



As long as the grass grows and the waters flow : an indigenous perspective of Blackfoot land history
by Thedis Berthelson Crowe

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Art in Native
American Studies

Montana State University

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Abstract:

In order to understand contemporary issues regarding land management policy, as well as resolve conflict, and solve complex problems, one must examine history to develop a thorough understanding of the situation. There is no written information that comprehensively addresses the land history of the Blackfoot, as indigenous people. This thesis addresses the first step to construct and write a Blackfoot land history narrative, the initial beginning of a long term project to address the contemporary land and natural resource management issues on the Blackfeet Reservation.

The purpose of this thesis was to critically evaluate the colonial historical narrative, taking into account the worldview and traditional value systems of the Blackfoot, in order to construct and write a Blackfoot land history narrative and provide an indigenous historical perspective of the impacts colonial influences have had upon the traditional land base of the Blackfoot.

A decolonized tribal land history that reincorporates and adds value and emphasis to Blackfoot philosophies, worldview, and cultural values is the key to unlocking the dysfunctional management system and identifying the colonial influences from federal Indian policies.

This Blackfoot land history narrative is only the first step in a process that will need to include further evaluation and deconstruction of colonial policies and the development of contemporary management strategies.

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ABSTRACT

In order to understand contemporary issues regarding land management policy, as well as resolve conflict, and solve complex problems, one must examine history to develop a thorough understanding of the situation. There is no written information that comprehensively addresses the land history of the Blackfoot, as indigenous people. This thesis addresses the first step to construct and write a Blackfoot land history narrative, the initial beginning of a long term project to address the contemporary land and natural resource management issues on the Blackfeet Reservation.

The purpose of this thesis was to critically evaluate the colonial historical narrative, taking into account the worldview and traditional value systems of the Blackfoot, in order to construct and write a Blackfoot land history narrative and provide an indigenous historical perspective of the impacts colonial influences have had upon the traditional land base of the Blackfoot.

A decolonized tribal land history that reincorporates and adds value and emphasis to Blackfoot philosophies, worldview, and cultural values is the key to unlocking the dysfunctional management system and identifying the colonial influences from federal Indian policies.

This Blackfoot land history narrative is only the first step in a process that will need to include further evaluation and deconstruction of colonial policies and the development of contemporary management strategies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Constructing an Indigenous Land History

At the end of the nineteenth century the Blackfoot people were in a state of transition to a reservation way of life, caught in the quicksand of being colonized and struggling for basic survival when the door opened to outsiders to write the history of the Blackfoot people. George Bird Grinnell's "Blackfoot Lodge Tales, the Story of a Prairie People," first published in 1892, established the foundation for a colonial historical narrative about the Blackfoot. This collection of stories is the first comprehensive piece of historical literature transcribed and written about the Blackfoot. The book and the history that Grinnell portrays contains strong tones of ethnocentrism, a paternalistic over-protectiveness on Grinnell's part, and examples of white superiority and racial bias that prevailed at the turn of the twentieth century. Grinnell's views about the Blackfoot, as indigenous people, are clearly articulated in his historical rendition about them and their stories about their way of life:

Our people [white] have disregarded honesty and truth whenever they have come in contact with the Indian and he has had no rights because he has never had any power to enforce any. Americans are conscientious people, yet they take no interests in these frauds. They have the Anglo-Saxon spirit of fair play, which sympathizes with weakness, yet no protest. This reason is the fact that practically no one has any personal knowledge of the Indian race. The white person who gives his idea of a story of Indian life inevitably looks at things from

the civilized point of view, and assigns to the Indian such motives and feelings as governed the civilized man. The Indian is a man, not much different from his white brother, except that he is underdeveloped, intensely religious, and has the mind and feelings of child with the stature of a man (Grinnell, xii).¹

Colonialism is established in the historical narrative and became the underlying principle for the foundation upon which the written tribal history was then based. The colonial influences that were so tightly woven into the fabric of that narrative became the acceptable views about the Blackfoot. Overcoming this colonial historical narrative has been a tremendous barrier and a challenge for the Blackfoot people, and continues to plague us as we struggle for self-determination as a Tribe in the twenty-first century.

It will be critical to our survival as Tribal peoples to understand how history has impacted federal and tribal policy making regarding Indian lands and land management, as well as how that policy has in turn affected indigenous value systems. It is of utmost importance for Blackfoot people to undertake the process of critically evaluating and analyzing the historical narratives and policies that mark our past and how that past impacts the way we utilize land and natural resources today. The process needs to start with an evaluation and critical analysis of written historical materials and policy. We need to evaluate and understand all of the influences that have impacted us as indigenous peoples and affected our relationship and connection with the land, including the impacts of colonization, the resultant federal Indian policy that we are forced to live with today and other factors that influence tribal policy making. This process needs to include major emphasis on the critical analysis of colonial ideologies that underlie specific policy documents and historical materials, and the construction of

an indigenous framework upon which to write a decolonized indigenous land history narrative.

This thesis critically evaluates the colonial historical narrative, taking into account the worldview and traditional value systems of the Blackfoot, in order to construct and write a Blackfoot land history narrative and provide an indigenous historical perspective of the impacts colonial influences have had upon the traditional land base of the Blackfoot. I specifically focus on interactions with the grasslands environment, including the Blackfoot peoples' historical relationship with the grazing of bison, horses and later, domestic cattle.

This process of re-identifying with our own historical foundations is critically important for us to understand how we got to where we are today. It is extremely important for us to capture and record the Blackfoot philosophy regarding the people-land connection as it relates to our historical relationship with the land and our natural environment. In our efforts to succeed as a tribe with self-determination and self-governance, it is important to critically evaluate the colonial historical narrative, and construct and write a Blackfoot land history narrative. This Blackfoot land history narrative is only the first step in a process that will need to include further evaluation and deconstruction of colonial policies and the development of contemporary management strategies. A major political challenge arises from this effort and the attempt to balance that foundation with contemporary land management issues that we currently face. It is critical for us as tribal peoples to incorporate our worldviews and cultural value systems into the historical narrative and our relationship with the land, as

well as identify colonial aspects that continue to influence the contemporary land management system. A decolonized land history should aid in the process of evaluating and resolving complex resource management issues and problems on the Blackfeet reservation. As tribal peoples, we need to identify solutions and develop management strategies that include Blackfeet philosophies, worldview and cultural values so that we can plan and effectively manage our natural resources for the long term sustainability of our lands and our tribal societies.

A decolonized tribal land history that reincorporates and adds value and emphasis to Blackfeet philosophies, worldview, and cultural values is the key to unlocking the dysfunctional management system and identifying the colonial influences from federal Indian policies. Dysfunction and chaos were created when colonial land management values and systems were applied to indigenous societies and their relationships with the land and natural environment. The inconsistencies created by these mismatching values continue to impact the management system that our natural resources are currently being managed. Revitalizing and reintegrating Blackfeet philosophies, worldview, and cultural values regarding the historic land-people connection and the stewardship ethic is one means of resolving the political and cultural conflicts, including the clashes between competing factions within the tribe over the contemporary management of land and resources. Understanding colonialism and addressing the impacts colonization and historical marginalization have upon the Blackfoot people, with regard to their relationship with the land, will create a renewed awareness of the foundation upon which these indigenous values were based. A

renewed awareness will strengthen our abilities to succeed as a self-determined people. Understanding these impacts is crucial in reestablishing a decolonized historical foundation for the tribe and in providing long term sustainability of our lands and resources and move in a forward direction in the 21st century.

I believe that by critically analyzing policy we can initiate the process of decolonization. Writing an indigenous decolonized land history, as we know and experienced it, will reaffirm the cultural values and worldviews of the Blackfeet and add value to our historical foundation, as indigenous people. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a leading indigenous scholar and theorist on decolonization of the Maori in New Zealand, states:

“Indigenous peoples have mounted a critique of the way history is told from the perspective of the colonizers. At the same time, however, indigenous groups have argued that history is important for understanding the present and reclaiming history is a critical and essential element of decolonization (Smith, 30).”²

Decolonization of the historical narrative is only the first step in the process of reconciliation with our pasts.

Understanding History Through the Use of Decolonization and Deconstruction

Decolonization and deconstruction should not be limited to the critical analysis of colonial policy and history as the dominant story. For indigenous peoples the process of decolonization needs to move beyond this point. Because history, politics and cultural considerations are so interwoven it is extremely important for Tribes to

understand the impacts and influences of colonialism and how it affects the tribal communities that we live in today. Smith defines decolonization in the following manner:

Decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices. Within this critique there have been two major strands. One draws upon the notion of authenticity, of a time before colonization in which we were intact as indigenous peoples. The other strand demands that we have an analysis of how we were colonized, of what that has meant in terms of our immediate past and what it means for our present and future. The two strands intersect but what is particularly significant in indigenous discourse is that solutions are posed from a combination of the time before, *colonized time*, and the time before that, *pre-colonized time*. Decolonization encapsulates both sets of ideas.

In addition to decolonization, I also examined the theory of deconstruction, a philosophy proposed by Jacques Derrida in France in the 1960's. In order for indigenous scholars to apply colonial tools, it is important to understand the theoretical foundation from which those tools were developed. Deconstruction as a methodology has grown and expanded from its' inception in the 60's; the implications of limiting deconstruction to an apolitical application has been the subject of much debate. Derrida himself, entered the debate about the political implications of deconstruction in the 1990's in his book *Spectres of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* ³which clearly demonstrates his intention that deconstruction is not merely an apolitical amusement limited to literary criticism and texts. Deconstruction was turned into a tool of decolonization when Gayatri Spivak, used it to deconstruct the "West" as a center of academic "truth" by deconstructing academic metanarratives. She uses deconstruction to open up a place for the oppressed "Other" to speak in these

academic discourses.⁴ Smith, as an indigenous theorist, also advances the oppressed "Other" in addressing decolonization.

American Indian scholars have employed deconstructionist methodologies in new contexts to decolonize academic disciplines, such as history and anthropology, and their hegemonic claims to expertise regarding the study of Indian peoples in the Americas. Native scholars, such as Angela Cavender Wilson and Donald Fixico, have tailored and refined the use of deconstruction as a tool to critically examine the colonizer-colonized power and authority differential underlying academic metanarratives about American Indians and to free Indian history from the ivory towers of academia. Native American Studies scholars have to recognize deconstruction as a tool, pick it up and learn to apply it as a methodology within their own sociocultural contexts to further the political process of decolonizing academia.

I believe that using deconstruction in this manner is a necessary step to open up space within these hegemonic discourses, to create the latitude for indigenous scholars to develop indigenous theories and construct indigenous perspectives from Indian voices and viewpoints that have been marginalized and suppressed.

As an indigenous scholar, I am using deconstruction as a tool, just one part of the process of taking information apart, in this case dismantling the historical narrative of the Blackfoot, separating historical information into its basic elements or parts. The deconstruction process is focused on examining the basic elements and identifying the influence that ethnocentric bias has on the historical narrative to determine how bias has affected the distribution of power and the claims to authority within the historical

model. It is equally important for other indigenous scholars to redefine how these tools will be used in an indigenous context.

I have cautiously applied the tools of decolonization and deconstruction to information and historical materials relating to the Blackfoot people land relationship from several different research areas. My thesis addresses the construction of an indigenous perspective of the decolonized history of the Blackfeet people land relationship.

According to Richard White, Professor of History at the University of Washington, using environmental history as a research tool is one that must also be used cautiously. White warns that while utilizing ethnohistory, environmental history and environmental sciences for interpreting Native American history, we should consider the origin of documented sources and how whites and Indian people perceived their realities and terminology, as well as being aware of the need to ask the proper scholarly questions. He states that:

Much of what we do is a kind of literary analysis, but with a difference. History is an act of interpretation; it is among other things, a reading and rereading of documents. Ideally our methods are always comparative. We compare documents; we read them against each other. We order them chronologically. Deconstruction is, in a sense what historians have done for a considerable time. We look for assumptions; hidden threads of connection; we probe for absence (White, 93).⁵

The process of constructing and writing a decolonized indigenous land history narrative Blackfoot people can use to understand the colonization process, how it impacted the people-land relationship and how it continues to impact land management decision making is not be an easy task because of the politics involved. The critical

analysis of the historical materials will be the easiest part. Constructing and writing an indigenous historical narrative can be accomplished by incorporating indigenous concepts, reaffirming traditional values systems, and developing indigenous theories that re-integrate our worldviews back into contemporary land management systems which affect the tribal communities, as well as the greater American society we live in. There will be political resistance because a small faction of tribal members adapted to the colonial policies, exert political pressure in the system and have benefited from colonization at the expense of the communal society and the land base that remains. But the question still remains, how do we know where we are going as a tribal people with regard to the management of the land, if we do not understand the history of how we got to where we are today? That is why it is so important to redefine the way we see ourselves and the way the world sees us, and to approach the issue of "*rewriting* or *rerighting* our position in history (Smith, 28)."

I believe that Blackfeet people and all other indigenous peoples need to have a solid understanding of their respective tribal histories because this is the foundation upon which cultural identity and worldview are so strongly tied. It is important to know where one comes from and how the historical evolution progressed through the perspectives and history of one's own people. By recording and continuing the indigenous understanding of our respective histories, worldviews, and traditional value systems, we control our self-identity as indigenous people and this in turn perpetuates our cultural existence.

American history is written from a colonial perspective, the result of a progression of American colonial politics, and the scientific and anthropological theories it has produced over the past 500 years. The conceptual framework and the dominant narrative of American history, United States history, and Montana history lacks an indigenous perspective and voice. American historians tend to ignore or dismiss people whose experiences and interpretations of the past do not conform to the master narrative (Calloway, 3).⁶ The succession of the American historical narrative directly correlates to colonial management philosophies and Federal Indian policies developed to manage and assimilate indigenous peoples into American society.

The injustice surrounding the past five centuries of writing American history and Indian history is that indigenous peoples have had little opportunity to participate, or provide their perspectives in the historical narrative that defines them or their places on the North American continent. During the process of colonization, the indigenous peoples of America did not have any participatory role in the development of Federal Indian policy and law other than to challenge them and to seek remediation through the colonizer's legal systems and Supreme Court. A direct result of this exclusion is that American Indian Tribes in the United States are forced to live within a colonized structure and are the most heavily regulated political/minority group that exists in the United States.

The United States of America is not a post-colonial nation as we enter the 21st century. The concepts of trust responsibility, Indian trust lands and the trust relationship that exist between the United States government and federally recognized

tribes, as well as individual Indian people who are recipients of the trust, is a prime example of the continued colonization of tribes, Indian people and Indian lands. The efforts by the U.S. judicial system to resolve the Cobell Trust Funds lawsuit that resulted from the 100+ years of federal mismanagement of Indian trust funds derived from Indian trust assets is a case in point.

Writing history is about power and authority. Who has the power and authority to decide what "really" happened in history and who gets to determine who has the privilege of writing that history? It is because of this power differential that indigenous peoples have been excluded from the historical narrative, marginalized, and perceived as inferior or in a negative manner. We became the "others," because those who had the power and authority to write history felt that the safest place for indigenous peoples to exist was on in the margins, or not included in the pages of history at all.

The cultures, lifeways, and worldviews of indigenous peoples are different from those who colonized this continent, just as they are different for each Tribe. Being the colonized peoples of America, we experienced the history of colonization in a different manner than those who colonized North America and the immigrants who invade our lands. Our understanding and perspectives of those same historical events is different. We need to re-write (re-right) the historical narrative to include our perspectives and our respective tribal histories to reflect those facts. History need to be written in a manner that includes the experiences and understanding of the colonization of indigenous peoples, without any bias, inferiority, shame or remorse. Ward Churchill states, "Virtually everyone has agreed that the impacts of colonialism on Native

Americans and their societies must be considered and that Native American Studies needs to bring new, post-colonial perspectives on the Native American past, present and future.”

History is also about justice. It is important for society to recognize that the way that the historical narrative is written continues to have impacts upon present day situations and will continue to exert influence into the future. It is extremely important for scholars and historians to examine the effects and impacts that colonialism and politics have upon history as a theoretical model. They must also ensure that history is decolonized and deconstructed, such that it portrays an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the historical events. Indigenous peoples need to look further within their respective tribal histories to determine the direct results and impacts these colonial influences have on them. It is extremely important for indigenous peoples to be an inclusive, interactive part of developing and constructing the historical narrative so that it accurately reflects their culture and history and includes their worldview, perspectives and values.

Decolonization and deconstruction, as methodologies, critically dissect the historical narrative by identifying the influence that colonialism and ethnocentric bias have on the historical narrative, as well as the claims to authority within the historical model, despite its claim to be objective. Since very little Indian history or tribal histories are actually written by Native historians, it is extremely important for native peoples to be able to critically evaluate historical information and materials and deconstruct policies as they relate to one's respective tribal group. In a decolonized framework,

deconstruction is part of a much larger intent (Smith, 3). It would be extremely difficult to undertake the process of decolonization with understanding or using deconstruction to critically evaluating information and historical materials.

To avoid further marginalization, it is necessary for indigenous scholars to apply decolonization and deconstruction, colonialist academic tools, to the historical narrative to critically analyze authoritarian views, identify ethnocentric bias, and dismantle the power differential between non-Indian and Indian historians. It is critically important for indigenous peoples to be an inclusive, interactive part of reconstructing that framework for the development of historical narratives that present a more comprehensive history that is free of bias, accurately reflects indigenous cultures, oral traditions, and includes indigenous worldviews, perspectives and traditional values as we know and understand them. Students and scholars need to be able to evaluate, critique and analyze both native and non-native historians, political and social systems, and scientific theory to determine the context and intent of the historical information. An understanding of indigenous tribal histories is necessary, as well as perspectives which cut through the usual point of reference in colonial history that obscures indigenous voices. By correcting historical narratives, written primarily from colonial perspectives outside our cultures, we will impact present day interpretations and influence history in the future.

It is important to acknowledge the differences in recording history. Many indigenous cultures, including the Blackfoot, evolved as oral cultures and we transferred knowledge through the mechanism of oral traditions and oral histories. The Blackfoot

did not have a written language so there was a distinct cultural difference between recording time in a linear manner in written narrative form versus recording time as it occurred in a cyclical manner. The Blackfoot used winter counts to illustrate and document significant events on an annual basis. Although they were not utilized to record history in a comprehensive manner, Dempsey states that, "The winter counts of the Blackfoot Indians were simple but effective methods of reckoning time (Dempsey, 3)."⁷

It is particularly important that written materials include our worldviews, traditional value systems and cultural values from emic perspectives, as we see and understand them. There is very little Blackfoot history or materials that have been written or published by Blackfoot people about Blackfoot culture or the history about their relationship with the land. The literature review will provide a brief overview of those written material that do exist with regard to supporting this thesis.

The authority for the foundation of the written history about the Blackfoot appears to be non-native outsiders capturing Blackfoot history from etic perspectives, outside the Blackfoot circle. Due to cultural differences, and differences in worldviews and value systems, these outsider views are limited in scope and perception. They exclude Blackfoot culture, worldviews and values. As Grinnell stated, when he published the *Lodge Tales* in 1892, "Practically no one has any personal knowledge of the Indian race. The white person who gives his idea of a story of Indian life inevitably looks at things from the civilized point of view, and assigns to the Indian such motives and feelings as governed the civilized man (Grinnell, xii)."

In *Ethics in Writing American Indian History*, Fixico states that, "The problem for those who write about American Indians is that written sources have been produced almost exclusively by non-Indians (Fixico, 92)." This puts us at somewhat of a disadvantage in an academic sense because as an oral culture we lack the written materials that are so valued and used to legitimize the historical narrative that supports American history. On the other hand, it provides the opportunity for us to work with our elders and others within our communities to develop Blackfoot history as we know it through oral traditions, preserving our culture and worldviews. Understanding both the internalness [emic perspective] and externalness [etic perspective] of tribal communities is critically important in presenting a balanced history (Fixico, 92).

As native scholars we need to move beyond the realm of academia and institutionalized learning and refocus the lens of learning to allow for the development of indigenous theories, the construction of indigenous models, and the revival, reaffirmation and inclusion of indigenous concepts and values. This would support balanced learning styles that are more comfortable and conducive for us as indigenous peoples and ensure inclusion of our worldviews and philosophies into the writing of historical perspectives.

In contemporary tribal societies, there is a clash between traditional values systems and the dominant colonial values that has been brought about by colonization. The process of colonization and the resultant American history included Euro American science, political science and sociology, policymaking and law. These colonial influences impact every aspect of the lives of indigenous people in today's world. Some of us have

survived very comfortably as "the others" for a long time in a colonial political environment. Those who economically benefited from the chaos, dysfunction and exploitation of the current politically driven land management system will probably be critical of a historical deconstruction and the process of developing a decolonized historical narrative.

Indigenous peoples need to decolonize themselves by critically evaluating American history and the process of colonization, examining the influences and subjugation that colonial history and policies have upon them as communal societies and the changes colonization brought to the worldview concerning the people-land-relationship and the values regarding indigenous knowledge. The process of decolonization is critical to recognize the impact that colonial influences have upon the system under which our land and natural resources are managed.

The contemporary confines of Federal Indian policy and tribal resource policies are directly influenced by colonial history and colonial management philosophies that were not developed or written by Blackfeet people and do not include our cultural worldviews, cultural values and traditions. The problems are also defined by a set of attitudes and economic relationships that place Native communities under the control of outsiders. Any conscious person must also recognize that "decolonization" alone is not a total solution, but it is a start (Hoxie, xiii). Additional efforts are needed to deconstruct federal and tribal policies, evaluate the effectiveness of these policies, and the influences and impacts colonization have upon the people and the land.

Indigenous people need to assume leadership for reviving and reaffirming indigenous worldviews and cultural value systems to meet tribal needs within tribal circles and management of tribal resources. The ability to perpetuate our self-identity as indigenous peoples is dependent upon our ability to write and preserve our respective histories, worldviews and traditional value systems. This reconciliation with the historical narrative is necessary for us to begin healing as indigenous societies as we move forward with self-determination as tribal peoples. We need to come to terms with who we are, where we came from and how we got to the current situations that we are in as Tribes. As tribal peoples, we need to understand the influences and impacts of colonization, resolve some of the age old values conflicts that stem from being colonized and living under the influences of a colonial historical narrative, and strive to balance and sustain the management of our lands and natural resources to survive as an indigenous society in a contemporary world. This process of decolonization will require us to identify those colonial processes that influenced us in the past and continue to influence our political systems today. This is the only way that we can move beyond the political chaos and dysfunctional land management systems that we are currently stuck in and move forward as a people.

The emphasis of my thesis changed over time. Initially, I wanted to evaluate the current grazing policy of the Blackfeet Tribe. The grazing policy impacts me personally as a tribal member, a land owner and leasee of land on the Blackfeet Reservation. Moreover, the dysfunction of the land management system is impacting the land and resource base of the Tribe. Graduate school was the means for me to develop tools that

and provide me with the necessary foundation I would need to begin to facilitate conflict resolution and provide leadership to identify ways to address complex resource management issues on the Blackfeet Reservation. However, I realized that in order to understand contemporary issues regarding land management policy, as well as resolve conflict, and solve complex problems, one must examine history to develop a thorough understanding of the situation. There is no written information that comprehensively addresses the land history of the Blackfoot, as indigenous people. This thesis addresses the first step to construct and write a Blackfoot land history narrative, the initial beginning of a long term project to address Blackfeet land and natural resource management issues.

To write such a history, it is necessary to conduct research and to complete a review of literature on the subject. Because of the enormous amount of information that needs to be included in this process, to create a total picture and comprehensive document of this type, the information in my thesis has been greatly condensed to provide a brief overview of only the necessary topic areas.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review outlines the historical materials, documents and other reference information used to support this thesis. I chose to use Donald Fixico's *"Reconstructing Native American History"* and *"Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History"* along with William T. Hagan's *"New Indian History"* and Devon Mihesuah's *"Introduction"* to the anthology *Natives and Academics - Researching and Writing about American Indians* and Angela Cavender Wilson's *"American Indian History or Non-Indian Perceptions of American Indian History?"*, these works allowed me to critically evaluate the historical information, examine emic and etic perspectives, as well as the ethics of the history that was presented in specific materials and documents. I also used these works as models to organize references and materials for the literature review. Fixico, Mihesuah and Wilson are leading Native scholars and all prominent historians in the field of American Indian or Native American history.

I also used methodologies outlined by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* to critically examine and evaluate historical materials and information to decolonize those perspectives. Smith provides an indigenous perspective regarding the need for indigenous peoples to recognize the influence of colonization upon their communities. In addition, Smith addresses the need for indigenous people to examine and decolonize history, as well as

western based philosophical influences that threaten indigenous epistemological foundations.

For native scholars, constructing and writing history about one's own indigenous group becomes even more problematic than just evaluating and examining written materials. Writing an indigenous historical narrative has to take into account the written history that exists, identifying and critically examining its colonial influences, while emphasizing the tribe's oral traditions and history to provide an indigenous perspective. This indigenous perspective should braid these various historical threads together and provide a balance to all of these aspects. As Fixico states, "The complexity of American Indian life and reality has been underrepresented by scholars and writers, who have produced more than thirty thousand books about Native Americans. It has become too simple to write American Indian history from only printed documents."⁸

There are volumes of historical materials written about the Blackfoot that span the timeframe of the past century; the initial historical pieces were published in the 1890's and at the turn of the twentieth century. These materials vary widely in their scope, context and frame of reference to the Blackfoot as indigenous people, their history and way of life. This literature review is an overview of the major pieces of literature that I used in formulating and developing my thesis. There are several other pieces that I used minor references from that are included in the bibliography.

It was easier to see the similarities and differences between the materials and information when I began to use Fixico's *Reconstructing American Indian History*, and his *Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History* along with William T.

Hagan's *New Indian History* as models to organize the literature into specific groupings. Fixico and Hagan break Indian history into specific time periods based upon publication dates. They also establish the foundation for Indian history by examining the context under which the materials were written and the ethics that should be involved in writing Indian history. Fixico distinguishes between frontier historians, who were living in that period of time and writing about it, from contemporary historians who write about the frontier era. Fixico states, "Before the 1960's, writers of Native American history literally wrote about Indians from an outsider's point of view, and they relied on printed documents as their primary evidence (Fixico, 118)." His statement distinguishes a difference between the ethics of historians that were initially writing about Indian history and historians addressing Indian history in a more contemporary sense. It is important to note and understand that, "Each generation reviews and rewrites history in the light of its own experiences and understandings, aspirations, and anxieties (Calloway, 2)."

After reading, rereading and researching many of these historical materials, I sorted the initial historical literature about the Blackfoot into "first encounter or contact history," one of the timeframes that Fixico suggests can be used to assess the value of sources of Indian history. These materials include George Bird Grinnell's *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, *The Story of a Prairie People*, Frank Linderman's *Indian Why Stories*, *Sparks from War Eagle's Lodge Fire*, Clark Wissler and D.C. Duvall's *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* and James Willard Schultz's *Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park*. These works are followed

by John C. Ewers' *The Blackfeet, Raiders of the Northwestern Plains* and *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture*.

I quoted George Bird Grinnell's "Blackfoot Lodge Tales" in my introduction to illustrate how written history established the foundation for a colonial historical narrative about the Blackfeet. As I stated previously, this collection of stories is the first comprehensive piece of historical literature transcribed and written about the Blackfeet. Although it contains strong tones of ethnocentrism, as well as examples of white superiority and racial bias that prevailed at the turn of the twentieth century, it established the foundation for other pieces that would follow. In the newly republished version of Linderman's *Indian Why Stories* (2001), Celeste River's quoted the following in her "Introduction to the Bison Books Edition" which raises question as to Grinnell's true intentions and motives in his initial writings about the Blackfeet and other Indians.

In a letter to Linderman, Grinnell wrote: "You say faking is about to begin on Indian stories. Your tense is wrong. Faking began a good while ago, but it is certainly true that it is growing all the time.... One hundred years hence no one who reads about the Indians will be able to distinguish the true from the false, the facts from the inventions."⁹

I interpreted Grinnell's instructions to Linderman to mean that he had embellished upon Indian stories in his writings and that he was encouraging Linderman to do the same, since in a hundred years no one who read the stories would be able to distinguish if what they had written were truly facts or if the stories were invented.

Because of language and cultural barriers, Blackfeet storytellers, at the turn of the nineteenth century, lacked the ability to critique Grinnell and other writers' interpretations of the stories from oral traditions. They had no way to ensure that the

outsiders with whom they had shared and entrusted the care of the stories to be put into books would document the oral traditions and tribal history in a manner that was unbiased and truly reflected the cultural values regarding history. As a result the encounter and contact pieces of history written at the turn of the twentieth century need to be examined very carefully.

James Willard Schultz opened the door to the Blackfeet world for Grinnell. Grinnell gives credence to Schultz as the "discoverer of the literature of the Blackfeet," and credits him with originally making public a portion of the materials contained in the "Lodge Tales." Through a literary means, Grinnell's "Blackfoot Lodge Tales" further exposed the Blackfeet, their culture and oral traditions to the world. The "Lodge Tales" set the stage and served as the primary foundation for others that would followed Grinnell. A multitude of anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, ethnographers, researchers, writers, artists and photographers such as Frank Linderman, Edward S. Curtis, Charlie Russell, Clark Wissler, Walter McClintock, John C. Ewers, Hugh Dempsey, William Farr, and Alice Kehoe among others have marched through the Blackfeet world over the past century, following in Grinnell's literary footsteps.

Grinnell's "Lodge Tales" provides the reader with an etic perspective of the Blackfeet, that of an "outsider" looking in. The one clear distinction that must be remembered is that Grinnell only had a brief glimpse of the Blackfeet world. Observational history is one dimensional and limited to description, whereas a fuller understanding of American Indian [Blackfeet] history requires rethinking the Indian past as distinct communities with their own cultures and with their own understanding

of their historical relationships ... (Fixico, 126). The Blackfeet world from an "insider's" perspective is markedly different from that has portrayed in the "Lodge Tales."

There is another dimension to the Blackfeet world, beyond that of observational history that Grinnell could not put to paper, no matter how hard he tried. It contains a rich, vibrant, multi-dimensional culture. As stated by William Farr, noted scholar of Blackfeet history, "What matter most in constructing a sustaining and sustainable future is the ritual history - that is the stories, oral and written, [a connection to the history and ceremony of Blackfeet life] which together provide a reassuring grasp of the rules, of the code to the whole Blackfeet spiritual economy (Farr, 306)."¹⁰

Grinnell first came to the Blackfeet Reservation in 1885 and published the "Lodge Tales" in 1892. Blackfeet people at that time realized the differential of power and politics when pen is put to paper under the written control of an outsider, but were powerless when it came to the overcoming the barriers of the loss of ideology and meaning when Nitsi poi yiks (speaker of the real language) was translated to English. Grinnell acknowledges Schultz's assistance and identifies two Blackfeet people who provided assistance with language interpretation.

Following is a translated passage that Grinnell used to open the Lodge Tales. The excerpt is focused on one of the storytelling sessions in which Double Runner, one of the storytellers, picks up a piece of paper Grinnell had been writing on and says to him:

"This is education. Here is the difference between you and me, between Indians and white people. You know what this means. I do not. If I did know I would be as smart as you. If all my people knew, the white people would not always get the best of us (Grinnell, ix)."¹¹

Few Blackfeet people spoke English at that time and they were not reading literature written in English. The push to formally educate Blackfeet children did not begin until after 1890. It wasn't until 1912 that Blackfeet people, like D.C. Duvall, who was actively working with Clark Wissler, began interpreting Blackfeet stories into written English and interpreting written literature ("In Memoriam," *Social Life of the Blackfeet Indians* [1912, p. ii]).¹² The Moonlight School, primarily focused on educating adults in an effort to eradicate illiteracy was not opened until the early 1930's (Farr, 128).¹³

Grinnell's "Lodge Tales," being the first piece of literature written about the Blackfeet, has been held as the foundational piece of written literature about the Blackfeet. As such, it influenced other writers and researchers that followed him. The "Lodge Tales," as a written historical narrative of Blackfeet oral traditions, influenced not only the world's views about the Blackfeet and those most curious about Indian people over the past century, but our own views about ourselves.

Written literature is used as one of the primary means of educating others. In the process of assimilating Indians into the greater American society, education was one of the primary means used to accomplish that task. Indian students were not allowed to question the materials and American history we were being taught.

As the grandchildren of the generations that followed, we have read the stories and other things that our grandfathers, the storytellers, told Grinnell. As scholars, we now have the skills and abilities to critique Grinnell's "Lodge Tales" and other literature regarding our oral tradition and history that our grandparents lacked in that time so

long ago. It is up to us to unlock the interpretation of our past and the foundation of our respective tribal histories for ourselves and for our tribal communities. We have a responsibility to identify inaccurate interpretations of Blackfeet culture and history, as well as the influences these interpretation had upon history. We must ensure that the stories and written history are accurate and unbiased for our grandchildren and others.

Over a hundred years after Grinnell published the *Lodge Tales*, the influence of his works is strewn across and referenced in other pieces of literature that span over a century of time. Contemporary anthropologist, Alice Beck Kehoe, still considers the foundation Grinnell established to hold true. Kehoe references Grinnell's work by stating, "Blackfoot Lodge Tales (1892) remains a sound volume of well-told stories.", in the *"Introduction to the Bison Book Edition"* she wrote for the republished edition of the *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* in 1995. The *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*, also a contact piece of literature, written by Clark Wissler and D.C. Duvall in 1908, references Grinnell's works as being, "by far the most complete collection (Wissler and Duvall, 6)." ¹⁴

This is why it is so important for indigenous scholars and others to critically analyze and evaluate the context under which encounter and contact history was written because these pieces of literature established the foundation for written literature and influenced researchers and writers that followed. Although these encounter and contact pieces of literature are available to be used as references, the etic perspectives they provide of the culture and history of indigenous peoples need to be critiqued and carefully examined using decolonizing methodologies.

In efforts to write better American Indian history, those writing post 1950's and 1960's literature about Indians were beginning to emphasize the "displacement of Indians from American Indian history (Fixico, 118)."¹⁵ In the mid to late 1950's transitional pieces, researched and written from ethnohistorical perspectives began emerging. At that time, the root cause of revisionism was the greatly increased activities in the field brought on by the need for expert testimony for cases before the Indian Court of Claims (Hagan, 30).¹⁶ Such scholarship was used support tribal treaty claims and claims regarding aboriginal territories during litigation. Michael F. Foley's *An Historical Analysis of the Blackfeet Reservations by the United States 1855 - 1950's, Indian Claims Commission, Docket Number 279-D* is an example of transitional ethnohistorical literature about the Blackfeet. Another book written during this era was Walter McClintock's *The Old North Trail*.

Hagan states that, "The New Indian history was born in the discussion of ethnohistory that flourished of the 1950's and 1960's."¹⁷ This change was influenced by opening of the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of American Indian, at the Newberry Library in 1972. In 1975 Francis Jennings, Dean of the Center, "led the way for a major revision of the history of Indian - white relations in the colonial period (Hagan, 33).", when he published *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*.

Literature focused on Blackfeet history written during this new Indian history era attempted to capture the Blackfeet side of history. The literature on Blackfeet history that I utilized for research and writing from this new Indian history era included Hugh

Dempsey's *A Blackfoot Winter Count*, William Farr's *The Reservation Blackfeet, 1882-1945* and *Trouble Bundles*, *Troubled Blackfeet: The Travail of Cultural and Religious Renewal*, John C. Jackson's *The Piikani Blackfeet, A Culture Under Siege*, Michael Malone, Roeder and Lang's revised edition of *Montana, A History of Two Centuries*, and Paul C. Rosier's *Rebirth of the Blackfeet Nation, 1912-1954*.

The literature that is based upon emic perspectives of Blackfeet people outlining the history of the Blackfeet people land relationship through oral traditions and oral histories and genealogy includes Percy Bullchild's *The Sun Came Down, The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*, the Blackfeet Heritage Program's *Blackfeet Heritage 1907- 1908*, and The Blackfoot Gallery Committee's *Nitsitapiisinni, The Story of the Blackfoot People*.

I compared non-Indian written encounter and contact literature, such as Grinnell's works, with ethnohistories and literature from the new Indian history. I then critically examined these non-Indian works in light of those written by Blackfeet people, as well as my own experiences with oral traditions and Blackfeet history, which provide an emic perspective.

Constructing a land history from an emic perspective requires an understanding of the indigenous philosophies surrounding the relationships between the Blackfeet, plants, animals and the land and is paramount to writing an indigenous land history. I utilized the following pieces of literature to examine philosophy regarding land history and sacred ecologies and the Blackfeet relationship with grasslands, bison and horses. This literature included Keith H. Basso's *Wisdom Sits In Places, Landscape and Language*

Among the Western Apache, Vine Deloria, Jr's *For This Land, Writings on Religion in America* and *Red Earth White Lies, Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*, Andrew Gulliford's *Sacred Objects and Sacred Places, Preserving Tribal Traditions*, Alex Johnston's *Plants and the Blackfoot*, Howard I. Harrod's *The Animals Came Dancing, Native American Sacred Ecologies and Animal Kinship*, Brian Reeves and Sandy Peacock's *The Mountains Are Our Pillows, An Ethnographic Overview of Glacier National Park*, along with information from *Nitsitapiisinni, The Story of the Blackfoot People* that addresses Blackfeet perspective of sacred ecologies, as reference above. I also considered Sheppard Krech, III's *Ecology, Conservation and the Buffalo Jump* to examine contrasting views of indigenous people's relationships with land and animals.

In examining land history it is important to address land tenure and land use issues. I evaluated information from Terry Anderson's *Land Tenure and Agricultural Productivity in Indian Country and Sovereign Nations or Reservations*, William Cronon's *Changes in the Land, Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England* and Cronon and Richard White's *Ecological Change and Indian - White Relations*, Peter Iverson's *When Indians Became Cowboys, Native People and Cattle Ranching in the American West*, Winona Laduke's *All Our Relations, Native Struggles for Land and Life*, Ward Churchill's *Struggle For The Land, Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide and Expropriation In Contemporary North America* and Donald Fixico's *Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century*.

I compared literature regarding philosophies surrounding sacred ecologies and indigenous relationship with land, specifically focusing on the Blackfoot's relationship and philosophy regarding the land, buffalo and plants. I examined works that address

indigenous land tenure issues and the way colonialism impacted indigenous values regarding land. In addressing the philosophical foundation of the Blackfeet people land relationship, land ownership and land use issues, I also incorporated a lifetime of personal experiences as a Blackfeet person and experiential learning that occurred in a cultural context. I also drew upon my twenty years of professional work in tribal affairs, experiences as a tribal conservationist and natural resources planner, along with my serving as a member of the Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife Commission.

I also researched and reviewed legal documents pertaining to treaties, land cessions and agreements between the Blackfeet and the U.S. Government. These included the *Treaty with the Blackfeet*,¹⁸ 1855, *Blackfeet Reserve established by Treaties of October 17, 1855, Treaty of July 18, 1866 and September 1, 1868* (both unratified), an *Act of April 15, 1874*, an *Act of May 1, 1888*, an *Agreement of June 10, 1896*¹⁹ and map *Montana* ¹²⁰, *Indian Land Cessions in the United States, 1784 to 1894*. All of these documents are available online through *The Library of Congress* website and Kappler's *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol.1, Laws*. These documents are critically important in constructing an indigenous land history because they established the legal foundation and precedence upon which legal decisions are based with regard the Blackfeet relationship with the U.S. government.

In an effort to create an environment conducive to indigenous theory and indigenous perspectives regarding decolonization of history I utilized David R. M. Beck's *the Myth of the Vanishing Race*, Ward Churchill's *The Tragedy and Travesty: The Subversion of Indigenous Sovereignty in North America*, Arif Dirlik's *The Past as Legacy and*

Project" Postcolonial Criticism in the Perspectives of Indigenous Historicism, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples* and Franke Wilmer's *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics*. I used these works to establish a foundation from which to apply decolonization to information and historical materials.

Because it is impossible to construct an indigenous perspective of a Blackfeet land history narrative without considering the contemporary political era of tribal self-determination and self-governance as a Tribe, I also researched literature addressing political and legal interpretations, as well as self-determination and sovereignty issues specific to American Indian tribes. These works included Vine Deloria, Jr. and Clifford Lytle's *The Nations Within, The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*, James J. Lopach, Brown and Clow's *Tribal Governments Today, Politics on Montana Indian Reservations*, Sharon O'Brien's *American Indian Tribal Governments*, David E. Wilkins, *American Indian Sovereignty and the U.S. Supreme Court* and Wilkins and K. Tsianina Lomawaima's *Uneven Ground, American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law*, along with Chapter I of Judith V. Royster and Michael C. Blumm's *Native American Natural Resources Law, Cases and Material*.

I realized, throughout the research and the writing of this thesis, that the process of evaluating the colonial historical narrative to construct and write an indigenous land history would be a complex and extremely challenging task. There are so many different strands of history and differing perspectives that need to be considered and critically evaluated during the process. Taking on such a task carries with it many responsibilities.

The Blackfeet Land History outlined in Chapter Two will weave these strands and perspectives together, while decolonizing information and historical materials to provide an indigenous perspective of the Blackfeet people-land-relationship and tenure upon the land. Due to those challenges of focusing specifically on historical influences that affect the land, this thesis presents other colonial influences in an extremely condensed manner, not intended to negate their impact but with respect to timely acceptance for academic purposes.

CHAPTER 3

THE STORY OF NITAWAHSI, OUR TERRITORY

A History of the Blackfoot People and their Land

As an indigenous person and a member of the Blackfeet Tribe, I am claiming a genealogical, cultural and political foundation with regard to my views, values and experiences. A lifetime of being immersed in the culture of my Tribe, living by these cultural standards and values have left me struggling to understand the impacts that colonization has upon the Blackfeet Tribe, other American Indian Tribes and indigenous peoples. In my personal journeys, I have become more focused on gathering materials and information relating to the indigenous perspective of the history of my tribe, in particular I have focused on the Blackfeet people and land relationship, how my tribe utilized and managed natural resources, and how this affects their lifestyles and attitudes today. This personal journey through time, place and history is what motivated me to pursue an academic degree in soil science and land resource management, a career as a conservationist and resource planner and led me to further my education with an advanced degree in Native American Studies. The past ten years have provided several opportunities that I have taken advantage of to conduct research, study and teach Blackfeet and other indigenous land history. I felt it was of critical

