) with spirit beings, the need (if only temporarily) of assuming a different persona in the quest for what one desires, the use of subterfuge in attaining

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid. 262 and 479 & 480, Note 29.

<sup>214</sup> Sigmund Freud, Steven Marcus, James Stachey, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (Basic Books, New York, 1975).

<sup>215</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *A Story As Sharp As A Knife, The Classical Haida Mythtellers And Their World* (Douglas And McIntyre (2013) Ltd. British Columbia, Canada), 34-45.

one's goals, and finally, how *not even love* can conquer inherent incompatibility. Raven appears in this narrative as well, but only at the end, in his role of a spirit being assuming the physical appearance of his name, a being able to venture between the spirit world and this world at will. The narrative draws our attention to the fact that the lines between the worlds are not so emphatically drawn that passing from one to another (even for humans) is impossible, once you have the right "tools" or "equipment" and the insight required to use them. In this narrative, true to his nature (as we gather from other narratives), Raven tires of his task, abandons it, and consequently brings into being something (or some creature) that has never been seen in this realm previously. In this case the creature so introduced, the seagull, becomes the mnemonic device that prompts one to recall the narrative. As Bringham notes, the theme of the narrative is an old and even timeless one, but, "the power of Ghandl's story...comes from the juxtaposition and interpretation of timelessness and time."<sup>216</sup> The juxtaposition of the spirit world with this world, and the fluid communication between the two that is possible, is the presupposition behind all of the Raven narratives, and is therefore indicative of the people's view and appreciation of their spiritual values and relationships with each other and the spirit world.

In the other approaches to spirituality that we have briefly outlined thus far, we find that, among the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe, and the Blackfoot, there is normally a human messenger of the divine who, by virtue of some communication with the spirit world, is entrusted with a message that is incorporated into a ceremonial observance for his/her human compatriots. In the Lakota tradition, a spirit messenger brings the initial message and ceremony (pipe), with the promise to reveal even more as time progresses, along with how the pipe should be used in each of them.

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid. 49.

All the above have, in addition to the messenger (whether from the spirit world or human in nature), several narratives and spiritual persona who interact with humans to accomplish a necessary task at hand. There are creation narratives, flood narratives, trickster narratives, and narratives of a decidedly sociological, anthropological, and philosophical nature. Often, they have been preserved by Europeans and handed along to us in a somewhat fragmented state because, unlike the Indigenous people present, Europeans did not know, and were therefore unable to, supply the context. I also see in this the Euro-Western penchant for fracturing and fragmentation into constituent parts that lend themselves to microscopic analysis. I would compare it to the lumberjack who is so busy contemplating the specific tree he is about to fell, calculating its direction of fall, how best to limb it, and how many board feet of lumber it will yield, that he misses the beauty and magnitude of the forest within which it stands.

The Haida texts that have been recorded and made available were transcribed and then translated and painstakingly woven into a cohesive, structured, and comprehensive body of narratives, with separate, but interconnected components of two equally important genres, the “two hands” as mentioned previously.<sup>217</sup> In this approach, especially in the Raven narratives, we soon begin to appreciate that the messenger *is* the message: “Raven, who is the story”<sup>218</sup> Raven rarely speaks, and when he<sup>219</sup> does, he “rarely stoops to the truth when a lie would serve.”<sup>220</sup> In Raven’s case, his actions indeed do speak louder than words. It is not what Raven *says*, but what Raven *does* that contains the message. So, when the narrative is presented by a seasoned professional, we not only *hear* the message, but more powerfully, we *experience* it. The message

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<sup>217</sup> Cf. Note 62, Page 40.

<sup>218</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *A Story As Sharp As A Knife, The Classical Haida Mythtellers And Their World* (Douglas And McIntyre (2013) Ltd. British Columbia, Canada), 217.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid. 237. Personal pronouns for Raven can be “he, she, him, her, his, hers , it or its, Xhuugya, the Raven, is he and she (and sometimes it) who does not need a name.”

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

(word, or logos, to use the Greek term) from the spirit world is, therefore, experienced by humans in the human world. Retrogressively speaking, therefore, those who have fully experienced the message are the most competent to repeat (reveal) it to others. They would have naturally included their interpretation and interpolation of their experience in their narrative, as would the person they had experienced it through, and so on, until we arrive at the original experience and narrative sharing of that experience. The validity of the components of the narrative is, therefore, not contained in any verifiable “facts,” but in the ability of the whole to motivate others to want to experience the message, and then meeting that need with an experience that is deeply felt and understood as genuine. “A mythology is not a fixed body of stories; it is an open set. A genuine mythology is a systematically elaborated, extended, interconnected and adaptable set of myths. It is a kind of science in narrative form.”<sup>221</sup> “Both science and mythology aspire to be true, and both, for that reason are perpetually under revision for as long as they are alive. Both lapse into dogma when these revisions stop.”<sup>222</sup>

All spiritual narratives bring the messages from the spirit world to this world, changing and adapting as necessary, so that those listening can form a connection with the spirit world, and thereby experience the message in the messenger in such a way that each personal experience of the message/messenger is original, the lessons learned immutable. In the case of Raven’s place within Haida spirituality, Bringhurst is drawn to conclude: “The Raven is the horny, greedy, adulterous, incestuous, shit-disturbing and irrepressible *logos*.”<sup>223</sup> Who, of sound mind, would ever *worship* ( in the sense that Christians worship Jesus of Nazareth) such an outrageous creature? *Honour*, as the one who is the bearer and personification of the message

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 287.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid. 288.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid. 289.

(word, logos) from the spirit world to the human world, but not worship; any more than the spirit beings present in human and non-human forms in this world are worshipped by any of the other Indigenous spiritual approaches I have examined. Instead, they are honoured as Elders. Therefore, the assertions by many of Euro-Western ilk that the Indigenous people they encountered were pantheists and animists are decidedly false and biased, based, it seems, on their Christian understanding and veneration of the messenger (Jesus) from the spirit world that they were acquainted with and had deified in their own narratives and literature.

The first thing that struck me as I researched Indigenous spiritual concepts was that there seems to be no deification of the “messenger” who brought spiritual concepts and ceremonies to the people, as is the case in Christianity, where the messenger is deified, and the focus is on him (Jesus of Nazareth), while the message itself seems to be relegated to second place, or, in some instances (or so it appears to me) forgotten altogether. In Indigenous approaches, there seems to be an acknowledgement of the messenger and that being/person’s special place in the narratives and spiritual history and approach of the people, but the focus is firmly on the message, and even more so on the ceremony and narrative as a means of passing that message on to succeeding generations. Even when (as among the Haudenosaunee) there seem to be special circumstances surrounding the birth and life of the messenger, the narratives simply mention the tradition and retain their focus on the message. In this way, it is the message that is of paramount importance as it is passed on through narrative and ceremony.

As a parish pastor for several years, my education, training, and experience also moved me to recognise several aspects of Indigenous spiritual approaches that resonated with experiences I have had and circumstances in which I was called upon to be involved in various life events in peoples’ lives. I mention the grief counselling I have been involved in as counsellor

as being akin to the Haudenosaunee Consolation ceremony, at least in my approach. Empathy was always the means through which the necessary conversation was initiated. The Anishinaabe Seven Grandfather Teachings not only resonated with the values I was raised appreciating, but were rather close to The Beatitudes and associated concepts in the Christian narrative(s). In the Dakota/Lakota/Nakota narratives, I noted that the method of depicting the ceremonies on the stone was counter-clockwise, suggesting that humans had strayed from the potential inherent in them, and needed, through ceremony, to reclaim that potential. In the Blackfoot Sundance, I observed the spiritual nature of marriage and the need to be prepared for some of the rigours of life that two people in a close relationship can face. So often, in pre-marital counselling, I had to restrain myself when the couple before me spoke at great length about how they planned a spectacular event for their reception, and dismissed any discussion I attempted to initiate concerning their relationship and how they proposed to address the difficulties and roadblocks that life often throws in the way of so-called marital bliss. The Haida narratives, as translated and transcribed by Bringham as sets of narratives in poetic form most suited to oral transmission reminded me of work I had done concerning various narratives in the Christian Old Testament, especially those of the prophets and the psalms. When approached from this perspective, the concept of methodological metaphor is heightened, as is one's perception and comprehension of the message contained in the metaphor.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Post-Contact Indigenous Spiritual Responses

Hayonwhatha (with Dkanawinda's help) had managed to "tame" Adodarhoh and his self-serving nature through acts of kindness, rather than trying to subdue him. The metaphorical Adodarhoh in human nature was kept in check by the regular ceremonies and the singing of the song of peace. However, it was then, as it is now, easy for Adodarhoh's nature to slip from the human subconscious and/or controlled confines, and thus become the motivator for life and action. This was demonstrated through contact with the colonizers and their influence. Certainly, it would be naïve to paint an idyllic existence wherein people of Adodarhoh's nature never made an appearance before contact. However, the need for communal co-operation in tending the Three Sisters, and the need for co-operation in all other areas pertaining to community survival, along with regular ceremonies, served to keep this nature in check.

Evidence indicates that even initial contact did not give rise to an Adodarhoh presence among the host nation(s), even though it seems patently obvious that it was the primary motivator in the nature of the colonizers and settlers arriving on Turtle Island. Perhaps the host nations didn't recognize its presence. Perhaps they did and were attempting to utilize traditional skills to "tame" and subdue it by providing much-needed assistance and succor in times of dire need, even including the colonisers in their annual Three Sisters Festival/Ceremony (American Thanksgiving). Perhaps the host nations were simply extending hospitality and courtesy to the newcomers, as they would to any "visitors" who seemed, at least, to have peaceful intentions, and simply wanted some space to cultivate their own crops (tobacco). Having the traditional knowledge to recognize the Adodarhoh nature, and the skills necessary to keep it in check, I would venture to say that the Adodarhoh nature of the colonisers was identified, at least among the Elders and leaders. But *this* Adodarhoh had a fierce intensity, single mindedness, and

cunningness about it that had not been encountered before. These, along with the determination to impose its will by any and every means possible (and the colonizers possessed many), proved to be more demoralizing, insidious, and infectious than any traditional medicine or known healing ceremony seemed to be able to address.

Predictably, given the horrendous odds the indigenous spiritual leaders and healers were facing, it wasn't long before members of the host nations became infected with the malady of the newcomers. It seems to have begun innocently enough (or so it may have appeared to the host nations) with trade that proved to be of mutual benefit. Trading was common to the Haudenosaunee, having been established over the centuries with other nations, with trade routes extending to the far reaches of Turtle Island. However, given the uniqueness of the items the Haudenosaunee received in trade from the newcomers, some individuals, i.e. those principally involved in the trading process, suddenly became more important in their own eyes than the community they were part of. That tendency may have been able to be initially addressed by the traditional methods within the community. But, as time progressed, the Adodarhoh of the colonizers reared his ugly head higher and higher, using cunning to introduce the demoralizing commodity of alcohol into the trading mix. Then, as the colonizers became braver and more numerous, they resorted to more obvious demoralizing techniques, such as destroying the stockpiles of stored "sisters" that the host nations depended upon for survival. The colonizers, after all, were not content to have their land to cultivate their own crops, they wanted *all* of it. To get what they wanted, a deliberate and determined effort was launched to rid the land of the host nations, so that the colonizers would have undisputed sovereignty. Jamestown, in 1607, was just the beginning.

Until 1763, when the French colonies became British, the Haudenosaunee were dealing with two different peoples, and, it seems with two differing approaches. The French seemed to develop their primary objective of trading in furs by being content to stay in settlements along the rivers, the routes that were important to the trade in furs. They did not need to acquire much land or gain permission to build their settlements for that. Often, they simply chose to inhabit well established communities by erecting their own buildings and fortifications on the same site. However, they seemed to support the Wyandots (Huron), the very people who had ostracised Dekanawida, and had consistently rejected any invitations to join the Haudenosaunee in their coalition of peace. So, while on the one hand, these people didn't seem that interested in unbridled acquisition of Haudenosaunee territory, they befriended and supported the traditional enemies of peace. In the British colonies to the South, however, the Haudenosaunee were faced with an insatiable appetite for acquiring land everywhere. Pontiac, in 1764 (Pontiac's Rebellion),<sup>224</sup> attempted to halt the continuous "land grab," but his efforts proved to be unsuccessful. So pernicious was the concerted effort to acquire land and demoralize and subdue the people, and so confusing were their words and actions (often one contradicting the other), that some of the Haudenosaunee supported the British in the Revolutionary War of 1775-1783, while others supported the revolutionaries. Finally, in 1794, the Haudenosaunee were split, fragmented, and even the moderate, peace-seeking leader (Brant) who refused land and money to place his weight behind the newly formed "nation" after the revolution, was effectively discounted.<sup>225</sup> For "in American eyes, a British lion lay crouched in the forests of Canada,

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<sup>224</sup> Bill Twatio, ("1763 tribal uprising ... Pontiac's rebellion; abandoned by their French allies, defeated and despised, the Native tribes of the northwest rally around an obscure Ottawa war chief.") (*Esprit de Corps*, Aug. 2005, p. 24+. *Gale OneFile: CPI.Q Canadian Periodicals*), <https://linkgalecom.uml.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/A163801194/CPI?u=winn62981&sid=CPI&xid=66710bf0>. Accessed Jan. 20, 2020.

<sup>225</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (Vintage Books, 1972), 161 & 162.

panting from past exertions but waiting only for an opportune moment to spring forth to recover the Crown's lost colonies. Thus Indian resistance was interpreted as part of a British conspiracy to destroy the new nation in its hour of birth."<sup>226</sup> The same was true of Haudenosaunee diplomacy (which was Brant's aim and forte), especially if it came (as in Brant's case) from a settlement of Haudenosaunee within British territory. So, with the aim of destroying the "British conspiracy" against them, including any possible collusion with them by Indigenous peoples, the newly formed nation set out to demoralize, conquer, and completely subdue any Indigenous peoples they encountered in their snowballing expansionist efforts.

It was to this fragmented, starving, desperate, demoralized, disillusioned, and disconsolate people, many of whom had fallen prey to alcoholism, that Handsome Lake brought his message of spiritual renewal. His revival message emerged out of his own experiences with "suffering from the Classic Iroquois bereavement syndrome compacted of depression, bitterness, and suspicion,"<sup>227</sup> as he mourned the death of his niece through the agency of witchcraft. It would be reasonable to assume that someone within the community would have approached him with the wampum belt of condolence, but if they did, this seems to have been ineffective in his case. While the consumption of alcohol would embolden him and provide him with momentary false courage (and emotional numbing), its effects would soon wear off, leaving a spiritual void in their place. Sick, and lying on his (as presumed by others) death bed on June 15, 1799, Handsome Lake had a vision in which he met three emissaries. Some accounts have four emissaries,<sup>228</sup> but this seems to be a combination of the June 15 vision and a subsequent one on

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid. 161.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. 240.

<sup>228</sup> Bruce Elliott Johansen and Barbara Alice Mann, *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee Iroquois Confederacy* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000), 147.

August 7.<sup>229</sup> These emissaries instructed him to begin a spiritual revival among his people by warning them of the dangers of four evil “words” that the Creator was displeased with. “The four evil words are whiskey, witchcraft, love magic, and abortion-and-sterility medicine.”<sup>230</sup>

Subsequent developments of Handsome Lake’s attempts to restore the age initiated by Dekanawida can be described a millenarian, as the objective was to restore the Second Epoch. However, perhaps due to Handsome Lake’s own spiritual paucity (and that of many of his people), the impetus for restoration came from a decidedly apocalyptic vision. If the people did not return to the old ways (of the Second Epoch) they could expect dire consequences. To categorise the movement as *either* apocalyptic *or* millenarian would be only half right, for it was “both and” in the sense that, if the return to the Second Epoch was not successful, the catastrophic end of the people loomed large. Although Handsome Lake himself was guilty of getting drunk, then singing sacred songs while inebriated, his spiritual and emotional suffering was presumably his absolution. Everyone else was to confess their transgressions publicly if they were moderate transgressions; privately to Handsome Lake if these transgressions were more severe, and only to the Creator if their transgressions were of a heinous nature. Everyone was, once a transgression was confessed, never to repeat it.

Upon his revival, Handsome Lake repeated what he had been told, an assembly was called, and dried berries and were consumed by everyone as Handsome Lake had directed. Presumably, the dried berries were huckleberries, since the emissaries each held a huckleberry bush in one hand.<sup>231</sup> Although I could find no reference to the medicinal use of huckleberries among the Haudenosaunee, I did find reference to their use for medicinal purposes among the

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<sup>229</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (Vintage Books, 1972), 242ff.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid. 241.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

West Coast Salish people,<sup>232</sup> and indications that they may have been part of the diet (fresh or dried) among the Haudenosaunee as well. On the other hand, since this was happening just the day before the annual Strawberry Festival, and the emissaries gave Handsome Lake specific instructions that this festival should always be held at that time, the “berries” in question may well have been strawberries. At the assembled gathering, Handsome Lake’s brother Cornplanter repeated the message that had been given to Handsome Lake in his vision. This narration was recorded by a Quaker missionary who was present, and upon hearing it, felt moved to add his own laudatory words at the end of Cornplanter’s recital. These laudatory comments were well received by the assembly, as well as Handsome Lake’s sister who, along with her husband had been chosen by Handsome Lake (as he was instructed in his vision) to become Handsome Lake’s personal physicians.

The presence of the Quakers in the area, who seemed to support Handsome Lake in his efforts, has led many to assume that Handsome Lake was taking *their* concepts and re-working them so that the result would be an adoption of the so-called “Protestant Work Ethic” by his people. But, upon close examination, Handsome Lake’s Gaiwiiio (gospel?) was an attempt at a revival and adaptation of the ancient ways of his people to address current circumstances. “Handsome Lake was thus not introducing a radically new religion; he was endorsing and reviving the old.”<sup>233</sup> It was a revelation that the traditional spiritual approach had within it the latent power and efficacy to address the present circumstances and that, if the people could recognise this quality within it and themselves, they could find a way out of the present morass they found themselves in. The problem was not that the traditional spiritual approach had become outmoded or had lost its efficacy in the face of the new reality imposed upon the people

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<sup>232</sup> [https://underc.nd.edu/assets/174603/fullsize/strass\\_2010.pdf](https://underc.nd.edu/assets/174603/fullsize/strass_2010.pdf), last accessed May 20, 2019.

<sup>233</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (Vintage Books, 1972), 251.

by the colonizers. The problem originated in the people themselves, for it was *they* who had neglected the teachings and ceremonies that had been given to them long ago, giving Adodorah's nature free reign over their spirits. By *re-introducing* the people to Tarachiawagon (the hero, Creator in the visions), and Tawiskaron (the hero's evil twin, Punisher and destroyer in the visions), and to the Four Winds (four emissaries in the visions), Handsome Lake meant to return the people to the spiritual precepts by which they had governed their lives for centuries. In working to restore their spiritual health, physical health, and ability to choose wisely for themselves in the present circumstances, Handsome Lake hoped to halt, and even reverse the adverse effects of poor decisions the people had made over the course of their contact with the colonizers. They need not feel spiritually defenceless and helpless in the face of the onslaught, but needed to understand that they possessed the strength to overcome the systematic erosion of their spiritual base; that the spiritual powers that they relied on had more power, knowledge, and ability than the people had suspected.<sup>234</sup>

Certainly, the presence of the Quakers was part of a plan to "civilize" Indigenous peoples<sup>235</sup> by governments and their agencies. However, "The general tolerance of Seneca religious belief and custom was based on the Quaker conviction that every human being, not merely the Christians, entertains an inner light that evinces itself as the voice of natural conscience."<sup>236</sup> That they supported Handsome Lake and his people is quite true, but there seems to have been little in the way of interference or undue pressure to convert to Christianity. It has been observed that "each Iroquois tribe, and even each band or reservation community, maintained its own more or less form of the general system" of the traditional belief system that

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid. 291ff.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid. 276.

was hundreds of years old.<sup>237</sup> “It was, Handsome Lake said, man’s duty to follow the traditional ceremonies.”<sup>238</sup> So, it wasn’t the “Protestant Work Ethic” that the people were adopting under Handsome Lake’s leadership but rather, they were heeding his call to return to the traditional practices that had been a major factor of their spiritual approach since the days of Dkanawinda and the establishment of the Haudenosaunee..

What appeared new however, was the revelation of a final journey to a place of either bliss or torment, the destination to be determined by one’s adherence or non-adherence to the Gaiwiiio. This is another aspect of Handsome Lake’s teaching that seem to have led some to assume that Handsome Lake “borrowed” much of what he proclaimed from the colonizers’ Christian (Quaker) gospel. But this apocalyptic aspect seems more of a warning to get people’s attention and bring them face to face with the reality of their current spiritual paucity (as mentioned above) and *does* echo the concept of The Good Twin and The Evil Twin of traditional Haudenosaunee spiritual narratives.<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, when questioned concerning the fate of those who had died before the revelation of the Gaiwiiio, Handsome Lake had no definitive response, saying: “They are therefore in a place separate and unknown to us, we think, enjoying themselves.”<sup>240</sup> A gentle rebuff, it seems to me, of those who insist on dissecting *any* spiritual approach that seems different than their own with the purpose of finding some inconsistency with which to disqualify its claim to genuine spiritual origin and efficacy. It wasn’t after all, the fate of those who had gone before that was being addressed and considered, but the fate of those present and still to come that preoccupied Handsome Lake’s thinking and attempts to motivate his people to return to the was of the Second Epoch that they had abandoned.

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid. 317. (Parenthetical clarification mine.)

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. 318.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid. 316.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. 252.

As well received as the Gaiwiiio was, however, there were some aspects of his current society that Handsome Lake wanted to do away with but couldn't. One that troubled him the most seems to have been the prevalence of secret medicine societies which, in his mind, smacked of witchcraft, one of the four evils he had been advised to lead the people away from. Considering that he had lost someone to witchcraft, this affected him on a deep personal level.<sup>241</sup> Concerning aspects of traditional practice that Handsome Lake was attempting abolish, one view states that "it is noteworthy that Handsome Lake was minimizing the traditional ceremonial opportunities for cathartic relief of the unsatisfied wishes of the soul,"<sup>242</sup> and the people were therefore reluctant to part with these ceremonies as Handsome lake suggested they should. With his focus firmly on the future, he seems to have forgotten the need to deal with the past first as a means of empowerment, as suggested in the Condolence Ceremony.

Death of a loved one, especially if that death could have been avoided or was by the agency of another, is perhaps the most difficult blow to deal with. Handsome Lake's personal grief over the death of his niece through the agency of witchcraft was addressed in his determination to abolish all witchcraft and anything that appeared as such. When the very societies and ceremonies he suspected of harboring witches persisted, much to his chagrin, he didn't seem to pay much attention to a balanced examination of them, keeping what was beneficial and reforming or removing that which wasn't. Instead he allowed his personal grief to cloud his vision and condemned them outright. And, as his popularity and sway over the minds and spirits of the people grew, so did his personal Adodaroh. Through the sickness of Cornplanter's daughter (Handsome Lake's niece) and a dispute over land,<sup>243</sup> both situations

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid. 240, 252, 253.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid. 253.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. 255 – 261.

being resolved, it was claimed by Handsome Lake, through his agency and defiant stand against witches and their practice, his prominence and power in the community reached new heights. “Handsome Lake’s position was virtually, if only briefly, that of a dictator.”<sup>244</sup> It seems that he became, for a time, preoccupied with identifying witches (usually female witches). However, since his own proclamations allowed for confession and recanting as an approach, it seems that there were no executions of witches as in the past.

So, while on the one hand the old code had been modified to allow for an alternative approach, on the other, the person who was ushering in the rejuvenated spiritual approach himself fell prey (if only for a time) to one of the spiritual maladies that the historical approach had warned against. As a result, his influence in the political and social life of the community waned and was soon replaced by an approach (perhaps closer to the teaching of the Second Epoch) that he had not sanctioned. However, his influence on the spiritual life of his people persists in the Gaiwiio that was remembered, recorded by his followers after Handsome Lake’s death, and continued to be recited by adherents to it in the traditional way of presentation, with modifications by the orator to suite the time, conditions, and situations in which the people found themselves.

An observation by a colonizer in 1809 concerning a Council of the Six Nations that “it was thought there were about One Thousand, and I dont (sic) remember to see one Drunken Indian amongst them”<sup>245</sup> seems to speak, on the one hand to a colonizer stereotype of the people, and on the other of the Gaiwiio’s efficacy in returning the thoughts of the people to sober and traditional methods of dealing with their social, economic and political life. As mentioned above, the Gaiwiio was not reactionary. It was revivalist in its tenure, seeking to re-acquaint the people

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid. 261.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid. 310.

with their spiritual legacy as a grounding for their approach and methods of dealing with their current situation. As a result, clan mothers and clan councils approached, embraced, and began to thrive in their new environment, speaking to the historical resiliency of their traditional approaches, and of the people themselves. Once they realized that adaptation to new methods of survival and existence didn't mean that they had to abandon their ancient spiritual consciousness, they approached them with vigor and determination. "Handsome Lake did not consider that his revelations and the gospels that issued from them constituted a new religion."<sup>246</sup> His mission was to revitalize his people "and thereby to guide his people toward a better life in this world and salvation in the next."<sup>247</sup> Once the people understood that they weren't being called away from their traditions to a new religion, as all Handsome Lake's preoccupation with secret societies and witchcraft may have lead them to believe, they followed the call and returned to their traditional spiritual precepts. As a result, as Handsome Lake indicated they would, they prospered, even though the physical circumstances they found themselves in were far removed from those of Dkanawinda and Hayonwatha's time. Perhaps the most fitting commentary on the whole question concerning the supposed Christian influence in the apocalyptic nature and many other aspects of the Gaiwiiio may be in the way Handsome Lake's death was dealt with by his followers. "In due course the ceremony of condolence required by his office as chief of the League was performed, and his successor to the title ... was installed."<sup>248</sup>

So, although Handsome Lake's revitalization of traditional spiritual precepts began with an apocalyptic vision and warning, the Gaiwiiio is not a new, apocalyptic-centered belief system, but a return to an approach that had served the people well since its inception hundreds of years

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid. 315.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid. 315 & 316.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid. 320.

previously. Because it was a return to the ways of tradition, it was not a new movement in the technical sense, so it I would not categorise it as millenarian either.

For a more apocalyptic-centered approach to spiritual revival, with its apocalyptic elements possibly the consequences of pessimism that grows from a failed millenarian approach, consider Wovoka, and his proclamation and inception of The Ghost Dance Religion (nanigukwa, ‘dance in a circle’)<sup>249</sup> of 1890. Although Wovoka (aka Jack Wilson) was a Northern Paiute, “Ghost Dance ceremonies were practiced by the Sioux, the Cheyenne, the Comanche, the Shoshone, the Arapaho, the Assiniboin, and other tribes of the Trans-Mississippi West.”<sup>250</sup> But Wovoka’s influence didn’t end there. It has also been documented as existing among the Lakota of Saskatchewan.<sup>251</sup>

Wovoka’s “Great Revelation” took place on New Year’s Day in 1889. In a comatose state, from which he awakened at or near the end of the solar eclipse that occurred that day, he reported that he had been to heaven and conversed with God.<sup>252</sup> Moreover, the land that he saw in his vision seemed to be an idyllic after-life, available to all those who observed the instructions and commands he had been told to give them. Note that the initial vision was (as in Handsome Lake’s case) apocalyptic in nature. Wovoka was given five songs for his own use, each with its power over the natural elements.<sup>253</sup> Evidence indicates that “dances” quite similar to the one Wovoka instructed his followers to perform were being held quite frequently by the

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<sup>249</sup> Michael Hittman (Don Lynch Ed.), *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance, Expanded Edition*, (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1997), 63.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid. Foreword, by David Thompson.

<sup>251</sup> Alice B. Keho, *The Ghost Dance Religion In Saskatchewan, Canada* (Plains Anthropologist, Vol. 13, No. 42, Part 1 November, 1968, Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of the Plains Anthropological Society), Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25666806>, Last Accessed July 5, 2019.

<sup>252</sup> Michael, Hittman (Edited by Don Lynch), *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance Expanded Edition* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1997), 63.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. 64.

people as early as 1888,<sup>254</sup> but there is some confusion as to whether these were Ghost Dances or some other celebration or gathering. The 1890 date seems to coincide with rain that served to end a prolonged drought, the rain presumably coming at the behest of Wovoka.<sup>255</sup> Wovoka's powers over natural elements, while they were quite efficacious in garnering people's attention and continued to impress those around (including non-Indigenous people), adding to his prowess as a prophet, were not, however, the principle focus of the man or his message.

Initially, the message was one that I consider an attempt at revitalising and encouraging, presumably as a response to Christian admonitions that all "pagans" (i.e. non-Christian Indigenous people) were headed directly for torment. Wovoka proclaimed: "the dead are alive again, ...when their friends die, they must not cry."<sup>256</sup> In the prophesied future, the earth would die, but the people needn't be afraid, for the earth would come alive again, with all animals (especially the buffalo) and Indigenous peoples once again abundant upon it, with no colonisers or sceptics within the Indigenous communities surviving the holocaust.<sup>257</sup> The dance which Wovoka had been given is described as: "the dance of goodness. It comes from heaven. It has a purpose. It will make your people free, and will make them glad."<sup>258</sup> Interestingly enough, even though the idyllic afterlife (or the life after an apocalyptic restoration) Wovoka spoke of was bereft of colonisers, Wovoka's initial instructions were that his people cease any animosity against the colonizers (who were desecrating the sacred groves of pine nuts in their inexhaustible need for firewood and search for gold and silver),<sup>259</sup> The people could even work for the colonisers if the opportunity arose (as Wovoka and others had on many occasions).<sup>260</sup> In

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid. 65.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid. 68.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid. 24 & 25.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid. 54 & 55.

addition, they were not to hurt or harm anyone, to do right always, and not to drink whiskey. The initial message, therefore, seems to have been a moralistic one, with the intention of preparing for the expected apocalypse that The Creator would certainly visit upon the earth. As such, it was preventative as opposed to millenarian, instructing the people on how to avoid being on the wrong side (i.e. among those to be destroyed), so they could be among those who enjoyed the new existence to be brought into being after the current world was destroyed.

When word spread of this new revelation, delegates from other Indigenous Nations began to arrive to hear it, notably Short Bull and Kicking Bear of the Lakota in November of 1889, and Good Thunder, Cloud Horse, Yellow Knife, and Short Bull of the Lakota a year later.<sup>261</sup> Since the colonizers were in the habit of attending any public meetings Wovoka held, and because his message contained the apocalyptic prophesy that all colonisers would be destroyed and not revived in the new creation that was to follow, Wovoka seems to have initially modified his message to a more millenarian bent, then moved away from prying coloniser eyes (mostly local newspaper reporters) to hold consultations in private. He eventually retired into semi-seclusion “when he wearied of rumors and falsehoods attributed to him.”<sup>262</sup>

If indeed, Wovoka’s message was that Indigenous people should live in peace with the colonisers, and simply make sure that they were on the right side of the impending apocalypse, then one can readily understand his withdrawal from the community where the coloniser newspaper reporters seem to have been quite interested in this new movement, always warily present, it would seem, whenever any gathering of Indigenous peoples took place, large or small. While some of their presence can be attributed to curiosity, there seems to have been an equally potent motivation to scrutinize, based primarily on paranoia. While on the one hand there were

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. 103 & 104.

certainly many who were at pains to paint Wovoka as a charlatan whenever he demonstrated his powers, on the other there were those who were willing to sensationalise aspects of his message, especially the all Indigenous (no coloniser) aspect of the world that would exist after the prophesied apocalypse. They even went so far as to stoke the fires of hysteria over an impending (or so anticipated) Indigenous uprising that was intent of hastening the apocalypse.<sup>263</sup> The fear of an uprising had, it seems, origins in Wovoka's demonstrations that he was impervious to bullets, dating back to at least one reported incident of a rabbit hunt (where shotguns were used, not rifles). Wovoka was hit with shotgun pellets and survived, leaving only red spots where the shot had hit him.<sup>264</sup> When one remembers that the most common undergarment of the time was long woolen underwear (long johns), the account seems quite naturally plausible, devoid of any demonstration of supernatural powers Wovoka may have been rumoured (or claimed) to have had..

Short Bull's account of meeting Wovoka<sup>265</sup> seems to echo other accounts of his teaching to live peacefully with the colonisers, living a moral life, and to wait for the time when all would be made right again, with the assurance that Indigenous people would be reunited (through the agency of God) with those who had died, to live life as it had been intended for them from the beginning. However, "Kicking Bear and Short Bull were nonprogressive (sic) traditionalists. They refused to live as the whites demanded, and they expected the destruction of the white man and the return of the old way of life."<sup>266</sup> Further, the delegates who had visited Wovoka "said that the whites would be punished, but it would be the Messiah who would punish them,"<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid. 261.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid. 87 & 88.

<sup>265</sup> Rani-Henrik Andersson, *The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 2008), 35-37.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. 40.

presumably as part of the forthcoming apocalypse. But these (Kicking Bear and Short Bull) were individualised, local approaches within the message containing general encompassing concepts shared by all.<sup>268</sup> There is evidence that large gatherings and dances were held upon Kicking Bear and Short Bulls' return to the Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations, but these were soon quashed by the Indian Agent, so that "the Lakotas continued their ceremonies in secrecy."<sup>269</sup> Because the dances were kept secret, it isn't known how many people were dancing. However, with the devastating drought of the summer of 1890, and resultant impoverished condition of the people (exacerbated by Congress reducing appropriations for the reservations), the dances again became public, and more and more people in many locals began to dance, in the hope that their situation would be alleviated through the promised return to life as they had traditionally known it, even to the point where they were emboldened enough to defy (at Pine Ridge) the Agent's attempts to halt the dances.<sup>270</sup>

After being prohibited by coloniser governments and agencies from holding any public spiritual practices for so long, the people, now emboldened with spiritual revival, once again found some hope and succor for their lives and the impoverished and powerless situation they found themselves in. The day was fast approaching when the current miseries would be all done away with, and all would be restored to the way it should be, with no colonisers remaining to kill all the buffalo and suppress and impoverish the people who had historically depended on the buffalo for their livelihood. Thus, their version of the Ghost Dance incorporated a sweat lodge, smoking the traditional pipe, the center pole of the Sundance, and traditional symbols of renewal,

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<sup>268</sup> This Theses, Chapter 2.

<sup>269</sup> Rani-Henrik Andersson, *The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 2008), 41f.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.* 42-45.

unity and peace.<sup>271</sup> By incorporating many of the important traditions and ceremonies in one grand, apocalyptic hope, the dancers were essentially already in a sense participating in the coming apocalypse. While on the one hand, the dance anticipated the prophesied apocalypse, on the other, and at the same time, many seemed to believe that it was instrumental in hastening its coming.

Recalling that they had heard that the undershirt worn by Wovoka had prevented the shotgun pellets from permeating his skin, leaving only red dots instead, Ghost Dancers of the Lakota began wearing “the sacred shirt,” both as undergarments in their daily lives, and as their primary garment during the dance. The “shirts” were of cloth, decorated with colours and symbols of traditional Lakota significance, and therefore strong testaments to the belief in renewal and re-creation (and strong medicine as well).<sup>272</sup> Significantly, there were no weapons depicted in the decoration of the sacred shirt (known as the “Ghost Shirt” among the colonizers), even though bows and arrows were commonly depicted on other articles and clothing used by the people. This would suggest that they were peacefully anticipating that things would be made right again by divine agency. If the dances hastened the event, that was a reason to hold them, and hold them frequently, but any thought of hastening it by the people themselves taking up arms seems to be decidedly absent. In some instances, no attachment or accoutrement deriving from colonizer culture were to be used, but other dancing groups seemed oblivious to this restriction, while others (Southern Cheyenne) didn’t incorporate the use of the shirt in any form.<sup>273</sup> The absence of weaponry as decorations seems, in itself, to indicate the absence of militancy in even the Lakota version of the dance, which is generally portrayed as the most

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid. 55f.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid. 67f.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid. 68.

militant version of it. When the belief in the protective power of the shirts among the Lakota grew (said to make one impervious to the colonizer's bullets), that was not necessarily a new concept among them, since the power was in the symbols painted on the shirt, not in the shirt itself, and sacred symbols painted on the body as a means of protection from harm in an attack was a part of their traditional belief system.<sup>274</sup>

Their history of contact with colonizers quite naturally lead them to believe that they would undoubtedly be targeted as they had been in the past, especially now that they were rediscovering and redefining themselves as a people, in defiance of the colonizer's expressed desire to dominate and eradicate their culture and even the people themselves. Their belief, therefore, in the power of the ancient symbols as protection from what they had been facing for so long, was a return to the traditional beliefs, even though expressed in a new format, the Ghost Dance. Re-discovering their spiritual strength as a people gave them the courage to defy the colonizer pressure to either assimilate and be dominated or be eradicated. Because the colonizers began to appreciate that their goal of total dominance over the people was being questioned, they chose to interpret this questioning and return to spiritual traditions as militancy.

Certainly, Wovoka's message was one of peace and peaceful existence, dancing to renew and revive the spirit while anticipating the coming apocalypse that would set things right again. It seems that the threat of a militant "Indian Uprising" was manufactured out of colonizer paranoia and media sensationalism, since the percentage of ghost dancers of the total population was as low as 10% in some locations, and only reached 40% at the Pine Ridge location, by even a generous estimate.<sup>275</sup> "Short Bull emphasized that the supernatural powers would destroy the whites only if the whites attacked the ghost dancers. They will help only if the Indians had to

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid. 70-73.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid. 76.

defend themselves.”<sup>276</sup> One analyst notes: “The Lakota ghost dancers became hostile, or warlike, only when the whites tried to interfere in their religious ceremonies.”<sup>277</sup> Even when the army troops appeared in November, 20, 1890, one ghost dancer remembered: “We did not carry our guns nor any weapons, but trusted the Great Spirit to destroy the soldiers.”<sup>278</sup> However, the intimidating tactic of the arrival of troops in the vicinity had just the opposite effect. Afraid, the people began to put aside any differences they may have had, along with any varying interpretations they may have had of the message that accompanied the dance to band together and move away from central locations and the prying eyes of agents and newspaper reporters alike. Even people who hadn’t been dancers joined the dancers’ camps for protection in numbers in fear of the escalating colonial military presence.

Safety in numbers and remoteness in camps were beneficial to the people, but again, they were interpreted as hostile actions by the colonizers. The Lakota at “The Stronghold,” a camp on a plateau in the north part of Pine Ridge Reservation, would help themselves to cattle to feed the camp from nearby herds. Some of these cattle had been abandoned by their *Lakota* (not colonizer) owners as they fled, either to the Stronghold or to what they hoped was the safety of the agency. However, the taking of these cattle was another action sensationalised and used by the colonizers to convince themselves of the hostile intent of the people. Pressure and intimidating demonstrations of force on the part of the colonizers lead to disagreements concerning the way forward among the dancers, some abandoning The Stronghold, others staying. Sitting Bull was still residing at the Standing Rock Reservation. He had not embraced the Ghost Dance, although one report from General Miles named him as a leader.<sup>279</sup> His

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid. 74.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid. 76.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid. 79.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. 141f.

intention had been to join the people at The Stronghold to speak with them, but he wasn't allowed to when he asked permission from the agency. Sitting Bull had also proposed other means of diffusing the tense situation, but was shot and killed on December 15, 1890<sup>280</sup> by a member of the "Indian Police" in the employ of the colonizers and their agent, McLaughlin.

Although there is rather spurious evidence to indicate that Sitting Bull's murder had anything whatsoever to do with the Ghost Dance,<sup>281</sup> it was dramatized and presented by some among the Lakota as indicative of increasing hostility by the colonizers. Additionally, it evoked fear, frustration, and anger among people who knew and respected Sitting Bull and his past efforts to calm the situation, especially Kicking Horse, leader of the people at The Stronghold. Kicking Horse undoubtedly came to the conclusion that, if the colonizers could deal with someone as respected as Sitting Bull in such a fashion, even though he had always indicated his willingness to negotiate with them during his time at Standing Rock, then he, Kicking Horse, could expect nothing less for himself and his people. His fears were realized at Wounded Knee, where the colonizers senselessly and indiscriminately hunted down and murdered unarmed, defenseless men, women, and children, convincing themselves they had fought against an uprising (some even speaking of extracting revenge for Custer's defeat), while the peoples' accounts told of a merciless massacre, premeditated and cruel.<sup>282</sup> The harshness of the winter, and the overwhelming numbers and superiority of weapons and murderous intent of the colonizers soon took their toll, leading to disunity and disillusionment concerning the spiritual and physical benefits of the Ghost Dance among the people who had taken refuge at The Stronghold. On January 15, 1891,<sup>283</sup> the remaining disciples of the movement among the Lakota

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid. 84 & 85.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid. 86.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid. 89 – 94.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid. 97ff.

seemed to have abandoned it. At least formally, for it seems, many never abandoned either the principles of the traditional ways that were the key to spiritual survival, or the hope that the anticipated apocalyptic event would, in its own time, usher in the new (or renewed) life that they believed was foretold.

That the spiritual benefits of the Ghost Dance among the Lakota was not irretrievably quashed and lost to history by the physical presence of soldiers, guns, and murderous intent, can be illustrated by the fact that, in 1968, Alice B. Kehoe found “a congregation that may be the last group practicing the Ghost Dance religion inspired by Wovoka.”<sup>284</sup> A Saskatchewan Archives picture dated after 1900,<sup>285</sup> depicts some dancers on a street in Prince Albert. Although there is no information on the dance itself, it does speak to the relationship that the townspeople of Prince Albert had with their neighbours across the river.<sup>286</sup> The Dakota people of Wahpeton had crossed the border seeking refuge after the Dakota Wars in the United States in 1862, reminding the British of past Dakota alliances with them (in 1776 and 1812) by showing the King George Medals they had received in gratitude for their assistance to the British.<sup>287</sup>

The Ghost Dance was brought to the people at Wahpeton by an Assiniboine, Fred Robinson. He (Robinson) had received instruction from Kicking Bear in 1902, who had in turn received it from Wovoka.<sup>288</sup> Robinson’s involvement, and his desire to spread the Ghost Dance message to the people of Prince Albert who were asking for it is illustrated in his personal correspondence with Wovoka.<sup>289</sup> In the vision that came to Kicking Bear in a sweat Wovoka

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<sup>284</sup> Alice B. Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance Religion In Saskatchewan, Canada* (Plains Anthropologist, Vol. 13, No. 42, Part 1 November, 1968) Taylor & Francis Ltd. On behalf of the Plains Anthropological Society, 296.

<sup>285</sup> <https://www.saskarchives.com/node/224>, last accessed November 16, 2019.

<sup>286</sup> [https://www.saskarchives.com/Dakota\\_Dance\\_PA](https://www.saskarchives.com/Dakota_Dance_PA), last accessed November 16, 2019.

<sup>287</sup> [https://www.saskarchives.com/dakota\\_Intro\\_Essay](https://www.saskarchives.com/dakota_Intro_Essay), last accessed November 16, 2019.

<sup>288</sup> Alice B Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance Religion In Saskatchewan, Canada* (Plains Anthropologist, Vol. 13, No. 42, Part 1 November, 1968, Taylor & Francis Ltd. On behalf of the Plains Anthropological Society), 296.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.* 297.

had prepared for him, he saw, not only people who had passed from this life living in the traditional way, but also The Creator, who confirmed that the ancient spiritual ways were still as valid and powerful as they had always been.<sup>290</sup> The only caveats being that: (1) upon a person's death, mourning was a contrary emotion, unfitting in view of the joy that the deceased was enjoying in the new land to which they had travelled, so red facial paint was to be used to express joy; and (2) that placing the deceased person's body on a scaffold was to be replaced with burial of the body.<sup>291</sup> Kicking Bear was given a pipe, the most sacred of Lakota spiritual objects, with an eagle feather attached. This led to the practice (as Kicking Bear was instructed) of wearing an eagle feather in one's hair as one danced.

The message as conveyed to the Dakota near Prince Albert seems to echo Wovoka's message more succinctly than the corresponding message presumed to be prevalent among The Stronghold group, although, as I have indicated earlier, there is ample evidence to indicate that what was presumed to be the message at The Stronghold has been corrupted by colonizer media sensationalism, prejudice, and paranoia. "The Saskatchewan legend may be considered also authentic."<sup>292</sup> It has been observed that:

the Saskatchewan legend taught by Fred Robinson after 1902 reproduces the essence of Wilson's own vision."<sup>293</sup> It didn't supplant the traditional Dakota spirituality, but augmented it, adding the concept that, living according to the traditional exhortations was not only one's community responsibility, but also instrumental in ensuring one's ultimate happiness in being reunited with those of one's people who had passed from this world into the next.<sup>294</sup>

In spite of the message's exhortation to live in peace with the colonisers, and even with the absence of any provocation on the part of the Dakotas, it seems that there were some echoes

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid. 299.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid. 300.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid. 301.

in Saskatchewan of the paranoia that was evidenced at Pine Ridge, since the North-West Mounted Police were called to investigate presumed Ghost Dance activity in Saskatchewan, but found no evidence to indicate that the fears of agitation or an impending uprising were grounded in reality,<sup>295</sup> nor could they find any evidence that the Ghost Dance even existed, indicating that the harsh lessons learned from Wounded Knee had been heeded. The colonisers were not to be trusted. Anything of traditional spiritual nature among the people needed to be well hidden, lest it be used as an excuse for further repression. It was only a few years before The Ghost Dance that the people of the area had witnessed, or heard of, the coloniser military presence just south-south-west of Prince Albert, at Batoche (Louis Riel, 1895), and Duck Lake (Almighty Voice, 1897).<sup>296</sup>

“Not even the white friend most highly esteemed by the Saskatchewan Ghost Dancers realizes that they practiced a religion neither Christian nor traditionally Dakota.”<sup>297</sup> This is an indication that the developing Indigenous spiritual response to colonizer presence was to continue with their traditional (and modified traditional) spiritual approach and practice, but to do so with the full realization that absolute secrecy was now required, for even the most trusted colonizer (even anthropologists) could record and reveal the secret proceedings, and thereby cause hardship for the people and repression of Indigenous spiritual concepts and practices. As Wovoka himself had retreated from coloniser view and scrutiny, so also did not only his followers in Saskatchewan but, as we have discovered, most other Indigenous groups practicing the traditional spiritual ceremonies and sharing of traditional knowledge. The wisdom, foresight,

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid. 298.

<sup>296</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/almighty-voice>, last accessed July 5, 2019.

<sup>297</sup> Alice B. Kehoe, *The Ghost Dance Religion In Saskatchewan, Canada* (Plains Anthropologist, Vol. 13, No. 42, Part 1 November, 1968 Taylor & Francis Ltd. On behalf of the Plains Anthropological Society), 296. Ibid. 300.

and resiliency of these Elders and leaders who preserved the traditions away from prying colonizer eyes, deserves to be acknowledged and applauded, for without them the richness of Indigenous spirituality could have been lost to us. That the colonisers could misunderstand a spiritual message of peaceful co-existence and twist it into a message of resistance and impending threat of armed insurrection, was a bitter lesson for the people to learn, one repeated in many locations and circumstances within the Indigenous world.

One other such “lesson” that may have contributed to the developing secrecy of Indigenous spiritual practices involved the Grass Dance, the Indigenous people of Oak River (Sioux Valley), and the colonisers in and around Rapid City Manitoba, in July of 1902,<sup>298</sup> the year that Robinson brought the Ghost Dance to the Dakota near Prince Albert. The people of Oak River were Dakota<sup>299</sup> as well and brought with them their traditional spiritual heritage when they moved north. They embraced and succeeded in agricultural practices in their new location, as they previously had in Minnesota prior to their 1862 migration to Sioux Valley. “From the mid-1880s until 1892, with the exception of the crop of 1889, the Oak River Dakota made outstanding advances in agriculture.”<sup>300</sup> They seem to have become even more successful (perhaps due to the traditional communal nature of tribal endeavors) than the colonizers working their individual farms in the area.

I suspect that their economic success (possibly resulting in jealousy among the colonisers) was an integral component of the circumstances surrounding the arrest and conviction of Wanduta for presumably organising the three-day Grass Dance at the request of the

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<sup>298</sup> Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 190-1950* (Published for The Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History; published by University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1999), 56-102.

<sup>299</sup> [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb\\_history/06/oakriveragriculture.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/06/oakriveragriculture.shtml), last accessed June 16, 2019.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

coordinator of the Rapid City agricultural fair in July, 1902. There is also evidence that Wanduta's arrest and conviction may also have been somewhat aided and abetted by Tunkan Cekinyana, who seems to have had been involved in internal band rivalry with Wanduta.<sup>301</sup> Tunkan Cekinyana's actions and the subsequent political and economic misfortunes of the band under his leadership tends to remind me of the derogatory colloquial phrase "Uncle Tom-Tom"<sup>302</sup> borrowed and adapted from Harriett Beecher Stowe,<sup>303</sup> and used to describe Indigenous persons who were willing to contradict and ignore their traditional spirituality in return for personal gain by aiding and abetting the colonisers in their domination of their people.

But the circumstances of Wanduta's case, while they could have understandably lead to the secrecy that would shroud traditional Indigenous spiritual practices and hide them from the colonisers for many years, also indicate a shrewdness in the approach of Indigenous Elders and spiritual leaders in endeavoring to continue and cultivate traditional Indigenous spiritual approaches and ceremonies. Through The Indian Act and its agencies and agents, coupled with the Residential School System, the colonisers were desirous of eradicating traditional Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices. However, the colonisers' fascinations with Indigenous people and their traditions led them to invite Indigenous people to stage "exhibitions" of dance and culture, usually in association with their agricultural fairs and exhibitions, as was the case in Rapid City. Only a few of the colonisers would be "brave" enough (or cared enough) to visit Indigenous people in their own settlements. If, however, Indigenous people were to accept an invitation to

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid. 77ff.

<sup>302</sup> I recall having first heard this derogatory phrase from Harold Cardinal (Author of *The Unjust Society The Tragedy of Canada's Indians*, M.G. Hurtig Publishers, Edmonton, 1969). My recollection, however, is not precise. Although I tend to remember an all-night conversation in the wheelhouse of The Radium Trader (the boat I was working on) while we were docked at Fort Chipewyan one summer night in 1970, I may be remembering his visit to a class I was taking at the University of Lethbridge in 1974 or 1975.

<sup>303</sup> Harriett Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin: Life Among The Lowly* (first published in two volumes by John P. Jewett & Company, Boston, 1852).

stage exhibitions within the context of a “safe” environment, then the colonisers could come to gawk at the “pagan” rituals and satisfy their curiosity concerning these “strange” people who were the historical inhabitants of the land the ploughs and roads were carving up to satisfy the colonisers’ agenda. These invitations were prevalent among many small coloniser communities, but more notable was the larger, annual Calgary Stampede, resplendent with its “Indian Village” and dance exhibitions, where thousands were able to satisfy their curiosity within the safe confines of a coloniser-controlled environment.

Coloniser curiosity often ran counter to official coloniser policies. Shrewd Elders were able to organise and hold forbidden ceremonies under the guise of the cultural exhibitions that they had been invited by the colonisers to present. In Rapid City, Wanduta and his people were invited by the local governing authorities to stage an exhibition of dance, even though such dances had been deemed outlawed by Government of Canada policies and legislation. The telling component here is that, while invited to dance for one day during the agricultural fair, Wanduta and his people staged a full, three-day Grass Dance, as mandated by traditional spiritual concepts. How many times, and in how many cases, shrewd Indigenous spiritual leaders were able to employ coloniser curiosity to circumvent coloniser policies so that they could uphold and maintain traditional Indigenous spiritual practices would require some concentrated study, but this case seems to indicate that it happened often. In the case of the Ghost Dance near Prince Albert, it was noted by Kehoe (pg. 301) that an “Owl Dance” persisted among the people up to, and including, the time of her 1968 study of the Ghost Dance phenomena there. This dance, according to her conversations with a Ghost Dance leader, utilised “the tunes of Kicking Bear’s Ghost Dance songs, though altering the words.” Even non-Indigenous people were invited to join. If it is the tunes (the rhythmic drum beat and not necessarily the words) that are the essence

of communication with Wakan Tanka, establishing a connection that supersedes verbal utterances, then, under the guise of a secular dance, Ghost Dance spirituality continued, but on a level not easily appreciated by many colonisers. “Hiding in plain sight” therefore seems to have been an option utilised by Indigenous spiritual leaders, to whom, as I mentioned previously, gratitude is owed for their efforts in keeping Indigenous spirituality alive despite the legal repressions and coloniser attempts at spiritual and behaviour modification through the Residential School System. That’s perhaps why, as the resurgence of Indigenous legal political consciousness began (as I observed in the 1960’s), there were also spiritual traditions to inform and underpin that re-awakening.

Even when an Indigenous person did appear to trust someone of the coloniser world enough to reveal their traditional spiritual concepts, I am left wondering how much was *not* revealed, due to the fear that what was shared could easily be misunderstood and misread to the detriment of the Indigenous peoples. Perhaps an individual within the coloniser society could be trusted, but that was no guarantee that, should that individual, as they always seemed to be intent on doing, share what they had been told (even in an atmosphere of trust) with other colonisers, those others would not misinterpret and misunderstand, leading to further acts of recrimination and repression by coloniser society.

Black Elk, for example, indicated that Wovoka’s sharing of his vision, since it was so similar to one he, Black Elk, had experienced, was instrumental in his own decision to come forward and share, not just with his Indigenous elders, but with coloniser society as well, with the help of John G. Niehardt,<sup>304</sup> although, at the time of Wovoka’s vision, Black Elk had joined

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<sup>304</sup> Raymond J. DeMallie (Editor), *The Sixth Grandfather, Black Elk’s Teachings Given To John. G. Niehardt* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1984), 11.

the Catholic Church.<sup>305</sup> Given the experience that Black Elk had in the world(s) of the coloniser, he seems to have chosen carefully with whom he would share his knowledge of Lakota spirituality. He seems to have also been astute enough to realise that the traditional form of oral transmission of spiritual narratives was being eradicated as rapidly as the traditional language was being forcibly repressed and supplanted by the coloniser's language.

He, along with others who had begun to collaborate with anthropologists and ethnographers,<sup>306</sup> realised that the best means of preserving traditional Indigenous spirituality was in written format. But, even though Black Elk's words seem to have been measured, careful, and precise, there is always the possibility that concepts he shared (through an interpreter) were rendered as interpolations,<sup>307</sup> rather than the full and vibrant concepts he remembered and shared in his own language, even though the bond formed with Niehardt in 1930, was exceptionally strong and personal.<sup>308</sup>

“Your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions.”<sup>309</sup> As I read Black Elk's words, this passage from the Christian Bible immediately comes to mind. I'm struck with meeting an old man, dreaming of how things could have been if he had paid more heed to, and followed, the vision he had when he was nine years old. I'm also struck with the feeling that I am meeting an idealist who feels a great deal of responsibility for the plight of his people because he

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid. 14, 16.

<sup>306</sup> James R. Walker (Editor) Raymond DeMallie & Elaine Jahner, *Lakota Belief and Ritual* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1980). Synopsis and review by James Clifton, University of Wisconsin (American Anthropology Vol. 83, Issue 2, 1981), 448f. <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1525/aa.1981.83.2.02a00550>, last accessed January 25, 2020. Walker arrived at the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1896, just after the Ghost Dance revival attempt.

<sup>307</sup> Raymond J., DeMallie, (Editor) *The Sixth Grandfather, Black Elk's Teachings Given To John. G. Niehardt* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1984), 11.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid. 26&27.

<sup>309</sup> *New American Standard Bible* (The Foundation Press Publications for The Lockman Foundation, La Habra California, 1971), Joel 2:28 quoted in Acts 2:17.

elected to be a part of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show<sup>310</sup> and go where that lead him instead of staying with his people and using his talents, ability, and vision to help them. Perhaps, though, by sharing his story, his vision, and his dream, he might atone for the abrogation of his responsibility to his people (he had become a Christian in 1904)<sup>311</sup> and assist the next generation to re-form the circle (hoop) by returning to the traditional spiritual approach, which would be instrumental in causing the tree at the center to come back to life. His reawakening to his responsibilities to his people came, according to him, when he was asked by them to use his gifts to help in a time of sickness in 1882,<sup>312</sup> and was made even more poignant when Kicking Bear introduced him to Wovoka's message and the Ghost dance.<sup>313</sup>

However, when Black Elk spoke to Niehardt in 1930, everything he spoke about was in retrospect. Black Elk had been involved with traditional Lakota spiritual beliefs and practices; he had travelled Europe with the Wild West Show and remained there for some time on his own with a friend before returning to his people; he had become involved with the Ghost Dance and the hope of a better future it spoke of; he had experienced the same spiritual malaise it seems, that overpowered his people after Wounded Knee; and he had turned his back on Lakota spirituality. However, by 1930, it seems had realized that he, indeed was "The Sixth Grandfather" of his earliest vision, and it was to fulfill the mission that he had been called to long ago that he began to speak, leaving his knowledge, experiences, and vision, for the next generations, so that they could benefit by returning to their spiritual traditions.

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<sup>310</sup> Raymond J. DeMallie (Editor) *The Sixth Grandfather, Black Elk's Teachings Given To John. G. Niehardt* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1984), 7 & 8.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. 121-126.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid. 151.

In many ways, Black Elk's life and experiences were essentially an encapsulated version of the life and experiences of his people. From traditional spirituality and ceremony, through persecution and facing obliteration, to apocalyptic hope and the expectation of a return to traditional ways of life, to spiritual defeatism that comes with expectations dashed and crushed, he had experienced it all. But despite all that, a fire of traditional spirituality still burned within him. We can be thankful that people like Black Elk encountered members of the coloniser society that were, instead of incessantly attempting to eradicate Indigenous spiritual precepts, interested in preserving them, even if only for historical or analytical purposes as artifacts in a museum or library. We can also be thankful that people like Black Elk were astute enough to realise the multi-faceted effects their words would have.

As "The Sixth Grandfather," it was Black Elk's responsibility to pass on to his people, through the agency of this coloniser whose curiosity had brought him to Black Elk, the spiritual wisdom and knowledge that his people needed if they were to realise the vision of a completed circle and flowering tree at its center. I wonder how long it took Black Elk to realise that it was not his Ghost Dance Shirt, but the sacred bow he held in front of him at Wounded Knee, that warded off the bullets fired by the soldiers?<sup>314</sup> To his credit, he did realise it, and, because of his reputation among his people, Niehardt found him.

Again, we find an example (like the "Indian Exhibitions" at coloniser fairs) of the paradoxical relationship between coloniser and Indigenous peoples. While on the one hand, policies and procedures are in place to eradicate or assimilate the people, on the other the intense coloniser curiosity concerning them helps to keep the traditional spiritual approaches alive, even if subliminally as a sub-text of the published narrative. It is telling that Niehardt published *Black*

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid. 273 & 274.

*Elk Speaks* in 1932, which was afforded accolades by *literary* critics and then forgotten on the library shelves. Was it Black Elk's time in Germany that sparked interest in Indigenous People of Turtle Island in that country and other parts of Europe, resulting in Carl Jung's obtaining a copy of *Black Elk Speaks* in Zurich and indicating his appreciation of it, that led to its re-issue in 1961?<sup>315</sup> Synchronicity?<sup>316</sup> Black Elk said that it would take generations of returning to the traditional spiritual ways before the hoop of his people would again be restored and the tree at its center come back to life. "Two gifted artists, who not only recognized but carried through on sacred obligation, offer the world a glimpse, however, momentary, into the outer boundaries of mystery."<sup>317</sup> Those who, upon reading these words and understanding the message beyond "the glimpse," and are willing to put in the effort, are of the generation(s) who will bring Black's Elk's dream/vision to reality. As is common among traditional spiritual approaches, there is no apocalyptic time of restoration (as in Wovoka's Ghost Dance) to be ushered in from the realm of the spirits. Instead, the people are called to accept the responsibility of restoring the sacred circle (hoop). Only if the people accept and act upon this responsibility will the tree at the center again come to life.

But, as we have seen, there was concerted repression of Indigenous peoples and their Spirituality in the 1890s and early 1900s. Black Elk and Niehardt collaborated in the early 1930s, but the words and concepts Black Elk had sought to provide for future generations in printed form were not transcribed in the language of the people, but translated into English and, as we have seen, were relegated to obscurity until the 1960s. Under pressure from colonisers and their

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<sup>315</sup> John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks The Complete Edition* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 2014), xxvii f.

<sup>316</sup> Cf. this theses.

<sup>317</sup> John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks The Complete Edition* (University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln & London, 2014), 290.

spiritual agents (missionaries), many of the people seemed to abandon the traditional spirituality, ceremonies, and weltanschauung. Although the spiritual “revival” or “resurgence” of the people will be dealt with later, we are here left with the question of whether Indigenous spirituality was virtually non-existent for over sixty years, leading then to questions concerning how “genuine” was anything (including Black Elk’s attempt at getting so much of it into print) that emerged after those sixty years.

To answer the question of “genuineness,” we can perhaps begin with the heretofore mentioned astuteness and perseverance of traditional spirituality by some of the Elders in the community. Wanduta, as we have seen, was one who managed to hide ceremony in plain sight by shrewdly conducting a ceremony under the guise of providing an exhibition of “primitive, pagan rituals” at the invitation and with the permission of the colonisers, using their seemingly inexhaustible curiosity to circumvent their repressive legislation and prohibitions. As mentioned earlier, many small towns, and even the City of Calgary, were accustomed to inviting Indigenous people to “perform” for the curious crowds. Historically, in the oral tradition of the people, concepts and ceremony were, as time, circumstances, and visions dictated, quite fluid and adaptable, while remaining true to their traditional *raison d’etre*. It was this inherent adaptability that had empowered them to survive and thrive for thousands of years. Unlike the colonisers, who were bound by their written words, with bodies of scholars dissecting, examining, and explaining these words, and with rigidly defined spiritual “ceremonies,” Indigenous peoples dealt with *concepts*, which could be, and were, expressed in a variety of formats, including narrative, song, performance, and visual art. While a few of the colonisers were able to

understand this (Niehardt<sup>318</sup> and Emily Carr<sup>319</sup> come to mind), most were preoccupied with an analysis and commentary of the *words* they encountered, and so enamoured with their scholastic traditions, that only poets and lyricists (like Bringhurst<sup>320</sup>) understood the oral tradition of narratives as an art form. Interestingly, it can be noted that the three persons just mentioned *experienced* indigenous spiritual narratives and the communication of spiritual concepts as art forms, which they then documented as such. So, while many colonisers remained committed to their scholastic traditions, Indigenous peoples were relatively free to express and retain their spiritual concepts in the face of repression and intimidation, always cautious not to be too obvious or forward, or to reveal their most sacred spiritual concepts, unless it was to those colonisers who had demonstrated that they could be trusted.

If “hiding in plain sight” was not an option, their accumulated knowledge of the land allowed the Elders to conduct ceremonies in places that colonisers either weren’t aware existed or were unwilling or unable to travel to, or at times when the coloniser wouldn’t expect any Indigenous spiritual activity, or were too busy with their own ceremonies to notice any Indigenous spiritual activity. In addition, coloniser self-delusion concerning the efficacy of their repression, suppression, and annihilation (especially through the auspices of The Residential School System) of Indigenous spirituality tended to lead them to assume that, if any remnants of it still existed, it would certainly disappear as age and mortality took their toll on anyone old enough to still recall its concepts. Had they recalled their early Christian history and the secret meetings in the catacombs of Rome, including Christian observances on days when the Roman

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid..

<sup>319</sup> Emily Carr, *Klee Wyck*, (Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver, B.C., 2003). See also: *Emily Carr: Her Paintings and Sketches*, Oxford university Press, Toronto, 1945.

<sup>320</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *A Story As Sharp As A Knife, The Classical Haida Mythtellers And Their World* (Douglas & McIntyre, Madeira Park, British Columbia, 1999).

population was too busy with their own observances, they would have perhaps paid more attention to how successful (or not) they were in supplanting Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices with their own.

How many “Midnight Sweat Lodges”<sup>321</sup> were there we can only guess at, but we know that they existed. But not all ceremonies were kept secret, especially, as I mentioned above, if they were held in places not readily or regularly visited by prying coloniser eyes. William Berens, whose legacy can be traced to the great Midewiwin leader, Yellowlegs, and whose grandfather, Bear, was a noted Midewiwin leader as well,<sup>322</sup> indicates that he was present, as a young boy, at what he remembered to be the last Midewiwin ceremony at the mouth of the Berens River in the 1870’s. When the anthropologist, A. Irving Hallowell, interviewed and travelled with Berens in the 1930’s he became acquainted with enough traditional spiritual teachings to become deeply intrigued and interested in taking notes that were later “mined” to give insight into the spiritual concepts and practices of the people. One example of this is Hallowell’s attendance at ceremonies held by Fair Wind, a medicine man.<sup>323</sup> As well, “the people at Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi called Hallowell *Midewigima* (*Mide* master) because he was so interested in *Midewiwin* ceremonial practices.”<sup>324</sup> In addition, Hallowell was remembered in the following words: “He was crazy dancing at the Indian dance. He can do it too. He could do it good. Just as good as the Indians did.”<sup>325</sup> This, I remind you, was in the 1930’s in what was considered to be the hinterland of Manitoba.

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<sup>321</sup> Waubgeshig Rice, *Midnight Sweatlodge* (Theytus Books, Penticton, British Columbia, 2011), 23.

<sup>322</sup> Jennifer S.H. Brown & Susan Elaine Gray (Editors), *Memories Myths and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader, William Berens as told to A Irving Hallowell* (McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca, 2009), 11.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.* xv.

<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.* xxii.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

So, at these locations on Lake Winnipeg, we can surmise that, not only were ceremonies still being held, with traditional spirituality alive and well, but also that the people felt secure and comfortable enough to instruct someone from the coloniser world and include him in the ceremonies. Obviously, as in the case with Black Elk and Niehardt, trust was a major factor in the process of giving us today a glimpse into what the Indigenous spiritual response was to coloniser efforts to eradicate it. Though not himself an acknowledged Midewiwin practitioner following in the footsteps of his grandfather, William Berens describe himself in the following words: “I learned the white ways from my mother and the Indian ways from my grandparents on my father’s side so I know what both are like.”<sup>326</sup> As a respected leader among his people, Berens certainly was able to acquaint Hallowell with traditional spiritual teachings, or at least with the people who still lived and practiced them. Even though much of Hallowell’s work still exists in his archived notes, some of these notes have been sifted through and have provided rich insights into traditional Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) Midewiwin spiritual practices. “Thunder Bird”<sup>327</sup> is just one example of this.

Is it a coincidence that two leaders of their people, Black Elk and William Berens, at approximately the same time, consented to be interviewed and have their words recorded by two anthropologists, Niehardt and Hallowell? It may be, but it may also be an indication that astute individuals who understood coloniser mentality found another way of handing down traditional spiritual concepts to future generations by hiding them in plain sight. When approached by individuals whom they felt that they could trust, Indigenous spiritual leaders seem to have been confident that their words would be recorded faithfully enough to pass on the wisdom they contained to future generations. Coloniser curiosity was a means through which coloniser

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid. 42.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid. 185 to 193.

repression of traditional Indigenous spirituality could be circumvented, leaving a record of the traditional spiritual concepts for future generations to encounter, even if they had never learned the traditional languages, heard the traditional narratives, or participated the traditional ceremonies.

The Elders and their wisdom and knowledge certainly seem to have survived the onslaught of coloniser repression, but for those many who have been discouraged by predominant coloniser attitudes and approaches from becoming acquainted with tradition and the original languages, and feel too timid to “ask an Elder,” even if they knew where to find one, these written records persist as a means of information. And, given the scholastic bent and seemingly inexhaustible curiosity of coloniser society, there probably are more to be found by even future generations. In addition, Elders of today have much to share, but now, as before, the issue of trustworthiness is of primary importance. If they are to share what they know, they are just as cautious about sharing it, and with whom, as Black Elk and others were. Misappropriation of Indigenous concepts, as with physical artifacts, to be kept as “curiosities” is, and always has been, just another form of coloniser dismissal of the people and all that is important to them. That which has spiritual connotations is meant for spiritual growth and is to be embraced as such, not something to be kept as an artifact or article of curiosity.

Unfortunately, coloniser translations of Indigenous languages and concepts, along with coloniser transcriptions of the same, approached from a viewpoint that has its roots in coloniser education systems, can yield only approximate knowledge and understanding of what has been studiously transcribed and transmitted. “It has been said that white men have no place in the spiritual world of Niitsitapi. I wonder.”<sup>328</sup> This is to say, while curiosity may have been

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<sup>328</sup> Betty Bastien, Jurgen W. Kremer (Editor), Duane Mistaken Chief (Language Consultant) *Blackfoot Way of Knowing, The Worldview of the Siksikaitsitapi* (University of Calgary Press, 2004), viii.

instrumental, and even a method through which traditional spiritual narratives and concepts were passed along to future generations, understanding what has been written requires an ability that is not inherent in the scholasticism of coloniser academia. We can be grateful for the fact that coloniser curiosity countered the program of coloniser annihilation of Indigenous culture and spiritual concepts, for, even when coloniser policies were successful, the transcribed words remained.

However, concerning Indigenous spiritual concepts:

All classical Haida literature is oral. By definition, therefore, it is something printed books cannot contain, in precisely the same sense that jazz, or the classical music of India, is music that a score cannot contain. Every healthy, living culture holds its stories to its heart, and so *the book*, in the fundamental yet intangible sense, is a cultural universal. This, however, is a book composed in homage to what script and print omit – and to the intellectual richness of a world where no manuscripts or printed books exist.<sup>329</sup>

Perhaps it was scholastic preoccupation with their scholastic means of acquiring knowledge, or perhaps it was coloniser indifference to Haida spiritual concepts that were the reason(s) that George Reed Swanton's 1900-1901<sup>330</sup> manuscripts of the Haida narratives he collected languished in archives for almost a hundred years before they were re-discovered, re-worked, and published again by Bringhurst, one of those rare people (like Niehard, Walker, and Emily Carr) who understood that spirituality cannot be contained in, or transmitted by, printed words on paper. Like art or music, spirituality needs to be experienced to be understood. The public sharing of narratives is a performance art.. Few who are steeped in traditional coloniser approaches to knowledge can step out of their conditioned academic environment and appreciate the message that is contained in the words. But, thankfully, these few are not the *only* ones we can rely on to assist us in appreciating Indigenous spirituality. For even the strides that

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<sup>329</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *A Story as Sharp as a Knife, The Classical Haida Myhtellers and Their World*, (Douglas & McIntyre, Madeira Park, British Columbia, 1999 & 2011), 14.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid. 10 & 13.

Bringhurst seems to have achieved are contentious among the people to whom the narratives belong. Even the most ambitious of coloniser attempts, it seems, individually or collectively, often suffer from not being steeped in the culture they are attempting to portray.

In conclusion, we note that there are those who continued with the traditional ways of knowledge, experience, and practice, passing on their concepts by meeting in secret ceremonies, where they could continue the traditional spiritual concepts. Without them, there would be only “educated guesses,” or “intuitive analyses,” of the depth and breadth of traditional Indigenous spirituality. The Midewiwin, being a secret society to begin with, immediately comes to mind. But many Indigenous cultures had their “medicine societies” that involved instruction and initiation to gain membership, and these persisted, despite coloniser attempts to outlaw and eradicate them and “re-program” the people through the Residential School System and other insidious methods of spiritual and cultural annihilation. These individuals who kept out of sight of the prying instruments of colonial lawmakers and enforcers (and often their academic enablers), ensured that traditional spiritual and cultural approaches could survive. Because they did, we can, if in doubt, “ask an Elder.” It was these resilient individuals who kept tradition alive who made it possible, some 500 years later, for that generation to begin to reclaim their spirituality, culture, and pride.

**CHAPTER FIVE:  
Those That Survived (Reclaiming and Regaining Indigenous Spirituality)**

As I stated in my introduction, I concur with Jung's observations and conclusions concerning life events that become didactic in nature. I have also indicated that this thesis is to highlight my experiences surrounding and contributing to my personal journey of self-decolonisation. After having read all that precedes this chapter, it may have become obvious as well that I value experiential learning as much as I value strictly academic methods. In fact, I would even argue that academic observations and analysis are not necessarily as objective as they are sometimes touted as being. Previous observations and conclusions (whether personal or secondary in nature because the original have been provided by someone else), influence how one approaches and interprets new observations. Granted, this is normally seen as building or expanding on knowledge that exists. I have referred to the "theses, antithesis, synthesis" model of learning, and how it approximates observations that Indigenous knowledge building begins with what is known as a method of understanding a new phenomenon. In this chapter, I present as sampling of the research, literature, and experiences that have contributed to my decolonisation to this point in my life. It is certainly not as exhaustive as it could have been, nor is it intended to be an autobiography. Some of what I present is public knowledge, in that material concerning these events is readily available. Some is based on personal experience. I consider these to have been influential in my personal decolonisation, which necessarily begins with recognising and shedding embedded stereotypes of Indigenous peoples. It is my hope that, by presenting the following as I have interpreted it, others may find some personal resonance with what I present, which may contribute to the process of decolonisation they are involved with in their own lives.

While Handsome Lake, Wovoka, Black Elk, and Elders from every Indigenous nation were struggling to revive or retain their identities, both spiritual and cultural, in the face of colonial pressure and assimilation and annihilation policies in the late 1800's and early 1900's, across the Atlantic an author in Germany who had never been to Turtle Island, worked from maps, travel brochures and magazine articles to romanticise Indigenous culture and spiritual values. Karl May wrote and published "Winnetou Der Rote Gentleman" in 1893, featuring, and centering around an imagined Apache Chief named Winnetou, who was assisted and befriended by his "blood brother" Old Shatterhand, a coloniser sympathetic to the plight of Indigenous peoples. May *did* visit Turtle Island in 1908, long after his book had exploded in popularity in Germany and, to some extent, across Europe. To this day, many Germans seem obsessed with Indigenous culture and values. A cursory browse through Facebook home pages yields a host of Germans who pose in Indigenous regalia against a backdrop of Indigenous memorabilia. Some of these people even use Indigenous-sounding names for their Facebook identities. There are daily Summer flights from Frankfurt to Canada's Yukon bearing Germans who come to experience as much Indigenous authenticity and association with the land as they can.<sup>331</sup> In fact throughout the early to mid 1900's, German romanticising of Indigenous values and culture grew. On Turtle Island, Indigenous cultural and spiritual values, along with their identity, were being threatened by coloniser political policies, which were typified by repression and cultural/spiritual annihilation by means of the Residential School system. Even the message of the entertainment industries in Germany and colonised Turtle Island were at opposite ends of the spectrum. Hollywood, for the most part, was busy portraying Indigenous peoples at contact as uncivilised savages who stood in the way of progress and civilisation. Titles like "Apache

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<sup>331</sup> <https://gem.cbc.ca/media/cbc-docs-pov/season-1/episode-10/38e815a-00dc1ac7f74>, last accessed July 14, 2019.

Uprising” (1965)<sup>332</sup> come to mind, as does a scene from “Heller In Pink Tights” (1960),<sup>333</sup> depicting the carnage inflicted upon a stagecoach and its passengers by hostile Indigenous warriors. During this time, in 1963, the movie “Winnetou” was released in Germany<sup>334</sup> starring Pierre Brice,<sup>335</sup> a blue-eyed French actor. The story line (as in the Winnetou novel) is resistance to colonizer (corporate) interest and coloniser attempts to ignore Indigenous peoples’ claim and connection to the land and ride roughshod over them.

This disparate presentation of Indigenous peoples, with May’s romanticised and presumably sympathetic (although stereotypical in its own sense) view on the one hand, and the stereotypical “murderous savage” on the other, serves primarily to illustrate how subjective and self-serving coloniser assessments of Indigenous peoples and the land they call home were/are. Travellers to the “new land,” ethnographers for the most part, tended to present a relatively “balanced” view of the people and their land, being appreciative of Indigenous peoples’ skills and intelligence, but at the same time chronicling conditions and behaviour that they found reprehensible. In 1609, Lescarbot, after spending a year with Poutrincourt’s expedition to the Bay of Fundy<sup>336</sup> published in French (with excerpts published in English titled *Nova Francia*) his *Historie de la Nouvelle France*.<sup>337</sup> Concerning the Mi’Kmaq people, he observes: “we must say of them that they are truly noble.”<sup>338</sup>

On the other hand, Lescarbot chronicles experiences of murder, mayhem, and total disrespect for Poutrincourt’s expedition force: “Finally, those savages ...seeing a fit opportunity

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<sup>332</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060117/>, last accessed July 14, 2019.

<sup>333</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0053902/>, last accessed July 14, 2019.

<sup>334</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0108523/?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_t2](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0108523/?ref_=tt_cl_t2), last accessed July 14, 2019.

<sup>335</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0108523/?ref\\_=tt\\_cl\\_t2](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0108523/?ref_=tt_cl_t2), last accessed July 14, 2019.

<sup>336</sup> Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2001), 13.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

to play a bad part, they set upon them with shots of arrows and clubs, and killed two of them.”<sup>339</sup> This it seems, in Lescarbot’s opinion, with little or no provocation. Furthermore, while the dead were given a “proper” funeral by their compatriots, “these rascals, I say, did dance and howled a-far off, rejoicing for their traitorous treachery.”<sup>340</sup> After the French had retired to the safety of their ship, during low tide, when they (the French) could no longer get ashore, these aforementioned “rascals” pulled down the cross erected by the French, dug up the graves, and mocked the French, who were still unable to reach shore and use their superior weapons to prevent all this from happening.<sup>341</sup>

Yet, Lescarbot can deem these “savages” as noble, as noted above. “Savage” (“wild man”) they indisputably (in his opinion) were but, it seems, they also were “noble,” for they engaged in activities (especially hunting the game of the forests) that were the prerogative of the nobility of Europe only; activities that, if engaged in by the common peasant, would lead to severe punishment and/or death. Therefore, in Lescarbot’s legally trained mind, these people he encountered were truly *noble savages*, where “The Noble Savage is obviously ...a legal concept, a technical analysis ...from the standpoint of comparative law.”<sup>342</sup>

So, given the reporting of Lescarbot’s and others first-hand observation for some 250 years, how was it possible that John Crawford, in 1859 could, in his paper titled “On the Conditions Which Favour, Retard, or Obstruct the Early Civilization of Man,”<sup>343</sup> refer to the myth of the Noble Savage, and attribute it to Jean Jacques Rousseau,<sup>344</sup> and have so many, including “scholars” accept it as a prima facia truth? Setting aside Crawford’s agenda of

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<sup>339</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid. 291.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid. 294.

“proving” the inherent superiority of the white (European) races, why was he not challenged concerning this myth that he had invented as a foil for his “proof” of racial superiority? John Lubbock wrote: “There are, indeed, many ...who talk of the free and noble savage,”<sup>345</sup> concluding that “the savage” is neither free nor noble, but really a humanoid sub-species. A highly subjective analysis, part of a highly subjective (white supremacist) self-serving agenda, to be sure, but no less subjective in nature than the written material that, even though it did not use the term “Noble Savage,” was replete with rhetoric that not only romanticised the Indigenous people of Turtle Island, but their land as well.

To understand some of how this romanticised view of “the noble savage” could have developed, we have only to ask one poignant question: If, upon their return to Europe, “explorers” and “adventurers” could include in their recounting of their time on Turtle Island, either the “noble savage” myth or the “fortitude of the European adventurer in the face of savagery” equally mythological view of the people of Turtle Island, their audiences would be awed and enthralled. So, for from a perspective of enhanced personal popularity, either the “noble” or the “murderous savage” portrayal of Indigenous Peoples sufficed.

In addition, recall that the initial contact of Europeans with Turtle Island was an attempt to expedite the commercial exploitation of the Indian sub-continent. History recounts several attempts to find a passage through Turtle Island to where the known riches were, or even to find a way around Turtle Island to these riches. In the process, the Spanish stumbled upon riches (gold and people they could enslave) that they could easily carry away with them, but the French and English, in the regions of the land that fell to them to exploit were not as fortunate. They did not find any gold or precious metals to carry off, only the material that the people of the land

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid. 299.

were using for clothing (furs). For these Europeans to obtain this commodity, they needed the co-operation of the people of the land, since the colonisers did not even know where to find what they wanted to exploit or how to obtain it even if they could find where it was plentiful.

Venturing into the unknown was unimaginable for the financiers who were anxious for profit in trade, so they needed to attract individuals who would be willing to accept the challenge and the hardships that went with it. So, it suited their interests to paint whatever picture of the lands and the people that they thought would attract Europeans to the venture.

This applied, not only to the trade in furs, but the later attempts to profitably cultivate the land as well. In these latter times, the land was pictured as lying fallow and empty, ready for cultivation. Where reality failed to supply the necessary image to lure people, imagination and lack of full disclosure did. This persisted all the way into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the European immigrants who were to “claim” agricultural plots (homesteads) in the Prairie Regions. Clifford Sifton’s assessment of desirable immigrants was as follows: “I think a stalwart peasant in a sheep-skin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children, is good quality.”<sup>346</sup> If these people had been sufficiently appraised of the *true* nature of the land (trees to fell, Prairie sod that didn’t yield well to the plough, sweltering heat, bone-chilling cold, etc.) instead of the romanticised version, and the fact that it was peopled by a race and culture that was every bit as old and accomplished as those in Europe, I wonder how many would have crossed the Atlantic, even if their lives in Europe were not that tenable. For those relying on from financing and a sympathetic ear on the part of those who controlled the purse-strings and made the decisions concerning the when and where of

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<sup>346</sup> Sir Clifford Sifton, *Only Farmers Need Apply: “The Immigrants Canada Wants”* (Maclean’s Magazine, April 1, 1922), 16, 32-34.

missionary activities, as in the case of religious orders, success was embellished, conditions presented in their most favorable light, and imagination freely supplied what reality was lacking.

For example, one of Jacques Cartier's reports of his encounters with the people of Turtle Island certainly presents them in most favorable (to the European imagination) terms, even bordering on blatant eroticism.<sup>347</sup> An author, Lahontan, imagined a "Long River or River Long supposed to flow into the Mississippi from the West,"<sup>348</sup> with "noble cities" and strange, exotic people; probably with the intention of enhancing the sale of the book he had written. George Catlin not only used vivid colours and imaginative settings for his paintings, but also vivid and picturesque prose to describe these strange and exotic people he encountered and painted.

Black and blue cloth a civilization are destined, not only to veil, but to obliterate the grace and beauty of Nature Man, in the simplicity and loftiness of his nature, unrestrained and unfettered by the disguises of art ...and nothing short of the loss of my life, shall prevent me from visiting their country and becoming their historian.<sup>349</sup>

It seems, too, that the farther one moved from "civilisation" (i.e. coloniser dominance), the more pristine, noble, exotic, and enviable the people, their land, and their lives, seemed to become.

Given the circumstances in Europe for many in the lower echelons of society, the lure of a land where one could presumably be one's own master was difficult to ignore. Of those of this ilk, it is observed that "enough of them chose the freedom that they saw available to them by defecting to the Indian side that colonial governments were sometimes moved to institute draconian punishments for Europeans who 'went native'."<sup>350</sup> Even those sent as missionaries among the people of Turtle Island, and who persevered in their mission despite falling out of favor in their home country (i.e. the Jesuits) were wont to speak favorably of Indigenous peoples as reasoning

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<sup>347</sup> Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2001), 48.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid. 68.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid. 179.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid. 71.

people who were quite capable of accepting the message they (the Jesuits) were bringing to them.<sup>351</sup> After all, if the people were as incapable of accepting the message of “true religion” as the Recollet, Hennepin’s<sup>352</sup> assessment of them seems to indicate (though he does grudgingly admire them at times), then what would be the point of sponsoring missionary activity among them, and why would anyone bother with such a fruitless endeavor? It would be better to wait “till Time and Commerce with the *Europeans* has remov’d their natural Fierceness and Ignorance, and thereby made ‘em more apt to be sensible of the Charms of Christianity.”<sup>353</sup> But the Jesuits and other orders within the church who were not prepared to wait, needed the support of their patrons to pay for the necessary passage and supplies for their missionary efforts, and no patron was about to finance a fruitless endeavor.

In the arguments concerning the possibility of “evolution” of Indigenous peoples and their eventual acculturation to European values and consequent assimilation on the one hand, and the pragmatism of their total annihilation (genocide) on the other, we find missionaries and the legal profession favoring “evolution,” while governments and military seemed to lean heavily toward annihilation.<sup>354</sup> It seems that at the time, nobody equated “evolution” or coercion to assimilate with cultural and spiritual genocide. The supremacy of the coloniser point of view, spiritually and culturally, were simply assumed to be a proven fact. The arguments centered, not on whether cultural and spiritual genocide (using our current understanding of the term) was appropriate, but simply on how it was to be accomplished.

As time progressed beyond the first centuries of contact, between anthropologists of the 1930’s and the re-discovery of their field notes and publications in the 1960’s, Indigenous people

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid. 52.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid. 54 – 63.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid. 123.

seem to have been largely ignored by coloniser society. Confined to reserves, forced to attend Residential Schools, those who could not, or chose not to assimilate and be absorbed by coloniser society and adopt coloniser values (spiritual and cultural) were seemingly forgotten.

Since most reserves were situated on land that (at the time) was considered worthless to coloniser society, they were conveniently out of the way and their existence was hardly even acknowledged, except as stereotypes. Those sufficiently removed from coloniser society were thought of as the “noble savages.” Those that lived within, or close enough to coloniser society to interact with that society were victims of a stereotype that emerged because they didn’t conform to coloniser practices and values/attitudes, or had succumbed to abject hopelessness and depression because of the circumstances under which they were forced to live and had simply given up.

As each successive generation of Indigenous people passed from this earth, the next generation was expected to “make progress” or evolve toward becoming acculturated to coloniser society and absorbed by it. General opinion seems to have been that if they were unable to “make progress” or “evolve,” as defined by the colonisers, there was something lacking in the Indigenous psyche that was the root cause why so many of them “failed.” Nobody, it seems, could fathom the possibility that Indigenous peoples preferred their traditional values and spiritual approaches to the “civilisation” of the coloniser society. If an Indigenous person did succeed in coloniser society, most of the time that person (or persons) was/were held up as examples for the rest of their people to follow, or even granted “folk hero” status. This “folk hero” notoriety was quite irksome to many who simply wanted to be their Indigenous selves and contribute (and be accepted as capable of contributing) to society at large as they had been taught

by their spiritual leaders and Elders was the responsibility the Creator had given them as two-legged persons.

A case in point would be the many Indigenous persons who served in the armed forces of the colonisers. Some like Tommy Prince, born in Petersfield, Manitoba in 1915, served in World War II and in Korea, and awarded 11 medals in total.<sup>355</sup> However, in spite of that, in his untiring work on behalf of his people when he returned home, he met roadblocks at every turn, and was even denied the right to vote, in addition to being bereft of other considerations afforded to any non-Indigenous veteran by the Canadian Government.<sup>356</sup> He spent his last years living in a Salvation Army shelter. But at his burial in 1977, dignitaries from various places and countries arrived to honour him.

South of the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel, one of the best-known examples of the fate of Indigenous people after serving in the military is Ira Hays,<sup>357</sup> famously photographed as one of those who raised the American flag at Iwo Jima. Upon returning and being discharged, he experienced difficulties re-adjusting to life outside the military. He died at the age of 32, alone on a reservation, after an all-night stint of drinking and playing poker. However, his funeral was said to have been the largest ever held in Arizona at the time. It's ironic (and deeply saddening to know) that both Prince and Hays, who returned to find that they were treated quite differently than returned veterans of non-indigenous backgrounds, were afforded upon their deaths a military burial with honours; Prince in Winnipeg's Brookside Cemetery in a section reserved for veterans; and Hays in Arlington National Cemetery, a military cemetery in Virginia where that country's deceased presidents are interred.

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<sup>355</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/tommy-prince>, last accessed July 14, 2019.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/irahayes.htm>, last accessed July 14, 2019.

Much has been said and published of late concerning the “Code Talkers,” Indigenous people serving in the armed forces, who spoke their own language through radio contact to communicate with each other and relay messages of military import. The forces opposing the Allied effort in World War Two could not understand or decode these messages. Interesting, since these forces were under the command of the German military, perhaps some of whom may have been acquainted and enthralled by Winnetou and the romanticized view of Indigenous peoples. The rhetoric surrounding the fact that this service the Code Talkers rendered to the Allied Forces was never made public until recently suggests that the project was so secretive that it was decided not to divulge its existence. Perhaps there was some consideration that this “secret weapon” would be useful (and perhaps was even used) during the intervening years of 1945 to recently (i.e. during the “Cold War”). Surviving members of the Code Talker community certainly indicated that they were sworn to secrecy concerning their contribution to the Allied victory, returning to their former lives after their service without even telling people close to them anything of what they had been involved with, or again, enjoying many of the benefits that were made available to non-Indigenous veterans.

Veterans Affairs Canada has an interesting web page<sup>358</sup> (last modified February 14, 2019), which speaks in glowing terms of Indigenous peoples’ contributions in many aspects of the armed services over the years. It speaks of the number of Indigenous persons who have served in Canada’s military, including efforts that have recently been made of honour their service. It includes those who served as Code Talkers in the Canadian military, some of the decorated people all the way back to World War One, but nothing is said about their lives *after*

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<sup>358</sup> <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/history/historical-sheets/aboriginal-veterans>, last accessed August 10, 2019

they were discharged. Are we, therefore, to assume that the characters in “Three Day Road”<sup>359</sup> are based on reality? If Tommy Prince’s history is any indication, if a person re-enlisted, they were treated reasonably well, perhaps as people who had “evolved” to embrace coloniser concepts. However, once they were out of the Armed Forces and back in the general population, they were probably quite shocked and disheartened to realise how little had changed for them (as was Prince’s experience). In other words, those who did not or could not “evolve” were again relegated to an artifact in a museum, the “museum” being their place of origin, their culture, and their spiritual concepts, all quite removed from coloniser consciousness.

In the preface to his book *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places*, Chief Snow notes:

The years 1948 to 1965 are passed over quickly. It was a period when the Indian people were forgotten because the dominant society became too involved with the economic development boom and its own growing affluence.<sup>360</sup>

There were Indigenous “personalities” visible in some facets of the “dominant society.” Tommy Prince and Ira Hayes, mentioned above, as well as Roy Rogers come immediately to mind.<sup>361</sup>

There were also a number of entertainment personalities, although some did their best to conceal their Indigenous identity until it became advantageous to disclose it to further their career in the latter part of the 1960s and early 1970s. Some even went as far as to exploit their Indigenous background to achieve popularity or enhance it. While Cher’s 1973 song “Half Breed” contains potent lyrics that make a statement, I cringed the first time I viewed the official video of her singing the song,<sup>362</sup> thinking that it was counter-productive to challenge stereotypes by becoming one, unless, of course she was being contrary.<sup>363</sup> to add emphasis to the lyrics. But, by that time,

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<sup>359</sup> Joseph Boyden, *Three Day Road* (Viking Canada, Published by the Penguin Group, London, England, 2005).

<sup>360</sup> Chief John Snow (Dr.), *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places, The Story Of The Stoney People* (Samuel Stevens, Toronto & Sarasota, 1977; Fifth House Ltd., Friesens Printers, 2005), ix.

<sup>361</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy\\_Rogers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Rogers), last accessed July 14, 2019.

<sup>362</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zt9XDdzzp2k>, last accessed July 14, 2019.

<sup>363</sup> Richard Erdoes and John Fire/Lame Deer, *Lame Deer Seeker of Visions* (A Touchstone Book Published by Simon & Schuster Inc. New York, New York, 1972), 285.

Indigenous people had again captured the imagination of coloniser society and several lyricists and performers were writing and performing songs about them. One example is “Indian Reservation” by Paul Revere and the Raiders<sup>364</sup> from 1971, although two earlier versions of the song (1959 & 1968) were virtually forgotten and never received much play time.

On the other hand, Buffy Sainte-Marie began her career in 1964,<sup>365</sup> slowly, painstakingly, and not without encountering roadblocks and setbacks, primarily because she challenged a great many sacrosanct concepts held by coloniser society, not all of which were necessarily associated with Indigenous peoples. To some extent, the renewed interest in Indigenous peoples may have been a product of the culture (or counterculture) prevalent at the time, with the backdrop of the “Noble Savage” myth prevalent in the minds of many. Some attention may have also been focused (at least North of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel) on Indigenous peoples because they were granted the right to vote in elections without being required to relinquish their rights as “Status Indians” in 1960. That is, if you were a man. It was not until 1985 that Indigenous women who married a non-Indigenous man retained their status as Indigenous for themselves and their children.<sup>366</sup>

In 1964 Johnny Cash released an album called “Bitter Tears,” containing a song titled “Ira Hays,” referring to the plight of that individual as discussed previously, and another titled “As Long As The Grass Shall Grow.”<sup>367</sup> One line in “As Long As The Grass Shall Grow sums up the nature of the song perfectly. That line is: “Cornplanter can you swim?” It refers to Kinzua (“fish on spear”) Dam on the Allegheny River, flooding Seneca land, including the site of Cornplanter’s grave and the sites of Handsome Lake’s visions. The dam was proposed as early as

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<sup>364</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21ixwIaN7qw>, last accessed July 14, 2019.

<sup>365</sup> [http://buffysainte-marie.com/?page\\_id=24](http://buffysainte-marie.com/?page_id=24), last accessed July 14, 2019.

<sup>366</sup> <https://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=res&dir=his&document=chap3&lang=e>; under the sub-section “Aboriginal Peoples and the Franchise, last accessed August 11, 2015.

<sup>367</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ni\\_EdsL-avU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ni_EdsL-avU), last accessed July 14, 2019.

1908, when studies concerning its construction were undertaken without the knowledge of the Seneca. Because government and military engineers' attentions were diverted from the project by the wars in Europe and Asia, the project went into hiatus until 1956. By that time the people had discovered the intent, and had begun their legal contest of the project as early as 1927. However, the courts ruled, in 1958 and 1959, that Congress had the right to abrogate any treaty.<sup>368</sup> In September 1966 the dam was complete, flooding 21,000 acres of land at flood stage, 12,000 acres at "normal" levels, and 6,600 acres in winter, exposing large mud flats. Cornplanter's body, as well as those of 300 of his people, were presumably exhumed and re-buried above the floodwaters of "Lake Perfidy,"<sup>369</sup> but, since positive identification of the bodies is not thought to have been as thorough as it could and should have been, there still exists some speculation that Cornplanter's remains may yet lie under the ground at the bottom of the lake,<sup>370</sup> along with the sites of his visions. By obliterating and flooding these sites, it could be argued that coloniser considerations involving "progress" superseded any spiritual connection Indigenous people had to the land or any places upon it that they might consider sacred. I can only imagine the uproar that the Christian community would raise if it became Israel's intent to flood the town of Bethlehem, the presumed site of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

Kinzua Dam illustrates that, despite their ability to mount significant, lengthy (if necessary) legal challenges, and to succinctly express spiritual and cultural values, Indigenous peoples were not afforded the serious consideration they warranted. While the stereotype of the "murderous savage" may have faded somewhat, in public presentations and portrayals of

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<sup>368</sup> Bruce Elliot Johnansen & Barbara Alice Mann (Editors, *Encyclopedia of the Haudenosaunee Iroquois Confederacy* (Greenwood Press Westport Connecticut, London, 2000), 187 & 188.

<sup>369</sup> (American Heritage Magazine, 1968, Vo. 20, Issue 61) <https://www.americanheritage.com/cornplanter-can-you-swim>, last accessed July 15, 2019.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

Indigenous peoples in the late 1960's and beyond, public (and hence government) perceptions seemed yet to retain troubling aspects of the "Noble Savage" myth that was propagated centuries ago as a white supremacist ploy. As Isabel St-Amand<sup>371</sup> has observed, coloniser (settler, in her terms) society and governments tend to labour under a false conception of Indigenous peoples, their culture, their spiritual values, and their intelligence and abilities. She draws our attention to Jean-Jacques Simard's observations that the prevailing understanding is an imagined construct. She quotes from his book *The Reductions: The Invented Indian Or Today's Aboriginal*: "This imaginary construct conceives of the Indian as a primitive being linked to an unspoiled natural world, untouched by civilisation and heir to an ancient cultural heritage that must remain immutable, under pain of disappearing."<sup>372</sup>

"Noble Savage," indeed! It seems that, in coloniser mentality, the intelligent, astute, observant, analytical, proactive, "modern" Indigenous person is an oxymoron. Either Indigenous people, their culture, their spiritual values, and their identity, disappear completely (total assimilation/annihilation), or they are to be relegated to "be beings on the periphery required to stay in remote regions, if not museums."<sup>373</sup> If they do not conform to these perceptions, Indigenous people, in the minds of coloniser society and governments alike it seems, "become figures of false Indians, assimilated individuals who would be hard to recognize,"<sup>374</sup> rather than bona fide original citizens of the land with a long cultural and spiritual history that is able to contribute much to the shared existence of everyone currently living on Turtle Island, and who are every bit as capable of intelligently addressing a situation as the colonisers are.

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<sup>371</sup> Isabel St-Amand, (S.E. Steward, Translator), *Stories Of Oka, Land, Film, And Literature*, (University of Manitoba Press, 2018), accessible through University of Manitoba Libraries portal: books-scholarsportal-info.uml.idm.oclc.org, last accessed August 7, 2019.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid. 37.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

Long ago, coloniser (that is to say, European) society has eradicated (or at least it is assumed they did) any vestige of any ancient spiritual concepts or values they may have had and assumed the spiritual umbrella of Christianity. Some of the colonisers' own cultural reminiscences are retained in prose, poetry, and music, as well as "folk festivals" that are held periodically to showcase this or that culture (Octoberfest, Islandingadagurrin, and Winnipeg's Folklorama, to name a few). The intent of these festivals seems to be to remember, showcase, and keep alive cultural heritage, but there is little indication that any of the ancient pre-Christian spiritual concepts remain in the memory of the people. In my personal assessment, having attended many of these, I'm inclined to think that they are less about showcasing heritage and culture, and more about serving and imbibing alcoholic beverages, although I suspect that the organisers might have some issue with my characterisation, and might suggest I missed the point. To be sure, the sale of spirits *does* help pavilion organisers with the funding necessary to underwrite the enterprise, but I wonder how many of the people who are not of the culture being showcased remember much of what they have experienced culturally once the effect of the alcohol they have consumed wears off.

Since coloniser society is from a Christian heritage that has simply assumed its superiority, there is usually no spiritual component to the celebrations of culture at "folk festivals." It is only within recent history that non-Christian immigrants have arrived and included a spiritual component in their cultural showcasing, often illustrating how spiritual and cultural concepts intertwine, a concept that is difficult to comprehend for those who have segregated "church" (spirituality), "state" (governments and the political and legal processes), and "culture" (what you assume is your genealogical country of origin). In my observations from attending these "showcases" presented by the most recent immigrants to Turtle Island, for the

most part, the spiritual components are tolerated, simply ignored, or treated as curiosities by coloniser society, as were Indigenous spiritual underpinnings of dances held to showcase Indigenous culture at the various country fairs and the Calgary Stampede, as discussed previously.

If Indigenous spiritual concepts are introduced in festival or celebration like Folklorama, or even one organised by Indigenous People to illustrate that they are part of the people's cultural heritage, the prevailing coloniser view still seems to be that these are not contemporary concepts, but a reminiscence of a faintly remembered dim past that is painstakingly being re-constructed the way one would carefully brush ages of accumulated silt away from an ancient artifact so as to arrive at as reasonable a view as possible of the original. Coloniser society seems incapable of grasping the fact that Indigenous people who have retained a spirituality-driven cultural identity have responded to situations they have faced and found succor in this identity, which has always given them the will and the strength to survive annihilation and assimilation pressures. Since Christianity has long ago suppressed or annihilated the ancient spiritual concepts of pre-Christian Europe, it seems to be generally assumed that Christianity has done the same to pre-contact Indigenous spiritual concepts.

The insidious coloniser view of Indigenous culture and spirituality as museum artifacts or aspects peripheral to mainstream society was severely challenged by the people of Kanehsata':ke in 1990 in an event that became known as "The Oka Crises" among media and the general public. In 1961, the Municipality of Oka, Quebec, had built a 6-hole golf course on land (The Lake of Two Mountains) that the people had succeeded in having recognized as theirs by France in 1717, and again in 1735<sup>375</sup> and, presumably (or so they thought) by colonial and coloniser

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid. 40.

governing bodies thereafter. The Wampum Belt, or contract, that recorded the understanding the people had arrived at with France was explained to the British in 1781 as not only defining the land that was given to the people, but also that it recognised their spiritual concepts, which were an integral part of their claim to the land.<sup>376</sup> However, “Wampum belts and their diplomatic function were denied by successive colonial authorities and Canadian governments, as they appropriated the land and sought to establish their dominion over it.”<sup>377</sup>

This attitude was prevalent when the land was appropriated for the 6-hole golf course in 1961 and was presumably the reason that the people of Kanchsta’ke were not consulted about a proposed expansion in 1990. The people only discovered the plan through media releases by the developers, news stories, and word-of-mouth. In their frustration at not being consulted and not even being given the chance to plead their case when they *did* discover the intent to expropriate even more of their land, the people set up a roadblock on the only road into the community and the area to be expropriated. Suddenly, these “museum artifacts” who coloniser society and governments had been attempting to push farther and farther away, emerged from the dimness of coloniser minds as unassimilated, modern, very much Indigenous people, quite capable and willing to defend their rights to the land by physical and legal means, not the least cowed by the coloniser police and military presence.

Many seemed surprised that so many of the people were quite capable of clearly and succinctly expressing their understanding of the situation to media reporters. As I recall, initially, the people at the roadblocks were caricatured by the media as a small number of militant renegades, “a case of the margin’s bursting into the center,”<sup>378</sup> who would be brought under

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid. 41&42.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid. 46.

control when they faced the cadre of legal professionals retained by colonisers, augmented by the presumed superiority of the coloniser police and military. That began to change (if ever so slightly), when Elders and Clan Mothers began to speak out. The spiritual ties to the land and the significance of it, although available to anyone who chose to investigate it, were not addressed by the media.

Considering that a similar expropriation attempts have been in the news as this paper was being researched and written, and the way they have been presented by the media, I'm lead to believe that very few, other than some scholars, have taken the time to make the inquiries that would lead to an understanding of the spiritual significance this land has for the people who have been there for centuries, accustomed as they are to being routinely displaced, discounted, and oppressed by colonial policies and practices. The people are simply defending their sacred, spiritually impregnated land against aggression, seeking the nation-to-nation consultation<sup>379</sup> they had every right to expect, based on their historical occupation of the land and agreements that (see above) dated back to 1717, which stated that they would be consulted concerning its use. Similar events to Oka have played themselves out at Gustafson Lake, near 100 Mile House in British Columbia,<sup>380</sup> and "Camp Ipperwash,"<sup>381</sup> Ontario in 1995. These indicated, among other things, that Oka was not an isolated case of Indigenous grievances over land claims. They also illustrated Indigenous capabilities of defending the land they had occupied long before Europeans even knew it existed, and through avenues coloniser society presumed Indigenous people were either unaware of, or assumed Indigenous people had no access to.

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid. 49.

<sup>380</sup> [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/gustafsen\\_lake/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/gustafsen_lake/), last accessed November 16, 2019.

<sup>381</sup> [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/ipperwash\\_crisis/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/ipperwash_crisis/), last accessed November 16, 2019.

Kanehsata'ke people understand their history as being one of the first villages to respond favorably to the Peacemaker's message, burying their weapons of war in favor of what became known as The Great Law of Peace, the foundation of the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois Confederacy. The village is even referred to by name in the Condolence Ceremony, the foundation on which the Confederacy rests.<sup>382</sup> Furthermore, while the area known as "The Pines," the center of the dispute in 1990, and the area also recently in the news,<sup>383</sup> is simply prime real estate for development to the colonisers, they fail to grasp that the White Pine is the Haudenosaunee "Tree of Peace," and is therefore of paramount spiritual importance to the people. The area in question may well be home to the very Tree of Peace under which the first weapons of war were buried, thereby initiating the ancient Iroquois Confederacy. In coloniser terms and understanding, it would be equivalent to levelling what is left of the Temple in Jerusalem, or the Dome of The Rock, or the (presumed) site of Jesus' crucifixion and tomb at Golgotha, his place of ascension on "The Mount," or birth-place in Bethlehem, to make way for exclusive high-end resorts and spas and accompanying golf courses.

Taken in this context, it is easier to understand the motivation behind the statement of one of the peoples' spokespersons: "One thing for sure, people here are never going to give up the pines."<sup>384</sup> John Cree states:

The pines is a sacred place for me, for all Mohawks. It's like a church. The pines is our sacred burial ground. There's all kinds of medicines, and the trees are very old. ...the pines give us pride. ...it is who we are."<sup>385</sup> The pine is at the center of the Haudenosaunee, its roots gather them together under its broad canopy, and the watcher,

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<sup>382</sup> Isabel St-Amand (Translated by S.E. Steward), *Stories Of Oka, Land, Film, And Literature* (University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 42. Accessible through University of Manitoba Libraries portal: books-scholarsportal-info.uml.idm.oclc.org, last accessed August 7, 2019.

<sup>383</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/oka-mayor-moratorium-remp-1.5238687>, last accessed August 12, 2019.

<sup>384</sup> Isabel St-Amand (Translated by S.E. Steward), *Stories Of Oka, Land, Film, And Literature* (University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 67. Accessible through University of Manitoba Libraries portal: books-scholarsportal-info.uml.idm.oclc.org, last accessed August 7, 2019.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid. 68.

the eagle, nests in its topmost branches, ready to warn the people of approaching danger.<sup>386</sup>

The eagle had done its duty, the people had defended their sacred place. Coloniser society was awakened to the fact that Indigenous peoples have not been assimilated or relegated to museums and out-of-the-way places away from the mainstream where, if they didn't choose to assimilate and disappear as a distinct people, they at least wouldn't be able to bother anyone or disrupt "normal" coloniser society and activities. Coloniser society could not deny the pictures of the physical violence at Oka, with colonisers throwing rocks at a caravan of Indigenous elderly, women, and children. It was also made aware of the fact that the real estate to be developed contained a cemetery. As a result, many were moved to examine their own embedded attitudes toward Indigenous peoples. There were a few who agreed with the rock throwers. There were those (especially in the Prairie regions of the country) who revealed their prejudices against the French (as I observed at the time) by noting that this took place in Quebec. But there were enough that came to the realization that historical relationships between Indigenous peoples and the governments of the country and their agents/agencies need serious re-examination. Slowly, painstakingly, Indigenous peoples, their culture, and their spiritual values were removed from the museum shelves and the romanticised "noble savage" realm, as well as the remote physical and mental regions of peoples' minds. Slowly, Indigenous people were beginning to be appreciated as people, not shadows. From Oka to the Truth And Reconciliation Commission Report, over 30 years have elapsed. A people who have suffered too long, who needed for truth to be told and reconciliation to happen, have been it seems, personifications of patience, especially if one goes back further into history than Oka.

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

For the people of Kanehsatake, and for Indigenous peoples across the land, a tipping point had been reached, where all past ill treatment was recalled and needed to be redressed. But the battle for recognition and consideration did not take place in courtrooms and restrictive cabinet rooms and houses of government. It took place on Indigenous territory, at a place of spiritual significance, drawing on this spiritual significance for the strength it needed. It also served notice that the spiritual lives of the people had not been subsumed by coloniser society. This incident “offered the shape and definition of a space in which connection to the Mohawk and Iroquois land, history, and political and spiritual structures was affirmed.”<sup>387</sup>

Holding ceremonies in the besieged space took on an additional significance in an historical context in which the enactment of spirituality, whether it be through belief, ritual ceremonies, or the political and spiritual structure represented by the longhouse, had been systematically denigrated, suppressed, and often outright forbidden and criminalized by the colonial authorities and successive Canadian regimes.<sup>388</sup>

The agreement reached on August 12, 1990 regarding any negotiations that were to take place concerning the on-going situation, recognised the importance of “spiritual leaders, clan mothers, chiefs, advisors, and attorneys.”<sup>389</sup> By including spiritual leaders and clan mothers, coloniser governments indicated that they were at least *saying* that they were willing to give weight to the spiritual approaches, concepts, and concerns that were an integral part of the relationship with Indigenous people and discussions of the future. On paper, at least, Indigenous spiritual approaches were understood and recognised as being integral to the peoples’ identity and understanding of the past as well as their future relationship with coloniser society.

In 1969, Harold Cardinal observed: “Many Indians once again are looking toward the old as the hope of the future. Many Indian leaders believe a return to the old values, ethics and

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid. 71.

morals of native beliefs would strengthen the social institutions that govern the behaviour patterns of Indian societies.”<sup>390</sup> In a lengthy, informal conversation, I recall being present at one night in the wheel house of the tugboat I was working on, while we were at the dock at Fort Chipewyan, just before or just after he wrote these words, he expressed the same sentiment, although not necessarily in these words. Although this hints at a revival of spiritual consciousness that, in Cardinal’s opinion had all but been eradicated, he further states that it “is our belief that the Indian must be an Indian. He cannot realize his potential as a brown white man.”<sup>391</sup> As he noted this revival of spiritual consciousness, he was of the opinion that “only through political vehicles can the Indian people express their needs and create pressure for their programmes.”<sup>392</sup>

Throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s most of the material I encountered concerning Indigenous identity and rights centered on legal and political issues and tended to highlight government bodies and their legal councils arguing with Indigenous legal council and (mostly elected) political leaders. Coloniser sentiments sounded much like those expressed in a 1983 ruling on claims by the Lubicon Cree: “Indians and Inuit people have abandoned their ancestral way of life and adopted the white man’s ways.”<sup>393</sup> The argument continued: “Since the Indian way of life did not exist, no irreparable harm could be done to it.”<sup>394</sup> Therefore, oil companies felt they had the right to continue extracting their product from Lubicon land, to the tune of more than a million dollars worth a day, without any need for compensation to or consideration of the Lubicon whatsoever. The hearing that had been initiated by the Lubicon to seek an injunction to

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<sup>390</sup> Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society The Tragedy Of Canada’s Indians* (M.G. Hurtig Ltd., Publishers, Edmonton), 89.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid. 170.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid. 164.

<sup>393</sup> John Goddard, *Last Stand of the Lubicon Cree* (Douglas & McIntyre, Vancouver/Toronto, 1991), 111.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

halt development ended with the court ruling to decline the injunction and allow the oil companies to continue their exploitation of the oil beneath the land, and to destroy forest and habitat in the process. Furthermore, to add injury to insult, the Lubicon Band was ordered to pay all legal costs of the oil companies, to the tune of \$200,000.<sup>395</sup>

The decision, said Nigel Banks, a law professor the University of Calgary, suggested that native people must fit the noble savage image to have rights.<sup>396</sup>

And further:

aboriginal peoples of Canada have rights as long as they remain in a fossilized or primitive state, but their rights are progressively diminished to the extent that they avail themselves to the benefits and burdens of the twentieth century<sup>397</sup>

So much confusion over who and/or what a “real Indian” is, how they are to dress, act, etc.<sup>398</sup> No wonder that the events at Kanehsatake in the fall of 1990 seemed to come as such a shock to coloniser politicians and the general population, meeting with such a violent reaction from coloniser society. Nobody thought that there were any “real Indians” left!

To the prevailing coloniser mentality, “the first ordained minister of the United Church from the Stoney Nation”<sup>399</sup> (Nakoda) who also published a book that speaks with reverence of his people’s spirituality, is an oxymoron. Chief John Snow, educated by the United Church in the Morley Residential School and ordained as a United Church minister, seeks to explain to coloniser readers that: “In order to understand the vital importance the mountains had – and still have – to my people, it is necessary to know ... our life was one in which religion was woven throughout all parts of the social structure and observed in conjunction with every activity.”<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid. 113.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid. 114.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories A Native Narrative* (House of Anasi Press Inc., 2003), 32-60.

<sup>399</sup> Chief John Snow (Dr.), *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places, The Story Of The Stoney People* (Samuel Stevens, Toronto & Sarasota, 1977; Fifth House Ltd., Friesens Printers, 2005), “About the Author”.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid. 4.

He is aware that his forefathers "had been selected by the Creator to receive a precious gift of special understanding and they have handed that gift down to us as a sacred trust."<sup>401</sup> He was not assimilated into Christianity, disavowing the traditional teachings of his childhood, but certainly Indigenous and proud of it, instrumental in many activities centering on Indigenous spirituality, not only among his own people (whom he served as Chief), but also throughout all of Turtle Island (or Great Island in his terminology).

When Chief John Snow speaks of his Indigenous spiritual heritage, he is not dusting off some antiquated museum relic to show it to us. He is presenting us with a vivid, energetic, alive, and contemporary spiritual world view and approach to life (in 1977, then again, in 2005). On occasion, perhaps to jog a memory of a dimly remembered passage on the part of a Christian reader, his presentation of his people's spiritual connection to the land is worded in prosaic language that is unfamiliar to many who have read an anthropologist's ethnographer's, or sociologist's offerings on the subject.<sup>402</sup> His language throughout is of a vigorous and very much alive contemporary Indigenous spirituality. When discussing his people's spiritual heritage and sacred sites or "objects," he consistently reminds us that he is speaking of a contemporary spirituality, not a long-lost relic of the past: "The buffalo's head was (and is) sacred to us"<sup>403</sup> is one example. He holds his entire spiritual tradition as sacred, with some aspects purposely dealt with by means of circumlocution: "I cannot discuss my people's medicine in detail here because it is sacred to us."<sup>404</sup> Concluding the first chapter of his book wherein he presents some oral history, Snow writes (note, in the present tense):

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid. Compare "Come, my children, anyone who is hungry..." to Matthew 11:28: (attributed to Jesus) "Come to Me, all who are weary (who work to exhaustion, "kopiontes" in Greek), and I will give you rest." New American Standard Bible. This passage would be very familiar to John Snow, along with its connotations.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid. 9.

In the olden days some of the neighbouring tribes called us the ‘People of the Shining Mountains.’ These mountains are our temples, our sanctuaries, and our resting places. They are a place of hope, a place of vision, a place of refuge, a very special and holy place where the Great Spirit speaks with us. *Therefore, these mountains are our sacred places.*<sup>405</sup>

There, in the mountains, at Morley, Alberta, he describes a Pipe Ceremony which happened

Ten thousand years ago? Perhaps a century? No! This occurred last summer and the summer before and each summer for the past six years. ...The setting is Morley: the home of the Indian Ecumenical Movement. Indian people who worship in dozens of different sectarian churches every Sunday throughout the year gather together at this time to confirm that there is a Creator, and that they have followed His way for thousands of years.<sup>406</sup>

Chief Snow is fully aware that every effort has been made by coloniser society to eradicate traditional Indigenous beliefs and practices, but is thankful for the few who resisted, keeping Indigenous spiritual approaches alive. In fact, he goes so far as to see a positive spiritual aspect in his people being relegated to reserves: “Was it the will of the Great Spirit that we were placed on Indian reserves to isolate us so we could retain our language, to preserve our culture, and to keep the sacred fire burning?”<sup>407</sup> Looking into the future, he sees this preservation of Indigenous spiritual approaches as beneficial, not only for his people, but potentially for all of humankind on this Great Island as well. As he writes, he explains how he sees traditional Indigenous spiritual approaches as providing a much-needed antidote to the poison of selfishness and greed he observes to be prevalent in coloniser society, indicating to him either the loss of spiritual grounding or the willful and total abrogation of any spiritual heritage that the colonisers may have had in the religions they brought with them. He sees Indigenous spiritual values, furthermore, as an antidote to the rising deification of technology and technological advances. For a sick coloniser society, Indigenous spiritual values are the medicine. Or at least, Indigenous

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid. 196.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid. 199.

spiritual values can serve as a counterpoint to the spiritual vacuum that is so quickly developing, and destroying not only people, but the land as well.

But Chief John Snow is by no means advocating a romanticised “return to the bush” approach. He sees the need to *engage* with contemporary society, not retreat from it. He indicates the need to resist being drawn into the vacuum that is consuming society, but not always through adversarial means. By rediscovering their spiritual heritage and their cultural values that have their strength in that spiritual heritage, the people themselves first need to resist being personally drawn into the vacuum. Then, as they gain strength and confidence, they are not only able to serve as examples to society as a whole, but, with their newly acquired contemporary understanding and skills, begin to provide a meaningful analysis of the problems and point to workable solutions that benefit society at large, not just Indigenous people. Quite a contrast from the apocalyptic undertones of past attempts to revitalise Indigenous spiritual values, as in the case with Wovoka and the Ghost Dance. Instead, Snow advocates using all the tools at one’s disposal; education, the courts, political weight, etc., with a firm grounding in Indigenous spiritual beliefs, values, and culture, to not only survive, but thrive in the years to come.

In a class that I took at the University of Lethbridge in 1974 or 1975, I had occasion to speak with a band council member from Hobbema, Alberta (Maskwacis, “Bear Hills” since 2014). Having grown up (as previously mentioned) just North of there, and West of Wetaskiwin (“wītaskiwinihk,” “the hills where peace was made,” or “Peace Hills”), I had always heard that, when a member of one of the communities (reserves) in the vicinity of Hobbema proved to be a recalcitrant alcoholic or otherwise proved to be detrimental to the peace and order within the community, that person would be provided, by the band, with a room in the Wetaskiwin Hotel and moved “off reserve” to continue his or her anti-social behavior there instead. When I

questioned the band council member concerning this, he did not deny it, only replying: “White man created the problem, white man can deal with it.” A rather pragmatic form of poetic justice, I always thought.

However, facing and dealing with the problem by means of this rather rustic and pragmatic form of poetic justice was not the approach taken by Chief Smallboy and some 140 people who followed him from their home at Ermineskin (between Wetaskiwin and Ponoka, Alberta) to the Kootenay Plains, North of Abraham Lake, in 1968.<sup>408</sup> This is the same general area as mentioned above in conjunction with Chief Snow. Concerning the Mountains and the Kootenay Plains, “everyone since David Thompson had recognized that the Kootenay Plains were sacred Indian land.”<sup>409</sup> Smallboy chose, as did those who followed him, to leave behind them the insidious coloniser influences, including drugs, alcohol, *and television*. Instead, he and his camp would return to traditional spiritual practices and medicines, including a return to the use of the Cree Language, and once again become “precise speakers.”<sup>410</sup> Smallboy was not only a hereditary chief, but duly elected in accordance with current Indian Affairs practices as well. The move surprised everyone, including residents of Hobbema (Maskwacis), although years of preparation and planning had preceded it. “Shocked” might be a more apt description of how I remember coloniser media reporting it. Quickly, quietly, resistance to years of coloniser pressure and influence was brought to light, not with vociferous demands or combative action, but with a simple “We’ve had enough of this, we’re leaving to go our own way.”

That “way” was difficult at first, and two years later, the camp became two, as some of the people moved to a new location (Buck Lake), within the boundaries of Treaty Six land, away

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<sup>408</sup> Gary Botting, *Chief Smallboy, In Pursuit of Freedom* (Fifth House Publications, Printed in Canada by Friesens, 2005), 3.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

from the contentious Kootenay Plains area. This area was soon contested in the courts as to whether it was (as had previously been assumed, see above) unceded, and sacred to Indigenous people and therefore should be recognised as theirs, or whether it was Crown Land belonging to the government. The media (and many others) assumed that children in the camp were not even getting an education, a point that was mentioned and belaboured consistently. However, an official within the Lands and Forests division of the Government of Alberta is quoted as saying: “We know they’re there ...we even suggested where they should set up camp...its quite true they have no authority to be there, but we’re just not taking any action.”<sup>411</sup> It has been suggested that this may have been self-serving on the part of the government, since the camp provided a useful source of labour for clearing the forest ahead of the flooding expected by the dam then being built.

But, as I lived in Alberta at the time and followed the events and media coverage, there always seemed (to me) to be more to it than the pragmatics of “cheap labour.” Alberta’s political and cultural heritage was such that many non-Indigenous people in the province felt alienated and ill-treated by Federal Governments, especially if these governments were Liberal, which was the case with Pierre Elliot Trudeau as Prime Minister of Canada. Many Albertans would have been in perfect agreement (as was Smallboy) with Big Bear (Smallboy’s great-uncle on his father’s side and a signatory to Treaty Six in 1876). Smallboy even echoed a phrase Big Bear had used to communicate his fear of losing his independence that resonated with more than just a few colonisers residents of Alberta as well. Not many of us in Alberta were very trusting of a Liberal government in Ottawa, and just as fearful as Big Bear of “dying with a (Federal) rope around our

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid. 8.

necks.”<sup>412</sup> We (at least I) could understand this quote as having historical significance in reference to the form of capital punishment (hanging) in the time of Big Bear (1876), but could also appreciate the metaphor implicit in Smallboy’s choice to quote it in 1977. Although the ultra-conservative press (Red Deer, smack in the middle of Alberta’s “Bible Belt”) were quick to attack Smallboy and his band of followers, there were many who seemed to applaud *any* individuals that had the audacity to step forward and show their disapproval of Trudeau’s “Cultural Mosaic” scheme that sounded to them more like the dreaded “Melting Pot” south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, which was anathema to any proud, self-respecting coloniser Albertan.

In fact, the Government of Alberta, to allay fears and quiet derogatory media reports, even provided a mobile schoolhouse and teachers for the camp. *In addition to learning Cree*, students learned about the land and traditional relationships with the land, and how to live off the land in harmony with it. It even seems that the children were being provided with an education that even met coloniser standards, proving to be, when they attended courses at Maskwachees Cultural College “every bit as articulate as their fellows”<sup>413</sup> as they earned transfer credits from the University of Calgary. Many went on to attend that University and earned their Bachelor of Education degrees, gaining employment as teachers within the Alberta Education system.

The camp, now known as the “Mountain Cree Camp,” has encountered many difficulties along the way, but still exists, and, since 2009, has been provided with Provincially accredited educational services through the Edmonton Catholic School District #7, with a contract that expires in 2021.<sup>414</sup> The Government of Alberta recognises its responsibility to provide a

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<sup>412</sup> Cf. Botting, pages 10 to 14 for clarification of this concept. Any horse that can be led around by a rope has had its spirit broken. A horse with a broken spirit is a pitiful sight; indeed, a plodding shell of a beautiful and magnificent creature, who is meant to be in a, shall we say, “symbiotic” relationship with the person he is carrying on his back, not a subservient one.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid. Preface, x.

<sup>414</sup> <https://ecsd.net/Programs/Overview/Indigenous-Learning/Pages/The-Mountain-Cree-Camp-School--Kisiko-Awasis-Kiskinamawin.aspx>, last accessed August 20, 2019.

Provincially accredited education for the children of the camp, even though it still maintains that the camp is located on “Crown Land,” and not designated as a reservation belonging to the band. A quick examination of the links associated with the web site referred to above provides some insight into the current relationship between the camp and those who once were responsible for a great many Residential Schools (i.e. Catholic Church) and the ill service Indigenous peoples received in them. The current programs and their delivery include and involve Elders, Counsellors, and Staff from various Indigenous communities, with ceremonies included as part of the school curriculum. No museum artifacts here, but a people who has connected with their past, has embraced and acknowledged it (even the most difficult aspects) and learned to move forward as members of contemporary society while retaining their Indigenous spiritual and cultural identity.

The history and spiritual heritage that Chief Smallboy initially relied on has provided the people with wisdom and the ability to critique the current maladies of our contemporary world and suggest viable cures. Their existence is not idyllic, with on-going issues over mining in the area and who has title to the land, they, or the crown. But their spiritual grounding and consequent resilience has served them well for the past fifty plus years. Unfortunately, governments have not yet matured enough to recognise that a spiritual legacy and connection to the land is a valid point to consider when attempting to balance “progress” with the rights of Indigenous peoples. The Kootenay Plains Provincial Recreation Area and The Kootenay Plains Ecological Reserve<sup>415</sup> and the adjacent Siffleur Wilderness Area were established by the Government of Alberta as protected sites, perhaps as an attempt to place these areas in a category that would make it even more difficult for Indigenous peoples to lay claim to them. Or, perhaps,

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<sup>415</sup> Information at Alberta Parks web site: <https://www.albertaparks.ca>, with links to some information on both areas, last accessed August 21, 2019.

because they are now protected areas, to remove them from any attempt to capitalise on their existence, other than in strictly controlled public tour or scientific research situations. In many ways, Smallboy became an important first step for Indigenous peoples and the demands for redress across all “The Great Island” or “Turtle Island.” Smallboy drew on the traditions preserved by the Cree at the Rocky Boy Reservation in Montana, where he had historical connections, put them into practice in community, and sparked a contemporary renewal of Indigenous spiritual concepts and approaches.<sup>416</sup> Nearby, as we have previously discussed, Chief John Snow was hosting Indigenous Ecumenical conferences. Although their approaches were different in some ways, their goal to revitalise the spiritual and cultural values of their people was the same.

The importance difference, however, was that Chief Snow was/is conducting his conferences, retreats, and other activities *on reserve*, while Chief Smallboy and his people are on land that was deemed to be “Crown Land.” Since no physical action was taken by the government(s) to remove Smallboy and his band, one could argue that tacit recognition has been given to the Indigenous peoples’ right to be there. Yet, governments continue to insist, publicly and in the courts, that Smallboy’s people are occupying the land illegally.

As indicated above, neither coloniser governments nor the legal system they’ve created and insist everyone must resort to in all manner of disputes, recognise that spiritual concepts and values (at least those of Indigenous people not accepting the dominant culture) are worthy of consideration. Any contentious matter, therefore, is to be addressed as defined and determined by the colonial power which is simply and straightforwardly just another form of colonial spiritual oppression. Another form of living and dying with a rope around one’s neck if you will. If, as

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<sup>416</sup> Gary Botting, *Chief Smallboy, In Pursuit of Freedom* (Fifth House Publications, Printed in Canada by Friesens, 2005), 159.

was the case in the most recent, most publicised, most visible Indigenous opposition to government antics (Bill C-45 of December 2012), there is popular grassroots opposition based on an alternate (spiritual) view of the land and Indigenous peoples' relationship to that land, there is a move by the government to deal with only the "authorised" representatives of Indigenous people (i.e. those elected according to government approved protocols).

If leadership can only be gained by government approved and defined methods, then the traditional methods of acknowledging leaders among the people are deemed invalid. In ignoring the people's tradition, colonisers impose their own process and refuse to deal with anyone who has not conformed to that processes. Meanwhile, conforming to the coloniser process so that the coloniser recognises the validity of your existence, is to intentionally subject yourself to the coloniser to gain something for yourself (the recognised right to exist). I recall Harold Cardinal's expression of "Uncle Tom-Toms." But coloniser dominance is even more insidious than that. If Indigenous people place their trust in a leader because they feel that person is best capable of representing them, their values, and their needs, that person then, in order to be recognised as an "authorised" representative of the people, must conform to coloniser rules and expectations as well, and runs the risk of losing his or her position as a recognised (by the government) representative if he or she ever strays too far from accepted coloniser values or practices. The danger is that we begin to experience the conundrum of the horse (Clover) in Orwell's *Animal Farm*.<sup>417</sup> Over time, the leaders the people elected (or chose by consensus) to represent them become undistinguishable from the oppressors the people elected their leaders to free them from. The process these leaders are involved in is defined by the governments or governmental agencies who are responsible for validating their leadership. Therefore, even though their people

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<sup>417</sup> George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Arcturus Publishing Ltd., London, 2019), 95&96.

may traditionally choose their leaders by consensus, coloniser-approved elections must be held with only those voting who can prove to the coloniser that they have the right to do so. Then, if leaders wish to communicate their peoples' needs and desires, it all must be done in the coloniser's way, with forms and language that has been defined by the coloniser.

If colonial powers can define the process, the outcome will always be the same. That is, to the advantage of the coloniser and to the detriment of the colonised. Even current discussions concerning "mutual recognition" seem to be coloniser defined, and therefore not all that different than the "Red Tile" of the cultural mosaic of the 1969 Government of Canada White Paper (always thought "White Paper" was an interesting designation), or even worse, a re-statement of the "Noble Savage" myth and all its white supremacist connotations. Working within colonial systems to attempt to right the wrongs of colonialism is therefore akin to attempting to empty a deep pool of water fed by a large and robust underground spring. No matter how hard one works, or how efficacious one thinks one's methods are, the source of the problem has still not been addressed. Even more insidious in my mind, is the connection I see between acceptance of the coloniser approach and method of addressing the situation and the categorical assumption that this is the only way to address any problematic situation, to another of Orwell's novels *1984*.<sup>418</sup> Once a person accepts the coloniser approach as the only viable approach, the metaphorical bullet is already lodged in one's brain, and one's spiritual death is a fait accompli.

A new approach must therefore be taken. Which brings me to the current discussion concerning "decolonisation," and the impetus for my research. When hearing this term, the first instinct is to consider that those who have been colonised are the people in need of decolonisation, that is, ridding themselves of the mind set prevalent among people who have

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<sup>418</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Arcturus Publishing Limited, London), 302-304.

systemically been treated as intrinsically inferior to the colonisers simply because they may not have possessed the resources to resist the colonisation process or, if they did possess the necessary resources, chose not to use them. But that addresses only one aspect of the problem. As long as colonisers (we) persist in maintaining attitudes and actions consistent with the colonising process, assuming that “decolonising” is just another term for “assimilation,” we continue to be not only part of the problem, but the source from which the problem arises as well. Again, the analogy of the spring-fed pool that incessantly renews itself no matter how hard one works to drain it applies, although I find it an insult to clear spring water to use it in this context. Perhaps one should instead refer to a brackish, self-sustaining slough that anyone who does not want to become hopelessly mired in knows enough to avoid. Lake Perfidy flooding Cornplanter’s grave site is therefore as much a metaphor as it is a physical reality.

The decolonisation process must involve seriously critiquing the colonial mind-set and underlying presuppositions of the colonial system within which we all, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike exist, while at the same time introducing new perspectives and approaches from *outside* the embedded colonial structures, be they social, political, economic, or spiritual. “Decolonisation will not happen if we insist on the safe and familiar.”<sup>419</sup> First we need to understand that:

regardless of whether we are the oppressor or the oppressed, the perpetrator or victim, we reproduce oppression through normalized patterns of behaviour that have developed over time and have become ‘natural,’ automatic, and unconscious actions and *ways of being* in the world.<sup>420</sup>

So, unless we first seek to understand ourselves; who we are, why we think the way we do, and why we do and say the things we do, and then make a conscious choice to act in the interest of

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<sup>419</sup> Shiela Batacharya & Yuk-Lin Renita Wong (Editors), *Sharing Breath Embodied Learning and Decolonisation*, (AU Press, Athabasca University, Edmonton, Alberta, 2018), 25.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid. 51.

progressive change rather than to react, chances are we are simply perpetuating the status quo rather than forging a new and better future for ourselves and the world we live in.

If we have the courage to engage in the practice of self-discovery, there are many options available to us, some of which have even been cultivated in coloniser society. If we are serious about decolonisation, we need to understand that Indigenous people have had and practiced their spirituality and methods of dealing with situations long before the advent of modern psychology. The key to self-discovery is to experience and be aware of our personal relationship with all that we are experiencing. But first, we must be open to the experience, and to the possibility that the experience will affect us and the way we perceive and think about all we encounter after that experience. To engage (experience) without being open to the process is to insulate ourselves from the risk of becoming someone other than who we were going into the experience. Simply to attend an Indigenous ceremony such as a Sweat Lodge for example, as spectators and tourists, there to fulfill a fantasy or satisfy some academic curiosity, only perpetuates the myth of the Noble Savage. We need to be aware that we may be preconditioned to assume that our self-awareness and our awareness of Indigenous spirituality is dependent on what we consider to be “authentic” Indigenous practices as defined by the Noble Savage myth, for instance.

Can we discount those Indigenous people who may choose to express themselves using the terminology of Nietzsche, Marx, Fanon, Freire, Hegel, and others? We belie our fear of contemporary Indigenous spiritually motivated thought and action when we do our level best to return Indigenous people to the museum of ancient history. Even more disconcerting would be instances where Indigenous leaders themselves insist that rigid traditionalism is the only means through which an “authentic” spiritual experience is possible. Joseph Couture observed, in 1989:

“My fundamental view of Indians today is a computer in one hand, a Pipe in the other.”<sup>421</sup> He envisions an Indigenous person as being fully aware of, versed in, and grounded in, traditional spiritual approaches, with the confidence and competence to address the issues of the day, using contemporary tools and methods to do so.

I recall again my conversation with the counsellor from Hobbema referred to earlier. When I noted that the program he was implementing to combat and reverse the debilitating effects of alcoholism and drug use among his people was quite familiar to me since I (in the course of my own training) had acquired an understanding of the principles and practices of Alcoholics Anonymous, his reply was simple and pragmatic. Looking first at the way I was dressed, then directing his gaze to his choice of clothing, he simply said: “Levis and Boulets fit us both.” And, to those who might insist that *only* those practices and forms of expression that fit the Noble Savage myth of the museum of antiquities model are “authentic,” I recall the words in the chorus of a song by Ian Tyson: “I outgrew the wagon, and boy let me tell you why, your tipi’s like an oven at times and your bed ain’t never dry ... and at fifteen below zero, you’d outrun the wagon too.”<sup>422</sup> Just because we used to do things a certain way, doesn’t mean we can’t embrace new approaches that are just as efficacious. A cowboy is no less of a cowboy if he does not unroll his blanket around the campfire by a chuckwagon and use his saddle as a pillow. An Indigenous person is no less authentic if he/she chooses not to live in a teepee made of tanned hides and cook over an open fire, wearing nothing more than buckskin clothing he/she made for themselves.

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<sup>421</sup> Ruth Couture & Virginia McGowan (Editors) *A Metaphoric Mind Selected Writings of Joseph Couture* (AU Press Athabasca University, Edmonton, Alberta, 2013), 291.

<sup>422</sup> Ian Tyson, *I Outgrew The Wagon* (On the album of the same name, written by Ian Tyson, recorded at Sundae Studios, Calgary, Alberta, 1989, released by Vanguard Records.)

With traditional spiritual concepts rooted in a sense of relationship to all that exists, today's Indigenous peoples are finding ways to express themselves in language and concepts that are current, as they critique the malaise society finds itself in. When they speak of the land and all that inhabits it as being something other than an exploitable commodity with benefits accruing to those willing to engage in exploitation, they are not Marxists. But it's easy to assume they are, if all you hear is "land" and "resources" and "who owns it." If, on the other hand, you begin to explore concepts of *relationship* to land and resources, you have moved from considering land and resources as inanimate "things" and closer to the Indigenous way of thinking of land and all that inhabits it, including "resources," as imbued with spirit, as are you. In comparing an Indigenous approach to land to the coloniser approach, we begin to discover how Christianity was co-responsible, or at best complacent, during the centuries of exploitation and plunder from first contact to today. Presumably, because of my agricultural background, or perhaps, because I have always appreciated the beauty of nature, I shudder every time I see a scar on the landscape because someone contaminated it with oil, decided to dig an open pit mine, or just "clear cut" the timber. I still cannot understand why we have to destroy nature to get what we want from her. All that beauty laid to waste because of the insatiable appetite that seems endemic to coloniser mentality.

In the next chapter, I therefore examine and contrast the coloniser approach to land with the Indigenous approach. I also examine how I feel the two spiritual approaches to the question of inherent human nature and to the question of "good" verses "evil" have laid the foundation for the disparate views expressed by Christianity and Indigenous spirituality.

**CHAPTER SIX:  
Important Differences in Christian and Indigenous Spiritual Approaches  
(And Some Similarities)**

A comparative analysis of the Judeo-Christian spiritual concepts with those found in Indigenous teachings begins with their respective views on the inherent nature of humankind. Of the child who was to be taken to the Seven Grandfathers to be taught the precepts he was then to pass on to the people in the Midewiwin ceremony, we read:

He was innocent. His mind was untouched by corruption and pain of the world. This baby was still fresh from the Creator's side where he stayed before he came to his mother's womb. He had not yet opened his eyes and ears to the world.<sup>423</sup>

As we have seen previously in the discussion concerning Indigenous views on virginity, all that is associated with the spirit world is considered pure. Therefore, if a child is seen as leaving the spirit world to be born, it follows that it must necessarily be pure when it is born. That pure spirit is, however, acknowledged to be susceptible to being "touched by the corruption and pain of the world." Children are born pure and innocent, but sadly, they lose that innocence and sense of immediacy with the purity of the spirit world through the influence of "life," which is why people need someone to guide them back to the harmony that is inherent in the spirit world. Therefore, the view of humankind is that it inherently possesses the ability to re-achieve the harmony that is a determining factor in the spirit world. Humankind only needs the appropriate instruction/ceremonies to help them become re-acquainted with, recover, and reclaim this inherent possibility.

Although Bullchild's account of the first Sundance ceremony referred to earlier concerns itself primarily with the relationship between a man and a woman who desire to become husband and wife, the woman's unique relationship with Creator Sun (as is every woman's) indicates a

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<sup>423</sup> Edward Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book the Voice of the Ojibway* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London, 1988), 60.

similar attitude as toward the newborn. If the woman is in a special relationship with the spirit world, then that which she carries in her womb must be in a special relationship as well. For the narrative proceeds with the assumption that the woman is indeed worthy of bearing new life. It is the man who is called upon to demonstrate that he will be a worthy husband and father through his quest, and through his endurance on the tree for the duration of the ceremony.

Throughout the literature that I have researched, I find nothing to contradict the view that in Indigenous thought and worldview children are considered to be born innocent and pure. The ceremonies and teachings are intended to help retain or strengthen one's relationship with the spirit world and to seek harmony with it, the world, and people (human and non-human) they live in and among. A child participates in ceremonies throughout their life beginning at birth but in some cases there are ceremonies that they do not participate in. This is illustrated by one narrative dealing with the Pleiades Constellation.<sup>424</sup> It seems that some children were inclined to think that they were ready to join in the dances with the adults, but the adults felt they were yet too young for the dance and forbade it. The children, who all had visions of instruction and therefore felt that they were mature enough, despite what the adults thought, held their dance anyway, but in a secret location, without adult guidance. They were subsequently drawn into the sky to form the Pleiades constellation. The one who looked back became, as was foretold, a falling star. The children originated from the sky (spirit world), and, through their new-found power in their vision and the dance, they were returned. But there is nothing to indicate that their ascension was a form of punishment for performing an adult only dance, since the children were granted, it seems, places of honour. The narrative seems didactic in nature, not moralistic. Children (and everyone who participates in ceremony) gain power through visions and

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<sup>424</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-F516eyWJY>, last accessed June, 2020.

ceremony. Not including children does not prevent them from growing and receiving power, it only results in the community being bereft of them and the power they gain through participation. Therefore, children should have a special place among us, for they can teach us a great deal, since they are closest to the spirit world and therefore can be the conduits of great power for the community. However, the didactic nature of the narrative is not simply confined to this. The children had visions, they felt ready to join in the adult dance. If this should have been an indication that they required the guidance of a spiritual leader/elder, it seems that the adults abrogated their responsibility toward the children by not providing them with the correct guidance in the comprehension of their visions, i.e., what the full meaning of these visions were, and how they fit into the spiritual life of the community. The children, on the other hand, in their impetuosity, did not seem to seek adult guidance in the interpretation of their visions, other than declaring that they were ready to join the dance and asking that they be allowed to join. In this narrative, both children and adults failed to act in a responsible manner, and so predated the events that transpired. I reiterate, my understanding of the narrative is that it is didactic in nature, helping both adults and children alike understand that, in matters of visions and spirituality, when responsibilities are neglected, there are natural consequences, but those same consequences are not some punitive act by some divine agent.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, in the creation narratives it is noted that: “every thing that moves (creeps) on the earth in which is a living soul.” Presumably, all life, both physical and spiritual existence, originates from the Creator (Genesis 1:30). But the definitive attitude concerning humankind seems to have evolved from the narrative contained in Genesis, Chapter 3. “Good” and “Evil” co-exist, and humankind chose to follow the path of evil to attain the goal of enhancing their status, rationalising that this would be laudable in the eyes of the Creator. As a

result of their not following the categorical imperative not to engage in this type of activity, they not only lost all the status they had, but their actions reverberated throughout all else that existed.

The struggle between humanity and evil is writ large, the land on which humanity walked and depended on for their existence becomes unyielding, and it seems that the first animals are required to lose their lives to provide clothing for humanity. In the next chapter, relationships among humanity deteriorate, followed by even a corruption of the spirit world (sons of God), until the observation is made, in Genesis Chapter 6, verse 5 that: “the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” “and the earth was filled with violence” (Verse 11). After the deluge (Genesis Chapter 8), the observation is again made that: “the inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). Jesus of Nazareth seems to echo this sentiment in Mark 7:2-23 (Matthew 15:18&19). The concept is then given more emphasis in Romans 5:12-14, which was quoted early in the movement’s history to “prove” that the inherent inclination of humankind is evil from birth (conception?). The reasoning seems to rely on the “proof” that, since all people die, then it must be because they are inherently evil/sinful. Since, therefore, it is thought that this is all part of a divine punishment with human mortality as the proof, then divine intervention is the only means through which this punishment can be removed.

In June 1530, Martin Luther and his cadre of like-minded followers summed up the assessment of humankind in the following words:

it is taught among us that since the fall of Adam all men who are born according the curse of nature are conceived and born in sin. That is, all men are full of evil lust and inclinations from their mothers’ wombs.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>425</sup> Theodore G Tappert (Translator and Editor), *The Book of Concord* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1959), 29.

The Genesis narrative and the expositions concerning the nature of humankind that followed it indicate that the officially accepted view is that an inherently corrupt (and evil) humanity corrupts all that exists, including the spirit world. In this dualistic and hierarchical view, there is good, which is identified as God, and there is evil, which is identified (later) as an opposing force/entity which influenced humankind's decision to disobey the initial categorical imperative. However, while the adherents to Judeo-Christian thought seem to have been of the opinion that humankind, as well as the earth and all that existed upon it were "cursed" because of humankind's disobedience of the initial categorical imperative, the narrative of the deluge, as we shall soon see, seems to be at odds with the prevalent view held by Christian coloniser society concerning the earth and all that exists upon it.

"This land is mine, God gave this land to me" So begins the classic theme song from the movie "Exodus,"<sup>426</sup> portraying the trials and tribulations of the people of Israel as they struggled to fulfill the promise of a Jewish homeland as contained in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The movie is loosely based on the struggles they faced in their determination to re-settle in Israel after the Holocaust. The ship portrayed in the movie as bringing refugees to Haifa in 1947 was, contrary to the movie portrayal, rammed by a British warship on July 18. The passengers were detained and sent back to a British-run camp near Hamburg, Germany. The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was passed on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1947, recommending separate Arab and Jewish states, with a plan to partition the city of Jerusalem. The words "mine" and "God gave" in the song, and the strong sentiment they express, are worthy of consideration when we begin to explore the prevailing coloniser attitude concerning land in comparison with the

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<sup>426</sup> Leon Uris, *Exodus* (Doubleday & Company Inc. 1958). *Exodus* (Directed by Otto Preminger, Musical Score by Ernest Gold, performed by Sinfonia of London, Lyrics by Pat Boone, 1960).

Indigenous view of land, since Christianity seems to have inherited much of its approach to land from its heritage in Judaism.

As part of the First Fruits ceremony/festival of the people of Israel, the recitation of the following is required when the offering is taken by the priest: “My father was a wandering (or, “perishing”) Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned (or, “lived as an alien”) there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation. ... and the Lord brought us out of Egypt ... and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land.”<sup>427</sup> “Given” is here a theological/spiritual interpretation of a successful military campaign against the people that occupied the land that the Hebrews coveted for themselves.<sup>428</sup> Two things command our attention concerning the land and the people of the land prior to the Hebrew military conquest. The first is the Hebrew attitude toward the conquered people, paraphrased by Josephus as: “I would advise you, ... to leave none of your enemies alive when you have conquered them, but to look upon it as your advantage to destroy them all.”<sup>429</sup> The second is the attitude toward the land itself, also paraphrased by Josephus in the words: “overthrow...their groves...and burn all such, their nation, and their very memory with fire.”<sup>430</sup> The people who inhabited the land prior to the conquest by the Hebrews are viewed as future problems waiting to happen, for if they are allowed to remain, there is always the danger that they may retain some of their previous beliefs and customs and thereby corrupt the spiritual precepts of the conquerors. The land itself is seen as equally problematic. Any refinements to it, or structures built upon it by its previous occupants are to be destroyed, to be replaced with only those that the Hebrews felt

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<sup>427</sup> Deuteronomy 26: 5-9, *New American Standard Bible* (The Foundation Press Publications (The Lockman Foundation), La Habra, California, 1971).

<sup>428</sup> William Whiston (Translator), *Josephus, Complete Works* (A.M., Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1985), 89-94; 105-110.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*

were necessary. Thus, *even the land itself* could not hold the memory of the conquered race. Everything on or about it was to be a Hebrew accomplishment, giving them thereby *total* ownership and complete control of it and all that was on it, whether it was “natural” or due to concerted human endeavour.

The attitude of conquest and complete control over the land, however, does not necessarily remain true to *all* the people’s narratives. In the ceremony mentioned above the use of the phrase “a wandering Aramean” referencing the progenitor of the race, recalls the days when the people were nomadic herders involved in animal husbandry as their primary means of livelihood. The people would follow or drive their herds from one pastureland that had become depleted by grazing to another that had not. Somewhat akin to the Plains Tribes of Turtle Island and their relationship with the land and the Buffalo. The people of the progenitor, Abraham, were not the original inhabitants of the land they would eventually settle in.<sup>431</sup> As they and their herds increased in number they divided into two groups, one seemingly moving and settling in a well-watered area (literally the circle of the Jordan), and the other to the land West of there to continue the nomadic lifestyle they were accustomed to (Genesis 13). They seem to have been reunited during a period of conflict (Genesis 14). After the need for a united front was over, the second group seems to have eventually returned to the land where they had previously chosen to live and settle in a larger “city” (Genesis 19). After experiencing conflict, the leader of *that* group became the progenitor of two other peoples. Meanwhile, through an act of subterfuge (Genesis 20), the progenitor gained access to areas better suited to his lifestyle of nomadic herder. Still, there was no concept of owning or controlling land. The progenitor, Abraham was simply there as a guest of the person who considered the land to be under his control. Abraham

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<sup>431</sup> Genesis 12:6, Genesis 13: 7 *New American Standard Bible* (The Lockman Foundation, 1971), 16 & 17.

even had to ask permission to bury his deceased wife in the land, finally negotiating to purchase a field and a cave for that purpose (Genesis 23).

When the people returned to the land to conquer it after their time in Egypt, they felt they had a spiritual prerogative to do so, based on the promise (covenant) that their deity had made with their progenitor (Genesis 15:12-21) that his descendants should become sovereign over the land they had once lived in as nomadic herdsmen. Their deity had seen fit to place them in the land as herdsmen and had subsequently promised that they would hold sovereignty over it by virtue of their initial dwelling there.

Therefore, if one argues that sovereignty as a spiritual gift accrues from ancient occupation of a land in which a people has been placed, then there is certainly room to argue that if the creator saw fit to put people on Turtle Island and they have lived there for centuries, not left and then returned as the people of Israel did. So, they then have a spiritual prerogative to claim sovereignty that is even stronger than that which the people of Israel had to the land they conquered and came to occupy when they left Egypt. While the people of Israel, according to their narratives, originated from one who was selected from the people that already lived on the land, the people of Turtle Island, according to their narratives, weren't subjected to any selection process, but simply placed where they are by divine agency.

But the concept of sovereignty over land based on spiritual prerogative, as ancient as this prerogative may be in the eyes of those claiming sovereignty, is not the only narrative recorded by the descendants of Abraham as dealing with the subject of land. Dated by the people to an earlier time than the promise to Abraham, is to one made to Noah in the narrative concerning the deluge. After it is all over and the earth is returned to its pristine state, we read in Genesis 8:21&22, that the divine will is stated as: "I will never again curse the ground on account of

man...and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.” “Now one can see clearly that this consolation will consist in an annulment of the curse that Yahweh laid on the earth.”<sup>432</sup> “The guarantee in v. 22 concerns the elemental temporal rhythm in which all creaturely life is involved.”<sup>433</sup> This seems to contradict the narrative involving humankind’s disobedience to the initial categorical imperative. Concerning the earth and all that it contains, the cyclical elements of the natural world are here indicated as immutable and without end. The rainbow, moreover, is to serve as a mnemonic device to remind humankind of this fact. Moreover, “The *natural* orders, fixed by God’s word, mysteriously guarantee a world in which in his own time God’s *historical* saving activity will begin.”<sup>434</sup> The obvious implication is that, while human existence may hang in the balance unless the divinity activates an historical salvation of humankind, the earth and all it contains will ever remain, continuing in its natural cycles. This narrative seems to indicate that it is *the earth* that is pronounced sovereign, not humankind or any portion thereof. Even if one believes that a divine historical saving activity is in place, it is important to realise that it is humankind that required it, not the earth and all its inhabitants.

This spiritual narrative and heritage seem to have been forgotten by the colonisers of Turtle Island, perhaps because science had already explained that the rainbow was refracted light and not a spiritual mnemonic device, or, perhaps, since they egotistically felt that they were the beneficiaries of divine historical saving activity, they had now vaulted over the earth and all that it contains in terms of status. There seems, in Christianity, to be no appreciation of the comparison between “weak” humankind that requires assistance, and nature which is immutably sovereign.

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<sup>432</sup> Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis A Commentary* (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1972), 122.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.* 123.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.* 134.

The supreme sovereignty of the earth and the need to observe and live in harmony with its cycles was and is, however, still an integral component of Indigenous spiritual thought and approaches. There is an important contrast, therefore, between Judeo-Christian ceremonies and Indigenous ceremonies. While many Indigenous ceremonies recognise the cyclical nature of the earth, its sovereignty, and therefore the desirability of living in harmony with and on it, the Judeo-Christian ceremonies of the colonisers seem to have their genesis in human endeavors and accomplishments that they feel are demonstrations and commemorations of their spiritual privilege, the First Fruits ceremony being only one example.

The Judeo-Christian approach to spiritual “sovereignty” over people as brought to Turtle Island by the colonisers, seems to echo their approach to sovereignty over land. In the initial conquest of the land by the descendants of Abraham who had left Egypt, as referenced previously on page 206f, all the people inhabiting the land who did not submit to the sovereignty of the conquerors were to be destroyed, along with any structures they had built or “improvements” they had made to the land. To be sure, Judaism *does* provide for a spiritual way to prevent one’s annihilation. That is, that “aliens” (non-Jewish people) residing within the Jewish State *can* become an integral part of it through availing themselves of the appropriate instruction. Their participation in the rites and rituals of their new-found spiritual approach signify their “conversion” to Judaism and the complete renunciation of any previous spiritual (and associated) concepts they may have held. Even if these people cannot lay claim to any *genealogical* right to consider themselves to be part of the Jewish State by tracing their ancestry to one of the twelve “tribes” who originated from the initial progenitor, Abraham, they can lay claim to a *spiritual* tradition that presumably offers them some confidence that they *belong* and are an integral part of the society.

Concerning the conversion ceremony (to Judaism), it has been noted:

this made you legally a Jew ... but that is not the end. It's only the beginning of a lifelong process. There is a rich Jewish life to be led after the conversion ceremony, but you will have to take an active role in shaping that new reality.<sup>435</sup>

That “new reality” is total immersion in everything Jewish: “acceptance of a new faith is not wholly for the sake of the religion itself.”<sup>436</sup> Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin is quoted as writing:

Jews who are convinced that Judaism is the best road to the good life and the surest path to the better future-to-come of universal peace and righteousness will be eager to share their insights and beliefs with their fellow men, especially in the Jewish setting of the State of Israel, where the proselyte has the opportunity to become fully integrated with the people of his choice.<sup>437</sup>

Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal expands on this:

Zionism may be regarded as the modern garb of the old Messianic hope, which kept the Jews alive through the ages past. It, too, has the two-fold function preached by the prophets. It aims to restore the Jew to his national life in his native land, Palestine; it aims too, through a regenerated Israel, to help bring about the regeneration of all mankind.<sup>438</sup>

So, “conversion” is not to be considered simply a spiritual choice, but involves an inherent life-style choice and a *complete* identification with *all* aspects of the faith, from physical observance of spiritual rites, rituals, and commandments, all the way to psychological and social identification with the group, its history, and “weltanschauung.” That is, complete and total assimilation that the proselyte will make every effort to achieve, even though it may not necessarily arrive in a blinding revelation at the rite of conversion. Annihilation of the proselyte’s pre-conversion spiritual concept and pre-conversion attitude toward life, if you will, but in a subtler form, with full and willing participation by the annihilated.

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<sup>435</sup> Lydia Kukoff, *Choosing Judaism* (Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, New York, 1981), 23.

<sup>436</sup> David Max Eichhorn (Editor), *Conversion To Judaism A History And Analysis* (Ktav Publishing House Inc. 1965), 168.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid. 171.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. 170.

Furthermore, the approach outlined above points to one more disturbing fact. It seems that those who are descended from the progenitors, Abraham's twelve sons, are de facto in a superior spiritual position simply through genealogy. As such, they are not constrained to "prove" themselves, as are neophytes to the spirituality, by maintaining a high level of zealotry for the new spirituality and the new set of values they have embraced. While the inheritors of the spiritual approach need to be wary of losing it through wrong decisions and contrary actions, the neophytes seem constrained to daily prove that they are worthy of being part of such an exalted spirituality and culture. Should they fail to demonstrate their worthiness to embrace the spirituality by not fully embracing the culture of that spirituality, they are in danger of being considered to have lapsed into their former contrary ways.

I suspect that Tommy Prince may have felt some resonance with this observation as he contemplated his relationship to the dominant culture and spiritual mind set when he was "demoted" from war hero to just another Indigenous person who hadn't fully and completely grasped the dominant concepts and become assimilated through the opportunity he had been given. Wuttunee (introduction, Pg. 21) seems not only cognizant of the principle of acceptance and immersion in colonizer culture, but advocates that Indigenous people recognize its powerful influence and enduring presence and govern their lives accordingly if they intend to succeed in this "new" era. Indigenous peoples who adopt the spirituality and culture of the colonisers do not have the luxury of a solid heritage in this spirituality and culture, and so need to demonstrate their acceptance regularly to allay suspicions that they are merely acquiescing to the dominant culture, but not fully accepting it. Not fully accepting the dominant spiritual/cultural mindset that was the Christianity of the colonisers, simply put Indigenous people on the wrong side of what

the colonisers considered to be self-evidently the will of their divinity, and therefore the obvious choice.

Christianity, posing itself as the true spiritual expression of the Messianic hope of Judaism, began as a proselytizing movement in a territory its founders had inhabited since birth, so there was no need to seek out and occupy a territory to call home. It did, however, inherit from Judaism the proselytizing approach that required complete identification with its spiritual approach. Even after the case was made to no longer insist that converts undergo the Jewish rite of circumcision,<sup>439</sup> it seems to have retained the idea that there were tell-tale indicators that the neophyte had truly annihilated and left behind any vestige of their previous spiritual approach.<sup>440</sup> There was still an assumption that the definitive pronouncement on all matters pertaining to congregational life and spirituality resided with the company of apostles, the recognised spiritual leaders. As time progressed from these early stages, the papacy, and the church, at least in Europe, came to be viewed as the embodiment of all the wisdom and spiritual acumen of the original leaders.

An “agreement was attained in substance by the end of the second century”<sup>441</sup> to give definitive authority to the proliferation of narratives that had first been transmitted orally then written down, along with written material said to have originated from one of the original leaders of the movement. “By the end of the fourth century, the limits of the collection were irrevocably fixed in the Greek and Latin churches of the Roman Empire.”<sup>442</sup> However, “The canon of the Syrian church still exhibited some major differences,”<sup>443</sup> and even today the Syrian church

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<sup>439</sup> Galatians 5:6: “For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything.”

<sup>440</sup> Deuteronomy 10:16: “Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart.” Is taken as a purification of one’s heart that leads to an exemplary spiritual approach that fosters a lifestyle fitting for a member of the new movement.

<sup>441</sup> George Arthur Buttrick et al (Editors), *The Interpreter’s Dictionary Of The Bible An Illustrated Encyclopedia In Four Volumes* (Abingdon Press, New York and Nashville, 1962, Vol. 1), 520.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

“...limits its canon of the NT ...rejecting Revelation ...II and III John, II Peter, and Jude.”<sup>444</sup>

Revelation, it is pertinent to note, is considered by many to be an apocalyptic narrative, quite clear in its judgement of some regional expressions of Christianity, as well as those who do not embrace it. Meanwhile, “The Ethiopian canon, ...was enlarged to include eight additional books,”<sup>445</sup> and “the Gothic NT never included Revelation”<sup>446</sup>(as with the Syrian church). These definitive collections included material inherited from Judaism as well, so, in practise as well as theory, Christianity viewed itself in a continuum with the old traditions. Viewing itself as a continuum instead of a departure, it retained, and even magnified its sense of triumphalism and spiritual superiority . Critical analysis (both textual and historical) during the past century or so have cast into doubt many of the traditional interpretations of the written material, both “inherited” from Judaism, and that created within the first century or so of Christianity. I referred to only one example of this in Chapter 1, when I discussed the Hebrew and Greek words that are normally translated as “virgin” in English in reference to the mother of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christian Messiah, and have accessed this scholarship whenever I have dealt with Judeo-Christian concepts. But the scholarship of recent history was not available to the colonisers of Turtle Island. Instead, the interpretations by their spiritual leaders were held sacrosanct. Even if they were adherents to differing leaders (the Papacy, Luther, Henry’s new church), the people were confident in their belief that they were right and everyone else was wrong. Leaders (both temporal and ecclesiastical) often went to great lengths to prove as much by “scholarly” means, even resorting to corporeal punishment in their quest for complete and absolute adherence among the people, and dominance over them.

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<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid.

Since neither Judaism nor Christianity, however, were able to realise their hope of the “messianic age” ( a new millennia) or “realised eschatology” as their early narratives seemed to indicate were desirable, the concept of an alternative hope began to form. This is expressed as an apocalyptic hope, when all the detractions and difficulties of this existence would be destroyed, and a new existence would be realised through one final act of divine intervention. Rather than concentrating on their responsibilities to bring into being and working toward a realised eschatology, the view evolved to assume that existence itself was inherently a stumbling block to realised eschatology (see above, Pg. 209, concerning the inherent evil nature of humankind). Therefore, the approach shifted from attempting to realise their ideals in this reality to anticipating the ushering in of a new reality by their divinity through some cataclysmic event, where the unachievable ideals of this reality were the norm. Instead of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth being hailed as the divine historical means through which humankind could shed the curse it had lived under for so long, a new “end of history” historical event was deemed necessary. Some would even go so far as to categorise this as a pathological “escapist” attitude. For if religion is viewed as a species of “psychic retreat,” as a great deal of rhetoric and even hymnody seem to express, then we are to be aware, concerning such psychic retreats that “if taken to be permanent areas of refuge (they) become pathological organisations.”<sup>447</sup> Whether the “other worldliness” of Christian apocalyptic belief is pathological or not is a topic for another discussion, but there seems to be evidence to suggest as much within the narratives and ceremonies of the Christianity of the colonisers and their approach to the whole concept of

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<sup>447</sup> Ronald Britton, *Belief and Imagination Explorations in Psychoanalysis* (New Library of Psychoanalysis, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, Vol. 31), 119, Accessed via: <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.uml.idm.oclc.org/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=caad90d8-7f8a-4f00-9ce9-370c6a06b521%40sessionmgr4006&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbG12ZQ%3d%3d#AN=93571&db=nlebk>, last accessed September 19, 2019.

colonisation and proselytization of the people they encountered as the original inhabitants of Turtle Island.

I noted that there is no specific relationship to land or anything to indicate even a vested interest in this reality inherent in the foundations of Christianity. Speaking of pathological approaches, I would venture to say that Christianity developed a rather schizophrenic approach to life. There was the vicissitudes of daily existence and the need to survive and succeed by any means, with the caveat that this physical existence and one's involvement in it are in a temporary realm. One's spiritual existence and ultimate spiritual fulfillment, however, is in another realm altogether. Therefore, working toward a realised eschatology was fruitless since it could never succeed anyway. What was important was to congregate with like-minded people to keep the hope of a realised eschatology *after* the apocalypse alive. Mindful of the experience of Noah and those of his immediate family during the deluge, and remembering those few who survived other vicissitudes of history and/or nature, the concept began to take root that those few who remained faithful to the concepts of the ancient teachings would survive (Isaiah 1:7-9, Ezekiel 14:22, Joel 2:32, Isaiah 10:20-23 referred to in Romans 9:27&28). Ultimately, it became the hope of life after the anticipated time when "The Lord Will Execute His Word Upon The Earth, Finishing It, Cutting It Short"<sup>448</sup> that governed the spiritual institutions, not any concept of a realised eschatology. Peoples' post-apocalyptic existence depended on their relationship to their divinity as manifested in their resurrected messiah. Adherents did not take responsibility for themselves, but simply clung to the hope that their messiah would advocate on their behalf when the cataclysmic end referred to above came to pass. Their relationship with their messiah became the only relationship upon which their hopes centered, and even that relationship was viewed in a

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<sup>448</sup> Romans 10:28.

hierarchical light. They wrote more hymnody reflecting dominance by their divinity than they did depicting their deity as “friend.” Their relationship to the “New World” and all that inhabited it, including the people who the colonisers encountered, echoed the dominating attitude expressed by the descendants of Abraham as they obtained the land they felt spiritually justified in claiming for their own. The attitude was one of hierarchical dominance and their spiritual privilege to dominate as well.

In contrast to this we have the wholistic spiritual attitude Christian colonisers encountered among the peoples of Turtle Island. The Judeo-Christian attitude had developed to view all in this current existence as evil, requiring conquest both spiritual and temporal. The Indigenous ceremonies and attitudes that we are aware of suggest that there is an inherent beneficence to this existence, as evidenced by the completeness of the cycles of nature, reminding me of the post-deluge pronouncement by the Judeo-Christian deity. Conquest is therefore neither laudable nor desirable, even counter-productive since the realm of nature is perfect in and of itself. Any hardship that humans face is the result of not maintaining the essential harmony with, and balance of, nature. Certainly, a person has the inherent right to defend their place against incursion and any denial of their right to existence. But harmony dictates that no one should devise plans to prevent others from enjoying the right to exist in *their* allotted space. It seems there is a sense (especially in The Great Law of Peace) that difficulties in relationships with other humans and non-human persons have their genesis in dis-harmonious human activity. Everything hearkens back to the need to maintain the required harmony to realise the idyllic existence that all desire. Using Christian terminology, Indigenous peoples’ spiritual approach (and there really is no other Indigenous approach since all is integrated within the spiritual approach, cf. Introduction, Pages 18 & 25) maintains the real possibility of a realised

eschatology. In observing ceremonies and organising their lives to maintain harmony and balance with nature and with one another, the Indigenous approach highlights human responsibility in attaining that realised eschatology. If one were to argue that Wovoka's approach toward revitalisation was defeatist and therefore apocalyptic due to the irrepressible odds of attaining a realised eschatology, then one must also conclude that the Christian emphasis on an apocalypse rather than realised eschatology, is most definitely a defeatist attitude as well.

But even Wovoka's message, as I indicated when discussing his approach (pg. 149 ff.), seems to emphasise the need to re-institute harmony as its basic premise. The cycles of nature, where perfect harmony is observed, the balance evident in other natural phenomenon evident to those who make the effort and take the time to observe, all inform Indigenous spiritual concepts. Anyone, I think, who has spent any undistracted time in nature can appreciate this. Therefore, as indicated above, the Indigenous spiritual approach, informed as it is by the cycles and harmony in nature, evolved ceremonies and rites that are designed to put recipients in touch with those cycles and that harmony, so that they can resonate with them and, by so doing, realise the balance and harmony they observe in nature in their own lives: "Mino-Bimaadiziwin" in Anishinaabe terminology, or "Walking the Red Road" in the terminology and concepts of Black Elk.

There are concepts within Christianity that could inform one of the relationships to land, such as the concept that "the earth" is sovereign, as implied by the post-deluge narrative mentioned above. However, there is little evidence to indicate that Christianity has historically paid much attention to them, opting instead to concentrate on some future idyllic existence that is instituted by a cataclysmic, destructive act initiated by their divinity. The approach is that, although everything has been brought into being by the divinity, not only humanity, but the earth

and all that exists upon it, has become corrupted. Instead of focusing on their responsibility to re-establish harmony to reconcile humankind with itself and all else that exists, the approach seems to have developed that their divinity is ultimately sovereign and everything, the earth and all that exists on it, must be subjugated to their divinity, according to the formula expressed in 1 Corinthians 27&28. Recalling Genesis 1:28, it is therefore reasoned that it is the Judeo-Christian duty and divinely established prerogative to establish harmony through conquest and subjugation as opposed to establishing symbiotic relationships. Therefore, Christian monarchs to whom the people and land they controlled were subject, were considered an integral part of the spiritual aspirations for humanity held by their divinity. Even during the Reformation, when people began to feel that their spiritual freedom from the yoke of the papacy might signal their personal freedom from the yoke of their monarchs, they found that any sense of personal freedom (spiritual from ecclesiastical authority or temporal from kings and princes) they felt may have been inherent in their ideals, simply resulted in charges of insurrection from their assumed champion, Martin Luther.<sup>449</sup>

What made a territory and its peoples “Christian” was therefore not any “Christian” policy, but simply an indication that the person capable of subjecting the land and its peoples was “Christian” and was therefore assumed to have accepted the responsibility of making sure that all its inhabitants were “Christian” as well. It was the monarch’s responsibility to support the activities of those who sought to subject the people to the Christian church by whatever means the church saw fit to employ for that purpose. Whether it be temporal or spiritual, subjecting was the motivating factor, not arriving at harmony through emissaries, counsels, discussions, and

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<sup>449</sup> This Theses, Chapter 1.

concessions that might include some compromise without comprising one's spiritual approach, as was the Indigenous method of maintaining harmony.

The result of this Coloniser approach at only one location is evident in Bringhurst's reference to a recorded first impression by Swanton upon landing at Hlghagilda (Skidegate), Haida Gwaii on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1900:

The island population is now shrunk to not over seven hundred, of whom three hundred are here. There is not an old house standing [at Skidegate] – all have modern frame structures with the regulation windows....The missionary has suppressed all the dances and has been instrumental in having all the old houses destroyed – everything in short that makes life worth living.<sup>450</sup>

Across Turtle Island, the original inhabitants of the land who were not annihilated or proselytized (and therefore assimilated) became problematic. They were either left on their own if they were sufficiently isolated already or moved to tracts of land (reserves) where they would be isolated from coloniser society and forgotten. They were thus assumed to be incapable of impeding coloniser control over whatever territory the colonisers deemed desirable. That the unannihilated and unassimilated were a “problem” was acknowledged, but the historical tendency was to set the “problem” aside to be dealt with later or considered a “problem” that time and mortality would solve.

In the Judeo-Christian narratives, it is difficult to imagine the created entities as having a spirit, since no mention is made of their being imbued with a spirit, nor is any mention made that any created entity (other than humans) has any spiritual aspect or “essence” of the creator spirit imparted to it,<sup>451</sup> although their narrative does seem to indicate that there is something of the divine in all that was created. Indigenous approaches in contrast, speak of pre-existing entities

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<sup>450</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *A Story As Sharp As A Knife The Classical Haida Myhtellers And Their World* (Douglas & McIntyre, Printed by Friesens, Canada), 69.

<sup>451</sup> Genesis 2:7.

that acquired their present status through some form of activity by an agent or agency which also pre-existed. Whether pre-existing beings were somehow “manipulated” or directed to assume their present status and place, or whether the creator spirit, in the act of creation, imparted something of itself to the entity created, we find consistency within Indigenous approaches which assume that anything that exists must necessarily be imbued with a spirit. We also find an immediacy and association with people’s lived experiences and local geographical settings that is difficult to identify in the Christian narratives of creation. While the Christian narratives speak of some relatively undefined force in a territory that is no longer accessible to humans,<sup>452</sup> the Indigenous narratives speak of actors and circumstances known (at least in some guise) and observable by the listener, suggesting the possibility of an immediacy with the creation experience, even though the narrative is presumably set in the past.

One creation narrative from the West Coast, the Hidery (Haida) narrative features (as do many from the West Coast) Raven and his efforts to bring into their current forms of existence the world, the sun, the moon, and the stars.<sup>453</sup> “According to the Hidery, the god Ne-kilst-luss, in all his works of creation and providence, assumed the shape of a raven.”<sup>454</sup> Furthermore, “as goodness he is known as Sun-i-a-tlai-duss, and as the evil principle he is known as Haidy-tan-ah. In the shape of a raven he existed from all eternity.”<sup>455</sup> To form the earth, Raven, by the continual flapping of his wings, beat down the pre-existing darkness to form solid ground. When the earth was ready, Raven knew that the sun, moon, and stars were in the possession of a great chief named Settin-ki-juss (presumably another spiritual being), who kept them in three separate boxes exclusively for his own use. When Raven requested that they be freed from their boxes

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<sup>452</sup> Genesis 3:24.

<sup>453</sup> James Deans, *The Hidery Story Of Creation* (American Antiquarian, Vol. XVII, No.2, March, 1895), 61-64.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid. 62.

<sup>455</sup> Ibid.

because the earth was ready for them, the old chief refused, so Raven was constrained to resort to trickery and subterfuge to gain access to them and release them. Raven, also through an act of subterfuge,<sup>456</sup> managed to create rivers (fresh water), but continues to live with the consequences of his subterfuge, having been turned from white to black during his altruistic efforts. Through another form of subterfuge, by bettering another spiritual being, Raven managed to stock the rivers with fresh salmon. In this recorded version of the narrative, Raven physically fathers and shapes the first humans. He also provides people the means to create fire.

In a few pages, Deans (as paraphrased above) covers creation, the Ice Age, the Flood, the establishment of the seasons, and speaks of Raven's current abode. His template for the recounting of the narrative is obviously the Judeo-Christian creation timeline, coupled with the theory of evolution. Whether, in 1895, he was given the narrative in the form he recorded it, or whether he imposed the timeline, he nevertheless retains in his article the concept inherent in the narrative(s) that nothing was created "ex nihilo," but pre-existed and was given its present form through Raven's activity. In this version of the narrative, humans were the product of conjugal relations Raven had with a conch shell and were also given their current form by Raven's actions. In other versions, Raven either discovers humans of both sexes inside phalliform and vulviform mollusks or creates them by causing the phalliform mollusk to mate with the vulviform mollusk.<sup>457</sup> Since Deans seems to have been familiar with, and subscribed to, the concept of evolution as is evident in his article, the idea that everything pre-existed in some form and gained its current form through some agency as opposed to having been created that way "ex nihilo" would have appealed to him. However, he could not have put an "evolutionary spin" on

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<sup>456</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>457</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *A Story As Sharp As A Knife The Classical Haida Myhtellers And Their World* (Douglas & McIntyre, Printed by Friesens, Canada), 479-480.

the narratives he heard had they not presupposed a physical and spiritual existence “from eternity” as he suggests. Furthermore, as Deans recounts the narratives, they speak of and to the relationships between everything that exists, and even though he seems to approach the narratives from a physical evolutionary bias, spiritual connections and relationships are still implied and not completely subsumed or eradicated in his translation.

The assumed spiritual nature of everything become clearer as one hears (or reads) longer, more complete versions of the narratives glossed over so quickly by Deans. In fact, it seems that the narratives themselves have an identity and spirit of their own, requiring a special talent on the part of the orator to give them full voice. Because the narratives have a spirit of their own, there needs to be a spiritual connection or relationship that involves the narrative, the orator, and the listener, so that the narrative is understood as it is meant to be. If any of the connections or relationships is broken or missing, the import of the narrative is lost, leaving us with the impression that we are hearing some fantastic story that may be a curiosity, good for distraction and entertainment only. In the worst-case scenario, a narrative of relationships can be presented as evidence that Indigenous peoples have some conception of non-Indigenous scientific theories (evolution), thereby (it is assumed) proving theories completely foreign to Indigenous spiritual concepts.

By not letting the narratives speak for themselves or by attempting (or pretending) to be “objective” and resisting any temptation to enter into a relationship with the narratives, we are blind to lessons we can learn from them, as is the case in the Haida narratives:

One They Hand Along is a narrative map locating the world of surface people in relation to the world beneath the waves, which is of special concern to the Haida. The trilogy of which it is a part extends this map to the forest and the sky. We can pass from one world to another, according to these stories, by paddling a canoe across the horizon, *or by making a moral choice.*<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> Ibid. 121 (Italics mine).

Unfortunately, very few Indigenous narrative have been transcribed in the words, form, and context in which were first encountered, and suppression of Indigenous spirituality has meant that very few narrators with a spiritual connection to the narratives were able to survive and keep their spiritual content intact for future generations. All too often, transcriptions taken by non-Indigenous persons tend to impose their own values and interpretations on the narratives, killing or seriously impeding any chance of a spiritual connection or relationship between the listener (reader) and the narrative. I can therefore understand the conundrum felt and expressed by Elders concerning the transmission of narratives. On the one hand, if they are *not* transcribed and retained in written format, they may be lost. On the other hand, the life of the narrative may well be snuffed out in the process of transcribing and publishing; so moving from oral to written transmission could be just as detrimental to the spiritual life of the people as losing the narratives because there is no one left who remembers them. The coloniser tendency to hold their written spiritual narratives sacrosanct (even if they may initially have had an oral narrative genesis) has meant that many Indigenous narratives have had to compromise the richness, vibrancy, and spiritual connection superseding time and space that is part of being delivered by an accomplished orator, in order to be recognised by coloniser society as having any validity whatsoever.

In the beginning, the American Indian oral tradition actuated and broke away from time. It called the world into existence and then disappeared into it. It remains there now, emanating creative power just as it did at first light. Constantly exercising its ancient ability to penetrate time and inspire human literary creations, the power of oral tradition extends the length of the continent and guides the minds of all poets attuned to it. The Native oral tradition is an animate, creative spirit that touches all who listen.<sup>459</sup> The oral tradition's various tribal creation accounts invariably link the generative word, the resulting narrative, earth, animals, and people into one great chain of Native

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<sup>459</sup> Betty Booth Donohue, *Remembering Muskrat: Native Poetics and the American Indian Oral Tradition* (Downloaded from <https://www.cambridge.org/core>, University of Manitoba Libraries, on 24 March, 2019), 15.

being.”<sup>460</sup> “The impulse of Native literature is to create or make happen, not to represent or self-express.”<sup>461</sup>

Donohue reminds us as well, that a *fragment* of a larger work is meaningless because it loses its connection with the entity it is a part of, and therefore all its life or spirit. However, often because of the narrative’s mnemonic devices, such as the mention and use of known landmarks, or of known beings (animals, birds, fish) to which one can relate, even though the original version in its completeness may have been lost or forgotten, it is still possible, by relating to places or beings (all which have a spirit, you may recall) to relate to the narrative, and to reconstruct whole narratives from the various “parts” that have been transcribed or remembered, thus reclaiming the spiritual power inherent in the narrative. If the narrative, or spoken word, created the world and remains in it, then a relationship with creation leads to a relationship with the word (narrative) that brought it into being in its current form. “It follows that generative narrative force resides in the earth and maintains its primal energy.”<sup>462</sup> The land and every being on it is decidedly *not* viewed as a commodity, but rather the embodiment of the spirit-word that brought them into being.

In Indigenous spiritual thought, by being in a good relationship with the land and every being on it, not seeking to subdue but live in harmony with it, one is therefore in a good relationship with the spiritual life force of everything. Breaking that good relationship by mistreating and/or attempting to subjugate the land or anything on it is breaking the relationship with its spiritual life force. Thankfully, not only the narratives that have survived (even if in truncated fashion) but certain places and landmarks (mnemonic devices) can assist us, because they contain the spirit of the narrative that speaks of their formation. If we forget that we are to

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<sup>460</sup> Ibid. 15&16.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid. 22.

be in relationship, if we even put ourselves apart from the land and all that is on it, we put ourselves apart from the creative word of the universe contained in it. If we remove ourselves from our responsibility to maintain relationships, we bring about dire consequences, not only for ourselves (for we have cut ourselves off from the creative and sustaining spiritual power/word of the universe), but for all that exists as well. In the Judeo-Christian view, humankind has, indeed, been responsible for broken relationships and disharmony (i.e. “The Fall”). However, in the Judeo-Christian view, once those relationships were damaged or severed, only divine intervention, not human agency, or endeavors, could restore those relationships

An integral part of any relationship in the Indigenous *weltanschauung*, it would be pertinent to interject here, is not only talking and acting, but *listening* as well. For, if we do not listen to the whole panorama of interrelated being(s), how can we possibly expect to respond in the manner appropriate to keeping these relationships alive and well? Proceeding in a manner concurrent with the assumption that we and our desires are all that are of any consequence, without listening to the whole panorama of information available to us, is to absent ourselves from the responsibility concurrent with relationship(s), resulting in their continuing to be broken or destroyed. It follows from this then, that in the Indigenous world view, bad things are the consequences of broken relationships or conversely, inattentiveness to the maintaining of good relationships. Narratives, passed from one generation to the next, are one way of maintaining relationships with the creative word of the narrative. Ceremony, with attention paid to the genesis narratives and actions associated with the ceremony, is another means through which relationships are brought to the forefront and maintained. Relating to landmarks within which great spiritual energy is known to reside, is yet another.

In the Judeo-Christian world view there is the thorny problem of how, if one creative force or being, is responsible for everything that exists, and if this creative being is essentially “good,” where do bad things or even evil come from? Certainly, there is a sense of broken relationships being at the root of “bad things” or “evil.” But “relationships” seem to be of a very different type, more of a regimented, “top down” hierarchical regime of commands and consequences of not obeying those commands, coupled with the concept of subjugation, as indicated above. One relates, but in subservience to a superior. So broken relationships are considered as the result of lack of subservience. And, concerning those one has been led to believe are “inferior” or lower in the chain of command, one “relates” only as an omniscient, all-powerful commander (leader) who has the inherent right to assume that all commands or directives are obeyed as issued. Relationships, therefore, are not reciprocal, as in the Indigenous world view. Instead, the template seems to be of dominance and subservience. Even if, as it has been explained to me, there is the possibility that one may consciously and willfully place oneself in what seems to be a subservient position, there seems to be an inherent aspect to human nature that can quickly turn any dominant-subservient relationship into an abuser-abused one as opposed to a reciprocal one. Fear, on the part of the abused, of doing *anything* that might anger the abuser and thereby bring down wrath and punishment upon oneself, robs the abused of any incentive to individual action, and may even lead to the loss of incentive to live. Consider Exodus 20, verses 5 & 6: “...I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”<sup>463</sup> The formula is recalled when the people were being instructed in how to proceed in their occupation of the

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<sup>463</sup> New American Standard Bible Translation is employed here and in the subsequent reference.

land they were about to conquer and inhabit (Exodus 34: 6&7, 14). In Joshua, Chapter 7, we see the consequences of not obeying a command, in this case concerning the complete destruction of everything associated with the worship of the conquered people. Not only the person who contravened the “marching orders” of the conquering people, but also his children (it seems to indicate) were put to death for his crime of keeping, rather than destroying edifices belonging to the conquered. Interestingly, the final verse (26) of the chapter mentions a mnemonic feature of the landscape (a great heap of stones) as well. Those passing by would recall it is presumed, the reason (and the wrath) behind this feature in the landscape and be reminded of the consequences of disobeying a command.

In my research, I encountered a mnemonic feature in the landscape of Turtle Island in a narrative concerning the large rock (Sta-eel’s Rock, or Lady Franklin Rock) in the Fraser River near Yale, British Columbia, that similarly deals with someone secreting something from her people.<sup>464</sup> In a Spring of scarcity of food, the salmon run was later than usual. The first salmon caught from the run was, according to custom, to be treated ceremonially to honour the spirit of the salmon, ensuring that plenty more would be sent to fill the needs of the people. Catching the first salmon after repeatedly trying in desperation to find food for her family, a woman secreted it in the bushes, then waited until nightfall to retrieve it and cook it for herself and her children. No sooner had they finished eating when a fierce storm hit the area. No ceremony, no chants by the Elders, seemed to have any effect on the wrath of the storm. The woman in question, however, was picked up by a whirlwind, carried to the centre of the river, and dropped. At the spot where the wind dropped her, a large granite rock began to grow up out of the water,

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<sup>464</sup> Ella Elizabeth Clark, *Indian Legends Of Canada* (McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1960), 106 & 107.

towering high above the water and constricting the current.<sup>465</sup> Other than the storm, the people didn't seem to suffer, for presumably the salmon run did happen, even if it was late. No Elder or any other member of the was instrumental in the consequences felt by Sta-eel for her transgression of not treating the first salmon in the ceremonial fashion deemed necessary to retain a good relationship with the spirit of the salmon. There is nothing in the narrative indicating that the woman's children (or husband) suffered any consequences other than being bereaved of their mother/wife. All that transpired, according to this narrative, was natural, for there is no indication that any Elder or other member of the tribe knew who had broken the relationship with the spirit of the salmon until after the events described above (though they suspected someone had). There is no indication that an Elder, or the tribe as a unit, took any punitive action to restore balance to a damaged or broken relationship. There is no indication (as in Joshua) that a tribunal was held to determine the guilty party and punish that person. Certainly, the Joshua narrative mentioned above, and this narrative, seem to be at opposite poles of any crime-punishment spectrum one might envision. The Joshua narrative involves human impetus and agency in the events that transpired after the indiscretion was discovered, while in the Sta-eel's Rock narrative human agency was involved only in interpreting events that had already taken place.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, humankind posits its original existence in idyllic terms as being created in the physical image of the supreme deity (Genesis 1:26&27, selem). "So man

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<sup>465</sup><https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=1X1SqS3I&id=29122AEAE59577BB394ECF5DD15841CC310D50AA&thid=OIP.1X1SqS3ImMPSpXDksBJ-lwHaF0&mediaurl=http%3a%2f%2fsearcharchives.vancouver.ca%2fuploads%2fr%2fnull%2f1%2f3%2f1385389%2f47c8994c-4ee6-47c4-b9c5-b06ac1e91fa4-A19671.jpg&exph=2360&expw=3000&q=lady+franklin+rock&simid=608036844221892449&selectedIndex=0&ajaxhist=0> Last accessed October 10, 2019.

is placed upon earth in God's image as God's sovereign emblem"<sup>466</sup> to rule and govern in a hierarchical fashion (rada: "tread/trample," and kabas: "stamp"), thereby becoming *the* integral connection in the relationship the divine has with all of creation. The use of the words "rada" and "kabas" here indicate a concept that is indicative of the Judeo-Christian understanding of the divine. Humankind decides, as noted in Genesis 3, to usurp its place in the hierarchical chain of relationships, by rationalising that to be the best representative of the deity, one should be more like one's understanding of the deity. To be able to understand every situation and have the capacity of making informed decisions as to how to proceed in each instance seems more laudable and complementary to the deity (more representational of the deity, as humankind understands it) than simply being, as humankind understands itself, a link in the chain of command, or a "go-between" in the deity's relationship with the rest of creation. The concepts humankind has of "image" and "rule" concerning the deity and its directives to humankind govern their desire to become as much like the deity as possible, so that they can lift themselves above an interdependent model of relationships to (what they feel) is an independent model far superior to their interdependent (or relationship based) existence.

The Genesis 3:1-3 narrative places the full responsibility of the broken relationship with the deity on humankind, for it illustrates how it was/is caused by humankind's misinterpretation of that relationship. The serpent's question is a trick question. The answer humankind gives to that question illustrates humankind's misinterpretation of relationships that existed (or better, interrelationships). Asked if the divinity has given all that grows as food for humankind, the answer interprets cautionary advice as a *command* with consequences if disobeyed. Aware that a

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situation could be detrimental to humankind, the divinity cautions them of the dangers inherent in that situation. This, as part of a reciprocal relationship that illustrates the divine's care and concern for humankind. To misinterpret care and concern as a command with consequences is, before any action is taken, already an act of abrogating that reciprocal relationship in favor of a hierarchical model.

In the Judo-Christian model therefore, not recognising nor appreciating the value of the interdependent relationship it has with its deity, humankind removes itself from this relationship and seeks in its arrogant assumption of new-found knowledge and wisdom, to establish new relationships according to the hierarchical understanding it now perceives itself to have with the deity. Once the interdependent relationship that had previously existed is abrogated in favor of an attempt at independency, then the conception that *all* relationships must be hierarchical becomes the governing factor in humankind's relationships with all else that exists. The consequences are detrimental to humankind from both sides of the intended interdependent relationship model. First, humankind reasons, it can expect severe consequences from "above" in its model of hierarchical relationships. Secondly, because the interrelatedness of relationships with that which is "below" has been abrogated in favour of the hierarchical model, consequences are to be experienced there, too. If humankind has broken the relationship with that which is "above," it is natural to assume that that which is "below" humankind will abrogate its interdependent relationship with humankind as well. Initially, humankind was to care for all of creation (as they were cared for by their deity) as the representation of their deity. Creation, in the interdependent model of relationship, would then reciprocate. However, once humankind removed itself from the interdependent, reciprocal relationship with the divine (representing and being cared for), their reciprocal relationship with the rest of creation (caring for and being cared

for) was broken as well, resulting in the fact that what had been freely exchanged (both in relationship with the divine and in the relationship with the rest of creation) now required effort to extract.

In the Indigenous *weltanschauung*, while the trickster exhibits some of the characteristics of the Judeo-Christian serpent (cunning, crafty, inventive), the trickster narratives seem to be primarily concerned with the aetiology of everything experienced by the people. The Judeo-Christian narrative too, speaks from observations of existence as peasants and herders, but speaks of these things as a consequence of broken relationships that cannot be repaired, whereas in the trickster narratives, while they may speak of and to relationships, have no sense that these relationships are irreparable, or are even in need of repair to reverse the consequences of the trickster's actions or the "tricked" entity's gullibility. A Menomini narrative: "Why We Have To Work So Hard Making Maple Sugar"<sup>467</sup> speaks of the need for the effort and time required, but concludes that this is a blessing. For, if the capillary action of the trees carried pure maple syrup that could be tapped, instead of the thinner sap that needed to be boiled down to make syrup, "People will become too lazy to do any work. They will just sit on their haunches and eat maple syrup." I'm reminded of something an elderly Indigenous woman said during a symposium I attended many years ago. She remembered a time when the Indigenous people of Turtle Island (specifically Canada) relied on their own resources to sustain themselves. In her opinion, though they may not always have had an ample supply of the things they needed and they had to work hard for what they had, it was far better for the people than it had become since they were considered wards of the state and provided with a monthly stipend. She mentioned pride, dignity, and sense of accomplishment as among the valuable things they had lost when governments

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<sup>467</sup> Richard Erdoes, and Alfonso Ortiz (Editors), *American Indian Trickster Tales* (Penguin Books, 1998), 190 & 191.

stepped in and started providing monthly cheques to the people. Work in this instance, is not the curse that the Judeo-Christian narrative seems to suggest it is. It seems Indigenous people accept the fact that they need to work for to sustain their existence, while those of the Judeo-Christian ilk would rather sit around on their haunches all day eating maple syrup.

On the other hand, “Why Women Have Their Moon-Time,”<sup>468</sup> while it is not necessarily a curse, is the consequence of indiscretion and bestiality on the part of one (progenitor?) woman which is experienced by all women since. “Wesakaychak, The Windigo, And The Ermine”<sup>469</sup> speaks to courage in rendering a service to another, and reward for that courage. Human sex and promulgation, as well as male-female relationships, are addressed in the narrative “Old Man Coyote Meets Coyote Woman”<sup>470</sup> in a rather humorous, and direct way. Often, as in “Whiskey Jack Wants To Fly,”<sup>471</sup> the trickster’s ego and foolishness backfires, causing personal embarrassment, if not injury. Note, however, that in this narrative, while Whiskey Jack (Wesakaychak) suffers consequences for his actions, it is not because he is cursed by some being higher in the hierarchical echelon than he, but simply falls victim to his own inflated assessment of himself, personifying the didactic nature of the “trickster” narratives. “Choosing Mates”<sup>472</sup> brings the lesson of pride and ego home to human male-female relationships. “Yehl, The Lazy One,”<sup>473</sup> teaches us that, no matter how clever we are, our deception(s) will eventually be discovered, leaving us no better off than we were before.

But crafty, cunning, deceptive serpents and tricksters do not yet address the concept of evil. Certainly, humankind or individuals may, though ego or misguided reasoning, or even sheer

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid. 194 & 195.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid. 200 & 201.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid. 61-63.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid. 195-199.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid. 205-209.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid. 252 & 253.

greed and self-interest, cause grief to themselves and even to those close to them, but from whence comes the evil that seems to befall seemingly innocent people?

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the source of all this suffering of the innocent is usually ascribed to one of the “sons of God” (lesser? divine beings) mentioned at the beginning of the book of Job. Commonly translated as “Satan” in English, the Greek rendering is “diabolos”: “slanderer,” or, more likely, “adversary,” as in opposing counsel in a court of law, which is probably the best rendering of the Hebrew. As the narrative unfolds, the discussion concerning Job and his exemplary character is initiated by the supreme divinity, displaying an interestingly human ego and self-congratulatory personality. Questioned as to Job’s exemplariness, given his obvious wealth and success, the supreme deity, in a further expression of self-congratulatory ego and confidence, gives full assent to a plan to “test” Job’s character by removing all his prosperity and his status among his people, with the caveat that Job himself will not be physically harmed. Certainly, Job has done nothing to warrant the calamity that is about to befall him, but, more to the point, neither have his wife, children, or servants, not to mention his livestock (treated here as simply indicators of his prosperity). Innocent people die and livestock is slaughtered, all because of a “test” of an individual to substantiate the self-congratulatory ego of the supreme being. Job survives the “test,” even resorting to ceremonial self-flagellation to repair any breach in his relationship with the supreme divine being that may be the cause of the calamities. Upon surviving, Job is “rewarded” with prosperity in the form of a new wife, children, and livestock that far exceeds the prosperity and pre-eminence of his pre-test existence.

In the narrative, even though there is no breach of the relationship between Job and the supreme divine being, there is nonetheless a breach of relationship evident between the supreme divine being and the one described as “the accuser.” By questioning the supreme divine being,

the accuser has, as a member of the cadre of divine beings, set himself/herself/itself apart from the supreme divine being, and therefore the other divine beings comprising the court of the supreme divine being. Identified as a divine being who has set itself apart and demonstrated a preponderance for maliciousness in this instance, one strongly suspects that this being continues in its quest to test humankind to fail, and thus cause as many breaches as possible in relationships between people and between humankind and the supreme being. This suspicion, coupled with the on-going experiences of humanity, have led to the identification of this being as the one who is responsible for all evil that befalls humankind. Furthermore, since this is a divine being, it is reasoned it must necessarily have existed prior to humankind's existence, and Job's "test" was not the first. Identification with the "crafty" or cunning serpent who first tested humankind, leading to the breach of relationships tends to follow, suggesting that innocent humankind was gullible, certainly, and thereby caused a breach in relationships, but how *responsible* is/was it for the breach(es)? And, if there is a mechanism through which humankind can admit to being gullible, but not responsible, to what extent are they to be held accountable for relationship breaches and/or repairing relationships? If a divine being is therefore ultimately responsible for relationship breaches and their consequences, then it follows that repair/restoration of relationships must be the purveyance of the divine, and not of humankind. Further, since humankind remains gullible and "the accuser" remains active, it seems rather impossible for humankind to restore any sense of reciprocal relationships. The hierarchical model however, has been demonstrated as workable and, given the obvious difficulties (and anticipated difficulties) with the reciprocal model, the hierarchical model seems to be the best solution to the situation(s) that the Judeo-Christian tradition has to offer.

In contrast, consider the position of evil (and evil beings) in Indigenous spiritual thought. For example, as noted previously, Ne-kilst-luss, a pre-existing being commonly known as Raven, is responsible for all the work of bringing pre-existing beings to be in their present forms and positions. However, as “good,” he is known as Sun-i-a-tlai-duss, but as “evil,” he is known as Haidy-tan-ah. Not two opposing spiritual (divine) entities, but one, exhibiting two personality characteristics as circumstances seem to warrant. An entity that does not irrevocably move completely to either “pole,” but maintains a balance between good and evil, therefore maintaining a balance in all its relationships, and consequently in all of life. Consider, as well, the personages of Glooskap (Gluskap, Glous’gap) and his twin brother, Malsum in Micmac narratives.<sup>474</sup> Interestingly enough, although Glooskap is the one who is responsible for all that is beneficial to humankind, *he* is the one who is thought of as cunning because he had the foresight to suspect his brother might be up to no good, and so thwarted his plan to end his (Glooskap’s) life. Malsum, responsible for all that is a vexation to humankind, is subsequently killed by Glooskap, but his spirit seems to still live on (as the spirit of the wolf), his body entombed in the mountains of Gaspe<sup>475</sup> (another mnemonic landmark). But it is not the character of the narrative(s) to delineate one brother as “good” and the other as “evil”, for “goodness and badness, however, is purely relative and of modern origin, such deities, ...being figures in a light-and-darkness myth.”<sup>476</sup>

Consider the following:

The same word (otkon) which Father Bruyas employs to translate into Iroquois the term ‘devil,’ in the passage ‘The devil took upon himself the figure of a serpent,’ he is obliged

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<sup>474</sup> Lewis Spence F.R.A.I., *The Myths Of The North American Indians* (McClelland & Goodchild Limited, Toronto, 1914), 141.

<sup>475</sup> Michael B Runningwolf. & Patricia Clark Smith, *On the Trail of Elder Brother* (Perse Books, New York, 2000), 11-15.

<sup>476</sup> Lewis Spence F.R.A.I., *The Myths Of The North American Indians* (McClelland & Goodchild Limited, Toronto, 1914), 141.

to use for ‘spirit’ in the phrase, ‘At the resurrection we shall be spirits,’ which is a rather amusing illustration how impossible it was by any native words to convey the idea of the spirit of evil.<sup>477</sup>

Experientially, we know of day and night, winter and summer, and Indigenous narratives are replete with examples of consequences that befall humankind if one or the other gains prominence, and thereby upsets the balanced existence that the two seemingly opposing sides of a pair are to maintain. Any loss of balance needs to be addressed to right the situation. Glooscap (Glous’cap) is given credit in the Micmac narratives for initiating the balance between Winter and Summer.<sup>478</sup> Admittedly, this addresses the problem with too much Winter, and doesn’t address the problem of too much Summer but, for the people from whom this narrative springs, the immediate concern is of having too much Winter, so balance is attained by making sure Summer arrives. Winter is assumed to be a permanent fixture so, if Summer retreats South, Winter will invariably re-establish itself.

Was it a “bad” thing, caused by the machinations of an evil spirit, that caused maple trees to have sap rather than syrup flowing in them, or a “good” thing, preventing the people from sitting around all day gorging themselves on the syrup and becoming lazy and soft?<sup>479</sup> Those who envision an idyllic life with no travail, and who would like to be lazy and sitting around on their haunches all day gorging themselves on maple syrup would say it was bad. However, the narrative indicates it was good. Collecting the sap then boiling it down to make syrup not only fosters inventiveness and industry, but a sense of community as well. The process offers plenty of room for co-operative effort among the people, not to mention occasion for pride in their

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid. 104&105.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid. 147-149. And: Michael B Runningwolf & Patricia Clark Smith, *On the Trail of Elder Brother* (Perse Books, New York, 2000), 99-106.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid. 25&26.

accomplishment, celebration when it is all completed, and gratitude to the trees for providing this useful and desirable liquid.

If we inquire of Indigenous spiritual thought concerning the problem of good and evil, it should not surprise us if the response (to simplify it) is “What problem?” If things are unbalanced, we need to devise a means of restoring balance. Wherever possible, if we have the means, we take upon ourselves the responsibility of preventative action which is designed to maintain the necessary equilibrium. Christianity wrestles with the problem of good versus evil, concluding that the natural order is completely dominated by evil, “cursed” by the divine. Humankind is therefore powerless to extricate either itself or nature, from this “curse” or the evil that dominates and controls everything. Genesis 6:5, as a rationale for the Great Flood, states: “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually.” However, even though the wicked were presumably destroyed in the flood, later observations concerning humankind are no more complimentary. After everything evil and every evil person had been destroyed by the deluge, and only Noah (the righteous one who, with his family was spared) remained, the divine is said to have stated: “I will never again curse the ground on account of man ...and I will never again smite (destroy) every living things, as I have done.”<sup>480</sup> But of humankind, this same divinity observes in a clause inserted into the above promise: “for the inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). Nature, it seems has nothing to fear from the *divine*, but if the inclination of humankind is naturally to evil, and humankind is in a responsible position as the intermediary responsible for representing or reflecting the divine in and to nature, the consequences for everything that isn’t a human person are dire indeed, in large part because

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<sup>480</sup> See above, concerning the sovereignty of the earth implied in this statement.

humankind has decided on the hierarchical model, as opposed to the concept of interrelationships. Because humankind is inherently incapable of doing anything to rectify the situation in the Judeo-Christian spiritual view, this is the purveyance of the divine, leading to apocalyptic sentiments/expectations.

To re-iterate what has been previously noted, in the Indigenous world view, humankind retains its ability and responsibility to foster and maintain relationships wherever possible, and to repair relationships whenever they are broken. Relationships are understood as reciprocal, benefiting all parties to the relationship. Furthermore, since everything, by virtue of its existence, is in relationship with everything (everyone) else, healthy, interdependent, and symbiotic relationships are *the* indications of a realised eschatology, in Christian terminology, *mino-bimaadiziwin*,<sup>481</sup> in Anishinaabemowin.

As I have illustrated, the responses to the question of evil and how that question is approached seems to have been dealt with in diametrically opposing ways by the Christianity of the colonisers and Indigenous spiritual approaches. The Christian heritage of the colonisers was/is of the view that the circumstances of a person's life are either the result of that person succumbing to the influence of a being who personifies animosity and complete and full disobedience of any categorical imperative uttered by the supreme being, or even the result of some "test" sanctioned by that selfsame supreme being to determine how firm a person's determination is to obey the categorical imperative(s), even under the most difficult circumstances that may even involve (or at least seem to) a person's demise if they choose to continue in their determination. By virtue of an initial failure to obey the categorical imperative of the supreme being, human nature is inherently evil, and,

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<sup>481</sup> [http://www.7generations.org/?page\\_id=2822](http://www.7generations.org/?page_id=2822), last accessed February 9, 2020.

presumably, requires that human resolve to obey the categorical imperatives of the divine be proven through a series of circumstances that could lead to a weakening of that resolve. These circumstances are considered a constant attempt by an inherently evil entity to break a person's resolve, and, since the supreme being is absolute in its supremacy, it is reasoned that these circumstances are furthermore sanctioned by that same supreme being. Since human nature is inherently evil, when it does survive these "tests," it is only because somehow, the supreme being has provided the means through which survival has become possible. A person is therefore utterly hopeless and helpless, completely incapable of achieving anything that would exonerate themselves, unless they are given aid by the supreme being. As with individual circumstances, so it is with the whole of existence. If there is to be any relief from the circumstances of life governed by constant internal and external pressure to disobey the categorical imperative(s) of the supreme being, then it will have to be initiated by that selfsame supreme being. Nothing short of a complete annihilation of current existence would seem to be capable of accomplishing this. In theory, then, a person must simply plead for assistance in all circumstances of life, and hope for the total annihilation of existence as the only relief.

Furthermore, as I have indicated, the post-deluge promise that is part of the Judeo-Christian narrative collection seems to have been forgotten or overlooked. The implied sovereignty of the earth and its relationship to the supreme being is not considered in human actions. Instead, the hierarchical nature of the relationship that humanity assumes it has with the supreme being governs their relationship with the earth and all it contains, as well as each other. It seems that, in this view, there is a "chain of command" from the supreme being, to humans, then from humans to the earth and all the beings upon it. Just as

humans are to be subjected to the supreme being, so also are other humans to be subjected to their leaders, both temporal and spiritual. Recall Constantine and Innocent as historical examples, and Luther as contemporary with early colonisation in chapter one. The antidote for evil is subjection. Anyone or anything that will not yield to what is considered higher in the hierarchical escalon that they/it are/is, is considered as evil and in consort with evil. Punishment, or the threat thereof, is therefore the only means of sustaining the hierarchical order.

From the Indigenous viewpoint, however, as indicated in the preceding pages, the concept of “evil” as an opposing force to “good” does not seem to exist. If something untoward befalls a person, it behooves them (or those spiritual leaders advising them or investigating why this happened) to discern which relationship(s) require repair, and what that individual can do to affect the return of harmonious relationships, or what the people as a group can do. Recall Sta-eel’s Rock in the Frazer river. If something seems wrong, then something needs to be done about it. If the person responsible cannot affect a return to harmonious existence, then it is the responsibility of the people together to address it. There are a number of responses, running the spectrum from individual efforts, right through to those in which the whole nation is involved, as in annual ceremonial gatherings, where person-to-person relationships can be addressed in addition to the ceremony itself, which serves to address, repair, and sustain the people’s relationship with all else that exists. It is always the responsibility of the individual person or the people working in consort, since it seems all else exists in harmony, and people are the only ones capable of causing disharmony.

That is not to say that there are not any individual beings who, at first glance, seem to be intent on vexing humans. The place of the “trickster” in the narratives and spiritual

and cultural approach to life has its own plethora of studies that could easily make this thesis voluminous if they were all to be dealt with here. However, recalling the small sample of narratives I have cited, the Judeo-Christian dichotomy of “good” and “evil” seems rather discordant with the Indigenous approach to the work of the trickster. For example, changing the maple syrup that once coursed through the maple trees to sap that then needed to be collected and boiled down to arrive at maple syrup is viewed as a desirable action on the part of the trickster. There is an interesting comment on human nature contained in the narrative. Had this not happened, people might have been susceptible to simply sit around, gorging themselves on maple syrup when the syrup was running in the Spring. But what of the rest of the year, when sustenance didn’t simply flow from the trees and it took a lot of sustained community effort to procure? Would a people who had simply existed without any effort be capable of working in consort and exerting the necessary effort to procure sustenance for the rest of the year? Or would they simply bewail the fact that nothing they required during the rest of the year came to them as easy as maple syrup? It was therefore a good thing that the trees produce sap instead of syrup, because it taught the people the necessary skills they required for those months when the sap was not running. So, the trickster who removed the expectation of an idyllic existence performed a necessary and laudable service. The act wasn’t some machination of some being intent on the people’s destruction. And, furthermore, this act did not sow the seeds of disharmony, but instead promoted a harmonious working together for the well-being of the people.

The differing approaches to the concepts of “good” and “evil” of the colonisers at contact and Indigenous people seems to be an insurmountable obstacle in attempting to

arrive at the synergy of understanding (talking to, rather than about) that could lead to the possibility of writing a common narrative for the future. However, as I address this in the next chapter, I seem to feel that there is a discernable path that we may follow to forge through this conundrum.

**CONCLUSION:****Writing A New Narrative for The Future  
Spiritual Synergy as a Basis for Action**

If we seek to understand the concept of spirituality, we encounter people who wish to communicate their spiritual experiences and the insights they have gained to us, but suggest that their experiences defy verbal expression. This shouldn't come as much of a surprise to us, since those who have had what they perceive to be a spiritual experience often suggest that they have perceived and experienced an all-encompassing completeness and harmony that are not subject to the limitations we are painfully aware of in our realised physical existence (manifestation) on this earth. People who have had what they perceive as a spiritual experience suggest that somehow, something within them has connected to an ethereal spirit world. Anyone who encounters this world that is so ethereal, with limitless possibilities when compared to the world we know and inhabit, is apprised of the fact that the ideas and forms of expression (language) that we possess fall short of communicating fully what has been experienced/encountered in the realm of spirituality. How does one communicate spiritual insights, as lofty as they may be, in the language(s) and environment that we are familiar with? People who speak of having a spiritual experience strive to replicate the experience they have had in their spiritual insights by utilising the resources available to them in their temporal lives. I have previously alluded to my appreciation of visual artists and their ability to communicate indescribably surreal concepts succinctly. In the realm of verbal and written communication of spiritual insights and concepts, the linguistic/prosaic vehicle of metaphor had been developed and employed in prose, poetry, performance, and visual art. Narrative and ceremony as a means of communing spiritual insights contains all of these.

Somehow, an experience (physical sensation, mental awareness - both are experiences) is to be communicated to those who were not present during the experience, or were present, but did not share the experience from the same perspective. Not only is the experience to be shared in words that are comprehensible to the readers/listeners, but there seems to be an intrinsic assumption that, if somehow the readers/listeners can be brought to that same experience by the correct choice of medium to communicate it, then the target audience will fully comprehend and even experience that which is being communicated.

Even writing and speaking, whether didactic or poetical, have as their ultimate aim the guidance of the reader to that knowledge of perception from which the author started; if they do not have this aim, they are bad. For indeed, if we go to the bottom of the matter, all truth and wisdom, in fact the ultimate secret of things, is contained in everything actual, yet certainly only *in concerto* and like gold hidden in the ore. The question is how to extract it.<sup>482</sup>

Further:

It is impossible to express the experience of mystery in ordinary language, because this language has grown out of, and is bound to, the subject-object scheme. If mystery is expressed in ordinary language, it necessarily is misunderstood, reduced to another dimension, desecrated.<sup>483</sup>

To understand this is the first step in understanding that which is being communicated to us by way of spiritual narrative, and why communication must be by means of metaphor.

There is an emphasis on “objective” or “empirical” verifiability (as alluded to by Tillich) in our thought/belief process that is often misunderstood and misused. If one can recreate with some precision the situation and circumstances within which an enlightening observation has been made and achieve the same results, then the initial observation is said to have been verified. In the physical sciences, this would involve precision in manipulating physical properties to re-

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<sup>482</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World As Will And Representation, Volume II* (The Falcon’s Wing Press, Indian Hills, Colorado, 1958), 72.

<sup>483</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Three Volumes In One* (The University of Chicago Press, 1967), 108.

create the initial circumstances of an observation. In the social sciences, situations, and people (and often physical environments) become the objects of manipulation to verify observations and axioms of, for example, sociology or psychology. The insidiousness of our need to be in control and to achieve the results we desire for our personal benefit would, it seems to me, be obvious. We tend to dichotomise our world and personal lives into two opposing poles: either we are on control, or we are living in chaos. The more in control we are, the more we can manipulate situations to our advantage, and thus the more we feel vindicated in the validity of our observations. Please note that this is not the Indigenous method of coming to know, where we use what we know to come to knowledge we desire in a method that the Euro-Western “theses-antitheses-synthesis approximates. For even when, because we feel it may serve us, we speak of “getting out of our comfort zone” we tend to attempt to exercise as much control as we can, just to make sure we are not led to or do not find ourselves in a situation where we have no control whatsoever, or confront a reality that we are incapable of controlling, which in turn may bring insights that challenge our previous mind set and view of reality

Should a person find themselves in a situation where they are not in control, however, we seem to have again limited ourselves to two choices. Often, the event is discounted completely, relegating it to a surreal world of fantasy, a dream, the result of lack of nourishment, a physical malady, or a “trick” or manipulation attributable to the machinations of another person. If, however, the “event” should recur, and recur repeatedly, as in a dream, or even a life event that is impossible to discount or ignore, terms such as “revelation,” or “insight,” or “spiritual awakening,” are employed to indicate that what has been encountered is something one is unaccustomed to. In this instance, assuming that we perceive the viability of what we have come to know, we seek to incorporate whatever has been encountered and what has been learned

thereby into the normal thought process and approach to life (syntheses). Since it is perceived that the insight is beneficial to oneself, it is assumed that others would benefit from what has been learned as well. To communicate the concept, the initial experience is described as well as it can be (using both objective language and metaphor) to share interpretation and insight. If those whose opinions one trusts concur in the interpretation, one may not only feel validated, but also motivated to share the experience/insight with people who may be strangers.

But an objective narrative involving the events/circumstances of spiritual insight, coupled with an interpretation of what is to be learned from the experience, falls short of validating the insights (as Schopenhauer suggest in the above quote) if those with whom one wishes to share those insights have not had the same experience.

Revelation grasps an individual or a group, usually a group through an individual; it has revealing power only in this correlation. Revelations received outside the concrete situation can be apprehended only as reports about revelations which other groups assert that they have received. The knowledge of such reports, and even a keen understanding of them, does not make them revelatory for anyone who does not belong to the group which is grasped by the revelation.”<sup>484</sup>

So, a means needs to be devised whereby others can vicariously experience the same “revelation” and arrive at the same insights through their experience and therefore become part of the “group.” Coupled with the narrative, then, a ceremony is devised that recreates as closely as possible the experience one has had. Not only is the narrative a metaphorical instrument within which is couched the insight to be communicated, but the ceremony recreating the initial circumstances wherein one first arrived at that insight becomes a metaphor as well. Neither the narrative nor the ceremony *is* the initial circumstance, but both attempt to *replicate* that circumstance so that the participants are assisted in arriving at the same insight of their own volition. If participants, by means of their participation, do arrive at the same insight, then the

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid. 111.

ceremony becomes *their* revelatory experience, and therefore no longer a replication of someone else's revelatory experience. I have found it rather interesting that a precise mixing of chemicals (as directed) in a lab under the watchful eye of a seasoned and capable lab instructor, involving all the elements of ceremony, or even a psychological "therapy session" with the same characteristics, are so readily accepted, while "religious ceremonies" are viewed askance, or even with derision at times.

In chemistry, physics, psychology, *and* religion, each ceremony is preceded by a narrative that outlines what is to happen and why. Each narrative attempts to "set the stage" by helping the participant to replicate as closely as possible the initial instance, *weltanschauung*, and circumstances that the ceremony is designed to replicate in their own mind/imagination. Someone mixed this with that in such a fashion and this was the result. Someone tried prying up an object with a lever and fulcrum and discovered that the closer the fulcrum was to the object to be moved, the easier it was to move it. Try it for yourself, and you will see. Someone who felt a nagging dissonance within themselves discovered that, by talking about it to someone else, they arrived at insights that helped them sort it all out and make sense of it. Someone had an experience that profoundly changed the way they viewed themselves, others, and the world in which we live, and discovered that, by retelling that experience and re-creating it as true to the original experience as possible, they not only validated their new insight, but others were led to share that insight as well, thereby further validating it.

In these instances, the narrative indeed intends to re-create the original time and circumstances whenever it is shared. By paying attention to the narrative so that we may replicate the initial circumstances within ourselves, we participate in that re-creation. In this way, narrative and ceremony do not simply "bridge" the time gap between the initial circumstances

and the present but eradicate time completely. Each re-creation, therefore, by means of narrative and ceremony, becomes a participation in the initial event, giving participants the opportunity to experience it for themselves. Through narrative and experience then, participants become co-creators of the reality they experience henceforth, a reality determined by the words they have heard, internalised, and thereafter based their existence upon. But it is not *the word* itself that they base their evolving existence upon, it is their *experience* of/with that creative word.<sup>485</sup> Past, present, and future become one, for the “creative process” is not some dim memory, but a present reality that is evolving to become the future.

“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with god, and the word was god. This one was in the beginning with god. All things came into being through him, and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overpower it.”<sup>486</sup> By means of these lines, one Christian writer introduces a new narrative given to humankind through the person of Jesus of Nazareth. If we read a bit further, we find that this person (Jesus) does not simply speak the creative word (narrative), but he and his life are identified *as* the narrative. In other words, he *is* the metaphor for the new creation he brings to humankind. Therefore, by being the narrative, he initiated a re-creating of reality and invited all of humankind to become co-participants in that re-creation. This re-creation is described in John 1:12&13(17) as not limited to those who qualify through history or genealogy, but open to all who are willing to participate. It is certainly not defined by commonly held prejudices or misconceptions concerning the participants (John 1:45&46; 4:5-27), nor necessarily even accepting concepts and practices of the previous creation (John 2:14-16). Furthermore, this re-creation (new narrative) is

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<sup>485</sup> Cf. Chapter 5.

<sup>486</sup> John 1:1-5.

described as far superior to the current creation (narrative) that the people were accustomed to in defining their reality. In John 1:42, it is also evident that the participants themselves are re-created in the process of their participation, thereby themselves becoming personified metaphors of the reality of the new creation.

However, the re-creation of the individual is not (as in any narrative or ceremonial observance) limited nor defined to or by one instance of participation, but of necessity, an ongoing and evolving process (John 18:15-17). One caveat, though. One cannot assume for oneself an automatic inclusion in this re-creation, nor in any way force it or demand it for oneself (John 2:23-25). As a prequalification, one needs to be open to the possibility and even position oneself to receive it, but the re-creation will come of its own volition (John 2:3&4). A desire stemming from personal gratification or prestige is in opposition to the tenants of the new creation and therefore prevents it from happening within an individual. In fact (John 18:15-17), even instincts of self-preservation are viewed as a severing one's ties with this new creation.

However, the ties cannot be completely and irrevocably severed by the one act. Re-embracing the new creation and re-dedicating oneself to it restores a person's ability to become a living metaphor of it (John 20:1-10). The restored person will therefore encourage others to embrace (or re-embrace) it as well (John 21:15-17), remembering that it is available to all who desire it (John 21:20-22). Further, those who have embraced it and seek to become its metaphor are to concern themselves with how well *they* conform to the metaphor of the new creation, and not with how well someone else conforms or does not. There are no specific rules (categorical imperatives, commandments) to determine if a person has truly embraced the new creation, but there are guidelines among the community of participants for determining progress. Unless a person voluntarily withdraws, they are considered participants, and any "measure" of their

progress is for their use only, and to come from their own experience with a personified metaphor of the new creation, not an external analysis and categorisation by the community of participants.

The ceremonies and their accompanying narratives are those elements that underpin the re-participation of those involved with the new creation. In Christianity, the defining events surrounding the metaphor for the new creation, Jesus of Nazareth, are many and varied among those who identify themselves with the re-creation he sought to initiate. As each narrative/ceremony addresses one aspect of the re-creation process, communities will highlight the ceremony and aspect they feel resonates with their lives and thereby deserve prominence and place less emphasis on the other ceremonies. Unfortunately, this piecemeal approach is counter-productive to the re-creation process that all vocalise they wish to engage in. The re-creation process is, from all perceptions of its metaphorical initiation, to be a comprehensive process. It does not simply to address and re-create one or the other of the previously held concepts, but *all* of them, including the disruptive fractioning that arises from over emphasising one concept over another. It is a re-creation process involving all aspects of being and life, not a “tweaking” of one or the other aspect, leaving all others intact. While the various factions who identify themselves as participants in this new or re-creation are certainly able to rationalize their attitude and behaviour, for someone who is not part of the process (or one of the factions of it) and views it from the outside looking in, these people are a confused and confusing lot indeed, disharmonious with each other and the new creation they all insist that they are part of and wish to achieve more fully.

Just as there is no pan-Christian approach to the metaphor of their narratives, there is no pan-Indigenous approach to their narratives, either. As the Christian narratives (metaphors) are

interpreted, understood, and applied locally and colloquially, so are Indigenous narratives (metaphors). Not all ceremonies are engaged in, or even acknowledged as meaningful to or by all. Similarities exist, to be sure, among narratives of the various Christian groups, and there are those in which all share, as is the case among the various Indigenous groups. There are commonalities of metaphor and interpretation among West Coast tribes; as there are among the Blackfoot Confederacy; as there are among those of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy; as there are among Lutherans; as there are among Catholics, as there are among Christian Fundamentalists. In every instance, perception has led to metaphor, which has led to interpretation and re-creative action (ceremony). However, that which is definitive for one group of people in their area and set of circumstances is not necessarily given the same import by others. A ceremony involving the Three Sisters or the first of the Spring salmon run would be meaningless to Indigenous people of the Plains, as would ceremonies involving the buffalo be meaningless to Coastal peoples or the Haudenosaunee. A ceremony involving a meal of fish and bread wouldn't have much meaning for Christians who didn't have access to fish as part of their staple diet; and a ceremony involving bread and wine wouldn't resonate with people whose climate was inhospitable to vineyards. However, the emphasis in Indigenous spiritual concepts is always on achieving and maintaining harmony where none exists and maintaining harmony where it does exist. With the colloquial emphasis on who is right and who isn't, as vocalised in so many ways in the traditional Judeo-Christian approaches, coupled with the previously mentioned concepts of good and evil, this bespeaks an approach that is not only devoid of harmony, but convinced that harmony is unachievable.

Local and colloquial narratives and re-creations would retain their viability and validity among the group within which they originated, if it were not for human activity that brings

groups with various narratives concerning the same subject matter into contact with each other. In the best of scenarios, competition for available resources necessary for survival as the defining aspect of the relationship is avoided, as are competition for prominence with respect to the defining narratives of the people. In the case of the Haudenosaunee, neighbouring tribes (as with the Huron) were invited to join the Confederacy (i.e. embrace The Great Law of Peace) on three successive occasions, and, if they declined the invitation, they were considered enemies of peace and the Confederacy, but they were not then automatically the target of armed sorties. The Anishinaabe referred to their neighbours to the West as “Nadowessi” (little snakes), indicating how troublesome and irksome the Anishinaabe found them to be in comparison to the much more troublesome and irritating neighbours to the East, the Haudenosaunee. But again, they seemed to have not entertained any desire for armed conflict to attain superiority. Euro-Christian approaches to Indigenous spirituality, however, as we have seen, seemed to premise the need to eradicate them. That should not surprise us since history recounts numerous armed conflicts in Europe between “Christian” nations that had connotation of spiritual supremacy.

Wee-Tas-Ki-Win-Spatinow “The Hills Where Peace Was Made” (circa 1867) speaks of a history of hostilities between the Blackfoot and Cree, stemming from the fact that both relied on the buffalo for the necessities of life. But though they both agreed to a peaceful relationship, not much is known of any shared spiritual narratives or ceremonies other than the important mention of the smoking of the pipe as part of the initial peace process. Perhaps the centrality of the pipe in both spiritual world views and practices says it all. Although West Coast peoples had some shared spiritual narratives, hostilities between them are known to have existed for some time after contact with colonising peoples. But, despite the differing narratives and metaphors, the

common thread was a sense of responsibility to maintain the integrity of their narratives and their associated ceremonies, and to interpret their metaphors in and by their daily lives.

But Indigenous hostilities and competition for available resources paled at the onslaught of the colonisers and their insatiable appetite for resources and their assumptions of spiritual and cultural supremacy. The colonisers (in their various factions) all claimed to be inheritors of the narrative and metaphor of the re-creation (or new creation) they felt had been embodied in Jesus of Nazareth. But, in the years following the appearance of that metaphor of the new creation, the colonisers, at least in Europe had re-written the narrative, re-interpreted it, and changed it to more closely resemble the old narrative it was to have replaced. This re-interpreted, re-written narrative and the mutated new metaphor of triumphant militancy that accompanied it, along with ceremonies reiterating and reinforcing it, became the foundation on which the colonisers based their approach to the land and peoples of Turtle Island as well as the culture and institutions they subsequently established as they attempted to impose their will on the people and land.

Of significance is the fact that the narrative and metaphor for humankind's responsibility to foster a realised eschatology as embodied by Jesus of Nazareth was replaced with the concept of an apocalypse as the final triumphant militaristic act of their deity. The responsibilities concurrent with establishing and fostering a realised eschatology wherein Jesus of Nazareth was the embodied metaphor were re-interpreted in a hierarchical fashion of ruler/commander, troops, and conquest, which, as I have illustrated in chapter 5, has its origins in the narrative and metaphor Christianity had inherited from its predecessor, Judaism. The putting to death of the embodied new metaphor (Jesus of Nazareth), an event that could be interpreted as a commentary on humankind, was instead re-interpreted in the Resurrection narratives as an absolution of

humankind's abrogation of the responsibility to embrace the new metaphor and the new creation it signified and in the process, realise it.

The new creation was within the realm of possibility for the people of the time, but they put the metaphor to death and returned to the old system that embodied conquest, supremacy, and militancy, instead of embracing the approach of persuasion through shared and lived experiences of the embodied metaphor. Again, the responsibility lay (in their re-interpretation of the metaphor), not with humankind, but with their divinity, who would in some future event, accomplish the re-creation that humankind had refused to accept the responsibility for, and had therefore failed to accomplish themselves. They could have interpreted their narratives surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as indicating that the concept of realised eschatology is so powerful that it refuses to die or be subsumed within another system of thought and relegated to some dim future, but they chose abrogation of their responsibility and transferred it to their deity instead.

Originally, the trees reputedly had maple syrup running through them, and someone had changed that to sap instead, leaving the people without the idyllic life of simply getting maple syrup out of the tree. If realised eschatology then, were maple syrup and a person appeared among the people to show them how, through communal effort and co-operation, they could turn the sap coursing through the capillaries of the trees into maple syrup, would it make sense to ignore the advice/teaching/technique this person had offered to the people? Would it make sense to despair of ever having maple syrup because it involved work and co-operation, and that took effort? Would it make sense, given the new capability that had been offered to the people, to instead bemoan the fact that they had to make do with sap instead of syrup, and long for the day when someone (with a great deal of power) would turn the sap in the trees back into syrup? To

ignore the possibilities that had been afforded them would be like the people wanting to sit on their haunches all day gorging themselves on maple syrup and despairing of life when they could not.

The colonisers sought to suppress, repress, and annihilate Indigenous spiritual concepts, narratives, and ceremonies. The same was true of the fashion in which they tended to treat each other, their personified metaphor of a realised eschatology, and any disparate spiritual concepts among themselves. It seems that the need for homogeneity among coloniser spiritual views and values was felt very early on in the Christian interpretation of its metaphor. Their presumed narrative indicates that the person involved with Judaism's attempt to annihilate Christian spiritualism, Saul/Paul,<sup>487</sup> was also instrumental (or at least involved) in attempting to establish Christian spiritual homogeneity.<sup>488</sup> And, while initial attempts at homogeneity were discussions (often heated, it seems from the references), later attempts, especially those with whom Christian colonisers would have been acquainted, were characterised by the use of the term "heretic" and public torture and executions of anyone who put forth an opinion or concept that was contrary to the one officially accepted by the hierarchy of their spiritual leaders.

Among Indigenous peoples, however, having survived (if only barely) the coloniser onslaught, it has been said:

The very late sixties was a period during which Native individuals and groups virtually everywhere in North America keenly realized that past and current efforts to resolve their enormous cultural, socio-economic and political difficulties were unsettling failures. It was also a period of intense introspection induced by the perceived lack of results... In the midst of indignant disarray, a saving thought was provoked when someone said... Maybe if we talked to some old people.<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> Acts 7:57&58, 8:1,3&4; 9:1&2.

<sup>488</sup> Acts 15, Galatians 2:1-10.

<sup>489</sup> Ruth Couture & Virginia McGowan (Editors), *A Metaphoric Mind Selected Writings of Joseph Couture* (AU Press, Athabasca University, Edmonton, 2013), 66.

Since then, the “old people” (Elders), often as a result of much coaxing and assurance that what they share will be treated with the respect it deserves, have begun to share the narratives and the teachings they have been instrumental in keeping safe within the vaults of their hearts and minds. For what they have kept and safeguarded is not proselytizing in its nature, nor is it academic. It is very personal and spiritual, as much a part of their being as a hand or a foot (heart, actually).

Only those who recognise that they need the knowledge and wisdom that is in the safekeeping of the elders are considered, not only worthy of receiving it, but also capable of using it wisely for their spiritual growth and maturation. To simply ask an Elder to share without giving any assurance that what they share will be used as intended will not suffice. Historically, dating back to first contact with colonisers, and as recently as the encouragement to share their knowledge in the late 1960's, non-Indigenous cultural and spiritual appropriation have predicated against the sharing of the Elders' wisdom. Having lived through this most recent time, I have observed an initial willingness to share freely, followed by a “pulling back” when it became clear that it was curiosity, and not a genuine interest in spiritual growth, that initiated the request for sharing. As noted previously, with the decline of people willing and capable of maintaining the tradition of oral transmission of narratives (wisdom, teachings) and coloniser-induced and dominated emphasis on written transmission, Elders face the conundrum of facing either the disappearance of the narrative, or the written transmission of the narrative, which can open the door to dissection, misunderstanding the metaphors, and appropriation, rather than the internalisation and personal re-creation which is the intent of the narratives. As noted, it is in experiencing (or re-experiencing) the metaphor of the narrative through which insight and growth are achieved. If the narrative is presented in written form, the narrator cannot control who reads it, or guide that person in his/her experience of the metaphor. The only assurance that the

metaphor will be experienced as it was meant to be experienced is the strength and validity of the metaphor itself, and the efficacy of the ceremony accompanying the narrative in re-creating the initial experience within which the concept being transmitted was realised.

There are those who now appreciate spiritual narrative as metaphor in both Christian and Indigenous spiritual thinking and understand the creative and re-creative power of both the spoken, written and performed (as in ceremony) word. There are people willing to recognise that: “There is no difference between mental and spiritual activity and development- they are two sides of the same, transparent coin. Both constitute an arduous and complex development over time.”<sup>490</sup> And, increasingly, it is evident that it is not only Indigenous peoples who are realising, in Couture’s words; “that past and current efforts to resolve their enormous cultural, socio-economic and political difficulties were unsettling failures.”<sup>491</sup> Non-Indigenous peoples are realising it too.

Non-Indigenous people of the late 1960’s vocalised the sentiments that past attempts to resolve cultural, socio-economic, political, and a host of other inequities and difficulties were unsettling failures, and some progress was made. However, I sense that the spiritual metaphor (and therefore power) for re-creation was either missing, was hijacked, repressed, or was ultimately abandoned by many involved in favor of another metaphor. It is said that the Elders know of a prophecy/teaching that the time will come when it will be appropriate and necessary to share their knowledge and wisdom with non-Indigenous peoples as well.<sup>492</sup> But *they* will be the ones who make the decision to do so, based on their assessment as to whether the people they share it with are ready to receive it, and/or if the people who have requested that these teachings

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<sup>490</sup> Ibid. 111.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid. 66.

<sup>492</sup> Leanne Simpson (Editor), *Lighting The Eighth Fire, The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* (Arbeiter Publishing, Winnipeg, 2008), 14.

be shared have done so out of a genuine concern for spiritual understanding and growth. Are non-Indigenous people capable of appreciating the metaphor of Raven, for example, who Bringhurst, in one observation describes in the following words:

On this view, Raven is more than just an archetypal trickster who blunders through the universe. The Raven is the horny, greedy, adulterous, incestuous, shit-disturbing and irrepressible *logos*. He is Voicehandler's way of fulfilling his promise to the Loon.<sup>493</sup>

The answer, of course, is that, as in all instances of spiritual insight or growth, there will always be some that find a reason to turn away and reject it, as is possible in some pseudo-puritanical abhorrence to Bringhurst's use of the word *logos*, which Christian colonisers tend to associate with Jesus of Nazareth. Some will have difficulty with the concept of metaphor, some will have difficulty appreciating the potential for re-creation behind the metaphor (either Christian or Indigenous), and some will simply turn away because they are unable to see an answer to the question: "What's in it for me?" Especially since the metaphor for new or re-creation addressed the question "What's in it for humanity?" and is therefore a counterpoint to egocentricity.

It seems that it is not only necessary for Indigenous People to remember, reclaim, and re-interpret the metaphor(s) of their spiritual heritage, but for the coloniser to re-examine their heritage so as to reclaim the initial concepts contained within their Christian narratives of realised eschatology as well. The post-deluge narrative seems to indicate that the world (i.e. everything that is not human) is no longer cursed but exists in perfect harmony with the Creator. The only "curse" is on humankind, and there has been an historical event/intervention by their deity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth which provided the necessary means to lift *that* curse as well. As the embodied metaphor of the new approach he was ushering in, his life and teachings provide us with the necessary means to re-establish and re-claim the relationship with the

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<sup>493</sup> Robert Bringhurst, *A Story As Sharp As A Knife The Classical Haida Myhtellers And Their World* (Douglas & McIntyre, Madeira Park, British Columbia, 2011), 189.

divinity that humankind's inappropriate and misguided actions severed. The only "curse" in the narratives concerning him is a troubling one concerning a tree that was not bearing fruit (Mark 11:13-14, 20,21). The narrator's apologetic observation that it was not the season for that fruit only serves to muddy the water of comprehension. Some suggest that the narrative simply exists as a blatant demonstration of power.

We read that the embodiment of the metaphor of the new order, (Jesus) was willing to assume the role of a "lowly" household servant and wash the feet of his fellow travellers (John 13:3-5). However, his most intimate adherents, those who became leaders of the new movement by virtue of the fact that they were his closest companions, insisted that even though it was their feet Jesus had washed, their position within the movement precluded such a lowly task as "serving tables," when they could more productively spend their time praying and serving the word (Acts 6:1-5). It was they, not the one whom they followed and sought to imitate, who would define their status and the "service" they would render to others within the movement. Another blatant demonstration of power and the return to the hierarchical system that the embodied metaphor of the new creation had sought to replace.

The systems we have inherited from the historical Christian coloniser approach and built upon is based on the European coloniser interpretation of their metaphor(s), which seem to be inadequate for the current reality we are faced with.

There are some serious concerns surrounding this, however.

What if the settlers choose not to change their ways? It is becoming more and more apparent each day, as capitalism and materialism grow into ever more powerful and arrogant forces and continue to roll over landscapes and cultures with impunity, that restoring a regime of peaceful co-existence with settler society and believing in the settlers' potential for friendship and enlightenment is impossible.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> Leanne Simpson, (Editor), *Lighting The Eighth Fire, The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* (Arbeiter Publishing, Winnipeg, 2008), 11.

If one bases the validity and superiority of their spiritual perceptions in one's ability to coerce (by whatever means) others into acquiescing to their assumed superiority, then it begs the question of which is superior, the spiritual concept, or the means of coercion. Today, it is not only Indigenous people who are aware of how the colonial system impacts them. Capitalism, egocentrism, and materialism are impacting the lives of the descendants of the colonisers as well. As mentioned, there was dissent voiced in the 1960's and 1970's, but rampant inflation and some new-found prosperity for many during the 1980's seemed to quell much of that, relegating it to academic thought and analysis.

We are bombarded daily with images of personal fulfillment and happiness through acquisition. Often, we live with feelings of inadequacy if we are not able to attain these goals. Thankfully, a few are beginning to question the validity and desirability of these goals of acquisition. There are expressions of a yearning for an alternative but finding the way out of the conundrum many seem to feel themselves in is difficult. For, to seek to understand the metaphor of the core narrative(s) of one's spirituality (assuming one remembers anything of its historical existence), then to re-create, experience, and seek to embody the metaphor, is to risk being re-created in oneself. Even though the Indigenous and non-Indigenous (Christian) narratives themselves reassure us that the risk and the re-creation will be in our best interests, this seems to often contradict every instinct we have.

Elders accustomed to Indigenous spiritual approaches assure us that this is a process that we and those within the community of humankind will benefit from. One Elder's cautious optimism is expressed in the following:

I see little glimpses of the old ways coming back, so I always have hope. I think part of the answer about things getting back to their original value is when we start with our individual selves. When we start to respect ourselves again and demand respect from our

children and everything else, I believe this will trickle down so that we will respect what the Creator put on earth for our use.<sup>495</sup>

I see this optimism as well in the prominent early spiritual leaders of Christianity whose words of encouragement we can read in the written material they have left to posterity, and in the narratives surrounding the life of their metaphor for realised eschatology.

Both the embodied metaphor(s) for realised eschatology within Christianity and the Elders of Indigenous peoples seem to agree that spiritual growth involves leaving our comfortable surroundings to seek inspiration. Both seem to agree that spiritual growth is a process, with many risks, revelations, and insights along the way. Both seem to agree that there is a beneficent spiritual energy that has, as its primary interest our ultimate survival, and that there are those within our community who reflect this in their attention and care for our spiritual and physical well-being. All that is required of us is to engage in the process and to trust it. Which also means that we trust the spiritual leaders from whom we seek assistance to guide, encourage, and to provide us with the spiritual nourishment we require to see the process through, so that we in turn may provide the same service to others. If we are open to the concept of a realised eschatology as seems to have been the hope of early Christianity, or *mino-bimaadiziwin*, or “Walking The Red Road,” we will be able to perceive the embodiment of the metaphor in the people we approach for assistance in our own growth process, and thereby choose as leaders and guides those whom we *can* trust, growing into the embodiment of the narrative ourselves.

There *is* therefore, a means of overcoming Absalon’s language problem as the precursor to initiating the decolonisation process for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike. It does not involve discussions concerning the best method of conveying nuanced meanings from

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<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

an Indigenous language into English, or the other way around. Instead of the spoken word, we can speak the embodied word and metaphor in relationship, realising the interrelatedness and interconnectivity of all that exists, and use this as a beginning. This too, is a process, and as in all spiritual processes involving growth and maturation, we require embodiments of the metaphor whom we can trust to be our guides. But the first step in the process is to be open to it and to seek it out. Or perhaps, simply affirm and accept that the realm of spirituality is far greater than even our metaphors can perceive or explain, and that the process itself has in this time, sought *us* out and invited us to experience it.

It seems that there is, in both coloniser society and Indigenous people, a sense of loss and a longing for a new narrative, one that is true to the remembered concepts that gave rise to their original spiritual and empirical approaches to life. Both seem to feel the need to reclaim the metaphor inherent in their respective spiritual heritages. Both inceptual traditions, I am convinced, can be reclaimed through respecting, and assisting each other. I am optimistic enough to envision that a new narrative may be jointly written for the future, a new word empowering and ushering in a new creation.

To usher in a new creation, however, does not involve the destruction of the existing one. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus, the metaphor of the new creation, is quoted as having said: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law of the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.” Further on, in verse 20, he states: “unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.” In succeeding verses, he proceeds to elaborate on what he has said in preceding verses by explaining the concepts of “Law” and “righteousness” *in terms of human relationships*. He, in my analysis, is indicating that the “Law” was not intended to be a set of categorical imperatives, but a guide to maintaining harmonious

relationships. So, there is no need to abolish the existing, but there is a need to re-acquaint people with the nature and intent of what they have been given, by illustrating that they, or at least their spiritual leaders, have historically misinterpreted it and subsequently made of it something that it was never intended to be. It is not the “Law” that needs to be done away with, but the misinterpretations that have led to a lifestyle based on categorical imperatives and hierarchical structures, as opposed to the relationship-based existence it was intended to foster. This is the new creation, the interpretation of the premises underpinning the previous one as they were intended to be interpreted in their initial formulation, as templates for relationships, not categorical imperatives.

This speaks a to the concept of the need for total annihilation (apocalypse) of all that exists before there can be anything resembling a realised eschatology as well. Although there is no mention in the above-quoted section of narrative concerning humankind’s relationship with the earth and all that exists upon it, recall the concept of sovereignty of the earth and all that exists upon it that I interpret as being stated categorically after the deluge. Since that sovereignty is *prima facie* in the narrative, human relationships with that sphere of existence are therefore not in need of clarification; it is the earth and all that exists upon it that defines the relationship, not humankind. If, therefore, the post-deluge promise to the earth and all that exists upon it is taken seriously, then the pre-deluge circumstances that predicated that event need to be correctly interpreted as well. The conclusion I have come to is that it is therefore not the earth and all that exists upon it that is in danger of annihilation, but humankind, if they fail to establish and maintain the desired healthy relationships with each other. The vision of an apocalyptic event, then, is a stern warning to humankind that it has the capacity to annihilate itself if it persists in failing to establish harmonious relationships. Prophetically speaking, then, it is a vision of

consequences (if-then) of not striving for a realised eschatology, but instead maintaining the unfounded and misguided hierarchical concepts inherent in the system of categorical imperatives.

But, it has been argued, not all humankind necessarily misunderstands the concept of relationship-based existence. What happens to those who understand it correctly, if and/or when there comes a point where humankind generally is in danger of self-annihilation? Beginning with the sentiments expressed in Isaiah 10:20-23 and the entire chapter 11 (containing, coincidentally, phrases that were later associated with Jesus of Nazareth), there has been quite a bit of speculation concerning a “remnant” who survives and lives to re-establish humanity. Verses 6 through 9 speak of harmonious relationships in nature, and verse 13 suggests harmonious human relationships, but then digresses to militaristic supremacy after that. To delve into the concept of “remnant theology” and all the sentiments surrounding it is well beyond the scope of this theses. But, in the material I’ve researched on this topic, the aspects concerning the identification of the remnant that survives with those who have been striving toward a realised eschatology and the harmonious relationships that seem to be its primary objective, seems rather promising. For the optimist, self-annihilation of humankind is not necessarily inevitable. For the pessimist, there is an “escape clause” in the literature that revolves around building and maintaining harmonious relationships with whomever one can, and with the sovereign earth and all that it contains.

Both Christian and Indigenous traditions, therefore, seem to indicate that a new creation/existence in this realm is possible, and inherently even inevitable if the process of people being embodiments of the metaphor is allowed and encouraged to continue to its fruition. True to the nature of the logos, speaking and embodying a new narrative will bring it into existence. As noted previously, however, both colonisers and Indigenous people need to find a

way to talk *with* one another, rather than *about* one another. And, as any competent professional involved in inter-personal relationships will affirm, to carry on a meaningful conversation, one needs to be an active listener as well as a precise speaker. “Therefore, as a rule, the man of the world cannot impart his accumulated truth and wisdom, but only practise it.”<sup>496</sup> Perhaps it is fitting, in our current circumstances, to recall the following:

It is that, therefore, that this present day we, thou and I, seat ourselves side by side, and that, it is here in the very midst of very many tears (I say)...we wipe away the tears from thy face...Now, therefore, in peace of mind, thou wilt continue to look around thyself, enjoying again the light of day.<sup>497</sup>

Perhaps we can again enjoy the light of day if we allow ourselves to be illuminated by contemplating the similarities that exist in many aspects of each other’s historical traditions and narratives, the teachings of the Seven Grandfathers, and the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-9), for example. And, if the personified metaphor of the Christian tradition is viewed (as he is by many) as the embodiment of truth as well, both Christians and Indigenous Peoples alike who have remained true to their inceptual narratives can find some comfort (vs. 10-12) in the assurance that their perseverance in spite of everything will not be in vain.

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<sup>496</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World As Will And Representation, Volume II* (The Falcon’s Wing Press, Indian Hills, Colorado, 1958), 74.

<sup>497</sup> J.N.B. Hewitt, *The Requicking Address of the Iroquois Condolence Council* (Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences, Vol. 34 No.3, March 15, 1944), 70. Available at: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/39690197#page/87/mode/1up>, Last accessed February 17, 2020.

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