Spring 2018

it shines a certain way. to a certain place: The Works of Native Filmmakers

Mae B. Vader
Bard College

it shines a certain way. to a certain place: The Works of Native Filmmakers

Senior Project submitted to

The Division of Arts

Bard College

by

Mae Vader

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2018

homage to Norval Morrisseau by Grace Waring

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my parents for your patience.

Thank you, Ed Halter, for being an ass (when necessary).

I thank you, Adam Khalil, for lending me your time and insight on several occasions.

Thank you, Sky Hopinka, for taking the time to listen when I didn’t know what I wanted to say.

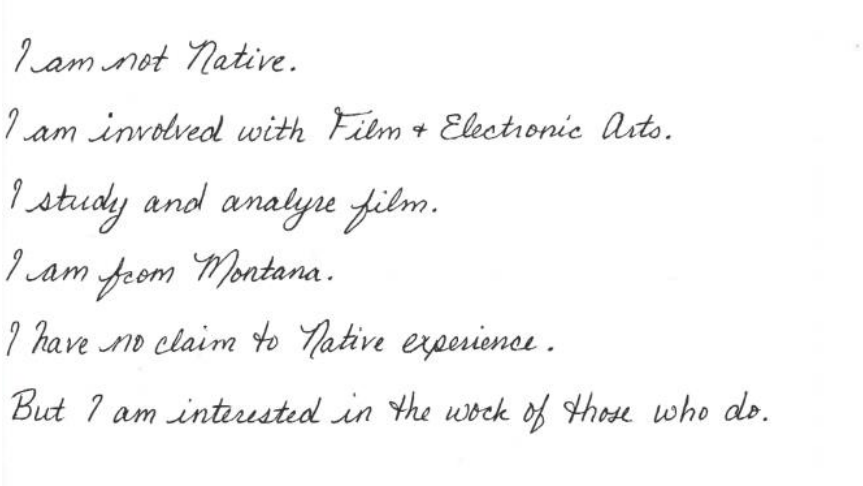
Thank you, Ivy and Ivan MacDonald, for sharing with me the unfinished work.

Grace, it was never an option to do it without you.

For McCalh Mary Margaret Racicot

Table of Contents

Introduction



In several instances, I have been typecast as an Indigenous child. Once, after a visit to the dentist, I was convinced I would soon be onscreen because the hygienist told me I could pass as a young Native girl in her husband's upcoming film. I've been Sacagawea and Pocahontas, played "Indian," attended powwows, stripped accessories from Indian dolls to wear in my hair. I began this project addressing the wrongs I committed in my youth, I must be honest about that. As it has developed, it has become a much different experience than what I first expected. Since childhood I have had a questionable fascination with indigeneity. At Bard, I was set on the pursuit of film and video. Could I find a way for these things to interact? How could I use film, this project, my dreams, to fix my brain and alter my judgement about Native people and Native artists? In the past year, I have attended a film festival, exchanged dialogue with talented filmmakers, watched movies, read theory, gone out of the country, walked on a frozen river, read poetry, gone to museums, recognized a new language, and updated my view on the world of Indigeneity. What was this world of Native film? Where did it begin, and how did it develop? How has white dominance affected Indigenous art? How has white writing halted Indigenous

growth? How could this not become my project? Attempting to teach myself about Indigenous identity, I questioned my own. The things I've come up with are as follows:

In chapter one, I use a problematic beginning, just like my own, in Native film with a study in the mid-1960s about a group of Navajo Indians who were given materials to make a film series: ***Navajo Film Themselves***. The researchers were not my inspiration. I wondered, what was my part in all this?

In chapter two, I recognize a beautiful film made in collaboration with a First Nation of Canada, the Inuit-run company Igloolik Isuma Productions, who created *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, using the developments of digital technology to push forward an ancient legend rooted in deep belief and appropriate conduct. The film attracted world attention, **confronting** the apathy of overarching society. Inuit people staked their presence and participation in the modern world.

With such attention, what would other Native filmmakers focus on? The films of Ojibway Bard alumni Adam and Zack Khalil, the title of one of which I borrow in mine, deal with the same themes of ancient belief and conflicting agencies. Experimental films *INAATE/SE/ [it shines a certain way. to a certain place./it flies. falls./]* and *Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets* create a unique body to match a newly uncovered skeleton of Indigenous history and subject matter. Chapter three elaborates upon the Native perspective. Whose film are you watching? Who was *really* there? Who is it really affecting? Here, some Native artists are shown to **expose** stereotype and injustice through an unlikely vehicle: humor. Others expose the dark side of Native experience more directly, such as longstanding member of the National Film Board of Canada and documentary filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, who shows audiences the image of a young Métis boy's body hanging from a tree for over thirty seconds to voice the

inadequacies of the treatment of Native children in the foster care system of North America. Or Blackfeet siblings Ivan and Ivy MacDonald, who hang ribbon skirts from trees to represent the countless missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

With film, Indigenous artists fight back. As I discuss in chapter four, problems are initiated, confronted, exposed, and finally **reclaimed as an act of retaliation**. Through the work of various writers, performance artists, sculptors, and filmmakers, stories are being told indigenously; I attempt to be a vehicle for their transmission. This project exists to promote Native filmmakers in their effort to assert authority over Indigenous experiences and expression.

Chapter One

Navajo Film Themselves

When two researchers, impressed by the ability of a group of Navajo Indians to easily pick up the skills to handle and use basic film equipment and editing techniques to a considerable extent, while also disregarding the need for names of parts and easily translating their function into the Navajo language, expressed their surprise to the tribal treasurer, he countered with one statement: “Maybe you didn’t tell them it was hard and that they couldn’t do it. Maybe they didn’t know making movies was supposed to be a tough job,” (Worth and Adair 123, 84-85). One of these Navajo filmmakers, John Nelson, spoke to the researchers of his experience imagining what would be covered in the film he was to make:

> I’ve been thinking a lot about…what…to make a movie of… a lot of people…come to the Trading Post, or just drive around inquiring how they make those wonderful necklaces and Concho belts and all those things that the Indian people have as their tradition…I believe this is the same way that the Indian women… use their knowledge, something up here [pointing to his forehead], they don’t follow any pattern…they start weaving and… make the designs that they feel would be interesting… That’s one of the things that I thought about since we met… about how to use your knowledge and that would be to making a movie (78-79).

John Nelson explains his form of filmmaking as intuitive, without a preconceived template. It is remarkable that he likens filmmaking to the traditional Navajo craft of weaving in its conception considering he had had minimal prior exposure to the medium of film. This cinematic “innocence” in a sense, was sought to be exploited and studied in order to see into the heads of

people isolated from Westernized society. Like the women John Nelson describes who weave rugs without instruction, the filmmaker integrates this quality into his own creation, processing a medium relatively new to his tribe, by way of showing off the traditional craft and innovation of his community. These conversations and detailed processes were recorded and published by Sol Worth and John Adair into a text alongside their 1966 study that taught a group of Navajo people to create films of their own construction, titled *Through Navajo Eyes*. In the summer of that year, the two white researchers enacted an experiment to examine and attempt to develop mainstream understanding of isolated cultures within the U.S., but more specifically through the medium of filmmaking. Curious as to what kind of images a people barely exposed to the moving picture would create, the researchers picked one of these "other" societies, supposedly nearly untouched by Westernization, in order to interpret their version of filmic "language", so that relations among white and non-white society could be improved through this enhanced knowledge (23, 6).

The two researchers travelled to Pine Springs on the Navajo Indian reservation and handpicked seven people to contribute to the film series *Navajo Film Themselves*. They wondered, what would these seven individuals, residents of a somewhat isolated reservation, arrange with celluloid? What kind of images would they make, and how would those be translated from one culture to the next? Pine Springs was a bilingual community, but having only "been invaded by television" one year, it was an ideal candidate for the experiment (Worth and Adair 49). Worth and Adair's aim was to take a group in the United States with the least bit of exposure to contemporary culture and teach individuals to use a film camera and editing tools in order to manifest "his vision of his world" for the majority to experience and study (14). But anthropologists on Indian reservations are by no means strangers. "Every summer when school is out a veritable stream of immigrants head into Indian country… From every rock and cranny in

the East *they* emerge," as Sioux author Vine Deloria Jr. puts it (78). These ventures by predominantly white academics, perhaps well-meaning, result in a cycle of perpetual stagnation. When an Indian community is scrutinized under a lens, the resulting phenomenon inhibits transformation as white society is first working to understand its origins within the vacuum they have created. "An anthropologist comes out to Indian reservations to make OBSERVATIONS. During the winter these observations will become books by which future anthropologists will be trained, so that they can come out to reservations years from now and verify the observations they have studied," (V. Deloria 79). Through this, the purpose of the studies is undermined through their very existence and continuation, which participates with modern colonization. The liberties taken with each study add to the steady list of struggles Native peoples deal with when attempting to develop their own identity *over time*. What options are there when choosing to include this study here, other than to discuss the products, yet by no means the ones Worth and Adair intended to be more closely analyzed (such as the book of their findings)? What were these films? What did the seven makers choose to do with the opportunity of having access to the equipment, whether or not they had an interest in the medium beyond the project? What can be learned by listening to them and not the researchers?

Before considering the successes of the project, problematic aspects must first be addressed. The language used within the published findings is evident of racial and cultural othering by the authors/researchers. Worth and Adair's surprise at the aptitude of the Navajo in picking up foreign technology reveals the researchers' low initial expectations far before they arrived in Pine Springs. That is, even though they believed the Navajo to be "outstanding among the American Indians in their willingness to accept innovations," as if other American Indians were not (Worth and Adair 74). The films themselves create interest and give insight to the lives

of the participants, but alongside the corresponding notes, an attitude surrounding the Navajo Indians is clear and concerning. Navajo participants were treated as simpletons occupying statically the only space in which Anglo-America has acknowledged them. Al Clah, John Nelson, Susie Benally, Alta Kahn, Maxine Tsosie, Mary Jane Tsosie, and Mike Anderson all had a range of experiences on the reservation, from spending all their lives there, learning tradition, language, custom, and craftmanship, to the younger filmmakers who attended boarding school, learning English and the basis of Christianity far removed from their families and ceremony. Using specific language, Worth and Adair attributed the results of the film study to the whole of Navajo, Native, and all other non-white cultures through generalization and patronization. For example, in the following line they state: "this is not the study of the Navajo Indian. It is a study of how a group of people structure their view of the world—their reality—through film," (7). How can the way non-Natives write about the Indigenous people of the continent be addressed and altered without repeating past mistakes? In order to highlight the wrongs of this study, *Navajo Film Themselves* will be analyzed alongside a different type of study, one based on inclusion of the subjects *from its very initiation* and decolonization of research methods.

A study took place in 2009 among the Inuit people in Rigolet, Labrador, which can in some ways be likened to *Navajo Film Themselves*, but was approached in a manner drastically different, resulting in conclusions not at all like that of 1966. Published article "Storytelling in a Digital Age: Digital Storytelling as an Emerging Narrative Method for Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Oral Wisdom" corresponds to this study, where these researchers, too, sought to teach an Indigenous community to use a contemporary medium of video, audio, and computer editing to tell their stories. The difference is the addition of Indigenous researchers in the team, discussing how non-Indigenous presence influences the dynamics of the individuals working

together, as well as giving careful attention to the matter of objectivity in "informing" the participants throughout development. In order to appropriately obtain the stories of the community, with minimal outside influence, the team of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous pursued "innovative research methods that focus[ed] on community participation…and the decolonizing of research" (3). Worth and Adair went to the Navajo Indian reservation in order to pick people of different professions, sex, age and status within the community. Filmmaker John Nelson was chosen for his political influence within the community, a female was also to be chosen, in addition to a craftsman, a "Navajo who had no craft, artistic, political, personal interest or aptitude in filmmaking," and an "outsider" (Worth and Adair 51, 56). The two researchers had fragile ties to the community, while Rigolet researchers were connected to the community in various ways.

The research in Rigolet was enacted through the collection of stories edited into videos with pictures and sound by Inuit community members. One is left to wonder what "data" was desired in its conclusion. Rigolet was granted funding from Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch in order to develop a form of data in the form of "place-based narratives and first-hand observations… of environmental change and climatic variation, shared through oral stories" (Willox 5). Instead of the study of the Inuit people, researchers here were concerned not only with the effect climate change had on the way of life of this arctic coastal community, but also with the "potential of digital storytelling to produce tangible outcomes that the participants considered valuable and that could stand as rich sources of qualitative data," (5). When teaching participants how to use the equipment and software (a more contemporary version of Worth and Adair's process), great care was taken in creating an inclusive and open environment, not dependent on teaching members the "acceptable" form of video structure/content. In order to

promote objectivity of the story structures, any non-Indigenous researcher was not included in the equipment and software editing training of the participants (6). This is an impactful change in the course of scientific study which normally works against Indigenous groups. With participants' permission, the videos were posted on a YouTube channel intended to be shared with others beyond Labrador.

In comparison to the conduct of the Rigolet research, one such example of Worth and Adair's shortcomings are presented. Quoted from the text, the researchers say, "We didn't want to use cameras ourselves until such time as we felt our students would be minimally influenced by our way of making pictures," (Worth and Adair 9). But further into the text, it becomes clear this concern is disregarded after some time, not only imposing Western ways of cinematic and story structure onto the Navajo, alienating them in return. One such example is, during an exercise, filmmaker and participant Mike Anderson sought to show the growth of a tree through various phases and did so by filming closer to a smaller object, and gradually getting farther away as each following tree increased in size, reducing the effect of growth in relation to the frame. Worth and Adair instructed him on how to achieve this effect (what they deemed the desired effect), by shooting with framing in mind, but in turn limiting creative and cultural expression by determining what was "correct" (96).

Let us look at the term "research". To some, this could have a positive connotation, associated with learning, discovery, and resolution. To others, this could be described as something invasive, harmful, alienating, and destructive. In the text, Sol Worth and John Adair refer to the Navajo participants as their "students", which already confines the remainder of the description within a powerful colonizer/colonized dynamic. The white men are the teachers, here to teach the ill-equipped Diné ("the people") in filmmaking. Two of the participants, sisters by

the names of Mary Jane and Maxine Tsosie, chose to take part in the study, but soon found themselves in a situation where the researchers began to control the structure of their film. It is peculiar to note the young women, Mary Jane age 21 and Maxine 17, were born on the reservation but attended boarding school off, and remained unfamiliar with the tradition and ceremony which often involved their grandfather, medicine man and elder Sam Yazzie. At the boarding school, neither were allowed to speak Navajo, were more accustomed to white society, and learned about Christianity (66-67). When the sisters were in the process of filming their grandfather during a healing ceremony, Worth and Adair attempted to manipulate Mary Jane and Maxine's view in their film *The Spirit of the Navajo*. Frustration arose during the filming and Worth lost composure, demanding certain shots from the women "when Worth asked her to take close-ups of Sam's face as he worked on his paintings" (Worth and Adair photo #39), disregarding the researchers own *recorded* knowledge of the Navajo's discomfort towards close-ups and direct eye contact. In this particular example, Maxine and Mary Jane reject the influence, and begin to show signs of resistance to the entire project, annoying the outsiders:

> Over the course of the afternoon, Maxine repeated at least ten times that her hand was trembling, shaking or unsteady and said that it was very hard to shoot under 'these conditions'. Worth asked, 'What conditions?' and she pointed around the Hogan in reply. When Mary Jane held the camera, she did no shooting. She circled around, looking at things, at people, but shot practically nothing. She did none of the things that Worth had 'taught' her the previous time (164).

In an attempt to reconnect with their tribal customs, the Tsosie sisters wanted to develop a film based on the medicinal practice of their grandfather—things that have been uprooted by the

imposing settler state and society. And the researchers, in ignorance and the heat of frustration, continued a long lineage of colonizing behavior and activity through their "suggestions".

In comparison, the Rigolet study goes so far as to lay out this dynamic first and foremost. These researchers are aware that "the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism," (Willox 3). The line continues: "The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous vocabulary." The team also sought to support the idea of oral storytelling and experience as qualitative data, through the form of digital storytelling, which in turn works to "celebrate the individual and the collective" (6). Using film and video for science, as well as for artistic expression, when done in an appropriate and thorough manner, allows for "promoting the indigenous voice" (8). In this project, the "analyzers" were removed from the makers and their material until after the completed video was submitted, which allowed for those involved in the initial development to experience the stories being told. This removal of the researchers from the participants allowed for a more open environment, where stories were more actively and genuinely shared, as a means to "dismantle the hyphen between 'researcher-researched' and 'teller-listener' and…place the researcher into the position of a 'listener', rather than a 'certifier' or an 'analyzer'" (15). This, in turn, flips the power dynamic held by Worth and Adair, who "metaphorically consider[ed] [the Navajo] as film children" (137), so that the Indigenous voices are valued, respected, and empowered instead.

But this all comes back to the idea of the researchers as being the *authority*. Instead, what can viewers learn from these films? What did their makers want those outside of the community to learn about them, as they decided to present it? It is interesting to note the structure of several Navajo and Inuit films. Looking at the Indigenous individuals as artists and filmmakers, the general public will be better able to identify with Native peoples of North America than because

of any study presenting information *about them*. Stories chosen and constructed by a maker is the individual's truth, which in the case of Rigolet, are freely given to others from which to learn. The exhibition of superiority complex-ridden colonial power dynamics should continue to be questioned as readers make their way through the remainder of the analysis.

A man is dwarfed against the landscape and trees surrounding him as he arduously scans the area depicted as familiar terrain for the craftsman. In comparison to the desert where he finds the supplies necessary for his craft, the product is just as small as he. Participant John Nelson of *Navajo Film Themselves* presents *Navajo Silversmith,* showing the creation of handmade silver ornaments. Most of the short film follows the silversmith as he collects the materials, searching through plants and rocks under the bright sun. *A Navajo Weaver*, another film of the series, opens with a young boy tending to sheep, then cuts to a woman sheering, soaking, combing, and spinning wool, also collecting sage and other plants. The accumulation and processing of the materials for woven rugs by filmmaker Susie Benally's mother consumes the film, with only a few minutes near the end given to the actual weaving of the piece. The subject of this film is the director of the next, inverting filmmaker and "actor". In this untitled film, sometimes called *Second Weaver*, Alta Kahn shows her daughter Susie as she spins the wool, in the end constructing a belt presented to the camera shyly. A common thread intertwines the process of gathering and walking. The filmmakers generally focus on the maintenance of the craft, in its careful tending and collection. For example, the sheep must be cared for in order to get the wool, which is clear from *A Navajo Weaver*, as this is how the film introduces viewers to the subject matter. In order to make the ornaments, material for its makeup, minting, and completion are to be collected. The process here for these early Native American filmmakers is the emphasis; the product is given mere glimpses. In order to cultivate benefit from an invasive project such as

Navajo Film Themselves, the focus of the Navajo filmmakers can be taken into consideration towards the remainder of this analysis as it develops, hopefully far removed from the attitude in Pine Springs. Using the underlying whispers of the seven filmmakers fifty years ago, the focus remains on the issues conveyed onscreen, such as the concern towards family members, community members, and livelihoods of all involved, and assigning authority not to the oppressive group peering over, but to those working towards propelling Indigenous voices.

Several films sourced from Rigolet told of the importance of fishing, hunting, and travel through the elements. Although their main objective was to collect data on the effects of climate change in Labrador, many topics were covered in the dozens of videos posted to the Rigolet YouTube channel. In a community that still depends greatly on the surrounding environment for food, income, and way of life, the Rigolet team emphasized "sharing stories about how changes in the land, sea, ice, and snow were impacting livelihoods, health, and well-being in the community" (Willox 6). For the Inuit participants, creating stories in the form of video and slideshow was less about the proof (such as numbers and records), and more about the act of "remembering" in order to "[connect] to a past and [bring] the history of communities into the present moment… it is about remembering all moments from the collective fabric, including pain and trauma," (8).

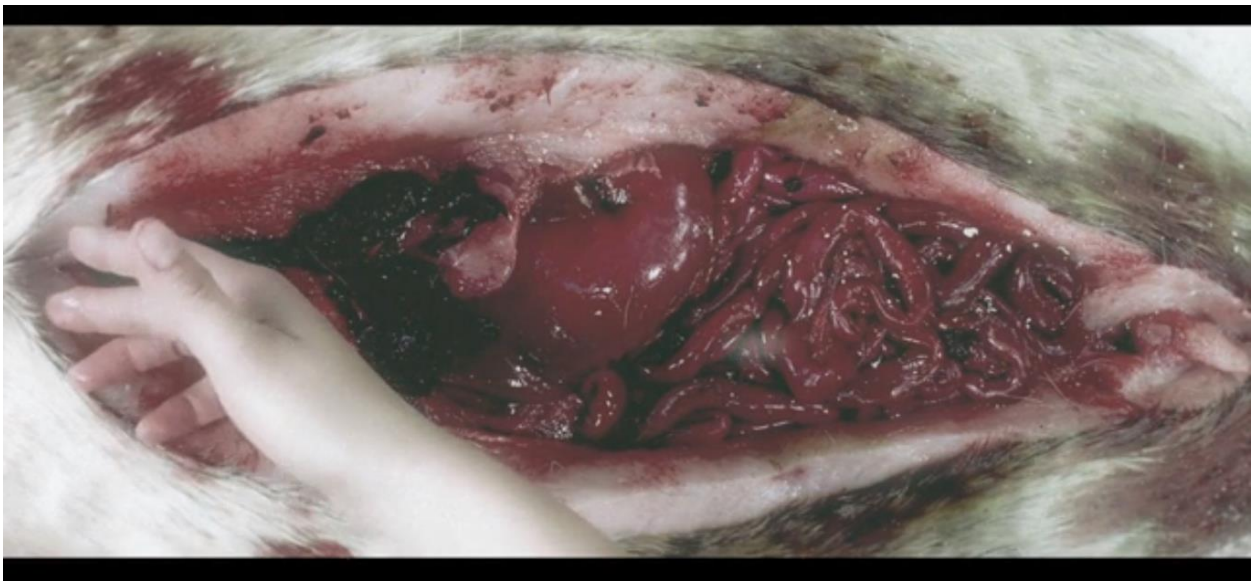
As a community, Rigolet is working to constantly remember and integrate the past into daily life for the betterment of future generations—a theme presented in many of the videos. In one film titled, "Will We Even Exist", a narrator worries for her grandchildren, as well as their "whole way of living" (uKautsiga). In another, longstanding traditions of throat singing and drum dancing are passed down in "My Inuit Culture". These are things that cannot be written down, the narrator tells us, it must be taught orally and directly from one generation to another.

Film may just be that medium that can amplify the Native voice, encompassing stories, experience, and the ongoing tradition, actively adjusting with passing time. Native filmmakers speaking for themselves "provides the platform for people to tell their own stories, in their own words, in the manner in which they want others to hear it," (Willox 10).

In the beginning of Worth and Adair's project, while consulting elder and medicine man Sam Yazzie about the prospect of having individuals create films, the old man asked an unexpected question, translated as, "will making movies do the sheep any harm?" (Worth and Adair 4). Sheep are a recurring symbolic form in many of the final films. The men answered that it would neither harm nor help them. "Then why make movies?" the elder asked. This is an important, wider question pertaining to cinema among oppressed peoples. What can filmmaking do for marginalized groups that it hasn't already damaged by whites behind the camera or beyond, such as the pen or brush throughout the centuries? Can a film by a Native maker be initiative of powerful things, such as greater knowledge, reduced hostility, and depleted ignorance? Or greater care for issues faced by Indigenous peoples?

Through direct representation, a fictional short film produced in the same year as the Rigolet study worked with similar themes: the changing way of life, especially pertaining to hunting and environment. Produced by Inuit-run company Isuma TV, and directed by Felix Lajeunesse and Paul Raphaël, *Tungijuq* highlights the historical importance and cultural, as well as financial, dependence on the hunting and fishing industry. Later on, we will discuss the importance of Isuma in greater detail, but the film reflects the concerns of Inuit people beyond an anthropological or scientific point of view. The short film opens with the expanse of an arctic blizzard. From the Rigolet video noted earlier, we know the sound behind the image to be traditional Inuit throat singing (by famous throat singer, as well as starring actress of the film,

Tanya Tagaq Gillis). The woman is disguised as a wolf, hunting in the white, icy landscape. Beautiful computer-generated images depict hooves as they approach of the wild caribou. The woman-turned-wolf hunts down one of the animals, grabbing it by its neck and pulling it to the ground. Next, the same woman is pictured as she lies naked on the ground, holding her bleeding gut, symbolically as the dying caribou. The wailing in the background increases, uneasily yet elegantly intertwined with the image. Through the ice, the body of the woman slips into the water, obscured by a cloud of blood. A seal swims forth to the breathing hole above, where an Inuit man awaits to hunt it, too. The seal is shot and floats weightlessly for a moment. The carcass then sits atop the ice, its belly slit open into a yonic shape as the two humans, original woman included, feed from its open cavity.



The importance of the film sits within the cyclic quality of life and death, human and animal. The Inuit people for thousands of years have depended on the wolf, the caribou, and the seal for sustenance, tools, direction, and life. It comes as a symbolic reference to the regulations imposed on hunting in Canada, as populations of these animals were driven towards extinction, none of which at the fault of First Nations people (Evans 47). The film comes as an attractive message expressing the need for these resources for the culture's survival, by way of a medium easily accessed and distributed. The film was selected for both Sundance and Toronto International Film Festival, as well as imagiNATIVE film festival in 2009, as it "talk[s] back to…[the] anti-sealhunting lobby", the industry of which is "eternal" to Inuit peoples (Isuma TV).

Native peoples around the continent have been consistently wrangled into regulation refusing their way of life by settler governments. A relevant example would be in 1966 (the same year *Navajo Film Themselves* was filmed) when the hunting of bowhead whales was made illegal, even though the Inuit had hunted them for centuries. The knowledge of their tracking, hunting, and preparation was threatened to be lost forever. But, in 1994, an elder who was soon

to pass away requested he be able to eat Muktuk (bowhead blubber). The request of an elder is taken with extreme seriousness in Inuit society, and the younger people are obliged to fill it. After an injured bowhead whale was found and slaughtered, the hunters went to trial for killing the protected animal, which caught the young people in the midst of two systems of governing: the federal law and Inuit custom (Evans 46). With *Tungijuq*, Native filmmakers at Isuma worked to have their concerns showcased, making the case in *support* of seal hunting and other game in order to maintain traditional practices. Film, indeed, can be used as a positive tool for the American Indigenous people in reflecting issues and stories when initiation, control, and means is in Native hands.

This initiates the move from the anthropological, inherently outside view to that of the artistic expressions of Native filmmakers. But the next question is, how? Native-made film *Reel Injun* (2009) by Cree director Neil Diamond covers the long history of deception and stereotype of Native peoples in cinema. Although Native peoples have been captured on celluloid since day one (such as one of Edison's first moving images of a Laguna Pueblo Ceremony), it has long been a struggle for American Indians to make a name for themselves beyond the two-dimensional stoic creature or merciless villain. An exception to this would be the credited directing duo and couple James Young Deer and Princess Red Wing during the silent era (*Unexpected Places*, P. Deloria 98). Author Philip Deloria comments on the brief period when Native people were able to infiltrate larger productions and distribution:

> But there had once been a moment in which other stories were possible. James Young Deer and Princess Red Wing leapt into a gap that opened for a few short years. In that ambiguous, formative moment—before Hollywood, when filmmaking was still inflected by the Wild West tradition—Indian authenticity licensed them to produce films. The

> economic structure of the industry empowered them to make those films from a particularly Native position (107-108).

After the studio system was developed, minorities struggled to get their stories made. A Cherokee actor by the name of Victor Daniels (Chief Thundercloud) who played countless roles (including the first onscreen Tonto) attempted to organize a new tribe called the "DeMille Indians" of Hollywood in 1940, which was ultimately rejected (80). From this time until the Native American Renaissance of the 60s and 70s, where *Reel Injun* suggests more Native voices began to be acknowledged through art, mainstream media was a tough barrier into which to break.

Without the immediate assistance and support of larger institutions, such as the beast of Hollywood and beyond, Indigenous filmmakers had to develop a new way to get their stories out, as it is clear from the smaller-scale, independent works discussed throughout this project. Philip Deloria, son of Vine Deloria Jr., in his book *Indians in Unexpected Places* states: "Over the course of the twentieth century, many of the same filmmakers who embraced the imagery surrounding Indians proved reluctant to embrace Indian people. As many critics have argued, Hollywood has never been a particularly friendly place for Native Americans," (78). New manners of spreading information are forced to be developed because of majority society's exclusion.

Ojibway filmmaker and Bard alum Adam Khalil, in an email generously shared with me discussing the prospects of a new project titled "THE INFORMANTS" proposes that in moving forward, Native artists must:

> …contaminate [non-Native Americans] with a new and more delicious desire: Native Art. As Indigenous artists who participate in the art world of settler-colonial states, we

> are asked to provide knowledge on our communities and cultures – similar to the historic and ongoing relationship between 'informant' and anthropologist. While this desire often condemns Indigenous people to an ideal irretrievable past, can it instead be rechanneled to promote the imagining of Indigenous futures?

With this, Adam seeks to use his status as an often *examined* figure in society to his, and other Native peoples, advantage. What is this advantage, and how can filmmaking work to help with a long history of abuse by cinema already established?

Just like the Tsosie sisters, who used the filmmaking opportunity as a means to connect to their heritage and tradition through covering the practices of their grandfather Sam Yazzie, there is additionally another filmmaker from the group that was considered an outsider, who used his film to attempt to approach the Navajo culture, from which he was alienated. Al Clah, maker of the film *Intrepid Shadows,* is Navajo, but was never involved in the community. He was a 19-year-old student at the Institute of American Indian Art in Santa Fe at the time but was brought to the reservation to be a part of the project (Worth and Adair 50). In his creation, Al Clah had his character poke a stick into a (home-made) spider's web. This, in the eyes of the other Navajo members, was taboo, and the actor (John Nelson) refused to continue working with him, as he had violated terms of conduct in the community (160). So, for the remainder of the film, the actor is replaced with a large, masked being called the Yeibechai. The themes of his film follow that of being the "intruder" (just as the character is listed in the opening credits) as he works to find his way, as the filmmaker himself does after he is eventually rejected by the community (209-210). With his film, Clah makes his intentions clear as he attempts to grapple with these issues.

Another filmmaker, Arlene Bowman, who is also Navajo, began her film career in graduate school exploring the concept of reconnecting to one's cultural heritage when she decided to make a project about her grandmother who lived on an isolated part of the reservation in 1986. Author Randolph Lewis suggests that Bowman is a part of the "in-between generation," balancing the line of assimilating into white society as government policy urged them to do, which in turn would "leave behind the certainties of traditional language, culture, and community," or to remain on the reservation (*Cinema on Native Ground*, Lewis 49-50). Being born in 1955, Arlene was left to be one of "[t]hese postwar children [born between 1946 and 1960] …raised in 'an era of heightened federal pressure to dismantle tribal rights… and the continued erosion of Navajo language and cultural practices,'" (49). When she decided to attend the graduate film program at UCLA, the issues of her ability to belong to neither the white space nor the Navajo reservation led her to seek out answers within the older generation in an effort to regain a stronger sense of her identity.

Arlene Bowman's film, *Navajo Talking Picture*, opens with allowing its viewers to settle into the surroundings. One can hear cows and birds as the camera pans hand-held around the plot of land worked by her grandmother, Ann Ruth Biah. The narrator, who is the filmmaker herself, tells us about the isolation of her grandmother, as we gaze upon a frail-looking elderly woman wrangling sheep and doing chores around her small home. We learn Bowman's grandmother receives social security checks to survive, in addition to selling her rugs for $80 apiece, yet she "isn't influenced by the white man." This gives an indication that the intended audience is toward her non-Native peers, as she fills in the information likely unknown on the life of a traditional woman living among the Navajo Nation. The old woman goes to the trading post and a worn wooden sign is all that announces our arrival. Bowman and her crew film her

grandmother speaking with another woman in Navajo, being translated to viewers via dubbing. And then, viewers are hit with the single most important aspect of the film: Bowman says, “I don’t know Navajo, and she doesn’t know English.”

The remainder of the film is developed from here, as conflict arises between the two women who are unable to communicate—one who comes from traditional practice and language, the other from Los Angeles at a large university. As the film continues, the grandmother becomes more hostile, avoiding contact with the camera as well as her granddaughter. The distance between the women is clear; Bowman tells us she stopped visiting her grandmother when she was young. The film for the filmmaker, then, serves as an "important artifact that reflects a particular moment in recent Native American history when 'urban Indians' struggled to reconnect with tribal traditions" and in *Navajo Talking Picture*'s further analysis, the film "[opens] up a number of productive conversations about art, ethics, and identity," (Lewis, *Cinema on Native Ground* xxiv). Arlene Bowman used film as a means to redevelop the relationship with her grandmother, as well as the wider aspects of her culture, as she struggled with finding a place in the world in which she fit. Film, here, is used as a tool of reclamation when government policy and attitude towards Native Americans has drastically impacted way of life for these Navajo women in just two generations—creating a hard wedge between family members—an obstacle not easily overcome.

Just as the Rigolet community members and new filmmakers used their stories and memory as a means to bettering the future for coming generations, and *Tungijuq* fought to show the other *other* side of the argument towards the hunting industry as a rite of passage into cultural preservation, the filmmakers discussed here actively pursue the medium as a means to explore and solidify their connection to Indianness in their respective tribes and traditions. Abenaki filmmaker and artist Alanis Obomsawin, who has fifty years of documentary under her belt, said: "All of my work—whether singing or storytelling or filmmaking—has been a fight for inclusion of our history in the educational system of our country," (Lewis, *Vision of a Native Filmmaker*

108). I argue throughout this essay, film is both an artistic journey for some Native filmmakers to begin to mend the ligaments which held a tribe to their culture, torn by centuries of violence and acts of colonization, yet also an argument in the case for the attention and inclusion of wider audiences into the history and issues which face Indigenous peoples today.

Without personally experiencing these hardships, how can I thoroughly and respectfully address these concerns so prevalent within certain films? If I am just another outsider, in what way can I be different than Sol Worth and John Adair? In order to continue, I had to explore the reasoning behind my interest and energy towards this project. It all began in childhood wonderment of the mythologic Indian, the beautiful princess, the connection to the world around, but how was I to complete my analysis without recreating dehumanizing and othering conclusions? For several years, a kind of pseudo-activism has been displayed in the country and around the world, embodied through energetic handwritten signs made public and ever-present on social media profiles. There are woeful stories and pleas for recognition—this is turn vouching for genuine progressive action. In comparison, I have stood idle, not knowing how to maneuver through the sea of colorful paper and posted declarations. Why was there hesitation to join, even when in agreement with the cause, I wondered? Then, Adam Khalil forwarded me an article from *Indigenous Action Media* titled "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex", which deals with these exact issues and helped me to construct my thoughts surrounding the issue more effectively. It covers the idea of "allyship" as a means to exploit the struggles of others, such as making money or simply receiving the self-gratification that comes with promoting a cause in a performative manner. One solution, it says, is adopting the attitude of "accomplice" instead, which implies direct action, thus consequence, when aiming towards a goal. In order for there to be true change of conduct, participants not immediately born

into the problem had to voluntarily devote a piece of themselves in order to feel a level of responsibility for a solution. Without this, there is dimensionless commitment to a movement, able to be dismantled at the slightest rattle of the cage. The foundation of my project felt shaky, and it was true I needed to reconsider the intention behind my attention. Despite the guilt I experienced after analyzing the fetishization of Native peoples during my upbringing, and despite feeling obligated to remedy this guilt, I could not allow these feelings to drive the project. Although I won't fix anything with a one-year project such as this, I could not complete it based on negative feelings; I could not choose to be scared of speaking about my project, especially with a person of Indigenous ancestry, in fear of being exposed for my interest/ignorance/misunderstanding. The impassioned article stated, it seemed directly to me: "While guilt and shame are powerful emotions, think about what [you are] doing before you make another community's struggle into your therapy session," (3). Throughout the piece, the strongly-worded opinions helped to shed the shame surrounding me and my everyday thoughts as I considered my part in it. By no means do I take this article as a universal truth, but the confrontation of thoughts I already had assisted in the processing of larger issues. Even the author admits, "A lot of people also assume Indigenous folks are all on the same page 'politically,' we're definitely not," ("Accomplices Not Allies" 7). The article was a step along the way towards properly constructing theory as an outsider displaying an honest and open gaze, yet with a critical approach throughout. This, I hope, is the difference between me and my predecessors.

But, I also wonder, what does my analysis do for them? For instance, my fondness of the films and filmmakers goes without saying because of the fact of this project itself, but if I believe the films are able to stand on their own, what is the need of my (outsider) perspective? As before,

the work of the filmmakers previously discussed aims to strengthen a sense of identity, and to include history, as well as contemporary issues into the national and world narrative. But what has stopped this inclusion before? I have always believed, aside from fetishization, there is an epidemic of apathy running rampant surrounding Indigenous existence in general, let alone serious Indigenous artists. Just as Randolph Lewis argues on behalf of Alanis Obomsawin's presence as "one of the relatively few figures that can be discerned in the long fog of cultural visibility that has engulfed First Nations people and their artistry, like indigenous people everywhere," he also argues for the importance of film and other media as a way to remedy this:

> More than most of us realize, the electronic media have become the essential mechanism for a global process of measuring our common ground with people far from home, literally and metaphorically, and making judgements about who *they* are to *us*, however those fields might be defined. Indigenous filmmakers working to reinscribe the image of the Native in the Western imagination (as well as in various tribal imaginations) are just one example of this process (*Vision of a Native Filmmaker* xxiii).

Adam Khalil, in THE INFORMANTS proposal, states there is "no figure stranger or more alien in the American consciousness than the Indian in America. The native is everywhere and nowhere… but the deep and dark secret of the American consciousness is this: Native Americans might exist. Nothing is more terrifying."

In an effort to acknowledge the existence and persistence of American Indians, highlighting the issues at the forefront of many Indigenous artists' pieces remains to be the most necessary. Vine Deloria says "[o]ur foremost plight is our transparency" (1), so further analysis, thus attention, must be given in order to represent Native work at all. Randolph Lewis, who authored both the text on filmmaker Arlene Bowman as well as Alanis Obomsawin, argues it is

"incumbent" of people who "operate from positions of relative privilege" to promote work by Indigenous people in all fields (*Cinema on Native Ground* xxi). This, although a valid concern which is also voiced in "Accomplices Not Allies," perpetuates the misleading idea that Native Americans do not have authority of the construction and promotion of their own experience. Although I express my gratitude towards the author for completing the texts on these outstanding female Native filmmakers, I disagree with this sentiment. Lewis is a non-Native, and makes no claim to expertise in his introduction, but the discussion can't end here. It seems contradictory to plead with the reader, even in my case, to pay mind to the issues confronting Indians in the United States and Canada by choosing works created from within the communities, while also having them dependent on my outside perspective to appreciate them. It is a complicated irony to resolve.

In order to continue, I must frame my argument around the authority of Native voice and experience. Inuit filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk, both producer and male actor of *Tungijuq*, is led by the strong "desire to correct the misinterpretations that thrive in the southern world," when creating his work on Inuit lives (Evans 49). For too long have Native voices been ignored, affected by "[d]evastating legal decisions, political helplessness, grinding poverty, [and] white racist antipathy" in not so many words (*Indians in Unexpected Places*, P. Deloria 225). So, recognition must be encouraged and enforced by focusing on Native filmmakers/artists/activists. We must begin to frame the narrative around the work, confronting the issues long plaguing representation and production. But how do we do it? As *Indigenous Action Media* puts it: "Should we desire to merely 'unlearn' oppression, or to smash it to fucking pieces, and have [its] very existence gone?" (Accomplices Not Allies" 5).

Chapter Two

Confrontation

"Direct Action is really the best and may be the only way to learn what it is to be an accomplice. We're in a fight, so be ready for confrontation and consequence."

- *"Accomplices Not Allies" 9*

The sound of whining, high pitched and piercing, permeates the viewer's ears as a pack of dogs circle below the visible moon of a landscape in gradients from the pale blue of the sky to phosphorescent white of the open tundra. A person in a thick coat stalks the animals. Two dogs run from him; one lies cowering in the snow. The sickening sound continues as it, in partnership with the blowing wind, chills the audience to the bone, immersing all viewers into the cold and desolate world of *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001). Then, suddenly, the dogs that fled return and seem to have multiplied, uniting the entire pack in a picturesque image. The beauty of the scenery is overwhelmed by the unsettling audio, creating a jarring physical effect, as well as an isolating emotional effect. This is the opening to Inuit filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk's landmark film about the traditional legend of Atanarjuat, produced in partnership by his company, Igloolik Isuma Productions and the National Film Board of Canada. It serves to be a pivotal film on many levels, keeping in line with the theme of traditional connection, as well as integrating a means of production dependent on the ways of Inuit culture, directly sourcing from the community to develop a story born from the region. *Atanarjuat* is incredibly rich with detail, carefully extracting historical accuracy not through research of Western norms, but from the voices of Inuit elders, not only prizing their experiences, but the very language of the Inuit, Inuktitut, throughout the entirety of the script.

On the islands of Nunavut (meaning “our land”), a section of land starting at northeast mainland Canada, dotting the map all the way to Greenland, Inuit communities continue to live, work, hunt, and speak Inuktitut, as well as “live in the modern world just as fully as everyone else”; this is, perhaps to the surprise of some, not a contradictory statement (Evans 123, 2). In this hybridized lifestyle, the Inuit preserve and strengthen their culture in ways the “south” rarely attributes to them. Author Michael Robert Evans states in his book *The Fast Runner: Filming the Legend of Atanarjuat*:

> Most of the world knows about the Inuit not through their legends and stories but through southern depictions of life in the North—portrayals that often position the Inuit not as wise and resourceful but as savage and primitive. Or backward and unable to adapt to the changing world…Or irrelevant and essentially nonexistent (xv-xvi).

The relevance, thus importance, of this specific film, which was produced in the story’s original language, by a company created, owned, and run by and for the Inuit, needs no further

explanation in the context of this project. Early on, I viewed the film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* and was taken with it immediately; only after further research has the production's true excellence begun to be realized.

Igloolik Isuma Productions, hoping to share the legend of the Fast Runner beyond its community and land of origin, constructed a new version through the accumulation and representation of history based in accurate and respectful conduct. With respect to Inuit culture, research methods accustomed to the manner and quality of its data were used by the Isuma team to rejuvenate the idea of traditional legends and modern way of life without a wide separation between the two. Isuma "consulted elders about language, relationships, clothing, implements, and other facets of Inuit life represented in the film," (Evans 19). A harmful cycle of research is stopped in its tracks as Isuma's contributions come to light, taking a Native-run agency, and enabling with it the sourcing and preservation of important cultural history, collected in the form of cinema. Above all, I wish to emphasize the *way* in which Isuma and contributors to *Atanarjuat* researched the subject matter, even though many were Inuit and familiar with the legend. The extent of the knowledge is extremely thorough, channeling directly from local experts and elders the intimate details of the legend and ancient Inuit lifestyle and beliefs, but while also adapting it to a contemporary medium and culture.

Director Zacharias Kunuk uses his position as an Inuk man and filmmaker to express that the Inuit do not fear cultural evolution. He asks, "Can Inuit bring storytelling into the new millennium? Can we listen to our elders before they all pass away?" (Evans 48). The new millennium, as well as the figure of the elder, are not mutually exclusive, but dependent on one another for substantial cultural aspects necessary for function. Kunuk, along with three other core members Pauloosie Qulitalik (who passed away in 2012), Paul Apak (who passed away in

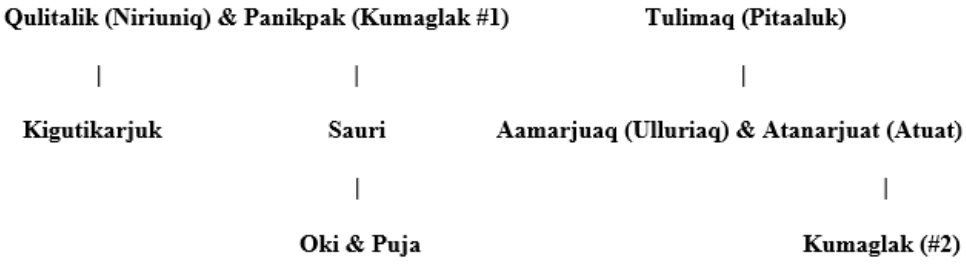
1998), and Norman Cohn (the only non-Inuit member of the company), established the production company in 1990 (Evans 32). It was developed in the belief that film and video was a powerful resource in establishing Inuit presence in world media: "Video gives the producers a means by which they can honor the wisdom and ethos of their elders while at the same time making a statement about the relevance and worth of Inuit today," (17). Another goal of Isuma is the preservation of the Inuit language, and this concern stems from the greater concern of the community, which led to the development of the Inuit Broadcasting Company, of which Kunuk was the chief producer (Evans 56, 34). The channel runs programs entirely in Inuktitut, especially with emphasis on the younger generations, producing children's shows aimed at teaching basics of the language, as well as programs voicing the struggle of fitting into two cultures (14-16).

Through his work, Kunuk hopes to show the value of his culture, which is as ever-changing as any. The fallacy of stagnancy in Indigenous, Native, and First Nation cultures has no place any longer, he argues. Along with the research, the filmmaking style also works to suggest modernity, using digital techniques, equipment, and editing, using "cutting-edge technology to bear on the ancient art of Inuit storytelling," (Evans 17). The film is styled after documentary, but in no way distances the audience or alienates the subjects with the use of the viewer's language as narrator, or uses the foreign gaze normally surrounded by an air of strangeness, which points more towards the differences between viewer and subject than the common bonds. As a viewer of *Atanarjuat*, you too are cold, stiff, and hungry, as the film submerges you into the story like icy water, and then warms you yet again by the fires of justice, love, and family. Through faint irony, Isuma Productions stakes Inuit presence in contemporary society, government, and art by means of an ancient character on a journey through a part of the world

many have never touched. *Atanarjuat* makes a strong case for authentic Native cinema, I argue, not because of its subject matter (one of legend and past), but because of the conduct surrounding the story, respectfully addressing a community's desire to share themselves as they themselves see fit, with the heart necessary to disrupt the blind spot for Native insight in the mainstream.

Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner Family Tree

(Information from diagram: Evans xx-xxi)



Aamarjuaq	ah-MAR-joo-ahk
Atanarjuat	ah-tah-NAR-joo-aht
Atuat	AH-tuat
Kigutikarjuk	kee-goo-tee-KAR-jook
Kumaglak	koo-MUG-luck
Niriuniq	nee-ree-YOO-nirk
Oki	oo-khee
Panikpak	PAH-nick-pahk
Pitaaluk	pee-TAH-look
Puja	POO-yah
Qulitalik	khoo-LIT-tah-lick
Sauri	SAOW-ree
Tulimaq	too-lee-MAHK
Tungajuaq	toong-GAH-joo-ahk
Ulluriaq	oo-DLOO-ree-yahk

Evil has taken residency in the village on the island of Igloolik nearly five hundred years ago, before Europeans first arrived in the region (Evans 3). The camp leader and shaman, Kumaglak, has been targeted by an evil spirit who visits, brought on by the leader's own son, Sauri. This evil spirit, Tungajuaq, kills the leader, and endows Sauri with the role, solidifying a place of evil among the community. Murdered leader's wife, Panikpak, in order to potentially salvage goodness in the village, sends away her brother and his wife, so she may call for him later when she sees her brother Qulitalik's help is needed. With this, the couple packs up with Panikpak's assistance, preparing the dogsled with supplies to head out into the open tundra. Young Qulitalik sips water from a container and spits it onto a small fur held in his hand, rubbing it along the ice-covered feet of the sled, buffing it into a smooth, slick surface. Just before leaving, a young Panikpak carries a large pouch over to the couple and states to her sister-in-law, "Some water you can keep warm," as the woman turns to have the gut full of liquid slid inside her coat down the back. These two actions seem as though they are not given much thought, but in fact, this scene proves the film's intensely detail-oriented attitude and dedication to authenticity, qualities that deserve attention. Of course, the sled requires minimal friction against the snow in order for the dogs to pull it effectively; and of course, the water will only stay liquid, thus drinkable, if kept close to a source of heat (which is most immediately the body). These are small facts of life for the Inuit families that live here at this time, and they are fed to the audience gradually and as naturally as they are portrayed by the actor. "By reaching back five hundred years to show the Atanarjuat legend, the Isuma producers were able to demonstrate to viewers – both through highlighted activities and through quiet, background action – the myriad ways in which the ancestors turned a challenging environment into a rich and fulfilling world," (Evans 50). All these seemingly little qualities add to the proficiency of the

filmmakers in the legend and lifestyle, working to create a film that is “ethnographically true” (Evans 19). The process by which we view the final product is astonishing on many levels.

The legend portrayed here is not the original. With the help of Inuit storytellers, *Atanarjuat* producers reviewed several versions of the story, each one of them slightly different but orally passed down (Evans 19). In his text covering the development, production, and success of the project, Evans mentions reviews of the film, some of which question its authenticity. One reviewer is critical of the fact that the ending of the film is not the “original” ending of the legend, which is one that has protagonist Atanarjuat kill his rival Oki and enslave his entire family. In the film, Oki does not die, because the filmmakers wished, instead, “to emphasize balance and selflessness over ego and ambition” to adapt to the needs of viewers (58). To suggest that this change of the legend was corrupting the authenticity of the film is also to suggest that the Inuit culture, like the stories deeply ingrained within it, are stagnant. Any alteration to this idea is confronted with confusion, distrust, and even hostility by the outside world. Instead, the legends are meant to be adaptive, changing details, characters, outcomes, and lessons to match the changing circumstances of the people being told. An Inuit team working with the elders of the community to create the most relevant and valuable route for a traditional legend is far from inauthentic.

Language was also a key component to the film’s production. Aside from being written and performed completely in Inuktitut, there were further details that had to be acknowledged. To my outside ears, Inuktitut is a very thick, rich language. Hearing its sounds and watching character’s faces cause me to think about the qualities of a language developed around cold lips and stiff expressions due to exposure to the arctic. Being an ancient legend, language from then until now has changed drastically. Many Inuit today are aware that the version of Inuktitut they

speak is “baby talk” compared to ancient forms, and that the older version was “much richer and more colorful” (Evans 57). This means, while constructing the screenplay, a more ancient form of the language had to be researched and learned from the elders through thorough oral direction and actors had to be trained to match the time period. These differences lay out the intense devotion to accuracy by the Isuma team, especially Paul Apak: “In the interest of authenticity, Apak wanted to make sure that none of his films, including *The Fast Runner*, had characters who violated respectful address, used words or linguistic structures that were not common at the time the scene took place, and so on,” (39).

The production of *Atanarjuat* also structured their working days around the sense of *time* in Igloolik. Compared to the normal 12 to 14-hour film production days, hard scheduled to each corresponding shoot, the Isuma team acknowledged the Inuit way of thinking. The Inuit depend greatly on the environment, as many people still hunt and fish to provide adequate food for their families. In addition, the often-volatile climate can throw off opportunities, as well as provide new ones. If the weather became good enough for fishing, or a herd of caribou came near the town, it was normal for crew members to be able to pursue the needs of life, prioritized over filming. Kunuk believed that his crew should be able to adapt to their environment, and not be constrained by the “southern clock” (Evans 52-53). This system allows for people to show up to work when they can, prioritizing their families and needs first; Isuma works to “[run] on Inuit rhythms as much as possible,” (53). Another film more recently made by a non-Native called *The Hostiles* (2017) about a U.S. Cavalry member who escorts a Cheyenne Chief from New Mexico to Montana has been praised for its “culturally accurate portrayal of Native peoples,” by the National Congress of American Indians (Hoffman). This could be because of the involvement of Northern Cheyenne Chief Phillip Whiteman, who advised the film and blessed

the production every morning, going against the grain of regular Hollywood filmmaking all about “time, time, time” (Hoffman).

With all previous examples taken into account, it should not be surprising to note the care put into costume as well as ceremony of *Atanarjuat*. In one of the first scenes, which takes place within the large igloo where families gather, the original Kumaglak draws the (evil) stranger’s attention to the intricate design of his own coat, and mocks the “Northerner’s” lack thereof, focusing the viewer’s gaze on the costume. The coats of the characters have several very important functions: protection from exposure, storage of water and infants on the back (in pouches called amauti), and representation of status. Like Kumaglak pointed out, clothing signifies resources, power, and innovation. If your camp is doing well, the members will be dressed well. After many years have passed, Kumaglak has been killed, infant Atanarjuat has grown into a man (along with his older brother Aamarjuaq), and the rivalry with Oki has intensified. Skipping details in between for now, Aamarjuaq has been killed by Oki, and Atanarjuat has fled in fear of his life naked across the ice (hence, the legend of the fast runner). Evil consuming the camp, now led by Oki after he has murdered his father, the people struggle to feed themselves. At Atanarjuat’s surprise return, his wife Atuat is shocked and they embrace affectionately. Atanarjuat then notices the quality of Atuat’s coat, old and discolored from the camp’s inability to replace it, as well as her status as an enemy’s wife. He cuts the ugly coat down the front and gifts her a new white coat—an instant upgrade. Isuma, wholly aware of the importance, contracted local artisans to either put to use or relearn traditional costume and tool-making skills (*Atanarjuat* DVD special features). Also, it is interesting to note character development through the hairstyle he/she wears. According to the film’s special features, ancient Inuit women styled their hair in intricate braids. Atuat, a gentle and kind woman, wears her hair

in neat braids for most of the film. Only near the end of the film does she let her hair hang down heavy and long, giving her an aura of strength and grace. Puja, Oki's sister and Atanarjuat's second wife who assists in the murder of Aamarjuaq, has bangs that stick up, and her hair often has a movement to it like grass, easily capturing her energetic and deceitful manner.


How I wanted to see you!


Now you'll be warmer!

Each costume, tool, and skill depicted within the film is verified from the knowledge of elders, and those in touch with traditional Inuit craft. Beyond the physical makeup, technique and ceremony are kept to a high standard. During an initial feud between Atanarjuat and Oki because of the former's affection for the arranged wife of the latter, a competition begins. Atanarjuat and Atuat have been flirting: playing games, talking to each other intimately, not to mention the moments when a character's skin is exposed from underneath thick coats for only a second, so one is able to touch the warm skin of the other with his/her hand—the tension of which is palpable. It has previously been arranged that Atuat is to be the wife of Oki, who is jealous of Atanarjuat's hunting ability, and now, of the fondness of his supposed wife for Atanarjuat. The families of the two men gather inside the perimeter of a large igloo. First, Aamarjuaq and another man stand shirtless, facing the same direction, shoulder to shoulder. Each man wraps his arm around the shoulder and head of the other, hooking a finger into the other man's mouth. They are locked together and proceed to pull back on the other man's cheek until one gives out and falls

over. This match is juxtaposed to a round of throat singing by Atuat and Puja. The two women stand face to face and very closely breathe and sing into each other's faces. The sound intensifies until the two secede into laughter. In the final game, Atanarjuat and Oki stand shirtless. Someone makes a comment about Oki's inability to get "it" in the right place in bed. Enraged, Oki and Atanarjuat begin to punch each other in the temples, as a balanced and methodical test of endurance. The purpose is to continue this until the two call a truce, or until one falls to the ground. During this time, the forces behind each man's mind visit him. Oki sees the man that killed his grandfather Kumaglak. Atanarjuat hears a musical calling. At this time, elder Panikpak decides it is time to summon her brother, Qulitalik, for help; the forces behind Atanarjuat need strength from the spiritual elders.

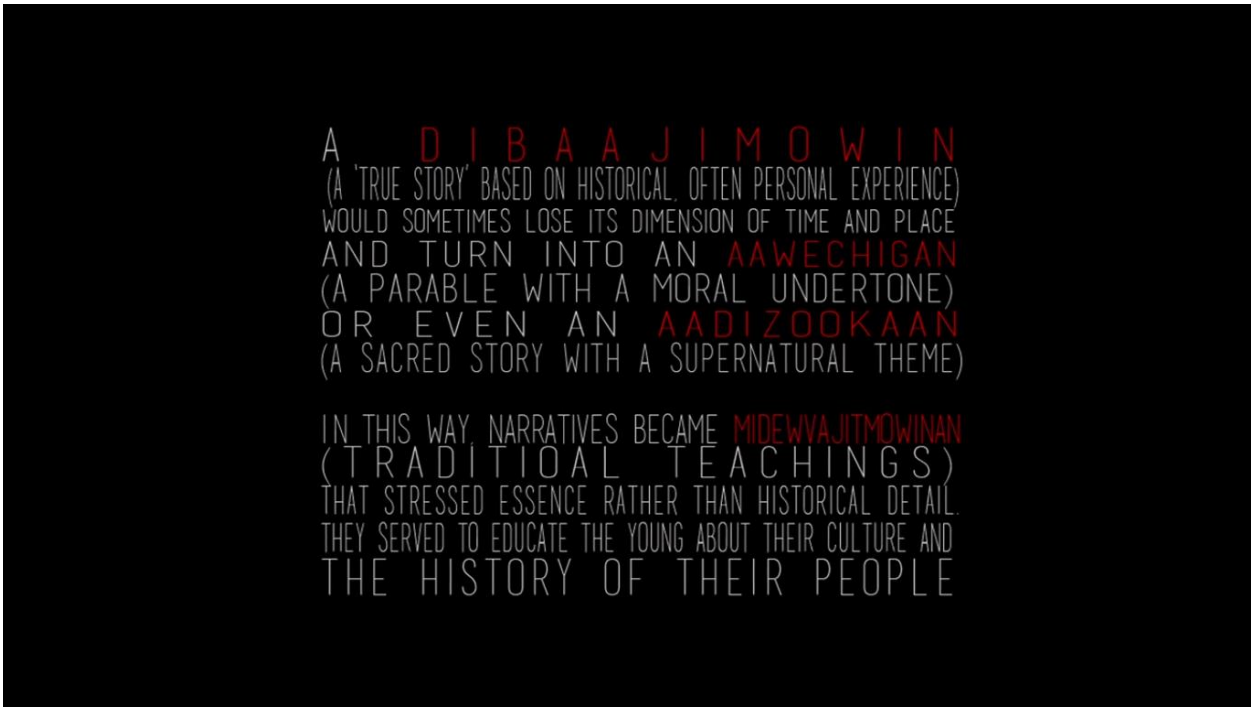
Historically, these customs were developed in order to keep camps united, even during times of tension and rivalry. “Because harmony was essential to everyone’s survival and comfort, approaches were developed to diffuse standoffs and settle quarrels without bloodshed or the fracturing of the camp,” (Evans 102). Survival was of utmost importance, and when Panikpak saw that the rule of Oki threatened this, greater power was requested from beyond. Even after Oki has murdered his brother, Atanarjuat’s main goal is to live in order to protect his community from evil—so he runs across the ice naked after he has been ambushed within his tent during sleep. The purpose of legends in general, is to educate younger generations on the hardships and lessons of the past, and for the filmmakers, this one especially had what it took to educate as well as to entertain. Kunuk argues this legend “had everything in it for a fantastic movie – love, jealousy, murder and revenge, and at the same time, buried in this ancient Inuit ‘action thriller,’ were all these lessons we kids were supposed to learn about how if you break these taboos that kept our ancestors alive, you could be out there running for *your* life just like him!” (Evans xviii-xix). With the forces of good on his side, Atanarjuat survives his cold journey with the aid of the spirits (but not without his feet torn up from the ice—of which actor Natar Ungalaaq truly experienced while filming).

The legend of Atanarjuat performs cycles: life, death, good, evil. Sauri kills his father in order to obtain leadership, as Sauri’s son Oki in turn kills him. Atanarjuat’s love and eventual wife Atuat is said to embody the spirit of elder Panikpak’s mother, earning her the same name as well as the title “Little Mother”. The same goes for Atanarjuat and Atuat’s infant son, called “Little Husband” by Panikpak, named Kumaglak after the dead leader, and her husband. Truly embodying this mode of existence, Isuma Productions works to give back to the community, sourcing all of its information, actors, and materials from the area, but also creates other works to

educate and uplift their society. It was especially important for the filmmakers to include elders into the production of *Atanarjuat* for accuracy and richness, and out of respect. Elders are an essential part of the community, and Isuma Productions was aware of the necessity of their knowledge while making the film. “The magic of Isuma is that it grows directly out of the community when it expands,” writes Evans, attributing not only increased economic growth by sourcing from the community, but also by creating powerful, truthful work that is entertaining as well as educational, Nunavut and beyond (32).

Atanarjuat was the first Canadian aboriginal language feature (*Atanarjuat* DVD special features) and director Zacharias Kunuk whole-heartedly embraced this, giving many of his acceptance speeches in Inuktitut (Evans xviii). This goes to show the true success of the film: “Despite the use of the Inuktitut language, despite the use of amateur actors, despite the focus on a part of the world generally ignored by most societies, *The Fast Runner* received numerous major awards and acclaim from a broad array of critics,” to drive the point home (Evans 86). But *Atanarjuat* is not the only film to use legend and language to embrace heritage and educate beyond one’s homeland.

INAATE/SE/ [it shines a certain way. to a certain place./it flies. falls./] (2016), the first feature length film by Bard alumni and Ojibway brothers Adam and Zack Khalil, opens with an introduction to a prophecy from their own tribe. The film references the Anishinaabe language in order to introduce the audience to the world of the Seven Fires Prophecy; the film opens as follows:



Like in *Atanarjuat*, ancient lessons are used to give a detailed account of the Ojibway culture in today's terms. More specifically, *INAATE/SE/* actively engages with the history of assimilation policies and missionary agendas of centuries past as they have affected the Ojibway nation's future generations. The documentary-type film tells viewers of a prophecy foreseeing the arrival of white Europeans and their devastation upon the land and people in the form of seven predictions from different periods of time. Early in the film, as the narrator tells of the birth of the hydroelectric plant, a slideshow flips through images in a loop, gradually replacing older images with the "advancements" of construction and industry (in addition to increased white presence), until the town of Sault St. Marie, Michigan is completely transformed and the old ways are lost to new technologies. The loop of images ends with the most contemporary form of documentation: video footage. This line of history as a natural progression is questioned by the filmmakers, as the tale is finally being told from the perspective of the Indigenous people of the region. In an interview for the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the brothers describe the

concept of constructed history, stating that the film was structured in response to this concept, as a "nonlinear view… of the Seven Fires Prophecy and is what differentiates Ojibway conceptions of history from traditional colonial history;" this, in turn, allows the brothers to, as they say, "hopefully come closer to a more Ojibway way of making films," (Bianconi).

The theme of filmmaking in a manner specific to a tribe occurs in both *Atanarjuat* and *INAATE/SE/*, which proves the importance of the filmmaker's intent and commitment to the subject matter of Native-related work. It is difficult to establish what gives this authority to such filmmakers, but the fact remains that it is not my place to define these conditions. The deep involvement would perhaps then lead to the move away from the dependence on linear history and towards a kind of storytelling that emphasizes "essence" in relation to Native narrative and representation. The Khalils' more recent proposal called "New Red Order: Headhunters" considers holding workshops that focus on "indigenous artists who engage with and complicate the ethnographic gaze," which would assist in this move. *INAATE/SE/* covers the ill-effects of colonial occupation by European settlers and the Catholic Church through years of control that stripped a sense of identity from generations of Anishinabeg. One prediction states the false promises of Christianity, the acceptance of which would bring about the near demise of the people. With the products of all previous history upon them, the Khalils vouch for the importance of the new generation, saying "[t]he work of our generation is to learn about what was lost, what remains, and how to move it forward," (Bianconi). Film is being utilized here as a tool for learning, recognition, reconnection, and advancement, much like *Atanarjuat*. *INAATE/SE/* is evidence of resilience.

Filmmaker Victor Masayesva Jr. was the first to make a film entirely in a North American Indigenous language—his tribal Hopi language. *Itam Hakim, Hopiit* (1985) was a

landmark film introducing a strong Native presence to audiences. In his language, an old man tells the story of European arrival, occupation, and Christianization, and the Hopi response to these events in a way uncommon to narrative filmmaking. The visuals are symbolic—corn as it is caressed and planted, a hawk chained to a roof, and a spider encasing its prey in its web. Europeans are portrayed by discolored and distorted images juxtaposed with a coyote caught in a trap. The religion they called "Jesus" brought famine and was in fact not right for them the old man says. Then, a sheep's throat is cut. Adults dance, and the narrator tells us the "children will be seeing this and improving on it." Children are the vehicle of historical and cultural transmission, but their need to continually adapt to circumstances "won't end anywhere." Although the visuals are relatively simple, it is the audio that places the importance in their symbolic value. Viewers' eyes are intentionally hungered as the filmmaker feeds the ears. In Hopi, an elder speaks to us to tell of the misfortune and ultimate triumph of his people against the Spanish as the Hopi rose up against them; they persist in sharing their history to this day. Even though many viewers may not speak the language, audio is given priority in the control of the story, not the other way around. The man tells a group of children this story as they sit around him. Without stimulating visuals, the body naturally attunes itself to the foremost incoming information—the voice. One problem is— some sections of the film are without subtitles.

With the use of translation, Native filmmakers are both including other Indigenous peoples in on their specific tribal experiences, as well as non-Natives into their world and stories. But what is the purpose of intentional *lack* of translation? Why have a film produced with wider audiences in mind, if communication is compromised? One theory is that it could recreate the environment that Indigenous people experienced during early contact with those who did not

speak their language. I believe this enforces the idea of communication without words, even though sound and language remain important. What understandings can manifest in miscommunication? Even more so, what information could be kept private in the refusal of complete sharing? Trust in Indigenous communities is understandably long-questioned. There is trust needed in agreements, confrontations, coexistence, but what is it like to have hundreds of years of history prove this inadequate? When making their film *INAATE/SE/*, the Khalils were asked how the various interviewees throughout the film were found. Their response was, "[a]lmost everyone in the film is a person that we have had lifelong relationships with…Because they were already comfortable relationships there were levels of access and trust that would have been impossible to achieve otherwise," (Bianconi). By refusing to translate *everything* in *Itam Hakim, Hopiit*, there is a barrier placed between the outside world and the Hopi. Audiences are included by the very production of the film, and initial translation, but filmmakers are also able to withhold, leaving audiences in the dark if they so choose. In this way, the film structure welcomes the outsider into the story, struggle, and history, but also allows for the Native people of the language to keep some things to themselves, this being mandatory between white and Indigenous communities.

Arlene Bowman, director of *Navajo Talking Picture* (1986), traversed an uneasy line when producing the film on her grandmother who lived on the Navajo Indian reservation. As stated before, the two do not speak a common language, and although Ann Ruth Biah is her *Masani* (old mother, maternal grandmother), a very important figure in the lives of Navajo women, there are blatant tensions that arise early when Bowman begins to annoy the old woman with her camera (*Native Ground*, Lewis 54). As Bowman continuously visits her grandmother with the camera crew, Biah becomes more and more agitated, eventually avoiding the camera

altogether, as narrated by Bowman in the film. The filmmaker also tells us some traditional Navajo believe the use of cameras to capture someone's image are taboo or forbidden. The viewer must also keep in mind throughout the film that, due to the dubbing, we as the audience know more about what is being said in real time than Bowman does. And even though she is a Navajo woman, her authority is questioned by her persistence and apparent disregard for her grandmother's clear displeasure with the presence of the film crew. Author Randolph Lewis suggests, after screening the film to his students in a college setting, that many people become enraged by the events onscreen. Audiences are appalled at the way Bowman treats her elderly relative. Bowman's apparent disrespect draws attention to the common Western documentary form of filmmaking where cameras are stuck in people's faces, regardless of whether or not they want to be filmed. Usually, people being filmed are in a highly vulnerable position and are less able to prevent their exploitation by aggressive outsiders (57).

Throughout most of the film, the grandmother's words are translated in post-production by dubbing, but in real time the atmosphere is a mix of several voices as Bowman, her grandmother, family friends, and crew members attempt to speak over each other in order to achieve understanding (in addition to the audience hearing a mix of English, Navajo, and dubbed English conversations). Bowman's choice of dubbing verses subtitles in her film is intriguing because it works to heighten the confusion and frustration of everyone witnessing the discussion. It is not until the final scene of the film where there is an unofficial translator present (someone on the reservation who knows both Navajo and English), who attempts to help Bowman communicate with her grandmother. In the final entrancing moment of the two women as they sit together in a bedroom attempting to remedy their respective situations, there is both English speaking by Bowman and Navajo speaking by Biah, which is then given English voice-over, but

with another layer added on top: the translator in between attempting to correctly interpret each woman's argument (additionally dubbed when in Navajo). Several people talk over each other at times, but the information is relayed nonetheless. In her final attempt to remedy the relationship and gain the respect of her grandmother, Bowman tells her she has begun to learn Navajo, so that someday they may finally talk on their own. In Arlene's case, her grandmother represented culture and tradition from which she was distanced, and she used film in order to get to know these ways of life, even though at first it was problematically executed. The film's translation in post-production was symbolically connecting Bowman with her grandmother and Navajo heritage through her own film.

In these films, filmmakers have worked to confront the issues which have separated them from their respective ancestral heritages. Zacharias Kunuk shared an epic to audiences around the world in the form of an ancient Inuit legend, utilizing the ways of traditional craft from

within the community of Igloolik. Bard alumni Adam and Zack Khalil also used a historically significant tale, passed down for generations as a vehicle for preserving Ojibway stories (and not by means of institutional preservation). And then, the filmmakers worked to introduce non-Ojibway to the terms of the language relevant to the subject matter, investing the audience into the centuries-long fight for recognition by the Anishinaabe people of Sault St. Marie. *Itam Hakim, Hopiit* skillfully manipulated language and translation in order to establish agency in contemporary storytelling. On the other hand, in *Navajo Talking Picture*, Arlene Bowman creates the problem related to language in documentary filmmaking. Unable to speak her own language, Bowman faced her past by making an inflammatory film on the lifestyle of her traditional grandmother. Through her filmmaking, she eventually came to the realization of a greater issue concerning her identity and ability to fit in among her family, finally concluding with her acceptance of the effort necessary to connect with the things she had lost in the years between her and her grandmother's upbringings. The following section will concern filmmakers who work to expose the attitudes of non-Native agencies and institutions, flipping the often-found colonial dynamic on its head in order to promote self-autonomy and continuing resilience through various means such as film style, substance abuse, humor, Native/non-Native spaces, visibility, and finally, a section devoted to issues specifically targeting Indigenous women.

Chapter Three

Exposure

Abenaki filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin has long been part of the documentation of Canada's Indigenous peoples but has the perspective of a Native person willing to express care and respect for the subject and participants involved, who span many tribes across the country. In July 1990, an event unfolded that surprised even the Mohawk tribe that lived on the reserve an hour west of Montreal, Quebec. In the event often referred to as the "Oka Crisis," the Sûreté de Québec (or the provincial police force) were called upon the small village of Oka which borders along the Kanehsatake Mohawk reserve. There was a construction project that was being protested in the form of a small group of Indian warriors camping out in the pine trees. The Oka mayor had accepted the proposed addition to the Oka Country Club golf course—nine new holes added to the existing course—which would stretch beyond the fence on top of the Mohawk cemetery.

The following events drew national and world attention: a roadblock by the Mohawk warriors into the reserve near Oka, followed by the blockade of the Mercier bridge south of Montreal in the town of Kahnawake, another Mohawk reserve, which led to the deployment of the Royal Second Regiment onto the two towns. The response of the government as well as neighboring community was staggering; the standoff lasted 78 days as men on both sides stood facing each other with loaded weapons—one side protecting their land which was about to be stolen from them again, the other as a show of force, showcasing tanks, razor wire, and thousands of military guards to enforce the construction of a golf course. Obomsawin rushed to the scene as soon as things escalated. Once Native filmmakers are given the attention, what do

they choose to focus on? What topics are covered and for what purpose? With eyes on them, how is representation questioned and humanity aroused from the greater audience?

Jesse Wente, Ojibway director of Canada Indigenous Screen, called Obomsawin's documentary a "watershed film in the history of First Peoples Cinema" on the National Film Board of Canada's webpage dedicated to streaming the film online. The very title, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993) prompts viewers to analyze whose film they are watching. Though the film could have easily been titled "The Oka Crisis of 1990," Obomsawin instead chooses an Indigenous perspective on the event. She names the film after the reserve the conflict would ultimately effect. The government armed the police, then the military, then the police another time against the small group of Mohawk men, women, and children in Kanehsatake, who remained to defend a cemetery where relatives were buried. Sheer violence leads the state's attitude when dealing with First Nations peoples, even though Canada is often thought to cast a "sympathetic eye" towards the First Nations (as I also thought once, driving through interior Canada, seeing signs staked on the side of the road announcing tribal affiliations and reserves) (Lewis, *Vision* xiv). This is especially noticeable compared to the lack of Native recognition in the United States, but this film, as well as Obomsawin's other films, prove this is not the case. Obomsawin represents the Native perspective in her film, as she says, "[the] last thing they [the government] wanted was an Indian to document anything," in turn exposing the ignorance and violence of settler states on Native people (1). The title also contains the number of years the Mohawk people have actively been fighting the occupation of their lands by white settlers, which began at the doors of a church almost three centuries prior. It remains very powerful that the title is not, say, *The Oka Crisis: 78 Days of Defense*.

Obomsawin enforces the cause of the Mohawk warriors through the construction of her film. “The chaos of the French Canadians appears in stark contrast to the composure of the warriors being interviewed in *Kanehsatake,*” (Lewis, *Vision* 97). The author goes on to state that this is “a fact that seems even more striking if the viewer stops to contrast the reasons for their grievances: the whites are rioting in the streets because the Mohawks have closed a major bridge, resulting in longer drive times to work and shopping, while the Mohawks are taking up arms to defend their land after being cheated and deceived for three centuries.” Steven Bonspiel, a man who witnessed the conflict at age 14, recalls the insults thrown at the Mohawk by the white residents of Oka in an article published first to CBC News and then to *Warrior Publications* (a site that promotes “warrior culture, fighting spirit, and resistance movements”): “Just go in there and exterminate them like the rats they are,” “What are we waiting for? Let’s get rid of them,” and “Put them all in the Big O and blow it up.” The author of the article describes the faces of the Mohawk preparing for the fight as having looks of “defiance”. He saw in his community people who based their actions around the Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, comprised of the balance between “peace, power and righteousness” (Bonspiel). The Mohawk people, although shocked at the persistence of violence by the settler state, were prepared to fight for their recognition. “July 11 clearly outlined how much work we still have to do as Native people in Canada; to educate, to fight for our rights, to survive,” (Bonspiel). Obomsawin utilizes Native perspective to expose the violence of a conflict within a country often deemed “too progressive” to allow such a response.

The Khalil brothers continue their work on similar questions in their film *Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets* (2017), as they too are in contrast with the settler state’s degradation of Indigenous authority and seizure of tribal possessions. The film sets up the discovery of the

"Kennewick Man", the remains of a "prehistoric Paleoamerican man" around 9,000 years old, in Washington state, 1996. The impending conflict pinned the Colombia Basin tribes against a population of Euro-Americans, on the origins of "the Ancient One". The foremost space of the film is the museum with reflective glass windows and hyper realistic human sculptures and diagrams of Native men and women. The discovery of the human remains led many "archeologists, anthropologists, amateur archeologists, and hobbyists" to flock to the area to conduct research in order to reveal the "true" (hopefully white) identity of the individual. From the shape of the skull, many scientists deemed the Kennewick Man as having European origins, giving rise to strong white supremacist appeal—seeing this as evidence of whites being the first people to occupy the Americas. 3D skull animations circle on the screen paired with audio of a speaker suggesting that with this new information, Euro-Americans would now be able to "truly inhabit this place." Colombia Basin tribes countered this argument with the stories of generations past, vouching for their origin in the region. This man was an ancestor of their tribes they declared, and Native groups filed for the return of the remains to be buried with other ancestors. The ruling court determining who was to receive the bones, refusing to acknowledge oral stories as a viable piece of evidence, deemed this inconclusive, and the research into the bones continued.

The filmmaking duo calls attention to the use of human remains as evidence, or physical objects left that can persuade after being professionally analyzed. Since the stories of the tribes were not considered legitimate, invasion onto the Ancient One continued. The filmmakers make this contrast again when visuals show viewers a process of DNA sequencing, paired with audio expressing the local knowledge passed down from the past 10,000 years. One man says, "It's fact to me, because I live it every day." Alternating red and white colored text narrating each

perspective to drive home the racial divide, and with it the separation of views held by Indigenous knowledge and Westernized scholarship. Scientists (professional and amateur alike) viewed the skeleton with an air of privilege. Most believed it to be a right to conduct research on these ancient findings; the Colombia Basin tribes saw it as a violation of their relative's body, as well as a violation against Native authority. The film was commissioned "in order to host an urgent reflection on indigenous sovereignty, the undead violence of museum archives, and post-mortem justice." *The Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets* prompts analysis of the convoluted task of establishing lineage through societally accepted means, which would only then allow the body to be returned under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Just as the study in Rigolet worked towards "promoting the indigenous voice" through validation of oral stories as rich forms of evidence (Willox 8), the Khalil brothers vouch for the proof of this wisdom—DNA testing in 2014 showed the remains were that of the tribes who fought for him.

Canadian author Warren Cariou at the University of Manitoba wrote on the validity of oral wisdom in the processing of life's events in his article "Life Telling: Indigenous Oral Autobiography and the Performance of Relation". Cariou argues for the recognition of stories that are passed down as well as performed for groups of people by Indigenous storytellers. He claims there is significant value in "understanding the uniquely oral aspects of Indigenous oral traditions and everyday storytelling practices…this work is crucial in the struggle to resist the colonization of Indigenous knowledge," (Cariou 1). In the very act of verbal expression, a special quality is derived from these stories unable to be duplicated by any other medium, yet equally as valid as other forms of evidence. Through the description of one's experiences, which Cariou refers to as "life-telling," it is a "performance of cultural sovereignty and community self-

determination," (2). Filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin also recognizes this when she tells of the massacre that occurred several hundred years ago witnessed by one of her ancestors. Randolph Lewis writes, "Nonnative historians used to doubt the accuracy of such oral transmission, but an ethnohistorian writing in the 1960s noted that among the Abenaki such stories 'seemed to have been passed on by an aged person carefully and deliberately training young children until some of them knew the old stories verbatim'…In this sense, only three long generations—in fact, *just three human voices*—separated Obomsawin from a searing event in the mid-eighteenth century," (emphasis mine, Lewis, *Vision* 14). For several decades now, Obomsawin has remained on the National Film Board of Canada, and with this status has represented Indigenous views on a wide scale. Many of her films are available for streaming on the NFB website for free. Lewis argues "[perhaps] more than any single quality, her profound knowledge of the Abenaki oral tradition would set her apart from other filmmakers and give subtle, if often overlooked, form to the work she was creating at the NFB," (58). Obomsawin used the settler state institution in order to educate others about the violence of that very state against First Nation peoples.

Both Khalil films, *INAATE/SE/*, and *The Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets* contain an experimental narrative twist embedded within the documentary form. The former is filled with interviews and photographs concerning the industrial development of Sault St. Marie in accordance with the Seven Fires Prophecy from various Ojibway individuals young and old, as well as the church's influence within the community and the institutionalization of artifacts as natural history to be put on display. But then, the story develops into a short narrative about a young man looking to be steered from the traps of substance abuse as he is given herbal medicine by an older man in the community. He is presented with a hallucination where he is confronted by a man in a black robe and disfiguring mask. Loud, blaring electronic sounds and

colorful distortions skew the film's direction into one of specialized control and form of the content.

Violence of a Civilization, too, uses this altered form, mixing documentary and narrative into a twisted electronic commentary on the role of institutional consumption. As stated above, the film opens with uncomfortably realistic human sculptures depicting ancient way of life of tribal peoples as an educational spectacle. The music matching the visuals, to which viewers would normally have been exposed early as an acceptable form of exploitation, thus numbed to their deeper meanings, is electronic and atmospheric. The pairing is seemingly *unnatural* compared to the setting of the primitive man in his natural landscape. The narrative is led by the story of the found remains, *human* remains that are treated similarly to the mannequins in the museum, publicly available for dissection, interpretation, judgement, and consumption. The narrator informs us that after the bones were discovered, "anthropologists excavated the area" for the remaining pieces, showing viewers not the footage of a real scientific mission, but of a

scripted clip of two white men yanking a skull from the water aggressively mimicking the skull's discovery. Water and mud dump from the open cavity freely as the men rip the man from his burial. This image is placed within a white frame, giving viewers a distanced look at the events unfolding, surrounded and controlled by the liberties of white society as they tear tribal history from the earth. A similar tactic is used often in *INNATE/SE/* when the audience is brought into the archives of the National Museum of the American Indian to show the sterilized environment in which important artifacts are stored. In both cases, the frame is used to suggest that these objects are being held hostage by institutions refusing to acknowledge Indigenous autonomy and authority in the control of their own history. Held in a prison, cold, lonely pieces are prevented from realizing their meaning to the greater community, instead being showcased as objects of colonization; the Khalils state with their films that museums are trophy cases, used to "exhibit settler colonialism's most prized possessions" (*Violence of a Civilization*). The stockpiling of remains, artifacts, diagrams, and representations are the evidence of the depth of the claws in control.

The fact-based expression of *Violence of a Civilization* transitions, then, into one of experimental narrative. Two people in grotesque masks that liken to facial muscles behind removed flesh walk throughout a museum floor, peering into the reflective glass cases, protecting the spectator from inflicting their influence, or worse, from seeing the truth. Viewers remember from the film that remains are presented as evidence in legal conflict, left in order to persuade ruling society of the processes behind their product, and only giving licensed forensic anthropologists, whose adequacy is determined by the state, the "authority to speak for them," since they are unable to speak for themselves. It is in the conclusion of these visuals that we are told the remains have since been returned to the Colombia Basin tribes and buried in an undisclosed location, in a final effort to protect the "Kennewick Man," or the Ancient One, from further destruction. The purpose of this mixture of typical genre is a new form of constructing one own's history and presentation, which has repeatedly been abused. Adam and Zack Khalil create their own form, using the most powerful methods of expression concerning the abused relationship of institution and oppressed peoples, to "take this alternate notion of history," and through its translation into film, require the filmmakers, as well as audiences, to "think about the film outside of the traditional conceptions of genre," (Bianconi). Native history is presented here not as a stagnant piece up for grabs by the eyes of the outside, but as a means to view the full spectrum of interlocking tradition and modernism, applicable to the instance of the Ancient One, the Seven Fires Prophecy, and beyond to other Indigenous cultures, adapting in order to "fully depict the range of Ojibway ways of understanding, documenting, and shaping history," (Bianconi).

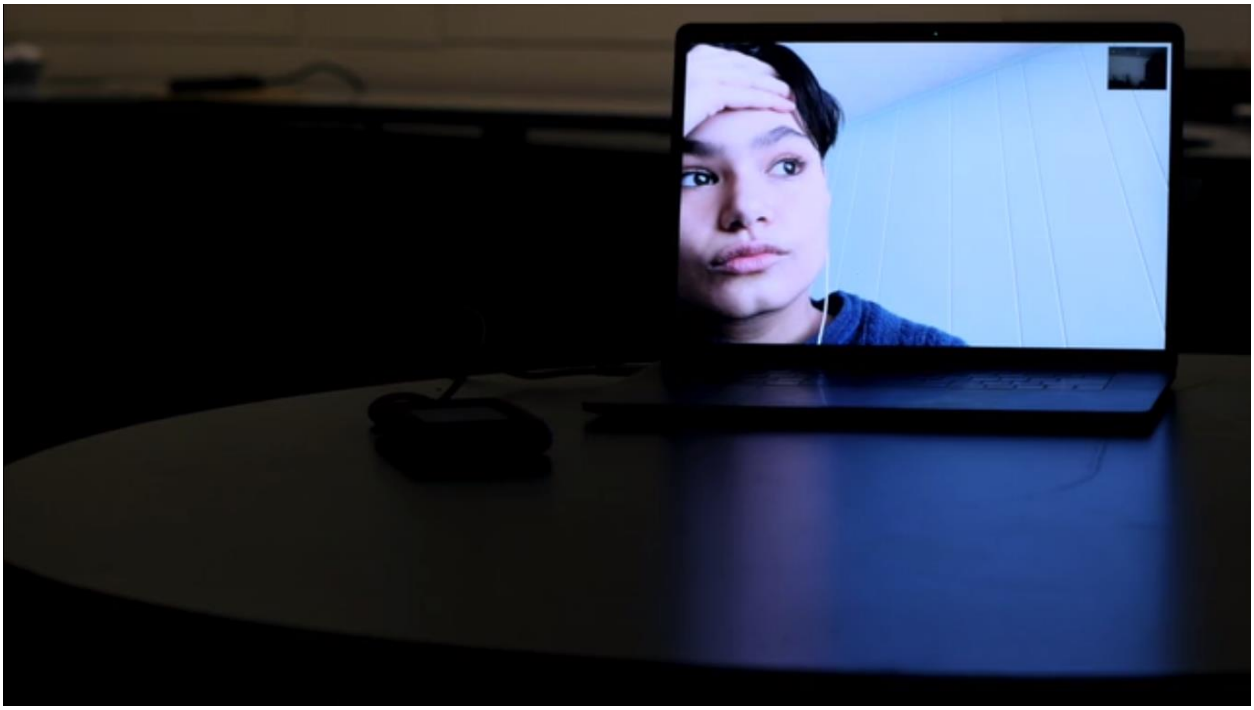
These reevaluations of more recent history are continued through the perspective of the group effected by a profit-driven construction bid for the harvest of crude oil in the United States. In 2016, the Dakota Access Pipeline was set to extract mass amounts of fossil fuel from the earth, which directly trespassed on a Lakota reservation. Consider the protest at Standing Rock. What can you remember of who was there? What big names attended? What kind of national attention did it receive? How many movie stars were arrested, prompting national spread of recognizable mugshots? The high-profile case of the Dakota Access Pipeline protests is often viewed as having pan-American support, blurring racial and cultural lines to stop the destruction of the environment and sacred Lakota land. Thousands of people gathered in solidarity to stop the trucks, garnering global attention and controversy as they occupied the contested space for nearly a year, camping out on the construction site and even chaining their bodies to heavy machinery. Like in *Kanehsatake,* Ho-Chunk filmmaker Sky Hopinka worked to re-present the experience and concern of the Native people participating in the protest, not simply from the perspective of predominantly white journalists and attendees. People of tribes from all over the continent united in the cause to protect water and sacred land, using another form of experimental documentary to project the conflicting needs of one people against the desires of another in *Dislocation Blues* (2017).

Afraid their water may become contaminated by the thousands of gallons of oil being extracted from the ground near the river, Lakota people defended their right to survival, as another group fought for the convenience and profit the new project would bring. Author Vine Deloria Jr. makes a similar point, considering the major conflict of interest concerning Indigenous survival and white pleasure, stating: “Indian people are fishing for food for their families. Sportsmen are fishing for relaxation and recreation. Indians may have to starve so that

whites can have a good time on the weekends if present trends continue," (23). Notice also the comparison between *Dislocation Blues* and *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*: the Lakota fight to defend the water supply as well as a sacred piece of land against the wealthy oil industry; the Mohawks are in conflict with both the construction project of the golf course to bring *additional* pleasure to Oka, as well as the white surrounding towns counter-protesting the bridge closure, which extended travel time to recreation and consumption.

Sky Hopinka's film opens with the bright screen of a laptop in a dark room, showing a video call with a young individual recalling his time at Standing Rock. Upon entering the camp, Cleo Keahna describes the darkness all around, but that nevertheless he could see everything "so clearly," meaning the goal of his mission, as well as many others'. The film not only works with Cleo's reflective commentary post-evacuation, but also the real time account given by Terry Running Wild, who describes his current perspective of the camp in the moment. In an interview posted to Vdrome, Sky reflects on the purpose of common documentary filmmaking, as it grapples with a wide range of experiences in order to gain a generalized authority over the subject matter. Instead, Sky chose to present a more personal account of two Indigenous people's experiences "without the burden of representation falling on any of our shoulders," (Whitefield). The downside of documentary, Sky says, is the "difficulty and fluidity of what it was like to process the whole thing," in the present moment as well as referencing it in the past after it has ended. In the film, Cleo sits onscreen in an isolated box, the viewer barely able to make out the surroundings of the room holding the computer. "I keep forgetting the bad stuff that happened," he says, the "rose-colored nostalgia" threatens to overtake the memory of the event, but behind his voice there is a tinge of hesitance when discussing the negatives of the protest. The

participant visibly struggles to criticize the movement, reflecting the tumultuous relationship within the minds of those who experienced it.



This reluctance stems in part from the weight of expectation upon oppressed peoples and so Sky allows the interviewee's thoughts to flow freely without wrapping up succinctly in the end. He is interested in "hearing those who wish to speak without regard for those expectations; thoughtfully, deliberately, and without shame," (Whitefield). There is a pulling back and forth between the idea of community and unity, with people achieving something together as one people (Native or not), no matter who the participants are and where they come from, and the tension of having outsiders participating in a very personal and culturally specific cause, in turn being exploited for media attention. Cleo embodies this tension through the hesitancy in his interview to criticize the movement post-evacuation, as well as discuss it now with any non-Native, as he says. Terry Running Wild, while he is interviewed off camera at the camp, states all who come to support Standing Rock are his comrades, united on one front against corporate

greed. Viewers are reminded of Running Wild's genuine investment and of the general need for action when he asks "can we end the interview?" The subject is here to accomplish a goal, not to attract credibility.

On the hills of Standing Rock during the Dakota Access Pipeline protest, viewers can see hundreds of cars, old and new, a mix of teepees and tents, as well as flags from all over the world. This mix of the contemporary and the traditional allows for the modified society of the camp that functions unlike that of dominant society. Cleo states in *Dislocation Blues* that the infrastructure is different from what many people attending would come to expect. For white participants, something as unsuspecting as the road design could throw off the comfort level, announcing the authority of specifically Indigenous spaces, designed by those who live in and use the reservation. At the entrance, the very structure of the camp strips the privilege from who normally benefit from it. Again, during a rally at the camp, long dark hair blows on traditionally patterned garments, being captured by hundreds of smart phones and digital cameras, again mixing the hybrid space of Indians today as they continue to fight off forthcoming invasion.

Sky protects the interviewees, relieving them of the burden of representing the entire protest. Another mechanism of protection he uses is the layering of frames in the film in order to distance the viewer from those who experienced the protest firsthand. Cleo is recorded as being on a video call in a dark room, projected by a lone computer screen. Throughout the film, there are dark ghostly figures occasionally blocking the audience's view of the happenings at the protest. This, Sky says, are ways to include himself in the production, by indicating his own presence in the image in abstract ways (Whitefield). In the final sequence, as the film visually drives away from the camp, recording the passing road after turning out from the contested space, the camera in turn pulls back from the inner screen of the story. As we viewers travel backward to leave, the camera, too, leaves the space to show a screen upon which the entire film could have supposedly been projected. Sky allows audiences in to see a new perspective of a high-profile and political movement involving Native American issues but does not leave the audience in this space to linger. We are removed from the camp to cause us to feel the pain of the departure—and now, it's closure (DAPL now is up and running). This act of reflexivity within the story of multiple perspectives from the present as well as future in the context of the camp, in addition to the removal from the very space into which we are introduced, applies a new dimension for the audience to consider. Sky hopes by "displaying depth beyond the spectacle of violence against Indigenous People" that people will be able to "recognize a place for empathy beyond horror and pity" (Whitefield). Unlike *Kanehsatake*, white involvement and counter-perspective are left out for the most part. The purpose of this is to provide an outlet for Indigenous expression without reference to white context: "This one's for us," Sky says, "but you can come along," referring to the work of non-Native assistance and promotion (Whitefield). The relationship of these two entities remains complicated, for even though Standing Rock was a

predominantly Native issue, its dissemination and promotion depended in part on the mass media of the settler state.

Dislocation Blues concludes with a song that sings "prayers are being said, but not for me" as viewers are removed from the camp. In theory, this could be in reference to the major conflicts facing the country, but the ignorance of another set of issues or group of people suffering severe injustice. With worldwide attention, Standing Rock gained name recognition, but solidarity gradually began to waver. Once the attention lapsed, the people left, and construction was continued by a new administration. These "prayers," per se, are not for Native Americans deemed undeserving of time and energy. In fact, this lyric is also applicable to the greater concern of apathy towards Indigenous people that have been dehumanized. People on reservations are depicted as poor, alcoholics, abusers, lazy, or worse. Indians use government money to continue their meager existences, suckling from the teat of taxpayers. If, as I argue, film can be used to reverse the apathetic attitude towards Native peoples, it would first seem reasonable to cast various Indigenous presences in bright and varied light, showing the range of personalities, experiences, and ways of living of an Aboriginal person. Why then, in many of the films, is the "questionable character" depicted on screen, one that abuses drugs or alcohol, perhaps perpetuating centuries-old stereotype?

INAATE/SE/ has a very memorable character: Wild Bill. This is a man who lives on Neebish Island in northern Michigan and spends most of his time alone in an area inhabited by less than ten people year-round (Ahwesh & Khalil). He is the uncle of Adam Khalil's good friend, and his inclusion in the film was very controversial because it depicted one thing that many Native people didn't want others to see: the drunk Indian in real life. There is a graphic honesty captured with Bill's presence as we watch him drink heavily and openly. He is prompted

with the question, “What makes an Indian a real Indian?”, prompting the audience with the reflection and confrontation of their own internalized prejudice. Bill’s answer is one of surprising reflection; he falls within his own stereotype. His rebuke mandates “You gotta look at the land. You gotta look, look, look at everything.” The images onscreen flip through various landscapes. You have to appreciate the land, he says. “What about the Indians that live in cities?” “They got civilized, they won’t break me,” he says in a low, raspy voice with a chuckle, evident of his drinking and smoking. Bill’s attitude is ambiguous in its purpose, as it could be used to enforce discrimination, as well as show the hardships faced by people exposed to this discrimination. In a podcast for E-flux, Adam, and my own professor Peggy Ahwesh, discuss his inclusion within the narrative as a “cross-reference” to this form of alternate history. By showing, if not graphically, substance abuse in Indigenous communities, viewers can see that people are not “doing well,” and in “exposing” it, comes strength in itself. Bill has agency over his own “suffering” (though he certainly would not call it that).

“I’m still fuckin’ here, and I don’t give a fuck about ‘em… This is still my fuckin’ land.” Determination drives Bill’s sense of livelihood and existence, and even though it is considered an inappropriate manner of conduct, the character here lives his life in a manner controlled and enacted by his views, in direct contrast with what the outside world suggests he should be (even going so far as to suggest Adam and his film crew return to the island again to film more of him). The questionable character was utilized again in a similar way in the 2002 film *The Business of Fancydancing* directed by author Sherman Alexie. It follows gay Spokane Indian poet Seymour Polatkin, who has moderate success publishing poetry about experiences on his reservation (which are some of Alexie’s poems read under Seymour’s name). The film introduces us to the poem “How to Write the Great American Indian Novel,” being read aloud by Seymour in a

bookshop facing a glass window with the handwritten sign: “National Indian Month”. Resembling a doggy in a window, being coldly gazed upon by passers-by, humorously unable to be heard by the world outside, the reading is presented alongside “reviews” of the poet by various publications. Large, white organizations applaud him for his groundbreaking work; Indianz.com gives the comment “Seymour Polatkin is full of shit,” setting up the polarized relationship of Seymour living in the white world as an anomaly and genius but as a reject in his own Native sphere. I took the poem initially as a great source of influence, reading it as the first piece of my research for this project. In its early phases, the poem helped me to process the prejudices I already had, as well as the emotions towards writing the piece as an outsider. Included in his book of poetry, *The Summer of Black Widows*, the poem is as follows:

> All of the Indians must have tragic features: tragic noses, eyes, and arms.
> Their hands and fingers must be tragic when they reach for tragic food.
>
> The hero must be a half-breed, half white and half Indian, preferably
> from a horse culture. He should often weep alone. That is mandatory.
>
> If the hero is an Indian woman, she is beautiful. She must be slender
> and in love with a white man. But if she loves an Indian man
>
> then he must be a half-breed, preferably from a horse culture.
> If the Indian woman loves a white man, then he has to be so white
>
> that we can see the blue veins running through his skin like rivers.
> When the Indian woman steps out of her dress, the white man gasps
>
> at the endless beauty of her brown skin. She should be compared to nature:
> brown hills, mountains, fertile valleys, dewy grass, wind, and clear water.
>
> If she is compared to murky water, however, then she must have a secret.
> Indians always have secrets, which are carefully and slowly revealed.
>
> Yet Indian secrets can be disclosed suddenly, like a storm.
> Indian men, of course, are storms. They should destroy the lives
>
> of any white women who choose to love them. All white women love
> Indian men. That is always the case. White women feign disgust

at the savage in blue jeans and T-shirt, but secretly lust after him.
White women dream about half-breed Indian men from horse cultures.

Indian men are horses, smelling wild and gamey. When the Indian man
unbuttons his pants, the white woman should think of topsoil.

There must be one murder, one suicide, one attempted rape.
Alcohol should be consumed. Cars must be driven at high speeds.

Indians must see visions. White people can have the same visions
if they are in love with Indians. If a white person loves an Indian

then the white person is Indian by proximity. White people must carry
an Indian deep inside themselves. Those interior Indians are half-breed

and obviously from horse cultures. If the interior Indian is male
then he must be a warrior, especially if he is inside a white man.

If the interior Indian is female, then she must be a healer, especially if she is inside
a white woman. Sometimes there are complications.

An Indian man can be hidden inside a white woman. An Indian woman
can be hidden inside a white man. In these rare instances,

everybody is a half-breed struggling to learn more about his or her horse culture.
There must be redemption, of course, and sins must be forgiven.

For this, we need children. A white child and an Indian child, gender
not important, should express deep affection in a childlike way.

In the Great American Indian novel, when it is finally written,
all of the white people will be Indians and all of the Indians will be ghosts.

The reading completed by Seymour sets the attitude for the remainder of the film, reflecting the experience by the director himself in comparison to the life of the fictional character. Alexie is of the Coeur d'Alene people, and has long been a prominent Native figure in contemporary literature. His film deals mostly with the struggles facing Native people who choose to leave the reservation for better opportunity, education, and income. There is struggle in

success here, Alexie suggests, because of the resentment held by one's community back home, such as friends and family.

Seymour is brought back to the reservation from his active life in Seattle when his childhood friend Mouse dies. We are first introduced to Mouse when Seymour and his best friend Aristotle graduate high school at the top of their class, as Mouse videos the two friends in silk sashes, joking with the camera that he will be getting his GED as the others plan to attend college in Seattle. The film is structured in a peculiar way, attaching a multitude of spaces together, such as the past of childhood, jumping from the perspective of one character to another, moving between what I call the "black space" and the "white space," among various others. The film develops around the idea of shared trauma, as Seymour publishes poems not only about his life, but the experiences of his friends, poetically presenting them as his own. Seymour symbolically steals the suffering of others back home in hopes of creating a better situation for himself, but Mouse and Aristotle, embodying the questionable character, continue to rather graphically show their suffering in the form of substance abuse. Early in the film, we see Mouse mixing rubbing alcohol into an unknown concoction and tossing it back. Aristotle, or Ari, ends up dropping out of college after three semesters, and after failing to get Seymour to come back home with him, proceeds to spend his time back on the reservation with Mouse. While recording, Mouse narrates "how to huff gas" as Ari sticks his nose into the opening of a fuel tank. He breaths in deep and long, collapsing, and slowly flailing his arms backwards in a futile attempt to ground himself.

The horrors of substance abuse are presented again in a scene titled "How to make a bathroom cleaner sandwich". Mouse sits alone in a dark room as he uncaps an aerosol can of unspecified contents and sprays it on a piece of soft white bread. He tops the sandwich with

another piece and after taking a single bite, falls unconscious. Audiences are never confident of the reason behind Mouse's death due to the ambiguous arrangement of time within the film, rarely structured in chronological order, but can safely assume it has something to do with his dangerous activities regularly presented to the viewer. The inclusion of these events is depicted almost casually, in reference to the commonality of substance abuse in poor, isolated communities. Although I do not agree with the questionable character in this case, for the humorous aspect of the dangerous acts in the form of "how-to" videos, I believe it has a strong purpose throughout the film, juxtaposing the threats to Seymour's emotional health and the threats faced by Ari and Mouse back on the reservation.

I feel I cannot continue without reference to the allegations that have recently come to light against Sherman Alexie. In March, 2018, an article was published on the questionable behavior of Alexie himself and his use of power against aspiring female writers. His influence held much higher esteem earlier in the project, and even though it naturally and gradually began to move away from the strictly stereotyped mindset of "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel," the allegations only pushed me to look at a wider range of material. Although *The Business of Fancydancing* provides excellent points concerning Native artists, I cannot ignore inappropriate behavior behind the work in respect to disadvantaged women who are finally able to stand against the stronger powers of the world of literature and film. With the allegations coming forth, mostly "vague, referring to unwanted advances, inappropriate remarks and threats against fellow Native American writers," professor Laura Jimenez hopes that his removal from instruction in the higher education circuit will "give room for other authors and other voices, and especially Native American women." The professor continues: "Maybe they finally are going to get some of the recognition they deserve because he will not be…claiming all the limelight,"

(Fonseca). With this, I remain adamantly in support of promoting the Indigenous voice, but not blindly, as this would be a prejudice in itself by refusing to hold Alexie accountable.

Although *The Business of Fancydancing* dealt with substance abuse in a peculiar way, it was not filled with pity for these poor souls. Telling a story from the past (but whose past, we are not sure), Seymour recalls a tale about a child and his siblings as they sit in the cab of the family truck as they wait on a winter's night for their parents to return from inside the bar. He recounts how they would laugh at their drunk parents as they intermittently checked on them, occasionally locking them out as a joke just to watch their father yell. Although in the minds of many, the story has the potential to be one of trauma, Seymour insists "this is not about sadness." Instead, "this is about the stories" that connect the children and their family members, regardless of their lives in comparison to others. The story was about the moments the family shared laughing through the steamy glass of the truck. This dependence on humor in relation to trauma leads us to the next section on the importance of laughing, as characters use stereotype and its reclamation to bring joy into circumstances unsuspectingly given a smile.

When Seymour and Aristotle have their Valedictorian sashes across their chests after graduation, Mouse says on camera, "they spelled *dick* wrong!" The friends continue to laugh and enjoy the celebration. Actor Evan Adams who plays Seymour also plays Thomas Builds-the-Fire in Chris Eyre's popular all-Native cast breakout film *Smoke Signals* (1998). In the film, various perceived Indian stereotypes are used as the humor base, appealing to both Native as well as non-Native audiences. Thomas is orphaned at an early age when his parents die in a house fire, only surviving through the direct action of Arnold Joseph, who is the father of a boy Thomas' age named Victor. The two grow up together on the Coeur d'Alene Indian reservation, Thomas raised by his grandmother, and Victor by only his mother after Arnold Joseph leaves the family.

Victor is resentful and angry, grappling with the reasons behind his father's abandonment. Thomas is his foil; he is a nerdy, intelligent, happy young man who enjoys telling stories. When Victor learns that his father has died, Thomas donates all of his savings to help Victor visit where his father last resided in an attempt to find answers. As the two travel on a bus, Victor is constantly annoyed with Thomas's positivity. "Indians ain't supposed to smile like that. Get stoic," he says, arousing the timeless ingrained image of the unwavering Indian warrior. In order to convince themselves and others of their strength, Victor tells Thomas to undo his long braids and let his hair flow naturally as an outward expression of his ferocity. "Look like a warrior. Look like you just came back from killing a buffalo." "But our tribe didn't hunt buffalo. We were fishermen!" Thomas responds gullibly.

Playing with these themes, Victor is mocking the very stereotype depicted by the outside world for their advantage. That same year, Shelley Niro, a Mohawk woman, directed the film *Honey Moccasin*, which also uses the ingrained stereotype for humor as a means to question its validity. The 45-minute film begins with Honey recounting the story of her birth when her parents Sonny and Sissy name her. Honey's father asks his exhausted wife if she would like anything to eat in the same moment the nurses asks what they would like to name their newborn daughter. Sissy responds to her husband: "Honey Melon." "That's original," says the nurse. "I'll change Melon to Melanie. Remember to get some rest, Mrs. Moccasin. You're going to need it," as she makes a hasty retreat from the room. This reference stems from the anglicized alterations made to tribal names and words, often appropriating them through misunderstanding. Here, a misfortune has been made into a laugh in order to amend to those wrongs by moving forward. Later in life, when Honey investigates the reason behind the tribe's stolen powwow gear, she

holds a magnifying glass to the ground, suggesting to the audience she is perhaps better "suited" to reading the earth than any other.

These stereotypes are positioned as positive but remain next to the school of thought considering Indians as being primitive peoples stuck in the stagnation of their culture. Another piece by Sky Hopinka, *I'll Remember You as You Were, Not as What You'll Become* (2016) deals directly with these themes in addressing the difficulty in establishing Native lives in the context of the modern world. As Vine Deloria Jr. states, "[to] be an Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical," (2). Sky's film begins with abstracted, ghostly looking human figures in flashing colors resembling the northern lights as the bodies dance across the screen. This section continues for several minutes, with a full chorus behind the visuals. It gives the impression of an unearthly powwow as the spirits move in circles, stepping lightly up and down. We are then presented with an eerie black space, which is reminiscent of the place Seymour dances in full regalia in *Fancydancing*, balancing the in-between of the two physical places he inhabits (the city and the reservation). *I'll Remember You* shows tall pine trees

being brushed with spotlights intermittently, which temporarily leaves a physical mark. In *Kanehsatake,* once the protest had gone on for several weeks and the weakened Mohawks and few journalists left had stationed at the treatment center, in order to avoid spying by the military-grade equipment just beyond the barbed wire, a curtain was put up to block the view. The annoyed Canadian forces began to desperately shine spotlights across the covering to bother the warriors to the point of removing it. Reminded of this scene during Sky's film, I considered the relationship of the two. Bright lights can either represent celebration or an exercise of control.

I included *I'll Remember You* here mainly for its use of a poetry performance by Diane Burns. We see a woman standing on stage, her body the only thing lit and visible, audience only evident by the sound of their laughter. She lists generic responses and words: "spiritually," "Mother Earth," "No, I didn't major in archery," "No, I didn't make it rain tonight," "You're

right, Indians never tell a lie." These are the responses she gives to the hypothetical non-Native consumed with curiosity about the contemporary existence of Native people in North America. We can easily fabricate the expectations and questions that were due those responses. Poet Diane Burns was born in Kansas to an Anishinaabe mother and a Chemehuevi father. She only published a single book of poetry titled *Riding the One Eyed Ford* in 1981. She died at the age of 49 from liver and kidney failure in 2006. The fact that she only published one book in her lifetime is a testament to the influence she has within Native American literature. Ten years after her death, she is presented in a film to revitalize her memory for many years to come. She too was included in the developing project of the Khalils and Jackson Polys called "New Red Order." The proposal outlined the screening of several pieces surrounding the topic of Indigenous identity and its perception. This installation included a poetry video set in urban squalor, with trash blowing across the screen like the new Wild West, as Diane Burns expresses the metaphorical homelessness of Native peoples in the city. She says: "Once they built the railroad the buffalo split past the horizon line… Now the railroad's done, brother can you front me a dime?" Viewers see two cops driving through the city streets as Burns voices, "the sacrifice of Manifest Destiny."

More than anything, her impression displays the inability for Indians to escape the box they have been placed in; Adam mentions a quote by Paul Chaat Smith in an email to me—"Indians are okay as long as we don't change too much," (Khalil, "FWD: New Red Order Collaboration"). Sky Hopinka uses Diane Burns in *I'll Remember You* also as a means to express the critical gaze under which Native peoples exist. As her poetry reading continues in voice-over, Sky uses ghostly images of a glowing cross as it burns itself into the screen like the sun into your eyes after looking too long. Burns eloquently speaks of a New York Times article announcing

the eradication of the small pox virus, immediately referencing the Mandan, the tribe who are said to have received the intentionally infectious blankets used to wipe them out. Artistically and with humorous tone, Diane Burns juxtaposes the violence of history and the success of the contemporary as hypothetical siblings. Now that the disease is eradicated, it is to be applauded, regardless of its lethal abuse against people in the past. Its cure is presented to us as evidence of the no-longer-threatening Indian. This lack of threat is captured by the filmmaker as ghostly figures left behind in the minds of Westernized society. The Indians are ghosts, so the colonizing disease no longer has purpose. *I'll Remember You* desires to preserve Diane Burns' memory; note the password to view the film is "burns".

Growing up in Montana, I have long been familiar with the Battle of the Little Bighorn (or as some call it, Custer's Last Stand, or Battle of the Greasy Grass). The battlefield is located in what is now eastern Montana, where a national park with monuments and museums commemorates the historic event. Vine Deloria Jr. argues that the symbols of colonialism (such

as the men who led large militarized movements in order to lay claim to "uncharted" territory) have been the brunt of Indian humor for centuries. Among the most commonly mentioned are George Armstrong Custer himself and Christopher Columbus. It seems a strength of the Indian people stems from their unwavering ability to make jokes about everything. Deloria says, "The Indian people are exactly the opposite of the popular stereotype. I sometimes wonder how anything is accomplished by Indians because of the apparent overemphasis on humor within the Indian world," (146). Deloria also argues that this mocking and teasing was called for in Indian society in order to maintain peace with a tribe. There is also an emphasis, he says, on humility, which allows individuals to stay grounded and functional within society, and humor works to quell tensions that may arise (147). Humor, in a sense, is a way of finding solutions. The search for these solutions can even be applied to larger historical trauma, as a means to heal, such as in the case of Custer, where in 1876 he and his army were defeated by a group of Lakota. This defeat of the United States military brings such pride to Native people all over the country, that the name Custer bears powerful connotation in itself. "All tribes, even those thousands of miles from Montana, feel a sense of accomplishment when thinking of Custer. Custer binds together implacable foes because he represented the Ugly American of the last century and he got what was coming to him," (148). A joke like this is used in *Fancydancing* when Seymour and his white boyfriend argue in their apartment. "[You're] being a racist jerk and still trying to get me naked," to which Seymour responds, "I just pretend you're Custer."

The use of humor in *Atanarjuat* is surprising because of its vulgar, sexualized type, not only drastically altering the audience's view of ancient peoples, but also because it questions the stoic stereotype. Atanarjuat's father, Tulimaq, has been stuck with bad luck ever since evil arrived at the camp. Early in the film, returning from a hunting trip, other members of the camp

suggest this “great hunter” should get his fair share: the rear end. “Maybe your wife would be a better hunter?” Maybe he should stay home tomorrow to sew while his wife goes out and does the hunting. Sexism aside, the joke adds dimensionality to the characters; the type of one-liner humor offers relatability to viewers in the modern world. The audience can now imagine these people in their everyday lives, with jokes to make about each other in a community. Even in brotherly conduct the young men’s interactions are relatable when Atanarjuat’s brother says to him: “If you want to lift a heavy rock, think of it as a woman’s butt.”

I was curious to see if humor like this was present in older recorded stories, admitting to myself that I did not expect such humor in historical tales, assigning them a conservative nature due to their place in time. I found a legend titled “Coyote’s Strawberry” from the Crow tribe in a collective of American Indian myths and legends, transcribed from oral recordings in the past century and a half.

> Out walking, Old Man Coyote spied on a group of good-looking girls picking wild strawberries. “Ah, these pretty young things!” he said. Quickly he buried himself in the earth among some strawberry bushes and let only the tip of his penis protrude.
>
> Soon the girls came to those bushes. “There’s a big berry here,” said one girl, “different from the others.” She tried to pluck it, but it wouldn’t come loose. “This berry has deep roots,” she said.
>
> All the other girls came and tried to pick the strawberry. Some pulled at it, some nibbled at it. “Oh, my,” said one, “this berry weeps.” “No,” said another girl, “it has milk in it.” A third said: “Since we can’t pick it, let’s look for a sharp piece of flint and cut it off.”
>
> The girls search and found a flint, but when they came back to the berry patch, the strange strawberry has disappeared. “It must have been some trick by that nasty Old Man Coyote,” the girls said to each other. One said: “Yes, I’m sure it was Coyote. We’ll have to get even.”
>
> One day the girls went to a place along the trail where Old Man Coyote always went hunting. They took their dresses off and smeared themselves with blood from some meat they had been given to cook. Looking as if they had been raped and slain by enemies, they lay there, face down, naked, and bloody.
>
> Pretty soon Old Man Coyote came along. When he saw the girls with blood all over them, he was scared. “Oh my, oh my!” he said. “What enemy has done this? What shall I do? Maybe the enemy is still around and will come and kill me. Oh my! I must

> find out how long these girls have been dead. If their corpses are old, then surely the enemy is far away."
>
> He bent down and started feeling and smelling the girls' bodies. Whenever he came near of the girls' backsides, she farted right into Old Man Coyote's face. He said: "Oh my, I think I am safe. These girls must have been dead a long time, they smell so bad!"
>
> Then all the girls jumped up laughing, shouting: "Old Man, this time the joke was on you."
>
> [Based on two stories told in 1899 and 1903] (Erdoes and Ortiz 314).

The story provides important lessons for community members about being respectful as well as humble in the face of making mistakes. The use of humor works to reclaim sadness normally attributed to these circumstances and brings strength from it in order to maintain familial relations. Mocking their own stereotypes, mocking their own invaders, and mocking sex brings Indigenous images under Indigenous control and establishes a continuation into the modern world, presenting a new image of the American Indian.

In their proposal, Adam Khalil, Zack Khalil, and Jackson Polys worked on constructing a way to set up workshops involving Indigenous artists and "indigenous desiring" participants in order to create a space for "collaborative engagement" ("New Red Order"). Through my writing, I have discussed the various spaces Native peoples occupy in the United States and Canada expressed through film, whether it be the long sections devoted to landscape shots and material gathering in *Navajo Film Themselves*, or the various spaces mentioned within *Fancydancing* (past, present, collective memory, "black" space, "white" space, urban, reservation, etc.). Navigating these spaces is one of the largest difficulties presented in the films I have watched. An article published January 19, 2018 in my hometown newspaper titled "Native American filmmakers taking lead in sharing stories" written by Jaci Webb, documents the increased recognition of Indigenous filmmakers in Montana in recent years. The state's film festival, the Big Sky Documentary Film Festival recently launched a Native American Initiative to

"encourage Native filmmakers to tell their stories their way." One filmmaker, Cinnamon Spear, who was previously a pre-med student at Montana State University (where I attended prior to Bard), later became a filmmaker in hopes that it would allow her experiences to be acknowledged through her storytelling. Occupying two spaces, she uses her position to further help her people. "With her feet planted in two different worlds, the academic world and the reservation, Spear sees herself as a 'cross-cultural communicator,'" (Webb). This is similar to Adam Khalil's stance on the work of "THE INFORMANTS," and the distribution of knowledge as a conscious choice; "there are many truths to share."

Then, there is the *literal* occupation of spaces, as in *Kanehsatake:270 Years of Resistance* directed by Alanis Obomsawin, and the inclusion of herself within the documentary as an occupier *within* the occupied space. Obomsawin and her crew remained with the Mohawk warriors for nearly the entire 78 days of the standoff before terms were agreed upon by tribal leaders and the Canadian government. In her earlier film, *Incident at Restigouche* (1984), Obomsawin documents a conflict between local government and the Mi'kmaq salmon fishermen on the Restigouche reserve in Quebec, who suddenly had their fishing access restricted, leading to unrest and a raid by the provincial police, ordered by the Minister of Fisheries. The most powerful aspect of the film remains to the be the dynamic between the filmmaker herself and the Minster as they engage in an interview that quickly becomes heated. The white official has an air of arrogance about him, scoffing at the Native woman in front of him who questions his authority. Her input within the space of the film as well as directly within the conflict speaks towards the courage needed by Native filmmakers to approach these conflicts, in words and in action.

In another one of her films, *No Address*, a documentary that covers the rampant homelessness of First Nations people in Montreal as they leave the reservations in hopes of better opportunity, Obomsawin shows audiences the desperation of the people living on the streets. They are even willing to be picked up by the cops simply to have a place to sleep. The perpetual humiliation of begging and pestering from police faced by these individuals is nearly overshadowed by their exposure to dangerous situations as they attempt to survive, struggling with finding a community that is able, and willing, to support them. The title of the film comes from the inability of these people to receive welfare without a valid permanent address, so many of the homeless cannot receive government help. Within the film, Obomsawin provides hope in the form of fundraising for a Native women's shelter. She places herself with the First Nations people in the final shot, sitting on a rock by the side of the river looking out. Across the water, industrial buildings are juxtaposed with her free-flowing hair and clothing whipping around in the cold wind. These two spaces meet here: industrial Montreal and the First Nations people who live in it.

Spring break of this year, I travelled to Montreal, Quebec with my girlfriend and two other friends. We hiked up Mount Royal (more of a quick uphill walk) to get a good view of the city and were met by a middle-aged woman, likely homeless, slowly making her way up the stairs, speaking aloud to people as they passed with her head down, in Inuktitut. Earlier in the trip we visited the Museum of Fine Arts, a huge, beautiful space full of various exhibits and art forms. In one particular room—a very large, dark room—the space was devoted to one First Nations woman's art. A fisherman's net attached to a motor was pulled smoothly up toward the ceiling and then released again slowly to the ground. The whole process took about four minutes from start to finish. There were various baskets and artifacts there as well. On the other side of the museum, another piece caught my eye that blended humanity and horror. A figure lay crouched on the ground, with long black hair spilling from its face into a puddle surrounding the body. A black hoodie pulled over the head hid any recognizable cranial features.

The piece has burned itself into my memory as an expression of these spaces Native artists continue to employ and occupy, questioning their place and sense of belonging in greater society. The piece, titled *Mixed Blessings,* created by Rebecca Belmore in 2011, deals with the "notions of history, place and identity. *Mixed Blessing* testifies to the lack of understanding and marginalization of Indigenous peoples as well as visual artists." The sweatshirt with the words "Fuckin' Indian/ Fuckin' Artist" seems to weigh down the body so much the figure is in a state of desperation. Identity is lost with the covering of the hair (information from exhibit card in museum).

On a day trip, my group and I took the car and drove to the village of Oka, the site of the golf course conflict in *Kanehsatake*. The nearby river was frozen over and covered with snow. Ski tracks, footprints, and snow mobile tracks marked the ground as we made our way to the middle of the river. We felt quite rebellious in this moment seeing the large crack in the ice and the water moving below. The village of Oka is small and unsuspecting, with only a handful of shops, a single grocery store, and two to three restaurants. The neighborhoods look quiet and

comforting; it was a place that could feel like home. I only knew how to find the site of the conflict by looking up the exact place I knew had an address online: the Oka Country Club. As we got closer to the golf course, I felt myself tense. What would it be like to visit the place I had only known about because of a violent government confrontation with a group of no more than 30 Mohawk warriors, one spiritual leader, one traditional chief, 19 women, and seven children? With all the shocking images I had seen of this place, how would it look now, 28 years later? The dirt parking lot of the country club had no other cars. The building was quaint and closed for the season. This was disappointing. Then, I saw an old fence just visible over the snow drifts several feet deep. The tombstones of the cemetery were visible just beyond the feeble fence. I also saw the pines where the warriors camped to defend this land; the trees stretched deep and tall. Taking the benches placed among the gravestones as a sign of welcome, we hiked through the deep snow in order to get to the cemetery. Our feet were soon cold and wet.

Glancing at the names on the stones, I felt humbled by my place in this moment. I felt uneasy at first, but soon the grounds calmed me. A burial had recently taken place judging by the fresh mound of dirt. There was a gazebo and memorials to the Mohawk people. Then, I realized there was a road leading into the cemetery, and at the end of that road there was a large, *open* gate with a sign announcing one's arrival to the "Kanesatake Pine Hill Cemetary". Walking through the grounds caused me to think about newcomers' attitude when approaching Indigenous communities. I, in a sense, entered from the side I was most familiar with, the *white side*, that being the golf course. Instead of looking for an entrance, or appropriate way to enter the cemetery, we decided instead to step over the fence and make our way through the deep snow when all the while, there was a plowed route openly welcoming visitors into Mohawk land. I entered through the wrong side because that is what I knew how to find.


ONEN'TÓ:KON
KANESATAKE
PINE HILL CEMETARY
IONTATIA'TA TA'ÁHSTHA


Be proud of your Heritag

Native filmmakers are working to traverse the "relationships and boundaries between Native urban and reservation spaces" as well as the space "between the studio-based film industry and independent filmmaking," as Joanna Hearne discusses in her book *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western* (227). The juggling of spaces by Indigenous filmmakers is reflected clearly in many of the films I have discussed here, but another space occupied by many Indigenous within this alien territory falls within the white homes in which Native children are often placed. Foster care of Native children remains an issue, even decades after the release of Obomsawin film, *Richard Cardinal: The Cry from the Diary of a Métis Child* (1986). The documentary begins with the reenactment of a young boy portraying the real-life Richard Cardinal, who committed suicide in 1984 at the age of 17. A young boy, as Richard, is shown picking flowers, describing what he knows "for certain" about his life. We learn of his unfortunate life as he and his siblings were taken from his mother, only then to be separated from each other because of his bed-wetting. Early on, we are shown the suicide photo of his young body hanging from a tree in the backyard of a couple's home. This couple, in addition to several other foster parents of his, are interviewed on what it was like to house Richard and are questioned if there were any signs leading to his death. Leo Crothers, the foster father of Richard's last home, took the photos of his body as it hung there for five hours after the police were called. When questioned by Obomsawin, he said he took the photos in case "nobody would listen to us," already aware of the neglect the case would receive by local law enforcement and media. 14 years in foster care represented 16 foster homes for Richard, all with white families. The only justice Richard received occurred after his death, when an inquiry was placed into the childcare system of Canada and notice was taken of the inadequacies; the best attention he was given by social welfare services "in all his time with the department" were arrangements for his

family members to come to his funeral, including all of his siblings from which he had been separated at age four. Obomsawin presents the audience with another solution in the end: “The answer lies in a return to traditional values in caring for our children and remembering that every child has many mothers.”

Unfortunately, these invisible children still exist today in the foster care system. In 2011, Northwest Public Radio completed a three-part study on the foster care system in South Dakota, specifically for American Indian children. The study found that the state is removing children at three times the national rate, and even though Native children make up only 15% of the population, they make up over half of the number of children in foster care. NPR argued that agencies are making good money by taking Native children away from their families, citing abuse, alcoholism, and poverty as main reasons for removal. But, according to the 1978 Child Welfare Act, Native American children must be placed with relatives, within their tribe, or at the very least placed in a Native home to conserve connection to their community. Only under specific conditions should a child be placed in a white home; but NPR discovered this was not being fulfilled. They saw that 90% of Native children are placed in non-Native homes, even when there are licensed foster care providers with space available among South Dakota Native families. When Suzanne Crow from Crow Creek Indian reservation was asked why she thought children were not being placed in Native homes because of what the social welfare agency described as a “long process” for placement, her response was blunt: “You know what? The long process is there’s no road from you to Indian people. That’s the long process.” Peter Lengkeek, a Crow Creek Tribal Council member described it like this: “Cousins are disappearing; family members are disappearing. It’s kidnapping. That’s how we see it.” Two sisters, Antoinette who is eight years old and Rashauna who is six, recalling their time in foster care, tell “a story about

how Rashauna wet her pants and the foster parents made her wear the underwear on her head," showing the unchanging lack of care for Indigenous children in the foster care system (Sullivan and Walters).

One thing that unites many of the films is their graphic nature exposing the ills of policy and the community's response. Seeing the throats of sheep slit, raw carcasses being eaten directly from the open cavity, as well as the difficulty of substance abuse, real-life violence, and suicide, all comprise a side of life unknown to some viewers. But, perhaps the most underrepresented stories are those of Native women, who repeatedly have to fight for attention, even in the film world. Alanis Obomsawin was an exception when she signed on with the National Film Board of Canada. She includes many strong female voices throughout her films, such as Ellen Gabriel, the young spokeswoman throughout *Kanehsatake*, the Women's Centre advocated for in *No Address*, as well as Obomsawin's strongest feminist film, *Mother of Many Children* (1977), which focuses solely on the importance of Native women in Indian communities around North America. The first feature-length documentary by Obomsawin, the film starts with a 19-year-old mother giving birth after travelling 600 miles to reach the hospital. The film presents to the women of each community as powerful influences. A young Inuit girl with two other women plucks berries from the ground in spring after the snow has melted. Then, an Ojibway woman shows her granddaughter how to make dolls from leaves that change color with the seasons. The Ojibway girl rocks her dozens of dolls in a hammock, singing "I got 15 million sisters in this life". The importance placed on women in Indigenous culture as a whole is evident through this film as it covers various regions and tribes. The film shows the drawings of a child as she narrates her first menstruation, going through the ceremony of staying within a hut for several days working with her hands, only able to come in contact with her female relatives.

The film later introduces a student at Harvard who uses printmaking as an expression of her Chippewa background in the academic space, which is then connected to a co-op in Montreal where prints are sold as a means for additional income by the women in the community.

Throat singing remains to be another important aspect pertaining to women in Inuit culture. As we saw in *Atanarjuat,* Atuat and Puja throat sing in the igloo where Atanarjuat won the temple punching competition against Oki. Among the Rigolet videos uploaded to the channel, one titled "My Inuit Culture" quickly follows the process of a young woman who decided to relearn tradition and language by taking up throat singing and drum dancing. The narrator and filmmaker argues that the throat singing technique is something unable to be written down but must be passed down and orally taught. Well-known throat singer under her performing name Tanya Tagaq, who starred in *Tungijuq,* also composed the music behind the film. Her music is known in Nunavut and beyond. Throat singing is the use of "short, sharp, rhythmic inhalations and exhalations of breath" originally developed for soothing sleeping babies ("Throat Singing"). Since it is normally performed exclusively by women in groups, a section on Native women would not be complete without its mention.

Mother of Many Children begins with birth and concludes with a 108-year-old Cree woman whose name was signed on a treaty 1876. She walks down a path with several generations of females. The film closes with an elderly woman singing to a group of children, passing down the songs and stories directly. Native women give and receive strength from one another; such an example is Shelley Niro thanking Alanis Obomsawin in the credits of her film *Honey Moccasin*. In June, 2017, I attended the first annual Indigenous Film Festival in Missoula, Montana. There, a small audience watched films, ranging from big-budget features such as *Boy* (2010) by Taika Waititi of New Zealand and *The Sun at Midnight* (2016) by Canadian Kirsten

Carthew, to an array of short low-budget films, which included local Blackfeet filmmaking duo and event organizers, Ivy and Ivan MacDonald from Browning, Montana. Concerned with the lack of attention given to Indigenous women, they became involved with the larger movement "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women" (MMIW), beginning work on a film that was very close to the heart of the siblings. Having a cousin among one of the missing, it has become a personal mission for Ivy and Ivan to complete the film, titled *When They Were Here*, spending many years working towards its fundraising and production. I have reached out to Ivy and received some clips from her, but her busy filming schedule has limited the extent of our contact. Two recent articles by Montana news outlets have given due attention to the issue as more young women begin to get involved in the movement, applying it to their local tribes. Many Native women are struggling to be seen. There is currently an epidemic of sorts happening on reservations around the country; obscene numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women have never been found justice, but there are young people actively fighting this violent trend. In Missoula newspaper The Montana Kaimin, an article by LJ Dawson covers a 19-year-old who spent her spring break walking 80 miles across the Flathead Valley in northwest Montana to raise awareness of these missing women. This is the second walk Fort Peck tribe's Marita Growing Thunder has taken, called "Save Our Sisters", concluding this year on Wednesday, March 28th. Growing Thunder also makes ribbon dresses to commemorate murdered Indigenous women, such as the one she was wearing on the final stretch of the walk in remembrance of a "young woman found murdered in the fields next to the highway," (Dawson). A week later, Growing Thunder was in the news again, this time in Billings, Montana, for her contribution to the MMIW movement in the form of nearly two dozen ribbon skirts of various sizes, displayed in a room close to the 50th Montana State University Billings' powwow. Footprints were taped

to the floor to silently lead viewers from a place of "celebration" on the dancefloor to the somber yet powerful image of a colorful child-sized dress hanging on the wall, representing a specific Indigenous girl who has gone missing (Kordenbrock). Growing Thunder also, for a period in high school, created a new dress every evening to wear the following day, and has made more than 200 pieces of clothing, "each one crafted and dedicated with permission from loved ones of the women and girls," (Kordenbrock). Growing Thunder is adamant that staying quiet is not an option; statistics on the violence against Indigenous women is scarce, but it is clear they are discriminately affected. "The saddest thing is I haven't met a family that this hasn't affected," she says (Kordenbrock).

Filmmaker Ivy MacDonald also walked with Marita Growing Thunder and others during the 80-mile trek, suggesting "[the walk] is just another example of how resilient native people are, coming together… Being a native woman, this is an everyday thing for us…It's just important for people to know native women are still here and we are still going through the struggles of historical trauma," (Dawson). Author Randolph Lewis, in promoting the voice of female filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin, states than among all other hardships facing Native peoples, Native women especially are faced with incredible odds for breaking into sight. He says, "when it comes to Native women, the Western gaze has been dismissive, uninterested, or pointed in the wrong direction altogether… Native women have been rendered insignificant or invisible" (Lewis, *Vision* 74). Although the MacDonald piece is still in production to be finished at a later date, I was graciously given access to some of the demo reels of their film *When They Were Here,* including interviews with two women, the current film intro, and Indiegogo campaign video.

For the campaign, Ivan and Ivy are asking for $6,000 in funds for the production, which will be used as a "decolonizing tool which directly places the issue with Indigenous concepts and ways of knowing." In one reel, a ribbon dress hangs from a tree, blowing gently in the wind to sorrowful music. Another woman wears a similar dress on a dock, looking out over a lake and the mountains. These dresses soon multiply, and now six hang from trees, representing the ever-increasing number of Indigenous women lost to violence and invisibility—until now. In an interview with a woman named Erin, she narrates her drive to teach her daughters the important traditions in the Crow culture. The voice-over backs visuals of a young mother preparing her daughters hair, makeup, and clothing based in custom. The strength of women can be embodied and amplified in the practice and continuation of these traditions sampled here. As she braids one of her daughter's hair, Erin states "Native women have a long history of being victimized. I want that to end with us." With this, she is helping her daughter to learn the ways she learned from her maternal relatives, assisting in the resilience of the next generation. Set in a seemingly normal family household, Erin hugs her daughter, matched with her call to action: "Now more than ever, we need to come together as Native women and help each other, encourage each other, support each other—so we can survive this epidemic of violence against Native American women." As she sits on the couch interreacting with the next generation to prepare them for the fight for existence, a sign attached to the fridge reads, "NO BAN, NO WALL. MONTANA IS FOR ALL".

Erin's two daughters are prevalent in the film's demo intro as well. The older one, around eight, runs ahead of the smaller one with glasses, about five years old. They laugh as they flee from the oncoming camera held low to the ground. Instead of fleeing with joy in a game, many Indigenous girls are exposed to the horrors of violence chasing them. These two children run as they should, consumed with childhood, but the remainder of the intro puts focus on the ground, rocks, water, and shadows, as they are the only remnants left of those who were taken from their families. In another interview, a woman named Shelly describes the feeling of loss within a tight-knit tribal community. Her figure is unfocused in the first shot as she wanders offscreen. With any loss of a woman, there is grief expressed by the whole community—for the children, for the mother, for the sisters without their caretaker. Standing between two pine trees, the camera looking slightly up at the woman's profile in a medium close-up, she says, "how can you make things better?" The final look viewers have of Shelly is her crying, as well as laughing, wiping the tears from her face, the camera panning left from her body into tree line. Ivy and Ivan work

with the concept of loss as it lingers in the physical world in the form of memories held by community. Native women as a force are too important for cultural transmission to be lost. “It needs to be known,” Ivy says. “Not just in the Native community, but in every community.”

In 1991, after Isuma Productions was established (the team who later created *Atanarjuat*), a group of women got together to form Arnait Productions, an Inuit effort that “allowed the group to gain expertise with the camera and editing equipment, and it also brought the women together to discuss the kind of major projects they wanted to tackle,” (Evans 15). The Khalil brothers evoke the work of their own mother, Allison Krebs, within their work, commemorating a poem of hers in *INAATE/SE/*, also referenced in article “The Violence Inherent” written by the filmmakers. The poem is as follows:

“Native Videographers Shoot Back”

Allison Boucher Krebs

Native videographers are armed and dangerous:
ready willing and able to shoot back,
taking no captives,
aiming straight from the hip
to the heart of the unsuspecting audience

Native videographers wind the thin corn silk
of storytelling genealogy –
layering
image,
word,
sound,
and silence –
challenging the purposeful amnesia of American History.

Native videographers lean into and snap apart
the imaginary lines separating history from prehistory,
reach across the permeable boundaries
drawn tentatively on maps of modern nation states,
sweet aside the borders that

dot dash dot
across the terrain,
and speak in tongues to the land
who breathes a sigh of relief to hear our voices
resonating back through the once breathless silence.

Native videographers open the aperture
extending the depth of focus
beyond the doctrine of discovery,
the Papal Bulls,
manifesting a destiny of space time continuum
embedded in a metaphysic
of resonance,
resilience,
persistence and
performance,
repeating itself patiently
in looped frame insistence
that while everything has changed,
nothing has.

This section has depended greatly upon the struggles of Native American and First Nations people of the United States and Canada, working to light the dark places which these issues normally inhabit. Given her status as a member of the National Film Board of Canada, Alanis Obomsawin was able to expose the unimaginable violence against a Mohawk community by the Canadian government. The golf course stands a symbol of white pleasure, which settler states fight for at any cost. Documentary becomes a powerful form in the hands of Native filmmakers, as various stories are fought to be shown for the first time from the perspective of the Indigenous people themselves, instead of the anthropological lens applied by outsiders. The power of these films lies not in the genre of documentary itself, but in the way these filmmakers twist the classic documentary form to match the unorthodox material. This is seen in the work by Adam and Zack Khalil in *INAATE/SE/* (2016) and *Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets* (2017), or Victor Masayesva Jr.'s *Itam Hakim, Hopiit* (1984), as well as the documentary-like

production of *Atanarjuat* (2001), which added a layer of relatability to the characters as they thrived in the arctic world.

Exposure also works to describe the efforts by Indigenous scholars and artists to demand for the respect of oral wisdom and Indigenous concepts of knowledge. The Rigolet study, evidence from Randolph Lewis' book on Alanis Obomsawin, and article "Life Telling: Indigenous Oral Autobiography and the Performance of Relation" by Warren Cariou have all supported the validity of the direct transmission of knowledge from mouth to mouth. This concept is utilized intelligently and critically in the Khalil brothers' *Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets* as the white world attempts another time to use socially constructed acceptance of "truth" as a means to steal the body of an ancestor in order to prove European origin in the Americas. These issues, ranging over the decades, also transition into the more familiar conflicts of the past several years. Standing Rock was a name in nearly every household in the United States two years back when the resolution unclear and tensions were rising. Sky Hopinka worked to show yet again the underrepresented Indigenous perspective on a predominantly *Indigenous* issue concerning the water and sacred land on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation. Audiences are shown a range of injustices, but consistently upon the screen there is a laugh to be had at the importance placed within humor in many Indigenous works. There is substance abuse, abandonment, destruction, theft, but in all films a conclusion somehow is always reached that Native resilience will go on. After all, Custer got his ass handed to him.

And lastly, we covered the incredibly heartbreaking instances of Native children in foster care through the story of Richard Cardinal, who took his life after spending the majority of it in white strangers' homes away from his family. In South Dakota, as we saw from Northwest Public Radio, children are being taken from their tribes at an alarming rate and under

unreasonable pretenses. Along with this injustice, another threatens to be forgotten: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women—an entity organized around the need for salvation from unprecedented violence against Native women and children. Young filmmakers, such as Ivan and Ivy MacDonald, are working to rouse the masses into acknowledging these often-unseen individuals. *When They Were Here*, set to be released later in the year, deals directly with the Indigenous families who have experienced the hardships of loss far too often. After discussing how Native filmmakers speak for their culture, knowledge, right to humor, women, and their children, I now move into the next section—resistance, reclamation, and retaliation.

Chapter Four

Resistance, Reclamation, and Retaliation

When I was younger, my grandmother bought me a bright blue dress that fell to my ankles with matching slippers that tied just under my knees with buckskin feet. The dress had thin metal cylinders attached all around the skirt, announcing any movement with a loud clanking and lingering jingle. She most likely found it at a garage sale, and I was elated at the prospect of wearing such a beautiful thing. I do not know who made it or for whom it was made; I didn't know what event would permit me to sport such a garment. The closest I ever came to that day was when I was cast in my elementary school play as Sacagawea about the adventures of Lewis and Clark. I had the long hair and I had the dress. I strapped a sleeping porcelain baby to my chest with a rabbit fur and rawhide string. My lines were something like "I am Sacagawea, interpreter and Charbonneau's wife."

I reflect back on this instance, one experience in conflict with another. Childhood memory tells me I felt proud to represent a part in the school play as an important historical figure. My current education tells me I knew nothing about what I was doing. There was no information or costume defined for what Sacagawea would have worn; I, as a child, had to come up with it on my own. The dress was ambiguous in its supposed origin, representing Native America as a whole, filling in for whatever Indian woman one may be attempting to become. Even my casting surrounded my identity in a veil of ambiguity; I was deemed racially ambiguous enough among those in my community to properly pass for a Native woman in this context. *After all, I had the hair*. In general, American Indians have been cast as a racially ambiguous type, able to be played by Italians (Iron Eyes Cody), Jewish people (*Blazing*

Saddles), or white men with tanned skin (almost every Western ever). Joanna Hearne says, "Casting is one of the most crucial decisions in translating Native narratives to the visual mode of cinema, compounding issues of genealogy and performance in the representation of Indigenous identity," (220). It has also had the reverse effect, where Native actors are able to portray a range of other ethnicities, such as Crow stunt man Rod Rondeaux who was interviewed for Neil Diamond's *Reel Injun* (2009). He describes how he was trained to play the villain, in whatever form of light brown skin that may take. He references his ability to get on a horse and play a skilled warrior or throw on a turban and suddenly become an Arab. Just as I did not understand the difference between one Indigenous culture and the next in the United States, all of tradition, custom, and language are mixed and neutralized in the eyes of non-Natives. In the "New Red Order" proposal sent to me by Adam Khalil, one line states, "[in] reality, indigeneity is a multiverse of different cultures and identities, with no centralized doctrine; rather, a constellation of practices, habits, and stories build the knowledge networks of our cultures, which, when consumed by non indigenous audiences, become homogenized, reduced to a romantic ideal."

In the same thread as the "New Red Order" one by artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña called *Welcome to the Third World* (2004) deals directly with the concepts of appearance and identity as it is determined by overruling society. The first half of the short art film displays the faces of several men as they look into the camera, with voice-over behind them narrating the welcome Europe might have heard in their dreams when arriving in the "New World". Various recognizable names of explorers and conquistadors are mentioned alongside welcoming words, as the men, without opening their mouths, give away everything they have through the metaphor of the language in the voice over. "Free rum for all of you," the narrator says; these are the riches

and generosity for which Europeans have historically always been searching. In the second part of the film, a man stands before us dressed in a variety of pieces which find their home to a range of Indigenous cultures and eras. The narrator goes on to describe the "multiplicity of looks you are able to display," because of the ingrained qualities of a viewer's perception. "I have a moustache; therefore, I am Mexican… My art is indescribable; therefore, I am a performance artist." The list goes on. The descriptions by Gomez-Peña mock the simplification of dominant society's attempt to portray a misunderstood object, practice, or person. The film plays with the ideas of ambiguity and ignorance, and the overarching power of invisibility as the artist works to reclaim these ideas as his identity under his own terms.

When Indigenous identity is not ignored or misinterpreted, it is glorified to a status beyond itself. Author Eve Tuck writes on the subconscious work of occupying settlers on Indigenous land. The ambiguous Indian grandmother has always been presented as the ultimate

mediator. She is the sole figure able to capture the essence of noble, free America, without the "aura of a savage warrior" (V. Deloria 3). In *Custer Died for Your Sins,* Author Vine Deloria Jr. outlines the phenomenon of the Indian grandmother complex as the perfect solution to white America's identity crisis. By having a blood tie to the Indigenous who were violently affected by Europeans' move west, some guilt is alleviated and responsibility of the settler is pushed onto the next, as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang suggest in the article "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor". The Indian grandmother, historically represented in the minds of white Americans as the "Indian princess who ran away with an intrepid pioneer" is a glorified figure able to give privilege to those feeling guilt in their part of the colonial state, as well as endow unoppressed peoples with a sense of authority in reference to minority experience (V. Deloria, 3). *Alphabet City Serenade,* a short video from an unknown year featuring poet Diane Burns, uses this concept when she says makes light of her own poverty-stricken situation as a Native person living among the metropolitan, saying "I'm American royalty, walking around with a hole in my knee." For whites, the Indian princess is a source of pride. To a Native woman attempting to survive, this means nothing. Burns sings of drinking herb tea and eating deer meat, paired with the visuals of a leaking fire hydrant and pigeons splashing in a muddy puddle—these are the resources available on the new frontier for urban Indians.

I, too, once searched for the illusive Indian grandmother as a way to reason with my decades-long attraction to Indigeneity; "everybody is a half-breed struggling to learn about his or her horse culture," (Alexie). When I found there was no such thing, at least in my lineage, it was surprisingly difficult to process the emotions I *did* experience when I discovered I was as white as humanly possible in my DNA, regardless of whether or not I had passed as white my whole life and enjoyed all privileges. But there was relief too, now that I could no longer humor the

idea of having an ancestral connection, I was forced to address my interest in all aspects with brutal honesty.

Son of Vine Deloria, Philip Deloria, theorized a "crisis" in the lives of some Americans who, in a sense, had the desire to "'have their cake and eat it too' of wanting to savor both civilized order and savage freedom at the same time," (*Playing Indian* 3). One of *Reel Injun*'s most powerful scenes occurs when the filmmaker attends a boys' summer camp devoted to showing them how to become Indian braves. The games the young men play consist of mud wrestling, chanting, face painting, shirtless displays of aggression, and pounding on the tables during meals. The all-white camp conjures the idea of the "Indigenous-desiring" population that uses glorified images for personal fulfillment. This "magic land" of being an Indian is discovered for these boys in the summer away from home, as they give themselves real tribe names and transform into warriors. One might then believe that whites have an obsession with being "someone else". In Sol Worth and John Adair's text, they theorized the reasoning behind the Navajo filmmakers' choices in subject matter of their films, at the same time comparing this group to the young white and black filmmakers they additionally taught to use film equipment in years past. The researchers, too noticed the desire held by the white students (with comfortable family income) to go beyond the home, in search of something foreign, versus the non-white filmmakers who chose to create films on of their own experiences and setting.

> It hardly seems unreasonable to speculate that in a white society, white middle-class teenagers and graduate students feel freer to venture forth with a camera, to control symbolically—as they do in other ways—those places and events far away from them. For the white groups we have studied, filmmaking activity is not inconsistent with the conquest of new territory, new people, and new ideas. For the Navajo in contrast to both

> other American groups (black and white), the family, its home, land, possessions, culture and ideas are the appropriate setting for filmmaking activity. They are not making films about whites as we are about them. They are making films about themselves. The black groups we have studied also deal with themselves, not in their own homes, perhaps, but they do not venture far away. They too are not capturing on film places and things far away from them (Worth and Adair 241).

This comparison of filmmaking to colonialism is extremely interesting, as wealth and privilege drives the material that has developed the majority of cinema in the past 130 years. It should not come as a surprise to say, that in an effort to counteract the colonizing act through film of years past, Indigenous control of the camera achieves greater things beyond wider representation. Without it, the abuse of this representation will continue, as well as neglect for the humanity of Indigenous artists and families.

But I cannot assume that the dissemination of Indigenous controlled images is the solution to all these problems. *Kanehsatake* shows the reaction First Nations people are confronted with when they veer from the expected image of the Indian. Once white pleasure or privilege is threatened in the slightest, here in the form of the expanding golf course, previously suppressed anger is released verbally and physically. In solidarity with the Mohawk warriors defending their land, 2,500 people from across the continent arrived in Oka at the peace camp. In contrast, in one night, 7,000 individuals formed an anti-Mohawk riot on the streets, screaming, burning, and hanging a Mohawk figure from the traffic light and setting it on fire to prove these whites meant business. The crowds yelled “savages” as the Mohawk caricature burned up, hanging from its neck. A month into the standoff, a mob attacked a convoy of 75 cars as it carried Mohawk men, women, and children fleeing the reserve. One man died, and another

suffered a heart attack from being pelted by rocks as they drove past the angry Oka residents. Not to mention, the police and military response to the threat of organized Indians in conflict with the desires of local government remains astonishing as we consider the tanks, guns, and soldiers as they pointed loaded assault-style rifles at family men and tribal leaders. At a press conference, one Mohawk woman pleaded for recognition: "Yes. They're ready for an assault. We were here to protect our burial grounds and the pines from a nine-hole golf course. You must keep that in mind. Have you forgotten?"

Even agreements for life necessities between the groups faltered in petty confrontation. When delivering food through the barrier, it took several hours for the truck to be cleared to enter. Even then, the families inside, as they unpacked the supplies, noticed holes punctured in the plastic bottles of oil, leaking bags of flour, and rotten fruit. There was violence being committed on multiple fronts: emotionally by the vitriol of the neighboring community, physically through the firepower being displayed before them at the roadblock, as well as fundamentally, as their very survival was threatened through the refusal of basic necessities.

The complicated ideological relationship between Euro-Americans and Native Americans is a push-pull dynamic still influenced by colonization. Another homogenizing and "ingenious act of colonialism" was the invention of the headband as a crucial signifier of Indigeneity, especially in the Western, described in *Reel Injun*. It not only allowed for greater control over the long black wigs worn by non-Native actors in Native roles, but also stripped Indians of their specific cultural identifiers. This act was an invasion in a sense of the very authority of Indigenous dress and custom, just as many researchers, pens, brushes, and cameras have been used as an invasion among oppressed peoples throughout history. Arlene Bowman dealt with the

consequences of invading her grandmother's quiet life with a camera crew and aggressive documentation (in addition to not being able to adequately communicate with her).

Adam and Zack Khalil, also adamantly interested in the malevolence behind much of the documentation of Indigenous communities, wrote the article titled "The Violence Inherent" in 2016 specifically about the act of representation and the "ethnographic impulse". This act of representation, through ethnography and beyond, in turn stagnates Indigenous culture and preserves it in the jelly of sepia-ed past. The brothers write, "Anthropology's obsession with preserving images of our 'vanishing' cultures—through ethnographic films or archives filled with boxes of our ancestors' remains—has long been a tool used to colonize and oppress indigenous peoples. By relegating our identities to the past and forcing us to authenticate ourselves via this past, our existence as contemporary individuals living in a colonized land is denied."

In an act of reclamation, Indigenous artists covered here take this past and redistribute it in various ways throughout their pieces. One foremost quality of colonization is the influence of the cross. It commonly is presented in the films as a force unlike anything ever experienced. "Land acquisition and missionary work always went hand in hand in American history. Where Christianity failed, and insofar as it failed, Indians were able to withstand the cultural deluge that threatened to engulf them," (V. Deloria 102). Victor Masayesva Jr., in his 1985 film *Itam Hakim, Hopiit*, voiced the inadequacies of the Christian religion for Native peoples in his very own Hopi language. *I'll Remember You as You Were, Not as What You'll Become* (2016) by Ho-Chunk filmmaker Sky Hopinka shows the ghost of a glowing cross dancing across the screen tauntingly. *INAATE/SE/ [it shines a certain way. to a certain place./it flies. falls./]* (2016) explores the influence of the Catholic church much more in depth, casting the "Tower of History" directly as

the church's powerful eye as it looms over the town of Sault St. Marie, Michigan. A rather jolly tour guide, dressed in a black robe, rosary, and a smile, shows the crew around the museum within the tower, which views the history centered around the integration of the church into the region. The blissful man waves his hand over the scene of the city below from atop the tower, capturing a 360-degree view of the church's accomplishments of conquest. Since victors write history, the filmmakers urge viewers to "look between the lines" to find the hidden histories. Behind the tour guide are tall, menacing stakes guarding the ledge of the building, creating a protective barrier between this truth and that.

One section of the film brings a group of women, who were forced to attend boarding school in the town, back to the place of their Anglicized education. The building has long been shut down, but it still holds an eerie power over the visitors and camera outside. “The black coats created a life that perpetuates itself. A cycle of trauma, it’s unrelenting,” one interviewee says. The sour discomfort is pushed further by the filmmakers when we are introduced to the hands of the woman who now owns the abandoned building home to the nightmares of hundreds of past Indian children. She points to a framed poster board displaying small bones, likening them to the bones of Christ and his message for humanity. Before seeing this film, I visited Sault St. Marie (on the Canadian side) on the drive back to Bard at the beginning of the school year last fall. The hotel phone next to the bed rang at midnight, and again at 5 am. We never answered it and left in the morning as the sun rose.

INAATE/SE/ presents video of priests in reenactment in a significantly lower quality of video than the rest of the film; the invading forces are accompanied by electronic eeriness. These "snowshoe priests" who came to convert the Ojibway people are pixelated non-humans depicted as a thing of obsolescence in the form of inferior video technology. The missionary work of the town is memorialized by the statue of a giant priest atop a cloud, bearing down with cross in hand, the stands holding his body up wedged through the tops of teepee-like structures: an unsubtle metaphor of their influence.

One of the most outstanding arguments of filmmakers Adam and Zack Khalil is the persistence of museums as the trophy cases of the settler colonial state. A prominent scene in *INAATE/SE/* involves the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), a branch of the Smithsonian, which has had both positive and negative connotations throughout the entirety of the project. In several films, NMAI is thanked in the credits. "It's pretty backwards to have a

settler colonial institution claiming to represent the colonized," Adam said to me in an email, "—but they're working hard to figure it out." In the podcast featuring Adam and Peggy Ahwesh, they discuss the collection of things, and consider how collections are never really finished. The same is true for the museums housing the artifacts of Indigenous history consumed, claimed, and probed as desired by the settler state.

In *INAATE/SE/*, NMAI is physically explored by the filmmakers in order to showcase the space thousands of artifacts now occupy when not on the museum floor. In an all-white, sterilized, cold, and orderly in appearance, pieces sit on their respective shelves—the only indication of their desire: bright red stickers spelling "CHOSEN". The storage of the artifacts is like a prison; lonely pieces of someone's history wait to be brought to light. Until then, their fate is unknown. "Museum is not necessarily a good word," one of the interviewees says, paired with the image of a book by Smithsonian: *Savages and Scientists*. The image of the sterilized collection is over-exposed; the echo of the lifeless space sounds tinny and digital. There is no humanity here.

A white border surrounds the clips behind the scenes at NMAI, locking the images in the center of the frame. The viewer is given distance, removed one level in order to heighten the *white* space of it all. Through the white frame, things are distorted, over-exposed, and stripped. The Khalil brothers use this quality again in *Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets*. When two men reenact the finding of the Ancient One's skull, a white frame surrounds their careless disruption of his burial. In court, a white frame surrounds the proceedings, which demand a certified entity to interpret the skull's secrets to prove his official owner (which goes beyond simply his skeleton, but also extending to the continent as a whole). In one of the last scenes, two individuals occupy the space of the museum wearing disfiguring masks, questioning the status of human remains as objects of representation, skewing the view of museums from places of learning into exhibitions of thievery and gross exploitation. In its defense, the National Museum of the American Indian has allowed the funding necessarily for distribution of Native-made films nearly lost, as well as various organized events, such as the Native American Film + Video

Festival, in addition to providing opportunities to young people in the form of internship programs.

I want to take a moment to cover the term *decolonization*. In order to be able to address colonial institutions, policies, and behaviors, we must be able to confront what it means to decolonize in the literal sense. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang wrote on this concept, urging the use of the term to only pertain to the direct repatriation of land to Indigenous people, and not simply as a desensitized umbrella term for "other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools," (1). Using the term generally strips the power from it, reducing the overall meaning of the concept behind it. The two authors argue that the overuse of *decolonization* is a "settler move to innocence" that attempts to "relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all," (10). In their "New Red Order" proposal, a workshop set up for Indigenous and non-Indigenous as a space to explore ideas behind identity and "indigenous-desiring" feelings, participants are to sign contracts in acknowledgment of their "active complicity in the ongoing colonization of North America". This overall idea also applies to the "social justice" movement happening all around us, usually most visible in the form of smiling, white, middle-class young people. As addressed earlier, article "Accomplices Not Allies" traverses what is deemed "allyship" or the use of another's suffering for increased social status or monetary gain, which is described as the antithesis of the solution. The author declares that "[a]llyship is the corruption of radical spirit and imagination, it's the dead end of decolonization," pushing ever further to retaliate against ingenuine action, stating: "What is not understood is that decolonization is a threat to the very existence of settler 'allies'" (7). It remains a conflict of a non-Native's self-interest to assist in the decolonization of America, so where does this leave them?

"Accomplices" suggests "[an accomplice] would find creative ways to weaponize their privilege…as an expression of social war," (6). Tuck and Yang's article adds that there are no answers now, only action, to prevent a continuation of settler moves to innocence.

When Richard Cardinal was represented onscreen as a young boy, he spoke of the things he knew of his life "for certain," or his applicable truths, when otherwise his life was in a constant state of uncertainty. For him, this was a way of processing his experiences as a child, and therefore a way of developing his own identity. Authentic identity is a complicated concept to use in the context of Indigenous cinema. Because of the stereotype of the Native as one-with-nature, noble, spiritual, and all-truth-telling, the term also had to be reclaimed in its use to control Native images through Native films. The not-so-noble aspects of Indigenous life are also presented, as a means to widen the perception of Indigenous people and ways of living. Khalil project "THE INFORMANTS" quotes Paul Chaat Smith in asking the "unavoidable question: Are Indian people allowed to change? Are we allowed to invent completely new ways of being [Indian] that have no connection to previous ways we have lived? Authenticity for Indians is a brutal measuring device that says we are [Indian] as long as we are authentic." Why aren't Indian people allowed to change? As seen from the violence observed in the white response of challenging behavior by Native people, it is clear there is some threat to white existence in Native evolution.

Arlene Bowman met this too, through the questioning of her authority in response to her film by students under author Randolph Lewis. Lewis wondered why students became so upset after watching *Navajo Talking Picture*. Was it because she didn't fall under the idea of the typical Indian woman? What constitutes a real Indian who has authority over a subject when even their families refer to them as inauthentic, "cheap" Indians (Lewis 50)? Because of her

background, such as having an unstable connection to the traditional side of her culture, inability to speak Navajo, her attendance at UCLA, and disregard of Navajo respectful address, Bowman's authority as an Indigenous filmmaker was considered "weak" (Lewis 82). Without these qualities, does she not have permission to make such a film? What gives one authority to make such films? Students watching the film didn't believe her to have this authority and refused to grant authentic authorship if she didn't adhere to the stereotypes of which they all were aware. This straying from the idea of a knowledgeable, connected, and traditional being cause unrest with the audience; it "put off outsiders expecting something more familiar and comforting," (Lewis 72).

This concept can begin to force Indian people to question their very identity and how they fit into the world. Indian people can fall into the trap of leaning towards what it is that society wants them to become. "Indian people begin to feel that they are merely shadows of a mythical super-Indian," (V. Deloria 82). Developing a sense of authority as an Indian person becomes an obstacle often elaborated upon, combatting the confinements of tradition, community, and stereotype. "Nobody is the authority on anything," says Cleo in *Dislocation Blues* (2017). Although in large movements, people look for the recognizable faces and unifying voices to lead, the film also vouches for the individual experience without applying it to the whole, which normally would place the burden of representation unfairly onto select subjects. Sky Hopinka's *I'll Remember You* portrays dancers at a powwow as ghostly, intangible bodies, recognizing their unacknowledged existence. Adam and Zack Khalil insisted on the validity of oral wisdom in reference to the Ancient One of *The Violence of a Civilization*, amplifying the voices of those demanding for the return of his remains to the tribes who lived there. With the hope of a brighter future coming closer to fruition with every Indigenous step, "Indians have

started to become livid when they realize the contagious trap of mythology white America has caught them in," (V. Deloria 27).

In a final act of retaliation, a young Ojibway woman fires back at the camera, turning the gaze of the audience of *INAATE/SE/* on itself, enforcing the authority held by Indigenous artists everywhere. "We intended to fire back against the anthropologists who would seal away our history in an archive or patronizing ethnographic film," say filmmakers Adam and Zack Khalil (Bianconi). Just as Tanya Tagaq looks into the eye of the camera as she places the meat of the seal into her mouth, there is determination in the final act of looking upon the viewer, establishing infinite presence and competent response. Allison Boucher Krebs, mother of Adam and Zack Khalil wrote, "Native videographers open the aperture / extending the depth of focus / beyond the doctrine of discovery… embedded in a metaphysic / of resonance / resilience, / persistence and / performance", announcing Indigenous arrival into the cinematic realm as a potent force (Khalil, "The Violence Inherent"). In 2010, another filmmaker shot back named Jacob Floyd, a young Creek and Cherokee movie buff interested in Native participation in early Hollywood. Forbidden from watching Westerns in his home growing up, Floyd was now able to address the biases of cinema against Indians in his film *Tonto Plays Himself*. Prominent actor Chief Thundercloud, real name Victor Daniels, caught Floyd's eye; here was a real Indian playing an Indian in the movies. Filmmaker Jacob Floyd then discovers he is a relative of Chief Thundercloud himself, legitimizing his effort to learn more about early Indigenous filmmakers, as well as encouraging the legacy behind the next generation of filmmakers. By pointing one camera at another, Floyd shoots back at the film industry.

Within the final scenes of *INAATE/SE/*, the young Ojibway interviewed in the film occupy the space of the old paintings at the edge of the river. Their presence, digitally transferred into the traditional space, by means of a technological illusion, solidifies the new generation's place in history. This generation is the one to reconnect the loose ends lost to damaging policy based on the ideology of gentrification and assimilation. The final prophecy of the Seven Fires states the new generation will be the one to awaken the sleeping elders, in turn, Ojibway knowledge. "Are you the people of the seventh fire?" a man asks the Native audience. Although this is the end of the film, it represents a new beginning for the Ojibway people and the hope of greater Indigenous sovereignty, bringing together young people and the words long passed down by their elders.

In the dark approaching the camp, Cleo saw the gathering of many nations at Standing Rock. The isolated protest soon became a national incident based in communal strength. In another instance, when Mohawk warriors defended their land against the continued acquisition of a colonial settler state, tribes from all over the continent came to support the tribe at Kanehsatake. The trauma of Native peoples, although specific to each individual tribe, often becomes shared in order to bring strength from one community to another. In *Mother of Many Children* (1977), womanhood was depicted across North America from birth to elder. Tribes were connected through the respectful address of Native women and their vital part in society. And although each tribe had specific ceremonies for coming of age, such as the Lil'wat girl who described her first menstruation through her drawings, each woman's life was connected in Obomsawin's film. Even for a research-based project in Rigolet, Labrador, the team viewed digital storytelling as "a way to celebrate the individual and the collective, and to lend respect and credence to the lived experiences of individuals through the collective co-creation of individual narratives," (Willox 6). Native narratives depend in part on the individual's experience of the collective; think of the varied experiences in *INAATE/SE/* with one Ojibway prophecy, the multiple story versions and consultations considered for *Atanarjuat,* the use of past and present reflection in *Dislocation Blues*, and the cycles of *Tungijuq* between life and death. Shared trauma is the foremost theme of *The Business of Fancydancing* as Seymour channels the stories and experiences of his friends on the reservation, telling them as his own, unable to decipher which are his and which are not; connected experience brings collective strength.

One thing that remains true is that tradition does not mean stagnation. "The anthropologist's encapsulating gaze ignores the fact that, for indigenous communities, tradition is not an immutable set of truths handed down by revelation, but a set of ever-evolving social

practices whose continuity cannot be repaired by preservation—only elaborated through struggle, and finally achieved under conditions of genuine self-determination," (Khalil, "The Violence Inherent"). Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor, generalized by Joanna Hearne, expands upon the concepts of "Indigenous modernity, survival, and sovereignty to include 'survivance'" (228). In this case, survival from all policy, murder, as well as the equal violence of ignorance, is resistance in itself. Motion is an act of sovereignty, enabling the right to move from place to place physically, spiritually, as well as culturally. The performance of story, whether it be in person, through film, or other art forms, forges new relationships with the individual and their audience, unifying stories into a conglomerate experience pushing forward the Indigenous presence in North America. In resistance, Native and First Nations filmmakers defend their stories, their land, and their image; in reclamation, Indigenous cinema is established as a force as it recovers the lost remnants from colonizing institutions; and in retaliation, experience is knotted together to form stories tugging at the door of cinema, ready to bust in.

Conclusion

Digital technology and the Native: these are two concepts that clearly work together in an effort to express the ideas of an evolved people. Through these many examples, talented Indigenous filmmakers have made their case to audiences around the world, using cinema as a platform for art, advocacy, and the Native voice. Films like *Smoke Signals* (1998) and *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001) are staples of mainstream Indigenous cinema, achieving screenings and recognition around the world. More locally, filmmakers and fellow Bardians Adam and Zack Khalil produced work that forced the viewer to question institutionalized preservation, mixing in different forms of art—Norval Morrisseau's work in *INAATE/SE/ [it shines a certain way. to a certain place./it flies. falls./]* and contemporary 3D animation in *Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets*—as a way to vouch for Indigenous authority and concepts of knowledge. And like Morrisseau, who "pushed Ojibway traditions and stories into the future by adapting them to a new medium," the filmmakers act on the effectiveness of film and video as a service for dissemination and influence (Khalil, "The Violence Inherent"). Using film in a manner like this leads to a type of "media warfare…using the camera as a weapon in both defensive and offensive capacities," as the Khalils and avid documentarian Alanis Obomsawin at Kanehsatake actively employ when sharing Native perspective. Atmospheric music levitates viewers above the world of Ojibway history in Sault St. Marie, hypnotically floating over the hydroelectric plant that initiates *INAATE/SE/* and the issues it follows. Layering of graphics on image, as well as narrative on documentary structure, a unique container develops that holds the alternate history the Khalil brothers adamantly work to make known. Vine Deloria Jr. says, "[m]any people writing on Indians today seem only to take; rarely do they seem to share with us," (x). What do I have to offer now? To you, I give my honesty, effort, and academic

year—offering up my insight on how I can elaborate upon the work, and make qualities known to others. In the Khalil proposal, "New Red Order: Headhunters," the artists imagine a space that allows for a site of "recruitment, testing, accumulation, and critical activation that will diagnose, reflect on, and aim to break through potential obstructions to indigenous growth." I hope I have started some conversation somewhere; this is my goal. Joanna Hearne quotes actor Larry Littlebird in her text when he says, "if you could get enough Native people working together, there [is] a possibility that a whole new methodology for making film could become available," (261). In promoting the Indigenous voice and expression, a new generation of artists can better work towards the Native image in the American mind, adjusting it to sync with the ever-changing Indian people.

Bibliography

"Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex." *Indigenous Action Media,* 04 May 2014. http://www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/. Accessed 08 Dec 2017.

Ahwesh, Peggy and Adam Khalil, commentators. "Time Bombs Showing the Fault Lines of History." *E-flux,* 1 Mar 2018. https://www.stitcher.com/podcast/eflux-podcast/e/53526747?autoplay=true.

Alexie, Sherman. "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel." *The Summer of Black Widows*. Hanging Loose Press, 1996.

Bianconi, Giampaolo. "Native Videographers Shoot Back: An Interview with Adam and Zack Khalil." *MoMA*, 29 Feb. 2016. www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2016/02/29/native-videographers-shoot-back-an-interview-with-adam-and-zack-khalil/. Accessed 10 Dec. 2017.

Bonspiel, Steve. "The Oka Crisis was supposed to be a wake-up call. Little has changed in 27 years." *Warrior Publications* [as seen on *CBC News*], 11 Jul 2017, https://warriorpublications.wordpress.com/2017/07/11/the-oka-crisis-was-supposed-to-be-a-wake-up-call-little-has-changed-in-27-years/.

Cariou, Warren. "Life-Telling: Indigenous Oral Autobiography and the Performance of Relation." *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, vol. 39, no. 3, Summer 2016, pp. 314-327.

"Daniel David Moses's 'Inukshuk' and Colonial Transformations." *CanLit Guides,* An Introduction to Indigenous Literatures in Canada, 18 August 2016.

http://canlitguides.ca/canlit-guides-editorial-team/an-introduction-to-indigenous-literatures-in-canada/daniel-david-mosess-inukshuk-and-colonial-transformations/.

Dawson, LJ. "UM student walks 80 miles to raise awareness for missing and murdered indigenous women." *Montana Kaimin* [Missoula, MT], 31 March 2018, http://www.montanakaimin.com/news/um-student-walks-miles-to-raise-awareness-for-missing-and/article_5bf07142-3513-11e8-a1f6-d3c9497dc48e.html.

Deloria, Philip J. *Indians in Unexpected Places*. University Press of Kansas, 2004.

---. *Playing Indian*. Yale University Press, 1999.

Deloria Jr., Vine. *Custer Died for Your Sins*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1988.

"Diane Burns." *Poetry Foundation*. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/diane-burns. Accessed 5 Mar 2018.

Erdoes, Richard and Alfonso Ortiz, editors. *American Indian Myths and Legends*. Pantheon Books, 1984.

Evans, Michael Robert. *The Fast Runner: Filming the Legend of Atanarjuat*. University of Nebraska Press, 2010.

"Film & Media Catalog." *National Museum of the American Indian*. http://filmcatalog.nmai.si.edu/intro/.

Fonseca, Felicia. "Readers Reevaluate Sherman Alexie Amid Sex Misconduct Allegations." *KomoNews* [Seattle, WA], 2 Mar 2018. http://komonews.com/news/local/readers-reevaluate-sherman-alexie-amid-sex-misconduct-allegations.

Hearne, Joanna. *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western*. State University of New York Press, 2012.

Hoffman, Matt. “Northern Cheyenne’s Whiteman Praised for Work on Western Film.” *Helena Independent Record* [Helena, MT], 17 Jan 2018, p. A10.

Hopinka, Sky. Personal interview. 14 Nov 2017.

---. “Re: Screening at Bard, and an individual project.” Message to Mae Vader. 15 Nov, 18 Nov 2017. E-mail.

Khalil, Adam. “Re: Fellow Bardian, Sproj. sufferer.” Message to Mae Vader. 13 Nov, 8 Dec 2017. E-mail.

Khalil, Adam, et al. “FWD: New Red Order Collaboration / THE INFORMANTS @ Artists Space.” Message to Mae Vader. 8 Dec 2017. E-mail.

---. “New Red Order: Headhunters. Recess Session Proposal.” Attachment 8 Dec 2017. E-mail.

Khalil, Adam and Zack Khalil. “The Violence Inherent: Native Videographers Shoot Back.” *The Offing,* 20 Sep 2016. https://theoffingmag.com/enumerate/the-violence-inherent/.

Kordenbrock, Mike. “A short distance from Montana State University’s Billings’ powwow, ribbon skirts tell a story of loss.” *Billings Gazette* [Billings, MT], 6 Apr 2018, http://billingsgazette.com/news/local/a-short-distance-from-montana-state-university-billings-powwow-ribbon/article_6ec4ddcd-5551-55c9-a6d8-a3d608e04db0.html.

Lewis, Randolph. *Navajo Talking Picture: Cinema on Native Ground*. University of Nebraska Press, 2012.

---. *Alanis Obomsawin: Vision of a Native Filmmaker*. University of Nebraska Press, 2006.

Simpson, Audra. “On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, ‘Voice’ and Colonial Citizenship”. *Junctures,* 9 Dec 2007. http://pages.ucsd.edu/~rfrank/class_web/ES-270/SimpsonJunctures9.pdf.

Sullivan, Laura and Amy Walters. “Native Foster Care: Lost Children, Shattered Families.” *Northwest Public Radio*, 25-27 Oct 2011, pt. 1-3. https://www.npr.org/2011/10/25/141672992/native-foster-care-lost-children-shattered-families; https://www.npr.org/2011/10/25/141662357/incentives-and-cultural-bias-fuel-foster-system; https://www.npr.org/2011/10/26/141700018/tribes-question-foster-groups-power-and-influence; https://www.npr.org/2011/10/27/141728431/native-survivors-of-foster-care-return-home.

“Throat Singing: a unique vocalization from three cultures.” *Smithsonian Folkways Recordings*. https://folkways.si.edu/throat-singing-unique-vocalization-three-cultures/world/music/article/smithsonian.

Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2012, pp. 1-40.

Webb, Jaci. “Native American Filmmakers Taking Lead in Sharing Stories.” *Helena Independent Record* [Helena, MT], 19 Jan 2018, p. A12.

Whitefield, Carly. “Sky Hopinka: *Dislocation Blues*.” *Vdrome*, 2017. http://www.vdrome.org/sky-hopinka.

Willox, Ashlee Cunsolo, et al. “Storytelling in a Digital Age: Digital Storytelling as an Emerging Narrative Method for Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Oral Wisdom.” *Qualitative Research*, vol. 12, no. 2, Apr. 2013, pp. 127-147.

Worth, Sol, and John Adair. *Through Navajo Eyes: An Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology*. University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

Filmography

Alexie, Sherman, director. *The Business of Fancydancing*. Fox Lorber, 2002.

Benally, Susie, et al., directors. *Navajo Film Themselves*. Visionmaker, 1966.

Bowman, Arlene, director. *Navajo Talking Picture*. Women Make Movies, 1986.

Burns, Diane, writer. *Poetry Spots: Diane Burns reads "Alphabet City Serenade*." YouTube, uploaded 9 Jan 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KdCiys8hms.

Craig, Dustinn, director. *4wheelwarpony*. 2008.

Diamond, Neil, director. *Reel Injun*. Rezolution Pictures International Inc. in co-production with National Film Board of Canada, 2009.

Eyre, Chris, director. *Smoke Signals*. Lionsgate, 1999.

Floyd, Jacob, director. *Tonto Plays Himself*. 2010.

Gomez-Peña, Guillermo. *Welcome to the Third World*. La Pocha Nostra, 2004.

Hopinka, Sky, director. *Dislocation Blues*. 2017.

---, director. *I'll Remember You as You Were, Not as What You'll Become*. 2016.

Khalil, Adam, and Zack Khalil, directors. *INAATE/SE/ [it shines a certain way. to a certain place./it flies. falls./]*. 2014.

---, directors. *The Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets*. 2017.

Kunuk, Zacharias, director. *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*. ALL, 2001.

---, producer. *Tungijuq*. Isuma TV, 2009.

MacDonald, Ivan and Ivy. *When They Were Here* [demo reels]. Vimeo, 2017.

Masayesva Jr., Victor, director. *Itam Hakim, Hopiit*. 1984.

Niro, Shelley, director. *Honey Moccasin*. Women Make Movies, 1998.

Obomsawin, Alanis, director. *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*. National Film Board of Canada, 1993.

---, director. *Mother of Many Children*. National Film Board of Canada, 1977.

---, director. *Richard Cardinal: Cry from the Diary of a Métis Child*. National Film Board of Canada, 1986.

---, director. *Incident at Restigouche*. National Film Board of Canada, 1984.

---, director. *No Address*. National Film Board of Canada, 1988.

---, director. *Trick or Treaty?*. National Film Board of Canada, 2014.

---, director. *Christmas at Moose Factory*. National Film Board of Canada, 1971.

uKautsiga. Videos [YouTube Channel]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/user/uKautsiga/videos.

Links to Online Films

Updated April 16, 2018

Bowman, Arlene. *Navajo Talking Picture* (1986): www.folkstreams.net/film-detail.php?id=211

Craig, Dustinn. *4wheelwarpony* (2008): https://vimeo.com/1776390

Floyd, Jacob. *Tonto Plays Himself* (2010): http://www.imdb.com/videoplayer/vi1588636953

Gomez-Peña, Guillermo. *Welcome to the Third World* (2004):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdEF3Sg-5w4

Hopinka, Sky. *Dislocation Blues* (2017): https://vimeo.com/208687040 [Password: blue]

---. *I'll Remember You as You Were, Not as What You'll Become* (2016):
https://vimeo.com/166668647 [Password: burns]

Khalil, Adam & Zack. *INAATE/SE/ [it shines a certain way. to a certain place./it flies. falls./]*
(2014): https://vimeo.com/105824155 [Password: soo]

---. *The Violence of a Civilization Without Secrets* (2017): https://vimeo.com/217342747

Kunuk, Zacharias. *Tungijuq* (2009): http://www.isuma.tv/tungijuq/tungijuq720p

MacDonald, Ivan and Ivy. *When They Were Here* (2017) demo reels:
https://vimeo.com/263803862
https://vimeo.com/215949306
https://vimeo.com/215949609
https://vimeo.com/219033897

Niro, Shelley. *Honey Moccasin* (1998): https://vimeo.com/92286410

Obomsawin, Alanis. *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993):
http://workforall.nfb.ca/film/kanehsatake_270_years_of_resistance/

---. *Mother of Many Children* (1977): https://www.nfb.ca/film/mother_of_many_children/

---. *Richard Cardinal: Cry from the Diary of a Métis Child* (1986): http://webadmin.nfb.ca/film/richard_cardinal/

---. *Incident at Restigouche* (1984): https://www.nfb.ca/film/incident_at_restigouche/

---. *No Address* (1988): https://www.nfb.ca/film/no_address/

---. *Trick of Treaty?* (2014): https://www.nfb.ca/film/trick_or_treaty/

---. *Christmas at Moose Factory* (1971): https://vimeo.com/209924096