Woyakapi Kin Ahdipi “Bringing the Story Home”: A History Within the Wakpa Ipaksan Dakota Oyate

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Wopida
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to micante (my heart) Lillian Canunpa Nunpa Win Loud Hawk. My girl, this work was done so that you would grow up knowing the strength of the family, community, language, and place that you were born into. This journey I took so that you would always know home. Wastecidake micunksi.

Abstract

This dissertation relates a history within the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe in South Dakota and traces one family group back to the Indigenous homeland of Minnesota. Key points of reference focus on the village of Chief Cloud Man and the lived experiences of his great-grandsons John and Charles Eastman, as well as his descendant Grace Moore. This family survived the forced exile of the Dakota from Minnesota after the Dakota War of 1862 by assimilating to white culture in part, but in staying true to their Dakota roots as well. Issues of survivance and identity, especially in regards to assimilation, and the effects of this exile on the Dakota experience at Flandreau are analyzed throughout my research.

This project uses oral history and primary document research, specifically personal family collections, to chronicle an Indigenous family experience during and after a time of war. In doing so, the Dakota perspective of these events is uncovered and given precedence over binary narratives that have predominated the historical narrative in the past. Topics of relevance to both American Studies and American Indian studies include: ancestral memory, language revitalization, Indigenous survivance, and nationhood.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Throughout our lives, we are taught, shaped, scarred, and strengthened by the stories we are told, the stories that we live, and the invisible legacies that help shape who we become. When these stories are silenced, as has happened to many generations of Dakota people, when the history is ignored, then we are unconscious witnesses to the past. When a generation cannot reconcile their experience, it becomes a legacy for their children and grandchildren, who inherit the raw, unfinished work of their ancestors.

-- Diane Wilson *Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life*

Han Mitakuyepi, wasicu ia Kate Beane emakiyapi ye tka Dakotia Ahdipi Win de miye ye. Damakota k'a Bdewakantunwan hemaca ye. Wakpa Ipaksan Oyate heciya omawapi tka tiyospaye mitawa Bdeota heuntanhanpi ye. Hello my relatives. In English my name is Kate Beane but in Dakota I am known as Brings Them Home Woman. I am Dakota, and I come from the Dwellers At Spirit Lake people. I am enrolled over in Wakpa Ipaksan ("bend in the River" also known as the Flandreau Santee Sioux tribe) but the Minneapolis area ("The Land of Many Lakes") is where my extended family is from.

Growing up, I never knew how to answer what is usually a very simple question, "where are you from?" Having been raised in Arizona, Nebraska, and California, and after living in cities and towns all over the country, I never really understood where "home" was. But when I returned to Mni Sota Makoce,[1] the homeland of my people, as an adult I began to understand my place in this world in a much clearer way and I set upon a journey of understanding the story behind my displacement from this region. In

[1] Mni Sota, also known as *Minnesota* in Dakota language refers to the reflection of the sky off of the water. This is often translated as "Cloudy Water" or "Sky Blue Water." This phrase translates as "Land of the Dakota"

short, I needed to know why I had been raised in exile, and I wanted to know what I could do to return my family home.

In the book *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota*, authors Gwen Westerman (Sissetunwan Wahpetunwan Dakota) and Bruce White write, "sixteen different verbs in the Dakota language describe returning home, coming home, or bringing something home. That is how important our homeland is in Dakota regardless of where our history has taken us. No matter how far we go, we journey back home through language and songs and in stories our grandparents told us to share with our grandchildren."[2] My name, Ahdipiwin was given to me by my relative Glenn Wasicuna, and I bear the responsibility of bringing the stories of my family back home to our community. This project is a part of this homecoming process, and the driving force of this research lies in unveiling the various ways in which "home" can be reinterpreted for Dakota people living in exile from our ancestral homeland. To physically return home is extremely important for us, and is the ultimate goal for many of us, but this is not always a possibility for relatives who must continue to reside in other places, and so it is important to find ways to both historically and spiritually return to these spaces as well.

Ehanni: A Long Time Ago…

To begin this story it is important to state whom the people are that I am writing about. The Dakota Oyate[3] are members of the Oceti Sakowin, also known as the Seven

[2] Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, *Minnesota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 13

[3] Oyate is the Dakota word for Nation or Tribe.

Council Fires, which are comprised of the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota people, each speaking a different dialect of the same language. These tribal groups have historically all resided within the central United States and up into and Canada. As members of what historical linguists have termed the "Siouan" language family this large group of relatives have historically (and inaccurately) been referred to as the "Sioux." This term comes from early French explorer accounts, which make reference to the "Nadouesioux" peoples, but translations of this word have been debated to mean both "snake" and/or "enemy," in reference to what we were called by our Ojibwe neighbors.[4] Today, Oceti Sakowin is a preferred name to use when referencing the three bands together, as *Sioux*. Traditionally, none of the Oceti Sakowin ever referred to ourselves using this term. The label is a remnant of treaty terminology used to generalize a much larger group of peoples than were ever consulted during negotiation. In the Pike Treaty of 1805 for instance, only seven members of one band of Dakota people (the Bdewakantunwan) were present at the signing of the document (for which only two signatories left their x-marks). This compact between the United States and "The Sioux Nation of Indians" (which would have represented at least, according to Pike, some 21,675 people),[5] but given so

[4] Gwen Westerman and Bruce White. *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota*, 34

[5] This was the first treaty to be signed with the "Sioux" of the Minnesota region. In it the Dakota ceded 100,000 acres of land, opening up land for the construction of a military fort (Fort Snelling). Though the land was valued at $200,000 Lieutenant Zebulon Pike did not include a monetary worth on the document and later inserted the sum of $2000 in order to gain Senate approval. The Dakota only received $200 worth of presents and alcohol on the day of the singing and the validity of this treaty has been contested ever since. See Roy Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 24-45.

few members of these tribal nations were represented, or even consented, one would be hard pressed to proclaim this as a true "agreement" between two consenting nations.

Though today we use Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota to distinguish ourselves regionally and tribally, to be most accurate and true to our language we are Ikce Wicasta, which translates as human being, or common man.[6] It is important to note that I use multiple terms such as "Native" "Indigenous" "American Indian" and "Indian" intermittently when referencing peoples Indigenous to North America in this work. Tribal specificity is always preferred, but other terms are also needed when referencing larger inter-tribal groups of people. Though I know many take issue with using the term "Indian" it is a term that I grew up hearing and using in my home community and I use it sparingly, when referring to documents that employ this term in pertaining to Dakota people or when employing the language that is being used at the time I am writing about historically for consistency of language.[7]

As Gwen Westerman and Bruce White relate, "The Dakota people are called Wicahpi Oyate, Star people. Our spirits came from the creator down the Canku Wanagi, the "spirit road," more commonly known as the milky-way."[8] The eastern group of the Oceti Sakowin, or Dakota, are comprised of the Bdewakantunwan, Wahpetkute, Sissitunwan, and Wahpetunwan tribal bands, which are then broken up into even smaller

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[6] Gideon Pond relates that the "Sioux Indians" have this name for themselves in a letter to his brother Edward Pond. See Gideon Pond to Edward Pond. May 19th 1834. Pond Family Papers. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society.

[7] For a more in depth analysis of the history and usage of the term "Indian" see Robert Warriors contribution in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies,* edited by Bruce Burgett and Glenn Handler (New York: New York University press, 2007), 132.

[8] Gwen Westerman and Bruce White. *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota,* 18

tiospaye, or extended family units that historically camped together according to seasonal migration patterns. These peoples intermarried with one another, as well as with neighboring tribal neighbors such as the Anishinabe, as well as with incoming white military personnel, creating an ethnically diverse group of peoples in the Mni Sota territory by the 18th century in which I begin this project. This work is situated around my family, with specific ties mostly to the Bdewakantunwan, but also the Wahpetunwan peoples, though we also share ancestral bloodlines that are traced back to both the French and English who married into our family line in the 19th century.

Since time immemorial Dakota people have lived in Mni Sota region. "The Land Where the Waters Reflects the Sky" is how we translate this name of Mni Sota, which represents the cast that the sky shines on the many waters that cover this landscape, and it is thus also translated as "Land of Sky Blue Waters" or "Cloudy Waters." The literal meaning can change with each season - this is expressive of the true beauty of our language as visually descriptive of this place we have always called home.

There is more than one site of Dakota creation in Mni Sota, though the site of Bdote (Where the Rivers Meet) in the Twin Cities area below where Fort Snelling stands today, and Bde Wakan (Spirit Lake), which is now known as Mille Lacs, located one hundred miles north of the metro area, are both widely considered to be the two most prominent sites of creation. Dakota elder Curtis Campbell[9] (Tinta Wita – Prairie Island Dakota) relates,

> So depending on where you live at or how you've grown up, each place had their own creation story. There were different histories of the creation stories. I don't

[9] Also known by his Dakota name Wakinyan Zi Sapa.

> hold any of them above the others; they're all equally important. And there's no right or wrong among any of them. But that's the way it is, you know. You go further down south, down river and go further north, either way, we're all the same people. We're all Dakota people you know.[10]

Though I have yet to hear of anyone contesting the creation story of the Bdewakantunwan at Bde Wakan, there has been conflict over the fact that other bands of Dakota have another site of creation. Much of this disagreement lies with parties with economic interests in the Bdote site, and there is an irrational fear among some non-Dakota Minnesota community members who express anxiety that tribal gaming enterprises could someday inhabit this space if it were to ever be returned to the Dakota. It must be stated, however, that this idea that has never, and would never, cross the minds of the majority of Dakota tribal nations, who view this area as a sacred site in need of tribal protection.[11]

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[10] Gwen Westerman and Bruce White *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota*, 16

[11] Both historians and anthropologists (none of whom are of Dakota ancestry) have written accounts that detail the origination of the Dakota from areas outside of Mni Sota Makoce and base their reasoning on their own interpretations of ever shifting archeological evidence and ignore the significance of Dakota oral historical accounts (which are also documented by early missionaries). University of Minnesota anthropologist Guy Gibbon asserts that the Dakota descended from the Central Mississippi Valley, while ethnologists Royal Hassrick claims the Northeast, and Albert Jenks argues that all "Sioux" tribes came from the east, moving west from the Carolinas. See: Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (Living Justice Press, 2008) 21-23 also see: Janet D. Spector *What This Awl Means: A Feminist Archeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1993)

Historical Significance

Professor of political science Franke Wilmer once stated that "Indigenous people represent the unfinished business of colonization,"[12] and as David Noble points out in *Death of A Nation,* they are seen as accidents that were never supposed to be in the New World upon "discovery."[13] It is no secret that the Indigenous peoples of the Americas were not always a welcome surprise when first encountered by white explorers. The topics covered in this work intersect historical events and issues with the lived experiences of five of my grandparents dating back to 1829; individuals whose descendants were not expected to survive into the 21st century. Concepts addressed include issues of leadership, the impact of colonialism, tactics of survivance and cultural recovery. Of these individuals presented in this project my grandfather Ohiyesa (Charles Eastman),[14] was a prominent Dakota intellectual and reformer of the 20th century. After graduating from Dartmouth College in 1887, he went on to become a medical doctor, and was the only physician to tend to the Lakota massacred at Wounded Knee in December of 1890, an experience that haunted him for much of his adult life. His eleven books have been published in multiple languages and are still widely distributed today.

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[12] Linda Tuhiwai Smith *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.* 2nd Edition (Zed Books, 2012), 7

[13] David Noble, *Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 7

[14] Ohiyesa, my great Grandmother Grace Moore's uncle, is my uncle according to western traditions of family lineage, but according to Dakota rules of kinship he is my grandfather and so this is how I refer to him.

In his monumental text *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, first published in 1916, Ohiyesa states,

> I am an Indian; and while I have learned much from civilization, for which I am grateful, I have never lost my Indian sense of right and justice. I am for development and progress along social and spiritual lines, rather than those of commerce, nationalism, and material efficiency. Nevertheless, so long as I live, I am an American.[15]

As Ohiyesa asserts, he is both an Indian *and* an American – and regardless of what others may assume based on his race, he demands to be heard. His life project was an appeal for equality, a perspective rooted in social justice, and yet he was often interpreted as being overtly simplistic as an assimilated Christian, as if his own education and ability to acculturate and adapt to western society made him somehow less Indigenous. He has to assert his existence as both Indian and American because the society at the time he was living had a difficult time accepting that he could be both, and those who did accept his position often misinterpreted what it meant to be both Dakota as well as an American. This quote exemplifies the arc of the overall family experience shared in this project, and represents its significance to the field of American Studies, as an Indigenous American history of dissent against imperialism and simplistic binary colonial interpretations of the Dakota experience. In my work I use this very personal family story, and utilize family documents passed down by Ohiyesa, his brother John, and his niece Grace Moore (my great grandmother) to showcase the fallacy of imposed oppositional identities such as Indian/American and Christian/Traditional over time. Dakota people have been

[15] Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 195

identified under each of these labels by missionaries and scholars – yet this does not take away from their authenticity as being complex Dakota individuals, a sovereign nation of people that crossed transnational borders imposed upon them by the United States and asserted their rightful place outside the political boundaries created by the colonial settler state following homeland removal.

What is often omitted in the discussions of Dakota history, and American history in general, is the fact that the story of indigenous people did not begin with European contact. Though most likely well aware of this fact, the most popular topics of discussion about Dakota people in Minnesota are now relegated to the Dakota War of 1862 and the immediate aftermath of the war - which led to the Dakota exile from the ancestral homeland. This time period deserves to be analyzed and interpreted through more of a Dakota lens, which takes into consideration Dakota community and cultural knowledge and oral history in particular. It is also imperative that we remember there was a long history previous to this violence for Dakota people, and that the experiences of our tribal members since this time period continue to be impacted by it in multi-dimensional ways.

Literature Review

When a small group of Isanti Dakota[16] men were first encountered by French explorers in 1660 along what now is now the Minnesota Wisconsin border, they were, in fact happy to see them. This happiness was influenced by the fact that the men were near

[16] "Isanti", which is today often written as "Santee," means "Knife Dwellers" in Dakota language.

starvation after surviving a particularly grueling winter. The Isanti men continued to bring food to these men, and in response Pierre Espirit Radisson issued his gratitude by stating that this nourishment would have been more welcome, "if they brought it a month or two before."[17] This history is reflective of the ways in which Dakota history is often told, from a Euro-American perspective that does not take into account the ways in which the Dakota would have viewed this interaction. These Dakota did not have to assist Radisson and his men, but they did, and this accommodation occurred over and over again as newcomers entered our territory. The lack of recognition to the Dakota as stewards of this land relates the ways in which our existence in our homeland was never fully appreciated or respected by these early travelers (or by many since). Radisson and his men would have likely perished that winter had the Isanti men not brought them supplies, and the Dakota were very accommodating and welcoming. Yet, there was an expectation by incoming populations that the Dakota existence was only significant so long as they were providing a service, administering to a need to those who deemed themselves as being superior – a perspective that would continue to exemplify Dakota-White relations into the 21st century.

The relationships that Dakota people formed with early missionaries and explorers, and the cultural misunderstandings that often prevailed impacted Dakota communities for generations to come. From the missionary and explorer perspective, well documented in journal entries and letters, there was an indisputable feeling of superiority over the Dakota. Historical renderings of these connections have been used extensively in

[17] Roy Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux,* 1

the literature on Dakota history, but it is usually told from the perspective of explorers, missionaries, and settlers, rather than of the Dakota. Newer works of the missionary era by Bonnie Sue Lewis (*Creating Christian Indians)* and Linda Clemmons (*Conflicted Mission: Faith, Disputes, and Deception on the Dakota Frontier)* have attempted to disrupt this narrative in interesting ways. Bobbie Sue Lewis writes, "drawing on anthropological studies and a trend toward Ethnohistory, recognition of Indian agency has brought a shift in focus to ways in which Indians remained Indian, despite missionization,"[18] and their work, much like mine, argues that Dakota people retained many of their traditional ways of being despite religious conversion. While these works are significant and overdue, they are still works that tell the story from the perspectives of non-Dakota researchers and do not relate how this time period has affected Dakota people specifically, from the perspective of the family that lived through this experience, which is what this work seeks to accomplish.

Much of what has been written on Dakota history is based solely on the government documents and observations of early explorers and missionaries and Gwen Westerman and Bruce White note in *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* that, "Rare during the last three hundred years have been histories written to communicate the Dakota point of view about their homelands. Even rarer were histories that communicated the Dakota point of view about the white history of the Dakota people.

[18] Bonnie Sue Lewis, *Creating Christian Indians: Native Clergy in the Presbyterian Church.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003) 26

The white versions of history demonstrate the specific personality of those who wrote and the sometimes haphazard nature of their relationships with the Dakota."[19]

The abundance of archival information utilized in the works of contemporary Dakota history scholars such as Gary Clayton Anderson (*Kinsmen of Another Kind, Little Crow)* and Allan R. Woolworth (*Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862)* offer valuable resources for any curious scholar researching the timeline of events in Dakota history. However, these texts also provide a definite bias because they do not accurately account for, nor hold an adequate understanding, of the Dakota cultural lens from which to view what they find written in the archives. The comprehensive *History of the Santee Sioux* by Roy Meyer offers a much more factual and less biased analysis, and yet even he is unable to fully comprehend the social implications of Dakota society from the viewpoint of his admittedly outside perspective. What is most honorable about Meyer's work, however, is his upfront admission to his position as an outside researcher in his preface:

> The observations and opinions of early white visitors to the Santee Sioux are cited where they seem appropriate, but no attempt at culture reconstruction or sociological analysis of the present Santee Sioux is made… Despite the obvious advantages of writing from the 'inside,' this one is quite frankly written from the 'outside.' History is based largely on written records, and most of the records of from which the history of the Santee Sioux must be reconstructed were kept by white men. The chief sources used in the preparation of this book were government documents, both published and manuscript; contemporary newspapers; books and articles, both primary and secondary; and the private papers of missionaries and others who worked with the Indians. Interviews have been of value in straightening out some perplexing details in the recent history of the Santee groups, but I have made no attempt to "correct" the received version of

[19] Westerman, Gwen and Bruce White *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota*, 6

> events in the nineteenth century by recourse to oral traditions as expressed by present-day Indians.[20]

The honesty that Meyer begins his book, and given that he took the time to meet and discuss his research with Dakota people, is commendable and gives credence to his work. The same cannot, unfortunately be said of Gary Clayton Anderson, whose works *Little Crow*: *Spokesmen for the Sioux*, and *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota –White Relations In the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* are particularly fraught with overgeneralizations, cultural assumptions, and contribute to a stereotype of the Dakota as violent and misogynistic. Anderson, who begins his historical analysis of the Dakota by asserting that males in Dakota society were chauvinistic in nature and functioned primarily around the "excitement of the chase and the glories of war"[21] is prone to encouraging stereotypical representations of Dakota people in his work in order to create a male dominant narrative that is rooted in violence.

The written archival records from which most of these historical texts are derived (mainly from explorers, missionaries, fur traders, and government agents) are fundamentally important to the historical record, and works such as Meyer (and even Anderson) have utilized these documents in interesting ways. However, we have to be careful how we use and interpret these works in our own research, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith keenly points out, "Writing can be dangerous because, by building on previous texts written about Indigenous peoples, we continue to legitimate views about ourselves

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[20] Meyer p. ix

[21] Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind*: *Dakota White Relations in Upper Mississippi Valley 1650-1862.* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997), 1

which are hostile to us."[22] It is with a critical eye that I look at works written from outside our communities, making a clear effort not to contribute to the body of assumption that I find most troubling in these texts, and instead referencing materials written by Dakota people themselves whenever possible, and by using my own knowledge of Dakota world-views to reinterpret that with which others have written.

Countering the master narrative on Dakota history, which has historically excluded perspectives by Dakota people, are many non-Dakota researchers such as Janet D. Spector (*What this Awl Means: Feminist Archeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village),* Colette A. Hyman (*Dakota Women's Work: Creativity, Culture, & Exile),* as well as Carol Chomsky (*The United States-Dakota War Trials: A Study in Military Injustice*), each of whom have worked closely with Dakota people in researching their material. Janet Spector makes a good point in her critiques of previous archeological scholarship and argues that much of what has been written has been both object and "Andro-centric" or male centered. Her foundational work was invested in the development of a feminist approach to archaeology in *What This Awl Means: Feminist Archeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village* is easily extended to those who focus on Dakota history (i.e. not promoting stereotypes of Dakota men as subjects rather than human beings and excluding Dakota women and children into their narrative).

Recent contributions by scholars Bruce White (collaborator and co-writer on *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota)* and Howard Vogel (*Rethinking the Effect of the Abrogation of the Dakota Treaties and the Authority for the Removal of the Dakota*

[22] Smith, Linda Tuhiwai *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 37

People From their Homeland) contribute work that is as community centered as it is compassionate to the Dakota perspective. The lack of a personal agenda in their work is made obvious in that they share their findings with communities and work with Dakota people as collaborators and allies, providing an understanding of the need for a work ethic rooted in social justice when writing about those who have been historically oppressed

Most recently, after the 150 year Dakota war sesquicentennial events that took place in Minnesota, we see a rise in backlash literature in which the Dakota are cast back as "hostile" and less than human, separated as being the vengeful "Other" in a story of American expansion. This narrative not only excludes the Dakota perspective, it is asserts ignorance to the realities of Dakota people as people surviving in exile. Minnesota settler descendent Walter Bachman's book *Northern Slave Black Dakota: The Life and Time of Joseph Godfrey* asserts that the Dakota men who were hanged in 1862 were all guilty of crimes in which many declared their own innocence. He asserts that by telling the Dakota perspective of this history, the settler perspective and "truth" is downplayed and he argues that racist feelings no longer exists against Dakota people in Minnesota.

> We regard ourselves today as largely free of such extreme racist views, and thus we take comfort in our distance from the 1860's. But consider what would happen today if a militant group, be they foreign terrorists or domestic zealots of any stripe, were to fan out into a region of rural American and kill hundreds of ordinary citizens in their homes or while they were attempting to flee to safety. Would we wring our hands over the legitimate grievances that may have prompted the group to commit such an attack? Would we argue that, above all else, the perpetrators of such deeds should be treated as fairly as possible under the law? Would we decline to demonize and punish the larger group from which the murderers emanated? Or might we, in our collective fury, call for the mighty

> hammer of American retribution to descend with full and merciless force on the people who perpetuated such deeds?[23]

One problem with this argument is that to Dakota people, there is no distance between today and 1862. Culturally Dakota people view time as non-linear and the lasting affects of history as a living continuum of experience impresses upon us the belief that we are still experiencing this trauma. Relating Indigenous peoples to foreign terrorists is also highly problematic. This assertion seeks to separate Dakota people from their ancestral land base even before removal, denying us our sovereign identity as Indigenous peoples with a right to govern ourselves on our own land. According to Bachman the Dakota were bad Indians who deserved to be punished and the consequences of genocide and extermination were inevitable because we behaved poorly. In his presentist interpretation the settler population were innocent bystanders, citizens of the region while the Dakota, as uncivilized peoples, are outsiders.

The common narrative told in scholarship such as Bachman's is one dimensional, using dueling binary interpretations of the *bad* Indian who fought in the war versus the *good,* "friendly" Indian who assisted in getting their white neighbors to safety. The binary identities of the farmer and traditional Indian do not fit into these interpretations as neatly as is often relayed and it is important to take a closer look at the variety of ways

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[23] Walter Bachman, *Northern Slave Black Dakota: The Life and Time of Joseph Godfrey* (Bloomington: Pond Dakota Press, 2013), xiv

from which our own people who lived through this era both viewed this time period and moved forward in search of healing in a variety of ways.[24]

More recent works by Dakota women historians, poets, and memoirists are countering and reframing the master narrative of Dakota history. These women seek to show the humanity of the Dakota people as a community with a voice worth listening to. Sissitunwan Wahpentuwan scholar and poet Gwen Westerman collaborated with Bruce White and other colleagues, including myself, on *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota,* which counters the colonial narrative of writers such as Anderson and Bachman by utilizing oral history, cultural and historical knowledge passed down in Dakota communities in order to tell a story about the long held relationship that Dakota people have nurtured with the Mni Sota landscape long before 1862. Westerman is also revered for her poetry (*Follow the Blackbirds),* which beautifully weaves together both Dakota and English to illustrate the contemporary Dakota human experience. Pezihutazizik'api historian Waziyatawin (*Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives, What Does Justice Look Like: The Struggle for Liberation in Homeland,* and *In the Footsteps of Our Ancestors: The Dakota Commemorative Marches of the 21st Century),* and Bdewakantunwan writer Diane Wilson (*Spirit Car: Journey to a Dakota Past & Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life)*, have made incredibly important

[24] There is a large canon of literature that covers the Dakota War dating back many years. Authors such as Roy Meyer, Allen Woolworth, Mark Diedrich, have presented work that makes great use of archival sources, however, until recent years most of the literature available has either only covered the perspective of the white settler and United States government, or it has viewed the Dakota in a framework of how they are defined in relation to a western perspective. David A. Nichols, and Mary Wingerd have presented materials that provide a better understanding of the time period and policy that shaped this era.

contributions to the body of literature about Dakota history and contemporary life as well. Waziyatawin's work focuses on issues of social justice for Dakota people, asking pertinent questions and offering valuable insights on how justice can be achieved for the Dakota returning to our homeland, while Diane Wilson documents her personal family experiences during the war and relates her personal journey to understanding these events after growing up with no prior knowledge of these events ever having occurred.

Project Roadmap

Chapter one, *Taku Wakan Unkiksuyapi: We Remember What is Sacred* critiques the binary ways in which Dakota history and people have historically been represented. The separation of Dakota people into two systems of classification, which have been used as a way to cause divisions in Dakota society between Christian mixed blood farmers and full blood traditionalists, are rooted in the early mission era. This is not an accurate portrayal of Dakota society because most Dakota people in history fit somewhere in between these two definitions. This chapter gives a detailed account of how these binaries were created and also gives an overview of the role that Dakota language played in the early mission era.

Chapter two, *Bde Maka Ska "White Banks Lake": Dakota at Lake Calhoun and Cultural Significance of Place*, is the historical backdrop from which this story begins. This lake is an important space that is representative of the Dakota connection to Minnesota, and is acknowledged as an important site within my family history, often referred to as our home. The lack of more widespread knowledge about the Dakota

history at this lake is reflective of the ways in which the Indigenous Dakota history of Minnesota is often marginalized and excluded in Minnesota history. As the original caretakers of this space, telling this history is an attempt to return home from exile and is a declaration of the ways in which the descendants of those who lived at this location in the mid 19th century continue to be invested in these spaces, even if only from a distance. The significant relevance of this time period in understanding the history of Dakota language and the ways in which Dakota people defied binary interpretation imposed upon them as farmers who remained committed to Dakota traditions are also explored.

In Chapter three, *Dakota Okicize k'a Nazicapi "The Dakota War & Exile": In Our Own Words* I investigate the events that led to the removal of Dakota people from Minnesota, and give a historical foundation from which to understand the larger project. The remembrances that Ohiyesa includes in his various publications are used, and these recollections are connected to narratives from two unpublished manuscripts in order to document a firsthand and more complete picture of this family's experience during the removal period. Also covered in this section is the Eastman families' subsequent conversion to Christianity after the war as well as an analysis on the creation of the Christian Dakota community in Flandreau, South Dakota.

Chapter four, *Nacihun Owakihi "I Can Hear You": The Writings of John and Grace,* I utilize a collection of letters written in Dakota by my grandfather John Eastman (Ohiyesa's brother) to his daughter Grace Moore between 1920-1921, as well as Grace's personal journals to relate the ways in which Christian Dakota life was a transformation of traditional tribal life – asserting that traditional values remained intact for Dakota

families in interesting ways and were not abandoned after settlement in South Dakota. Issues of language and cultural reclamation, and the importance of education are used to show how these letters and journals reflect survivance in this community and I also analyze the ways in which these concepts work against binary stereotypes which have been used to identify the Flandreau community over time.

Methodology

In my work I choose to use the Dakota names of people over their Christian Dakota names whenever possible. An exception to this is when a family member has a preferred name to be used publically and then that name is used, such as in using John Eastman over his Dakota name. One challenge in conducting research in Dakota history is the tendency for Dakota to have multiple people using the same name. This is a standard issue in mainstream society, as I can't imagine how many John Smith's there are documented in the archives. But when it comes to two individuals in my family line in particular, Tawakanhdiota (Many Lightenings) and Mahpiya Wicasta (Cloud Man), this name confusion has caused historians to improperly identify, document, and interpret our family's history. I have found in my research that many of the published pieces that include these individuals are inaccurate, and so much of my work has been piecing together which stories and documents pertain to the men in my family line specifically.

There are also other sources of confusion over names. For example, in traditional Dakota societies we held multiple names throughout our lives – often Dakota names being changed after significant events or experiences in our lives. Once conversion to

Christianity occurred new wasicu (English) names were also adopted, though usually the Dakota names were still kept within the family and not left behind. Sometimes, as in the case of my grandfather John Eastman, one name was initially chosen but then changed. John had originally chosen the name of George while imprisoned as a boy at Davenport Iowa following the Dakota War, and we know this because he wrote a letter (analyzed in chapter 3) which is signed using a different English, as well as earlier Dakota name, than what we as a family had remembered him by. In order to confirm his identity I spent much time researching family papers, searching archival documents, and speaking with family members over the phone, but I am now convinced without a doubt that this letter was penned by my grandfather John.

Critics of insider research take issue with the fact that scholars are too close to their work, thus leading to biased findings. This opinion is countered by the perspective that an insider holds pertinent knowledge, not often found in descriptions and interpretations of researchers who come from outside of a community. This does mean that either insider or outsider research is more valuable in academia, but there is a particular way of viewing the world and of looking at our own communities that make insider research an invaluable contribution when writing about American Indian history.

What also needs to be taken into consideration in this debate is the fact that being from a particular community, especially as an Indigenous person, as someone who is descended from those who experienced assimilation and acculturation first hand, one's heritage does not provide free access or instill trust in those communities being researched whatsoever. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes, "Indigenous research approaches

problematize the insider model in different ways because there are multiple ways of being both an insider and an outsider in Indigenous contexts"[25] The lack of oral history being passed down that in families during the Dakota War is one example of this, because even insider researchers writing about our own families must rely on archival documents and interpretations collected by outsider sources.

The most helpful guide that I have found in navigating the pitfalls of insider research is Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smiths foundational work *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples.*[26] Smith provides a space in her work where emerging Indigenous scholars can find comfort in the fact that they are not alone as researchers in higher education, and most importantly the work provides validity of the insider experience. Linda Smith writes, "Imperialism frames the indigenous experience. It is part of our story, our version of modernity. Writing about our experiences under imperialism and its more specific expression of colonialism has become a significant project of the indigenous world."[27] This project is an expression of this ideology, and though it is written primarily in the imperialistic language of English, it also contextualizes some of the problematic ways in which our history is told and argues for a less colonial-centric interpretation of Dakota history overall.

Historical Inclusion

[25] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 137

[27] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 20

The omission of what occurred to Dakota people both during and after 1862 has resulted in enormous obstacles when dealing with identity in Dakota communities. Sociologist Dr. Les. B. Whitbeck and colleagues write,

> The ethnic cleansing did not end with military defeat and occupation of territory. Rather, it persisted for generations. This means that American Indian people are faced with daily reminders of loss: reservation lands, loss of language, loss and confusion regarding traditional healing practices. We believe that these daily reminders of ethnic cleansing coupled with persistent discrimination are the keys to understanding historical trauma among American Indian people. The losses are not "historical" in the sense that they are in the past and a new life has begun in a new land. Rather, the losses are ever present, represented by the economic conditions of reservation life, discrimination, and a sense of cultural loss.[28]

The loss of historical teachings, changes in family structures and ties to community, loss of traditional cultural and language knowledge, have all left Dakota people with what is commonly referred to as *intergenerational post traumatic Stress Disorder*[29] or *historical trauma*. This condition is passed down from one generation onto the next and is a persistent issue in most Indigenous communities.

Glenn Wasicuna, a language mentor and deksi (uncle) according to customs of Dakota kinship,[30] has assisted me in many of the translations of archival and family materials that I use for this project. Glenn relates,

> I never heard about the Dakota Exile or the Dakota Conflict until I moved to Minnesota eight or nine years ago. I never knew any of that, but it's just a small

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[28] Whitbeck, Les B. Gary W. Adams, Dan R. Hoyt, Xiaojin Chin, "Conceptualizing and Measuring Historical Trauma Among American Indian People," *American Journal of Community Psychology,* Vol 33, No. 3/4, June 2004: 121

[29] Whitbeck, Les PhD et al. "Depressed Effect and Historical Loss Among North American Indigenous Adolescents" *Centers for American Indian and Alaskan Native Health Journal, Colorado School of Public Health*. Vol 16, No.3, 2009

[30] In Dakota society we hold kinship terms for family members as well as friends of family that we delegate as being just as significant to us spiritually as relatives.

> part of history, that Dakota Conflict. We have a history that began since time began. We have our own history, but that has never been talked about. Whenever they say "Dakota history" everybody thinks 'oh it's the Conflict[31]," but that's only just a tiny bit, a tiny drop in our history. Our history began way before that.[32]

As Glenn Wasicunna also states, adding to the problems that arise in telling Dakota history is the fact that for many years this story was not passed down to the younger generation in our communities. Many Dakota people did not grow up hearing the story of where their people came from, because the reaction to the trauma from this time period was to move forward without appropriately dealing with the grief experienced by those who experienced the war and exile time period. At the same time, most non-Dakota people in Minnesota did not hear the story of where the Dakota went after 1862 either, as if we had simply vanished one day on our own accord.

Project Goal

Historian Donald L. Fixico (Shawnee, Sac & Fox, Muscogee Creek and Seminole) keenly observes in *Call for Change: The Medicine Way of American Indian History, Ethos, and Reality* that experiences are often more significant than events to Indian people, and in his he asks readers to "put aside previous notions about history as a collection of events and to think about history in terms of experiences. In this Native ethos, history is a series of experiences recounted by storytellers through the oral

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[31] The popular terms used when discussing the Dakota War of 1862 includes Dakota Uprising and Dakota Conflict and there has been much debate over whether the latter is an appropriate term given the fact that Dakota people did declare war as a sovereign nation on the United States.

[32] Erin Griffin, MA thesis in Anthropology, University of Oklahoma, Norman: 2009

tradition."[33] It is these experiences and oral histories that create a more accurate interpretation of Dakota history, and in my work I seek to weave out these experiences during events of historical significance in order to gain a richer understanding of my tribal history and family story.

This work seeks to show that "traditional" is not a static concept in our communities today, and that interpretations of both culture and history have changed over time while the fundamental values of our age old belief system as Dakota people remains intact. Simply because our ancestors undertook new ways of living and worshipping did not in any way mean that they were any less Dakota, and my hope that our own people can understand the complexity of this history in new ways and stop internalizing the interpretive binary that limits our story and place within this world.

The first time I stood on the shores of Bde Maka Ska[34] I reflected on my ancestors and I wondered about their struggle. Though I felt that I belonged at this place, and that I was at home there with the land, I was still not completely welcome by the society that now occupied this space. That distance between my ancestors and I was overwhelming to say the least. In order to bridge this divide, a greater understanding of my family's forced removal from Mni Sota, needed to occur. This work seeks to accomplish this task. This project travels back and forth in time to relate key events and issues in Dakota history by relating the story of one family, and personalizing a history of war, genocide, and extermination. I utilize historical archival materials, literature, oral history, and personal

[33] Donald L. Fixico *Call For Change: The Medicine Way of American Indian History, Ethos, & Reality* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 2

[34] Also known today as Lake Calhoun, which is the focus of Chapter 2

family documents to frame a narrative of five generations of experience as Dakota people strategizing survival. I do not write on behalf of, or speak for all Dakota people, just as no one else has the right to speak on behalf of everyone in their community. However, I believe that all perspectives must be documented in history, and I have done my best over the last seven years to document and understand our family experience. This project tells the story of my tribal band or *tiospaye*[35] relationship to Minnesota, and relates my family's involvement during the Dakota War of 1862 and the era of removal that followed.

This work speaks to the role that our language has played throughout this history as well. When I first began studying Dakota iapi in 2007 my language instructor Cantemaza (Sprit Lake Dakota)[36] would tell our class that there were less than twenty fluent Dakota speakers within the borders of the four Dakota reservation communities in Minnesota - all of whom were elderly. Today, I often hear that this number has quickly dwindled down to less than five. Though there are more speakers outside of Minnesota, to the areas our people were exiled to such as Canada and North and South Dakota, the swiftness with which we are losing speakers is frightening and it is easy to feel a deep sense of panic to work towards reversing this process as quickly as possible. In this project I have documented the history of language forfeiture within my own tiwahe,[37] as I believe that acknowledging this past is the first step towards regaining, preserving, and maintaining access to our culture and language.

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[35] Dakota word meaning "extended family group."
[36] "Iron Heart" (Neil McKay) Spirit Lake Dakota, Dakota Language Specialist, University of Minnesota Twin Cities.
[37] Dakota word for "family."

I look forward to the day when there are far more Dakota voices in the academy, asserting multiple perspectives on every matter of things. Dakota people have a variety of ways of thinking about the past and our place in it, especially when it comes to matters of history, war, and religion. The perspective that I give here is mine alone, and I do not speak on behalf of all Dakota people, or even of everyone in my family. This project is a starting point for further discussion and a continuation of the work of my ancestors. The dialogue needs to continue, and my overall goal is to encourage other Dakota people to find the courage to tell their stories as well. We each have a voice and it is time that we write ourselves back into Mni Sota history, one family experience at a time.

Chapter 1: Taku Wakan Unkiksuyapi:
We Remember What is Sacred

> The religion of the Indian is the last thing about him that the man of another race will ever understand.
>
> -Ohiyesa

Some of the fondest memories I have as a girl are of singing Dakota hymns at Christmas service with my grandmother at our reservation community church in South Dakota.[38] The significance of this place, both as a space for worship as well as a lasting historical monument in remembrance of our family story was always self–evident in the connection that my family held with this property over the years. Though membership has dwindled, perhaps due to a lack of interest, time, or faith, at one time this building stood strong as the heart of the Flandreau Santee community. My uncle William Beane, our tribal and family historian, has memorialized and honored the original members of this church by placing photographs of them throughout the building, and many of these frames capture the life of my great-great grandfather John Eastman[39] who had ministered a Dakota Congregation here from 1876 to 1906.[40] This place continues to be a fixture of historical and cultural prominence for my family, and it is still a traditional gathering place for many tribal members during holidays and for family events, regardless of our religious persuasion or spiritual beliefs today.

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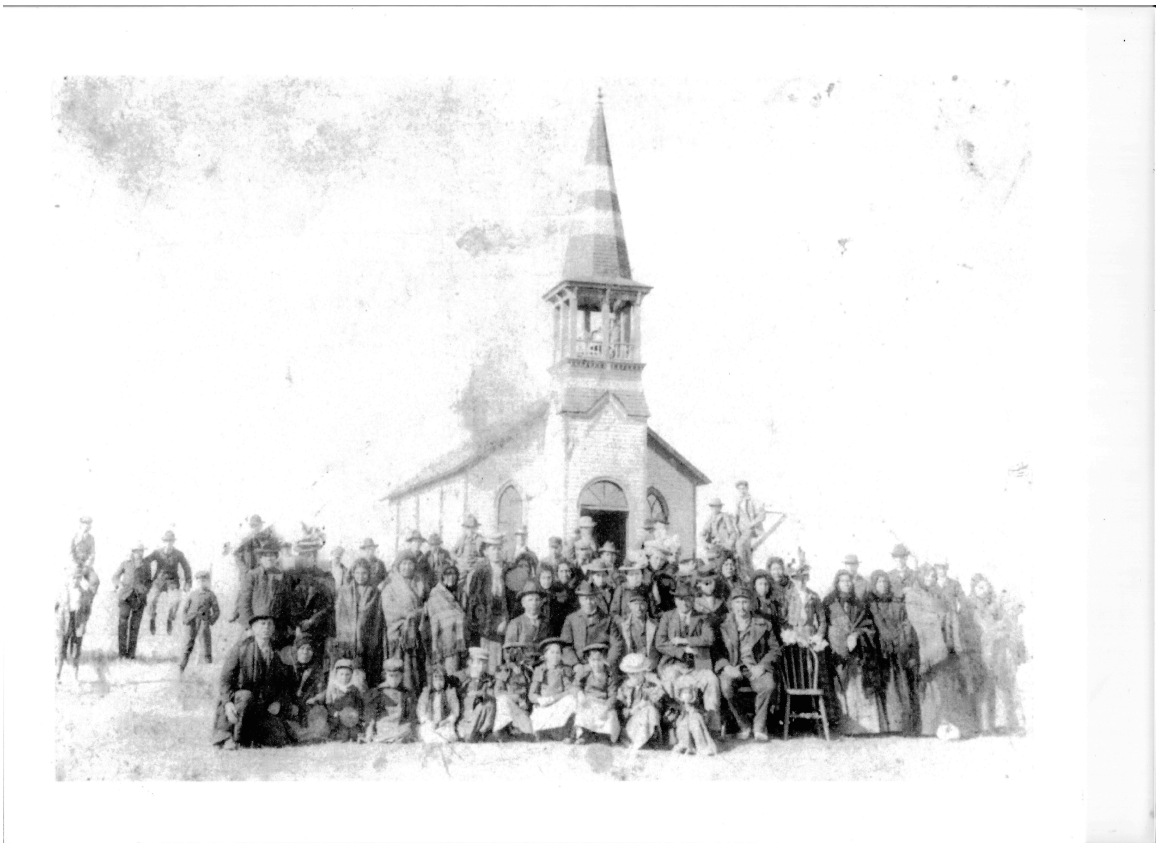
[38] First Presbyterian Church

[39] Also known in Dakota as Hinhan Duta "Red Owl" while a youth, and later as Mahpiyawakandida "Worshipping Cloud."

[40] William Beane, *An Experiment in Faith: The Journey of the Mdewakanton Dakota Who Settled on the Bend in the River.* Self – published by William Beane for members of the Wakpaipaksan Okodakiciye "Bend in the River Church, 2003



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Though I have always held a deep love for our church, I was not raised to attend religious services on a regular basis outside of when I visited our reservation, and so the messages voiced from the pulpit were not always well understood within the confines of my own limited comprehension of Christianity. As a Dakota who does not self-identify as Christian, being raised off reservation, I am situated as *both* an insider as well as an outsider within my own community at Flandreau – a patchwork reservation founded by fiercely independent Christian Dakota people who had been exiled from Minnesota in

41 First Presbyterian Church, 1910. John Eastman in center of photograph, original property of Moody County Historical Society Museum, Flandreau, S.D.

1863.[42] As the descendent of these individuals, I have observed the ways in which Christianity and Dakota spiritual traditions have both played important, and at times even complimentary, roles in our history (as systems of comfort in times of despair specifically). At the same time debates over whether the traditional Dakota and Christian "God" or Wakan Tanka[43] are fundamentally oppositional must also be acknowledged, as these oppositions have also created great divisions and misunderstandings within our communities that continue to this day.

Currently, to be considered of "traditional" descent holds a certain prestige within Native communities. This is a rather new phenomenon and in opposition to a time before the Red Power movement of the 1960's and 1970's when some in our own communities saw "traditionalists," and specifically those who were full blood, as less progressive. This way of thinking was encouraged by policymakers and Christian religious leaders who felt that our traditional ways must be banished in order to achieve the goal of Native assimilation into white society. In the years since, specifically with the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, our traditional spiritual ways are no longer illegal to practice, and there has been a resurgence back towards our traditional sense of self as Indigenous peoples, a process driven by activists and Native spiritual leaders who felt that a return to our own world-view was essential to the healing in our communities from past trauma. However, the pendulum does not always strike a balance to easily, and over time our own Christian ancestors have been harshly judged within our

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[42] See Willliam Beane, *An Experiment in Faith: The Journey of the Mdewakanton Dakota Who Settled on the Bend in the River.*

[43] Translated as "Great Spirit," Dakota people also refer to a higher power as "Tunkasida" or "Grandfather."

own communities and families for choosing to follow the "white man's religion." But none of this scrutiny takes into account the time or environment in which our ancestors were living – and it certainly does not leave room for interpretations of our historical and religious past that are more nuanced than the simplistic duality of Christian versus Traditional representations allow for.

First and foremost, the interpretation of the term *traditional* that I utilize in this work often relates this phrase to cultural and spiritual worldviews and practices that date back to a time before European contact. At the same time, this concept, like the people it describes, also interprets a living history that is not static. Though it represents ancestral ideologies, value systems and practices from long ago – this label also metamorphoses over time to incorporate outside influences as well. Since our people have always traded, and exchanged knowledge with other communities with whom we came into contact with (either in our travels or within our own homelands), this is not at all surprising. There is no fixed date of beginning or ending for elements of tradition in our communities, and a static interpretation of this ideology leaves Dakota people stuck in the past and without the ability to grow and be innovative in a world that is forever changing. All living species must adapt to their changing environment and Indigenous communities have always done so as well. The question of how far back in time one must go to be authentically "traditional," and to whose standards one must adhere to in order to fit this standard of authenticity are both important questions to consider when using this term – which is loaded and complicated in ways that relate pertinently to this project.

As 20th century Dakota anthropologist Ella Deloria would later convey, "The Dakota people of the past were not asked to analyze for posterity their beliefs about God. We cannot know, therefore, in so many words by them uttered, exactly what they believed and how they expressed that belief. We can only get it from stories that have come down."[44] Some of this information can be interpreted by observations from those who came to live amongst the Dakota such as the Ponds, but the outsider perspective can only tell us what was perceived as someone from the outside looking inwards at Dakota society. We have our own interpretations of our spiritual beliefs and ways. As a young person who is still learning my own knowledge of these ways are ever growing and I deeply personal.

An overview of traditional Dakota spiritual beliefs is difficult to convey in the English language, and takes many years of learning to understand. These spiritual ways of knowing and practice are far too complex and culturally sensitive to even attempt at interpreting at length here. However, the works of my grandfather Ohiyesa (Charles Eastman), who was the great grandchild of Mahpiya Wicasta (the leader in the village that was camped near the earliest Christian mission), does give a more personal Dakota perspective of these lifeways, stories, and beliefs in his work. He writes, "The original attitude of the American Indian toward the Eternal, the "Great Mystery" that surrounds and embraces us, was as it was exalted." According to Ohiyesa, traditional Dakota spiritual beliefs were "not formulated on creeds, nor forced upon any who were unwilling to receive it," they were (and are) centered on teachings of solitude and a deep connection

[44] Ella Deloria, *Speaking of Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998) 49

to nature.[45] Though the words vary, the meaning intrinsically remains the same and function according to rules of kinship and community health and safety. Some of these values include: *Wooinina* (Silence), *Wowacina* (Dependability), *Wowaohoda* (Respectfulness), *Wowaokiye* (Helpfulness), *Wowaunsida* (Compassion), *Wobdehecic'iya* (Positivity), and *Wowaditika* (Bravery).[46] Each of these terms can be interpreted and applied to situations in a myriad of different ways in order to be understood and provide guidance. Often there are stories that are passed down that provide insight into these values and in the telling of these stories lessons can be derived that educate the community about the natural world and our place in it. The Dakota wicohan today continues to teach virtues that stem from understanding these values, which as Ohiyesa asserts, are not creeds as much as guidelines that are not fixed or forced upon any person. There are terms and interpretations from which to understand the world and our relationship to it, and the specific terms can vary for each community and differ slightly according to dialectal differences. However, the core meaning and function have always remained the same.

Dakota Religious Binary Construction

Dakota people are often interpreted in historical literature as "hostile Indians" who were engulfed in intertribal warfare during key moments in our historical narrative. This interpretation, which has served to create an illusion of division, frames our story as one in which we were vulnerable and in need of assistance from outside influences, as

[45] Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), *Soul of the Indian* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 5.
[46] List of Dakota values received through personal email with Glenn Wasicuna.

our traditional style of intertribal relations and warfare were gaged as being uncivilized. After missionary contact the Dakota were divided into two camps in direct opposition to one another – as the Christian versus the Traditional Indian. The practice of framing the spiritual and religious components of our 19th and 20th century history and culture in an oversimplified manner, using binary representations that create a split between those who were Christian to those who remained true to our ancestral ways is a divisive interpretation assuming that individuals could not be a combination of both, nor lead a life that in any way complicates or works against the narrative of the Dakota as victims in need of being saved. In Dakota history specifically we see this separation of identities manifested early on into two categories: the "good" or "friendly" farmer Indian and the "bad" or "hostile" traditional Indian.

> On binary categories in the telling of history Linda Tuhiwai Smith relates,
>
> > The idea is linked to the historical method of chronology. In order for history to begin there has to be a period of beginnings and some criteria for determining when something begins. In terms of history this was often attached to concepts of 'discovery," the development of literacy, or the development of specific social formation. Everything before that time is designated as prehistorical, belonging to the realm of myths and traditions, 'outside' the domain.[47]

These binaries were created, delegating those who retained the customs and traditions of the Dakota wicohan[48] as inferior peoples. This representation of our tribal past eventually made the policies of genocide and extermination that were inflicted upon our communities seem inevitable and justified, therefore rationalizing a history of United

[47] Linda Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies,* 32
[48] Dakota value system.

States imperialism on Dakota lands. These binaries cemented the Dakota perpetually as the "other."

As George Tinker asserts, "in the politics of freedom, a serious Indian theology dare not buy into denomination doctrine without offering its own cultural critique"[49] and in reinterpreting our religious and labor history from a more Indigenous and holistic lens I am asserting my own freedom to formulate a critique of the binary model. By looking at the ways in which we viewed Christianity in *relationship* to our Dakota world-views and cultural/historical story, rather than simply as a separate and oppositional history about dominance and cultural demise, the many nuances of this history can be more clearly interpreted, representing a more inclusive and compassionate history of Dakota life.

Though some Dakota people did choose one religious or spiritual path over the other, the vast majority of the population never adhered so easily and completely into either one of the two categories of Christian farmer or traditional Dakota, though many people did eventually internalize the common definitions and interpretations of these categories. What is most important to note, is that many of the Dakota individuals who converted to Christianity in the early mission era did so *because* they felt that the fundamental tenants of Christianity fit with the values of traditional life. Many Dakota made attempts at farming at one point or another, some more successfully so than others, but this did not necessarily mean that they gave up on their traditional ways of hunting or praying in the Dakota way.

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[49] George Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty.* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008) 2

In order to reinterpret these oppositional representations, historically referred to as "long hairs" and "cut hairs," it is essential that we cast a critical gaze at these terms and view them for what they really are as stereotypical representations of our ancestors. Sometimes referred to as the "hang around the fort," "traditionalist," or "back to the blanket Indians," these labels originated during early days of the first missionaries entering Dakota territories in 1835 as a way to define us into two oppositional bodies. Since that time these binary forms of labeling have marked Dakota identities, which were and still are complex and multi-faceted, into simplified constructs of conceptual identification, perhaps because it makes the story easier to tell. But our people and our histories are much more complicated than these divisions allow us to be, and though the terms were utilized and still exist in our communities (most often with negative connotations), it is important to develop a deeper understanding of where these terms come from.

Historian Philip Deloria confirms that as far back as the eighteenth century colonists were creating the "Other" identifiers, and encouraging representational divisions between themselves and Indigenous communities, who were further divided as real or "imaginary" based on false or over romanticized interpretations. The identity formations and terms used to describe Indian people were always *in relationship to* whites, rather than as being interpretations faithful to Indigenous existence on their own merits (relating to actual indigenous culture, history, and experience). Within these constructions of identity, eastern tribes were situated as either "inside" (good) or "outside" (bad) the nation in order to be defined as *civilized* or *savage*. Mainly negative

connotations were associated to those categorized as outsiders. The noble civilized "insider" Indian, a category in which assimilated Christian Indians adhere to, falls into the "helper" trope, existing mainly to serve and provide for incoming European populations while the savage Indian is assertive of a traditional existence, inclusive of warfare and traditional spiritual practices.[50]

The project of the of New England British colonists in the late eighteenth century was vested in manipulating the savage and civilized identity formations in order to forge a detachment from Britain, appropriating imagery and using these representations as a backdrop from which to define themselves as independent and unique. However, as Deloria asserts, "It has become a truism that such images of good and bad Indians reveal more about the people who created them than they do about Native people themselves."[51] These same views were manifested in the mid-west during the early to mid nineteenth century with Dakota. Here hierarchical interpretations of identity were encouraged as a way to promote assimilationist projects of individualism and foster community division– in an attempt to destroy the communal structure of Dakota life and gain access to Dakota land.

First Wave Mission Era

The history of missionary work amongst the Dakota is a tale of loyalty and devotion between two nations, but it is also a story steeped in conflict and cultural misunderstanding. On the one hand missionaries advocated for the more humane (though

[50] Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 20-23
[51] ibid. 20

by no means equal) relationship between Dakota peoples and the United States government in the 19th century, as discussed further in chapter three. The missionaries advocated for equality only if the Dakota would commit to becoming more like them, and in reading their early observations of Dakota life it is apparent that they held very little respect or patience for Dakota spiritual and traditional life ways, an existence that depended on customs and a belief system which the missionaries believed held the Dakota back from civilization in a perpetual "primitive" state.

Protestant missionaries Samuel and Gideon Pond were the first to minister to the Dakota, arriving in the region via Fort Snelling from Connecticut in 1834. The brothers came to Dakota territory with no financial backing beyond their own savings and initially survived exclusively on support from their home churches in order to teach the Dakota to farm at Bde Maka Ska (Lake Calhoun). The Ponds were soon joined by missionaries Jedediah Stevens and Thomas Williamson, from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM), and by 1835 they joined Stevens at a Lake Harriet mission site, located one mile from the Bde Maka Ska community (led by Chief Mahpiya Wicasta) in present day Minneapolis.[52] Working under the pretense that they were documenting the last years of a dying race of people, the Ponds felt it was their godly duty to record the last years of Dakota existence while saving as many "heathen" souls as they could in the limited time that they assumed they had with them.

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[52] Tensions between Stevens and Gideon would lead to Gideon taking up residence at Lac Qui Parle mission site with Williamson the following year, and Stephen R. Riggs would accompany them at this site in 1937. See Samuel Pond, *Dakota Life in The Upper Midwest.* Also see Samuel and Gideon Pond, *Two Volunteer Missionaries Among the Dakota* (Boston & Chicago: Congregational Sunday School & Publishing Society 1893)

Though the brothers did indeed leave an impressive record of Dakota life in the early 19th century, their observations were also overwhelmingly full of cultural assumptions, which conveyed the ways in which they viewed the Dakota in animalistic and foreign terms. In reading their letters it also becomes clear that the overall agenda of the brothers was more acutely focused on strategizing religious conversion than on documenting social, cultural, or historical observations for the sake of posterity. Samuel would even state in hindsight, "My main object has been to show what manner of people the Dakota were as savages, while they still retained the customs of their ancestors."[53] However, these very customs that the brothers and other missionaries like them sought to eradicate served a purpose in upholding the fabric of Dakota society. To the Dakota the practices of worship and everyday living were intertwined and interdependent. To abandon Dakota spiritual practices at this time would have been disastrous. From medical care to the hunt for food, prayer and ceremony were a part of every facet of existence and had been so for thousands of years.

The idea that the Dakota would actually survive the colonial impact of invasion, or that they had their own worthy spirituality and religions that were distinct to them, handed down to them by their own god (called tunkasida or wakan tanka), was not a significant or respected notion amongst the missionaries. Of Dakota religion Samuel Pond writes,

> It is not easy to exhibit the religious views of the Dakota in a very clear or satisfactory light. Their external forms of worship can be described, but I shall not attempt to tell just what they thought of things unseen, for many of their notions

[53] Pond, Samuel *Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest,* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001)

> concerning supernatural things were confused, unsettled, and contradictory. I went among them with a determination to know all that was to be learned about them, and especially about their views on religious subjects. For this purpose I carefully observed all that was to be seen of their acts of worship, even entering their wakan[54] feasts and taking part in their ceremonies. All the information that was to be gained by conversing with the most intelligent communicative among them convinced me, after careful research, extending through many years, during which I made a diligent use of my eyes and ears, that they had no fixed, uniform belief.[55]

It's clear in this statement that Pond, though openly invited by the community to participate in some Dakota ceremonies, does not understand the Dakota worldview or holistic approach to spirituality. Here he expresses an interpretation of Dakota belief as not being grounded or valid, when in reality he was blinded by his own cultural barriers and limitations. Pond goes on to write that his lack of conviction in the Dakota ways of prayer was largely due to the fact that "they had no books and no class of persons whose business it was to teach common people the articles of religious belief, each one knew only what he happened to hear, and some heard one thing and some another."[56] With this observation in mind, the brothers set to work on a path to learn the Dakota language in order to translate the bible into Dakota, thereby cementing their role in Dakota society as that of instructor and mediator between the Dakota and what they perceived to be a short but more civilized existence.

In personal letters home to their friends and families on the New England coast, Samuel and Gideon Pond faithfully documented the thirty years that they preached

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[54] In the Dakota language "wakan" translates as something that is sacred, or holy in nature.
[55] Samuel Pond, *Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest,* 85-86
[56] ibid.

among the Dakota. This archive illustrates the ongoing struggle for the two parties to co-exist, and contains very candid observations on Dakota society, However these remembrances also reflect the missionary bias of traditional Dakota ways and in these documents we can see where interpretations of those who fit the prototype of "good" or "bad" Indian came to take shape, formulating the binary narrative that would influence the ways in which Dakota people were forever represented. It is important to note as well that in the beginning years, according to the Ponds, all Dakota were relegated to the latter status of being bad. The Ponds felt that the Dakota must first work to earn the status of being a good Christian Dakota, and this would take time to achieve.

The Pond brothers, who had arrived to the frontier full of vigor and ready for a challenge, were excited to be the first to preach the word of God to the Dakota,[57] whom Samuel described as "the most savage and warlike of the northeastern Indians."[58] From the beginning, they pledged a commitment to spending the rest of their lives in Dakota territory, and Samuel describes the region and its inhabitants in a positive light as follows,

> This is delightful country and extremely healthy. I have not been able to ascertain the number of the Sioux or Dak-co-ta but it is a great nation. They are divided into numerous bands under separate chiefs all speaking the same language some of them extremely savage. One band on the Misouri I am told have never admite a white man among them, not even a trader but wear skins. The indians here wear moccasins leggings and blanket and breech cloth…The Sioux are generally tall well made and have regular cheekbones & some are of them are almost white they

[57] In a letter to a friend Samuel Pond writes that he and his brother Gideon are the only missionaries among the Sioux, but that several others had already been among the Anishinabe, whom he references as the "Chippeway."-- Samuel Pond to Fowler, May 1834, Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 8. Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.
[58] Samuel Pond to Gideon Pond, December 3rd, 1833, Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 8. Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

> have never killed many white men but are mortal enemies to he Chipeways and the Sacks on the south.

In this letter Samuel also writes of introducing the plow to a tribal chief, though this is quite possibly a reference to my grandfather Mahpiya Wicasta, the leader of the Bde Maka Ska village, he does not always give the names of the Dakota he is in contact with. Pond speaks of the importance of learning to speak the Dakota language in order to survive in this region, both tasks that would become a central focus to his life for the next thirty years.[59]

In reading the Pond letters we are able to understand that they began their missionary work with great hope and a prediction for success, and there is a non-deniable sense of great passion displayed that first year. However, eventually Samuel Pond's letters to his mother in particular often become more subdued at times. In these more personal exchanges Pond admits to feelings of anxiety about his work proselytizing among the Dakota at Bde Maka Ska, a nation and race of people so completely unlike any he had ever encountered before. His biggest worry is that the Dakota are simply not interested in his mission agenda, but it is his faith that keeps him going and he remains confident that the numbers of Dakota to join the mission community and farm would increase in time. In many of the letters penned home by the brothers, bible passages and messages of loneliness are relayed that speak to their own personal sacrifice and hardship. Though their writings speak to their commitment to their work, they reveal that the brothers came to the region with a much more self gratifying agenda - not solely to

[59] Samuel Pond to Herman Hine, May 25th, 1834 St. Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 8, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

save the souls of the Dakota - but as a "personal sacrifice" in order to ensure their own salvation.

That the Pond brothers were not as humble about the task at hand is not at all surprising. While the intention of their work as Christians was portrayed as a selfless endeavor, the brothers began their life among the Dakota feeling incredibly confident about the goals that were actually self- serving to themselves and their religion. Samuel wrote his mother in September of 1835,

> The fact is I have a load of responsibility resting on me more than I ever anticipated but would not have it otherwise. I want to have you all remember that my hands and head are all occupied with the things around me. I am surrounded by a host of immortal spirits going swift to hell. If it is not impossible that the eternal destiny of many depends upon the manner in which I live and act among them. I trust if I live a few years I shall do something towards making known the gospel known to some of these Indians and trust that you all and my Christian friends will pray that the preaching of the gospel here may prove not only a savor of death but of life unto life to many of whom Christ has died.[60]

Samuel's consistent statements in these letters that he does not have long to live were justified considering the instability of resources, a lack of medical services, and the probability of being caught between warring tribes in the region. Nevertheless, it also seems to be a way of expressing his feelings of superiority over the people he is preaching to. It is this self-aggrandizing agenda that drives the Pond's commitment to their livelihood in which they begin to discourage Dakota people from following their traditional cultural practices. Though the Ponds were invested in a selfless commitment to serve God, the Pond's suffered from what we would today call the "white savior complex" and the effects of these acts to disrupt the traditional Dakota belief system and

[60] Samuel Pond to Sarah Pond, September 2, 1835, Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 8, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul

way of life of the Dakota is selfish in the sense that the Dakota were never asked if they wanted to be saved, and their "best interests" were defined by an outsider perspective.

Language & Cultural Barriers

Though the Ponds did receive regular visits from Dakota who expressed interest in the bible, the progress towards conversion was far slower then they would have liked, and they vented their frustrations with the Dakota in letters home on a regular basis. By October of 1837 Samuel Pond admitted to his mother that he "did not think there are any Christians among the Sioux yet but some of them are beginning to gain that knowledge of God which is necessary to their conversion."[61] The reasoning behind the slow increase of Christian conversions during the era were due to a variety of reasons; the seeming lack of interest by the Dakota was one obstacle, but the commitment by the Ponds to preach without a language barrier was another. In 1836 Samuel reported that though missionaries had already been living amongst the Ojibwe (whom he refers to as 'the Chipeways'), none of them could speak their language. He writes, "Missionaries do not think it their duty to live with Indians in order to learn their language though I believe a missionary to the Pawnees does it so but it is my duty to do so."[62] This was a strategy encouraged by the Pond brother employer (The American Board of Commissioner for Foreign Missions) because it was believed that the missionaries could learn the "simple" language of the Indian faster than the Indian could learn the "superior" English language

[61] Samuel Pond to Sarah Pond, October 14. 1837 Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 12
[62] Samuel Pond to Ruth Pond, March 3, 1836, Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 10

of the missionaries.[63] Thus, the only clear and "easy" path towards conversion must be paved using the language of the people being preached to.

In 1851 Samuel recited to his brother a paper that he had written in which he discussed their early language work and the reason for using the Dakota language in preaching the gospel:

> The question may be asked, if the Indian languages are so far inferior to the English, why do missionaries spend so much time in efforts to acquire them? Why do they not discard them at once, and make use of the English alone as a medium of communicating instruction to the Indians? I reply that all missionaries who have acquired sufficient knowledge of an Indian language to know what it is and what it is fit for, are convinced that the Indians can never have either science or literature in their own language, and can never be civilized and enlightened people until they adopt the English language; and they are anxious to bring the English into use among Indians as soon as possible. But all efforts to induce the present generations of Indians to acquire the English language must fail. They can be approached only through the medium of their own language. We might as well expect the deaf and dumb to speak our language as to hope that adult Indians will ever acquire it; and if they will not come to us we must go to them. If they will not learn our language we must learn theirs, or leave them in their ignorance.[64]

Since "leaving the Dakota in their own ignorance" would mark a failure on the part of the Ponds, a concerted effort to learn the language was made. The hope was to capture and document this language before it, just like the people speaking it, ceased to exist. Thus, the words and the structure of the language were recorded in great detail. Samuel also records observations on language learning, stating that learning a language that had never

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[63] Linda Clemmons *Conflicted Mission: Faith, Disputes, and Deception on the Dakota Frontier* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2014) 47

[64] Samuel Pond to Gideon Pond January 5, 1851. Pond Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

before been written was particular challenging, and was even more challenging than the language of the "Chipeway" people to the north.[65]

The Pond letters divulge a deeper understanding of the ways in which the Dakota language played a significant role in Dakota missionary history, and how it was used as a colonial tool for religious indoctrination. In one letter, written in 1834, Samuel asked his mother to pray for the "heathen around us." He went on to remark that those who come to his home often see the bible and wish to learn more about it, to which he responds, "I can only tell them that I will do it when I can speak their language."[66] Though initially Pond seems to express in numerous early letters that the language will be easy to learn, it took him longer than predicted to feel comfortable with the language, and by 1838 he acknowledged, "I can translate the easiest parts of the Bible into Sioux so as to make it intelligible to the Indians and translate a chapter or two almost every day. I hold a meeting in Sioux on the Sabbath but few attend and I do not feel anxious to have many attend until I can speak better Sioux than I can now."[67] Thus, it was Pond's own insecurities with the language that he reasons kept more Dakota from attending his services, and in time, it becomes apparent that he quite possibly spent more time studying the language than he did teaching the word of God itself.

Another factor that likely hindered the progress of the Ponds, and the reason that many of the Dakota seemed to lack any interest in their agenda was due perhaps to the

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[65] Samuel Pond to Ruth Pond, March 3, 1836. Pond Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

[66] Samuel W. Pond to Sarah Pond, August 24, 1834, Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 8 P437, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul

[67] Samuel Pond to Sarah Pond, July 2 1938, Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 13. Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

abundance of Dakota traditional practices that continued to exist during this era. At this point not many Dakota felt a need to change religions, as Dakota spirituality was an integral aspect of every day life. In this era, the Dakota were still being taught by their tribal leaders and elders to uphold Dakota spiritual practices for future generations. Gideon asserts that "It is supposed 25,000 Dakotas most degraded – lost from God some of them at least here and there are anxious to be taught the Christian religion (they frequently ask me to tell them what it is in the Bible & teach them how to pray urging me forward in learning their language." But in this statement I can't help but wonder if the Dakota were simply showing an interest out of curiosity. For the most part the few Dakota that did study with the Pond's did so simply to receive farming assistance and in the hopes of learning the English language, which a few at this point felt would be of benefit to them in a better understanding of treaty negotiations already proven to be exploitative. As asserted before, the Ponds were attempting to learn the Dakota language in order to translate the bible, as a way to sway more conversions, but their interests were different than those of the Dakota. Many of the Dakota that visited with them and undertook their lessons seemed more interested in learning English words and not Christian gospel. They likely saw the missionaries as a novelty themselves, and viewed them as people with interesting new skills to share. They mirrored back the agenda of the missionary and interpreted this new language and culture as a means to acquire more knowledge and record history as well.

The lack of Dakota interest in conversion led the Pond brothers to become more and more frustrated as time went on. The missionaries found themselves living and working amongst a group of people who did not live up to their romantic ideals of what they had expected Indians to be – primitive peoples who would be willing and ready to cast aside all previous cultural teachings at their bequest. The survival of these teachings today also speaks to the significance of these traditional beliefs. But this largely unified communal structure of living would not last into the next generation. Even though there was never a mass conversion to take place, the existence of an "us vs. them" mentality of superiority that the missionaries brought with them to the Dakota region, in regards to tolerating traditional cultural lifeways, began to spread at the community level.

Though most Dakota people did not see themselves as inferior beings in need of saving, some found themselves drawn to the ways in which the missionaries preached. It must be remembered that though life at the mission sites were more stable, overall the Dakota were struggling to be able to provide for their families at this time, and some had begun believing that the new God might be able to provide an answer in their particular struggle. In these times of economic despair they felt swayed by the missionaries discouragement of traditional ways as being primitive. Samuel Pond writes about an encounter with one Dakota man who knelt down and prayed to God before him, and states that though he still does not consider this man a Christian, as he is not yet in his eyes worthy, he has hopes that the man will convert. He recites the man's prayer as he was able to translate from Dakota into English, "Great Spirit my Father I would worship you but do not know how I wish you would teach me I am ignorant and wish you to teach

me. I am wicked and wish you would forgive my sins I want a new heart. I know nothing and wish you to teach me. I want to understand your book I have grown up in ignorance and worshipped stones and trees and everything but I wish now to worship you alone. I want to throw away everything that is bad and listen to you." In this statement it is apparent that this man has internalized the notion that his own people's practices are bad.

Also reflected in this prayer is a fear of the afterlife that was now found in this new religion (this fear is not present in traditional Dakota spiritual beliefs systems). He translates the words of the Dakota man's prayer to God, "I wish my soul to be happy when I die when the spirits of all the dead are assembled on judgments and the bad are cast into fire I want to be saved with the good I will not unite anymore with the Indians in their idolatrous feasts I want you to forgive my sins, The Sioux are all ignorant and wicked and we have all grown up in ignorance and have done wrong we have forgotten you and prayed to things that have no ears. I want to pity the Sioux and teach them to be right. I want you to pity all my relatives and take care of them and pity them. I want you to pity me."[68] The new God spoke to their own feelings of insecurity and human feelings of shame – which is reflective of the Dakota virtue of humility, and closely tied to wowaunsida (compassion), as having empathy for others and being selfless. As much as this one would have desired to denounce his own faith for the new one being presented to him, he is in fact asserting himself in a way that is actually very Dakota in nature.

Samuel goes on to admit that this is his own translation of the prayer as recited and states that "but the Dakota will not bear translating into English. You will perceive

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[68] Samuel Pond to Sarah Pond October 14 1837, Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 12. Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

that he hardly mentions the name of Christ and the reason is that he has been taught but little about him. I do not understand the language well enough to explain to them the way of salvation. May the lord teach them."[69] This statement leads one to wonder what meaning was lost in this translation, and in other communications between the missionaries and the Ponds. As is well documented, and as Pond admits, Dakota and English are not so easily translated, some words being extremely difficult to define in the other language and so words such as "ignorant" and "wicked" may have entirely different meanings than what is asserted here. Also, in his own assertion that the man has not learned much about Christ, we can ascertain that the missionaries were really only preaching to a small number of Dakota at this time, and that the new religious teachings that many of these Dakota were showing interest in were not always receiving a consistent mentorship in their quest for conversion. This, being likely due to the nomadic nature of many tribal members, some of whom did not wish to stay centrally located at one village site and preferred to travel with the seasons as the tribe had always done, taking them away from the mission and its purpose.

Life after the Treaty of 1851

After the Traverse De Sioux and Mendota treaties of 1851 opened up land for white settlement, the Dakota were placed on a twenty-mile long strip of land along the Minnesota River and became confined to reservation life. With stipulations encouraging the Dakota to attend school and farm rather than hunt for food, these treaties were drafted

[69] Ibid.

with a clear agenda towards assimilation.[70] As Indian people both struggled and succeeded in adapting to the ways in which colonial influences were rapidly changing their home territories in varying degrees, there was also increased factionalization within Dakota communities, creating a space for the exaggerated binary interpretations that missionaries formulated on Dakota life to become accepted as truthful depictions. As these categorical binaries became widely accepted as accurate, even our own people began internalizing these divisions. The Indian agents as well as United States government agents who were invested in appropriating Dakota land for white settlement took advantage of these tensions by showing acts of favoritism towards those who farmed and/or converted to Christianity, or to those who were of mixed descent, because they felt that these individuals would be more likely to assimilate into white society. This resulted in an atmosphere of distrust, causing internal community divisions and a breakdown of the ways in which community relationships were structured amongst the Dakota.

In an 1894 Wambdi Tanka (Big Eagle), an elder and former chief, was interviewed by a reporter for the St Paul Pioneer Press, and he reflected on the ways in which the Dakota choosing to farm were treated by the United States government.[71] Big Eagle, born into Black Dog's village (near Mendota) in 1827, was a member of a farming community near Redwood Falls, and he also participated in battles during the 1862 war.

> The farmers were favored by the government in every way. They had houses built for them, some of them even had brick houses, and they were

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[70] Charles J. Kappler. *Indian Affairs Laws and Treaties,* Vol. II. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904. "Treaty with The Sioux – Mdewakanton and Wahpakoota Bands, 1851." p.954

[71] My grandfather, The Reverend John Eastman, was an interpreter for this interview, along with his mother-in-law Nancy McClure Huggan.

> not allowed to suffer. The other Indians did not like this. They were envious of them and jealous, and disliked them because they had gone back on the customs of the tribe and because they were favored. They called them "farmers," as if it was disgraceful to be a farmer. They called them "cut-hairs," because they had given up the Indian fashion of wearing the hair, and "breeches men," because they wore pantaloons, and "Dutchmen," because so many of the settlers on the north side of the river and elsewhere in the country were Germans. [72]

This observation gives a very candid and pertinent description of the ways in which rifts between those who farmed and those who did not began to take place in Dakota society. It also shows how government interference in Dakota communities both instigated and encouraged these divisions. There were, however, some diversions from the ideal presented here, as not all farmers had actually forsaken their traditional beliefs, and some never became Christian. Decisions to try farming, or to attend church services, was not absolute or unwavering, some individuals or family groups made attempts at some of these new ways of living out of casual curiosity, or with intent interest, at least for a time, but then returned to the ways in which they had been raised either because they felt more comfortable or did not feel successful in their endeavor. Others did not go back; they found out that they felt more at ease adhering to this different lifestyle.

Determining who was a "cut-hair" and who was "traditional" was not always so simple. Even members of Taoyateduta (Little Crow) village began to farm at Kaposia (near modern day St. Paul), plowing their own fields, with the chief being built a frame house in September of 1857. Leaders Wabasha and Sakpe were also built homes at this

[72] Return Ira Holcombe, *A Sioux Story of the War,* St. Paul Pioneer Press July 1st, 1894

time. [73] Samuel Pond documents in his recollection titled *The Pond Narrative* that Taoyateduta's father was among the first of the Dakota to farm in 1834, "At Kaposia the chief was Big Thunder and the father of Taoyateduta called by the whites but erroneously Little Crow, and the chief soldier was Big Iron. The two held the plow alternately while I drove the oxen. I suppose they were the first Dakota's who ever held a plow."[74] That Taoyateduta, acknowledged as being the first Dakota leader to declare war in 1862, had been built a house is surprising to some who believe that his legacy would stand as most representative of the "hostile" binary model. In fact Taoyateduta descended from a family that was not afraid to try new ways of living and his legacy complicates the binary narrative as well, both internally within the Dakota community and externally among whites.

The Misunderstood Role of Dakota Women

Samuel Pond's brother Gideon, who in later years would advocate for innocent Dakota who were tried and punished for participating in the Dakota war, writes his frustrations with what he see's as a lack of interest in Christian values amongst the Dakota in a letter to his sister Rebecca in 1838,

> Most of the Ind's feel themselves under no obligation at all to worship God according to his word but all acknowledge that [it] is well for those who feel disposed to do so yet most of them are careless and stupid about their spirits as if they knew they had none or as stones in which they pray. I suppose it would be no

[73] James Magner Farm Report, September 24, 1857, SED, no. 11. 35th Congress, 1st session, serial 919, p. 349

[74]Theodore C. Blegan, "Two Missionaries In the Sioux Country: The Narrative of Samuel W. Pond". *Minnesota History. Vol. 21, No. 3 (September 1940) pp. 272-283*

> slander for me to tell you that they are all liars, thieves, adulterers, fornicators, murderers, haters of God. It is probably a fact that there is not a chaste woman in the Sioux nation except it may be a very few individuals who have converted to Christianity.[75]

Ponds arrogance towards Dakota people and culture, and his complete lack of understanding or respect for Dakota ways of living are highlighted in this statement, but it is reflective of a commonly held viewpoint shared by many missionaries as well as government agents of this period. This way of thinking came about both as a reflection looking down at the after effects of colonial dominance on a community of peoples living in poverty, where a system of dependence had been created and fostered in Dakota communities by those who were greedy for their land; but it was also a perspective that stems from cultural misunderstanding.

Ohiyesa observed in 1911, "The native American has been generally despised by his white conquerors for his poverty and simplicity. They forget, perhaps that his religion forbade the accumulation of wealth and enjoyment of luxury."[76] What Ohiyesa means by this is that not only according to Dakota tradition is it considered righteous to share all that you have with your community and those around you, but it is also a life lesson to give up what is most valuable to you at certain junctures in life, here again asserting the value system of the Dakota cultural life was all important.

Pond's statement about the chastity of Dakota women is telling of the chauvinistic attitude that was common in reference to the gender roles of a society very different from that of white society in the 19th century. Most concerning in Pond's statement on women

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[75] Gideon Pond to Rebecca Hine, September 27th, 1838. Box 1 File 13. Pond Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.
[76] Ohiyesa, *Soul of the Indian*, 9

is his very matter of fact reference, to a society where women were considered at fault for becoming sexual assault victims. What this statement by Pond reinforces to me is that women were present in the binary interpretations created by missionaries almost as an afterthought, and were most often defined by their relationships with white men.

In contrast to Pond's overly sexualized representation of Dakota women, Ohiyesa writes remembrances of a traditional Dakota society that valued female roles. He recollects being taught that family lineage was traced through the mother and that all belongings of the family were in in the possession of the woman of the household, stating, "It has been said that the position of woman is the test of civilization, and that of our women was secure." Ohiyesa goes to state that before outside contact women were, "to us the a tower of moral and spiritual strength, until the coming of the border white man, the soldier and trader, who with strong drink overthrew the honor of the man, and through his power over a worthless husband purchased the virtue of his wife or his daughter. When she fell the whole race fell with her."[77] Ohiyesa notes the treatment of women by white military personnel was something he found deplorable, arguing that an influence of alcohol had caused weakness in the community spirit.

Ohiyesa argues that traditionally women were the center and strength of Dakota society,

> In them was vested our standard of morals and the purity of our blood. The wife did not take the name of her husband or enter his clan, and the children belonged to the clan of the mother. She held all of the family property, descent was traced in the maternal line, and the honor of the house was in her hands. Modesty was her chief adornment; hence the younger women were usually silent and retiring; but a woman who had attained to ripeness and of years and wisdom, or who had

[77] Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), *Soul of the Indian* 42

> displayed notable courage in some emergency was sometimes invited to a seat at the council.

Though motherless himself, Ohiyesa was especially close to his grandmother that raised him, describing her as possessing "as much goodness as intelligence,"[78] and he held women in high regard in Dakota society, stating that the strongest of his own family traits came from his grandmother, who came from the Wahptetunwan band of the Dakota. In his memoirs recollections of his grandmother are especially endearing, and he is always very respectful when referring to women in tribal society. It is his Uncheedah that provides him with many of his early spiritual teachings as well.[79] Ohiyesa's Uncheedah did not wish for her grandson to sway at all from the traditional path on which she raised him, but she also trusted her son knew what was the best for his own child. The role of the Dakota grandmother to inform, teach, and encourage the grandchildren to understand religion and achieve an education are still strong motivators in the Eastman side of the family today, and the story of how Ohiyesa became educated in the 'white man's" schools after growing up "in the wilds" of Canada as a traditional Dakota are told like folklore in our family oral history.

Binary Shift to Education

By the time that Ohiyesa was a boy the earlier trope of the uncivilized Traditional Dakota vs. civilized Christian Dakota Indian began to change, and his life is very reflective of the shift during this era. At this time the "good" Indian categorical identity

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[78] Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), *Indian Boyhood*, 5
[79] ibid. 21-29

construct had been transformed to include the expectation of education as reflective of the civilized life. Though in earlier treaty negotiations schooling had been included, the missionaries had always been hard pressed to attract very many students, as many children were needed at home to work or care for younger siblings. In traditional Dakota society education was important as well. It was incorporated as training in life (such as learning to hunt or take care of camp, harvesting of wild plants, etc.) and knowledge about the natural world around you, as well as the history of your community, these were all elements of education, and Ohiyesa documents much of this in his first memoir *Indian Boyhood*, in which he makes the argument that this earlier type of education was just as valid, if not more beneficial, as western formalized institutions of learning.

Ohiyesa based his interpretations of education on the teachings he received by his father Tawakanhdiota. He acknowledges this influence by his father in an unpublished manuscript which were left in the possession of his granddaughter at his passing:

> His decision of getting his boys trained and educated in the white man's books as far as possible so that they may be useful in the finer adaptation of civilization by the Sioux Nation…Father prepared my mind for the course that he intended to have me follow. Every night by our log house chimney fire he explained to me as far as he knew, the life of the white man, and the essential philosophy and system of their religion, and tried to explain to me why they became strong in material progress and their increased population, contrasting all the time the Indians scheme of life. He pointed out the ideals and in the end he compromised them, that is to say, the ideas and the ultimate purposes were after all the same the same, only following different roads to reach the point.[80]

The idea of a compromise is an interesting revelation that Many Lightenings bestows upon his son. However, what he relates as a compromise can also be interpreted as a

[80] Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa), *Unpublished Manuscript*, Not dated, in the possession of Eastman's granddaughter Gail Johnson, Hadley, NY

logical and rational decision vested within the same aim of traditional thought – towards the survival of the community or tiospaye.[81] His use of the metaphor of the road, following different roads to reach the same point, also becomes literal when Ohiyesa follows his advise to receive an education and walks to the site of the school in Santee Nebraska at his fathers request.

Second Wave Dakota Conversion

The time period after the Dakota war, when Dakota were imprisoned first at Fort Snelling, then Mankato, and finally at Davenport Iowa and Crow Creek South Dakota, marks an era that Bonnie Sue Lewis has termed the second wave of Dakota conversion.[82] This was an era when death was always close at hand. Each of these locations held a common thread in that missionaries traveled with the Dakota and continued to preach to them. Mass conversions were taking place, where nearly all of the Dakota men were baptized, and with these conversions also came teachings to read and write in Dakota. While the men were under the influence of missionaries such as Thomas S. Williamson and Gideon Pond, the women, children and elders were getting similar teachings from John P. Williamson (son of Thomas Williamson), and Samuel D. Hinman – both of whom are held in high regard because they stayed with the Dakota throughout the harsh winter. These men laid the groundwork for the Episcopal and Presbyterian Dakota

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[81] Extended family group within which Dakota people live*, ti* meaning "to live" and *ospaye* meaning "the group." For definition see Gerald Mohatt & Joseph Eagle Elk, *The Price of a Gift: A Lakota Healers Story.*

[82] Bonnie Sue Lewis, *Creating Christian Indians,* 7

populations that would continue to grow out of this era, and faced harsh criticism from settlers for speaking out on behalf of the Dakota.[83]

At Davenport Missionary Stephen R. Riggs, who had proselytized and studied the language of the Dakota since 1837 remarked that the Dakota were learning to read and write at a pace that far exceeded all previous years of missionary efforts.[84] It was here that Ohiyesa's father Tawakanhdiota (Many Lightenings) and two elder brothers John and David (Hinhan Duta and Hepidan) converted to Christianity. The reasons that more conversions occurred during this time are debated, and often misunderstood. A simple analysis from the outsider perspective states that they had given up on the old ways of living, and that as conquered peoples who lost a war they were now broken and ready to accept the "better" white way of living. Ohiyesa would later write in reflection, "It was not until his spirit was broken and his moral and physical constitution undermined by trade, conquest, and strong drink, that Christian missionaries obtained any real hold upon him. Strange as it may seem, it is true that the proud pagan in his secret soul despised the good men who came to convert and enlighten him!"[85] Though Ohiyesa seems to be blaming alcohol for the shift towards Christianity in this statement, he is also describing the conditions that led to this community to increasingly shift towards a new religion during a time of great turmoil.

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[83] Meyer, Roy *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial.* 136-138

[84] Clifford Canku *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters* (St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013) xii

[85] Charles Eastman, *Soul of The Indian,* 20

When young Ohiyesa was first reunited with his father following his release from four years in prison he asked him about these new and alien ways of praying only one day out of the week, in opposition to the Dakota tradition of praying everyday. His father told him,

> Our own life, I will admit, is the best in a world of our own, such as we have enjoyed for ages…But here is a race which has learned to weigh and measure everything, time and labor, and the results of labor, and has learned to accumulate and preserve both wealth and the records of experience for future generations. You yourselves know and use some of the wonderful inventions of the white man, such as guns, and gunpowder, and knives and hatchets, garments of every description, and there are thousands of other things both beautiful and useful.[86]

Here Tawakanhdiota, now known by his Christian name of Jacob Eastman, has closely tied conversion to education and is thinking about these changes in Dakota society more in line with acculturation – as a more natural progression in order to continue forward. He was not saying that the old ways were in any way invalid, but he had been conditioned through his experience suffering in prison to believe that adjusting to these "white ways" of living (which at this point were not really so new) was the only way to move forward and survive. Ohiyesa writes of his father's life experience,

> He had been accustomed to the buffalo-skin teepee all his life, until he opposed the white man and was defeated and made a prisoner of war at Davenport, Iowa. It was because of his meditations during those four years in a military prison that he severed himself from his tribe and took up a homestead. He declared that he would never join in another outbreak, but would work with his hands for the rest of his life.[87]

Tawakanhdiota also told his son of this new life,

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[86] Charles Eastman, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization.* 8
[87] Ibid. p. 15

> Above all, they have their Great Teacher, whom they call Jesus, and he taught them to pass on their wisdom and knowledge to all other races. It is true that they have subdued and taught many peoples, and our own must eventually bow to this law; the sooner we accept this mode of life and follow their teaching, the better it will be for us all. I have thought much on this matter and such is my conclusion.[88]

These last two statements recalled by Ohiyesa, the words his father relayed to him about his decision to take up Christianity and white man's dress and ways of doing things. They illustrate the complexity of the decision to become Christian and accept a different way of living. That Tawakanhdiota felt defeated, to say that it is time to "bow to this law" is heartbreaking. Today in hindsight, having not endured prison life and having not experienced the genocidal policies it is impossible for me to pass judgment on his decision. Though I, as Tawakanhdiota's granddaughter five generations down the line, would be raised without many of those traditional teachings that I yearned for, I also can't help but have compassion for him. After all, if he did not make this decision, surviving the only way he knew how to at this point, than I might not be here today and the road which he chose, compromise or not, did lead to the survival of our family today. Rather than seeing Tawakanhdiota as broken, or defeated, as one might assume, our own family honors the decisions that he made because he was a pillar of his community and his children went on to become prominent leaders as well. In this interpretation the decision to devote one's life to Christianity was not the end of the traditional Dakota life, as much as it was a toll for sustaining the population so that these Dakota values could still be carried forward in new ways.

[88] Ibid p. 8

The Progressive Era

Often interpreted as an example of what policies of assimilation could achieve, as a graduate of Dartmouth College and Boston Medical School Ohiyesa represented, from an outside perspective at least, that Indian people could learn English, live in white society, and attain great success. Ohiyesa was portrayed during his life in the media as being a "former" traditional Dakota who became Christian and adhered to what according to western ideals of living was "civilized life." This interpretation is based on his achievement of an elite New England education, as well as his connections to influential people in Washington. Ohiyesa worked alongside (and sometimes though not always in opposition to) men who were key players in the assimilationist agenda of that era such as Richard Henry Pratt, the founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, and Henry Dawes, whose most notable achievement as a state representative was the passage of the General Allotment Act, also known as the Dawes Act of 1887.

Ohiyesa was an educated and well-spoken Dakota man who was as comfortable in a suit and tie as he was in a headdress and buckskin regalia. These two sides of Ohiyesa are often interpreted as representative of the "two worlds" in which he existed, another binary interpretation on Indian life, which works to separate Indigenous ways of thinking from that of larger society. This is ironic given that much of his life he was writing and lecturing about the ways in which Indian life had been misrepresented and misinterpreted by others.

In Ohiyesa's work he attempts to find ways to reconcile Indian and white relations, in order to repair damage that he had witnessed being inflicted onto Indian society since childhood. In *From the Deep Woods to Civilization* he writes,

> While fully appreciating the Indian's viewpoint, I have tried to convince him of the sincerity of his white friends, and that conflicts between the two races have been due as much to mutual misunderstandings as to the selfish greed of the white man. These children of nature once had faith in man as well as in God. To-day, they would suspect even their best friend. A "century of dishonor" and abuse of their trust has brought them to this.[89]

He attributes some of the most damaging representations of Indian people to the negative influences that the introduction of alcohol had to Indian communities. The image and stereotype of the "drunken Indian," which had become closely associated with the "bad Indian" binary of this era, had come into fruition in Dakota society specifically by the early 19th century, when fur traders and Indian agents used the exchange of liquor to swindle signatures on treaty agreements for Dakota land. As Waziyatawin writes of the Pike Treaty negotiations in 1805, in which Zebulon Pike provided 60 gallons of whiskey to those in attendance,

> U.S. government negotiators frequently employed this method of enticement to achieve their desired aims in dealings with Indigenous peoples. It helped them to achieve the advantage in treaty negotiations by gaining the acquiescence of individuals they could lure with the promise of alcohol, or in some cases by lubricating the deal making at the start. By 1805, at the time of this treaty negotiation, Dakota people would have likely never experienced alcohol in this quantity before.[90]

Ohiyesa writes, "My Chief object has been, not to entertain, but to present the American Indian in his true character before Americans. The barbarous and atrocious

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[89] Charles Eastman, *Indian Boyhood,* 183

[90] Waziyatawain, *What Does Justice Look Like,* p. 30-31

character commonly attributed to him has dated from the transition period, when the strong drink, powerful temptations, and commercialization of the white man led to deep demoralization. Really it was a campaign of education on the Indian and his true place in American history."[91] Though Ohiyesa is acknowledging and addressing the problems that alcohol created for his community, he is also attempting to reinsert a positive model of Indian life to the white American public, and in this way he is empowering the value of positivity in which he was raised. He remained hopeful that he could influence policy makers as well as the American public to see Dakota people as human beans, deserving of equal opportunity, and the facilitators of a valuable belief system, which could provide insightful contributions to the American mainstream if only given the chance.

It was Ohiyesa's love of his early education as a boy in the wilderness, and the values that he learned during his traditional upbringing that led to his work as a consultant and founder of chapters of both the Young Men's Christian Association, and the Boy Scouts of America in the late 19th century. In this work Ohiyesa attempted to assert the traditional ways of the Dakota, with values tied to hard work, and knowledge derived from a close relationship to the natural world, were essential attributes for young people to have in order to navigate modern society as spiritually enlightened and balanced individuals. Ohiyesa (who by now went by his English name of Charles Eastman) traveled the world giving lectures on a mission to assert the value of the traditional Dakota way of life.

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[91] Charles Eastman, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization,* 187

The Dakota connection to the YMCA was likely first influenced by the presence of the organization at the Dakota prison in Davenport Iowa, where fellow organizers of the Indian YMCA such as Thomas Wakeman (son of Taoyateduta),[92] and brothers John and David Eastman had been imprisoned as young men following the war. At Davenport early volunteers of the YMCA, who provided clothes and bedding, as well as instruction in the English language, had visited the young Dakota prisoners. As these men were released and found there way to Flandreau with their own families they remembered the kindness of this organization during their time of need. The first Indian YMCA meeting was thus held at the Dakota First Presbyterian Church on April 27th, 1879, with Eastman brothers and Thomas Wakeman all in attendance and serving positions on the initial founding committee.[93] The Indian YMCA chapters were focused on healthy living and meetings became gathering spots for those who wished to become sober on reservations. Ohiyesa would continue to be employed by the organization in different capacities for many years traveling from reservation to reservation promoting the mission of the organization as beneficial to Indian life. His work was not always supported or without controversy. However the work of the YMCA in Indian country did receive much recognition. In an article by H.F. Kallenberg, who is attributed as one of the founding

[92] Also known by his Dakota name of Wowinape, he was with Taoyateduta picking berries in the Minnesota town of Hutchinson on July 3rd 1863 when a white farmer killed his father for bounty money – though he fled he was later captured and sent to prison at Davenport. See
Handwritten transcript of the Military Trial of Wowinape, Minnesota Historical Society Collections, as well as "Indian Killed Near Hutchinson," St. Paul Pioneer, July 7, 1863.
[93] Original translation of meeting notes document (original held in memorabilia collection). University of Minnesota Libraries, Kautz Family YMCA Archives.

organizers of the first game of college basketball describes introducing the game to the Indians in South Dakota and he alludes to someone I assume is Ohiyesa:

> My experience with the Christian Indians of South Dakota has convinced me that there is something hidden under the stolid and cold exterior with which the white man is usually met, which the rifle and whiskey have never been able to bring to the surface. I am not quite ready to vouch for a 'civilized' Indian, even though he may have graduated from an Eastern college, but a 'Christianized' Indian is a new creature in Christ Jesus and I have a tremendous lot of faith in him.

Kallenberg goes on to portray the character of South Dakota Indians as full of humor and explains the concern that many involved with the Indian YMCA had at this juncture; namely that Indians returning from their education would return home to their reservation communities and lose all of the "civilization" that they had acquired while in school (referred to "going back to the blanket"). Kallenburg writes,

> There are instances on record where educated Indians have gone back to their blankets, feathers, and war paint, and people have come to believe that an Indian will generally finish his education in this manner. This is not true of the educated Christian Indian...The Indians are an intensely interesting people, and the man who goes unprejudiced among the Christian Indians and succeeds in getting under their shells and catching a glimpse of the man himself, will soon discard his newspaper conception of him.[94]

Though Ohiyesa was speaking and advocating against misrepresentation of his ancestors, the binary identity was reflected back in the ways in which he was portrayed in the media, and he actually contributed to the creation of a new kind of stereotype at this time – that of the noble and educated progressive Indian. Though most of the well-

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[94] H.F. Kallenberg. *Ikcewicasta MdoketuWaonspeiciciapi. Yoataninpi: Among the Indian Association Men in the Dakotas"* Men Vol. XXV. No. 1 January 1899 pp. 19-21. Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Anderson Library, University of Minnesota.

known photographs that were taken of Ohiyesa were publicity shots that were created to sell books, and are not reflective of who he was as an individual. Not so easily defined, is the stark contrast between the shots of him in a suit and in a headdress, which created an easy pathway for media to manipulate public stereotypes. It can also be argued that in allowing this dual image to be created he agreed to the ways in which he was represented in the media by virtue of the fact that he sat for the photographs and encouraged their distribution, he was complacent at some level in the formation of stereotypical imagery that we see of Indian people today.

As a person of mixed race, and as a Christian who also believed fiercely in traditional Dakota ways, the spirit of Ohiyesa was composed of far more than two dueling identities at odds. When he rose to the lecture podium dressed in his regalia he was doing so as a warrior of words, and to make a point, as a way to reflect the stereotypical cowboy and Indian image back at white America. Deloria writes,

> Eastman endeavored to carve out a positive role model for native people in twentieth-century American. Real interior Indians – not Others, but people, like himself, in full contact with American society – possessed this authentic knowledge that American's needed. Eastman sought to take the primitivist value attached to exterior Indian Others and reattach it to real modern Native Americans.[95]

According to Deloria, Eastman sought to expose this type of dualistic narrative as more complicated, and he used his educational training and knowledge of white society to mirror back this binary in ways that would benefit both Indian and white society. He was employed with organizations such as the Boy Scouts of American in an effort to

[95] Philip J. Deloria. *Playing Indian.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 123

humanize American Indian people so that American society would acknowledge and honor the positive elements of Dakota life.

Ohiyesa was also using the headdress as a sacred symbol, in his work as a modern day warrior trying to help create a better existence for his people. It seems as if he was creating a literal interpretation to showcase his father's advice that the books' were the "bow and arrows of the white man." The use of the regalia was a strategic ploy that he used in order to gain the attention of his audience, and once they were listening, he would speak the truth about the conditions and issues he saw as most pressing in Indian country. He had concerns about American Indian citizenship and was interested in looking for solutions to economic and social problems that existed on reservations, and he saw economic independence as an attainable goal for Indian people.

Charles Eastman vs. Ohiyesa[96]

Even when Ohiyesa converted to Christianity along with his father and siblings he held true to his Dakota identity and world-view, though in regards to the ideals of Christianity he first held as a young man. In his later works he admits to being rather naïve. In the last pages of *From the Deep Woods to Civilization,* Ohiyesa speaks of the ways in which his life long interactions with Christians have shaped his interpretation of the "white man's religion" by asserting, "From the time I first accepted the Christ ideal it has grown upon me steadily, but I also see more and more plainly our modern divergence from that ideal. I confess I have wondered much that Christianity is not practiced by the very people who vouch for that wonderful conception of exemplary living. It appears that they are anxious to pass on their religion to all races of men, but keep very little of it themselves."[97] In this statement it is clear that Ohiyesa, though a Christian himself, is not in any way afraid of casting a critical eye at those who don't "practice what they preach." Here he is showing us a very interesting and more complicated, if not weary, representation of a Christian Dakota perspective.

Of early missionaries, in reference to the Pond brothers and their colleagues, Ohiyesa writes,

> The first missionaries, good men imbued with the narrowness of their age, branded us as pagans and devil-worshipers, and demanded of us that we abjure our false gods before bowing the knee at the sacred alter. They even told us that we were eternally lost, unless we adopted a tangible symbol and professed a articular form of their hydra-headed faith…We of the twentieth century know better! We know that all religious aspiration, all sincere worship, can have but one source and one goal. We know that the God of the

[96] Photos courtesy of Dartmouth College.
[97] Charles Eastman. *From the Deep Woods to Civilization.* 193

> lettered and the unlettered, of the Greek and the barbarian, is after all the same God; and, like Peter, we perceive that He is no respector of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him.[98]

This notion that the Dakota and white god were the same is found in many writings and interpretations of Dakota Christianity, and is representative of the ways in which many Dakota people saw Christianity – as holding similar values to traditional Dakota beliefs. Eventually Ohiyesa's way of reconciling the two seemingly opposing word-views of Christianity and the traditional Dakota spiritual beliefs, was to find the similarities between the two. Ohiyesa writes at length about the parallels, which David Martinez observes, "Was mostly based on comparable ethical principles rather than notions about creation and the fate of the universe."[99] The principles were thus, based on a value system that was strictly Dakota, and some who chose to become followers of Christian religions interpreted Christianity itself through the lens of the Dakota wicohan. Ella Deloria observed, "because [Christianity's] social message was already partially familiar, there was a sound foundation for the structure of Dakota Christianity."[100]

Some of the most valuable insights into our family story that are recorded through the writings of Ohiyesa is the very detailed story of our ancestor's conversion to Christianity and the reasoning behind it – as a means for survival after exile. He relates that, "The fur-traders, the "Black Robe" priests, the military and finally the Protestant missionaries, were the men who began the disintegration of the Indian nations and the

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[98] Charles Eastman, *Soul of The Indian,* xiii
[99] David Martinez. *Dakota Philosopher: Charles Eastman and American Indian Thought* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009) 45
[100] Ella Deloria, *Speaking of Indians,* 62

overthrow of their religion, seventy five to a hundred years before they were forced to enter upon reservation life."[101] In *Soul of the Indian* Ohiyesa is attempting to give a Dakota perspective on faith, in response to the critiques by outsiders such as the missionaries themselves, and states "I have not cared to pile up more dry bones, but to clothe them with flesh and blood. So much has been written by strangers of our ancient faith and worship treats it chiefly as matter of curiosity. I should like to emphasize its universal quality, its personal appeal!"[102] Here he lays out his agenda clearly, writing with the intent of educating non-Indians about the spiritual faith of his ancestors as a valid belief system, and as an attempt at humanizing the Dakota experience. Ohiyesa candidly points out, Dakota spirituality was observed and documented by early explorers and missionaries as a novelty, and before his work that is the only documentation that was available – from outsiders looking in on Dakota life without any real understanding of the reasoning behind practices and lifeways.

In *Soul of the Indian* Ohiyesa provides a detailed account of Dakota spiritual lifeways and beliefs, and he also speaks about how these practices had changed over time. First published in 1911, a New York Time's book review asserts the only criticism of this book is that it is too short and states, "It is seldom that a book can be characterized as disappointing because of its very excellence."[103] Though this review, and other

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[101] Eastman, *Soul of the Indian,* 54
[102] Eastman, Charles, Soul *of the Indian* p. xii
[103] New York Times, *The Soul of An Indian: Revealed by a Cultivated Sioux Whose Wife is a New England Poet.* New York April 23rd, 1911

Ohiyesa critics,[104] hint at the possibility of his work as being too idealistic. On the contrary, I think it displays the true nature of what Dakota cultural and spiritual life was like at its most fundamental level. In the days before colonial influences disrupted a more traditional and communal way of life, our societies did have a system of living that had provided and sustained us for centuries, and it worked for us. At the same time, Ohiyesa does tend to focus on the positive when speaking of the traditional spiritual life ways, and by recalling his earlier years he writes from the perspective of a child, and gives a youthful interpretation of events and life at that time. His interpretations parallel the Dakota value of *Wobdehecic'iya* (Positivity), so that his family members can be viewed as survivors and not solely as victims.

Ohiyesa asserts that before western contact, Dakota were better off and closer to being spiritually righteous, and yet in his work he admits that the old ways are gone forever and the aim for new way of moving forward was to incorporate these belief systems into the contemporary world in order to survive. Here he is promoting what he and his father viewed as a compromise. He writes,

> I stand before my own people still as an advocate of civilization. Why? First, because there is no chance for our simple life anymore; and second because I realize that the white man's religion is not responsible for his mistakes. There is evidence that God has given him all the light necessary to live in peace and good will with his brother; and we also know that many brilliant civilizations have collapsed in physical and moral decadence. It is for us to avoid their fate if we can.[105]

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[104] Biographer Raymond Wilson also makes this critique in his article *The Writings of Ohiyesa – Charles Alexander Eastman, M.D., Santee Sioux,* published in "South Dakota History" by the South Dakota Historical Society, 1975

[105] Charles Eastman, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*, 195

Both Ohiyesa and Ella Deloria write about civilization as a construct that is also very Indigenous in definition. They take the binary of the civilized white man vs. the uncivilized Indian man and turn it around to showcase how true civilization is based on moral living, adhering to values from which Dakota traditional life was based. In this way the Dakota society before the mission era can be viewed as being a true model of civilization. In this way too, they were making arguments ahead of their time in which they themselves did not have the foresight to understand. The "simple" life that Ohiyesa mourns for and writes out of history as being forever gone is not forgotten, thank to his writings, and many Dakota people today still value that era of more communal and holistic living as a time to strive toward as a community.

Ohiyesa and Ella Deloria were very strategic to utilize the binary to their benefit in order to make a point, and yet outsiders have not always been so keen at seeing this maneuver for what it is, as an expression of Indigenous dissent. To Ohiyesa, civilization did not necessarily hold the same meaning as those who were imposing it upon his relatives. He was critical of both the system that failed his people as well as the religious institution that created this very system that had been put in place to destroy the traditional way of life. Even though he viewed his youthful life in the woods as being most civilized above all else, he still had wowaunsida (compassion) for the missionaries and felt that there was some way to reconcile his multiple identities into one. David Martinez writes, "Eastman wants to invoke an image of Indian culture and religion that is purified- in the same sense as an *inipi* or sweat lodge purifies – of the demoralizing effects of "civilization," be it from alcoholism, poverty, or materialism. In this context,

remembering stories is good medicine."[106] Ohiyesa's decision to adhere to the Dakota way of interpreting the past is a decision that he made as a traditional Dakota man who valued the Dakota Wicohan ideals of living. Given the negative influences that abounded during this era, when Dakota people were struggling to survive on reservations, he was making an attempt at showing the good virtues of Dakota life. His hope was that mainstream society could have a deeper understanding of American Indian life, than a more secure future for Indian people could be attained.

The ability to *choose* to follow our own Indigenous spiritual path as Dakota people is not something that would have come so easily to our grandparents' generation, as their own parents and grandparents experienced firsthand the pressures of colonial interference in their spiritual lives that made adhering to a traditional existence difficult if not impossible following the Dakota war. That our spiritual practices were in fact, illegal to preform until the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, is a well-documented fact, but many in our community do not know this larger history of our conversion, nor recognize that these decisions were made during times of great stress. Thus the reasons that many Dakota made a conscious *choice* to convert to another religion should not be undermined as a victory for those who have historically oppressed us, but neither should it be a defining narrative of our spiritual history as being simple or without consequence.

Linda Smith relates, "Fragmentation is not an indigenous project; it is something we are recovering from. While shifts are occurring in the ways in which we Indigenous

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[106] David Martinez *Dakota Philosopher: Charles Eastman and American Indian Thought,* 31

peoples put ourselves back together again, the greater project is about recentring indigenous identities on a larger scale."[107] The greater project here is the reclaiming of the Dakota story through personal family experience using Dakota sources to empower ourselves. The binary that has divided our communities in years past can be reexamined in order to rethink what the more authentic Dakota experience might have been. With this knowledge, and by confronting the stereotypical representations that have defined our story, reconciliation within the divided sense of self can occur. This decolonial act will lead us back to the same road which Tawaknhdiota and Ohiyesa paved for us, and we can then move forward armed with a broader understanding of the past.

[107] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 100

Chapter 2: Bde Maka Ska "White Banks Lake": Dakota at Lake Calhoun and the Cultural Significance of Place

When I introduce myself in my Dakota language I say "wanna Bde Ota ed wati *ake* – I now live *again* in Minneapolis." To say "ake" or "again" is significant because though I was raised as a Dakota in exile and did not grow up in Mni Sota Makoce,[108] this is the land that my ancestors walked for thousands of years, our people were born out of this soil, and it is this place from which my grandparents fought hard and gave their lives for us to be able to stay. Growing up, I had heard a few of the ancestral stories about Minnesota places of cultural and historical significance to Dakota history, and I had been told that one of my grandfathers had led a village at Lake Calhoun in present day Minneapolis in the 1820's, but before I moved to this state I had no detailed knowledge or vision of the physical context in which to locate or interpret these histories, and they remained in my imagination as historical tellings of some far off and distant place.

The stories of our ancestors, though seemingly mythical in nature, are not simply 'legends' of a long lost past, they are evidence of what Dakota people have left of our oral history traditions; stories, with bits and pieces that became lost as common knowledge with each passing generation. These stories focus on places of importance to community history and they teach us lessons about the ways and times in which our ancestors lived. It was not until I returned home to Minnesota that I began to learn the

[108] As stated in the introduction, the Dakota name for "Minnesota" is Mni Sota, the meaning of which translates into English as the reflection of the sky off of the water. This often gets interpreted as "sky blue water" or "cloudy water."

significance of my family history and connection to this now very urban landscape. Though the Dakota community at Bde Maka Ska has historically been used to represent an early assimilationist society, and has been interpreted as a Dakota village that adhered to the "good" Indian binary (as farmers who practiced the Christian faith), this is not the way that I view the history of this place at all. This location and history reflect a more important story that, though not often taught or well known within the state of Minnesota, is emblematic of the ways in which Dakota people defied colonialism in order to survive. The people that lived at this lake worked hard, incorporating key Dakota values that benefited the community while at the same time adapting the ways of an ever-changing world into their daily lives and world-view.

Mahpiya Wicasta's grandson Ohiyesa states that, "it was the rule of his life to share the fruits of his skill and success with his less fortunate brothers. Thus he kept his spirit free from the clog of pride, cupidity, or envy, and carried out, as he believed, the divine decree – a matter profoundly important to him."[109] This idea of sharing what you have with others, a value often termed Wacantohnaka (Generosity), Wowaunsida (Compassion) and Wowaditkta (Bravery), are the all traditional Dakota virtues that those who lived at Bde Maka Ska represented with grace as a society that still valued and upheld itself as a traditional community.

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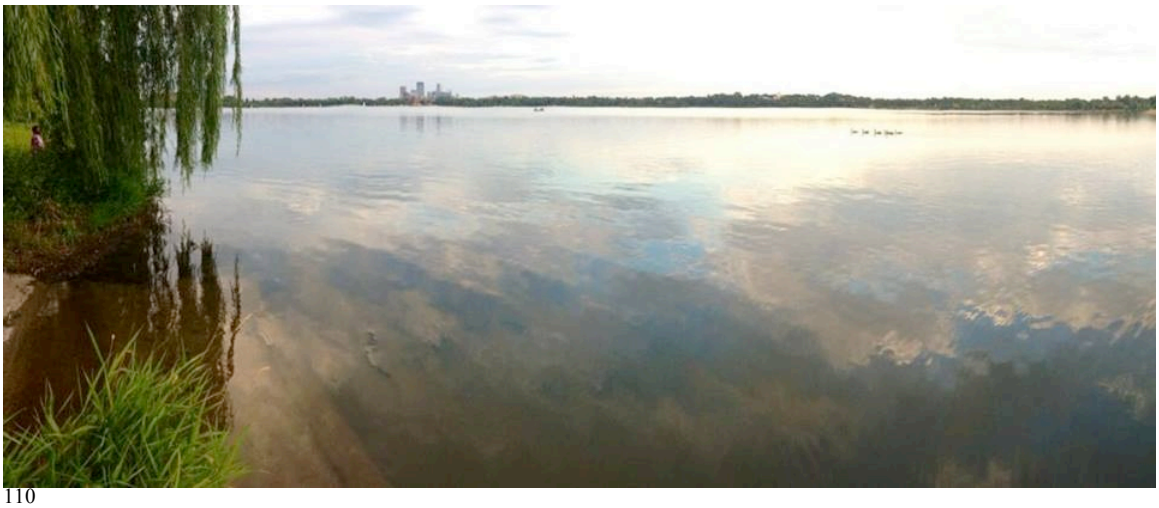
[109] Charles Eastman *Soul of the Indian,* (1911 Reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980), 10


[110]

The act of removing Indigenous peoples from their ancestral land base is a disconnection from historical and cultural experience, a break in a tribally specific identity, and an erasure of their own existence as Indigenous peoples with strong ties to the earth. Within this framework of erasure there is also a story of reinterpretation, if not total separation, from our Indigenous traditional spiritual relationship to god, or Wakan Tanka[111] and from the values that nurture and sustain our communities. Thus, the connection that is severed when one generation is removed from an ancestral homeland is much more complex than merely physical separation and has an ongoing psychological effect, presenting an undeniable inheritance of historical trauma passed down perpetually from one generation to the next.

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[110] Bde Maka Ska, personal photograph taken by Hinhan Loud Hawk
[111] Dakota word for "god" is referred to as Wakan Tanka or Tunkasida. See Monica Siems *How Do You Say "God" in Dakota? Epistemological Problems in the Christianization of Native Americans.* Numen, Vol. 45 No. 2, 1998 p. 163-182

As Keith Basso states in *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscapes and Language Among the Western Apache* the attachment that people have to places is complex but taken for granted because,

> As normally experienced, sense of place quite simply *is,* as natural and straightforward as our fondness for certain colors or culinary tastes, and the thought that it might be complicated, or even interesting, seldom crosses our minds. Until as sometimes happens, we are deprived of these attachments and find ourselves adrift, literally *dislocated*, in unfamiliar surroundings we do not comprehend and care for even less.[112]

The relationships that Indigenous peoples have with their ancestral homelands are sacred, we believe that we were created by Wakantanka to take of the land that we were created on, and there is an emotional connection as well as a spiritual relationship with these natural spaces that must be nurtured. The notion of "coming back" to our ancestral homeland requires that we first must understand the history of this space, in order to remember these connections and so that we can resituate ourselves, as well as the stories of our ancestors and of the earth itself, back into this landscape.

Bde Maka Ska is Dakota for "White Banks Lake" and this name is descriptive of the sandy white beaches that surround this body of water located in south Minneapolis. Situated as part of the uptown neighborhood, this space is more widely known today by its English, and to the Dakota far less significant, name of Lake Calhoun.[113] This beautiful collection of lakes make up what is called the "chain of lakes" and these waters

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[112] Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places* (*Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996)* xiii

[113] This lake is now known as Lake Calhoun, named in honor of former secretary of war John C. Calhoun, See Warren Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names: Their Origin and Historic Significance,* Vol. 17, 229

have a story to tell; and they have withstood the test of time, a fixture in this city reminding people of what once was existed here before urban sprawl.

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Resting upon the ground on the east side of Bde Maka Ska, sits a plaque erected in 1930 by the Daughters of the American Colonists which carries an inscription that speaks to a very general historical significance of this place. It states its purpose, "To perpetuate the memory of the Sioux or Dakota who occupied this region for more than

114 Marker at *Bde Maka Ska*, Erected by the Daughters of the American Colonists in 1930, personal photograph.

two centuries prior to the treaties of 1851." This marker does not speak to the significance of the lake history itself. It sits nestled into the soil below a small boulder, and with age the words have blended into the rock making it difficult to read. Bde Maka Ska, the largest lake in the city, is described by the website of the Minneapolis Parks and recreation board as, "a popular site for fishing, wind surfing, swimming, sailing, canoeing, walking, jogging, biking and roller- and in-line skating" and reportedly it rates as the second most visited destination in the area (Mall of American being the first).[115] However, this place was not always simply a place of leisure, there is a working history and an Indigenous presence to this space that is still important to acknowledge.

Mahpiya Wicasta: Progressive Leadership During a Time of Change

Sometime before 1829, surveyors of the Minnesota territory bestowed the name Lake Calhoun onto Bde Maka Ska in honor of John C. Calhoun, a South Carolina senator and former vice president under both John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. Calhoun had also served as both secretary of state and secretary of war. He was a staunch advocate of slavery and fought to expand slavery into the western states. Calhoun had authorized the construction of Fort Snelling, a military fort at the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, for which he was memorialized in the naming of the lake, but he really had very little presence in the area. What is often left out of the history behind the English name for Bde Maka Ska is the history of indigenous relations and the policy that Calhoun was invested in. By 1824 Calhoun established the Indian Office that he named

[115] Minneapolis National Park Service, http://www.minneapolisparks.org/default.asp?PageID=4&parkid=263

"The Bureau of Indian Affairs," which was housed within the war department.[116] The same year he penned the first draft of a policy which would become the Indian Removal Act, signed into law on May 28, 1830. This act, authorized by President Andrew Jackson, led the way for the creation of removal treaties, policies of tribal ethnic cleansing that were used to pave the way for western Euro-American settlement, wreaking havoc on Indigenous communities and families in its path for centuries to come.

The village of Heyata Otunwe,[117] headed by Bdewakantunwan[118] Dakota leader Mahpiya Wicasta[119] was located at Bde Maka Ska in a marshy area that had previously served as a place to harvest wild rice. Situated roughly six miles from Bdote,[120] a site of creation for the Dakota people, the lake at that time measured some three or four miles in circumference, and was filled with an abundance of fish.[121] Though known by its Dakota name to its residents, it was labeled "Eatonville" by the United States Indian agent Lawrence Taliaferro in honor of John H. Eaton who was secretary of war under president

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116 Donald L. Fixico, *Bureau of Indian Affairs* (Westport: Greenwood, 2012), 12

117 A newspaper account from 1851 relates that this village was so named because, "they formally lived back from the river at Lake Calhoun." See Minnesota Democrat, Tuesday September 9th, 1851. Minnesota Historical Society

118 Bdewakantunwan "Spirit Lake Dwellers" and the other three bands of eastern Dakota will be defined in the introduction.

119 Mahpiya Wicasta's name is often translated as "Cloud Man" or "Man of the Sky," Though Cloud Man is a more accurate translation I use his Dakota name in this work out of respect to the Dakota language and Indigenous naming practices.

120 Bdote translates as "confluence of the rivers" and describes a larger area that also encompasses the space where the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers meet - present day Fort Snelling National Park.

121 Measurements and location description provided in letter by Samuel Pond to Herman Hine, January 19th, 1835, Pond Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul

Andrew Jackson.[122] Known to the Dakota as Heyata Otunwe "the village at the side," this community represented a period of transition for the Dakota from 1829-1839. The Indigenous history of Heyata Otunwe is significant to both Dakota and Minnesota history for two important reasons, the first being that from 1830-1839 (at this location just one mile north of nearby Bde Unma, or "Lake Harriet"[123]) the first successful adaptation to an agricultural farming lifestyle for the Dakota people occurred at this location[124] ("successful" according to western standards and ideals). Secondly, during this same time period (1834-1839) the Dakota language was first put into written form by missionary brothers Samuel and Gideon Pond at their mission located at Bde Unma, which makes knowledge of this site essential for anyone trying to understand the history of our language. Missionary brothers Samuel and Gideon Pond, arrived at Fort Snelling in 1834 and Samuel's son, Samuel Jr., would later recall his father's impression that until recently life had been well for the Dakota in this region,

> No attempt had ever been made either by private enterprise or government authority to civilize or Christianize the Dakotas…The Dakotas were at the time substantially what they had been for generations, depending on their own resources for subsistence, upon their own medicine men for medical advice and aid, and upon the traditions of their fathers for their knowledge of the mysterious and unseen. Each of these they found in its way sufficient for their

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[122] Dietrich, Mark *A Good Man in a Changing World: Cloud Man, the Dakota Leader, and His Life and Times.* Ramsey County History Vol. 36 Spring 2001

[123] Lake Harriet is the English term for this body of water, known in Dakota as Bde Unma, "the Other Lake" which is used to distinguish it from Lake Calhoun - located very close to the north.
Paul Durand, *Where the Waters Gather and the Rivers Meet: An Atlas of the Eastern Sioux*. Self-published, Prior Lake, MN, 1994

[124] The site of present day Lake wood Cemetery is the location where the community was camped, but the community utilized the full space of the lakeshore and surrounding area.

> needs. Experience had taught them that the natural resources of their country would supply them with all the necessaries of life…[125]

The Ponds, like many missionaries of the time residing in indigenous communities, set to work under the pretense that they were documenting the last years of a dying race of people, the Pond brothers were fiercely committed to the task at hand. In a letter to Samuel, Thomas Williamson writes,

> It is a common saying that the race is destined to become extinct. I believe this results chiefly from the want of success where no success ought to have been expected namely where they were not instructed in their own languages…I hope you will mutually stir up each other to do all that you can to do in the way of learning the language and teaching them to read and write it and preaching gospel to the poor Dakotas. There is a vast responsibility resting on the US missionaries to the Sioux. None of the other Indian missions is now looked to with more interest.[126]

The Ponds took the task of learning the language very seriously, and the bulk of their time here (when they were not working the plow) was spent either visiting with Dakota speakers, thinking, or writing in the language as practice for the translations of sermons into Dakota.

As stated in chapter one, the Pond brothers felt strongly that language acquisition was necessary in order to speed up the process of Christian conversion. Samuel would later write of the language, which he deemed far inferior to English, as follows:

> The language of the Dakota is not so perfect as one would naturally expect among a people so rude and uncultivated. It is well adapted to their use, and is adequate to the expression of their ideas with force, conciseness, and precision. In its

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[125] Samuel Pond, *Two Volunteer Missionaries Among the Dakotas, or the story of the labors of Samuel W. and Gideon H. Pond* (Congregational Sunday School Publishing Society, 1893), 29-30

[126] Thomas Williamson to Samuel Pond, February 21st 1839 Pond Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, Box 2 file 1

> present state it could not be used as the language of a civilized people, for it would require many additions before it could represent all the ideas that are readily expressed in any of the languages of Europe; but it is probably as susceptible of improvement as those languages were when spoken by savages.

From Samuel Pond's point of view, assimilation in part was an overall goal for the community, he felt that the decision of Mahpiya Wicasta and his community was "to turn their attention to agriculture and adopt the customs of civilized people." Thus, his goal, in agreement with Indian agent Lawrence Taliaferro, was for the Dakota, specifically Dakota men, to spend less time hunting and more time farming. Pond defined the change as "abandoning the chase and cultivating the arts of civilized life." He viewed Mahpiya Wicasta as a "man of superior discernment, and of great prudence and foresight," and he noted that the chief was "opposed by many of the other chiefs, and none of them entered heartily into his views."[127] Though it is well known that some Dakota leaders did not always agree with one another's decisions, as in any society, this statement is simply exaggerated in terms of views on agriculture. Though many leaders were hesitant, and some were certain to be against any changes from the traditional life style, there is plenty of documentation that other leaders did consider at one point or another a shift for their own community towards farming, especially perhaps after witnessing the successful crops at Heyata Otunwe. Prior to Mahpiya Wicasta decision to farm, Wakinyantanka (Big Thunder), also known as Little Crow of Kapoza,[128] had made

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[127] Samuel Pond, *Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest,* 11

[128] The village of Kapoza (located in present day south St. Paul), also commonly spelled as Kaposia, translates as "Swift of Foot" and was home village to four generations of leaders who each also went by the hereditary chief name of name of Little Crow. The first and last generations of which also went by the name of

the same choice but had not followed through with the harvest. Another leader, Wambdi Tanka (Big Eagle) from Mahpiya Wicasta's old village of Black Dog had made a request to Taliaferro in 1836 to acquire a plow and harness, and similar requests were also made during this time by other communities including a band of Wahpetunwan[129] at Lac qui Parle.[130]

Lawrence Taliaferro, a United States army officer had served as Indian agent from 1820-1839, presided over the treaty of 1837 with the Dakota, which resulted in the ceding of all Dakota lands east of the Mississippi River for a sum of money that mostly went to supposed "debt payments" to traders. Taliaferro by this time was supposedly very wary of how exploitative and out of control the fur trade industry had grown in the region due to lack of government regulations, and he felt strongly that Dakota people should rely less on their traditional hunting lifestyle and turn to agriculture fulltime. The harshness of recent winters had added to the difficulties, which when combined with the lack of game, forced the Dakota to move beyond their normal traditional hunting grounds into areas that caused confrontations and increased tensions with neighboring Ojibwe communities. Taliaferro saw farming as a way to keep the peace, and he hoped the Dakota could also "replace their collective worldview with an appreciation for the superiority of economic individualism and private property." As Mary Wingerd writes in *North Country: The Making of Minnesota, "* Neither Taliaferro nor the missionaries who worked to transform

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Taoyateduta (His Red Nation). According to Paul Durand, *Where the Waters Gather and the Rivers Meet: An Atlas of the Eastern Sioux.* Self-published, Prior Lake, MN, 1994

[129] Dwellers Among the Leaves, or Forest.

[130] Taliaferro journal, March 8, 1836, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society.

the Indians' way of life questioned their deeply held assumption that the only 'civilized' man must look exactly like themselves." [131]

The idea for the village of Heyata Otunwe first came into fruition in 1829. Mahpiya Wicasta, a member of the Black Dog band of Dakota and was born sometime around 1795.[132] He had gained much respect amongst his community, proving himself as a great hunter, warrior, and leader he was moved to turn to an agricultural lifestyle. After surviving a (treacherous) near death experience in a snowstorm, the story of his survival is one that our family has told to one another for generations as family lore, and missionary Samuel Pond documented the story as told to him by Mahpiya Wicasta himself. This particular season, Mahpiya Wicasta led a group of men on a winter hunt, and they had been forced to travel a great distance from their summer villages due to the lack of game. The excursion had taken them to the plains near the Missouri River when the party was overtaken by a sudden blizzard. The storm was so violent that the hunters had to lay down, each wrapped in his furs. Mahpiya Wicasta could not communicate with his companions and did not know whether they were dead or alive. The men lay there for three days and nights under the snow. During this time, Mahpiya Wicasta reflected on the request that Indian agent Taliaferro had made urging his community to plant corn crops at Lake Calhoun the year before. When the storm was over, the men found that they were

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[131] Mary Wingerd, *North Country: The making of Minnesota,* (Minneapolis: University of Press, 2010), 107

[132] A second Cloud Man, who was from the Sissitunwan Dakota, is known to have existed during this era, both were signers of the Traverse De Sioux and Mendota 1851 treaties, causing much historical and genealogical confusion among both historians and descendants. It is the Bdewakantunwan Cloud Man, signer of the Mendota Treaty, I reference in this work.

near a "large camp of Indians who came to their assistance."[133] On returning home to Black Dog village, Mahpiya Wicasta persuaded a group of families to accept government assistance to start a new village in which agriculture would be emphasized for subsistence. They were given seed and farm tools, and by August of 1829 they began their new venture at farming.[134] By the third year the number of Dakota had grown from just 8 to 125 people.[135] By 1839 that community would grow to a total population of 207, including 72 men, 54 women, and 81 children. [136] The Spring1835 crop at Heyate Otunwe consisted of three acres of corn and one acre each of potatoes and cabbage, onions, and beets.[137] By September they had also acquired a cow and a yoke of oxen, purchased from a British colony residing north of the village site.[138]

Describing an average day in 1834 Samuel writes his mother Sarah,

> It is now a sabbath morning but a sabbath morning here is not like a sabbath In Washington. One Indian has been here to borrow my axe another to have me help him split a stick – (another now interrupts me he wants to borrow a hatchet) another has been after a trap which he left me another is now before my window at work with his axe while the women and children are screaming to keep the blackbirds out of their corn. Again I am interrupted by one who tells me that the Indian are going to play ball near our house today hundreds assemble on such occasions. What a congregation for a minister of Christ to preach to! But alas! As far as I know the "glad tidings" of salvation never sounded in the ears of the Dah-

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[133] 100th Anniversary of the Pond Period of Minneapolis History, Pond Family Scrapbooks, Minnesota Historical Society M187 Box 1 file 5
[134] Pond, *Dakota or Sioux in Minnesota,* 10–11. According to Taliaferro, the village was founded on August 15, 1829: Taliaferro journal, Sept. 4, 1830.
[135] Taliaferro journal, August 14, 1833. Minnesota Historical Society.
[136] Population data from Dakota Land History research files compiled by Bruce White from annuity roles 1839-1852.
[137] Samuel Pond to mother Sarah Pond, May 31st, 1835, Minnesota Historical Society
[138] Samuel Pond to Sara Pond, September 2, 1835, Pond Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

> co-tah; yet I cannot but hope that some will be gathered into the fold of Christ even from among this wild and savage nation.[139]

As Pond observes, a day at the mission site consisted of much activity, and it is apparent that the Dakota were enjoying their life as a community during this era, and they were hard at work learning how to work the plow and harvest crops. That they were expected by these newcomer missionaries to soon convert their spiritual ways, changing the fabric of their cultural selves and Indigenous ways in the process, was not likely something that they necessarily foresaw as important or forthcoming at this point. The significance that these types of observations, where daily living is documented, speak to the ways in which the Pond brothers' personal accounts are most beneficial to the Dakota historical record. While as problematic as the overall missionary agenda may seem to us today, or as hurtful as some of the cultural assumptions expressed may seem, they do leave a legacy in the archives that we can use to help us piece together what life was like for our ancestors at this time.

In January of 1835 Samuel described the mission site and village in a letter home, giving a very detailed description of how this area looked at the time, and how to locate it on foot from Fort Snelling, in the hopes of someday receiving visitors. He writes of crossing a stream of water that the Dakota had named "the little river" and a waterfall,[140] and passing burial mounds before reaching the Bde Maka Ska village, "through the corn fields in your way to the village here you would see the women and girls dressed in

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[139] Samuel W. Pond to Sarah Pond, August 24, 1834, Pond Family Papers, Box 1 File 8 Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

[140] Referencing Minnehaha Falls (Mni Haha) and Creek (Mni Cistinna). *Mn*i is the words for "water," *Haha* is descriptive of the rolling water of a waterfall, and *cistinna* means "small."

something like a petticoat and short gown taking care of their corn, if the corn was ripe enough to eat the men & boys would be there too, if not some of the men & boys would be after deer & fish and some of them would be doing nothing." In describing Dakota camp,

> A narrow lane which the women have fenced by setting up posts about as large as a person's wrist & tying slender poles to them with bark leads through the cornfields to the village. The village, which stands on the on the southeast side of the lake consists of 14 dwelling houses beside other small ones. The houses are large & two or three families live in some of them. You would not see our house from the village but turning to the right along the east bank of the lake and ascending a hill after walking nearly as far as your house to fathers you would find our house on the high ground which I mentioned before as covered with timber, between the woods and the lake.[141]

These descriptions offer very visual interpretations of what the land looked like at this time, and the locations, such as the waterfall and burial mounds, continue to be considered sacred sites for Dakota people today.

There is documentation that Dakota were planting corn as early as 1775, but never in large amounts. When they did undertake corn crops, they did so in the month of June. Women often planted in conical mounds where wild artichokes tended to grow, because here the soil was "richer and more mellow." Samuel Pond recalls, "They never planted until they found ripe strawberries, and then soaked their seed corn until it sprouted, planting it with their hands quite deep. As soon as it showed three or four leaves, they loosened the earth around it with their fingers, and when it was large enough hilled it up thoroughly with hoes. They usually planted a small kind of corn that ripened early, but

[141] Samuel Pond to Herman Hine, January 19th, 1835. Pond Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

they had larger kinds and often raised good crops." However, so little was sometimes harvested that the Dakota would eat the bulk of the crop before it ripened.[142]

Dakota people, seen in western anthropological terms were labeled, "hunters and gatherers" and were not traditionally viewed as farmers, though they historically cultivated smaller scale gardens at village sites. Nonetheless, their way of life did not fit so neatly under the western definition of *agriculture* because they traveled at different times of year in accordance with the seasons and harvested their food mostly from wild and native plants, rather than subsisting mostly off of plants that were not indigenous to the area. The Dakota traditionally harvested vegetation, which consisted of foods such as wild rice (psin), wild artichokes (pangi), wild turnips (tipsina), potatoes (bdo), and various berries to supplement their diet. [143] They also fished and made use of sugar bushes and wild flowers and other plants for both nutritional and medicinal use. Smaller scale 'garden' farming and natural vegetation had been sufficient in keeping people fed when game was in abundance, but the decline of the game due to overhunting by the fur trade industry meant that the traditional ways of food cultivation were simply no longer enough to meet their nutritional needs and when faced with starvation they would consume acorns and extract the sap of hickory chips by boiling it.[144]

Rather than being a case study for how the Dakota were transformed to fit into V. Gordon Childe's "Neolithic Revolution," transitioning from hunting and gathering to

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[142] Samuel Pond, *Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest,* 27
[143] Ibid. 27-28
[144] ibid. 29

food production through the domestication of plants and animals,[145] the experience of Heyata Otunwe gives us an example of how some Dakota Indigenous communities were not stagnant to making changes within traditional life ways, especially when the survival of the community depended on it. Throughout this era the Dakota continued to hunt when and wherever they could. Contrary to what historians have written about Dakota society using the binary model of farmer Dakota versus traditionalists. Dakota adjustments in their day-to-day adaptations did not mean that these communities were in any way forsaking their indigeneity and/or traditions. Community members were simply open to making changes in how they harvested food during times of need. However, this shift, which occurred during the most unjust of colonizing influences and circumstances, led to the first major change in Dakota dietary traditions; the people were now consuming larger quantities of corn (when crops were successful that is, in some seasons they were not) and started to include other non-indigenous foods into their diet.

Traditionally, in Dakota society it was the women who harvested and tended to crops. It was also women who performed much of the heavy labor in the camp. Women were the ones in charge of moving camp, which included putting up the tipi. Ohiyesa wrote, "The Dakota women were wont to cut and bring their fuel from the woods and, in fact, to perform most of the drudgery of the camp." Even though camp life was very laborious, the women who were strong and able bodied did not complain about this work.

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[145] Gordon Childe's term was not coined until 1923 but he attributes the domestication of plants and animals (vs. hunting and gathering) as a matter of survival due to climatic shift that occurred 15,000 to 5,000 years ago. This is one theory that explains the shift towards agriculture but it does not explain why others have waited, and some have not made this shift at all.

Ohiyesa goes on to remark, "This of necessity fell to their lot, because the men must follow the game during the day."[146] The hope of the government agents and missionaries was that these gender roles would be changed with the introduction of the plow into a new way of full-scale farming, and that the men would take on the bulk of the labor in these efforts. In 1839 Stephen Riggs, who had spent a summer visiting Heyata Otunwe in 1837 before being assigned to the nearby Lac qui Parle mission remarked, "The progress made in these branches of female labor has been, to one who sees the situation of that sex in this country, quite encouraging. To induce the men to cut wood and "make corn," and the women to sew, knit, spin, and weave – duties so essential to civilization – will not be the work of a day, nor a year, but of long and patient exertion."[147] Thus, the missionary agenda of "civilizing the Sioux" also required changes in the social structure of Dakota family life.

Though the men did join in on planting and harvest work at Bde Maka Ska, a job that both genders considered their role in the community, it was still considered to be more in line with "women's work" - likely much to the dismay of white "supervisors" such as Gideon Pond. In an 1837 letter penned by Gideon Pond to his sister Ruth he writes,

> The Indians at this village plant about 80 acres (I plowed only 15 acres for them this spring) as it has all been planted before it is comparatively easy for them to cultivate it with the hoe. This the women do mostly some of the men however help their wives through the whole of it (the corn belongs to the women). This

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[146] Charles Eastman, *Indian Boyhood*, 7

[147] Stephen R. Riggs The Missionary Herald, Vol. 35, 1839 pp.312-314. Minnesota Historical Society

year they have harvested about 2300 bush. Of corn and will probably have about 200 bush. of potatoes. Each woman has her little field to take care of.[148]

The role of the women in the fields was also to watch out for blackbirds, of which there were two threatening varieties that wreaked havoc on the crops. A well - known painting by military officer and artist Seth Eastman titled "Guarding the Cornfields" documents this act in a visual representation of every day life - a Dakota woman standing on a scaffold platform scaring away the birds. Elders and children also often enjoyed taking part in this all day activity as well. There are a few other paintings documenting life at Bde Maka Ska in existence. On July 4th 1836 George Catlin attended a Dakota lacrosse game and he painted portraits of Taliaferro and Black Dog, but never was able to get a sitting with Mahpiya Wicasta, and there are no paintings or photographs that capture his likeness in existence[149].

[148] Gideon Pond to Ruth Pond, 1837. Pond Family papers, Minnesota Historical Society

[149] Mark Dietrich, *A Good Man in a Changing World: Cloud Man, the Dakota Leader, and His Life and Times.* (Ramsey County History Vol. 36 Spring 2001), 13

Seth Eastman, "Guarding the Corn Fields" 1853[150]

As chapter one illustrates, the relationship between the Pond brothers and the Dakota was an interesting combination of both need and considerable lack of trust or respect. Though some of the Dakota valued their friendship with the brothers enough to give them the Dakota names Wambdi Duta (Red Eagle) and Mato Hota (Grey Bear)[151] the two men had very little patience for Dakota who did not want to convert to Christianity or who did not take to the agricultural life style in the manner and to the degree they found acceptable. It was likely that there were many Dakota who did not value their close proximity as neighbors and both cultural conflict and miscommunication were common issues, this was not an utopic society by any means, but for the most part the Dakota were able to survive and able to sustain themselves.

In illustrating the significance of this site to Dakota history, and to my family story in particular, I can ascertain that part of its draw as a place for research and study is that it was such a well documented village, due to the abundance of materials that are available to uncover its story. By reading between the lines of this historical record it becomes apparent that Bde Maka Ska presented an interesting dynamic during the pre-war era in that it showed cooperation and being adaptable to a changing environment. Though not perfect solutions by any means they were attainable while keeping true to the

[150] Minnesota Historical Society.
[151] Letter dated December 28th 1839 from S Riggs to the Pond brothers (addressed to their Dakota names Wanmdiduta and Matorota)

Dakota virtue of Wowacina (Dependability) because they worked to give back to their own. As stated previously, the leader and tribal members of this tiospaye expressed great Wowaditika (Bravery) as well. It is not ever an easy decision to venture off on a new path for anyone, and those at this site had great faith in their creator when they decided to test the waters at Bde Maka Ska.

The reality of this community is not that they were farmers who gave up their Dakota spiritual ways. The decision by Mahpiya Wicasta and his community to take up agriculture can be viewed as acculturation rather than assimilation to western values and culture. Though complete assimilation was Indian agent Taliaferro's ultimate goal -- calling "his" Eatonville "my little Colony of Sioux agriculturists," he would declare responsibility and even ownership over the village. The Dakota community had no intention of changing their culture, language, or traditions at this time. It would be another thirty years before a large scale conversion would really take place, and this story is best told with a fuller picture of the war of 1862 being told, but even then there is no reason to believe that adopting the religious ways of another culture, or attempting to learn to speak English, meant that the old ways were gone.

Regardless, Heyata Otunwe, or "Eatonville," as Taliaferro and other whites preferred to call it, was viewed as an experiment to see if the Dakota could live up western standards, which implied that a combination of Christianity and agriculture equaled a truly civilized body of peoples.[152] This perspective sees Mahpiya Wicasta and his fellow band members as pawns of civilization, on a "progressive" path to assimilation

[152] Taliaferro journal, Sept. 4, 1830, Minnesota Historical Society

towards European ways, and this is how this story often gets told, as if the Dakota had no choice in the matter of whether to participate in this community. From Mahpiya Wicasta's perspective, however, he had a decision to make for the future of his people, and this chance that he took towards a life based on western agricultural standards was supported economically by the local Indian agent and missionaries. These men had had a strong influence to be sure, but the decision was not made against Mahpiya Wicasta's will. It was a time of transformation for the Dakota. Mahpiya Wicasta's decision was not merely economic or cultural but also political, a move toward self-sufficiency. In a time of great unrest and economic and political instability, the Dakota at Bde Maka Ska, with a dependable source of food, were achieving food stability, which they were hoping might bring independence from full government control.

Mahpiya Wicasta was attempting to assert his autonomy as a Dakota by using the benefits of what was offered so that his people would not have to rely entirely on annuities from treaties, which during this time were often late or of poor quality. If his community had relied entirely on what was offered by traders, who often raised their prices to exorbitant amounts with no regulations by the United States government, they would have starved. This leader had a difficult choice to make at this juncture, and he opted to try another way of life for a time, to ensure the future survival of the community. Certain traditional ways of the Dakota were becoming less and less viable, especially with the decline of buffalo from the western regions of the Dakota homelands. The requirement to fend for themselves and feed their families was ever present, and in this sense Mahpiya Wicasta's goals were in tune with that of Taliaferro and the Ponds. He

was a true leader, surviving and weighing future options for his community, but this was not where his vision ended.

Mahpiya Wicasta was not seeking to become something other than a Dakota person. He did not intend to forsake his identity as a Dakota man; he was simply making an honest attempt to adapt to his surroundings, changing with the times as any human being, as well as any community, must in order to live. The change in subsistence patterns did not make the people of this village any less Dakota. Its members not only tried to feed themselves more efficiently but shared their wealth in a typically Dakota way, with neighboring bands, thus ensuring the survival of even more Dakota people. In September 1835, Taliaferro felt the need to lecture the people of Mahpiya Wicasta's village "to explain fully to the Indians -- not to give their corn away to others of their relations -- with other matter of importance to their interests." Despite the fact that the people in this village embraced agriculture, Taliaferro was never able to convince them to stop being Dakota and crop contributions were continuously made to Dakota relatives from other villages.[153] This was why the community was seen as a "failed experiment" in the eyes of those who promoted it, because they could never seem to convince the Dakota to dry and store food for the winter and to only take care of themselves; on the contrary the Dakota saw this as hoarding and it went against the Dakota wicohan[154] of sharing what you have with the whole.

Contemporary scholars claiming to be sensitive to Dakota perspectives often perpetuate the binary reading of Heyata Otunwe as a "failed experiment" without

[153] Taliaferro journal, Sept. 7, 1835. Minnesota Historical Society.
[154] Dakota Wicohan can be translated as the Dakota "way of life"

questioning the limited gaze of this observation. We see this in the work of Mark Dietrich, Gary Clayton Anderson, and countless others, and at this point is has become an always expected phrase when speaking about Mahpiya Wicasta and his community. However, Mahpiya Wicasta's village was not a failure because it guaranteed the survival of not only his people, but of neighboring Dakota communities, thus ensuring the future lives of their descendants. This was a man that could not predict the future, but who had agency and he made a choice – to take on attributes of a new lifestyle that incorporated pieces of the old along with the new. He saw his people hungry, watched his children and grandchildren struggle, and did what he needed to do -- and for a period of time it worked and the profits from this site nourished many Dakota people from various villages.

It is unknown how long Mahpiya Wicasta intended to remain at the village site; the Dakota had traditionally not stayed at one location throughout the year for this long, though they did still leave the site to hunt on occasion as they always had, and never gave up on the hunt as an important resource for food, hides, and trade. Mahpiya Wicasta's band abandoned the site due to fear of retaliation from the Ojibwe following a war between the two nations in 1839. This community continued to emphasize agriculture in the years following, when they relocated to a new site on the Minnesota River near Bloomington. The Pond brothers formed the Oak Grove Mission site here, near the settlement of Mahpiya Wicasta and his band in 1843. After loss of lands from the Traverse Des Sioux and Mendota treaties of 1851, Mahpiya Wicasta's band was removed to a site along the Minnesota River near what is Yellow Medicine county near Granite

Falls, where government agents built him a house made of brick.[155] He resided here until war broke out in 1862. At this time Mahpiya Wicasta was among those placed in the concentration camp at Fort Snelling over the winter of 1863. He died there and was buried "within sight of the valley he loved so well and not far from where he was born."[156]

The legacy of Mahpiya Wicasta lived on after his death and has served as a source of inspiration to his descendants. His grandson Ohiyesa (Charles Eastman) would survive the exile of his Oyate[157] from the ancestral Minnesota homeland, fleeing his home village up into Canada near Manitoba at the age of four with his uncle and paternal grandmother. In later years would write this recollection of his maternal grandfather before the war,

> As I remember him, small as I was. Chief Cloud Man was very fine looking old. His hair was pure white, silky and wavy, altho he must have close to hundred years in 1862, he was active. He comes to my paternal grand mother's sugar camp, "to see little Hak a dah" that was my childhood name. He had three daughters and two sons. Anpetu inajinwin ("The Day Sets" or "The Day Finishes"), Hanye tu kihn ayewin (Hushes-still-the-night) and Wakan inajin win (Stands Sacred, or Stands Holy, or Stands Mysteriously) but it was meant the first translation. The last is my grand mother. They were all unusually beautiful and spirited one all of them married officers.[158]

It's clear from Ohiyesa's interpretation that great pride was taken in being the grandson of Mahpiya Wicasta (Cloud Man), and the family retained strong kinship ties even after marriage took them to separate camps.

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[155] The 100th Anniversary of the Pond Period of Minneapolis History 1834-1934. Minnesota History Center Pond Family Scrapbooks M187
[156] The 100th Anniversary of the Pond Period of Minneapolis History 1834-1934. Minnesota History Center Pond Family Scrapbooks M187
[157] Dakota word for a group of people that constitute a nation or tribe.
[158] Ohiyesa to H.M. Hitchcock of Minneapolis, MN on September 8 1927. Ayer Collection Newberry Library Chicago, IL

Scholars do not always recognize these interracial unions as valid marriages, however, nor do they acknowledge the existence of mixed race children and grandchildren of Dakota leaders as being authentically Dakota. In fact Gary Clayton Anderson, in his work often describes the marriages between Dakota women and with white or mixed blood men involved in the fur trade as being "purchases." As if Dakota women were goods to be bought and sold.[159] The Dakota had always intermarried with neighboring communities of people, but the reasoning behind the unions between Dakota women and white men was unique. These men, usually soldiers or agents in the fur trade, had taken Dakota wives in order to infiltrate Dakota communities as a strategy to build relationships for purposes of social acceptance. Catherine J. Denial argues in her recent book *Making Marriage: Husbands and Wives & the American State in Dakota & Ojibwe Country* that the Dakota and incoming white populations had their own views and investment in the connections made from these unions.

> …marriage, an economic almost always sexual partnership sealed by the exchange of goods, homes, vows, and sometimes names – encapsulated central truths about each cultural group that met in the upper Midwest. Each community maintained a specific sense of what marriage meant, how it should be celebrated, and what responsibilities were inherent in it's practice: marriage provided a blueprint for social cohesion.[160]

Though social networking was actually akin to Dakota views on marriage, which rested on the function and survival of community life rather than just personal pleasure (though this is not to say people did not marry for love), the difference here lied in the overall

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[159] Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota White Relations In the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997), 67-68

[160] Catherine J. Denial, *Making Marriage: Husbands and Wives & the American State in Dakota & Ojibwe Country* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2013) 56

long term agenda of these relationships. Often these men had no intention of staying with their Dakota wives and would leave them, children included, once they felt that had achieved whatever goal they were seeking.[161] To the Dakota, however, these relationships were like sacred ceremonial smoking of the pipe, they were meant to bring people together and create relationships of trust.

Anderson's critique on the village of Heyate Otunwe specifically makes far reaching assumptions about Mahpiya Wicasta's role in Dakota society, belittles the work that Dakota villages put into their crops, and worse yet makes judgmental interpretations on the racial make up of Mahpiya Wicasta's grandchildren. He relates, "Eatonville residents were not agricultural entrepreneurs. If anything, they represented a Dakota subculture. The founders, Cloud Man and Keiyah,[162] had strong kinship alliances with whites, relations that actually subverted their formal tribal roles as warriors. Three of Cloud Man's daughters took white husbands and raised mixed blood families, making his extended family more an appendage of white than of Dakota society."[163] To describe an entire family as an "appendage" of whites and to determine that these relatives were not a part of Dakota society, thereby stripping them of their identity as Dakota people is not only unfair it is racially insensitive and culturally presumptuous.

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[161] Mary Wingerd, *North Country; The Making of Minnesota,* 148

[162] Likely an incorrect spelling of the name "Keya," a relative of Mahpiya Wicasta at Bde Maka Ska whose daughter married Philander Prescott, a former interpreter who ran a trading post and was killed in the 1862 war.

[163] Gary Clayton Anderson. *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1962* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997), 144

That Mahpiya Wicasta created relationships with the men that married his daughters did not in any way take away from his status as a warrior, which was a separate role that he played in Dakota society as a young man before becoming a much respected elder and leader in Dakota society. There was no great shame brought upon him, and he was not ousted from the tiospaye (which would have been the appropriate action had he lost any kind of status with his community).

Ella Deloria writes that, "Kinship ties being that important blood connections were assiduously traced and remembered, no matter how far back, if only they could be definitely established. That was no easy feat either, since there were no records. However distant a relative might seem according to the white man's method of reckoning, he would be claimed by Dakotas."[164] As Deloria describes Dakota society it is apparent that issues with Dakota of mixed race, and debates over who can authentically be declared Dakota had became based on outside interpretations.

Mahpiya Wicasta and his wife Canpadutawin (Choke Cherry Woman) had three daughters that entered unions with white men, but the children born out of these unions were not considered any less Indian in Dakota society simply because they were mixed race. Lawrence Taliaferro married Anpetuinazinwin (Day Rises Woman) the daughter of Mahpiya Wicasta in this fashion. Captain Seth Eastman, who had been stationed at Fort Snelling, married Wakaninazinwin (Stands Sacred), which produced a daughter, Wakantankawin, also known as Winona[165](English name Mary Nancy Eastman). Out of

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[164] Ella Deloria, *Speaking of Indians,* 102

[165] Kinship term for "first born daughter" Mary Nancy was also known by her Dakota name of Wakantankawin.

mixed blood unions Mahpiya Wicasta had four granddaughters total.[166] One of these granddaughters was placed with the Pond family as they were leaving their mission site by Bde Maka Ska and moving to another site in Bloomington. The father of the child (father by the name of Lamont) had passed away and the reasoning behind this placement by the Dakota mother is not well known.[167]

The unions between both Lawrence Taliafero and Anpetuinazinwin, and Seth Eastman and Wakaninazinwin did not last - as both men left their Dakota wives and children to pursue their careers in other territories and went on to marry white women. Seth Eastman returned with his white wife, Mary Eastman to Fort Snelling in 1840 for a duration of seven years, and though there is no documentation of him having any further contact with Wakaninazinwin he did arrange for Henry Sibley to accommodate supplies for his daughter as needed, just as Taliaferro arranged for his Dakota daughter, Mary, to receive a claim of land under the treaty of 1837.[168]

Oral history within the family of Wakaninazinwin and Wakantankawin tells that Eastman's daughter did care for her fathers wife in their home when she was unwell, but it is unclear what the details of their relationship was. Even though Mary Eastman wrote extensively about her time at Fort Snelling she failed to mention the existence of her husbands Dakota child. Sadly, Wakantankawin developed acute tonsillitis shortly after the birth of her youngest son Ohiyesa (Charles Eastman) in 1858 and was cared for at the home of her grandfather Mahpiya Wicasta until she died of her illness. Her son Ohiyesa

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[166] Elizabeth Williams, Mary Taliaferro, Jane Lamont, and Mary Nancy Eastman
[167] Jane Lamm Carroll, '*Who Was Jane Lamont?' Anglo-Dakota Daughters in Early Minnesota* (Minnesota History Magazine, Spring 2005), 186
[168] Mark Dietrich, 13

would later recount that, "She was buried about 20 rods southwest from the farmhouse situated about a mile or so east the old agency stone house, on a knoll where or near the brick building of her grandfather Chief Cloud Man [Mahpiya Wicasta] had stood." [169]

Wakantankawin (Mary Nancy Eastman) [170]

Sadly, Seth Eastman's desertion of his Dakota descendants leaves an impression that he was not as compassionate towards the fate of his grandchildren as she could have been. Wakaninazinwin's son's Hinhan Duta (Red Owl, later known as John) and Hepidan (David) continued to reside in Minnesota with their father Tawakanhdiota (Many

[169] Ohiyesa to Hitchcock of Minneapolis, MN on September 8 1927. Ayer Collection Newberry Library Chicago, IL

[170] Sketch by Frank Blackwell Mayer. Ayer Collection Newberry Library Chicago, IL.

Lightenings[171]) and three other siblings after the death of their mother but were caught up in the Dakota United States War of 1862. It is during this time period when these families became separated, a division that is still in existence today. When our ancestors were scattered by war and exile, only small tiospaye groups were able to reconvene. Some Dakota who fled as far as Canada never returned home to the region where their relatives found themselves in South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, North Dakota (and eventually even back in Minnesota). Today these descendants are residing all over the world, in great numbers, survivors of a strong community of people who outlived all outsider expectations of their demise.

Bde Maka Ska has survived as well, though today this place looks very different then it did in its original state. Indigenous plant life is now gone, covered by concrete. With a major metropolis skyline as a backdrop it is easy to forget that this place to has a story and a name that precedes common knowledge of this city. Nearby street names such as Hennepin and Nicollet idolize white men who visited this territory and created their own stories about this place, without paying respect to a much longer history, a story that deserves to be told and honored in more adequate ways. The Twin Cities area is a place haunted by a past that was, for the most part, strategically forgotten by its own residents for many years. But within these spaces the spirits of ancestors still buried here remain, as does the love of these places by their descendants who still have every intention of protecting the body and legacy of this place. Today many in the local American Indian community have begun to use the name Bde Maka ska in place of Lake Calhoun when

[171] Later after converting to Christianity Tawakanhdiota (Many Lightenings) would take the Jacob Eastman, taking the English surname of his deceased wife.

referencing this space within the local Native community, an act of decolonization that reflects the strong ties that indigenous people still maintain with this space.

David Martinez writes "when Eastman [Ohiyesa] recalls that his elders, be it his mother or his grandfather, Cloud Man, not to mention ancestors such as Jingling Thunder, lived along the Minnesota River, where St. Paul and Minneapolis stand today, he is doing more than expressing his nostalgia. Instead, he is making an ethical and political assertion that American Indians, such as the Dakota, possess an inalienable right to claim an ongoing and sovereign place in modern American society."[172] The need to tell our stories speaks to this act of reclamation, which is an assertion to reclaim not only our role in this society from which we were exiled, but is interpretive of a movement towards self-empowerment with the ultimate goal of asserting the right to care for the regional lands that we honor as our birthplace into this world.

There is always hope that our history at Bde Maka Ska will someday be adequately recognized, and uncovering this history is the first step in this process. As Gwen Westerman and Bruce White state in *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota*, this is "the land where the waters are so clear they reflect the clouds. This land is where our grandmothers' grandmothers played as children. Carried in our collective memories are stories of this place that reach beyond recorded history."[173] It is within the hearts of the descendants of the Dakota people who lived along the shores of Bde Maka Ska that these stories remain living today, and this space will always be home.

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[172] Martinez, David *Dakota Philosopher: Charles Eastman and American Indian Thought,* 152

[173] *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota.* Gwen Westerman and Bruce White, 13

Chapter 3: Dakota Okicize k'a Nażicapi
"The Dakota War & Exile": In Our Own Words

Every summer after church service on our reservation in South Dakota my sisters and I would make an annual trip to the cemetery to visit our relatives. At these gravesites an offering to the spirit world, usually tobacco or candy, was placed at the bottom of each tombstone to let our ancestors know that we honored and remembered them. The graves of our grandfathers Tawakanhditota (Many Lightenings) and John Eastman (Mahpyawakankida or "Worshipping Cloud") were of special importance. This father and son had lived through the Dakota war of 1862, and they are the oldest in our family to be placed here. These were the first gravesites in which members of our family were buried away from our ancestral homelands and put underground in a marked cemetery of the Christian tradition.[174] Off in the corner of the lot also sat the grave of Taoyateduta (His Red Nation), more commonly known by the name that the whites called him, Little Crow. He was not a direct ancestor of ours, but as a Dakota he was our relative none the same. My sisters and I would set candy bars down at his gravestone because we knew that he was an important figure in our community and that he had made a long journey before returning home to his relatives at Flandreau. But it was not until we were adults that we knew he was most prominently widely acknowledged as the leader of the 1862

[174] Traditionally Dakota were interned on scaffolds, usually placed at a high point near the village, such as a hill.

Dakota war or that his body had once been on display in a Minnesota museum as a trophy of war.[175]

Though some Dakota people today do have grandparents that are able to relate knowledge of their personal family experiences during the time of the 1862 war, many of these remembrances only tell pieces of the story, and often descendants are left with just as many questions as they have answers in regards to their own family connection to the war and its aftermath. In order to make sense of these histories and fill in the gaps of family records we must read historical texts written by scholars that come from outside of our communities, which have oftentimes historically offered biased interpretations of our ancestors as "defeated peoples." We also investigate the archives independently in order to reinterpret the materials left behind by non-Dakota missionaries and government agents. However, often missing from the majority of the materials that exists about the war era are the firsthand personal experiences of Dakota families – a vital element in humanizing this history of genocide.

I am fortunate in that my ancestors who experienced the war era as children, as well as the generation that followed, left some of their own personal remembrances behind in their writing. This was a new medium of expression for these two generations introduced to them while they were imprisoned following the war. My grandmother Grace Moore writes briefly of her father John and grandfather Tawakanhdiota's experience in her journals, and her recollections parallel those of her uncle Ohiyesa

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[175] Taoyateduta's remains, formally on display at the Minnesota Historical Society, was repatriated to his descendants and buried at Flandreau First Presbyterian Church cemetery in 1971. See David Beaulieu, *The Fate of Little Crow,* 1863-1970. Minnesota Historical Society

(Charles Eastman), who at only four years old in 1862 is one of the few Dakota people to write and publish their own account of that time period. These recollections not only express a timeline of Eastman family experiences during the war, they also relate very pertinent information in documenting the Eastman family conversion to Christianity, and the creation of the Flandreau tribal community in South Dakota that was founded after the diaspora.

Aside from remembrances included in his books, Ohiyesa also left behind two unpublished manuscripts to his children, now in the possession of his great grand daughter Dr. Gail Johnson, a retired linguist living in upstate New York. Her mother had inherited boxes of manuscripts and correspondence from Ohiyesa's daughter Eleanor Eastman Mensel (her mother) and passed them down to Gail - who then graciously shared copies of the documents with me for this project. In the untitled manuscript (simply referred to here as "the unpublished manuscript"), Ohiyesa composes an interesting narrative of many stories and remembrances, and even includes an account passed down to him of father Louis Hennepin's journey into the Minnesota region in the late 17th century. This early documentation of oral history discusses Hennepin's journey to Owamniyomni ("St. Anthony Falls" located in present day Minneapolis), and Ohiyesa states that his ancestors were descendants of a chief by the name of Akipakte, who was present in the party that found Hennepin and his men near the mouth of the Wisconsin River.[176] Both manuscripts, though quite short in length,[177] also shed more light on our

[176] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript,* p 4. This history is significant because it Hennepin made the claim that he was the first to visit and "discover" Owamniyomni, which he named "St. Anthony Falls."

grandfather Ohiyesa's experience during the war, and his family flight from Minnesota, than are found in his published texts. These remembrances are included here as part of a larger Eastman family narrative for the first time.

Nearly everyone who has critiqued Ohiyesa's writing asserts that he wrote for a white audience, and given that he turned to writing as a means to provide financial support for his family, this may very well be true. But his overall intent was actually to pass down knowledge and share information with anyone and everyone – including his descendants. This is made apparent in the dedication of his first book *Indian Boyhood,* published in 1902, when he writes,

> The following chapters are the imperfect record of my boyish impressions and experiences up to the age of fifteen years. I have put together these fragmentary recollections of my thrilling wild life expressly for the little son who came too late to behold for himself the drama of savage existence. I dedicate this little book, with love to Ohiyesa the second, my son.

Ohiyesa's only son Charles Jr. (also known as Ohiyesa II) was born in 1898, and he and his five sisters (Dora, Irene, Virginia, Eleanor, and Florence) were the inspiration for much of their father's work and writings. All of his children were well versed in their cultural history, stories, and songs, and even participated as children in a family run camp to express the importance of these cultural teachings for many years called "Camp Oahe" on Granite Lake in Munsonville, New Hampshire.

Ohiyesa's writing works as a modernized rendition of the oral history tradition not just for Ohiyesa the second, but for the entire Eastman family. In sorting through each of

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[177] One document titled "The Execution of Little Six and Medicine Bottle" is only three pages single typed. The other document is 30 pages (all numbered), followed by a page numbered 45 where it breaks off, meaning that unfortunately there are numerous pages missing.

the published as well as unpublished texts penned by Ohiyesa, and pairing these remembrances with other oral history recollections of family and community members, (as well as utilizing information from historical texts and archival documents) a less fragmented picture of the Eastman family history can be pieced together that describes the experiences that our relatives suffered through in order to sustain their own connections as a family and community.

The Dakota war, the hanging of Dakota warriors, and the extermination of our ancestors from the Minnesota region are fundamentally necessary topics to include in any discussion of Dakota history in the 19th century, and it is no wonder that Ohiyesa writes about the Dakota war in at least four of his published works.[178] However, as David Martinez observes, "Eastman consistently refrains from graphically describing the horrors he either witnessed or heard about from others." The reasons for this can only be surmised but Martinez asserts that it, "may be the result of Eastman's medical training, but it also may be symptomatic of having endured traumatic events firsthand."[179] Although it is quite likely that Ohiyesa experienced historical trauma as a child refugee of war, he chooses to focus primarily on the positive aspects of tribal life in his work. I believe this reveals his strict adherence to the traditional Dakota virtue of remaining positive (known as wobdehedic'ya) and having compassion (wowaunsida). In both of his

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[178] This project looks specifically at those writings as personal historical recollection. Though Ohiyesa's 1907 work *Old Indian Days* includes stories that include real life situations and events, it is written in short story form rather than memoir and is thus not included at length here. This work has also been well covered by David Martinez in *From The Land of the Sky Blue Water: Charles A. Eastman, Minnesota, and the U.S. –Dakota Conflict*

[179] David Martinez, *From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water: Charles Eastman, Minnesota, and the 1862 U.S. –Dakota Conflict.* (2006), 23

memoirs he uses the war as context, as a metaphor almost, for the larger struggle in life in which his narrative is placed. Here he relates the strength that his relatives demonstrated during times of great duress, and shows the positive attributes of Dakota values in facing hardship before and after colonization.

Remembering the 38

On December 26th 1862, thirty-eight of our Dakota warriors were hanged in the largest mass execution in United States history. My grandfather, Flandreau tribal elder Sid Byrd, adamantly believes that these men are Dakota patriots who died so that the people could live, and their only crime was participation in warfare protesting the treatment of our people.[180]

The six weeks of battles and the aftermath of the Dakota war, led to the forced exile of all Dakota people from Mni Sota Makoce[181]as well as the hanging of our warriors.[182] This violence has left a permanent impact, a wound not since healed, on our Dakota communities through the present. But though the mass execution of our men is one very significant element to this story, which has become more widely known in recent years, there is a larger history to this time period as well – the theft of our land, the imprisonment and banishment of all Dakota people, and the ongoing effects and repercussions that this time period had on our communities.

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[180] Sid Byrd interview, Flandreau, SD January 15th 2009
[181] Land where the water reflects the sky
[182] Often referred to as " the 38+2" in reference to the hanging of Sakpe and Medicine Bottle in 1865 at Fort Snelling, also sentenced to death for their participation in the 1862 war.

Many Dakota people face a sense of displacement and confusion over why their own families ended up so far from their homeland at the locations they did. This lack of historical knowledge on our removal as well as the policies that enacted our extermination from Minnesota can be attributed to a number of things. Some of this can be attributed to the disintegration in the ways in which information about our past has been passed down, as a result from the breakdown in the traditional way of communicating history and teachings over time, to a sort of historical amnesia that is common in our contemporary society.

The unwillingness by some Dakota from an earlier generation to pass down the stories can also still be attributed to the historical trauma that Martinez argues Ohiyesa suffered from, where silence is often a coping mechanism employed by those who experienced the trauma first hand. These hurts are then handed down to subsequent generations in the form of either anger, or sadness, (a condition known as intergenerational trauma). One effect of the inheritance of this trauma is that the ways others interpret this history becomes believable within our own communities (even when this history is written by those who called for our demise) - simply because we do not know any other truth. Frankie Jackson (Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota) reflects on being raised as a Dakota in exile, "Growing up on a reservation that resides outside of Minnesota you're told that you're from Santee or you're placed at Crow Creek, or you're in Flandreau because you're ancestors were bad. That's what history tells us."[183] This

[183] *The Past is Alive Within Us: The U.S. – Dakota Conflict*, Producer Steve Spencer/Field Producer and Director Emily Goldberg (2013: Twin Cities Public Television)

interpretation of Dakota people as "bad Indians" is thus carried forward today. Instead of continuing with the notion that our people had done bad deeds and were then cast away to reservation life, a more complete version of this story must be painted so that we can reconcile and heal from these events, and for many this requires a deeper understanding of our personal family connection to this era – which is the reason why I have compiled these accounts here.

Ohiyesa's Experience

During the early to mid 19th century reports of Dakota on non-Indian violence were few, a Fort Snelling Indian agent Lawrence Taliaferro asserts that a Dakota had killed no white man while he was in office from 1819 to 1840.[184] Extensive networks of kinship and trade were developed over time through intermarriage. This is not to say that clashes did not occur, these interactions were rife with cultural misunderstanding and as traditional natural resources became more scarce, (mainly due to unjust treaty stipulations, over-hunting and corrupt practices of the fur trade industry) altercations between the Indigenous peoples and an increasingly unwelcome incoming population was inevitable.

Ohiyesa's grandparents had lived to see the arrival of the first missionaries to Mni Sota Makoce[185] in the 1830's at Fort Snelling and Bde Maka Ska,[186] and though they had not yet become Christian, his tiyospaye continued to live in close proximity to the missionaries and had taken up farming. At the time of his birth the family was residing

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[184] Pond, Samuel W. *Dakota Life in the Upper Midwest,* 63

[185] The word Minnesota is derived from the Dakota name for this region, *Mni Sota* or "Where the Waters Reflect the Sky" and *makoce* is the word for "land."

[186] Lake Calhoun

with their tiospaye along the southern bank of the Minnesota River near the present day town of Redwood Falls. Ohiyesa's father Tawakanhdiota (Many Lightenings) was a leader of the aging Mankato's (Blue Earth) band in the early 1860's.[187] His wife, Wakantankawin (daughter of Mahpiya Wicasta "Cloud Man") died shortly after giving birth to their fifth child, Hakadah (The Pitiful Last) in February of 1858.[188] This child would later be called Ohiyesa (The Winner) and his Dakota family, of both Bdewakantunwan and Wahpetunwan ties, were living during a time of great economic and social unrest.

By this time, the Dakota had been relegated to living on a small tract of land, no longer free to roam as they once had. They were unable to hunt and fish on ceded lands as had been promised in previous treaty negotiations.[189] Of this time period Ohiyesa would write,

> The immediate causes of Sioux Outbreak of 1862 came in quick succession to inflame to desperate action an outraged people. The two bands on the so-called "lower reservations" in Minnesota were Indians for whom nature had provided most abundantly in their free existence. After one hundred and fifty years of friendly intercourse with first (?), then the English, and finally the Americans, they found themselves cut off from every natural resource, on a tract of land twenty miles by thirty, which to them was virtual imprisonment[190]

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[187] Charles Eastman *Indians and Great Chieftains* (1918. Reprint, Teddington UK: Echo Library 2007), 22

[188] In a letter written by Ohiyesa he states, "I was born in Feb. which was recorded by my mothers half breed friend. " See Charles Eastman letter to Hitchcock, September 21, 1930, Newberry Library Ayer Collection. In this letter Ohiyesa also describes the cause of his mother's death as tonsillitis. Ohiyesa would later record in the first page of his *Unpublished Manuscript* that he was born February 19th, 1858 during a "terrible winter storm."

[189] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript,* 22

[190] Charles Eastman *Indians and Great Chieftains Little Crow*, 21

As Ohiyesa states, the forced removals to reservations had completely stripped his people of the liberties they had managed to retain since European contact. Ohiyesa continues in his unpublished account,

> When the Eastern Sioux thus disposed of their lands in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Northern Iowa, they went onto a reservation, which they reserved out of the lands they sold. This session of land by the Sioux, supposed to be the richest agricultural country in the whole United States, was to be sold to the government for ten cents ($.10) per acre. While the United States agreed and did establish a trust fund of over three million dollars at five per cent interest, besides annuities to be issued to them in provisions and clothing, and to provide a doctor for each tribe, also a school teacher, blacksmith, etc. The interest of this trust fund, the United States agreed to pay in hard money to the Indians annually. It was agreed definitely that the Indians reserve their fishing and hunting privileges on the lands, which they sold, to the United States.[191]

Here Ohiyesa is referring to the two treaties between the United States and the Dakota in 1951, in which the Bdewakantunwan and Wahpekute, under the Treaty of Mendota and the Sissetunwan and Wahpetunwan, were under the Treaty of Traverse De Sioux, lost most of their landbase. He is correct in his description, except that the lands were actually sold for closer to 7.4 cents an acre, and he fails to mention that Dakota leaders had been swindled into signing a second paper, known as "The Traders Paper," in which a third of their cash payments went to traders to satisfy years of debts accumulated on price inflated goods.[192]

Ohiyesa also states that three quarters of the Dakota actually opposed the treaty of 1851, "claiming that no band of the Sioux nation owned any specific piece of land

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[191] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript,* 23

[192] Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs Laws and Treaties,* Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904. "Treaty with The Sioux – Mdewakanton and Wahpakoota Bands, 1851." p.954

belonging to the nation." He asserts that those who signed the treaty had no right to sell, and that certain chiefs had their lives threatened for their participation in this compact with the United States.[193] Cash annuities promised from the trust fund were never dispersed during the three years as had been promised, and he also argues that since that time "historians and others writers" claim that gold was sent to the Dakota to cover the annuities, but that politicians and government agents intercepted this money for their own personal profit.[194]

David A. Nichols documents one such politician, Henry Hastings Sibley, the first Governor of the state of Minnesota,

> Sibley entered politics in 1848 and in 1849 was elected territorial delegate to Congress. He continued in the fur trade and represented the traders at the Sioux treaty negotiations of 1851. That treaty promised the Santee Sioux $475,000 in exchange for land. Henry Sibley succeeded in claiming $145,000 of that amount as money due him for overpayments to the Sioux for furs! The Sioux objected to this obvious fraud, but agent Alexander Ramsey approved the claim. Henry Sibley became a rich man and in 1856 was commissioned a major general in the militia. He became the first governor of the state of Minnesota in 1858. His successor as governor was, not surprisingly, Alexander Ramsey.[195]

Suspect actions by fur trade industry leader turned politician Henry Hastings Sibley (who personally profited from the Traders Paper in 1851), reflect the reasons why Dakota tribal members were so wary of the treaties and the people who drafted them. They rightfully accredited much of the losses in game and land that they were experiencing at this time to these men and the shady dealings that they promoted.

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193 Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript,* 1-2
194 ibid 2
195 David A. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 19

By 1855 the Minnesota non-Indian population had grown from less than five thousand in 1849 to more than fifty-three thousand. In another two years this number would increase to one hundred and fifty three thousand people. This flood included American born citizens as well as European immigrants from Germany, Ireland, and other countries.[196] As Dakota history scholar Iyekiyapiwin (Darlene St. Clair, Lower Sioux Dakota) states, the migration of people that came into Minnesota territory after treaties opened the way for settlement is more accurately described from a Dakota perspective as an invasion.[197] At this point the relationships built by years of co-existence with whites were becoming damaged beyond repair as both their traditional resources and land base were swindled out from under them. It had also become more apparent to some that white fur traders and officials lived with and/or married Dakota women for personal profit rather than community welfare.[198]

Minnesota Episcopal Bishop Henry Whipple, one of the most vocal advocates for Indian administration reform, once stated that "the Indian department was the most corrupt in our government" and in need of a complete system overhaul that focused more on Indian welfare and less career prestige and monetary gain for white officials.[199] David A. Nichols acknowledges that Whipple was not the only critic, but that many were discouraged by the sheer magnitude of the problem, as corruption had become such an

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[196] Mary Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 245
[197] Iyekiyapiwin, Darlene St. Clair, Panel Discussion: The Dakota Exile: Impact and Resistance. University of Minnesota, March 14th 2014
[198] Gary Clayton Anderson, *Little Crow: Spokesman for the Sioux* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1986), 129-130
[199] David A. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 7

integral part of the system.[200] Whipple had also predicted that trouble was on the horizon, warning President Abraham Lincoln six months before the start of the war,

> Before their treaty with the United States, the Indians of Minnesota were as favorably situated as an uncivilized race could well be. Their lakes, forests, and prairies furnished abundant game, and their hunts supplied them with valuable furs for the purchase of all articles of traffic. The great argument to secure the sale of their lands is the promise of their civilization. . . . The sale is made, and after the dishonesty which accompanies it there is usually enough money left, if honestly expended, to foster the Indians' desires for civilization. Remember, the parties to this contract are a great Christian Nation and a poor heathen people…From the day of the treaty a rapid deterioration takes place. The Indian has sold the hunting-grounds necessary for his comfort as a wild man; His tribal relations are weakened; his chief's power and influence circumscribed; ad he will soon be left a helpless man without a government. a protector, or a friend, unless treaty is observed.[201]

What Whipple sought was Indian policy reform. Lincoln's response, however, was brief, stating simply that he had received his letter and would send his concerns on to the Secretary of the Interior.[202]

Henry Whipple was not the only one to foresee confrontation, and in January of 1862 missionaries Thomas Williamson and Stephan Riggs went before the Minnesota delegation to report that conditions were critical, that tensions had begun to erupt into acts of retaliation between Indians and settlers, and that a "collision with the Indians on our frontiers"[203] was inevitable if nothing was done to rectify the situation. They also asserted that government agents had helped the traders receive goods (paid for by the

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[200] ibid.
[201] Bishop Henry Whipple to Abraham Lincoln, March 6th 1862. Whipple Papers, Minnesota Historical Society
[202] Abraham Lincoln to Bishop Henry Whipple, March 27th 1862. Whipple Papers, Minnesota Historical Society
[203] David A. Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians,* 75

Dakota) and yet the Dakota were left wanting and hungry. They could not afford to buy food from these same traders who had cheated them out of goods that were paid for.[204]

War

Severe hunger is what sparked an incident of violence in Acton Township in the later summer of 1862 that is forever known as "the egg incident." In addition to a poor crop turnout that year, treaty annuities (both food and monetary) had not arrived. This was partly due to federal policy changes for their dispersal,[205] but also to the fact that the United States government was preoccupied with the Civil War. As a result, any assistance to the Dakota who were in dire need of food was not likely to arrive in a timely fashion.

Ohiyesa asserts that cash annuities were not paid for two years and that all money received from the following treaty of 1858 (over $90,000) had gone to the traders, just as had occurred in 1851.[206] Likely influencing the decision to go to war was the fact that Taoyateduta had recently fallen out of favor with his people, having lost their confidence after his involvement in signing the 1858 treaty (along with others such as Wabasha and Sakpe). Ohiyesa writes,

> They had signed the treaty under pressure, believing in these promises on the faith of a great nation. However, on entering the new life, the resources so rosily described to them failed to materialize. Many families faced starvation every winter, their only support the store of the Indian trader, who was baiting his trap for their destruction. Very gradually they awoke to the facts. At last it was

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[204] ibid.
[205] Roy Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 113
[206] Charles Eastman *Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains* (1918. Reprint, Teddington UK: Echo Library 2007), 51

> planned to secure from them the north half of their reservation for ninety- eight thousand dollars, but it was not explained to the Indians that the traders were to receive all the money. Little Crow made the greatest mistake of his life when he signed this agreement.

This treaty was essentially drafted in order to "make good" on broken promises from the 1851 treaty, but it also reduced the Dakota land base even further. It's no wonder many were weary of those drafting this compact and did not agree to its signing. The land along the river had become prime real estate, but now the Dakota were forced to survive on a reservation along two small ten-mile strips of land bordering each side of the Minnesota River. [207]

On August 17th four young warriors who had illegally left the reservation and been out duck hunting came across and killed a white family and their houseguests. Though differing versions of what happened at the farmhouse where this violence occurred have been presented over time, the men were identified, and the story of what occurred was related second hand by Bdewakantunwan Wambdotanka (Big Eagle) in an interview with a St. Paul journalist in 1894.[208] Wambditanka relates that after the murders the young men fled for Chief Shakopee's village, and they were then taken to the house of Taoyateduta (Little Crow), where the decision was made to go war. This declaration was not made lightly, nor was it unanimous. Many (including Ohiyesa) contend that Taoyateduta declared war that evening in order to try and regain the faith of his tribe. Though many leaders and tribal members, including Shakopee and Wabasha, were

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[207] Charles J. Kappler. *Indian Affairs Laws and Treaties,* Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904. "Treaty with The Sioux – Mdewakanton and Wahpakoota Bands, 1851." p.954

[208] *Return Ira Holcomb, A Sioux Story of the War: Chief Big Eagle's Account of it's Important Incidents, St Paul Pioneer Press, July 1 1894*

against the idea of entering into a war with the United States, Taoyateduta reasoned that because of the growing unrest amongst the people, and also because a white-woman had been killed specifically, that warfare was the only viable option at this time.

It is important to remember that the murders at Acton did not cause the war as is commonly stated. Though some historians have asserted that the Dakota war was fueled by tensions and animosity between Christian (whom Gary Clayton Anderson problematically refers to as "nominally being white") and traditional Dakota, this is not an accurate nor fair assessment of the situation that led to war. Many years of unjust treaty negotiations and resource depletion by the fur trade industry: acts of colonial dominance and cultural subjugation were the real culprits at stake. Anderson argues that by 1862 tensions between whites, mixed blood Dakota, and full blood Dakota people had become polarized, "making farmers and warriors into two distinct groups.[209] However, Bonnie Sue Lewis, whose work *Creating Christian Indians* covers this time period in great depth, estimates that there were only about one hundred Christian Dakota by 1862.[210] Given that there was an estimated 19,600 Dakota people living in the newly formed state of Minnesota in 1860,[211] this argument of blame for what led to the war is deeply flawed. Though tensions were there between some full blood and mixed blood Dakota, not all farming or Christian Dakota were of mixed descent, and some full bloods

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[209] Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in The Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862.* Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul 1984, 256

[210] Linda Clemmons. *Conflicted Mission: Faith, Disputes, and Deception on the Dakota Frontier.* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2014), 21

[211] Minnesota Historical Society: http://www.usdakotawar.org/history/newcomers/settlers

made attempts at farming too, meaning that the binary based construction of two opposing parties of people within the Dakota communities is simply not accurate. There were growing tensions due to the different ways in which Dakota people were accommodating themselves to other lifestyles. But to assert that this was one of the causes for war is troubling because directs the focus away from the actual conditions fermenting hostility and reduced the conflict to intertribal fighting – thereby blaming the victims not the victors for what transpired.

In making the claim that Dakota people had become polarized into two parties of traditional vs. farming Christian Dakota, scholars (Gary Clayton Anderson included) often cite the interview with Wambditanka (Jerome Big Eagle – Bdewakantunwan chief) in 1894. My grandfather John Eastman, older brother to Ohiyesa, acted as translator for this interview. Wambditanka had participated in the 1862 war, and spoke candidly about what life was like at this time,

> Of the causes that led to the outbreak of August 1862, much has been said. Of course it was wrong, as we all know now, but there were not many Christians among the Indians then, and they did not understand things as they should. There was a great dissatisfaction among the Indians over many things the whites did. The whites would not let them go to war against their enemies. This was right, but the Indians did not then know it. Then the whites were always trying to make the Indians give up their life and live like white men – go to farming, work hard and do as they did – and the Indians did not know how to do that, and did not want to anyway. It seemed too sudden to make such a change. If the Indians had tried to make the whites live like them the whites would have resisted, and it was the same way with many Indians. The Indians wanted to live as they did before the treaty of Traverse des Sioux – go where they pleased and when they pleased, hunt game wherever they could find it, sell their furs to the traders and live as they could."[212]

[212] Return Ira Holcombe, St. Paul Pioneer Press, July 1 1894. My grandfather John Eastman, whom Holcombe describes as "an educated and intelligent gentlemen" acted as an interpreter for this interview, which was held at Flandreau, SD.

Here Wambditanka acknowledges that there were not actually very many Christian Dakota at this time. Which is in opposition to the common narrative of the Dakota as being more equally divided. Wambditanka also alludes to a lack of tribal consensus at Little Crow's village on the day that it was decided to go to war. "Blood had been shed, the payment would be stopped, and the whites would take a vengeful vengeance because a woman had been killed. Wabasha, Wacouta, myself, and others still talked for peace but nobody would listen to us and soon the cry was, 'Kill the whites and kill all these cut-hairs who will not join us.' A council was held and war was declared." Though there were fears for the safety of some mixed blood and farming Dakota people, there was also an ample number of so-called "cut hairs" participating in battle. Therefore, the line of who was considered "hostile" and who was "friendly" to the whites was thin, so the division between those who fought and those who did not participate in battle was obviously not so clearly determined by looking at one's blood quantum not their economic or cultural lifestyle.[213]

[213] Ibid.

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Ohiyesa relates that on the day that the Acton warriors arrived at the village of Kaposia, his father told Taoyateduta "If you want war, you must personally lead your men to-morrow. We will not murder women and children, but we will fight the soldiers when they come."[215] Ohiyesa also recollects that his grandmother and uncle told him that his father never killed any white men during the war,[216] however it is unknown whether or not this is actually true. In the era in which Ohiyesa documents the war, the early to mid twentieth century, the Dakota who participated in battle were widely portrayed as "bad Indians" (which also explains why Wambditanka is so quick to assert he was for

[214] Tawakanhdiota "Many Lightenings" (Jacob Eastman), image included in University of Nebraska Press 1977 edition of *From the Deep Woods to Civilization,* no original provenance given.
[215] Charles Eastman, *Indian heroes and Great Chieftains* kindle edition LOC 389
[216] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript.* p. 11

peace when he actually participated in many battles as well) and referred to as the "hostile" faction of the Dakota, in opposition the "loyalists" that assisted the United States army as scouts. Since Ohiyesa's various accounts allude to possibilities as well as denials of Tawakanhdiota's participation in battle, his role in the war still remains unclear. My uncle William recalls that his great grandfather might have been wounded at the Battle of Wood Lake.[217] In the court trials of men captured after the war there is another man by the same name of Many Lightenings who participated in this battle as well,[218] and so this may be where the story comes from, but then again maybe it was him; the facts are difficult to ascertain with any degree of certainty.

The quote by Ohiyesa also relates what many Dakota who fought in war believed, that women and children should not be harmed, which is in sharp contrast to the more common settler narrative depicting all Dakota warriors as being indiscriminate in battle. The fact that women and children were killed during wartime is difficult to come to terms with, however it is important to remember that these acts were carried out by only a few of the Dakota who participated in the war, and so it is without merit to condemn all of the warriors for these losses of human life. That being said, it is equally important to acknowledge that given this was a time of war, and that settler families had encroached

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[217] William Beane interview, Flandreau South, February 18th, 2013

[218] Researcher John Isch cites a trial transcript of a "Wakanhdeota" as being Tawakanhdiota. Names were often spelled and translated in different ways (or shared the same name) and so it was a common to mistake one individual for another. However the trial for Tawakanhdiota was held at a later date at Fort Snelling and not at Lower Sioux as this document references meaning this was likely not him. See John Isch *The Dakota Trials: Including the Complete Transcripts and Explanatory Notes on the Military Commission Trials in Minnesota (1862-1864)* (New Ulm: Brown County Historical Society, 2012)

on Dakota land illegally in massive numbers over a short period of time. Those Dakota who did take lives were acting in defense of their own people and children, who were starving and facing imminent harm due to the presence of these incoming populations.

Dakota Flight

Ohiyesa documents that August 18th, 1862 started out as any other day in his unpublished manuscript,[219]

> At the time of the massacre I was four years old (1862) playing with my little miniature bow and arrow by my grandmother's house. I remember seeing Indians bringing quantities of store goods of various kinds to our home. It was brought there temporarily while they were there plundering the stores. Indeed while the catastrophe was in progress, my dog and I, small as I was, were up on the scaffold scaring flocks of blackbirds off my grandmothers corn-fields by my yells and the dog's barking.

Here in Ohiyesa's account we have the reflective perspective of a Dakota child, which is not often documented. He recollects that his father told him to stay indoors and that by the afternoon his brother in-law David Faribault, whom he describes as "a French Half-breed who had married my sister Mary only that summer," came into the house with Tawakanhdiota, who instructed him to stay indoors. He was impressed by the activity at camp and recalls, "Towards evening a great council was held not far from our home, and the women at our house were all excited. Of course I only felt what my folks were doing.

[219] Gail believes that this document was written late in her grandfather's life. It is likely a first draft in its original condition, with minor edits made in pencil by someone not documented (though Gail assumes these edits were done by Ohiyesa's daughter Dora)

The next distinct memory I have of that period is our travel up the Coteaus of the Dakota. This I might say, is my final departure from Minnesota into wild life."[220]

In *Indian Boyhood,* Ohiyesa goes on to convey the story of his family's departure from the homeland. His brother Chatana is included in much of his writings of his younger life, he was his closest male sibling, just three years his senior.[221] He writes how the children innocently played, jumping from a wagon that had been stolen from a white farmer family while in route from Minnesota to Canada. No reflections are given on how the wagon was stolen or what happened to the white farmer family who had owned it. His remembrances also do not give us very much information about the hardships the family faced along the way, and does not focus on the fear that the adults in his tiospaye[222] were facing while fleeing under the threat of prosecution and death. What it does tell us is that at least during the initial flight this family group had stayed intact for a period of time on the journey north. In describing the flight to Canada Ohiyesa writes,

> The summer after the Minnesota Massacre General Sibley pursued our people across this [Minnesota] river. Now the Minnesota River is considered one of the most treacherous rivers in the world. Even a good modern boat is not safe upon its uncertain current. We were forced to cross in buffalo-skin boats – as round as tubs! The Washechu (white men) were coming in great numbers with their big guns, and while most of our men were fighting them to gain time, the old women

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[220] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript,* 3

[221] Chatana is described in more detail in Ohiyesa's unpublished manuscript. Ohiyesa states he was well versed in Native languages as well as in Canadian French and became a "manager of one of the western Hudson Bay Posts as interpreter and mail carrier." Sadly, Chatana passed away in a blizzard in the winter of 1885, and this is also noted in a hand written family genealogy compiled by Ohiyesa's daughter Dora Eastman (original in the possession of Gail Johnson and copies dispersed to relatives). In this genealogy Dora notes that Chatan's English name was James Eastman. He was married and his relatives still reside in Canada under the Eastman name.

[222] Dakota iapi for community, or extended family group.

> and old men made and equipped the temporary boats, braced with ribs of willow. Some of these were towed by two or three women or men swimming in the water and some by ponies. It was not an easy matter to keep right side up, with their helpless freight of little children and such goods as we possessed [223]

The timing that Ohiyesa gives for the flight from Minnesota is in line with the historical record of Sibley's army and their two punitive expeditions to capture Dakota who were fleeing Minnesota to evade capture after the war, in which over one hundred and fifty Dakota were killed.[224] At this time, bounties $75 to $200 were placed upon the scalps of any Dakota person who was captured and killed.[225] A headline from a Winona, Minnesota newspaper dated September 24, 1863 warned, "The state reward for dead Indians has been increased to $200 for every red-skin sent to Purgatory. This sum is more than the dead bodies of all the Indians east of the Red River are worth."[226]

In an effort to rid all Dakota presence from the territory, upwards of six thousand troops were deployed at this time to defeat and capture no more than three hundred fleeing Dakota.[227] These were the people young Ohiyesa and his family were fleeing, though through the innocent eyes of a child, he simply focused on the wagon wheels and playing with his brothers during the last moments that they would have together as a united family.

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[223] Charles Eastman *Indian Boyhood,* p. 13-15

[224] Letter from Major General John Pope to Henry Halleck August 14, 1863 cited in Colette Routel, *Minnesota Bounties on Dakota Men During the U.S.-Dakota War*, William Mitchell Law Review Vol. 39:2

[225] See Colette Routel, *Minnesota Bounties on Dakota Men During the U.S.-Dakota War*, William Mitchell Law Review Vol. 39:2. *Also see* David L Beaulieu *The Fate of Little Crow, 1863-1970*, unpublished and available at the Minnesota Historical Society.

[226] The Daily Republican, Winona MN, September 24th 1863, Minnesota Historical Society.

[227] Mary Wingerd, *North Country,* 342

The value of Ohiyesa's unpublished account is that it tells us distinct details of the family's flight, from Minnesota, which are not included in any of his published texts. Ohiyesa recalls that the family traveled with a group after leaving Minnesota, and states that they ventured toward the Missouri river in present day South Dakota, where the group split into four. There they spent the winter near what he assumed was the Missouri river or one of its tributaries. He mentions that buffalo were abundant in this area but that his family faced particular danger with enemy tribes in this territory. Indeed, their hunters came under the attack of the Blackfeet. He records the following events,

> At this point our tribe which was called by the western Sioux, Santees, sent emisarries to all the Sioux bands around the Black Hills, informing them that Eastern Sioux had broken with the United States, therefore with the exception of whose who surrender all the Sioux people were hostile to the citizens of the Unites States. In order to have a united stand against the whites, the Santees sent delegates to the three confederated tribes who lived on the junction at the mouth of the Knife and Missouri rivers. These tribes were the Arakris or Rees, Mandans and Gros Ventres. Heretofore these tribes were enemies to the Sioux nation, therefore they refused to join them against the United States.

Ohiyesa writes that in 1863 the group then headed towards the territory now known as Devils Lake in North Dakota. At that time, a council was held with many in attendance, including: "Little Crow, Little Six, Standing Buffalo, White Lodge, Spotted Eagle, Younger Sleepy Eye, Blue Earth, my father Many Lightenings, Little fish Hook, and Black Tiger." A decision was made for the entire group to head to Winnipeg. He recalls, "Personally the only thing that I remember about the visit to Winnipeg was that I was riding a little pony, walking along the side of the long trail of travelers of over three thousand Indians."[228]

[228] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript.* 4

In *Indian Boyhood* Ohiyesa writes of growing up without his father and two older brothers in Canada, "The second winter after the massacre, my father and my two older brothers, with several others, were betrayed by a halfbreed at Winnipeg to the United States authorities. As I was living with my uncle in another part of the country, I became separated from them for ten years. During all this time I believed they had been killed by the whites, and I was taught that I must avenge their deaths as soon as I was able to go upon the war-path."[229] What Ohiyesa would not know until years later, was that his great grandfather Mahpiya Wicasta would die in the concentration camp at Fort Snelling, suffering in prison like many of his other tribal relatives and that his family would never know what became of his remains. As a child Ohiyesa was as protected from much of the horrors that his Dakota relatives who stayed behind were enduring.[230]

Ohiyesa estimates that at the start of the war, "about four or five hundred frontier people, farmers, and soldiers were killed within ten days."[231] The battles of war lasted six weeks and came to an end on September 23rd, when a faction of the Dakota, far outnumbered by former governor Colonel Henry Sibley's army, were defeated at the battle of Wood Lake (the same battle in which it is unclear whether Ohiyesa's father was a participant). The numbers of settlers killed vary. A Minnesota newspaper reported a letter written by Indian Thomas Galbraith to Alexander Ramsey on the morning of August 22, 1862 in which Galbraith makes a plea for military assistance stating that he

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[229] Eastman, Charles, *Indian Boyhood.* 8

[230] This does not mean life was in any way easy for those who fled north. Ohiyesa relates in *Indian Boyhood* that his family and community suffered from hunger at times in their new location as well.

[231] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript,* 3

and his family "are in the hands of these miserable devils." He gave an early and much exaggerated estimate at 1,000 people.[232] However, most calculations after the war report a total number of non-Indians killed closer to five to six hundred,[233] so even Ohiyesa's initial number was high. The number of dead Dakota has never been properly estimated.

Treaty negotiator Sibley, who had been a leader in the fur trade industry made the promise to the Dakota that if they turned themselves in only those who killed civilians would be punished.[234] Ohiyesa asserts that many who turned themselves in had not actually participated in any of the battles and that many Dakota who had participated in the war fled into outlaying territories at this time. However many Dakota believed in Sibley's word and turned themselves over in order to ensure the safety of their families under the belief that they would only be imprisoned for a short time and than released.[235]

Instead of honoring his promise not to prosecute those who only battled with soldiers, Sibley appointed a military commission, made up of men who had fought in battle against the Dakota, to try all Dakota men believed to be involved in the war. Three hundred and three Dakota men, most of whom did not speak English, were tried without adequate representation by a military tribunal. The cases tried lasted as little as five minutes a piece, and as many as forty two cases were heard in a single day in a rushed

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[232] Pioneer and Democrat, Morning edition, August 22, 1862. Minnesota Historical Society.
[233] See citation notes in Colette Routel, *Minnesota Bounties on Dakota Men During the U.S.- Dakota War,* 2
[234] Mary Wingerd, *North Country* p. 311
[235] Charles Eastman, *The Execution of Little Six and Medicine Bottle,* Unpublished Manuscript, Gail Johnsen, Hadley New York, 1 See also See also Return Ira Holcomb, *A Sioux Story of the War: Chief Big Eagle's Account of it's Important Incidents,* St Paul Pioneer Press, July 1, 1894

process of military injustice.[236] University of Minnesota law professor Carol Chomsky refers to these trials as an exercise of power rather than law.[237]

Initially three hundred and three men were convicted of murder and rape, but under extreme pressure by his white constituents, President Abraham Lincoln, who at first attempted to delegate the assignment elsewhere so as to not bloody his hands or his presidency,[238] eventually commuted the sentences of death by hanging to 39.[239] Sibley, who had remarked that the Indians "should all be hung as a great example of which would strike terror to all Indians on the continent and save hundreds if not perhaps thousands of lives,"[240] was appalled, as were the families of the settlers killed during the war.

Outrage at what was seen as leniency, quickly spread throughout the white populations of Minnesota. Scholar David Martinez states in his article *Remembering the Thirty-Eight: Abraham Lincoln, the Dakota, and the U.S. War of Barbarism, "*Aside from the fact that this mass execution remains the largest in American history, what makes this travesty of justice all the more egregious is the vindictiveness with which it was carried out by a settler population that saw itself above the Constitution and beyond

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[236] Mary Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota,* 313-314
[237] Carol Chomsky. (*The United States - Dakota War Trials: A Study in Military Injustice.* Stanford Law Review, Vol. 43, No. 1, 1990), 95
[238] David Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics,* 108
[239] One Dakota, Chaske, would later be pardoned based on evidence that he had been confused with another man by the same name.
[240] Henry Sibley to Abraham Lincoln, 16 February 1863, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress

any regard for human rights."[241] The calls for vengeance were palpable throughout the state with newspaper headlines screaming for blood. Retaliation mobs were formed to attack Dakota prisoners, who had been transported to Mankato to await their death as the gallows were being constructed in the town center. The St. Paul Pioneer reported on the morning of December 10th: "About 11 o'clock, the crowd numbering no more than one hundred and fifty persons, commenced moving in small squads, towards the camp. A few had clubs, one or two hatchets, some knives, but a large majority were apparently unarmed." And reports that several hundred from New Ulm, a site of one of the worst battles in the war, had begun to move towards the prison, but they returned home upon learning that the prison was so well guarded that they would not be allowed near the prisoners.[242]

That September 9th 1862, Governor Alexander Ramsey had addressed a special session of the Minnesota legislature and stated, "Our course then is plain. The Sioux Indians of Minnesota must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state. They must be regarded and treated as outlaws, the wretched remnant must be driven beyond our borders and our frontier garrisoned with a force sufficient to forever prevent their return." [243] In February and March of 1863 two legislative acts, which are commonly referred to simply as one "Dakota Removal Act," were passed in response to the demand by Governors Ramsey, the state, the military, and settlers to exterminate and

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[241] Martinez, David *Remembering the Thirty- Eight: Abraham Lincoln, the Dakota, and the U.S War on Barbarism,* Wicazo Sa Review, Fall 2013

[242] The St. Paul Pioneer December 10, 1862 morning edition.

[243] Alexander Ramsey, Governor, State of Minn., Annual Message to Legislature of Minn. 12 (September 9, 1862). Available at http://archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/NonMNpub/oclc18189672.pdf

remove all of my people, the Dakota Oyate, from the state of Minnesota. But before they were to be removed they had to be imprisoned while they awaited their fate.[244]

In November of 1862 Dakota elders, women, and children who had turned themselves in following the war had been force marched under military guard from Lower Sioux agency 150 miles to a concentration camp below Fort Snelling, while attacked at various points along the route by angry settlers. Here the Dakota who had not participated in any war, and over two hundred converted to the Christian faith, likely out of desperation.[245]

As traumatic as the history at the Fort Snelling concentration camp is for Dakota people, there are ample historians who seek to trivialize the perspective by many that this was a death camp housing innocent people, or who assert that terminology relating the Dakota experience to genocide is not just. Even though they also report in their timeline of these events that there were attacks made on these Dakota dependents, and deaths were documented," Corinne L. Monjeau-Marz and Stephen E. Osman argue that by looking at primary source documents one can prove that Dakota people were essentially being "escorted" and confined for their own safety. Monjeau-Marz and Osman attribute most of the mortality within the prison to the spread of diseases such as measles (which was rampant due to poor living conditions). Though some count the mortality rate during confinement to be upwards of 400 people, the authors count death tolls ranging from 100-

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[244] Act of Feb. 16, 1863, ch.37, 12 Stat. 652, and Act of March 3, 1863, ch 119, 12 Stat. 819

[245] Robert D. Hall, *A Sketch of the Work of John Poage Williamson,* November 1st, 1911. Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Anderson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

250 or more people, but argue that a less than a 7 to 10 percent death rate in the camp is an insignificant number because the death rate for the Dakota was lower than those experienced in Union and Confederate prisons during the Civil War.[246]

The authors illustrate that the Dakota were indeed in danger, but to assert that men, women, and children, were "escorted" (under military guard and threat) to an enclosure without adequate food, clothing, and shelter in order to protect them is reaching at best. The descendants of those killed, strongly disagree with these kinds of sentiments, as well as the low calculation of mortality, and oral histories within the Dakota community document this number to be much higher and also tell stories of violence that occurred within their own families.[247]

Though a wooden fence was erected as a barrier to keep vengeful white settlers out once they arrived at the fort, this prison wall and the armed guards who were watching over the camp also kept the prisoners from being able to leave. Given the horrible conditions of the prison, the Dakota were not safe by any means, and the violence that women and children were left vulnerable has also been well documented. One newspaper account reported a Dakota woman being shot as target practice due to frustrations with President Lincoln for taking too long to sign an execution order to hang the men. The article reads, "Accident. An Indian Squaw was accidentally shot at Fort Snelling yesterday by one of a number of soldiers who were practicing target shooting.

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[246] Monjeau-Marz, Corinne and Stephen E. Osman, *What You May Not Know About the Fort Snelling Indian Camps,* Minnesota Heritage: No. 7, p. 112- 133, South St. Paul: Minnesota's Heritage Inc. January 2013.

[247] The Uptake, *Descendants of Exiled Dakotans Remember MN. "Trail of Tears."* November 12th, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFNFbeA7Tcs&app=desktop

We doubt that not but there will be many such accidents if Abraham don't consent to let them hang."[248] It was this environment that Dakota elders, women, and children endured while they awaited word of the condition and prospect of their men.

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The Dakota elders, women, and children prisoners were kept at Fort Snelling until being transported to Crow Creek the following spring season. John P. Williamson stayed with the Dakota along this journey as he stated to his father he "thought it best not to leave the Indians on the route, as there is no one along who cares anything about seeing to their wants or knows what they are." He reports that along the route they sang songs

[248] The Saint Paul Pioneer, Wednesday Morning, November 19th, 1862.
[249] Bishop Whipple visited the Dakota at Fort Snelling in order to check on their well - being and to convert them to Christianity.

with each other, likely as a way to keep up their spirits.[250] Conditions here were not much of an improvement over Minnesota. John. P. Williamson reported that by the time they reached the camp a census was taken in which the head count of Indians was almost thirteen hundred – but only one hundred and sixteen of these were males sixteen years of age or older. The rest of the count was equally divided at six hundred women and six hundred children.[251] Williamson wrote his father that "They have a guard placed around the camp all the time to prevent their being abused by whites," and he reports that their prospects for food throughout the winter are poor.[252] In her article *Survival at Crow Creek, 1963-1866* Colette Hyman reflects that testimonies from missionaries, "paint a picture of starvation, disease, and dehumanization."[253] John P. Williamson wrote at the time, "The Indians don't have much to say about this country and are not in a position to say much" and reports that the Ho-Chunk ("Winnebago") are much more vocal about their discontent. He worries that may cause trouble and states that they have thirty or forty soldiers employed at the site.[254] That Ho-Chunk had also been included in Indian banishment from Minnesota is a relatively little discussed fact, and was likely due to Governmental desire to rid all natives from the land. In short, they were simply in the

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[250] John P. Williams to Thomas S. Williamson, May 9th, 1863, Thomas Smith Williamson and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society
[251] John P. Williamson to Thomas S. Williamson, June 9th, 1863, Thomas Smith Williamson and Family Papers 1839-1862, Minnesota Historical Society
[252] John P. Williamson to Thomas S. Williamson, November 14th 1862, Thomas Smith Williamson and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society
[253] Colette Hyman. *Survival At Crow Creek* (Minnesota History 61, Winter 2008) 148
[254] John. P. Williamson to Thomas S. Williamson, June 9th, 1863, Thomas Smith Williamson and Family Papers 1839-1862, Minnesota Historical Society

wrong place at the wrong time and faced the same consequences as the Dakota even though they had never participated in the war.[255]

Questions of Guilt

Ohiyesa writes in *The Execution of Little Six and Medicine Bottle* that the Dakota surrendered to General Sibley,

> Were of the party who had opposed going to war with the whites and had done all they could to avert the trouble. Among them were some young men who had joined in the massacre of the settlers and in the battles that followed, and who were therefore more or less guilty, but many were entirely innocent. Especially this was the case among the older men. In fact, these Indians had rescued over two hundred white captives from the hostile element, and they were delivered up when they surrendered., they had risked their own lives to save some of these captives; and yet all the men were tried by general Crook, and nearly all were convicted and sentenced to be hanged. The number under sentence of death was about three hundred. They were all tried within three or four days.[256]

Missionary Gideon Pond also steadfastly believed that the majority that the men tried and condemned were "of a unhostile party" that did not actually participate in battle. He writes "of the three hundred and more now in prison at Mankato who were the subject of my communication of the 9th instant, I am fully persuaded that a large majority are suffering unjustly – suffering for the crimes of others. It appears to me that the expressed sentiment of the community toward them is unjust, passionate, vindictive, barbarous, and

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[255] For more on the Ho-Chunk at Crow Creek see Collette A. Hyman, *Survival at Crow Creek*, (Minnesota History 61, Winter 2008), 148-60

[256] Charles Eastman, *The Execution of Little Six and Medicine Bottle,* unpublished manuscript, in possession of Gail Johnsen, Hadley New York.

cruel."[257] The day after the hanging the Mankato papers included front-page articles, which supposedly contained "Confessions of Prisoners."[258] These "confessions" included transcripts from conversations between the revered Stephen R Riggs and the thirty-eight Dakota men hanged before they went to the gallows, in which the majority of these men argue their innocence. One man by the name of Sunkaska (White Dog) related to Riggs that all of the men had been promised a second trial, and he hoped it would be more just than the first and wished for the President to be made aware of this. Sunkaska insists that he, like many of the men, did not have a chance to assert his innocence.[259]

In Pond's opinion that Taoyateduta (Little Crow) and his warriors acted as the real enemy, he argues that more of an effort should have been made to capture them. Though it is admirable that Pond sought to advocate against innocent Dakota suffering, but his analysis of the Dakota as being "hostile" vs. "unhostile," is framed conceptually in the language of the time period, which is a far too simplistic and not at all reflective of the situation that Dakota people were facing. In reality the Dakota, unified or not, were an independent nation of people who had declared war. University of Minnesota legal scholar Carol Chomsky argues,

> The commission tried the Dakota for the wrong crimes. Based on historical and legal views prevailing in 1862 and the years that followed, the Dakota were a sovereign nation at war with the United States and the men who fought the war were entitled to be treated as legitimate belligerents. The Dakota, therefore, should have been tried only on charges that they violated the customary rules of warfare, not for the civilian crimes of murder rape, and robbery. Judged by those standards, few of the convictions are supportable. President Lincoln's

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[257] Gideon Pond, Letter to the editor. *The True History of the Indian Outbreak in Minnesota.* The Evangelist Vol. XXXIII – No. 10. New York, March 5th, 1863.
[258] Mankato Independent and Mankato Weekly Record, December 26th, 1862
[259] The Independent, January 2nd, 1863

> commutation of all but thirty-eight death sentences may have been effort to correct the trial verdicts to reflect the proper standard of responsibility, but the flaws in the proceedings make even his judgments questionable.[260]

On December 26th, the thirty-eight Dakota men were convicted of civilian crimes for killing and raping white settlers. They were hung from the gallows in the Mankato town square, while onlookers cheered. Newspapers printed the following day stated their names, and three of the men were listed as being "half-breeds", with another newspaper reporting them to be Roman Catholic, further complicating the one dimensional and inaccurate mixed blood versus full blood narrative of the war and it's aftermath.[261]

Imprisonment

Unknown to Ohiyesa, his father and two older brothers had not been killed following the war, and as stated previously had fled across the border and into Canada with a group of Dakota, including Medicine Bottle and Shakopee. In *The Execution of Little Six and Medicine Bottle*[262] Ohiyesa writes that this small group of Dakota sought refuge among the British because they "had faith in the friendship and fairness of the English government"[263] Ohiyesa writes,

> In midwinter of 1864, about forty families, led by Little Six and Medicine Bottle, visited Fort Garry for the purpose of securing a supply of ammunition. A certain

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[260] Chomsky, Carol *The United States-Dakota War Trials: A Study in Military Injustice*. Stanford Law Review, Vol. 43, No.1 (Nov. 1990), 15

[261] Mankato Weekly Record, Mankato MN, December 26th 1862 & The Independent, Mankato: Friday Morning January 2nd, 1863.

[262] Little Six was also known as *Sakpedan* or *Sakopee* (Shakopee) and was the third chief in his family line to hold this name

[263] Ohiyesa *The Execution of Little Six and Medicine Bottle.* Original Manuscript in the possession of Gail Johnsen, Hadley New York.

> half-breed by the name of Campbell, who cam originally from the Minnesota valley and was well acquainted with these chiefs, met them at the fort, and informed the authorities who they were. Thereupon a conspiracy was formed to betray them, as each of the leaders had a price upon his head. It was planned to persuade them to cross the line into the United States for a pretended conference at Fort Abercrombie, but finding it impossible to induce either of the chiefs to go, those who were in the plot gave then drugged whiskey and conveyed them either on sleds, bound, and helpless. They then told the rest of the warriors that their chiefs had gone to hold a peace council with men from Washington, and thus secured them all. Among them was my own father. As soon as the Sioux reached the fort, they were all arrested and put in chains, and thus taken to Fort Snelling. Their families were sent for to Winnipeg, and kept in military encampment at the fort. The men, over thirty in number, were condemned to be hanged.[264]

Tanwakanhdiota[265] and two of his sons, Hinhan Duta and Hepidan, later known by the English names of John and David, were among the group taken to Fort Snelling and sentenced to death. President Lincoln eventually commuted the sentences to prison rather than hanging for all but two warriors, and Sakpe, and Medicine Bottle were hanged at Fort Snelling on November 11th, 1865. Tawakanhdiota and his boys were then transported and imprisoned along with the other Dakota men in Davenport Iowa.

Tawakanhdiota and his two sons were imprisoned at Camp Kearney, adjacent to Camp McClellan where they joined the 265 men originally sentenced, as well as 16 women and two children. In this prison many of the Dakota began writing letters (translated by the missionaries) to try and reach family members and let them know that they were still alive. These letters contain detailed first hand accounts of what life was like in prison. Michael Simon writes in *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters*,[266]

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[264] ibid
[265] Jacob Eastman
[266] Over one hundred letters, part of the Minnesota Historical Society Collection, were translated from Dakota into English with the aid of many Dakota elders,

> During the first two years, it appears that the men were not permitted to create warm clothing or blankets; as a result, many men froze to death during the winter. One of the letter writers about prisoners being ordered to remove the stoves from the barracks. The prisoners thought they were going to be given new stoves and complied. Instead, they were without heat until the prisoners were allowed to reinstall the old stoves. Not all the guards were cruel, but some just couldn't resist inflicting punishment on those unable to resist. As a consequence many prisoners died from sickness, while others froze to death. The prisoners write about the death in these letters, giving rough counts and naming those who have passed. Stephen R. Riggs, the Presbyterian minister to whom these letters were written, estimated that 120 Dakota people died in the camp; this may have included deaths of others who were captured after the war and brought to the camp.[267]

One letter addressed to Stephen R. Riggs by a Dakota prisoner speaks to the struggle to convert in prison and conveys a sense of anxiety for the need to do so in order to appease the missionaries,

> Many of our relatives have written this letter – it is so. Then we want you to listen, as we tell you, how we are living here in prison – it is so. The elders and non - elders met together and wrote this letter – it is so. We did one thing, and it was wrong what we did, and now we are paying for this. The men and the women that are living here met and talked, they said they will not take communion – it is so. They told how they all depend upon the Great Spirit. Therefore, the elders that watch over them did the same. We ask them to talk every Sunday – it is so. So all the men have again recommitted. So we are telling you we are very glad we trust the Great Spirit. You took the Great Spirit's Word to the people for over thirty years, but many Dakota person's did not want His Word. But those of us in prison now want the Great Spirit's Word, therefore we now have His Word entirely. So if these men here in prison go to where the common people are on the outside, and they take the Great Spirit's Word, they can do it, because they will be very capable…[268]

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including William Beane. About fifty of the letters were translated for publication in Clifford Canku and Michael Simon's *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters: Dakota Kaskapi Okicize Wowapi*, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013

[267] Clifford Canku and Michael Simon *The Dakota Prisoner of War Letters: Dakota Kaskapi Okicize* Wowapi, xii-xiii

[268] ibid. 20-21, Original letter (written in Dakota) can be found in the Stephan R. Riggs Family Papers (1812-1883) at Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul Minnesota.

The Dakota men who drafted this letter included Many Lightening Face (*not* a direct relation to Many Lightenings of the similar name) and seven other Dakota men. In his trial transcript Itewakanhdiota, originally sentenced to be hanged, states that he had no gun, only a sword, and was too far off from the battle site to participate. He admits that he was there but argues, "I was afraid and I am a coward."[269] There is no direct documentation to suggest that any of the men who signed this letter were guilty of participating in the war, and they were not hanged because there was no evidence to suggest otherwise, however, they now express feelings of shame to Riggs in order to try and gain their own freedom. This era is the period when Dakota people began to internalize these feelings of shame, even if they had not participated in the war, as the missionaries used the idea of salvation to encourage them to turn against their own when they were at their most vulnerable.

It was at this prison that my grandfathers Tawakanhdiota and Hinhanduta became Christian,[270] and they were the first in our family to do so. The choice was one that was likely made out of despair, as this was a time of great hopelessness, and the missionaries at the prison were the only ones who treated the Dakota with any form of kindness. However, as had always been the case, the missionaries such as the Williamsons' that accompanied the Dakota were there because they had a larger agenda at hand, they were seeking souls for conversion and that the Dakota. They, in turn, were searching for light

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[269] E-Tay-Wa-kan-hde-out trial case #157 Frames 2001-206. See John Isch *The Dakota Trials: Including the Complete Transcripts and Explanatory Notes on the Military Commission Trials in Minnesota (1862-1864)* New Ulm: Brown County Historical Society, 2012

[270] Grace Moore Journal, undated

in a time of great darkness, they welcomed this new way of praying into their lives because it was a way to continue their faith in a manner that would not bring them further punishment.

Omakiye: A Plea For Help by Hinhan Duta

In the year 1866 missionary Stephan Riggs wrote a letter to his young son, speaking about a letter he himself had been asked to translate into English. The request had been given to him by a young Dakota boy in prison at Davenport by name of George. In this letter the young man is writing to his grandfather, Seth Eastman, a military officer once stationed at Fort Snelling who had married Wakaninazinwin (Stands Sacred) the daughter of Mahpiya Wicasta (Cloud Man), but he had left his Dakota wife and child behind when he was stationed elsewhere and had returned to the fort with a new wife for a short period of time. Thus, his daughter's children did not know him. Riggs includes a transcript of a portion of the letter in his correspondence:

> Grandfather,
>
> I never saw you, but I write you this letter. My name is George, and they tell me you are my grandfather. This I wish to acknowledge by sending you this letter. They tell me that you are a great man. But my mother was your daughter, and I am her child. She is dead many years ago – and my brother and myself are here suffering in this prison with the Indians. This I wish to tell you my grandfather. We are need of clothes and other things and for that reason I write to you. Can you not send us a little money, grandfather?
>
> Grandfather this is all I have to say. My brother and I shake hands with you grandfather. My mother's name was Nancy. My Indian name is Hinhanduta, Red Owl. My brothers name is Hepidan. He is thirteen years old and I am fifteen. My father is here also.[271]

[271] Stephen R. Riggs to his son Robbie. Riggs Papers Letter dated January 22, 1866 from Minnesota Historical Society Collections.

This letter provides the only personal account of John Eastman's time in prison at Davenport, and was written very early on before he chose the English name of John, and most likely still used his Dakota name of Hinhanduta. As John's great-great granddaughter, and as the descendant in a family that did not pass down many stories about these events, this letter is a heart-wrenching find. It documents the poor conditions that Dakota children found themselves confined to as innocent prisoner of a war they were too young to participate in. It is plea for love and assistance during a most difficult situation, asking for help from a man in which many in our extended family felt much disappointment. Seth Eastman, the first ancestor of white descent in my family bloodline, never responded to the letter of his Dakota grandchild. Though it is not known whether he received the letter, Eastman would have known that his grandchildren were caught up in these extermination efforts and he did nothing to check on their welfare.

Riggs goes on in their letter to write, "Now don't you think that is a nice letter for an Indian boy to write his grandfather!"[272] Framing this letter as simply a sweet note from grandson to grandfather is troubling. The fact that this letter was never discussed in our family is interesting and reflective on the types of silences that have followed our family story over time. Perhaps Hinhanduta was hurt that his grandfather never responded to his plea for help, but more likely he decided that it was not a matter worth dwelling on, as there was enough of a challenge to be a Dakota and in prison. He had converted, along with his father, to the Christian faith and like the traditional Dakota beliefs that he was

[272] Ibid.

raised to honor, he seemed to have forgiveness for Seth Eastman. Ohiyesa would eventually recall his grandfather's departure in a letter to a colleague stating, "Traditions existed in the Cloud Man family, that Seth was very tender toward his child, and when on his last visit – to his child, he pressed – to heart while tears ran down his noble young face."[273] Though the forgiveness by the brothers is honorable and understood, to this day their descendants still wonder if Seth ever received the letter, and question why he did not check on the welfare of his daughter's children.

John Eastman's brother Ohiyesa, as well as his daughter Grace, document that he spent four years in prison, and Ohiyesa recollected that his father once, "declared that he would never join in another outbreak."[274] Grace Moore also includes a short description of this family story in one of her journals, when she writes,

> Forty Indians were hanged and the rest of the 400 served four years in prison at Davenport. They were then released and returned to their families who in the meantime were driven out of Minnesota and scattered over No. and So. Dak. Montana and Canada. But wherever the released prisoners went, they went not as heathen worshippers but as converts to Christianity. My father was one of the 400 prisoners. He with my grandfather returned to their family, only to find brothers and sisters all scattered.[275]

Upon his conversion to this new religion Hinhanduta eventually took on the name John Eastman, choosing that name in honor of the missionary John. P. Williamson (1835-1917), a fellow Dakota speaker, and a friend to the Dakota in both Minnesota and to those exiled to the Santee reservation in Nebraska. His father chose the Christian name of

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[273] Charles Eastman to H.M. Hitchcock, September 8, 1927. Ayer Collection. Newberry Library, Chicago, IL
[274] Eastman, Charles *From the Deep Woods to Civilization.* 9
[275] Grace Moore, Undated journal entry.

Jacob and decided to bestow upon his family the English last name of his late wife Mary Nancy Eastman.[276]

As Grace writes, only a partial family reunion was ever acquired after their prison release. Conditions at Santee were not much better than what the Dakota had experienced before the war in Minnesota, or at Crow Creek, and being confined to a reservation felt like a continuation of their incarcerated life. It was not long before Jacob Eastman decided to leave and forgo government dependency in search of a more independent existence. Ohiyesa writes of his father's journey,

> When he was released and returned to the new reservation upon the Miss river he soon became convinced that life on a government reservation meant physical and moral degradation. Therefore he determined, with several others, to try the whites man's way of gaining livelihood. They accordingly left the agency against the persuasions of the agent, renounced all government assistance, and took land under the United States Homestead Law, on the Big Sioux River.[277]

The new home that these individuals would seek would be Wakpa Ipaksan, or "Bend in the River" later to become known as the Flandreau community of South Dakota, and this is where Tawakanhdiota would finally set down roots and make a new home for himself and his descendants.

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[276] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript*, 25
[277] Eastman, Charles *Indian Boyhood*, 286

Post-War Life

In February of 1868, over twenty families[278] began the two-month journey over one hundred and thirty miles to Flandreau. John Eastman's great grandson William Beane writes,

> After crossing the Minisose "Missouri River" on the ice, they started their trek into Dakota territory at the mouth of the Waseyusapiwakpa "Red Earth or Vermillion River," west of present day Vermillion, S.D. Following the Waseyusapiwakpa, traveling close to the frozen river, they camped within protection of the numerous trees along the banks. In the mornings and evenings all gathered together to softly pray and sing hymns.

Beane states that the winds raged that night as a storm approached and the Dakota buried themselves in snow-drifts to survive subzero temperatures. He relates that a revered community elder, a woman by the name of Owancatown (Blue All Over) was lost to the storm that night but the Dakota continued on in her memory.[279]

In 1909, John Williamson documented the names of the "Flandreau Band of Sioux Indians" and also included the names of those who joined the settlement each year from 1870 to 1873. The church population rose steadily from one hundred and seven original members too one hundred and fifty. At this point in time most of band at

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[278] The exact number of families that participated in this move and settlement is not documented apart from estimates that have been made that state anywhere from twenty to twenty-five. Confusion over the calculation of heads of household might be to blame for this However, the roll from the church gives a good idea of Dakota residing at the Flandreau settlement at this time given that most (if not all) had become Christian. See John P Williamson to Joseph Carrol, May 17, 1909 National Archives, Kansas City.

[279] William Beane *An Experiment in Faith: The Journey of the Mdewakanton Dakota Who Settled on the Bend in the River.* 2003

Flandreau were also still giving their Dakota names, even though they had all converted to the Christian faith and had taken names that this reflect this change. He reports,

> these parties when traveled from Santee to Flandreau by foot men women and children, all, and each of them were carrying their bunks on back. The distance about 150 miles. While they travel through open prairie some of them were frozen to death. Inside these four years (1869, 1970, 1871, 1872), many were sick and dead. The parents walk to Sioux Falls for groceries and flours and many times the children were hungry. During these four years all these parties were lost their rations and annuities under treaty of April 29th, 1868.[280]

Ohiyesa writes an account of how he acquired his English name at Flandreau in his unpublished manuscript, a story that has never been widely reported or documented:

> One evening, the preacher who was an Indian came to my father's house. He told me I was going to choose a name and produced a little book. In it were columns of names. I didn't know what they were – but he said they were names. I was very much puzzled and didn't know what to do. Of course I couldn't read those names – far less know the meaning of them. He finally concluded the simplest way was to have me point at one of those names which I did. It happened to be "Charles." He said perhaps I could have another one with it because there are a good many people of the same name, and if I had another one with it the combination would distinguish me from others. So I pointed at another one and this time it was "Alexander". He said my father's family name was "Eastman". This completed or rather established my future name – Charles Alexander Eastman.

Ohiyesa, thus became Charles Eastman, and as he writes, he began to embark on a life that was very different from which he had ever known. His family that raised him, and his father who took over his care at Flandreau both instilled in him similar values of bravery, respectfulness, and dependability. In this way his transition was made easier.

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280 "Flandreau Band of Sioux Indians", Typed copy of original letter of Rev. John P. Williamson to Joseph Carroll, Flandreau, S.D. May 18, 1909. The National Archives, Kansas City. This roll was calculated in an attempt at documenting to the government the names of those who had moved to Flandreau and "took up homestead under act of Congress approved May 20, 1862."

Once they reached Flandreau, the Dakota built a church and a day school with the help of local missionaries who Ohiyesa writes, "lost no opportunity to utilize this community for advancing their Christian work."[281] By October 3, 1869 this space served as the center of their community as a place to pray – putting into practice the new ways in which they had been schooled to worship to tunkasida (god) while imprisoned. Though, as Williamson reports, it was not an easy life by any means. But, they felt that creating a new life for them selves at Wakpa Ipaksan was worth the risk of more hardship if it meant a more stable future for their children.

The Dakota at Flandreau had become weary of reservation life for good reason, and they left without authorization.[282] By beginning a new farming community independently (yet together as a community), they could best combine the ways of old and new. They also knew that the 1868 Treaty with the Sioux included a provision permitting Indians to take up homesteads – and in taking advantage of this opportunity they saw a way to reassert their independence. Ohiyesa writes, "When my father left the Santee agency, Neb. the Indian agent did everything to prevent their going as a band and he did everything to prevent them from carrying out their project. Indeed he took away from them issued horses and farming elements, in fact everything that was issued to them by the government, not-with-standing the issued properties were in payment of treaty funds."[283] Ohiyesa likens what he considers a bold move on the part of his relatives to "the band of Israelites who escaped from the grasp of the Egyptians and were

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[281] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript*. 23
[282] Paul Stuart, *Dakotah: A History of the Flandreau Santee Sioux* 61
[283] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript*, 21

endeavoring to resettle their own native land again." He argues that his relatives were attempting to take back that which was rightfully their own (meaning land and freedom).[284] As with their ancestors at Bde Maka Ska, this community was also referred to by outsiders as "an experiment." However, in reality, similar to Bde Maka Ska, the Flandreau community was a venture entirely calculated and undertaken by Dakota people who were determined to succeed. [285]

Ohiyesa writes on his father's choice to farm at this time,

> He had colonized his immediate band on this fertile river and went farming in a simple way. Fortunately, he had a half-breed son – in- law, David Faribaou [sp], Jr., who could read and write as well as speak three languages, namely English, French, and Sioux. He kept my father well informed of the government's intentions and the general attitude of the public towards the dethroning of the Sioux nation of their empire which they had occupied and ruled for ages. His single eyed purpose was to plunge his tribe into civilization, that is to say, the acceptance of that scheme of life. [286]

Ohiyesa recollects his father looking out over his 160 acres of land and stating that the new farming life was for the best, " I have hunted everyday for the support of my family. I sometimes chase deer all day. One must work, and work hard, whether chasing deer or planting corn. After-all, the corn planting is the surer provision."[287] Here Tawakanhdiota relates that the strong work ethic of the Dakota had sustained over time, and this community was carrying forward the dream of their former chief Mahpiya Wicasta, who believed that if one was to survive in this new era it was necessary to implement these

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[284] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript*, 23
[285] Oral history, and written histories document that these families were the descendants of the village at Bde Maka Ska (Lake Calhoun) led by Mahpiya Wicasta (Cloud Man); See Paul Stuart, *Dakotah: A History of the Flandreau Santee Sioux,* 63
[286] Charles Eastman, *Unpublished Manuscript,* 20
[287] Charles Eastman, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization,* 16

western agricultural methods of food production and utilize any benefits of this new world to fulfill our own needs. This change in practice was necessary in order for the life of the community to continue on.

Roy Meyer writes in *History of The Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial* that "resenting the authority of the old chiefs, a number of the men who had emancipated themselves from tribalism while at Davenport left the reservation in the spring of 1869, together with their families, and took up homesteads in the valley of the Big Sioux River, in the vicinity of the later town of Flandreau, South Dakota."[288] Meyer associates this interpretation as stemming from John P. Williamson initially, but in his work he continues to promote this view – which is an example of the overly presumptuous cultural assumption (as well as a male dominant gendered narrative) that scholars have stated about this time period and community. In no documentation or oral history have I found any reason to say that these families resented "the authority of old chiefs." In fact, the authority of the older generation had already, for the most part, lost much of its power to council due to governmental interference with traditional tribal structures of governance at Crow Creek and Santee. Ohiyesa recollects that his father viewed life at Santee as life imprisonment and states that since he felt there was no way to go back to the life they had before the war "he resolved to grasp the only chance remaining to the red man – namely to plunge boldly into the white man's life, and to swim or die."[289]

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[288] Meyer, Roy. *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial.* p. 165
[289] Charles Eastman *The Indian Today, 98*

To say that Wakpa Ipaksan (Flandreau) Dakota "emaciated themselves from tribalism"[290] is an overly simplistic rational for the reason that this community in exile both accepted Christianity into their lives, and left the reservation at Santee. Roy Meyer goes on to argue, "In all probability, these Indians had imbibed, along with the rest of white men's culture, a sizable measure of selfishness, and they thought they could accomplish their personal objectives better without the agents supervision." Not only does this quote assert that the Indian agent knows "what's best" for the Dakota - a demoralizing and oppressive perspective at best, but he goes on to label this community of survivors as *selfish*. These individuals had lost their family to war, been imprisoned, and come to the conclusion that the only way to survive, after losing their livelihoods, access to traditional lifeways, and land, was to acculturate to some degree – but that does not mean that they suddenly lost their traditional sense of community and had become purely self-serving. These Dakota left Santee as a group that was comprised of the same tiospaye that had lived together before the war, and journeyed to the location that they did to recreate a community home, all while maintaining the same sense of kinship and family that had always been held in high regard in Dakota society. This community chose to deny the paternalistic society at Santee, where an Indian agent would determine their existence, and this was not in any way an individualistic or selfish act – it was a an assertion of their sovereignty as Dakota people and an act of survivance.

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[290] A similar sentiment is given in *Dakotah: A History of the Flandreau Santee Sioux,* edited by Paul Stuart and published by the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe in September 1971. This account is representative of the ways in which Flandreau descendants internalized this narrative, and this same perspective is sometimes heard among the older generation at Flandreau today who are relaying the information that they have read in texts such as Meyer.

Log Cabin home like those that homesteaded at Wakpa Ipaksan (Personal photo collection of Ohiyesa) [291]

Of the creation of the Flandreau community, Wakpa Ipaksan elder Sid Byrd recited to me the story his grandfather told him of when the Dakota came to reside at this place in the winter of 1869,

> The people who left [Santee] were Christians and they came the whole community was a Christian community…See on their journey this was a journey of faith they renounced the reservation and they would walk in the winter. They would sing to keep their morale. In the evening they would gather around the campfire, have their devotions, pray together share their meal, and in the morning

[291] This picture is from the personal photograph collection of Ohiyesa (Charles Eastman). On the back of the photograph he wrote, "typical Indian log cabin as my father lived in at Flandreau, Dakota territory." Photograph in the possession of his granddaughter Gail Johnson, Hadley MA.

> they would do the same and they would walk. When they finally arrived they formed a prayer circle. My grandfather said they raised their voices in praise and thanksgiving for a safe journey. One of their members perished along that trail coming and they built it [the First Presbyterian Church] and it was because they wanted to sit… Those who have gone before us died so that we who follow may live, and this church it would be representative of those who gave their lives and we established a new place, a place for worship. Wakantanka has taken care of us, has sustained us during difficult times, and they were thankful of that.[292]

Sid Byrd argues that as homesteaders the Dakota were renouncing the reservation system,[293] which is a very different structure than "tribalism" – a simplistic generalization of Dakota traditional life. Though the families made agreements on paper in order to secure this land and rebuild a community; that is not necessarily a marker that they felt communal or tribal living was no longer important at this point in time.

Wakpa Ipaksan, or Flandreau, has always been my family home, but learning about our long journey to this destination helps me to understand this place on a deeper level – and helps to connecting this place back to Minnesota. My grandmother, before she passed away last year, was always proud of the Christian heritage of this place, and of the independent spirit from which it was founded. Sid Byrd has taught me that my people wanted freedom, they sought a new life where healing could begin to take place after all that the people had been through. They had enough of the suffering that had followed their people for a generation, and their faith helped them to have the strength to look towards the future. Though they had experienced serious trauma of war and removal, that they could begin anew and retain a positive outlook on life at this place is a true reflection of traditional Dakota virtues. These values of Wobdeheic'iya (positivity) and

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[292] Sid Byrd, Oral History, Interview Flandreau, South Dakota January 15th, 2009
[293] ibid

Wowaditka (bravery) were a continuance of the life balance that their ancestors at Bde Maka Ska had also sought, and their efforts were made in order to regain their freedom to live an authentic life. They still retained their innate identity as Dakota people and called "God" by the Dakota name of Tunkasida in their prayers and songs, which they began to sing in English as well as Dakota iapi. In retaining these fundamental principles of living, and in holding strong to their faith in Tunkasida, they have ensured the survival of their descendants to this day, to which we are eternally grateful.

Chapter 4: Nacihun Owakihi "I Can Hear You": The Writings of John & Grace

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It is often tempting to look back and make judgments on the actions of historical figures or ancestors, judgments made with what we think are keen eyes sharpened by current research, new facts, and our own experiences. We scan every letter, court document, and journal for meaning and for explanations of the choices those people in our past have made. To justify our interpretations, we extrapolate answers couched in current theories of literary criticism or historiography. But without explicit records, will we ever *definitely* know the answers to the questions we have about our history?

--Gwen Westerman (Sissitunwan Wahpetunwan Dakota)

As a young girl I remember thinking of Dakota iapi[295] simply as the way that elders conversed with one another. The knowledge to speak, read, and write in Dakota ended when my great grandmother Grace Moore chose not to pass the language down to her daughter, my grandmother Lillian, in the early twentieth century, and growing up I

[294] The Eastman family, Grace Moore top center standing with her father John seated to her left. Original photograph in the personal collection of William Beane, Flandreau, SD.

[295] "Iapi" means "language" in Dakota translated literally as "they speak."

never associated Dakota iapi as something to which I held any right to know. For much of my life I assumed that I would never be able to understand the conversations that occurred between my elders, or the songs being sung in ceremony, and I struggled with the confusion and shame that came with not knowing my language.

The decision by our grandparents to not relay the language forward to future generations was a choice cloaked in historical oppression, and the ramifications have come at a steep cost. The contemporary diminishment in access to our Dakota iapi,[296] like the practice of our spiritual traditions, stem from colonial policies and tactics of assimilation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The forced removal from our traditional homelands, our ancestors' conversion to Christianity, the placement of our children into government sponsored boarding schools, and the imposition of euro-American ideologies of an outsider defined civilization, each of these had catastrophically disruptive impacts on the lives of our tribal members.

However, within every history of loss there is also a parallel story of strength helping to illustrate the very complicated reasons behind our ancestor's choices. In paying close attention to the experiences and ways in which our families endured we are able to weave out interesting ways in which traditions transformed. In doing so, it becomes apparent that not all was lost, and the core values of Dakota indigeneity were retained into the twentieth century. According to our traditional belief system, often

[296] It is estimated by the non-profit Dakota language revitalization organization "Dakota Wicohan" that there are less than five fluent speakers left in Minnesota. In the reservation community of, Flandreau South Dakota there are only a few speakers left. An exact number is difficult to ascertain, but all of our speakers are elderly.

referred to in our communities as the Dakota wicohan, our words and culture are both considered to be living breathing entities – embodiments of our spiritual selves and expressions of ancestral teachings that have existed in our community conscious since the beginning of time. Given that the core values of these traditions have survived because of the ways in which we incorporated them into new traditions, I argue that the raw essence of these lifeways were carried forward in new ways, as a continuance of the older Dakota tradition, even in communities that are interpreted as being in opposition to outside interpretations of "traditional" life. I examine moments in our historical record when we restructured certain experiences and religious practices to fit our own needs. In reworking our own narrative in this way, a claim can be made that we as Dakota people have always acted as invested agents of community change, and as active participants on our own story of survival.

Gerald Vizenor states, "The nature of Native survivance creates a sense of narrative resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihility, and victimry. Native survivance is an active sense of presence over historical absence, the dominance of cultural simulations, and manifest manners. Native survivance is a continuance of stories."[297] A reinterpretation of Dakota history under a survivance lens, providing evidence of life in the space of loss, is thus essential in the contemporary work that we engage in towards language and culture revitalization – not only because the process of language survivance is dependent on understanding the knowledge and complex lessons that our past can teach us, but because the right that we as descendants have to reinterpret our own story is

[297] Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance,* Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2009) LOC 33 Kindle edition.

also most fundamentally important. A focus on the positive and a reclamation of our historical power helps to revive the spirit –and these interpretations also give us hope for the future. At the same time this perspective *must* be interpreted with full understanding of the historical injustice that we endured – and should be interpreted in conjunction with, rather than in place of, the more bitter realities that we have experienced as historically oppressed peoples.

Kunsi's Papers

Leanne Hinton states that, "Within an active society with a thriving language, writing may develop many practical uses, not only for the development of literature, newspapers, language materials, and so on, but also for the use of day-to-day life – letters, shopping lists, diaries, advertisements, accounting, recipes, and so on."[298] For the Dakota, there remain a very limited number of these documents outside of letters and newspapers to record the last years in which our language would be considered "thriving." Even fewer of these types of documents have been translated into English, which is an important undertaking to capture the historical perspective of the Dakota experience.

This project utilizes two collections of written materials that belonged to my great-grandmother Grace Moore. Throughout her life, Grace kept a diary as well as journals of church notes in both English and Dakota, and she also maintained regular correspondence through the exchange of letters penned in the Dakota language with her

[298] Leanne Hinton, *The Green Book of Language Revitalization*, 240

father the Reverend John Eastman, while he was a minister on the Sisseton reservation in the early 1920's. After the death of Grace in 1985, my uncle William took great care in preserving the paperwork she had bequeathed to him at the Flandreau home he shared with his beloved mother, my kunsi[299] Lillian (Grace's only child).[300] William meticulously filed his grandmother's paperwork away in the hopes that someday someone in the family could help to decipher their meaning, and though deksi[301] William spent many years researching our family lineage, and was able to brilliantly piece together a family tree utilizing the documents that were written in English. However, the collection of letters, small, frail papers that were preserved and yet existed in a rather delicate state, had been penned in language that he was unable to interpret. This is significant because my unkanna[302] John was the last person on our Eastman side of the family to pass down the ability to read Dakota iapi. Our family history, our ancestral words, and their meanings were thus hidden from us because they were written in our own language - an irony that is reflective of the ways in which our history continues to sometimes haunt and inhibit us from moving forward.

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[299] Dakota word for grandmother
[300] My grandmother Lillian had a brother (from her father Oliver Moore's first marriage) named Leroy who resided with her grandfather John Eastman's family, and who is referenced in the letters, however he passed away as a child.
[301] Dakota word for uncle
[302] Dakota word for "grandfather"



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Grace Olive Eastman had been born August 8, 1886 at Flandreau to the Reverend John and Mary Jane Faribault Eastman. Given the amount of record keeping she left behind at her passing, it can easily be assumed that she loved writing. Most of Grace's personal diaries, dated between 1965 and 1971, contain daily logged entries that describe the activities of each day. Entries read, "Had fresh peas for dinner, watched t.v. Bessie [her sister] stayed the night, took a bath in the evening" and, "Cool day, stitched table cloths, went to pow-wow." Another, dated September 19th, 1978 is very rather curt and to the point, written in a tired hand that reads simply, "It was a usual day."[304] The act of recording each day's activities was so incredibly important to Grace that she never missed a date, and many of the books are filled with loose scraps of paper: for days she either did not have access to her diary or ran out of space to write. I like to imagine her sitting at her kitchen table in the evening reflecting on what had transpired in her day,

[303] Grace Eastman Moore, photographs courtesy of William Beane, Flandreau S.D.
[304] Personal Journals of Grace Moore, in my personal possession.

documenting important events in our family such as the birth of a child or the loss of an elder, and this was how Grace recorded our family story.

Writing Ourselves Back into History

For my great grandmother's generation writing letters was a way for family members who lived far apart from one another to communicate in the early reservation period, but it was also a fairly new form of expressing oneself and creating a record of one's community and daily life. This medium of transmitting information had begun to take the place of oral tradition in some ways during this era. Grace's uncle Ohiyesa (Charles Eastman) had used writing and storytelling as a medium to pass down our family history in his published works from 1902 onward, and he described the tradition of oral storytelling that had been practiced in our communities for hundreds, if not thousands of years,

> Very early, the Indian boy assumed the task of preserving and transmitting the legends of his ancestors and his race. Almost every evening a myth, or a true story of some deed done in the past, was narrated by one of the parents or grandparents, while the boy listened with parted lips and glistening eyes. On the following evening, he was usually required to repeat it. If he was not an apt scholar, he struggled along with his task; but, as a rule, the Indian boy is a good listener and has a good memory, so that the stories were tolerably well mastered. The household becomes his audience, by which he was alternately criticized and applauded.

Both young boys and girls received this type of training, and both Ohiyesa and his brother (Grace's father) John, had been reared in this tradition. But by the time of Grace's birth the practice had not been employed on a regular basis in the same way.

Though some tribal members did keep the older "more traditional" form of the oral storytelling alive within their own families, many became more spread out from one another after the Dakota diaspora of 1863, and the practice became less consistently employed. In my own family, though historical knowledge was passed down orally to an extent, the ways that remembrances were told back during the early years of our grandparents such as Ohiyesa – as a way to strengthen memory and teach lessons (in Dakota iapi specifically) about a much longer history of the world were no longer shared.

The way that I learned about my family history was by asking questions, and over time I began to observe the ways in which our stories and traditions have become shaped by what has been written – either by outsiders or by the hand of our own ancestors. Though the process of how Dakota people acquire cultural knowledge and story still include the traditional methods of the oral transference, many historical teachings have since been transformed to include archival materials and texts. In this way, oral history has begun to incorporate the introduction of the written word.

It was while Dakota people were imprisoned that missionaries were most successful in introducing them to both a writing system in their own language, as well as in learning to speak the English language. My grandmother Grace Moore writes about her father's experience in her journal,

> At the time of the Sioux massacre in 1862 – the Williamsons, Ponds, and Riggs were just beginning to feel their way into the hearts of the Indians but the greatest conversion of the Sioux people took place in the prison camp at Davenport Iowa – where many were prisoners, and some were hanged for deeds of the massacre. While in prison, the Williamsons and Riggs went into camp and preached the gospel and converted those who were left. My grandfather Many Lightenings and my father, then a young man, were among the converted.

The Dakota prisoners at Davenport were instructed in how to pray like Christians by using newly printed bibles that were written in the Dakota language in 1865[305], and they were taught to sing from Christian hymnals that were translated into the language as well. Just as their predecessors had attempted, these missionaries schooled the Dakota in their Indigenous language first, using the resources that had been compiled by the earlier missionaries, and the overall agenda continued to be religious conversion. Though mission schools had existed in Minnesota since the mid 19th century, they had not attracted many students,[306] either because of problems with interest, location, or the need for young people to remain at home to their families work and keep up the home. It was at Davenport, after they had lost their homes and freedom; that Dakota prisoners began to write remembrances down for posterity on paper, specifically in the form of letter writing to family members that had become separated by the war.[307] In this way letter writing became a form of family survivance, ensuring that relatives were aware of who had lived through the war and its aftermath.[308]

Though this was the era in which John spent his younger formative teenage years, his daughter Grace was raised during the era just after this second wave of Dakota Christian conversion. As the child of those who had lived through the Dakota war, she

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[305] Winifred Williamson Barton, *John P. Williamson: A Brother to the Sioux,* 70
[306] Letter by Stephan R. Riggs, dated Sept. 25, 1837, published in *The Missionary Herald,* Vol. 34, 1838, 69
[307] See Clifford Canku and Michael Simon, *The Dakota Letters Project: Dakota Kaskapi Okiciza Wowapi*, (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2013)
[308] Mankato Free Record, "*Then Indian Prisoners"* March 7th, 1863. This newspaper account of prison life states that the prisoners, " are great letter writers, and from one to two hundred are written weekly to their friends at Fort Snelling and elsewhere."

existed during an interim of relative calm after the storm of displacement and exile. The 20th century was a new day for the Dakota in many ways, especially at Flandreau where families had been able to homestead and create a new community for themselves independently in 1868. This tiospaye, refusing to concede to life on the reservation at Santee had left the reservation on foot, finally putting down roots close to the Minnesota border. This was the closest they felt they could get to actually returning home safely,[309] and for the first time since experiencing the trauma of extermination and exile there was hope for the living at Flandreau – as long as they practiced their faith in a way that was more acceptable to the white society and the American government of course.

Though the privatization of land for farming and focus on individualism that the Flandreau community upheld was a very different way of living than they had formally been used to in Minnesota, what sustained this community was a clear focus on both their spiritual faith and on a push for education, each serving as colonially influenced expressions of lifeways that the Dakota had always employed to teach Dakota values and sustainability back in the homeland.

Education as Survivance

In her article *The Boarding School as Metaphor* Brenda Child (Red Lake Ojibwe) analyzes the ways in which interpretations of the boarding school era, enacted to enforce assimilationist policies of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and often utilized as a

[309] See *Dakotah: A History of the Flandreau Santee Tribe*, Edited by Paul Stuart. Tribal History Program, Flandreau, South Dakota, September 1971.

metaphor for colonialism, are often too limiting in scope.[310] Though many boarding schools did discourage Dakota language retention (some schools using force and violence to do so) and can certainly be chastised for the language deprivation that has been experienced in Dakota communities, the argument that education itself has always stunted our language development is not fully accurate. For the first generation of formally educated Dakota students at mission schools, their Indigenous language was not discouraged to the extent that it would be in later government run boarding schools. These first generations learned to read and write in their own language, and maintained a positive outlook on their educational experiences. Similar to the ways in which duel binaries of identity formation in Dakota history are damaging, acting to simplify our experiences as one dimensional, the rationalization that education, and boarding schools in particular, have been detrimental to every one of our ancestors and all communities is far from reflective of all Dakota experience. As Child states, the history of Indian education is "far more multifaceted and untidy than a simple story of federal policy and assimilationist practice."[311] In looking at the history of western education in my family, we can weave out a story of both colonial dissent and cultural retention, which complicates the narrative of Indian education as being a solitarily negative and violent influence on our language and culture.[312]

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[310] Brenda Child. "Boarding School as Metaphor." *Indians as Subjects: Hemispheric Perspectives on the History of Indian Education.* (Santa Fe: SAR Press, 2014), 267-284
[311] Ibid. 269

Missionary Stephan R. Riggs felt that more progress was made at Davenport prison than had been made in the almost thirty years that that missionaries had attempted in the small day schools built from monies that had been provisioned through treaty agreements made between the Unites States and the Dakota in nineteenth century Minnesota.[313] Thus, though mission schools had existed in the homeland for quite some time, it was while in exile, and in prison at Davenport, Crow Creek, and finally Santee that the majority of the Dakota first received a western form of education, which came in conjunction with their conversion to Christianity. The missionaries were so successful at this time because they had access to vulnerable population of prisoners as who were limited in their options and desperate to find a way to live though imprisonment - and they used the bible to teach reading and writing in Dakota.

Alfred Riggs, the son of Stephen R. Riggs, who had ministered to the Dakota at Davenport, then continued his father's educational endeavors and established the Santee Normal Training at Santee in the winter of 1871, a location where many prisoners relocated upon their release in order to rejoin their families. It was also at this educational institution in which a small press was created to publish Dakota language materials, such as text books and bibles, and the *Iapi Oaye* or "Word Carrier" was issued in 1875, the first and only Dakota language newspaper in wide circulation at this time (containing many articles penned by John Eastman which have yet to be translated into English).[314]

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[313] Stephan R. Riggs to Selah Treat, March 26, 1863. ABCFM Papers. Minnesota Historical Society. See Linda Clemmons, *Conflicted Mission: Faith Disputes and Deception on the Dakota Frontier*, 214

[314] See Clifford Canku *Dakota Prisoner of War Letters,* and Roy Meyer *History of the Santee Sioux*, 176-178

The Santee Normal Training School, though it had an over arching goal of serving the same assimilationist agenda as later government run boarding schools, was a very different type of institution. It functioned for many years with the purpose of teaching young native students to read and write in the Dakota language in the hopes that they would become missionaries in their own communities (career paths of which both John and Grace took advantage) – again the education was offered in exchange for the spread of God's word. Missionaries of this era, such as John P. Williamson son of Thomas Williamson, carried on the same belief that their parents had preached, that the most productive way of communicating Christ to the Dakota would be by using their own language. Observing the many years that their own missionary parents had struggled to learn the language had an impact on this younger generation and as Alfred Riggs argued, "Education is more than language, and must use a medium that is understood. We cannot afford to wait for our scholars to the English language before we begin their education."[315] During this era the school was at it's most productive, averaging between one and two hundred students.[316] Unfortunately the school lost state support when government run schools become more widespread and was eventually forced to resign from the exclusive use of Dakota iapi, which had been the major appeal for many Dakota to attend.

Thus, by the time Grace attended the Santee Normal in the late 19th century, the school was no longer teaching its students in the Dakota language. To the frustration of

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[315] Alfred L. Riggs to Ezra A. Hayt, December 22, 1877

[316] Richard L. Guenther, *The Santee Normal Training* School, Nebraska History, 51 (1970) 359-378, & Mary B Riggs, *Early Days at Santee* (Santee: NTS Press, 1928), 9

Riggs, it was a common belief at this time that in using the language the school and its students was remaining "too Indian" and this was a hindrance to the next generation of Dakota becoming *civilized.*[317] The strong missionary backing of the language being rooted in early Dakota missionary history is reflective of the ways in which this religious history is also quite complex. This is also telling of how and why the Dakota maintained such solid ties to these missionaries over time, as they were able to communicate with them in their own tongue and were not discouraged from holding onto their language using violent measures of subjugation as was more common in later government run schools.

The influence of this era at the Santee school (largely compounded with the general environment of Native language suppression that existed in the early 20th century), is reflected in that Grace chose to use English far more than her father does in personal writing, and is also reflective in her decision to not pass down the ability to speak Dakota language to her daughter Lillian – however, both John and Grace appreciated the education they received, and looked back at this time with fondness and maintained close relations with the missionaries who instructed them, which is evident in the lifelong friendship that John maintained with his close mentor John P. Williamson.

John's younger brother Ohiyesa also attended Santee in the fall 1874, and he recollects in his writing that their grandmother opposed his attendance. Uncheedah, a strict believer in the old way of life gave young Ohiyesa this parting advice, "Always

[317] Roy Meyer, *History of The Santee Sioux*, 176

remember! That the Great Mystery is good; and evil can only come from ourselves!"[318] This advice is most important to note because this it illustrates that the ways in which this family viewed education not an act of compliance to assimilationist agenda, but as an act of dissent in which we retain a Dakota sense of self during an era of rigid colonial interference. For this generation education was viewed as a way to impress more understanding into the world in which we lived, and the hope was that after acquiring this vast knowledge the next generation would then come back into our community to help our own people thrive into the next century.[319] In this way achieving a "white man's education" was ultimately seen as a tool for survival. Many Dakota children came away from these early institutions with lasting friendships as well as skills that they used to provide for their families, and this is reflective of the ways in which an oppressed community has continued to show resiliency and strength in the face of adversity.

The Rise of Women's Work

Roy Meyers argues that though Dakota people may have survived, this survival came at the cost of cultural preservation at the Santee reservation in the early twentieth century "Although the Indians remained in most cases a race apart, it cannot be said that they retained much of their aboriginal culture into the twentieth century, except for the Dakota language. Aside from a little beadwork, the superintendent in 1910 could report no Native arts and crafts."[320] However, the case can be made that this "little beadwork"

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[318] Charles Eastman, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization.*
[319] Sydney Beane, oral history interview, Plymouth Minnesota, February 12th, 2012
[320] Roy Meyer. *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy On Trial*, 322

actually gives evidence of a larger community trend - one that was not understood by casual outside observers such as Indian agents, who hold very little personal knowledge of the intersections between Dakota culture and artistic expression.

In Grace's collection of papers there is one black leather-bound journal that stands out with more detailed entries than the others; it is older and much larger than the other books. This journal contains dates from the 1930's with notes that are related to her church service specifically, as well as a history of Dakota women in missionary work titled, "The Rise of Indian Women's work." Grace, who was in her forties at this time, writes in this volume,

> I do not know under what conditions the women worked in those early days. Perhaps they met in the home of the missionaries but after I began to exist and began to grow and see things, the missionary society has always been before me – as a sort of a guiding light. At Flandreau where I grew up – my mother was always ready to go to a meeting every Wednesday, taking all her children with her, so I always looked forward to Wednesday. They would meet in the morning and start serving as soon as they got there, after putting a quilt on frames to be quilted and setting on the floor around the quilt. At noon a big dinner was served by the hostess and back to work again until about 3:30 pm. When the work would be put away, all the children called in to sit around our mother's knee, and they would have a worship service. The (?) would conduct the meeting, their would be laughing, prayers offered by several women, scripture read and talk on the scripture by someone. This same form of worship service is still carried on in our societies – it is reverence in all respect and devotion of the faith of our women.[321]

White missionary wives back in the Minnesota homeland first formed these types of sewing circles in the 1830's. Stephen R. Riggs stating in 1837 that teaching the Dakota women to sew and weave were "duties so essential to civilization."[322] The purpose of

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[321] Grace Moore Journal. Not Dated.

[322] Letter by Stephan R. Riggs, dated Sept. 25, 1837, published in *The Missionary Herald,* Vol. 34, 1838, p.69; also see Linda Clemmons *Conflicted Mission: Faith,*

these earlier meetings had been to keep Dakota women away from performing labor at camp and in the fields because both the missionaries and their wives saw these activities as uncivilized pursuits for women.

Scholars Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Lakota) speak to the long history of quilt making specifically in their essay *The Role of Sioux Women in the Production of Ceremonial Objects: The Case of the Star Quilt* as follows:

> The art of quiltmaking had been practiced by Sioux women for nearly a century. It was introduced to them through government and church agencies. As part of an overall effort to educate the Sioux in the ways of White people, women were taught a wide variety of "civilized "domestic skills. Quilting, along with such techniques as bread making, tatting, and crocheting were learned in women's church societies, they were taught by government "field matrons," and they were featured in domestic science curriculum of federal and parochial boarding schools.[323]

But as Linda Clemmons rightfully points out regarding the role that missionary wives such as Mrs. Riggs played in these early teachings to the grandmothers of Grace in Minnesota, "The irony was lost on Riggs that the Dakota women she taught were probably more experienced seamstresses than she."[324] Clemmons is expressing that Dakota women had always known how to sew and were highly skilled in all kinds of craftwork; from quilling and beading, to the sewing of buckskin dresses. They had always created much-needed items for the home by hand (and even the physical home itself in the case of tipis).

Disputes, and Deception on the Dakota Frontier. , (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society, 2014)

[323] Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, (Lanham, University Press of America, 1983), 126

[324] Linda Clemmons, *Conflicted Mission: Faith, Disputes, and Deception on the Dakota Frontier,* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2014), 55

By Grace's generation the need for blankets to keep warm remained much the same, and so quilting circles were naturally formed at Flandreau by Dakota women involved in missionary work as well. In interviews with Santee elders, scholar Colette Hyman relates that "winyan omniciye" (women's meetings) held on the Santee reservation in the early to mid 20th century were also always held on Wednesdays at Santee,

> The women shared meals and prayers, but mostly "they did a lot of sewing." Women brought babies and young children, and women who were too aged or infirm to work were welcomed as well. They were also joined by students at the Santee Normal Training School. These gatherings, which brought together young and old to do work that Dakota women had always done together, helped recreate bonds of kinship and friendship among women and, ultimately, rebuild Dakota communities.[325]

In these recollections it is apparent that for Grace and her family Wednesdays were a day dedicated towards community and women were encouraged to congregate and socialize. In this way, the church's focus on community was parallel to the traditional Dakota emphasis on communal living. That the women came together to quilt, bringing their children with them as a form of social and spiritual investment is reflective of the days before exile when Dakota women would perform these domestic tasks together in camp on a daily basis.

Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine relate on the ways in which utilization of blankets was expanded over the years, they assert the social nature and cooperative aspect of the production of the quilts and the relatively inexpensive supplies needed are what

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[325] Colette Hyman, *Dakota Women's Work: Creativity, Culture, & Exile. (*St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012), 154

made their creation gain in popularity the way that they did.[326] The need for warm blankets in the cold winter months at Flandreau would have been the most obvious usage, but the sharing of quilts, particularly those which incorporate the star design were used in Dakota communities for what are commonly called "give – aways" (known in Dakota as a "Wopida" or "thank you"), funerals, naming ceremonies, and to honor family members.[327] These events are all community acts of appreciation that extend traditional practices in contemporary ways. Today, young people receive star quilts specifically in their communities at college graduations, or a couple might receive one at their marriage or the birth of a child. At funerals you will often see numerous star quilt designed blankets both folded on and hanging near the casket of a loved one. They are also made by artisans to be shown in art shows or to be sold, much like any other art form.

Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine remark that the geometric designs that make up the star for the quilts are patterned after traditional art forms and that, "a design technique was followed by Sioux women in their traditional painting, beadwork, and quillwork."[328] Albers and Medicine also attribute the star to the morning star design of Plains women origin, "The morning star, which appears in the East in early April, has always been an important symbol in their myth and ceremony. It represents the direction from which spirits of the dead travel to earth, and by extension, it signifies continuing

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[326] Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, *The Hidden Half: Studies if Plains Indian Women*, (Lanham, University Press of America, 1983), 126-127

[327] A "give-away" is a tradition where gifts are exchanged to the community in appreciation and individuals of particular honor are sometimes wrapped in a star quilt (or other blanket) to show honor and respect. Though today, Pendleton blankets are seen utilized more often in urban areas where there seem to be less Dakotas who quilt than in rural and reservation areas.

[328] Ibid. 127-129

link between the living and the dead. More generally, the morning star symbolizes immortality."[329] This speaks to the ways in which Dakota women transformed the traditional artistic practices that their grandmothers employed to create new traditions that continue today – representative of the immortality of culture and the freedom to express it.

Grace's revelation that the missionary society served as a "guiding light" is telling of the capacity in which the church was important to her generation. In one sense this passage reads as evidence that the missionary goal of "enlightenment" had reached the Dakota, but on a deeper and most fundamentally human level Grace's words convey that these sewing circles served not just as social gatherings but as spaces for healing – providing a safe place to pray and gain comfort from the company of others. In this way these Wednesday meetings were a very "traditional" and almost ceremonial type of gathering, showing that at least in some ways life was just as it had always been for the Dakota.

Grace's uncle Ohiyesa recalled how significant the role that women played in funding the Dakota churches in his 1915 essay *The Indian Today*,

> To-day I am glad to say, we have still reason to thank our mothers for the best part of manhood. A great many of them are earnest Christian women, who have carried their native uprightness and devoted industry over into the new life. The annual reports of the missionaries show large sums, running into the thousands of dollars, raised by the self denying labor of native women for the support of their churches and other Christian work.[330]

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[329] ibid 129

[330] Charles Eastman, *The Indian Today,* 90

As a young Dakota Christian woman and mother, Grace was likely one the women that Ohiyesa had in mind when he wrote this statement. In one journal entry she writes a remembrances of this same time period that gives evidence to the sentiment of her uncle:

> Because of this great devotion, and love for the work – from two to three thousand dollars a year were given for missions for native missionary work. I can remember one time when I was treasurer of the Dakota Presbyterian and the money was given to me – so I would turn the lump sum over to John P. Williamson who was the general treasurer of the Dakota Wotain Waste. I slept one night out in a tent with over a thousand dollars under my pillow. I had my hand on the money all night and didn't get much sleep. The rise of the Indian women's work was at its peak then.[331]

In her journal Grace, who is entering her middle age years of life and becoming more contemplative, also looks back on her youth at Flandreau, the time as being an ideal era to come of age as a young Christian Indian woman:

> In these girlhood days of mine, the work of the Indian women was at the peak of its service for missions. There were no automobiles, no modern distractions to take away the spirit of the work. It was a simple faith that was real to those women. They worked for it and lived it in their lives. They gave freely of what they had – they loved the work and it meant no hardship to go in horse & buggy or wagon and even walk from five to ten miles to attend a meeting.[332]

Here she looks back longingly at the era before her as serving God more productively. Grace is relaying the strong work ethic and deep level of commitment to the church that the women at Flandreau had in the late 19th century, and she relates the modern distractions as barriers to the church.

Honestly these reflective passages about "the good old days" make me smile and wonder what my great grandmother would have thought about the technological wonders of the modern era. But, behind the sentimental rose-colored glasses that Grace adorned

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[331] Grace Moore Journal, "The Rise of Indian Women's Work," Not dated.
[332] Ibid.

there is an important larger analysis to be made with this statement. The world was changing so quickly for the Dakota at Flandreau, and though previous traditions of faith had been inextricably tied to everyday living, from praying before the hunt, to a ceremonial practices that occurred on a consistent basis throughout the day, it is then no wonder the generation before her walked ten miles on foot in order to pray one day a week. The Dakota were still learning how to incorporate this new way of praying and they were hungry for that comfort, the spiritual fulfillment that ceremony provides. By Grace's generation the community had become more detached from that faith and were shifting focus. The traditional practice of the interconnected spiritual existence, a faith that was put into practice on a daily basis was being replaced by a more western-based life structured towards concepts of individualism and separation. Ironically, the very message being preached from the proselytizer eventually began to also distance people from the church as they focused more on the nuclear family and less on the community whole.

Grace speculates that the decline of community engagement over the years was also due to the financial strain on families at this time, but she projects this burden back onto her own generation as a personal failure,

> Somewhere along the line, we who are mothers now, and were girls at the time I have been thinking about, have failed to do our part, or else, we to have been swept with this modern living, that to-day our women's work is lacking that spirit of love and devotion for missions. Economic problems are also an essential cause of the lack of giving for missions. The cost of living is much greater than it used to be. Our Indian people to-day are suffering – and it means a sacrifice to the fullest extent.[333]

[333] Grace Moore, undated journal entry.

Though not all markings are dated the journal holds entries ranging between 1937 and 1942 which tells us that the specific economic instability that Grace is speaking of comes at the tail end of the Great Depression, and not long after the Indian Reorganization Act, which allowed for the community to organize officially as a tribal entity, the Flandreau Santee Sioux, in 1934.[334]

Regardless of the positive changing tides of Indian policy at the time, employment continued to be a problem at Flandreau, with the main source of jobs being found at the Flandreau Indian school, which had opened as the Riggs Institute in 1892,[335] there was little else but low-wage opportunities on the reservation in this era.[336] The employment provided to community members was also often temporary, such as in the rebuilding of roads and improving the heating plant between 1933-1934. In February of 1934 a garment factory was built with funds from the Civil Works administration, but only nine Indian women were employed at this site, which only operated seasonally.[337] Worried about the lack of jobs, Grace's brother George Eastman, a member of a newly formed tribal council in 1934, wrote to the Indian Commissioner asking for assistance. He remarked in the letter that most of the landowners in the community were elderly at

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[334] *Dakotah: A History of the Flandreau Santee Tribe*, Edited by Paul Stuart. Tribal History Program. Flandreau, South Dakota. September, 1971. 93

[335] The name was made official by an act of Congress in 1901, but it was later changed to the U.S. Indian Educational School, as well as Flandreau Industrial School. See A Short History of Flandreau Indian Vocational School, author and date unknown, National Archives Kansas City

[336] William Beane interview. February, 2013.

[337] *Dakotah: A History of the Flandreau Santee Tribe*, Edited by Paul Stuart. Tribal History Program. Flandreau, South Dakota. September, 1971. 98 Also See Roy Meyer, *History if the Santee Sioux,* 340. This text lists the garment factory as opening in December of 1933, and reports that the factory made clothing for children in the Indian Service.

this time, unable to pay taxes on their properties, and asked for the assistance in acquiring more land for community members.[338]

Grace takes issue with the fact that women in her generation had to seek out employment in the public sector in order to help sustain their families. The approach that Grace yearned for was to remain private and focused on the home – but in a way that was also community based. In a sense she wanted the best of both worlds, and had a difficult time reconciling the oppositional structures of communal living in a capitalistic society. Just as the generations before her had been forced to adjust to a changing world, this life that they had chosen to pursue at Flandreau had greatly impacted the traditional communal structures of family life. Patricia Albers writes,

> The new situation that Sioux women found themselves in gave them less opportunity to be autonomous and exercise influence than they had in the past. Denied access to annuity distributions and other means of livelihood coming from the federal government, Sioux women had no means to assert their independence except within the confines of their own self -generated subsistence and handicraft activities. Increasingly, the balance of power leaned towards Sioux men who, by virtue of federal fiat, held a prior claim on a household's provisions and its means of production.[339]

Though the situation at Flandreau was unique in that the founding community were homesteaders, the landowners on the reservation had always been male, and though, traditionally, Grace would have performed hard labor on the farm right alongside the men, in this more modern agricultural community women were expected to take up other forms of employment, such as secretarial or factory work. Thus, Grace's main outlets in

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[338] George Eastman et al., to Collier, May 31st, 1933 National Archives RG75
[339] Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine, *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, 190

early twentieth century reservation society were limited, and her educational upbringing taught her that the church was the best way for women to assert their priorities toward the home.

Dowanpi "They Sing": The Tradition of Dakota Hymnals

My memories are not always so clear of my grandmother Grace, since I was only seven years old when she passed on I do not recall any of her words, or even her voice, but I can picture her seriousness, her fragility, and small stature. She barely hovered above her own young grandchildren, and yet she carried her self with this high air of moral purpose. Grace regularly attended The First Presbyterian Church at Flandreau, where her father John was once a minister. This small building still overlooks the rolling prairies and valley of our reservation, and it holds the title of oldest continually operating church service in the state of South Dakota.[340] Since my great -grandmother was so very advanced in age when I knew her, just as quickly as my remembrances began they ended with her passing at the age of ninety-nine on October 1st, 1985.

It is also at the First Presbyterian church that I was baptized as a young girl. The most memorable recollection I have of my grandmother Grace is on this day as she, two weeks past her 99th birthday, stood proudly before us as. The Reverend Sidney Byrd

[340] This designation was made in 1966 through a series of letters between Rev. Soloman G. Grueich and Will Robinson, Secretary of the South Dakota Historical Society. See William Beane *An Experiment in Faith,* 2003

effortlessly weaved Christian sayings in Lakota[341] with the telling of jokes to make my siblings and I feel at ease. Her daughter, my grandmother Lillian attended this church regularly until her passing in 2012 and I can still feel the rings on my grandmother's knuckles as she would quietly smile and smack me in the arm if I didn't sing along to Dakota hymnals.

Grandmother Lillian's persistence in getting me to join in the chorus of Dakota Christian hymnals such as Kci Maun Ye (Abide With Me) was always expected, though she knew I was not a good practicing Christian Dakota. Attending "Dakota church" was simply something we always did when visiting our home reservation community, and I valued these Sunday mornings as another way to spend time with my beloved grandmother. I enjoyed listening to my uncle play the organ for church service, and this was always a place to come together as family. But secretly I also loved this place because I found joy in flipping through the Dakota bible, which contained more of our words written than I had ever seen. This was the only place that I could hear my grandmother sing in Dakota, and ironically perhaps, it was here at this church that I felt as though the language still belonged to us.

[341] Though he is Dakota, and a Flandreau Tribal member, Sidney Byrd was raised as a young boy by his grandparents who resided in Pine Ridge, which is why he speaks the "L" dialect of the "Siouan language."

Michael McNally's research among the Ojibwe analyzes the ways in native hymnals represent what he considers to be a kind of religious hybridity. He argues that nineteenth century missionaries produced the English to Ojibwemowin translation of these hymnals in order to sway religious conversion,

> in their campaign to root out the Indianess of the Ojibwe people and to dissemble the communal structures, indigenous ideas, and seasonal rhythms that governed life ways. But with time, the translated hymns took on a life of their own in the oral tradition. For many Ojibwe people today, the ritualized singing of these hymns, usually at all night funeral wakes has become emblematic of who they are as a distinctive people with distinctive values. This appears to be the case regardless of whether those gathered at a wake identify as Christian. The elders who travel the north woods to sing these hymns are neither emissaries for evangelical Christianity nor singers of hymns *per se*. Instead, they are known as "Ojibwe Singers," respected as elders who sing "Ojibwe songs."

Thus, similar to the repurposing of the Star quilt for traditional activities, native hymnals have been reimagined and incorporated to function as a medium that supports doctrines of tradition. Like the Ojibwe practice of hymnal singing, the Dakota – who also had

hymnal translated into their own language by missionaries with a similar agenda – have incorporated Dakota Christian hymnal singing as being our own. According to oral history tradition, it was even a Christian hymn that was sung in Dakota by some of the thirty-eight Dakota prisoners as they were led to the gallows to be hanged in Mankato in 1862 – though those who observed this travesty often wrongfully refer to this song as a "death song."[342] Dakota hymns were also sung by the Dakota as they traveled after removal, either from one prison towards the next as n the days following the war, or in their search for a new place to call home as in the settlement at Flandreau.[343] The singing of Dakota hymns served the same purpose as the singing of traditional and ceremonial songs had for eternity – as a way to uphold strength and as prayers to God.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century traditional quill and beadwork designs were incorporated to decorate the two main Dakota hymnal books, *the Dakota Odowan* and *Wakan Cekiye Odowan*.[344] The *Dakota Odowan*, published in 1879, was the collaborative work of John P. Williamson and Alfred Riggs.[345] The practice of decorating the books likely began out of respect and to keep the hymnal clean and in good condition. In creating these beautiful pieces of functional artwork the Dakota women were also making these song-books their own, transforming the physical aspect of the religion and

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[342] Sid Byrd interview, January 15th, 2009

[343] John. P. Williamson notes that the Dakota would sing during the move to Crow Creek. Sid Byrd and William Beane both relate that the Dakota sang Christian hymnals as a way to keep their strength during their journey from Santee to Flandreau. See John P. Williamson letter to Thomas S. Williamson, November 14th 1862 See William Beane, *An Experiment in Faith,* Also cited from Sid Byrd Interview

[344] See Colette A. Hyman, *Dakota Women's Work: Creativity, Culture, and Exile.*

[345] Winifred Williamson Barton, *John P. Williamson: A Brother To the Sioux…* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1923), 252-253

song to reflect the traditions of the Dakota that had lasted, and creating the beautiful designs for the book covers was also considered a way of honoring the songs that had helped to ease their heartbreak after removal.

Though the simple jackets and plain gold trimmed lettering now lack the decorative covers of the previous generations, songs from the Dakota hymnal books are still sung in church services and at community events today. Many of my generation, which carries very few if any fluent speakers, have been brought up with this form of the language. The inclusion of Dakota iapi in church life is telling of the ways that Dakota people held strong to their own identities and language and incorporated this piece of culture into that which mattered most – as the connection between Dakota people and God (be it ceremonial or in a church).

Nothing is more reflective of the ways in which colonial propaganda has been repurposed and reimagined to support traditional preservation projects than in the repurposing of texts compiled by missionaries to learn to read and write in Dakota iapi today. Former University of Minnesota Dakota language instructor Carrie Schommer (Wahpetonwin) writes in the forward of the republished version of Stephan R. Riggs *A Dakota-English Dictionary:*

> The missionaries translated the Bible into Dakota with the help of Joseph Renville, Sr., whose father was bilingual in his parents' native languages. Williamson read the bible in French, Renville translated the verses into Dakota, and Riggs and the Pond brothers struggled to write the words down. Thereafter, various chapters of the bible, prayer books, and hymnals were issued in the D dialect. The collection effort bore additional fruit in 1852 when the *Grammar and Dictionary of the Dakota Language,* edited by Riggs and sponsored by the Minnesota Historical Society, was published by the Smithsonian Institution. An expanded version of the dictionary, also the result of Riggs was

> produced in 1892, as *A Dakota-English Dictionary* and is the version now printed.[346]

Both the Riggs *Dakota-English Dictionary* as well as the much smaller *English-Dakota Dictionary,* edited by John P. Williamson in 1902, were created to record a "dying language" and the irony of utilizing these texts in the revitalization of the language is not lost on the students that use them today. These dictionaries have assisted me in translating some of the personal materials that belong to our family – including the letters written to my grandmother Grace from her father. Currently, they are still the most comprehensive dictionaries that we have available to us.[347] In this way, we have also repurposed the dictionaries to serve our own needs – and this is a form of reclaiming our language in a sense. However, the words are, and always will a part of us, and in looking at the ways on which they have lasted I have come to realize that they do not belong to us, we belong to them, and it is our responsibility to ensure that they continue to live into the next century.

Unkanna Wowapi Kaga: "Grandfather's Letters"

Twenty-three of the personal correspondence letters between Grace Moore and her father John Eastman are still in existence. Spanning a very short period between 1919-1921, these delicate writings are a frail reminder of time, and they are a very

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[346] Stephan R. Riggs. *A Dakota- English Dictionary. (*1890 Reprint. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), vi

[347] Though these materials are valuable resources to have, the translations of Dakota words are very Euro-centric and Christian based, which makes it difficult for students today who would like to learn to speak the more informal and conversational language that their grandparents conversed in.

personal account of the last years of John's life. Though not all of these writings are legible,[348] and the translation process is not yet complete, they are an invaluable resource for my family and tribal history, as well as to the preservation of the Dakota language.

I clearly remember my anticipation the day my Deksi brought down the large bundle of aged letters - wrapped in twine – and placed them on the coffee table in front of my sister and me. We were afraid to even touch them at first, just as I had been afraid to form the words, to speak out loud during my first semester of Dakota language class at the University. This fear, and the shame that follows my generation for not knowing our own language can act like a barrier in so many ways. The first step for me in breaking through this roadblock, which had separated two generations at this point, was in finding out the reasons my own family had letting it slip past us. Luckily, with the translation assistance of my language mentor Glenn Wasicunna, a Dakota elder from Sioux Valley Canada, I became less intimidated of the words held within the pages of these letters, and I began to understand our family story from the perspective of my grandparents.

During an interview in 2010, my kunsi Lillian explained to me that her parents and grandparents used the language to speak to children in those days but did not expect them to respond with it, "We knew words, and so we talked to each other. I'd talk English and she'd talk Indian to me and yet I understood her and she understood me. But she never talked English."[349] Kunsi Lillian also explained to me that Dakota iapi was not taught to children when she was young because everyone knew that English was a most

[348] Some of the letters were written in blue rather than black ink. This blue ink did hold up over time as well as the black, and bled through the pages at some point in time over the years.

[349] Interview With Lillian Beane January 16, 2009

desired skill to master in order to be successful. Therefore it seems, purposefully not teaching the language was ironically an act of love rather than cultural suppression. The generation before my grandmother did not want to see their children struggle as they had in life, and this became the new tradition.

When asked about her grandfather John my kunsi would always smile. She would wistfully retell a story of riding a passenger train through the South Dakota prairie with him as a girl, and she remembered that he always, "dressed so nice, and wore good clothes." She said that he lived in the nicest house she had ever seen. My translating and reading his letters I have learned that her grandfather John was not wealthy by any means, in fact according to his letters he struggled financially a great deal, but he was a respectable hardworking man, and his family lived a quiet and simple life. Like his daughter Grace, John's main focus in life was on the health and happiness of his family, and he saw the church as s necessary resource to support and build community morale.

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Mahpiyawakandida

John Eastman was born on March 1, 1849 at either Oak Grove Village (also a mission site) in Bloomington, or in Shakopee, Minnesota.[351] His early Dakota name was Hinhanduta (Red Owl) and first Christian name was George, but he later adopted the

[350] John Eastman. Photo courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

[351] Both sites have been mentioned as possible birthplaces in various archival documents but my deksi William believes Bloomington to be more accurate. Shakopee was the home to the village of Chief Sakpe II (also known as "Little Shakopee," the second in the line of three with the name meaning "Six"). The Dakota name for the area now known as Shakopee is listed as "Tinta Otunwe" (Prairie Village) in Paul Durand's *Where the Waters Gather and the Rivers Meet*. Nearby Prior Lake is known as Bdemayato (Blue Banks Lake).

name John to honor missionary John P. Williamson, who had been his teacher and mentor for many years.[352] There are important stories held within names in Dakota society, reasons that these names are given, but the story of how John Eastman acquired his earlier Dakota name of Hinhanduta is unknown. Later on in life he would earn at least one other Dakota name, which was common practice in traditional Dakota society, and he became Mahpiyawakandida (Worshipping Cloud). However, the reason and significance of this name is also not known, as is much of the story of his early life in Mni Sota - before his imprisonment at Davenport.[353]

Though, John Eastman's life accomplishments have been researched at length by his great grandson, my deksi William, very little has been written about him as a public figure in Dakota history. He does make appearances in his youngest brother Charles' works, specifically as his mentor and a former instructor at the Santee Normal School.[354] Though his life has never been a widely documented, his great-nephew Ernst Jerome

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[352] John Williamson was the son of missionary Thomas Williamson, He preached to the men who were incarcerated at Fort Snelling prison and stayed with the Dakota who were taken to Crow Creek. Eastman when on to become a student of Williamson's at the Santee Normal Training School and they shared a close life-long friendship, giving a eulogy in the Dakota language at his mentors funeral stating, "Whatever I am at this time, I owe to him, and I think ok him as my father. Whatever I have wanted to know, I have asked of him, and he has told me. Whom shall I inquire of now?...He more than anyone else had compassion on the Dakota people. He went with them in the early days, carrying his packs as they did theirs, oftentimes hungry and thirsty and tired, but he remained with them because he wanted to tell them the Good News." See *John P. Williamson: A Brother to the Sioux*, Winifred Williamson Barton. 260

[353] William Beane interview, Flandreau South Dakota, February 18th, 2013

[354] See Charles Eastman Unpublished manuscript; see Charles Eastman *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*

Mensel (grandson to Ohiyesa), did find it important to mention his great uncle John in his 1954 Dartmouth history thesis,

> Before beginning my research for this paper, I knew nothing of John Eastman and even now know even all too little of his real character and mettle…my grandmother (Elaine Goodale Eastman) for one felt that in him were to be found the elements of a great man and that little of the real tribute, which he deserved, had ever been paid to him. Had she lived longer and been of strong body and mind. A written monument to his unsung contribution to that team, of which I am to unfold a portion of their story, might have been produced for all to read.[355]

This passage not only speaks to the closeness and shared respect that the families of the Eastman brothers' held, but it also initiates the same question of why so little has been written on John's remarkable life - to which the most obvious answer is given he was never in the national spotlight at the same level as his younger brother Ohiyesa. Unkanna John was simply a more "behind the scenes" pillar of his community – often sending his brother out into the field when a more well -known and publically charismatic representative was needed to call attention to a cause.

The types of activities that engaged John Eastman's time were focused on the improvement of Dakota life on reservation lands and included a lawsuit demanding the reinstatement of abrogated treaty monies owed to the Dakota by the United States government after the 1862 war, the establishment of the Flandreau Indian School, and the founding of multiple reservation chapters of the Young Men Christian Association (along with his regular duties as a minister to his community).

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[355] Ernst Jerome Mensel, *John, Charles, and Elaine Goodale Eastman: Their Story-A Contribution To The American Indian.* Dartmouth College Professor Allen R. Foley Advisor, May 18th, 1954

In December of 1885 John Eastman gave an address to the State Convention of the Minnesota Association in St. Paul, where he related how the first meeting of the Indian Young Men's Christian Association had been organized at the First Presbyterian Church in Flandreau on April 27th 1879. Eastman remarks that the association was made without any constitution, "but was made upon the rules of Jesus" and that the purpose was to find ways for young Dakota men to support one another.[356] This first chapter was organized with the contributions of John and Charles Eastman, Wowinape (Thomas Wakeman), who was the son of Taoyateduta (Little Crow),[357] and a few others.[358] It is interesting to note that the founders of this organization were all sons of men who had both fought in battle during the war (or led the war in the case of Wowinape) as well as those who had declined to do so. These parties, which historically have been portrayed as forever divided, came together to formulate a plan to reinstill the confidence of these fellow former warriors.

In the late nineteenth century era Dakota men and women were both struggling with shift in gender roles as they learned to navigate living at Flandreau near white society. In a fairly short period of time this population had gone from a hunting culture (which had farmed as needed), to life in prison, and were then released to a community that was solely focused on agriculture.

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[356] "Work Among the Indians," The Watchman, August 15th, 1886, p. 188, Anderson Library. Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Minneapolis, MN

[357] Wowinape was the son of Taoyateduta (Little Crow), the Dakota chief most often associated as being the leader of the 1862 Dakota war.

[358] Author unknown, Copy transcript of notes from the first meeting of the Indian YMCA, Flandreau South Dakota. (Original document in memorabilia collection) Anderson Library. Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Minneapolis, MN

The organization programming encouraged physical activity, healthy living, and also served as a support network for those wishing to work through issues with alcohol addiction, which had been a problem in the Dakota community since liquor was introduced by early traders. John and Charles' (Ohiyesa) brother David Eastman (Hepidan) converted to Christianity as a means to find support for his own sobriety. In his own account of this experience David relates that his brother John encouraged him to "go to a meeting" in order to be saved and he relates in his own account of this life change, "For nineteen years I been struggling for salvation and for five years now I am strong on power of holy spirit."[359] David declares that the YMCA helped to change his life, re-instilling his faith in God, and this story shows how in the early to mid twentieth century those who had "become wayward" were encouraged to join the church in order to help refocus their spiritual self.

Though questions of agenda are relevant, the Young Men's Christian Association work at Flandreau is also reflective of the commitment that the Dakota had to combining religious faith with moving the community forward in a healthy way – especially since this was an organization that was brought into the reservation by the tribal members themselves. Some community problems that took place at Flandreau during the lifetimes of both John and Grace, which not in any way exclusive to Dakota communities, such as excessive alcohol consumption, and the pervasiveness of health issues that we now contribute to things such as nutrition and poor preventative medical care, are also

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[359] David Eastman, *The Conversion of Hepidan or David Eastman's Account of Hos Own Conversion,* December 1914. Anderson Library. Kautz Family Archives YMCA October 5th 1921, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

associated with long-term intergenerational effects of historical trauma that stem from both systemic poverty as well as the inability of the community to grieve past trauma. Twentieth century missionaries and church workers who took it upon themselves to try and address these problems, once again, convinced the Dakota that they must be "saved" in order to secure a future for their descendants. However, when looking at the actual reasons, the practical mentality that many Dakota associated with adhering to the Christian faith during this era, the Dakota were simply looking for a way to heal, a place to pray, and a an opportunity to continue forward.

Wicoie Unkitawapi: Our Words

Hand written on Board of Home Missions stationary John opens each letter with "my Dear Daughter" in English, and signs off using "Nape Ciyuzapi"- a common Dakota greeting, meaning "I shake your hand" that is still used today. The letters are written to his daughter, separated from him and living with her husband and young child in Wolf Point, Montana. As previously stated, education was an important value to John, just as it had been for his father, and after Grace attended the Santee Normal Training School in Nebraska, she also returned to Flandreau Indian School, before receiving a scholarship to attend Miami University at Oxford, Ohio. She followed in her father's footsteps to become a missionary, spreading the word of God to various tribal nations – a path encouraged by her teachers at the Santee Normal Training School. She married her husband Oliver Moore and their daughter Lillian been born in her father John's Sisseton,

South Dakota home in August of 1911.[360] Father and daughter were quite close, a sentiment made obvious in the tone and manner of their informal and private correspondence.

Opportunities in another community (as well as a lack of employment at Flandreau) had called both John and Grace elsewhere in the early 1920's and the family used letters to keep in touch when they were too far from one another to visit. While ministering at Sisseton, John was not living in his "home" tribal community – though he was also among relatives at this reservation, Flandreau had become his home for all of his adult life, and his closest relatives remained there as well. The Dakota were free to leave and work in other communities, and though he himself had left to work at she Santee school as a young man, he preferred to live at Flandreau while he was raising his children. Though in his earlier life the Dakota had always intermarried and moved to other camps within the oyate, joining another tiyospaye, previous to learning to write in their own language they were unable to reach out to one another and maintain as close ties, discussing their day and sharing even the most seemingly mundane of everyday activities with one another.

The appreciation that father and daughter held for letter handwriting, as well as their commitment to one another as family is reflected in the regular consistency and speed at which Grace and John replied to each other's letters, which were sent on a monthly if not weekly basis. Though John and his wife Mary Jane are often helping to house and raise numerous grandchildren, there are times when it seems to be only the two

[360] Interview with Lillian Beane, 2009.

of them at home again and John seems to suffer from "empty nest syndrome." Without the constant activity and preoccupation of having children in the home, he seems to have more time to worry about the health of his himself and his wife. John writes,

> These days our house is lonely. Ever since I went to Flandreau your mom has been sick, but now she's getting up and around. Now, she thinks she's going to be sick through the summer. She's not sore anywhere but her heart is beating really hard. Her heart beats really fast and then she falls down. She says she can't breathe at those times, I feel bad about that. But today she's doing things and walking around. But, she's still not strong.[361]

He also writes just a couple months later,

> Maybe you're waiting for us to give you a letter. I'm really sick again and I'm not able to do anything. I'm going to come home now. I knew I was going to get sick and I wanted to come home for that reason.[362]

It is apparent is these exchanges that John misses "home," meaning Flandreau, as well as his children desperately. It is hard to know what ailments they were experiencing at the time, but they did recover for a time. In three of the letters, including the above description of our grandmother Mary Jane, John writes evidence that his wife as well as one of his sons might have suffered from what would today be considered an anxiety disorder - a condition that many of our family members continue to struggle with today. The loneliness coupled with health problems that John writes to Grace relay pertinent information about our family medical record, and they also attest to the bond that this family had for one another.

That John still considered Flandreau as "home" is also interesting. Both John's brother Ohiyesa and many of his grandchildren made attempts at returning to Minnesota

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[361] John Eastman to Grace (Eastman) Moore, September 16, 1920
[362] John Eastman to Grace (Eastman) Moore, November 22, 1920

for limited points in time throughout the nineteenth century – often seeing this as a homecoming (but most had to relocate in order to find employment elsewhere). However John always retained a deep connection to South Dakota. The Flandreau Santee were not yet an official tribe recognized by the federal government at this time, and the reason behind John's close affiliation to this place is likely due to the life long investment that he put into this community. A series of letters from South Dakota Senator Richard F. Pettigrew to John in the early 1890's indicate that John was the driving force behind the establishment of the Flandreau boarding school in 1862.[363] One letter dated August 13, 1890 states, "The bill to establish the Flandreau school has passed both houses and will become a law by the President signing it within a few days."[364] The letter also outlines monies to be distributed to build the school. These documents attest that John Eastman's work was not limited to the religious life, and provides a small glimpse into his involvement as a community organizer and national representative of the Flandreau community – a leadership role that he took over from his father who had been one of the founders of the settlement.

In another letter John writes about his son George, a professional baseball player, who would carry on this leadership role to become the first chairman of the Flandreau tribe. He writes, "George wrote your mom a letter he said he's doing well, and the town

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[363] Copies of some of these letters, all drafted to John Eastman, were given to me by my uncle William Beane. The original letters, in a collection titled, *John Eastman Letterbook*, were formally in the possession of John's grandson Walter Jones in Flandreau, S.D. (now deceased). The whereabouts of these original letters are unknown at this time. See also Author unknown, *Flandreau Indian School History,* National Archives

[364] R. F. Pettigrew to John Eastman, August 13, 1890. *John Eastman Letterbook*

really loves him and he's going to be there until October 1st, and for that we are glad. But, he's not with his wife, and for that we are sad. Therefore that's been bothering him. Therefore he's not himself, maybe his heart is broken." The word that John uses for "heartbroken" is *nagi, w*hich translates literally as "his spirit is leaving him" and which Glenn transcribes as, "He is not himself."

Leanne Hinton writes, "For endangered language especially, documentation is key importance… For language revitalization, written documentation may be the primary surviving resource from which teachers and language learners may draw. Thus any possible recording of the last speakers through writing or other means is essential. Language pedagogy depends in part on the written word…"[365] The significance of John Eastman's letters to the preservation of our language was always apparent throughout the translation process. The word *nagi* is not the same word that I have most commonly heard for this emotion of sadness or heartbreak today – and this alternate definition provides an example of how descriptive and beautiful our language is, and it also lends an example of the conversational informal type of language that is used in the letters. The teachings that learning these kinds of words (especially in context such as a letter) is most beneficial for second language learners because many of us prefer to understand how our relatives talked, rather than memorize the grammatically correct definitions provided by the missionary dictionaries.[366] In another example, John uses *hunkapi kte* as a word for funeral. The literal translation here Glenn assumed was "she is going to see her relatives."

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[365] Leanne Hinton, *The Green Book of Language Revitalization*, 240

[366] Often the dictionaries definitions are very biblical in nature and many words are transcribed with meanings determined in relationship to God, rather than in conversational Dakota that was actually spoken.

The use of this language shows an example of older words and phrases no longer used from John's era, also likely influenced by a dialectical difference. Though he was not aware at that time that he was writing, in utilizing these words and phrases in this context, John was also preserving these words for future generations.

Survivance in Everyday Living

One of John's letters to Grace is dated December 26th, 1920 - a somber day for Dakota people, as this is the anniversary of the hanging of thirty-eight Dakota patriots at Mankato in retribution for their participation in the 1862 war. I came across this letter with bated breath, skimming it to see if I could find any references to this time period, wondering if my grandfather would give a first hand account of his experiences as a man during this time period. However, in his letter John does not make any mention of this day as being significantly associated with the war at all. On this day my grandfather writes,

> I'm sitting here but I got tired of sitting so I got up and I wrote a letter. In my room there is a metal stove so it's warm in the room. The boys are noisy but I don't hear them while I'm sitting here. I'm doing ok but I'm unable to go anywhere. Even to my older sister's house I don't go. Christmas memories box came. Your mom is the only one that does that nowadays. Me, I can't go into town. So, therefore at least you know we remember you. Even though I can't go into town I remember all of you. From December 18th it's been so cold and George is at the church everyday since December 20th. We can't do it therefore we can't get a box there in time [iyehan- in time]. Dec 23rd Robert Renville went to Peever so I told him to take the box. Dec 24. We put up a Christmas tree there was no wind and it was mild so I was able to go over. We went by car to Charles Crawford's house [wakpadan little river] riverbank. There's a snow bank along the banks of the river. There's a lot of snow by his house so we couldn't go so we had to go around by K(?)'s house and then we

> got there. Inside the church the way they fixed it up this time they fixed it up even better. They made a nice program.[367]

John goes on to explain the church Christmas service, and describes a manger and the production of a holiday play put on by the local children,

> Inside the church the way they fixed it up this time they fixed it up even better. They made a nice program. The ceiling was low with wire and then made a really nice house. The minister got up they nailed a black piece of paper and three wise men came on camels and that's where the star went. They made a buffalo. They made a place like that the scene (owayapi- the scene) they put hay in and it looked really good. In the program the children that spoke were Johnny's, and Leroy Moose, that's all the children that spoke. They were all good and they made everybody glad (wiciyokpipi)…and also Cora made an angel they also liked that. I saw those I'm glad (cantemawaste hce – hce= more than nina) and strong (wawasake). Then the signing they did was really good. George did really well I said (epe) wicakicun (well with everybody) Harry Jones Hazen Barker Howard ---- (?) Steven LaBelle Peter Eastman that's everybody. Big Talk sang a solo (ihiyaye) and during the chorus that's when we speak and I liked that (it was done well). Harry Jones and Steven LaBelle sang a duet (kicisnana dowan) (isnana means alone) Harry Jones Steven Labelle Peter Eastman Hazen Barker they sang (hena dowanpi) then (hehan – wanzi oqasin witaya dowanpi) They all sang together But because they were all good singers it was really good. Then Santa came (waziya hi) and then they finished. [368]

In reading this letter it is apparent that John viewed this date as a holiday to celebrate family, and as a time for the community to come together. That he makes no mention of the war or the hanging of the thirty–eight seems less surprising when understood in context of Dakota traditional values and beliefs about death.

The decision to focus on the wobdehecic'iya, or positive, on a day that we associate with mourning today is reflective of the irony that is sometimes coupled with

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[367] Transcriptions of the translated letter show my notes, in order to give a reader a better idea the language being translated. This also provides a window into the translation process itself.

[368] John Eastman to Grace Moore, December 26th, 1920

survivance. This earlier generation (those who were positioned closer to the trauma) made a clear decision to focus on retaining an attitude of Wobdeheci'ciye (Positivity) and showed Wowaditika (Bravery) in the ability to be strong. It can be argued that they were discouraged from mourning the thirty eight hanged in 1862, because they had been taught in prison that these men were sica or *bad*. However, I see John's ability to move forward as a more purposeful attempt at healing, and I don't interpret the omissions in this letter as showing active neglect of grief. I have been taught by elders that it is a traditional teaching to grief and then let go of that pain in life as best as we can. The meaning behind this teaching being that if we do not let go, the spirits of those that we loved and did not survive, risk the chance of staying in this world. They end up caught in a middle place between life and death, a kind of limbo, because they are worried that we have not yet healed from their passing. We are therefore taught that in order for our ancestors to cross over to the spirit land we must not let our grief consume us.

The December 26 Christmas letters serves as a lesson for those of us that honor our deceased relatives on this day to be appreciative and aware of life. As Gerald Vizenor states, Native survivance is an act of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction, however pertinent. Survivance is greater than the right of a survivable name." [369] This continuance is seen in the ways in which unkanna John describes the service, which are remarkably similar to the holiday church services at the Flandreau First Presbyterian Church that I grew up attending with my grandmother Lillian. The *Dowanpi* hymns sung in our Dakota

[369] Gerald Vizenor, *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance.* Loc 797 Kindle edition

language, and the children waiting for the coming of Santa (waziya hi)[370] are all traditions that were passed down onto my generation. These very relatable "American" traditions, are unique for the Dakota because of the ways we incorporated our traditions into the service with our language and culture, with a buffalo making its appearance at the manger. This generation was creating new traditions based out of the old, and reflecting cultural regeneration of our historical experience by retaining community. As a descendant I can vouch that these ways have continued today as well.

John's own health had remarkably deteriorated at this point, with hints in his last letters stating that he was not well. He goes on to write at the Christmas church service the women's mission society prayed for him,

> The Good Thought women (tawayanwaste) the leaders of the womens group all of them stood up (owasin) in front and wictokcaun I was put in front of them. Miye un (On my behalf) Anderson read the bible and I said a prayer then the women gave me $51 and I was happy and also (wancayazan) I am sad to because I know everybody is sad. I want to live again (be well) I told them. Well now the things I'm supposed to be doing I'm at the end now I think (kecamni) but it's Christmas now and we're alive (ni-unhipi) and we've gone beyond and I'm happy (we've made it up to and beyond another Christmas). So maybe now its going to be winter (wanna waniyetu kte) (get ready to do what you have to do) encouragement to try harder…for eight days straight now its been cold (kitayan- straight) then we saw Christmas and we are all really happy (iyounkipi hce). I'm the most happiest. But from small things are bigger things. I pray from small things bigger things will come (an exchange) (icitokiyapiya – an exchange) I hoped it would be and to pass it towards each other I hope I fit it (makipi- to fit).[371]

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[370] John Eastman Letter, December 26th, 1920, John writes "waziya hi" for "santa came." Reaffirming that in his day the same word for Santa Claus was the one that is often used today. "Waziya" is a term referring to the North direction and today we call Santa Claus "Waziya Wicasta" or "Northern Man."

[371] John Eastman to Grace Moore, December 26th, 1920

Again, even in the face of his mortality remarking, "Well now the things I'm supposed to be doing I'm at the end now," John states that it is Christmas and niunhipi (they are alive), for which he is grateful. When he writes, "we have gone beyond" this can be taken literally to mean that he has lived past another Christmas season, but I actually interpret this on a deeper level because this community outlived what was expected of them as survivors of genocide. In this alternate interpretation John is speaking of the immortality of Dakota life, which is determined by culture and tradition.

In the letters that John writes to his daughter Grace there is an abundance of evidence that the key values that have always been associated with traditional Dakota life had been sustained. Even though John prayed in a church, and chose to use the Christian bible to teach lessons (rather than oral history lessons relayed in Native stories as he had been raised), he still maintained his sense of being as a Dakota. As Bonnie Sue Lewis writes of John in *Creating Christian Indians* he, " held on to what he saw as Dakota virtues by encompassing elements of white culture that would allow him to preserve and protect those virtues." [372] In other words, John used his religious faith to continue to preach Dakota traditions of prayer and song, with an emphasis on family connections and community health. He knew what the issues were in his community and he mentions them explicitly in his letters, relating the illnesses of community members and his loneliness for family are constant themes.

For John and Grace both, the focus on kinship and family relations in their writings echo Dakota virtues that place high value on the role of the tiospaye. As Ella

[372] Bonnie Sue Lewis, *Creating Christian Indians,* 172

Deloria asserts, relationships and kinship were most important above all else in traditional society,

> I can safely say that the ultimate aim of Dakota life was simple: One must obey kinship rules; one must be a good relative. No Dakota who has participated in that life will dispute that. In that last analysis very other consideration as secondary – property, personal ambition, glory, good times, life itself. Without that aim and the constant struggle to attain it, the people would no longer be Dakota in truth. They would no longer even be human. To be a good Dakota, then, was to be humanized, civilized. And to be civilized was to keep the rules imposed by kinship for achieving civility, good manners, and a sense of responsibility toward every individual dealt with. Thus only was it possible to live communally with success; that is to say, with a minimum of friction and a maximum of good will.[373]

The relationship between Grace and John was incredibly close and their writings reflect information about family members, and detail the worries they carry for how others are faring. They show much Waunsida (Compassion) when discussing others, and often relate concern in how the grandchildren in the family, the future generation, will live in a world that seems to be moving much faster than either one of them is prepared to accept.

John Eastman, Worshiping Cloud, passed on into the spirit world on October 5th, 1921. He was seventy-two years old, and his devoted daughter Grace did not leave his side. Grace's writes in her journal, "As I stood by his bed – in his last day, he leaned to me and said, Daughter, never give up the work I loved. I have seen you serving the Master as I have served him. I am very happy in this – and I want you to be faithful and stand true to the end."[374] That John died feeling content and fulfilled by his life's work gives me closure in a way. So much of the time my research focuses on the atrocities that occurred during the war and at times I have spent so much time trying to understand this

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[373] Ella Deloria *Speaking of Indians,* 25

[374] Moore, Grace Journal Entry in journal dated 1937 & 1949

time period that I have become lost in it, and have felt led by anger and sadness. My grandfather's letters have taught me was that there was life after these events. Though he was a survivor of war, and had experienced the genocide of our tribal people first hand, he was not defined by this violence. He lived on and was able to create a family and life for myself that was positive and full of love. He was happy.

On the history of Indian education Brenda Child asserts, "The extraordinary part of the boarding story emerges because Indians, even children, refused to act powerless." American Indian people have managed to live through difficult transitions and colonial encounters by transforming the colonial agenda and using our agency to choose what attributes and traditions of the colonized society we feel can best suit our own communities. As Child states, many of our family members have, "outlasted and outmaneuvered a failed educational agenda"[375] and Dakota people viewed western forms of education as a strategy for cultural and historical retention. In learning to read and write the Dakota were able to both stay connected to family. Education was also deeply interconnected with conversion, and by reinterpreting Christianity using Dakota value systems they were able continue to pray (in a way that was found acceptable in the larger society in which they were struggling to live). By observing the ways in which Dakota people in this era used their educational skills to benefit their own communities, and to *give back* to their own people, it also becomes apparent that the history of education in Dakota communities is much more multi-dimensional than one might first assume, and is

[375] Brenda Child, *Indians as Subjects: Hemispheric Perspectives on the History of Indian Education.* "The Boarding School as Metaphor." Santa Fe: School For Advanced Research Press, 2014)

very much a traditional Dakota act of ensuring community survivance. The extensive amount of community engagement work that the Eastman brothers provided over the years, exemplifies the ways in which they were proactive to maintain tradition - in these acts Dakota people were not complacent in this history nor were they simply victims. There were a variety of ways that people expressed their identity at this time, many children continued to find strength in being Dakota, and by incorporating a writing system and the ability to read and write in their own language, as well as English, many of these children have been able to go on and document their tribal story in important ways.

I take issue with any ideology or interpretation that asserts or reinforces ways in which our power still lies with the oppressor and agree with Michael D. McNally when he writes that Native people did retain some of their traditional authority, even in the face of genocidal policies of extermination and assimilation. McNally asserts, "Neither were they passive recipients of someone else's historical actions, and herein lies the problem: The structural forces of "culture change" eclipse the historical agency of native people in their negotiation and renegotiation of culture over time." McNally argues the need for a reinterpretation of native religious history that engages the acknowledgement that Native people used their own traditions (as practice) to change the concepts (beliefs) of Christianity that were imposed upon our communities. In other words, rather than focusing solely on the ways in which *they changed us*, we incorporated our traditions into the practice of their beliefs, thereby *making them our own* - and that ideology is also at

the core of what this larger project seeks to do as an act of reclamation for our tribal and family story.[376]

In the journals of Grace I relate similarities to letters and birthday card inscriptions I received from my own grandmother, Grace's daughter, most often discussing the weather and church service. In John's hardworking character, a fierce advocate for self-determination and justice, I see my father, who also works hard into the night in his own home office, trying to make a difference for his Indian people as a 'retired" community organizer, recently turned film maker. I hear my father's voice when John writes a hint for his daughter to write home more often. In John's remarks about his grown children and in his fatherly efforts to help them during times of stress, sometimes lending them money, when he really had little to give, or caring for a grandchild that needed a place to stay. I think about how really so little has changed over the years in our communities as Indian people, and in our family specifically. We still struggle to reconcile how we can pray in our own way while living in a society that does not understand our culture or experience, but we do what we can and we utilize our education to provide for our families and give back to our community just the same.

As Michael D. McNally states, "Native communities have long woven the stories, signs, and practices of the Christian tradition into the fabric of their lifeways, in rich and resourceful ways, even under the direst of colonizing circumstances."[377] In both Dakota

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[376] Michael D. McNally, *The Practice if Native American Christianity (*The American Society of Church History, December 2000) 834

[377] Michael D. McNally, *The Practice if Native American Christianity (*The American Society of Church History, December 2000) 834

religious history, as well as in early educational experiences specifically, there are complex elements of cultural survivance that deserve to be acknowledged, and the proper credit must be relayed upon our ancestors as resisters in the post- Dakota war period - an era in which they are often portrayed as complacent victims of the assimilationist agenda.

In all, these writings have taught me that survival looks like everyday living and that sometimes our very existence is an expression of our resistance. Survivance is found in the little ways in which we maintain our own uniqueness as Dakota people – holding an ability to regenerate ourselves and transform the impositions made upon us. As, Ikce Wicasta, or human beings, we must adapt to an ever- changing world around us and yet we still remain, first and foremost, as close to the core of our Dakota existence as we possibly can. The past is alive within us and we are alive today because of the choices our ancestors made to ensure our safe entrance into this world. As my unkanna John's father Tawakanhdiota (Many Lightenings) once said of Christianity and white "civilization," 'the ideas and the ultimate purposes were after all the same, only following different roads to reach the same point." Thus, the responsibility of my generation, and of those that come after us, is to follow that same road towards the future - using the contemporary liberties afforded us to recover the ways and words which were once kept hidden within the safety net of our own traditions. In understanding this history and by asserting our right to know our traditions and speak our language, we as Dakota people can finally return home and rejoin our ancestors on that same path of Wowaunsida (Compassion) and Wowaditika (Bravery) in which we have always walked.

Tokatakiye "The Future": Moving Forward

Each chapter of this dissertation covers a very specific wakan, or sacred element of tradition, place, history, and language that is intrinsically tied to Dakota identity. These pages have also articulated my interpretation of the ways in which our relationships with these cultural elements have been both strained as well as preserved over the last one hundred and fifty plus years, because as we continue to work toward a more liberated state of being as Dakota people it is essential that we seek to reclaim the power to express our own interpretations of our family and community stories.

Our endurance as Dakota people has been made possible by the lived struggles of our ancestors. Their strength and tenacity to let expressions of both faith and hope prevail against all odds have been inherited by us as their descendants. The lives of men and women like Mahpiya Wicasta, Tawakanhdiota, Ohiyesa, John Eastman and Grace Moore had purpose; and even if we did not always agree with certain decisions that they made (such as converting to the Christian faith, or not passing on our language), it is important to understand the context of the times in which they were living. It is also just as essential that we acknowledge the ways in which they held firmly onto tradition, layering the old with the new as they resettled their families into life on the reservation in South Dakota.

I hope to make clear in this work the ways in which the binary model of interpreting Dakota culture and history remain as a divisive framework of communicating history, excluding many of the most interesting and complicated elements of our larger story. Though we cannot change the past, we may alter the ways in which we perceive it, and my hope is that in time the misleading dualistic representations of our communities

may fade away to history. This historical space could then be filled with more nuanced perspectives that express a variety of both historical as well as contemporary Dakota voices that have yet to be heard and shared.

The argument made in this project is geared towards researchers who hail from both inside as well as outside of our communities, and this binary in itself is ever changing and becoming less of an issue as more of our tribal members reach their educational goals in higher education and seek employment as advocate for Dakota perspectives of history in their communities. As Dakota people we must also continue to think critically and compassionately about the ways in which our stories are told. If we simply accept the binary model, using terms such as "cut-hairs' and "long hairs" to continue to define our own people in either a historic or modern context,[378] we are further promoting historical divisions. At that point, there is no justice served, no chance of returning to a more communal, ceremonial, and healthier state of living, no hope for healing at any caliber, and no hope for any kind of reinterpretation of the past that tells the Dakota story without prejudice. This binary model is, therefore, an interpretation without any hope for the future.

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[378] In an article written by Dakota scholar Waziyatawin in 2013, *Co-Opting the Memory of the 38+2*, the term "cut-hair" is employed as describing Christian Dakota who helped their wasicu (white) neighbors to escape during the war. Waziyatawin labels these individuals as "traitors," though many of these relatives did not actually "side with the whites" as she argues. Though I wholeheartedly agree with the Waziyatawin's call for justice and have great respect for her work, in these specific historical cases many of the Dakota were simply trying to assist families with whom they held close relationships. My view is that this sentiment actually works to co-opt the historically colonial practice of division, and this act of "name calling" works to distance our communities from healing even further. See also Waziyatawin *Manipi Hena Owas'in Wicunkiksuyapi (We Remember Those Who Walked)* American Indian Quarterly (Winter/Spring Vol. 28, Nos. 1&2) 151

Scholars (from both outside as well as inside our communities) who write about Dakota history must remember that we are a living and thriving community of people today. Though in the past some researchers preferred to view our family members as subjects – compartmentalizing our story and identities into simpler terms in order to make an argument easier to convey – the downfall to this binary has been an exclusion of our rich diversity as human beings who react to our changing circumstances in very interesting ways.

Woyakapi Unkohdakapi Unkokihipi "We Can Tell Our Own Stories"

379

379 Unkanna Ohiyesa in his fishing boat. Original photograph in the possession of Virginia Risk, Hatfield Massachusetts

One of the most striking images that I have ever seen of my grandfather Ohiyesa, is a personal photo shared by my cousin Virginia (Ginny) Risk – the granddaughter of one of Ohiyesa's five daughters. It is a simple photo of an elder Ohiyesa sitting in a fishing boat, smiling, and smoking his pipe. When my ic'epansi (cousin) Ginny shared the picture with me she said that this was one of her favorite portraits, because it showed our grandfather, as he really was – a simple and happy man who loved and felt the most comfortable while sitting out on the lake in his canoe. In this photo Ohiyesa is wearing neither a headdress nor a formal suit, images others have forever used to define him. This image is illustrative of the mosaic reality of Dakota existence, as people who defy interpretations and expectations determined by those who do not understand our place in this world as normal people simply trying to live each day to the best of our abilities.

Ohiyesa's biographer Raymond Wilson writes, "Eastman wanted to be the winner, to win the race, and be judged a champion, and to a great extent he was a winner, yet he kept casting himself as a loser. And in the end he became the winner lost." Scholars have also written that Ohiyesa was never able to reconcile his life "between two worlds" and have argued that he was an unhappy failure of white society towards the end of his life, retreating back to woods of the upper Michigan peninsula as if he was admitting his defeat.[380] Even his unmarked gravesite is interpreted as representing the ways in which he was lost to history. However, aside from the fact that Wilson's reinterpretation of Ohiyesa's name is culturally offensive and disrespectful, this representation casts judgment on Ohiyesa from an unfair colonial perspective, and

[380] Raymond Wilson, *Ohiyesa: Charles Eastman Santee Sioux* (Urbana: University Of Illinois Press, 1983) 192

defines his success under the gaze of the very materialistic and capitalistic society in which he clearly wrote against.

Ohiyesa, however, was not defeated, nor was he a failure by any means according to those who knew and loved him personally. I was raised being told that at the end of his life our grandfather simply moved to the upper peninsula so that he could summer in the woods that he loved and passed away in 1839, not from a broken heart, but as a respected elder who also enjoyed spending his last winter months with his son, an advertising executive in Detroit.[381] Family lore also relates that our grandfather requested to be buried in an unmarked gravesite, just as his ancestors before him had always been, and in the same way in which he buried his own beloved daughter Irene in 1918.

My grandmother Grace was often interviewed for articles and books on her uncle Ohiyesa, as she had been quite close with his family, spent time with her uncle, and recalls evenings spent listening to him tell his stories while his wife helped to type them for publication. She once stated in a 1971 interview with a young scholar that she had many of Ohiyesa's books as well as family letters in her possession years before. However, not understanding their value to historians and family alike, she cleaned out her desk and threw many of them away.[382] I can only imagine the worth of what was lost when my grandmother cleaned out her possessions, but it speaks to the need to let families in our communities know that some of the documents that they have preserved over the years still hold historic and cultural value today. The collections of family

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[381] William Beane interview, Flandreau South, February 18th, 2013.
[382] Interview with David Miller, *Remembrances Of An Interview With Mrs. Grace Moore.* Flandreau, S.D. March 12, 1971. Paper Copy found in Grace Moore's belongings in the possession of William Beane, Flandreau.

materials that I utilize to weave out my family story is only a small example the types of documents that exist in our communities which need to be incorporated into the academic narrative of Dakota history. Though the extent of materials that sit in family homes in our communities today are not as well measured or documented as the materials that exist in archives, much of the documentation that sits in archival boxes have still yet to be translated into English and my guess is that many personal collections face the same predicament.[383]

The translations of Dakota materials are important in order to provide a more just historical record, presenting the perspectives of those whose voices were silenced long ago. The translations of these types of materials serve help us to reclaim our language, and offer healing for the relatives of both those who penned the information, as well as those involved in the translation process. This argument is evident in the case of the prisoner of war letters, formally mentioned in Chapter three. Dakota scholar Dr. Clifford Canku, co-author of *The Dakota Prisoner Letters* writes,

> Dakota people who face the difficult past squarely and discover their own families' stories can move beyond anger and anguish. We hope that our work will encourage further research and study of other Dakota letters that lie untranslated in regional and national archives. Dakota students who learn their language and do the difficult work of translating will publish more books that take us all to a new age, where Dakota people tell their own history to the world.

Dakota language has an insatiable power to heal us. As Canku states, this is where the future of Dakota history will flourish in new ways, and there is just as much value in the

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[383] In the Minnesota Historical Society, for example, there are many documents that simply read Dakota materials not translated." In my research I have recorded a number of these documents and continue to add to an ongoing personal archive of these materials, which are in need of translation.

translation process itself, and in learning to understand the rhythms of our language, as there is in analyzing the content of these documents once translated.

My interpretation of the ways in which our grandparents seemingly neglected to hand down certain traditions in our family, such as our language, is that they viewed their actions as a way to preserve life. For better or worse, these decisions were made as acts of love. These individuals continued to pass down the core values, which they risked their lives to protect, and they carried these values and traditions across borders to ensure cultural continuity.

As a Dakota winyan living in the twenty first century, I am also acutely aware that I have gained the freedom to be prideful of my language and heritage where those before me were often made to feel ashamed. I inherited this stigma, and as a young Dakota person who is not fluent in my language I still struggle understand my place in this world and have experienced a difficult time finding my voice. But the beauty of life as indigenous survivors is that we have been ensured the ability to grow and keep moving forward. Where my grandparents determined "success" to be the ability to simply live, or to survive hand to mouth in this society, I am now able to associate my own successes with experiences that push me back towards our traditions. I hold a liberty to expand the quality of my cultural life and I relate my own success to the understanding what is being said in our language at ceremony, and the ability to respond to an elder asking me in Dakota iapi what family and tiospaye I come from. As a mother of a young child specifically, I can physically sense the one hundred and fifty plus years of oppression being lifted from my shoulders when I ask my daughter to do something in our language,

and she responds knowingly without question or shame. Our words are just that powerful, and her young mind has yet to even comprehend that her recent entrance into this world as well as and her freedom to learn to speak Dakota iapi as a first language, are acts of resistance.

The older Dakota ways of ways living and viewing the world, such as the Dakota Wicohan, have survived and still exist in our communities when we speak Dakota, and we are currently experiencing some resurgence in these teachings amongst our people. We are also feeling more comfortable asking questions of our elders in order to understand who we are as Dakota people, what our traditional lifeways were before removal, and where we come from. This is a positive step towards a more holistic reinterpretation of our past. This era where we are at now, as Indigenous language students, is where our own research can hold the ability and honor of becoming a ceremonial process towards reclamation. Cree scholar Shawn Wilson's Indigenous methodological approach; described as being less of a positivist paradigm, and more in line with critical theory and constructivist paradigms of qualitative research is an important consideration in this work. As Wilson states, "In both critical theory and constructivism, knowledge itself is not seen as the ultimate goal, rather the goal is the change that this knowledge may help bring about. Both paradigms share the axiology that research is not seen as worthy or ethical if it does not help to improve the reality of research participants."[384] Making the commitment to relearn our language and tribal history are difficult responsibilities to take on – but these are fundamentally important

[384] Wilson, Shawn *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods.* 37

efforts that we must embrace if we want to strengthen the quality of life in our communities.

Unkiksuyapi: We Remember

Legacy of Survival at Wakpa Ipaksan[385]

For Dakota people our relationship with both our language and our land are both essential elements to the process of healing as a community in exile. A return to the homeland of Mnisota is a key part of this transition, and this journey home is something that many Dakota people have continued to partake in over the years. Yet the vast majority of Dakota people are still living in exile, and there is still an overwhelming feeling amongst our own people that we remain in the margins of a society that has not yet *really* welcomed us home. Indeed with the relocation policies still on the books on the state of Minnesota, and with no return in land base or resources for the Dakota

[385] Personal photograph taken at event

descendants of those who were exterminated from the state in 1863, the burden of exile and the demands for justice are well warranted. Frankie Jackson speaks to what it is like to live as an Indigenous person in exile in the 2013 Twin Cities Public television film *The Past is Alive Within Us, "*You're disconnected from your sacred sites, your sacred places. When you're disconnected from your relatives and you're forced to create a new home. It will affect you in ways that are very hard to explain."[386] In rewriting our history, we seek to close the divide that this disconnection has created. In telling my family story I am voicing my rights to speak about who we are, and I am making an attempt at reconnecting with our homeland. And yet the magnetic pull back home is so persistent that we continue to return. In August of 2012 I participated in an event that occurred on my home reservation in Flandreau South Dakota, called "the Legacy of Survival," in which hundreds of Dakota people from all over the United States and Canada convened and came together to hold workshops and commemorate our survival as a nation. It was a small reunion proportionately, but one of the largest gatherings of wartime separated Dakota families that had ever occurred. On the second day of the event we gathered and walked across the border of South Dakota back into Minnesota as a symbolic gesture of returning home 150 years after our exile. This was a very emotional event. For many years our communities had held walks and runs in memory of our ancestors, but this was the first time we actually addressed the issue of exile and came together to return home as a united community.

[386] Twin Cities Public Television, *The Past is Alive Within Us*

However, as I walked down that road with my father that day, I couldn't help but notice that the "Welcome Home" signs held by white allies on the side of the road were in still written in English, not in Dakota, and I, for one was not comfortable shaking the hands of the state policy makers who stood on the roadside smiling at us. Not because I was not grateful for this experience, because I truly was, but because I knew that unless any real direct actions were taking place to bring my people home, these smiling faces could very well hold more broken promises. Yes, I suppose I am weary, but given our history I don't know any other way to be. I was there for my people, because when it came down to it, this event was about healing. When we arrived at the border I witnessed the four Dakota grandmas who led the procession, sitting at the state line. They were wrapped in blankets and they were weeping. I observed many of my Dakota relatives with tears in their eyes. I felt a sense of relief on the air, as if a piece of the historical burden that we are all born carrying had been lifted, at least for some. I understood then that the true significance of this event, as a symbolic gesture, was important despite my qualms about the intentions of those policy makers. This process of acknowledgment and healing did hold meaning, regardless of my personal views on the overall value and long-term direct impact of a symbolic event, and my heart was heavy with the recognition of this. At the same time this was a beginning, far overdue, and I questioned whether anyone, especially the governmental officials in attendance that day, would be willing to carry this healing process forward in other ways that would more closely and directly impact our community needs.

In order to reconnect from the historic divisions that have been imposed upon Dakota communities, we can move forward by taking action in a variety of ways. From the recognition of our Dakota place names at locations that hold special meaning for us culturally and spiritually (such as Bde Maka Ska), to unlimited access to sacred sites to pray (such as Bdote), as well as reparations in the form of land and resources to help fund the re-righting of past wrongs that have affected our community spirit in negative ways. Our Dakota people must have access to both the necessary tools as well as the financial backing to continue the cultural preservation and revitalization efforts that our tribal members and allies are working towards. As researchers, those of us who are invested in social justice in the Dakota homeland must continue to assert the Dakota presence into our work, and to assert the significance of our language into as many projects as we can. By carefully observing the words of my ancestors, in both English as well as in Dakota iapi, I have learned that we must remain optimistic in the struggle to remain Dakota into the next century. We must return home to Minnesota, not just in a physical context (which is very necessary and important) but in an emotional one as well. We must assert our own right of belonging in these ancestral spaces of place, education, and being. This call for justice is rooted in our need to contribute back to our ancestral home of Mni Sota. As the original caretakers of the land, as storytellers, and as spiritual teachers to our children in our indigenous ways of knowing, all Dakota people carry the right to return home. Mitakuye Oyasin.

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Chapter Four:
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Conclusion:
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