

PICTOGRAPHIC DRESS:
DECOLONIALITY IN THE PERFORMANCE OF MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

My thesis examines pictographic War Honor Dresses collaboratively hand-sewn and painted in North America, attributed to the final decade of the eighteenth century. As a natural progression of the centuries-long Indigenous pictographic tradition and due to changes fueled by a dynamic ideological climate, the Lakota were forced to adapt cultural practices according to their changing social and political climate. Art Historian Emil Her Many Horses describes Native Women's dresses as "aesthetic expressions of tribal culture and personal identity." Building on that observation, I argue that embodied War Honor Dresses bridge the metaphysical elements with the utilitarian and the aesthetic with the spiritual. Constructed for public spaces, they provide a means by which a community remains connected with a deceased member of their community and serve as early embodied agents of decoloniality. These dresses ultimately inform and influence the work of contemporary artists wishing to form the future by reimagining the past in creative and innovative ways.

Comparative analyses of extant War Honor Dresses establish their multiple functions as mobile sacred spaces, mnemonic devices, and time machines. Engaging issues of self-determination and sovereignty, what at first appears to function primarily as a garment,

instead visually adheres to historic practices dispersed by the Lakota, as well as concomitant concepts circulated by American Indian historians and artists such as Vine Deloria, Jr. and Rhonda Holy Bear. In a return to tradition, these dresses enable commemoration of the future.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Art and Sciences, have examined a thesis titled “*Pictographic Dress: Decoloniality in the Performance of Memory*” presented by Linda Joy Link, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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We are slowed down sound and light waves,
a walking bundle of frequencies tuned into the cosmos.
We are souls dressed up in sacred biochemical garments
and our bodies are the instruments
through which our souls play their music
-Albert Einstein

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The circle is a sacred sign in both American Indian ideology and aesthetics. It produces meanings that dwell within and materialize beyond its round form. The circle illustrates the seasons of the year, all cardinal directions, the stages of life, elements of nature, the time of day, and the ceremonial plants of the medicine wheel. It is no flat and static shape, but rather, it is a mobile and living entity. According to American Indian lifeways, the circle is capable of giving life, healing physical wounds and restoring sacred balance. It is necessary to consider *Pictographic Dress* on temporary loan from Conception Abbey in Conception, Missouri, to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, a dress highly charged with history, emotion, and intrigue within the broader American Indian understandings of the sacred circle (Figure 1).

Pictographic Dress was constructed of un-dyed muslin by Silent Woman sometime within the last half of the nineteenth century in honor of her younger brother, Bobtail Bear, who died in battle. Male members of his community later embellished it with depictions of Bobtail Bear and additional warriors engaged in interactions with warriors from rival nations, significant battle exploits, and incidents of bravery. The short-lived practice of honoring deceased warriors on dresses is epiphenomenal of earlier biographical mnemonic methods utilized by the Lakota as well as many other groups living on the Great Plains. Silent Woman designed *Pictographic Dress* to be loose-fitting to allow for greater ease of movement. Full sleeves, a rounded neck, and insets of additional fabric on both sides enabled a nomadic woman living on the Great Plains during the nineteenth century to fulfill her many responsibilities efficiently. Not only does the circle feature on *Pictographic Dress* in the

representations of shields and static groupings of hoofprints, but also in the round form the embodied dress assumes during War Honor Dances and ceremonies. Determining if the artists arranged the representations in chronological order on the dress is difficult. However, depictions show Bobtail Bear on both sides of the dress in different stages of his life, providing a prime example of an indigenous understanding of history as non-linear and demonstrating how the past-future co-exist in the present.

This thesis examines the sacred dresses of the Lakota peoples, in particular the biographical Pictographic Dress or War Honor Dress. Previous scholars have examined the iconographic qualities of these sacred garments. No one has yet looked deeply at the embodied experience of wearing the Pictographic Dress, however. To the Lakota, War Honor dresses symbolize more than thread and fabric; more than mere utilitarian garments worn to fulfill societal norms or genderized constructs. The undulating folds of War Honor dresses work to validate and strengthen Lakota lives, life experiences, knowledge and culture. They provide for a reclamation and promotion of an accurate Lakota identity and historicity. War Honor dresses represent a place where the promise of decolonization materializes.¹ This

¹ When Christopher Columbus launched his ships in search of a passage to China and India but landed in the Americas instead, he also launched bloody and genocidal attacks that included theft of land, destruction of civilizations, and enslavement of indigenous populations throughout the Americas. The repercussions of his pogrom still ripple through the lives of millions to this day. The term decoloniality originated initially from emerging Latin American scholars, including Aníbal Quijano, Walter Dignolo, Enrique Dussel, and Nelson Madonado-Torres after the quincentennial of Columbus' voyage. These scholars argue that the systems and ramifications of European colonialism informed social circles and spheres of knowledge still experienced by way of racial, political, and social discrimination. New approaches of the concept of decoloniality argued by professors and scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wang Young advocate for the rematriation of land to indigenous nations. According to Tuck and Young, this includes the recovery of sustaining and sustainable connections between the land, air, water, plant life, and animal life to indigenous life. They contend the permeability of borders (a colonial construct) allows for the regeneration of connections with

thesis argues that the Lakota *Pictographic Dress*, when used in performance by female Lakota elders, recreates a sacred space through the movement of the body and the dress. That personal and embodied space, taking the form of a circle or spiral, echoes sacred places, symbols, and objects found throughout Lakota culture. These include the war shield, ceremonial observances, the tipi, camp circles, and dance arenas, and the drum, to name a few. This thesis thus concludes that viewing the dress in the context of an embodied performance tells us how cultural memories have survived across space and time, lending insight into contemporary artistic and social practice of the Lakota peoples.

The Circle in the American Indian World

The Lakota were not alone in their belief in the sacredness of the circle.² Sacred signs and symbols defined a diverse group of North American lifeways and belief systems. Before looking deeply at the circle in the Lakota context, it is necessary to situate the symbol within a broader American Indian context. In many American Indian views, the circle may stand for tribal unity linked with the cosmosphere. Elements of the cosmos are a recurring motif

each other and the natural elements. Andrew Herscher and Ana María León, “At the Border of Decolonization,” *e-flux Architecture* (May 6, 2020), <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/at-the-border/325762/at-the-border-of-decolonization/>.

² From antiquity to now, the circle holds in its sway a certain symbolic universality. The circles of Stonehenge, the sacred Ashoka Chakra symbol of the Hindu religion, round domes of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, the wide, white skirts whirled by Sufi dancers in active meditation, demonstrate a relationship between human cultures, signs, ritual spaces, and performances. Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, in developing Structural Anthropology, established the concept that timeless fundamental “structures” survive across all cultures. As a result, all cultural behaviors, beliefs, practices, or artifacts, even if separated by time, are analogous due to genetic or historical associations. Lévi-Strauss helps us understand Lakota War Honor Dresses as well situated within the symbolic universality shared by ritual spaces all over the world. Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 68, no. 270 (Oct-Dec 1955): 428-44.

depicted on and through both everyday and sacred American Indian objects. Circular sun rock carvings, many of which are prehistoric, are found in many areas of the United States, such as the Southwest (Figure 2). In present-day Illinois, remnants of a woodhenge dating to the Mississippian culture are still evident. An Anasazi black and white clay pot from the late Pueblo II to early Pueblo III periods (between AD 900 and AD 1350) unearthed near what is now Snowflake, Arizona, features an encircled sun or star radiating from the inside center of the bowl with a distinctive geometric border rimming the outer circumference of the vessel (Figure 3).

The circle was utilized in the construction of domestic domains and sacred spaces as well. The kivas of the Southwest, tipis of the Plains Indians, and round medicine lodges of the Arikara on the upper Missouri River, all circles, were designed to imitate the universe. The Sundance lodges of the Plains Indians were similarly round, albeit more open to the natural elements (Figure 4).

Scholar George Horse Capture writes about a recurring motif, sometimes referred to as a “sunburst” pattern and other times denoted as a “star” as the primary design element found on abstract buffalo robes (Figure 5). It consists of horizontally divided elongated diamond shapes arranged to touch at the middle and curve around to form a circle. All equal in dimensions, the same half of every diamond is painted the same color at its bifurcation throughout the design. A stylized cosmological structure of concentric circles thus emerges before the eyes. A small circle of diamonds or rays forms the center of the robe design, and larger circles radiate around it in a seemingly infinite pattern. This idea of a series of concentric circles is found in nature and also plays an integral role in the formal organization used in setting up camp as well as the theoretical structure around which sacred ceremony

operates. These concepts of simultaneity and concentricity will be further discussed later in this paper.

Material and simultaneously metaphysical, the circle shaped the American Indian worldview and cultural perspective. The dominant nature of the American Indian worldview is relational and consists primarily of connections between humans and their environment. The American Indian concept of time has its roots in the cyclic and seasonal patterns repeated in nature and are synonymous with continuity, unmeasurable in any westernized context. Navajo mathematician and physicist Fred Young explains that the tribal sense of self as a moving event within a moving universe is analogous to the physicist's understanding of the particle within space and time.³ Scholar Ralph T. Coe argues that because Indian art rests under a different interpretation of time, it reacts to change but does not itself affect change.⁴ There is an inarguable sense of continuity in Native American lifeways despite commutations in culture over time initiated by European contact, increased innovation of technologies, and the availability of new materials through trade.

Reliance upon the circle established far more than the material culture of American Indians. Medicine Wheel, situated at an altitude of 9,642 feet near the summit of Medicine Mountain in Wyoming, is a round buffalo altar (Figure 6). The archeological feature, composed of limestone positioned on the ground high above the Bighorn Basin, is reminiscent of the medicine wheel, the sacred symbol employed by Plains Nations to illustrate the knowledge of the universe in its entirety. The sacred stone structure in

³ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* (Boston Beacon, 1992), 147.

⁴ Ralph T. Coe, *Sacred Circles* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 15.

Wyoming contains a buffalo skull at the center and consists of a circular rim measuring 80 ft. in diameter, with 28 divisions radiating from the center to the rim. It features a series of seven stone circles or *cairns*. Cairn O sits at the center of the structure and is approximately 10 ft. in diameter. Cairns A - F is found at or near the rim, and is considerably smaller.⁵

Plains medicine painted shields are sacred circles embellished with symbols of utmost importance to individual warriors (Figure 7). Sharp pointed symbols applied to the round hide cover denote the sun, stars, and allude to the four winds swirling above the vast high plateau of semi-arid Great Plains grasslands. Men constructed shields of this type into the 20th century.⁶ Lakota artists painted these shields, as well as Ghost Dance attire and accouterment, with cosmological forms to enable the wearer access to protective supernatural powers and abilities. According to scholar and author Colleen Cutschall:

Both buckskin and cloth Ghost Dance dresses were painted with highly charged symbols of nature and the elements and emblems of feminine identity. Through painted signs of power, the universe was being called upon to rescue [the Indians] from cultural genocide.⁷

⁵ Scholars do not know who built Medicine Wheel. Although the wheel exists on Crow land, the Crow testify it was there when they arrived. Ibid.

⁶ Lakota painted many items, including men's shirts, drums, ceremonial shields, and women's dresses with Ghost Dance designs such as the thunderbird, morning star, new moon, sacred pipe, the sacred cedar tree, or turtle.

⁷ Like the War Honor Dress practice, Lakota women made fewer Ghost Dance Dresses than other dress styles. When the Ghost Dance movement was unable to fulfill the promise of restored land, animals, and deceased relatives, it dissolved. Dressmakers returned to time-honored quill and bead decoration, and the short-lived explosion of new painted dress designs ended. The United States Government banned Ghost Dance activities after the massacre at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890, and IF practiced was done so in great secrecy in order to avoid further retribution. Royall Hassrick, *The Sioux Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 339.

The cosmos inarguably influenced the designers of the quilled and beaded “target” medallions that prominently feature on buckskin shirts (Figure 8). Even though their impact may have been more decorative than spiritual, the wearer became the personification of the ancient sacred circle. Likewise, a soft buckskin Cheyenne pipe bag, when held outstretched, reveals a circle at the top with four hanging flaps symbolizing the four directions (Figure 9).⁸ Shields, bags, and dresses; what at first appear to be utilitarian in function also serve as peripatetic forms of the medicine wheel, symbols of health, healing, and spirituality. Due in part to a psychic scale rather than solely a material comparison, these items and places all relate to one another inside the bounds of the sacred circle.⁹

The Significance Of Circles In Lakota Art And History

Circles operated in the embodied performance and decoration of the Lakota’s sacred garments, including the War Honor Dress. To understand how we must first examine the role of the symbol in the Lakota narratives and history. A deeper understanding provides insight not only into Lakota historicity but also in how affective embodiment influences efforts to contest and refashion Lakota narratives. Seasonal changes and migratory patterns found on The Great Plains greatly influenced Lakota lifeways. The cycles of nature found in the seasons and the passage of the sun and moon through the sky evidence the repetitious round of activities and the continuum of creation.¹⁰ Lakota asked the sun for protection in battle, to

⁸ Ralph T. Coe, *Sacred Circles* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 15.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Larry J. Zimmerman, *The Sacred Wisdom of the Native Americans* (New York: Quarto-Book Sales, 2016), 80.

shield them from harm, and to help them in raids for horses and women. The sun was male and referred to as Grandfather. The moon was female and honored in the place of the sun at night. The moon was "Grandmother," as was the Earth.¹¹ From living in conical shaped tipis constructed on spherical frames in circular encampments to featuring it in the construction of articles such as sacred hoops utilized in ceremonies, rituals and battles, as well as the formal structures around and in which sacred functions took place, they made abundant use of the circle. They attached both secular and sacred associations to its form.

Lakota History

The Teton is one of seven divisions or “bands” of American Indians known as the Lakota. The distinction of “Sioux” may date back to the 17th century from the Ojibwa Nation, who used their word *nadouwesou*, which translates to “adders” to identify the Lakota. When French traders heard the Ojibwa refer to the Lakota, *nadouwesou* became shortened to *Sioux*.¹² The Teton band is the westernmost Lakota division. The name Teton derives from the Lakota word *tetonwan*, which translates to “dwellers of the prairie.” The remaining six Lakota bands form northern and eastern divisions. The northern nations go by *Yankton* from the Lakota word *ihanktonwana*, meaning “dwellers of the end.” This group further divides into the *Yankton* and the *Yanktonai*, or “little *Yankton*.” The eastern band is known as the Santee Lakota, a term that derives from the Lakota word *Isanti*, or “knife.” Their name may come from their land near Knife Lake in what is now called Minnesota. The

¹¹ James R. Walker, *Lakota Belief and Ritual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 102.

¹² Author Unknown, “History,” Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, accessed July 28, 2020, <https://www.standingrock.org/content/history>.

Santee consist of four bands named the *Wahpeton*, or dwellers among the leaves, *Mdewakanton*, or “people of Spirit Lake,” *Wahpekute*, or “shooters among the leaves,” and the *Sisseton*, or “camping among the swamps.”¹³ These seven distinct social and political entities collectively refer to themselves as members of the Seven Tents.¹⁴ They recognize a common culture and heritage in that they speak separate dialects of the Siouan Lakota language and share many characteristics of history, economy, social systems, and religious practices. Members of the Seven Tents never integrated into a fixed political structure or confederacy, but they did agree never to fight one another and often shared common interests and assisted each other as the need arose. Each distinct group values specific dialectic, geographic, political, and cultural characteristics.

The Teton, the largest of all the Lakota divisions, are further divided into distinct bands. The largest band is the *Oglala*, a name which can translate to “they scatter their own.” Next in size are the *Sicangu* or “burnt thighs.” This division is sometimes referred to as the *Brule*, from the French word meaning “burnt.” The remaining five Teton bands are the *Hunkpapa*, *Sihasapa*, *Itazipco*, *Oohenonpa*, and *Miniconjou*.¹⁵

¹³ Nomenclature becomes complicated concerning how to translate each band’s name in that each group is known by multiple names. Royall Hassrick, *The Sioux Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 21.

¹⁴ Author Unknown, “History,” Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, accessed July 28, 2020, <https://www.standingrock.org/content/history>.

¹⁵ *Hunkpapa* translates to “Those Who Camp at the Entrance,” *Sihasapa* translates to “Blackfeet,” *Itazipco* translates to “Without Bows,” *Oohenonpa* translates to “Two Boilings,” *Miniconjou* translates to “Those Who Plant by the Stream,” *Oglala* translates to “Scatter One’s Own,” and *Sicangu*, meaning “Burnt Thighs.” Royall Hassrick, *The Sioux Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 21.

The name *Tetonwan*, or “Dwellers of the Prairie,” aptly describes the original territory of the Lakota. They built villages along the wooded eastern banks of the Missouri River and in the upper verdant valleys of the Minnesota River in what is present-day Minnesota. The rich and loamy soils, mostly flat terrain and plentiful moisture of central Minnesota, were ideal for growing corn, beans, and squash. They supplemented these foods with roots, tubers, wild rice, and fruits. Teton men roamed the prairies and forests hunting buffalo, deer, and elk. In addition to farming, hunting, and gathering, the Lakota traded with nearby nations. In return for farm crops, Lakota traded meat and hides.

The Teton remained on the prairies of Minnesota until the middle of the 18th century when the ramifications of European expansion and increased intertribal warfare resulted in diminished resources and territory. Rampant disease in Eastern North America diminished their population further.¹⁶ While some Lakota chose to remain in the region, others left the area in hopes of a more peaceful and prosperous life further west. As this movement west precipitated displacement of peoples already inhabiting western territories, a steady process of westward movement and relocation of numerous groups continued for many years.¹⁷

The area west of the Mississippi River tallgrass prairies and east of the majestic Rocky Mountains became known as “The Great Plains” after Nevin Fenneman’s 1916 study was

¹⁶ Diseases spread from European explorers who exposed indigenous groups to epidemics such as cholera, typhus, influenza, malaria, measles, and yellow fever to which their immune systems had not developed an immunity resulting in the death of millions of people and the obliteration of entire indigenous communities. Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 12.

¹⁷ Robert Utley notes the Lakota were driven from Minnesota by the Chippewa. In their move west, the Lakota then seized territory inhabited by the Iowa, Ponca, Pawnee, Arikara, Mandan, Hidatsa, Assiniboine, and Crow nations. *Ibid.*

published entitled Physiographic Subdivision of the United States (Figure 10).¹⁸ The Great Plains consist of northern, intermediate, central, and southern sections. At the time the Lakota migrated to the Northern Great Plains, it was a broad expanse of flat land with much of it covered in prairie grassland. Creeks running east from their sources in the mountains transect the Plains and release their waters into the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. These Plains and Prairies were home to millions of bison and herds of swift elk, antelope and deer. Wolves, coyotes, and grizzly and black bears, rabbits, and turkeys also roamed the Prairies and Plains.¹⁹ The Teton may have been the first of the Lakota to permanently venture west of the Missouri River and settle in the Great Plains in the mid 18th century. This migration led them to the Northern Great Plains Black Hills in present-day South Dakota by approximately 1765.²⁰

Once relocated to the Plains, the Lakota came into contact with many other nations inhabiting the region, including the Cheyenne, Pawnee, Arapaho, and Crow, who would provide them with ample quantities of horses through trade.²¹ They were not immune to the need to adopt aspects of other cultures and civilizations to establish their survival further and continued to trade with the Mandan and Arikara, who, along with other nations, maintained

¹⁸ Nevin M. Fenneman, "Physiographic Subdivision of the United States." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. 3 (1): 17–22 (January 1917).

¹⁹ *The World of the American Indian*. Edited by Jules H. Billard. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 46 and 268.

²⁰ Royall Hassrick, *The Sioux Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 65.

²¹ *Ibid.*

agrarian lifestyles on the Great Plains. Once there, the Lakota discontinued their farming economy and stationary village life, choosing instead to establish small temporary nomadic encampments. Because of their ability to adapt to the environment, they developed a vibrant, resilient, and thriving culture that would surge, decline, and resurge due to changing circumstances over the next 100 years.²²

The Lakota perception of the circle as the ideal shape was most prevalent across a complicated concrete and abstract framework. Describable as a series of concentric horizons that began in the personal domain and extended to infinity, this invisible structure paralleled an individual's lifecycle from infancy through death, and became represented through Lakota arts, cultural productions, and social structures.

Within The Fold of the Family

The first circle to play an essential role in the life of a Plains person was that of the *tiwahe* or immediate family. Most American Indian nations considered tipis the property of the woman; they were her domain (Figure 11).²³ A woman's housekeeping skills were a true test of her ingenuity and skills and paved the way for memberships in prestigious religious societies or craft guilds. Not only did women prepare tipi poles, the cover, and liner that protected her family from inclement weather, but all household items, clothing, and toys as well. The tipi is a temporary structure and formed by stretching hides or canvas over a series of wooden poles staked to the ground. Carefully engineered, tipis provided shelter to its

²² Royall Hassrick, *The Sioux Life and Customs of a Warrior Society* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 65.

²³ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Women's Press, 2016), 147.

inhabitants from the heavy winds, blowing dust, hard rains, and extreme temperatures for which the Plains are well known.²⁴ Women also tanned the bison robes, and furs necessary to obtain European trade goods such as cloth, glass beads, metal tools, and weapons. A woman's success as the maker and keeper of her home lay in her hands. According to award-winning Kiowa beadwork artist Teri Greeves, "in staking down a tipi, a way of life is staked down and thus sacred space is created and held."²⁵

Along with building her family's residence, she utilized her skills and abilities to embellish it. Beadwork, quillwork, and painting expertly expressed the Lakota spirit and lifeways. Lakota women employed these art forms in the construction of household and sacred items alike. Tipi linings were painted and embellished as were backrests, robes, and various containers used to hold household goods. Women created geometric and non-representational designs (Figure 12). This gendered delineation in roles resulted in distinct design styles across the various nations. Preferences for certain symbols, compositions, and materials such as porcupine quills, native fibers, or glass trade beads resulted in tribal and regional variations.

Frequently, symbols such as circles, square crosses, or spirals which represented something particular at one time, were later reinterpreted to mean something different, only to recur even later, symbolizing something similar to the artist's original intent. This ancient

²⁴ Richard Conn, *Circles of the World: Traditional Art of the Plains Indians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 15.

²⁵ Joseph Shaikewitz and Shea Spiller, review of *Climate in Crisis: Environmental Change in the Indigenous Americas*, <https://brooklynmuseum.tumblr.com/post/613127475332071424/tag-along-on-a-virtual-tour-of-climate-in-crisis?fbclid=IwAR23SKo-KqDARofAPNIHirSNv52rXkrctRAHVjka8NGbsj7aX0HqoR8AnM4>, accessed 4/1/2020.

cycle, as George P. Horse Capture refers to it, is the visualization of what art historian Aby Warburg termed *pathosformel*, or “recurring emotionally charged visual tropes.”²⁶ His study of recurring symbols, gestures, and motifs, as well as an obsession with cultural exchanges of all kinds and all periods, lead to an interest in The Hopi Nation. In observing serpents on their pottery and their recurrence in Hopi Rain Dances, his early work in comparing Western European works of art such as Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* and the “animated incidents” that appeared between both works, is evident.²⁷ Throughout his life and work, he sought new ways to frame and present visual images to divulge their interconnectedness across time and space. Just as Warburg believed the serpent performed the work of culture, so too *Pictographic Dress* works along similar lines of “sympathetic magic.” Just as the snake represented how fear caused imagery that produced patterns of thought, *Pictographic Dress* represents how imagery leads to conceptions of space.²⁸ Even for the modern viewer, scenes of Bobtail Bear conducting horse raids, leading war parties and engaging in hand to hand combat elicit empathic connections Warburg called “symbolic relations.” When looking at *Pictographic Dress*, it is impossible not to wonder about the brave warrior as well as his

²⁶ Colleen Becker, “Aby Warburg's Pathosformel as Methodological Paradigm,” *Journal of Art Historiography* 9 (December, 2013).

²⁷ Kurt Forster, “Aby Warburg: His Study of Ritual and Art On Two Continents,” *October* 77 (Summer, 1996): 5-24.

²⁸ Warburg coined many new key phrases and concepts, one of which was *denkraum*, or space for contemplation. His doctors at Bellevue mental sanatorium in Kreuzlingen Switzerland viewed this concept as mental health. Joseph Leo Koerner, “Writing Rituals: The Case of Aby Warburg,” *Common Knowledge* 18, no. 1 (Winter, 2012): 86-105. Native American medicine is concerned with the physical, spiritual, AND mental health of the community and society in general. F. David Peat, *Blackfoot Physics: A Journey Into the Native American Universe* (Boston, York Beach: Wiser Books, 2005), 23.

grieving family and community. One cannot help but want to learn more about The Lakota and the resilience with which they lived such a vibrant and dynamic existence on the Great Plains.

Art historian Ernst Gombrich asserts we are accustomed to looking at all images as if they are photographs and that we see them as the mirror image of a literal or fictional existence. Following Gombrich's position established in his work concerning the science of signs, we may observe that when we look at *Pictographic Dress*, we are not just looking at scenes from the daily life of a Lakota warrior. Rather, we see two distinct representations; that of Bobtail Bear and also the historicity of one of the original Native American tribes living and hunting all over the Rocky Mountain ranges well before the arrival of European colonizers.²⁹

When horses became readily available, the range within which the Lakota lived and hunted vastly increased.³⁰ Before horses were in plentiful supply, either women, or the dogs of the Plains cultures pulled the family's travois, a drag sled for carrying goods comprised of two tree trunks connected at one end with a platform or net between (Figures 13-14). Travois facilitated transporting meat home from hunts and moving camp to a different location. Possessions were limited in number, and tipis were limited in height, about 12 feet. It took ten buffalo hides weighing about 65 pounds to cover tipis of this size. After the horse was employed to move items of weight, tipis increased

²⁹ E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, 11th ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 96.

³⁰ Marshall, III, Joseph M, *Returning to the Lakota Way: Old Values to Save a Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc., 2014), 56.

in size to about fifteen feet and were covered with approximately fourteen buffalo hides, weighing roughly 90 pounds. An increase in personal possessions was possible due to established trade routes and improved mobility. Although a larger travois limited accessibility to areas too narrow for the typical 3 to 4-foot wide sled, it did allow the Lakota to travel further and carry more belongings obtained through trade.³¹

The Totality Of The Tribe

Just beyond the flap of the growing Plains child's tipi lay the next most significant circle of one's tribe. The *tiyospaye* or extended family included individuals within the larger camp circle of tipis. Historically, the extended family circle aided in forming the foundation of the social structure of Lakota culture and continues to play a crucial role in the preservation of the Lakota culture today. Lakota holy man Eagle Voice recalled a "mystical experience" from his youth:

I was standing on the highest hill in the center of the world. There was no sun, but so clear was the light that what was far was near. The circle of the world was a great hoop with two roads crossing where I stood, the black one and the red. And all around the hoop more peoples than I could count were sitting together in a sacred manner. The smokes of all the peoples' little fires stood tall and straight and still around the circle, and by the murmur of the voices of the peoples, they were happy.³²

Nineteenth-century comparisons regularly associated the tribal group with the concept of

³¹ Alan Seeger, *We Are a Horse Nation: The Making of the Documentary Film* (Mission: Sinte Gleska University Press, 2014), 6.

³² John G. Neihardt, *Where the Tree Flowered* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), p. 53.

circularity in phraseology, such as "The sacred hoop of the tribe" or the "circle of council fires" into the common vernacular of the time.³³

The very shape of a campfire would make it sacred. It would make perfect sense for ceremonial spirituality to revolve around the form of a circle, as one would be navigating the fire in the process of participation. Lakota honored their brave warriors around the campfire, where they recounted heroic deeds. Native Americans historically performed ceremonies in the sacred space around a campfire. It is in this context for a short time in history, Lakota women sewed muslin dresses called War Honor dresses painted with biographic scenes showing valorous moments honoring deceased male members of their family.

The concept of renewal repeats itself across the ritualistic practices of the Lakota. The Sundance is the most important annual religious ceremony on Plains Indian reservations.³⁴ Traditionally intended to ensure the fertility of buffalo herds as well as success in warfare, a large circular lodge was built specifically for this ritual that took place at the summer solstice. Ultimately, the significance of the dance was not confined to these historical purposes and expanded to include personal sacrifices as a form of prayer in return for the renewal of the world. The entire community would encircle a pole made from a cottonwood tree. The Lakota believed the pole participated as an Axis Mundi, connecting the world above with the world below. Male dancers would perform until succumbing to utter fatigue

³³ Richard Conn, *Circles of the World: Traditional Art of the Plains Indians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 9.

³⁴ William K. Powers, *Sacred Language: The Nature of Supernatural Discourse in Lakota* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 70.

or achieving a trance-like fervor. The Sundance comprised a series of rituals related to the forces of creation that lasted four days. This annual event allowed the tribe time to renew their faith in the spirits that guided the world. The United States government banned the dance in 1881 as a way to suppress Indian resistance, and because white observers did not understand the self-sacrifice aspect of the ritual. Some secretly continued the practice risking retribution in hopes of preserving the old ways. Under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, sacrificial piercing was again allowed but not openly practiced until the 1960's when the United States experienced a period of Native American civil unrest and revival.

Kevin Locke, an independent scholar, and Hunkpapa Lakota, teaches that the hoop dance is a performative invocation danced to generate medicine both on a personal and collective level. The medicine comes from enjoying the skill and beauty of the dance. When Locke performs, he utilizes 28 hoops to depict the reemergence of life after winter and the annual renewal of life through flowers, butterflies, and the constellations. The hoops are in the four colors of the medicine wheel (red, yellow, black, and white) and represent the four directions, the four human races, and the four seasons. As the hoops interconnect over the progression of the dance, they symbolize the unity of all creation and the interdependence upon which the Lakota believe man's survival hinges.³⁵

Medicine men conduct rituals significant to Lakota religion in lodges explicitly built for the observance. These rituals establish a sacred link with the spirits the medicine men hope to invoke. These revered spaces, including sweat lodges, Sundance arenas, and tipis, unlike westernized churches or synagogues, are constructed to be temporary, making them easily

³⁵ Tara Browner, *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*, pbk. ed., Music in American Life (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 62.

transportable. *Inipi*, or purification ceremonies, take place in temporary frames of branches bent to form a small dome. The structure is complete when covered with blankets or animal hides blocking out all light.³⁶ The "sweat" takes place in this circular enclosure.

Not just found in art and architecture, but also in Lakota literature and sacred music: the circle emerges again and again. For native dancers, the beat of the drum represents the beating human heart and rhythms fundamental to all life. This rhythm is the reason performativity plays a vital role in Native expression. In the Sundance, the pole acts as a connection to the other world.

The Hoop Of Humanity

The third metaphoric circle of the Lakota is that of humanity. It includes both enemies and allies, as all shares the common bond of humanness. According to Lakota holy man Eagle Voice's vision included earlier, the natural world, which included all other life forms and was often the subject of the nonvisual art of storytelling, was a valuable addendum to the circle of humanity. An oral tradition was a dependable means by which historical and cultural traditions, literature, laws, and conventional social mores circulated throughout the community. These stories handed down over time were a means by which they could record essential events, preserve their culture, and express their beliefs. Most importantly, these stories taught them how to live, which plants to eat and how to harvest plants for medicinal purposes, and how to hunt and treat wild game. Native Americans still connected to their established lifeways find sacred connections and models for moral behavior in these myths and stories passed down time and time again.

³⁶ Larry J. Zimmerman, *The Sacred Wisdom of the Native Americans* (New York: Quarto-Book Sales, 2016), 214.

Native Americans better understand their geneses, the world they are navigating, the origins of members of the natural world, as well as interrelational correlations with those nations. Through memory and repetition, stories are the threads that bind a people to their culture and traditional practices. According to A. LaVonne Brown Rouff, in *American Indian Literatures: An Introduction, Bibliographic Review, and Selected Bibliography*, oral literature is ritually enacted and performative. The participatory nature of recounting events according to individual interpretations with specific gestures and vocal techniques employed to elicit responses from listeners. Another important aspect of oral literature, according to Ruoff, is the coalescence of the community, a byproduct of a participatory tradition. The mnemonic device of repetition is a means by which Native Americans make sense of their world and is yet another instance of circularity within the Lakota culture.

The Spiritual Sphere

The vast realm of the unknown, *Wakan*, includes beings and forces both unseen and uncontrollable by man.³⁷ It forms the largest of the concentric circles encompassing the lives of people living on the Plains. This sphere stretched past the constraints on human vision, requiring a means by which those living on the Plains could contact and connect with the powers inhabiting this realm. Given how much confidence they placed in the intercession of unseen powers on the affairs of men, religion affected nearly every aspect of Plains people's

³⁷ Many people attempted to define the word *Wakan* to understand its meaning. William Powers does not attempt to define it in his work as the Lakota do not translate it when speaking English. William K. Powers, *Sacred Language: The Nature of Supernatural Discourse in Lakota* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 118.

lives. In Lakota belief, spirit power or "medicine" inhabits all things, and the Lakota makes this connection in multiple ways.

One of the most significant means by which the sacred is made circular manifests in the Medicine Wheel. The shape of the medicine wheel encompasses many meanings across the Lakota culture. Contained in its simultaneously simplistic and sophisticated round form is a cosmological representation (Figure 15). The circle itself symbolizes creation's cyclicity, and the cross denotes the Four Winds and the four principal directions. A cross in the center forms four quadrants and each quadrant represents one of the four seasons. Red, black, white, or yellow designates a section of the wheel. The Lakota consider these sacred colors, the colors of humanity.³⁸ Anthropologist and scholar Larry Zimmerman describes an essential aspect of Lakota ideology when he explains that we should think of the cosmos as a sphere holding every material element and event that occurs. He says because all past, present, and future events share space in the field, they assume timelessness even though they were, are, or will be linked to spatiality. Zimmerman also adds that because the cross represents a horizontal dimension as well as a verticality that intercepts at the pole down the center, events gain dimensionality on layers within the space, and it is the spatiality that connects everything.³⁹

The shape of the circle recurs in the round tipis pitched in circular encampments around which a community moves through a circular ceremonial space. A circle of men positioned

³⁸ William K. Powers, *Sacred Language: The Nature of Supernatural Discourse in Lakota* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 118.

³⁹ Larry J. Zimmerman, *The Sacred Wisdom of the Native Americans* (New York: Quarto-Book Sales, 2016), 250.

around a round drum reiterates the heartbeat of their lifeways. The Lakota maintain the give and take of a collaborative community that provides for the needs of their people as well as the repetition of customs and beliefs from generation to generation. Even the livelihoods dependent upon the circularity of nature's patterns aid in resolving universal questions that inform us when defining our origins and identities as well as how we connect to them through collective memories. Time spent with Native people, walking in nature, or at sacred sites can empower an actual transformation of consciousness. Temporarily, the participant begins to hear, see, feel, touch, and perceive the world in profoundly different ways so that the ego blends into the collective.

Indigenous science exchanges the exactness and conclusiveness of fixed laws and measurable levels of Western science for flux, change, and transformation. Transformations of consciousness and being are not abstract concepts to Indigenous cultures. For instance, a bird can transform into a man, a mask can become imbued with animating power, and an embodied muslin dress can generate metaphysical and healing powers. The embodied performance of *Pictographic Dress* continues to connect the past to the future. For the Lakota, the undulating folds of a muslin dress as it is worn and danced in breaks from the confines of planarity and becomes a dynamic entity. So too, it is for the active wearer; the cycle of time can turn back on itself in a recurring renewal. The grieving wearer becomes encircled within the folds of time, the circle of those who sit around the ceremonial ground, and the circle of the tipis. As if imitating the cyclical movement of the seasons or the waxing and waning of the moon, time circulates on itself, simultaneously becoming past and future, and within that curvature of time, all unknowns resolve. War Honor Dress wearers enfold into themselves informing their people, just as contemporary artists can dip into the past and

return to long-gone days of the bravery and the strength of a people. *Pictographic Dress* recognizes the presence of something genuinely ancient, a cyclic movement that connects a nation with the enfolding and unfolding of the entire cosmos. An embodied commemoration allows another way of knowing and remembering by enabling a new feeling about time. *Pictographic Dress* connects the movement of the body to memory-it is a materialization of the metamorphosis of meaning between one world and another.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ F. David Peat, *Blackfoot Physics: A Journey Into the Native American Universe* (Boston, York Beach: Wiser Books, 2005), 23.

CHAPTER 2

A CRITICAL AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EXTANT PICTOGRAPHIC WAR HONOR DRESSES

Along with collaboration and commemoration, creativity is a vital component of Lakota culture. Artistry and skillfulness remain deeply woven throughout the social and sacred patterns of this vibrant nation. The establishment and evolution of Native visual languages express individual and collective identities while illustrating whole histories. While the long-established pictographic and rock art tradition was mostly patriarchal in practice, women artists also remained guided by long-standing protocols and norms that made art production by women commonplace.

Biographic Rock Paintings

Warriors, among others, employed the biographic tradition long before American Indian artists finished painting pictographic warrior scenes on a modest dress hand-sewn from imported muslin. Independent scholar and retired archeologist James Keyser classifies three main styles of Plains Indian rock art: Ceremonial, Hoofprint, and Biographic Tradition. Ceremonial Tradition rock art includes images of humans, ritual objects, animals, and weapons and began between 500 and 1000 AD. This form of communication helped create a dynamic relationship between Plains Indians and the sacred forces fundamental to their lifeways (Figure 16). Hoofprint Tradition rock art may have been carved during women's vision quests to promote fertility and illustrate world-renewal ceremonies (Figure 17). These carvings depict bison tracks as well as various animals, human faces, and female figures. Archeologist Linea Sundstrom believes the artists designed the drawings to show the interconnectedness between the life-giving abilities of women and the life-sustaining gift of

bison.¹ Ceremonial Tradition rock art influenced Biographic Tradition rock art (Figure 18). Initially, this style included representations of shield-wielding warriors and later grew to include coup counts.² This adaptation of the style incorporated one man's war honors and brave deeds accumulated over a lifetime into one location. North Cave Hills, also known as Ludlow's Cave just inside the boundaries of Custer National Forest near Ludlow, South Dakota, exhibits rock art in all three styles. This tradition of commemorating an individual warrior's heroics and displaying them together would resurface in an unusual and more emotive form in the last half of the nineteenth century. This visual system of communication expanded from rock art to designs on buffalo hides for use as robes, on tipi covers, dolls, moccasins, and war shirts.³ The Lakota further applied this technique in painting their calendars on hides, and sometimes muslin.⁴

To the Lakota, a year occurred between the first snowfalls of each winter; thus, their calendars became commonly referred to as "winter counts." Historically, Winter Counts were records or calendars that geographically and pictographically related to a significant yearly event with images often applied to the hide or muslin in a continuous spiral (Figure

¹ James Keyser, *Plains Indians of Earth and Sky*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2011), 58.

² Bravery and fortitude were highly prized virtues in the Lakota culture. Warriors "counted coup" as a way to gain status among peers. Courage ensured a higher social position. Max Carocci, *Warriors of the Plains: the Arts of Plains Indian Warfare*, McGill-Queen's Native and Northern Series (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 93.

³ James Keyser, *The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky*, ed. Gaylord Torrence (Paris: Skira, 2014), 60.

⁴ Janet C. Berlo, *Plains Indian Drawings 1865-1935: Pages from a Visual History*, ed. Janet Berlo (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 43.

19). One image is symbolic of a significant incident occurring in that year with imagery arranged in a spiral.⁵ According to historian Donald L. Fixico, the cyclical structure of Native American time negates the need for linear and clock-based time.⁶ Historically, Native Americans excelled at time perception as their very survival depended upon reading signals in the world around them.

Their ideas of time were more precise than those of the Europeans. They were more alert to the subtle changes in foliage, wind direction, tidal movement, and bird migration that marked the passage of the year.⁷ Names of the months included what was occurring in nature's cycle at the time, i.e., Cold Moon (January) Hungry Moon (February) Windy moon (March) Grass moon (April) Geese go north moon (May) Corn Moon (June) Hot Moon (July) Drying up Moon (August) Thunder Moon (September) Ten Colds Moon (October) Geese Going Moon (November) and Big Cold Moon (December).⁸ Documenting time by watching nature meant marking time was closely related to geographical locations.

The Lakota relationship with time and concept of timelessness unfetters the ties binding the Lakota to view life through the relationship between cause and effect, or beginnings and

⁵ John Canfield Ewers, *Plains Indian Art: The Pioneering Work of John C. Ewers*, ed. Jane Ewers Robinson, The Charles M. Russell Center Series on Art and Photography of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 8:162.

⁶ Donald Fixico, *The American Indian Mind in a Linear World* (Abington: Routledge, 2003), 50.

⁷ F. David Peat, *Blackfoot Physics: A Journey Into the Native American Universe* (Boston, York Beach: Wiser Books, 2005), 200.

⁸ Unknown Author, "The Lakota Moon Calendar," Akta Lakota, accessed December 16, 2019, <http://aktalakota.stjo.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=8991>.

endings.⁹ This idea of timeless time is referred to as "polychronic" by American anthropologist E.T. Hall. Simultaneously occurring events is a characterization of polychronic time and is closely related to naturally occurring rhythms, the earth, and the seasons. Consider how extemporaneous, intermittent, or concomitant natural events can and have taken place.¹⁰ This concept of simultaneity is a recurring motif that runs through Native American ideology. Zimmerman writes that Native American ceremonies and celebrations echo the idea that a past event "remains a vital, active, invisible presence in the life of people today." He adds that these observances and rituals demonstrate far more than just the specific context in which communities conduct them or the re-enacted sacred rites that they may incorporate. He posits these long-observed and little-changed rituals are the embodied observance of the continuity of life while at the same time commemorating cultural preservation.¹¹

Tied to the symbology of the Lakota's belief in the medicine wheel and their perception of time, is the concept that nothing ever ends. The sacred harmony of all things and all beings, an embracement of continuity and renewal, and a belief that past, current, and future events co-occur. In this understanding, when a living being completes a cycle, they move to the past. They are still geographically close, just "out there" somewhere but always near.

⁹ William K. Powers, *Sacred Language: The Nature of Supernatural Discourse in Lakota* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 122.

¹⁰ Duranti, G. & Di Prata, O. (2009). Everything is about time: does it have the same meaning all over the world? Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2009—EMEA, Amsterdam, North Holland, The Netherlands. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute.

¹¹ Larry J. Zimmerman, *The Sacred Wisdom of the Native Americans* (New York: Quarto-Book Sales, 2016), 250.

Vine DeLoria Jr., a Lakota Elder, scholar, author, theologian, historian, and activist, writes about personal medicine bundles that were kept in the family dwelling for up to a year and treated as if the person was still present with the family. This practice allowed time for a community to process the situation and extend the trauma over some time. The family could be comforted by the fact that even though the deceased was no longer visibly present, he or she was emotionally and spiritually close.¹² *Pictographic Dress* operated in much the same way.

Seemingly disparate components of material culture can be united both abstractly and functionally. Used in pursuit of familial, individual, and gender identity as well as balance, healing, and divine intervention, the medicine wheel, rock art, ledger art, war shirts, and shields together with pictographic dresses work to ensure connections to the past and provide lasting symbols of cultural identity. Minnesota Institute of Art Curator Jill Ahlberg Yohe writes that to Native American women, “legacy” translates to a combinative existence encircling the past, present, and future with aesthetics and knowledge systems that transcend time and place.¹³ The Lakota learned many would challenge this very concept of a continuum not once, but many times throughout their existence on the Plains.

With the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the United States government relegated the Lakota to reservations. This significant period of upheaval and the subsequent lack of previously abundant resources forced the Lakota to transform the synergetic custom of

¹² Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 171.

¹³ Terri Greeves and Jill Ahlberg Yohe, *Hearts of Our People* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 20.

recounting war deeds into a more individual visual expression utilizing paper and ledger book pages provided by white men.¹⁴

The period of the establishment of the reservations was one of traumatic tragedy. During this painful period of history, initiatives imposed by the United States government forced American Indians to relocate. Warriors no longer needed war shirts to illustrate their many brave achievements or sacred shields to protect them in battle. They no longer lived in buffalo-hide tipis chronicled with their accomplishments. Nevertheless, they continued the practice of memorializing heroic war deeds in new and innovative ways, such as on ledger pages and muslin dresses.¹⁵ These alternative mediums are vibrant and invaluable sources of information about Plains Indian history. They are primary “texts” and artifacts.¹⁶ They are sacred.

Ornate beadwork increased in popularity during the last decade of the eighteenth century. Items such as horse gear, ceremonial regalia, small suitcases, and women’s shoes were simultaneously decorative and functional (Figures 20-22).¹⁷ What once was utilitarian and fashioned out of necessity was transformed into ethnographic examples of a people’s capacity to communicate the intellect and intricacies of their culture.

¹⁴ Max Carocci, *Ritual and Honour: Warriors of the North American Plains* (London: British Museum Press, 2011), 48.

¹⁵ Janet Berlo, *Native North American Art* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 124.

¹⁶ Janet C. Berlo, *Plains Indian Drawings 1865-1935: Pages from a Visual History*, ed. Janet Berlo (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 10.

¹⁷ Janet C. Berlo, *The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky*, ed. Gaylord Torrence (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2014), 226.

In the last half of the 19th century, the Lakota would endure numerous hardships and disasters. The Treaty of 1868 defined the borders of the Great Sioux Reservation.

After the discovery of gold in the final quarter of the nineteenth-century on the Lakota reservation in the black hills of North Dakota, tensions mounted with the United States Government. The first transcontinental railway brought further disruption. The number of American traders, travelers, and settlers increased throughout the 19th century, and neither they nor the American Government respected American Indian rights to their traditional territories. What resembled an overwhelming victory for the Lakota at The Battle of Little Bighorn in the short term, resulted in worsened relations between Native Americans and the United States government in the long run. Following the battle, the government intensified attempts to drive Native Americans from their lands and onto reservations.¹⁸

It was likely just before the Battle of Little Bighorn between 1875 and 1880 that Bobtail Bear, a Lakota warrior, was killed during a skirmish with a member of the Crow tribe.¹⁹ After Silent Woman constructed what looked to western eyes to be an unassuming muslin dress, a male member of the tribe or a group of men painted the dress with vibrant depictions to honor Bobtail Bear's heroic exploits (Figure 1). This custom allowed his older sister, Silent Woman, to memorialize him, remember him, and honor him in the community (Figure 23).²⁰ War records painted on women's muslin dresses are rare, and according to Lakota

¹⁸ Nancy Bonvillain, *Teton Sioux* (Broomall: Chelsea House, 2004), 52.

¹⁹ Bobtail Bear's age at the time of his death is uncorroborated at this time. Gaylord Torrence, Senior Curator at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, approximated this date range.

²⁰ Lakota women generally did not paint garments of this nature as they had not witnessed the events. Validation of war coup points occurred when fellow warriors witnessed the brave acts. The artists were either active participants in battle or able to recount war coups. John

knowledge, only women with relatives killed in battle could wear them.²¹ Though deceased warriors were no longer able to experience the highest honor of recounting battle exploits around the campfire, a female family member did it for them by wearing pictographic dresses and singing about their bravery after war parties returned from battle (Figure 24).²²

Memory Threads: *Pictographic Dress*
At The Nelson-Atkins Museum Of Art

Silent Woman's community heard Bobtail Bear recount his brave deeds while still alive. Silent Woman wore her dress and sang songs to keep his memory alive after his death in battle with a Crow. They would have looked at the depictions of Bobtail Bear and understood the intricate details now lost to time. Were it not for Bobtail Bear's name glyph above his image, history might well have forgotten him (Figure 25). Now more than one hundred years later, the casual viewer at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art does not know much more than the identity of the warrior and the wearer.²³ One war depiction blends into another, and the symbols and events understood by the Lakota in the last decade of the nineteenth century become little more than surface design.

Pictographic Dress is on a long-term temporary loan to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art from Conception Abbey in Conception, Missouri. Marie Louise McLaughlin bequeathed

Canfield Ewers, *Plains Indian Painting: A Description of an Aboriginal American Art* (Stanford & London: Stanford University Press, 1939), 7.

²¹ Frances Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music, and Culture* (Washington, DC: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 367.

²² Larry J. Zimmerman, *The Sacred Wisdom of the Native Americans* (New York: Chartwell Books, 2016), 241.

²³ Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. Museum label for *Pictographic Dress* Kansas City, MO, 16 Oct. 2016.

the dress to the Abbey upon her death. How ownership of the dress transferred from Silent Woman to Mrs. James McLaughlin to the monks at Conception Abbey is not known.²⁴

Comparative to extant examples of war honor dresses, *Pictographic Dress* is relatively unpretentious in design. Perhaps this was the intent, to allow Bobtail Bear to remain the central focus or perhaps because, for reasons unknown to us, Silent Woman did not pass the dress on to family members who might have added additional embellishments. Further investigation of the seams shows advanced sewing techniques. The sleeves appear to be attached to the body of the dress, utilizing a self-finished seam. A seam sewn in this manner eliminates raw edges from showing on either the right or the wrong side of the fabric. The use of this technique shows expert knowledge of sewing skills. The bottom of the dress appears to have an approximately four-inch, double-fold, straight-stitch hem that has been intricately hand-stitched in place. Silent Woman constructed the dress from muslin obtained either through trade or as part of an annual allotment provided to each household.²⁵

Pictographic Dress shows evidence of damage due to wear and tear over time. Stains and holes bear witness to its age and fragility. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art Senior Curator of American Indian Art, Gaylord Torrence, believes Silent Woman sewed the dress around 1885.²⁶

²⁴ Frances Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music, and Culture* (Washington, DC: University of Nebraska Press, 2001),367.

²⁵ Theodore Brassler, *Native American Clothing: an Illustrated History* (Richmond Hill, Ont.: Firefly Books, 2009), 14.

²⁶ Gaylord Torrence, interviewed by Linda Link, Kansas City, MO, United States, December 10, 2016.

Silent Woman sewed the garment from muslin probably imported from England. The muslin was most likely woven in a textile mill by English women in Lancashire, West England, the center of textile manufacture during Britain's industrial revolution. The finished garment measures 52 x 52.75 inches.²⁷ The artist or artists added images on the dress using graphite and red, yellow, green, and blue pigments. As the paint appears subdued, the pigments used on Pictographic Dress are likely natural mineral pigments rather than synthetic dyes obtained through trade.²⁸ The depictions located on the other side of the dress also show engagement with the enemy, but lack representations of bloodshed. Except for one horse on what, according to western convention, might represent the front of the dress, every figure faces toward the right. The artist placed this atypical, symmetrical portrayal in a prominent position. It is the depiction of Bobtail Bear's final battle. This illustration showing enemy engagement does include the portrayal of blood. A blue and green horse faces a red horse, but neither horse depiction includes wounds. A crow warrior in a striped war shirt and dark leggings stands on the ground near the red horse and aims an arrow at Bobtail Bear, mounted on horseback. Bobtail Bear carries a yellow shield decorated with three groupings of two feathers. These white feathers tipped in black indicate the number of times he discovered signs while scouting for enemies. Near the shield, the artist painted what appears to be a yellow fox pelt indicating Bobtail Bear belonged to the elite kit fox war society or *toka'las*, (Kit Foxes). This society ensured proper conduct within the tribe in both times of peace and

²⁷ Unknown Author, "Pictographic Dress," The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, May 10, 2020, <https://art.nelson-atkins.org/objects/11815/pictographic-dress>.

²⁸ Gaylord Torrence, interviewed by Linda Link, Kansas City, MO, United States, December 10, 2016.

war.²⁹ Bobtail Bear wears a patterned shirt splattered in blood. An arrow protrudes from a gaping head wound (Figure 26).

After discovering a photograph of Silent Woman wearing Pictographic Dress in *Teton Sioux Music* by Frances Densmore and reading the dress, it was interesting to note Silent Woman was photographed wearing the most emotionally charged depiction located at the back rather than at the front. By western convention, this appeared counterintuitive, but the mystery would be solved. Renowned Dakota/Nakoda dressmaker Juanita Growing Thunder expounds on this curious discovery by explaining Lakota women dance with their backs to the viewers.³⁰

There are approximately eighteen instances of warfare and horse raids portrayed on the dress. It is not clear whether the horse raids are related to warfare incidents or painted as separate events. Three of the eighteen episodes depict attacks against women. Not including Bobtail Bear's glyph, there are five additional name glyphs included on the dress (Figure 27-31).³¹ Either additional members of Silent Woman's family are memorialized on the dress, or as Torrence suggests, the different glyphs represent other warrior members of his tribe who fought alongside Bobtail Bear.³² One or several of them may have been the artist. Two other

²⁹ James E. Walker, *Lakota Belief, and Ritual* (Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 273.

³⁰ Terri Greeves and Jill Ahlberg Yohe, *Hearts of Our People* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 242.

³¹ The information published by the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art does not indicate that the dress memorializes four additional male members of her family. Given how short-lived and dynamic this tradition appears to be, however, it is a distinct possibility.

³² Gaylord Torrence, interviewed by Linda Link, Kansas City, MO, United States, December 10, 2016.

warriors included on the dress incorporate fox pelts hanging from their horses. Perhaps they were included on the dress honoring Bobtail Bear as they may have been active participants in the same battles. According to both Gaylord Torrence and Dr. Janet Berlo, the dress was more than likely sewn by Silent Woman herself, given the valuable and creative role of women in the Sioux culture.³³ Without close examination, it is impossible to discern if more than one seamstress constructed the dress.

Natural Progression Of Biographic Tradition Ledger Drawings

Ledger drawings offer a unique insight into collectively remembered events of bravery, not unlike the Lakota war honor dresses. Dr. Candace Greene, an American anthropologist with the Smithsonian Institution, argues that bilateral composition, or two-sided arrangement, is a recurring pattern in ledger art. Greene asserts that the majority of pictographic depictions show two figures interacting. More complex scenes portray multiple pairs. A vital component of this compositional arrangement is that the figures oppose each other through various differentiating traits. These may be due to gender, tribal affiliations, or situational circumstances within the composition. Context is needed to resolve the question of relevancy within each event portrayed.³⁴ In keeping with a Lakota understanding of continuity, it makes sense that multiple scenes contain the same individual portrayed simultaneously. Each character also fills multiple roles at the same time: female, victim, male, warrior, victor, Crow, Lakota, soldier. Through this concurrent and synoptic composition, the viewer

³³ National Museum of the American Indian, *Identity by Design: Tradition, Change, and Celebration in Native Women's Dresses* (Manchester, UK: Hudson Hills, 2010), 138.

³⁴ Candace Greene, *Plains Indian Drawings 1865-1935: Pages from a Visual History*, ed. Janet Berlo (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 26.

confronts a series of oppositions placed in a bilateral format.³⁵ The positioning of figures delineated by various categories is ubiquitous but not universal. Berlo contends the artists portrayed the main character on the right and drew the opposing character on the left.³⁶ This style is consistent with the images portrayed on *Pictographic Dress*, which shows Bobtail Bear's name glyph illustrated above him in multiple places on the dress.³⁷ A change in the placement of the antagonist and protagonist in scenes of warfare could occur when the artist depicted the warrior overpowered by his enemies. Greene asserts it is not surprising that artists depicted scenes of defeat since, according to Lakota belief, warriors were strong and courageous and worthy of honor even when overpowered. Artists employed his "face-to-face" composition to illustrate hunting scenes with the hunter placed to the right of the animal. Moreover, men and women were also conversely paired, with the man on the right and the woman or women on the left.

The question of why the motion of each scene flows from right to left stirs curiosity. George Horse Capture, anthropologist, activist, author, and Lakota argued that because it was customary to wear buffalo robes with the head to the wearer's left, therefore pictures would have flowed from right to left. With opposing figures illustrated facing each other, each separate composition moves from the viewer's right to left. While Greene explains how to

³⁵ Janet Berlo, *Native North American Art* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 26.

³⁶ Candace Greene, *Plains Indian Drawings 1865-1935: Pages from a Visual History*, ed. Janet Berlo (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 26.

³⁷ The use of name glyphs in pictographic art was common practice to indicate a particular warrior. Gaylord Torrence, interviewed by Linda Link, Kansas City, MO, United States, December 10, 2016.

interpret spatial relationships shown in individual occurrences, she does not consider precisely how to read the dress from scene to scene.

Comparative Analysis of Extant Pictographic Dresses

It is worth considering, then, how *Pictographic Dress* compares to three other war honor dresses held in the National Museum of the American Indian collection (NMAI) in Washington D.C.: *Woman's Dress* (Figure 32), *Dress Painted with Battle Scenes* (Figure 33), and *Dress Painted with Men's Battle Exploits* (figure 34). *Woman's Dress* (circa 1890) consists of natural cotton cloth.³⁸ The seamstress or sewers appliqued bands approximately two inches wide in mustard yellow, and dark-blue wool onto the dress where the sleeves are attached. Fabric inserts at the side extend down beyond the front and back rectangular shaped panels and provide a striking accent at the bottom of the dress. Stretches of red silk ribbon and triangles of dark-blue wool decorate the bottom of the gussets. A dark-brown collar edged in red ribbon accents the neckline. As with *Pictographic Dress*, the artist or artists painted battle scenes in what appears to be natural-mineral red, yellow, and blue pigments and graphite.³⁹ The dress measures approximately 55.7 x 50.5 inches. The dressmaker and the warrior commemorated by the dress are unknown, but scholars postulate Running

³⁸ National Museum of the American Indian, *Identity by Design: Tradition, Change, and Celebration in Native Women's Dresses* (Manchester, UK: Hudson Hills, 2010), 134.

³⁹ Organically derived pigments are less vibrant than commercially produced paints. Ronald Koch, *Dress Clothing of the Plains Indians* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 23.

Antelope, Hunkpapa Lakota warrior painted the dress.⁴⁰ Records at the NMAI cannot provide a definitive provenance but do indicate an unknown source sold it to the museum in 1949.

This particular dress, although close in type and style to *Pictographic Dress*, differs in multiple ways. It has a considerable amount of accent decoration, a straight neckline as opposed to a rounded opening, lengths of fabric which extend on each side below the front panels, and sleeves that are longer with an inside seam intentionally left open allowing for greater freedom of movement. Similarities include a bilateral composition in each scene, and all vignettes depict motion from the artist's right to left. Very similar illustrations of heroic acts cover both dresses. The two examples feature archetypal, notable portrayals in a position of prominence on the chest just below the neckline. The artists painted a less prominent battle scene on the back below the neckline. Both artists employed the use of natural pigments, similar symbols, and illustrated warriors in a strikingly similar style, and approximately the same scale.

The second related dress, *Dress Painted with Battle Scenes*, is also made of natural cotton and dated between 1890 and 1900 (Figure 34).⁴¹ It measures 60.2 x 54.1 inches. Red wool accents the straight neckline, sleeves, and hem. The scalloped wool sewn to the hem provides added decoration. Once again, the provenance of *Dress Painted with Battle Scenes*

⁴⁰ "Collection Search Results," Smithsonian Institution, accessed January 7, 2020, https://collections.si.edu/search/detail/edanmdm:NMAI_228007?q=lakota+cloth+dress&record=22&hlterm=lakota%2Bcloth%2Bdress&inline=true.

⁴¹ National Museum of the American Indian, *Identity by Design: Tradition, Change, and Celebration in Native Women's Dresses* (Manchester, UK: Hudson Hills, 2010), 132.

is mostly unknown.⁴² Battle scenes emerge in graphite, painted with red, yellow, and brown pigments. The areas painted red appear muted, indicating a natural mineral pigment. The yellow and brown are more vivid and saturated, implying trade dyes.

Dress Painted with Battle Scenes differs from *Pictographic Dress* in that depictions of heroic adventures do not entirely cover the dress. The figures only cover the bottom third of the front panel and the very bottom near the hem on the back panel. There are marked similarities in the bilateral composition of individual scenes, and all scenes depict movement from right to left. A significant difference is the lack of name glyphs. There is only one instance of bodily harm on the dress, located at the lower, right, front corner rather than at the chest. Due to the lack of name glyphs, it is unknown if the injured warrior was the one the dress memorialized. This dress is in relatively good condition compared to *Pictographic Dress*, with only slight staining in spots and no visible holes. Pigmentation appears to be a combination of natural and trade dyes. Additionally, the artist seems to have paid less attention to details concerning regalia. There is a simplicity to the depictions of the figures compared to the warriors painted on *Pictographic Dress*. The warrior depicted on this dress likely did not live long enough to conduct many horse raids.

⁴² The National Museum of the American Indian acknowledges that the dress was previously in the collection of Nate Salsbury, the owner of Buffalo Bill's "Wild West" show in New York City. His widow donated the dress to the museum in 1921. "Collection Search Results," Smithsonian Institution, accessed January 7, 2020, https://collections.si.edu/search/detail/edanmdm:NMAI_116908?q=nate+salsbury&fq=culture%3A%22Indians+of+North+America%22&record=66&hlterm=nate%2Bsalsbury&inline=true.

The final dress with which to compare *Pictographic Dress* is entitled *Dress Painted with Men's Battle Exploits*.⁴³ The NMAI acquired it from an unknown source in 1930. This dress measures approximately 61.4 x 50.4 inches and was formerly thought to be from the Pikuni Blackfeet but has been reattributed as probably from the Sihasapa Lakota (Blackfoot Sioux). Further research is required to ascertain how the origin of the dress was re-identified. As with the other three known pictorial dresses, a complete collection history is unknown.⁴⁴ The dress, dated circa 1890, is made of cotton cloth with denim sleeves and gussets. The accent gussets of red felt triangles, and narrow horizontal strips of red felt positioned approximately five inches apart down the length of each gusset. Red felt fringe also adorns the seam where the denim sleeves are attached to the muslin portion of the dress. It also lines the seams at the shoulders and the rounded neckline. Bright blue triangles, approximately three inches tall, line the bottom hem on both the front and back skirt panels.

This dress differs from *Pictographic Dress* in many ways. It is unique in that there is a seam at the waist where the bodice attaches the skirt panels. Additionally, there are eight full-scale depictions of wounds on the dress that may indicate where the memorialized warrior was fatally shot or wounded, either in battle or throughout his lifetime. There is an absence of bilateral composition. Both the front and back upper body panels contain immensely complex battle scenes rendering it difficult to definitively determine which scene depicts the

⁴³ "Collection Search Results," Smithsonian Institution, accessed January 7, 2020, https://collections.si.edu/search/detail/edanmdm:NMAI_188549?q=lakota+dress&reco rd=42&hlterm=lakota%2Bdress&inline=true.

⁴⁴ This particular dress may have formerly been in the collection of Charles W. Hutchinson, a New York banker, railroad owner, and collector. "Collection Search Results," Smithsonian Institution, accessed January 7, 2020, Ibid.

final moments of the warrior honored on the dress. The skirt panels also depict chaotic and violent warfare. Of the four known examples of Lakota war honor dresses, only in *Dress Painted with War Exploits* do events move from both left to right and right to left.

Examining these rare and poignant garments scene by scene and comparing depictions of blood, facial profiles, and horse silhouettes establish several significant points. Several artists most likely worked on *Pictographic Dress*, with one artist painting the majority of the scenes (Figure 27).⁴⁵ Close visual analysis of the dresses also elucidates that more than one woman contributed to the making of the dresses.⁴⁶

Looking at pictographic war honor dresses is like thumbing through a photo album. It is not necessary to begin at the beginning of the album and look at each page in succession to comprehend the bigger picture. Epitomized by the circular form of the medicine wheel and the circulation of figures on the War Dresses, the Lakota ideologically embraced duality and simultaneity. There is no single correct way to read the dresses today or relate one circumstance to another.⁴⁷

There is limited current academic discourse around War Honor Dresses. The rarity of the tradition, whether or not women painted them, and who was qualified to wear them accounts for the majority of available scholarship. Existing documentation discusses bilateral

⁴⁵ Comparing A and B to C in Figure 26, the observer can see the artists employed less color in depicting this particular scene. Additionally, the figures appear smaller in stature and more sinewy than in the other depictions on *Pictographic Dress*.

⁴⁶ Information obtained in person during hands-on research conducted at the National Museum of the American Indian storage facility in Suitland, Maryland, in August 2017.

⁴⁷ Gaylord Torrence, interviewed by Linda Link, Kansas City, MO, United States, December 10, 2016.

composition and actions that tend to move from the viewer's right to left, but the conclusive discussion regarding standard geographical locations for death scenes does not survive. Perhaps due to the passage of time and the widespread attempt to assimilate and colonize Native Americans, understanding how or if the scenes might fit together to form a comprehensive and sequential narrative is lost.

These four dresses were all collaborative endeavors. Women sewed them. Men painted the warrior scenes, as witnesses to battles firsthand. The depictions on each dress provided biographical non-fictional accounts of brutal combat or dangerous encounters. The artists may have been present during many, perhaps all of the events shown on the dresses. If not, they may have had enough personal experience to convey an event based on the descriptions of other warriors who were there.⁴⁸ Each dress varies slightly in construction, composition, materials, and style. With what little information remains available, this tradition was seemingly short-lived. Many questions remain surrounding *Pictographic Dress* and the complicated cultural customs portrayed in its depictions; questions only satisfied by further research.

Quantum physics represents the material world as being the externalization of paradigms, forms, balances, and interconnections of energy. Likewise, American Indians speak of relationships among the powers and spirits that surround them. The various alliances and relationships native communities have entered into with these powers form an essential

⁴⁸ Gaylord Torrence, interviewed by Linda Link, Kansas City, MO, United States, December 10, 2016.

aspect of an indigenous world. These alliances carry with them obligations and the necessity for carrying out periodic ceremonies of renewal.⁴⁹

The very shape created by embodied War Honor dresses when worn in movement creates a shifting between past, present, and future. It is a physical connection to the soil itself and a metaphysical connection and consciousness of being. This embodiment is a creative, moveable embodiment of the medicine wheel; it is generative and regenerative in both physical and metaphysical spheres. *Pictographic Dress* binds us together through shared experiences such as periods of struggle, cultural resilience, and decolonization. In the same manner the mighty Cottonwood pole participates in the Sundance as Axis Mundi connecting this world to the next, *Pictographic Dress* bridges tradition with contemporary, past with future, sacred with profane, and wearer with power.

⁴⁹ F. David Peat, *Blackfoot Physics: A Journey Into the Native American Universe* (Boston, York Beach: Wiser Books, 2005), 31.

CHAPTER 3

POWER DRESSING AND PERFORMATIVITY

You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round....The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves... Black Elk¹

The Lakota have been “power dressing” well before Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel designed the dress suit for women in the 1920s. Chanel was known for combining traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity and fusing menswear with sportswear to free women from long, cumbersome skirts and constricting corsets. During the last half of the 1970s the phrase “power dressing” became a staple of the American vernacular. John T. Molloy wrote *Dress for Success* in 1975 and *Women: Dress for Success* in 1980, alluding to a genderized professional dress code. Female workers entering the highly charged and typically masculine realms of politics and business began pairing well-tailored suit jackets with knee-skimming skirts, heels, a coordinating scarf, and conservative jewelry.² A somewhat subversive *modus operandi* allowed women agency to establish authority and respect, and subconsciously acquire power. Later, the popularity of the pantsuit provided a more overt subversive means by which businesswomen and activists could affect real change.³ Democratic women of

¹ Black Elk, John G. Neihardt, and Raymond J. DeMallie, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, premier ed. (Albany, N.Y.: Excelsior Editions, State University Press of New York Press, 2008), 194-96.

² Ironically, the jacket worked to conceal femininity while the skirt simultaneously exploited it.

³ The Pantsuit Nation is a private Facebook group, and Twitter hashtag used to unite Hillary Clinton supporters during her 2016 presidential campaign. The group does not affiliate with a political party, but they employed the pantsuit as a symbol in support of Clinton's campaign.

Congress wore white suits and dresses at President Trump's 2019 State of the Union address to commemorate suffragettes, as a show of solidarity for all women, and as a nonverbal demonstration in support of equal rights. Power dressing could be considered, through visual sociology, as an investigation of how clothing functions in the relationship between a social system and a negotiation of power.⁴ Western marketing ploys remind everyone that the clothes make the "man." In American Indian ideology, "man" makes the clothes, and their form and function combine to generate balance and power.

Animal nations and cosmic forces situate at the core of the reverence of and quest for *Wakan*. Consistent with this teaching, the foremost means by which spiritual powers become accessible is through rituals and ceremonies or objects. They are the physical invocations and manifestations of the spiritual forces they understand to operate in the universe. It is a complex combinatory concept encompassing ideas of the spirit, energy, force, strength, and vitality present in natural elements, animals, plants, minerals, and humans accessed for both collective protection and individual safety or guidance. The Lakota belief system acknowledges an unequal distribution of power between substances and beings. Embracing a concept of power where dissimilar forces are in a continually dynamic relationship helped shape the ideological framework around which Plains Indians formed an understanding of war, conflict, and resolution. These concepts affected every aspect of the Lakota's life on the Plains.

Lilly Chamberlain, "Vision, Mission," pantsuitnation, accessed January 25, 2020, <https://www.pantsuitnation.org>.

⁴ "Fashioning Power – Visual self-presentation in Social Life", Anna Akbari, Submitted to The New School for Social Research in May 2008 - Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. (Dissertation Committee: Dr. Jeffrey Goldfarb, Dr. Elzbieta Matynia, Dr. Jacho Kang, Dr. Marshall Blonsky)

Complimentary Roles in Generating Power

Historically, socialization into gender roles began at an early age. Plains males were typically encouraged and trained to become warriors. As infants, their mothers sang songs to them of bravery and honor. Before embarking on their vision quests, young boys learned the history and moral rules of the tribe from stories told to them by elders. Such stories were not only entertaining but were also used to teach the children how to behave and prepare them for manhood.

The passage from child to adult was typically clearly defined in Native American tribes. During vision quests, coming of age youth put into practice all the necessary skills they had learned in order to prove self-sufficiency in the wilderness and fasted until they had had a vision. During the vision, the male would discover a guardian spirit or direction for his new adult life. Once established as an adult within his tribe, his life would revolve around protecting and providing for the health and welfare of his people.

Alternatively, women's lives centered around domestic affairs. They, too, formed guilds and societies and constructed all necessary items of clothing as well as amulets and protective objects used in ceremonies and war rituals. Societies of skilled classes of women gifted with the power of constructing protective amulets formed among certain tribes. For instance, until the early twentieth century, a designated group of women among the Oglala of the Sioux Nation prepared shields and war medicines to be provided to warriors going on the

warpath.⁵ Specially designated women were also entitled to bless warriors before the men engaged in battle.

A firm reliance upon metaphysical powers theoretically underpinned warrior societies and women's guilds necessary for the management of public affairs and the ritual well-being of the many groups that inhabited the North American Plains. Women's societies allowed women a means by which to recount their achievements, such as the number of objects decorated in one season or how many hides they had tanned. The practice of recounting deeds paralleled the ranking system of men who, in similar performative fashion, counted coup and rehearsed their accomplishments at victory dances. These two structures not only provided for independent systems of individual recognition but also worked to define gender roles and responsibilities. In her work, philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler posits gender is a performative construct based upon repeated actions understood through a process of repeatability and a regularized and constrained duplication of standards and customs. Butler argues that gender is a phenomenon continuously produced and reproduced.⁶ She further states it is a cultural construct and capable of creating what she calls domain of agency and freedom.⁷ A War Honor dress or tipi performs this same function.

⁵ Clark Wissler et al., *Societies and Ceremonial Associations in the Oglala Division of the Teton-Dakota*, in *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History: Societies of the Plains Indians* (New York City: NMAH, 1912), 11:1-100.

⁶ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (Dec., 1988): 519-31.

⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Roudedge, 1993), 12.

Correlative to Butler's theory, American Indian women and men are the most visible manifestations of the notion of balance or complementary powers central to Plains Indian ideology. Roles assigned to different sexes define, construct, and maintain cosmic balance by way of gender identity that among Plains people was primarily determined by what people did in their daily lives. Warfare related activities established and maintained gender identities per the roles assigned to males as well as for those who crossed or blended the spiritual, or more rarely physical attributes of both. These were the men who reproduced actions generally enacted by women or women who repeated actions usually performed by men of the community. They were representative of the continuous interplay of collaboration and complementary roles needed to ensure cosmic balance.⁸

The production of war shirts constructed by women and worn by warriors exemplifies the Lakota spirit of collaborative cooperation. Honorable warriors of high standing employed these garments during ceremonious occasions as a way to honor their community and recount battle exploits (Figure 35). Women's skill and expertise combined with male spiritual symbols and brave deeds benefited both maker and wearer in different ways. As makers found opportunities to demonstrate technical expertise, wearers donned objects imbued in the spiritual power that granted protection.

Both brave exploits and symbols mutually sustained and informed each other in gendered performances that established divisions between men, women, and additional identities. For instance, dragonflies, which among some Plains nations represent transformation, appear on war-related items collected and worn by men-women. A symbol

⁸ Max Carocci, *Warriors of the Plains: the Arts of Plains Indian Warfare*, McGill-Queen's Native and Northern Series (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 51.

synonymous with transformation represented their gendered position as in between males and females.⁹

Men added personal touches to the shirts made by their spouses by adding pigments and additional protective items to the fronts, backs, and or sleeves of their shirts. Specific colors and designs conveyed certain societal conventions. As an example, among the Sioux, the use of blue for sky and yellow for earth could respectively cover the upper and lower portion of a shirt.¹⁰ Not all signs and symbols included on war shirts are easily decipherable. Men and women both personalized their designs with highly individual motifs alluding to real-life experiences with immaterial entities and intangible cosmic forces. As is evinced on *Pictographic Dress*, more easily recognizable pictograms such as horse tracks, horses, guns, scalps, human forms, or pipes formed an extensive visual vocabulary familiar across the Plains.¹¹ Pictorial illustrations indicate an array of symbols used to demonstrate particular concepts or items. While concurrently working as social agents of male power and prowess, war shirts were very personal, still powerful items that identified warriors with their individuality, life history, spiritual experiences, and individual essence, established in ideas of power and masculinity. Not only were cosmic powers invoked, but political forces were put into play as well.

⁹ Coleman Winfield 2003, 'Feeding Scalps to Thunder: Shamanic Symbolism in the Art of the Cheyenne Berdache', pp 98-113 in Colin F. Taylor and Hugh A. Dempsey (eds), *The Plains Indians of North America: Military Art, Warfare, and Change. Essays in Honor of John C. Ewers*, Wyk auf Foehr: Tatanka Press.

¹⁰ Clark Wissler, "Decorative Arts of the Sioux Indians", *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History* 18 (3): 231-77.

¹¹ Karen Daniels Petersen, *Plains Indian Art from Fort Marion* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), PG number needed but the library is closed due to COVID 19.

Traveling Circles

Dance plays an integral role in both male and female Lakota religious practices and is an essential method by which a group initiates power and connects with Mother Earth. By dancing in a circle together, a community becomes strengthened and united. The cyclic songs represent the continuity of life and of time.¹² Anthropologist and art historian Max Carocci posits the term “powwow” is a derivative of the Algonquin term *pau-wau*, which refers to participative assemblies of spiritual leaders who worked to cure disease or guarantee victory in battles, raids, or hunts utilizing recurring songs, emblems, motifs, and symbols. Over time, the term grew to define large assemblies, or most gatherings characterized as ceremonies or celebrations.

By 1882, every effort was made by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to cease such cultural celebrations and gatherings with the punishment of loss of rations, imprisonment, loss of tribal status, and even death. Shortly after the BIA deemed ceremonial dances “devious and dangerous,” wild west shows such as those led by William Cody and the Miller Brothers hired hundreds of American Indians to participate.¹³ Although there was a shift in enactment, these themed spectacles did provide American Indians with the means to thwart the intentions of the United States government subversively. Through both open and defiant resistance as well as unobtrusive and often subversive means, American Indians continued to dance.

¹² Tara Browner, *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press), 98.

¹³ Clyde Ellis, “We Don't Want Your Rations, We Want This Dance,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 30 (Summer, 1999): 133-54.

The powwow, as experienced today, originated at the turn of the nineteenth century and is derived from Omaha, Ponca, and Crow tribe's warrior dances. The Warrior dances, disseminated to multiple Plains tribes at different times, are now credited as the model upon which dancers conduct contemporary powwows. The Yankton Sioux obtained the Grass Dance from the Omaha in the 1840s who, in turn, shared it with other various northern tribes.¹⁴ Attendees conventionally refer to the annual schedule of hundreds if not thousands of powwows occurring across the United States and Canada as the "powwow circuit."¹⁵

A distinct link exists between contemporary powwows and military societies established before the reservation period. Historically, warrior societies coordinated social events and dances. Communities utilized these dances to commemorate and continue significant cultural and social practices. After the massacre of hundreds of Lakota at Wounded Knee in 1890, the role warrior societies played in tribal life changed in profound ways. In this transitional period, warriors could no longer participate in the battles that previously earned them social status. Lakota men forced to forge new connections to warfare through ritual and ceremonial life, dancing, if even as wild west show participants, provided opportunities for maintaining continuity with past martial practices as well as contributing to tribal cohesion and community identity. Powwows became a regular annual event for many Plains communities by the 1920s. Over time, these performances were woven into the fabric of tribal and intertribal affairs. Not only did dancing provide the resilient Lakota with a way to affirm,

¹⁴ Tara Browner, *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*, pbk. ed., Music in American Life (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 21.

¹⁵ Ann Axtmann, "Performative Power in Native America: Powwow Dancing," *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 1 (Summer, 2001). 9.

reaffirm, and negotiate identity, but also aided in the development of new forms of artistic styles at a time when many ceremonies and customs were outlawed.

The aerial layout of the dance arena plays a significant role in the powwow as a historical representation of the Lakota's past (Figures 36 and 37). Not only can the event be interpreted as a composition of bodies and matter, but as cultural metaphors, and as a link between spiritual and physical worlds inhabited by material and immaterial beings. Lakota powwow grounds are physical representations of the sacred hoop with a series of hoops radiating from the center out. When female participants dance, it is in a clockwise direction near the center. Male participants dance counterclockwise further out from the center. This arrangement forms the power necessary to create a protective force. The drums form the next concentric layer and symbolize a protective ring around the whole area. Spectators and vendors form subsequent rings around the dancers. This order is customary in not only Northern and Central Plains powwows, but in Intermountain and Pacific Northwest regions as well.¹⁶ The layout of a contemporary Lakota powwow arena mimics historic campsite configurations and serves as a visual reminder of the reinforcement of the sense of circular time in space (Figure 38).

Elaborate regalia worn at contemporary powwows provides a visual continuum of a warrior ancestor's dependence upon the use of amulets and sacred symbolism. Before going to battle, warriors carefully chose symbols to decorate their bodies, clothing, and horses to

¹⁶ Tara Browner, *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*, pbk. ed., *Music in American Life* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 96-97.

gain optimal supernatural power more so than to ensure physical safety (Figures 39-40).¹⁷ Circles painted around the eyes and nostrils of the horse assisted in seeing and smelling danger. Warriors included many painted symbols such as thunder stripes to symbolize the god of war and dragonflies for imbuing swiftness and agility.¹⁸ The biographic/pictographic style born of war and warfare became encoded in the regalia worn by dancers historically and today through the shapes, forms, and meanings included in the ornamentation. As with *Pictographic Dress*, through careful examination and research, can meanings be interpreted. Powwows, intended initially to aid in summoning spiritual assistance, grew to visibly and dynamically commemorate a legacy of warrior societies.

Animated Decoloniality

Powwows are animated decoloniality as they remain a cherished means by which communities keep customs such as dancing, cooking, gifting, and socializing, to name a few, alive. The annual powwow symbolizes far more than donning regalia, dancing, or singing songs. They serve as a highly regarded social phenomenon symbolizing the survival and revitalization of culture. Along with providing a means to come together, they also encourage sharing and reaffirming old ways.¹⁹ Even though the powwow has experienced shifts in practice since its inception, it is a collaboration between material culture and motion to form

¹⁷ Christine Mather, *Native America: Arts, Traditions, and Celebrations* (New York: Clarkson Potter/Publishers, 1990), 167.

¹⁸ Shatka Bear-Step, *Painted Ponies* (Scottsdale: Bear-Step Publications, 1952), 13-14.

a Movement as well as a (re)movement. Vine DeLoria Jr. attests a powwow “still makes good medicine.”²⁰

For American Indians, the relationship between humans and nonhuman worlds builds the framework upon which their concept of power has flourished. Native teachings hold everyone, and every being in the natural world is encircled by an infinite living and dynamic sphere. The power that facilitates the mystical is the essence of exchanges between beings.²¹ Through the act of performance, dancers fluctuate between the spirit and human worlds. During the dance, time suspends, dancers reconnect with ancestors, and the old ways are maintained. Accessible power becomes generated through the magic of a dynamic system of connections and the energy grids cyclically created and recreated at yearly intertribal powwows.²²

Powwows are not the only instance in which collective movement works to generate connections with ancestors and medicine. The annual sacred Sun Dance takes place within the circular structure of an arbor. This arena encompasses much more than a boundary imposed upon them by the confines of a rigid classification such as "stage": they are actual and symbolic zones of animated energy activated when dancers dance.²³ The “power of the world,” as referenced by Black Elk at the beginning of this chapter, is found in the circularity

²⁰ *The World of the American Indian*. Edited by Jules H. Billard. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 46, 366.

²¹ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* (Boston Beacon, 1992), 22-23.

²² Ann Axtmann, “Performative Power in Native America: Powwow Dancing,” *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 1 (Summer, 2001), 9.

²³ *Ibid.*

of powwow arenas in which the dancers perform. When moving bodies engage actively in indigenous ceremonies, present connects to the past, and participants invoke power and perform memory.²⁴

Womanpower

The ability or permission to access supernatural power is not just available to the men of indigenous communities. Connection to spirituality and personal energy forms the basis of resistance, survival, and renewal for most Native American women. One way, particular to women, to access this power is by wearing the skirt. Female elders teach younger generations that wearing skirts enables the earth to better connect with feminine power and energy.²⁵

For many tribes, the skirt may represent the “hoop of life” or the life-giving abilities women possess. Over time, westernized ideology has negatively influenced the Native American interpretations of this power to create life. The practice of wearing a skirt are understood by some as a means to restrict women under the guise of tradition, much like the donning of the hijab for female practitioners of Islam.²⁶ Dr. Myra Laramee, a member of the Fisher River Cree Nation, actively strives to share “skirt teachings” to explain wearing traditional dresses and skirts as a way of honoring their femaleness and teaching their children pride in the old ways and love of self.

²⁴ Ann Axtmann, “Performative Power in Native America: Powwow Dancing,” *Dance Research Journal* 33, no. 1 (Summer, 2001), 9..

²⁵ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, second ed., CSPI Series in Indigenous Studies (Toronto: Women, 2016), 145.

²⁶ Ibid.

...And when we think about that dress, we think about all the teachings that she carries: the first teacher...The Woman. But the hide dresses that we used to wear, they used to have fringes on the bottom. And those fringes would touch the medicines as we walked the earth. And Mother Earth would always know who it was that was making their presence felt on her back...on her shoulders. So that when the prayer was made by that woman, Mother Earth would show her what it is that she needed...²⁷

Traditional Cree teacher Ruth Morin shares that part of being an indigenous woman is conducting oneself in a manner recognizable as a woman in this world and the spirit world. At a skirt teaching, Vera Martin, Anishnaabe, stood with her knees bent, so the hem of her skirt grazed the ground and said: "this is my tipi." Martin advocates wearing the skirt "because the energy from Mother Earth must always be there." Comparing the skirt to the tipi is a compelling historical and visual analogy. Dr. Kim Anderson, Metis, and Cree author, scholar, and educator explains that historically, women originally owned tipi dwellings. Tipis were described as "an old lady sitting on the plains wrapped in her shawl." Anderson argues that wearing traditional dresses and skirts should be viewed as a celebration of womanhood and the ability of a woman to bring life into the world. Author Leanne Simpson sometimes wears skirts to honor the old ways as well as the Elders who shared skirt teachings with her.²⁸ A contemporary desire to preserve the teachings of the elders gives agency to historical feminine connectivity to Mother Earth, and the strength, energy, and power obtained through wearing dresses and skirts.

²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/cbc/videos/skirt-teachings-with-myra-laramee/1485878361436352/4/5/20>.

²⁸ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, second ed., CSPI Series in Indigenous Studies (Toronto: Women, 2016), 146.

Memory Threads: From Commemoration To Decoloniality

Remembering serves a myriad of purposes. As is the case with *Pictographic Dress*, one reason to remember is to reverence the past. In the process of remembering, we form a genesis of ‘self’ and fashion a sense of our identity. By giving form to the formless, Silent Woman strengthened Lakota culture and connected future generations to the old ways.

A prime purpose of War Honor dresses was that they necessitated affective embodied action. The dress served as a means by which Bobtail Bear's community could remember him, and for this to occur, the dress not only needed to be worn but needed to be worn in public. How a group or community communicates itself to itself is how Victor Turner defines his notion of plural reflexivity. He further develops his theory to explain this communication is not confined to what he refers to as “talking codes” but expands it to include “doing codes” such as gestures, dancing, music, graphic depictions, sculpture, and the production of symbolic objects. Public reflexivity ultimately becomes a performance.²⁹ Solitary reflection plays a no less important role in the construct of a public expression of being, but this paper primarily focuses on the collective experience.

French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs theorized, “it is in society that people normally acquire their memories.” He believed the interactivity of subjects from within a particular social group engaged in a continual return to images, stories, and rituals collectively revered within that group engendered memory. He argued that if memory was social and cultural, it was also performative, therefore making the past present and lived and

²⁹ Victor Turner, “Frame, Flow and Reflection: Ritual and Drama as Public Liminality,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6, no. 4 (Dec., 1979): 465.

relived.³⁰ According to Hawlbachs, memory “generates knowledge of the relationship between past and present events that is oftentimes troubling, other times comforting.”³¹ In the case of *Pictographic Dress*, remembering occurred both on the individual and collective levels. Silent Woman wore Pictographic Dress and evoked both positive and negative memories of Bobtail Bear not only for herself but for members of her community as well.

Art Historian Aby Warburg, a contemporary of Hawlbach, argued memory centered around the persistence of specific visible shapes and symbols. Warburg felt this access to commonly held cultural forms such as circles and cosmological symbols provided a means to overcome what he called “the phobic pressures of reality.” Warburg’s dissertation underlined his interest in recurring symbols, gestures, and motifs comparing two works by Sandro Botticelli, *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* and what he termed “animated incidents” found in both works. This common thread affected his later work when he observed a recurrence of serpents on Zuni pottery and its recurrence in the Zuni Rain Dance.

At approximately the same time Silent Woman constructed *Pictographic Dress* (c.1885), Aby Warburg began his studies in art history, history, history of religion, and archaeology. Modern German scholars later prioritize the psychological and emotional elements of his scholarship to further develop the process of commemoration, with particular emphasis on traumatic events. Through his work, he introduced the concept of iconography into art

³⁰ Maurice Halbwachs, “The Social Frameworks of Memory,” in *On Collective Memory*, ed. Lewis Coser (London and Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 38.

³¹ Liedeke Plate and Anneka Smelik, *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2015), will provide page no.

history –one of the tools needed to decipher and interpret the phenomenological and historical symbols depicted on and associated with *Pictographic Dress*.

Memory is a performative act. In *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture*, authors Liedeke Plate and Anneka Smelik combine a methodological focus on memory as a performance with a theoretical emphasis on cultural products as “performances of remembrance.” They focus on how a culture remembers as well as how performative acts of memory generate past experiences in the present.³² Their reasoning closely aligns with the American Indian concept of time.

Plate and Smelik reason that it is through commemoration that we embody the memories that inhabit us, and in their private and plural iterations, they are an animate phenomenon. In *Technologies of Memory in the Arts*, Plate and Smelik look at what they refer to as the ‘cultural dimension’ of memory, meaning, what a culture remembers and how it brings about that memory. They define cultural memory as the materiality and methods by which a specific culture develops, understands, maintains, and remembers their identity.³³ Plate and Smelik position it in the junction between an individual and collective memory, joining the being to its behavior. Through it, the immaterial fuses to the material forming motile reconfigurations between past and future as well as personal and collective. Because their definition of cultural memory denotes recurrent memories, they contend art, media, and "popular culture" play a pivotal role in it. They assert forms of artistic recollection work to

³² Liedeke Plate and Anneka Smelik, *Performing Memory in Art and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3.

³³ Liedeke Plate and Anneka Smelik, *In Technologies of Memory in the Arts* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 2.

imprint as well as give meaning to and thus affect the past. Whether recalled deliberately or unintentionally, their theory contends the way one remembers the past affects both the present and the future it assists in creating.³⁴ Plate and Smelik's philosophy states that two factors function in the production of memories; the sociocultural framework in which communities create them, as well as the material means available to construct and reconstruct, document, collect and recollect them.³⁵ Bobtail Bear's community reinforced Lakota historicity every time they recounted stories of bravery and valor around the fire. Every time the winter count was related to the community, or they performed sacred rituals and practices, they embodied commemoration. Every time Silent Woman wore *Pictographic Dress* at victory dances or sang to honor Bobtail Bear, she performed memory.

Almost 130 years have passed from when Silent Woman skillfully constructed a garment that not only served to clothe her body, but taught relatives how to live in a brave, honorable, humble, and respectful way, and also served to help keep Bobtail Bear alive in the hearts and minds of her people. Many years later and *Pictographic Dress* and other extant dresses from the short-lived war honor dress tradition are serving another purpose. Contemporary artists, both indigenous and of Euro-American descent, are not exempt from the connections to the past these dresses afford. As advocates for social justice, artists can often say through their work what words cannot express. Powerful artwork accessible to the general public helps to challenge and reframe narratives about American Indian histories and the effects of colonial expansion, annihilation, and cultural assimilation. Cheyenne River

³⁴ Liedeke Plate and Anneka Smelik, *In Technologies of Memory in the Arts* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 2.

³⁵ Ibid.

Sioux/Lakota Rhonda Holy Bear's historically accurate figures work to perform memory to remind us that the Lakota were and are creative, resilient, and ingenious people despite the many changes imposed upon them. Emil Her Many Horses, Oglala Lakota and curator in the office of Museum Research at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, constructed a traditional tableau honoring Native American soldiers who served in Vietnam but in a way that harkens back to the warriors who lived and died on the windswept prairies of the Plains. Traditional War Honor Dresses also influenced artists Peter Bowles, Mark Sykes, Lauren Good Day Giago, and Colleen Cutschall, who constructed contemporary versions of war honor dresses, all with the intent to honor and memorialize the past for the benefit of the future. Their work, in communicating us to ourselves, facilitates Turner's notion of "doing codes." Even though *Pictographic Dress* was constructed and embellished at the end of the 19th century, its relevancy and potency affect and influences contemporary artists. Along with the Lakota, several Nations have incorporated the War Honor Dress tradition into their culture to honor and commemorate loved ones as a continuance of warrior traditions.

Lakota artists Rhonda Holy Bear and Emil Her Many Horses construct figures, not as playthings to creatively teach children how to live as contributing members of their community, but rather as teaching tools to inform and educate us about a rich and diverse culture. Their figures expand the cultural dimension of memory, as Plate and Smelik argued. First American knowledge, art, ideas, and cultural material is received, preserved, and transmitted orally from one group to another, one generation to another, and can adapt and change according to circumstances as necessary. Recognizing generational knowledge as a living entity and thus subject to change, and acknowledging "traditions" as constructs

intended to fit certain realities of those who are living and practicing them at the time is imperative to interpreting the past.³⁶ New adaptations by 21st century First American artists produce a tangible working technology exchangeable for a paradigmatic shift toward decoloniality.

³⁶ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Women's Press, 2016), 14.

CHAPTER 4

THE INFLUENCE OF GENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE ON 21ST-CENTURY LAKOTA ARTISTS

Scholars Andrew Herscher and Ana María León are proponents of reassigning the alternative meaning of “passages of communication” to borders in efforts to produce what they refer to as the promise of decolonization. Bolivian Aymara scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui incorporates this concept into her theories of decolonization. The elements woven into dynamic cultural fabrics such as values, organizations, laws, and symbols work to represent what Cusicanqui refers to as “the past-future” in the present. She argues decoloniality is not linear but cyclical and materializes when indigenous peoples seek to strengthen a reality different from those that are systemically attempting to suppress and subjugate them.¹

By way of singing, dancing, practicing, and making, indigenous nations affirm their historicity. These undertakings help form the continuous cycle through which Rivera Cusicanqui asserts decolonization unfolds. By preserving and commemorating cultural identity and artistry, innovative Lakota artists preserve the Lakota legacy for future generations and produce the neo-cultural narratives necessary to travel the passages of communication about which Herscher and León write.

Figure artist Rhonda Holy Bear is a prime example of a Lakota woman utilizing her knowledge of her heritage and artistic skills such as beading, quilling, painting, and sewing,

¹ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, “Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: A Reflection On the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 95-109, <https://read.dukeupress.edu/south-atlantic-quarterly/article-abstract/111/1/95/3568/Ch-ixinakax-utxiwa-A-Reflection-on-the-Practices>.

to navigate and widen the passages of communication toward decoloniality. In doing so, she provides powerful gifts of healing, identity, deepened value systems, and a heightened awareness of human commonality.

Holy Bear, also known by Wakah Wayuphika Win which, translated, means “Making With Exceptional Skills Woman,” was born on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation in La Platte, South Dakota (Figure 41).² She comes from proud Lakota warriors. The paternal side of her family is Itazipco Lakota, and her great grandmother White Face Woman (Itè Ska Win) and great grandfather, Horse (Tashunka), were at The Battle of Little Big Horn. While Tashunka died during that battle, her grandmother Josephine Sees The Horses survived. She and her mother (Itè Ska Win) then fled with Sitting Bull to Canada and in 1891, and later surrendered at Fort Randall with Sitting Bull.³ Her uncle Philip LeBlanc continued the proud Lakota warrior tradition by serving under General MacArthur as a Lakota Code Talker with the 302nd Recon Squadron, 1st Cavalry Division. Holy Bear remembers seeing him march with the WWII Lakota Code Talkers in an Eagle Butte, South Dakota, Labor Day Parade. Her mother attended St. Joseph’s Indian School in Chamberlin, South Dakota, a boarding school for "Indians." While there, she was taught embroidery and sewing from Catholic nuns and would later teach Rhonda several of the stitches she learned.⁴

² Rhonda Holy Bear. “Rhonda Holy Bear.com.” *RhondaHolyBear.com*. Rhonda Holy Bear, n.d. Web. 8 Nov. 2014.

³ Rhonda Holy Bear. “Facebook Biographical Information.” *Facebook*. Rhonda Holy Bear, 14, August 2011. Web. 9 Nov. 2014.

⁴ Rhonda Holy Bear, phone interview with Linda Link, Merriam, KS, October 16, 2014.

During her early formative years, Holy Bear lived with her maternal grandparents, DeSmet and Angeline Holy Bear.⁵ When she was four years old, she remembers making her first doll. She showed her handiwork to her Grandmother Angeline, who told her the story of her beloved doll. Just like Holy Bear, Angeline's grandmother raised her. Her grandmother was an accomplished beader and quillwork artist and made a special doll for her. She took Angeline and her beloved doll with her to a tribal meeting in South Dakota, where she often sold her work. At the meeting, Angeline and the daughter of wealthy tourists played together, but when it came time to go, the little girl would not leave without Angeline's beloved doll. Her grandmother sold the doll to the tourists. It was the loss of this doll that would later inspire Holy Bear and ultimately lead to a rewarding artistic career. Angeline encouraged Holy Bear's creativity. She lacked sufficient money to purchase store-bought toys. Being too young to comprehend that someday this lack of money would enable her to one day strengthen the bond connecting her to her culture, she walked along the Missouri River, scouring for what the water would bring to her to use. Holy Bear often hiked five miles to the garbage dump to recycle snippets of cloth or miscellany with which to construct dolls. She continued to live with DeSmet and Angeline until forced to attend a federal boarding school in 1963.

When she was ten years old, Holy Bear participated in "Project Light House," where she learned to bead from Ella Bears Heart, an elderly Sioux woman.⁶ At fourteen, Holy Bear

⁵ Rhonda Holy Bear. "Rhonda Holy Bear.com." *RhondaHolyBear.com*. Rhonda Holy Bear, n.d. Web. 8 Nov. 2014.

⁶ Rhonda Holy Bear. "Rhonda Holy Bear.com." *RhondaHolyBear.com*. Rhonda Holy Bear, n.d. Web. 8 Nov. 2014.

went to live with her aunt in Chicago, where she attended the Owayyawa Indian School. This school strove to help gather the pieces of traditional culture so the broader picture could be preserved for generations to come, as well as make traditional culture relevant and available.

Holy Bear also attended Little Big Horn High School, where she studied art at a college level, was exposed to many different artistic mediums, and excelled at drawing, painting, dancing, acting, singing, and traditional Native American art forms. Her teachers referred to her as "the multi-talented kid."⁷ The school immersed its students in the arts and cultural history programs through lectures and demonstrations from many acclaimed Native artists and tribal members. Students were also encouraged to research and study their cultures. Research is still an integral part of her work today, and she continues to study Native American artifacts in-depth to more firmly embrace her culture.⁸

After graduating from The Little Big Horn High School in 1976, Holy Bear earned a prestigious spot at the Art Institute of Chicago on the merits of her portfolio, but tuition was beyond her reach. Not to be deterred, she continued researching, honing her skills, and making figures. Every Thursday, she went to the Chicago Field Museum to take advantage of free admission night. There she sketched the treasures of her people and recorded as much as she could about the artistry and culture of her ancestors. Noted scholar and historian Father

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "St. Augustine's Center for American Indians. St. Augustine's Center for American Indians Records, 1961-2006." N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Dec. 2014. <http://chicagocollectionsconsortium.org/node/3607>.

Peter J. Powell took note of Holy Bear's artistic ability and drive and arranged for her to have access to the museum's archives and library.⁹

In 1982, Rhonda saw an advertisement in the Chicago Sun-Times for American West, a new art gallery. After contacting them out of inquisitiveness, the director offered her a sales position. In the process of driving her to work on her first day, the director took notice of the dolls she had made and suggested she bring several of them with her. Both dolls were purchased the very next day. Holy Bear was encouraged to offer more dolls for sale; one individual purchased those eight dolls the same day.¹⁰

Over the next four decades, after much work and persistence, Holy Bear's work has featured in various magazines, journal articles, museum catalogs, and papers (Appendix B). Depictions of her work have been illustrated in multiple books (Appendix C) and exhibited and collected by many galleries, museums, and foundations (Appendix A). Her most recent exhibit, *Full Circle/Omani Wakan* on display from October 2016 through January 2019 at the Chicago Field Museum, highlighted her trajectory as an artist as well as her desire to explore her cultural and spiritual narrative further.¹¹ Her beautiful figures and every aspect of each sculpture hold powerful symbolic and spiritual meaning for both Holy Bear and the Lakota.¹² She works from the heart with sincere devotion and appreciation for her people. Her attention

⁹ Rhonda Holy Bear. "Rhonda Holy Bear.com." *RhondaHolyBear.com*. Rhonda Holy Bear, n.d. Web. 8 Nov.2014.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Author Unknown, "Full Circle/Omani Wakan: Lakota Artist Rhonda Holy Bear," fieldmuseum.org, October 30, 2017, <https://www.fieldmuseum.org/exhibitions/full-circleomani-wakan-lakota-artist-rhonda-holy-bear>.

¹² Rhonda Holy Bear, phone interview with Linda Link, Merriam, KS, October 16, 2014.

to detail results in an accurate representation of Lakota clothing, accouterment, and, ultimately, Lakota historicity.

When making a figure, Holy Bear first assembles the body. Some of the torsos have been made entirely from cloth; some from a combination of cloth and basswood, some are entirely made from basswood or created with a wire armature. Holy Bear constructed early figures with faces and hands carved from clay to imbue them with more emotion. At present, her primary medium is woodcarving, a skill at which Holy Bear excels. These materials are highly symbolic of the Lakota connection to the earth. Another means by which Holy Bear shows a correlation between her figures and her people is through the use of an elongated line art style. With lengthened proportions, her figures personify the spiritual reach of her people. Although her relatives lived in this world, they were attaining the spiritual world in how they lived, and she intends for her work to demonstrate this endeavor. Through their long and proud lines, she also sees a personal spiritual reach.¹³ While the primary influence for Holy Bear's work comes from the tribes of the Plains, particularly her own Lakota people, her use of long and elegant facial details also combines features from Africa, Egypt, Oceania, and Asia.¹⁴ Wood faces and hands are painted with earth ochers to depict skin color and enliven each figure accurately. After she paints a figure with high-quality mineral pigments, Holy Bear then designs scale drawings for the garments. She combines buckskin, cloth, beads, hair, shells, quills, feathers, and bone and fashions her designs inspired by

¹³ Rhonda Holy Bear, phone interview with Linda Link, Merriam, KS, October 16, 2014.

¹⁴ Ellen Napira Taubman and Twig Johnson, *Connecting Generations: Contemporary American Indian Dolls* (New Jersey: Montclair Art Museum, 2004), 1-30.

historical clothing and artifacts she has found in museums, old photographs, or books. Holy Bear's work ranges in size from four to thirty inches tall.¹⁵

The casual viewer never sees some of the particulars on Holy Bear's figures. For example, she adds exact facsimiles of traditional undergarments beneath the outer clothes if the figure she is working on historically wore them. Sometimes she designs her figures to wear painted rather than fully beaded dresses, one underneath the other, just the way women used to wear layers of clothing (Figure 42). The arms, legs, feet, and bodies of her figures may also have tattoos just like traditional Plains Indian people even though clothing conceals them. Each of these details, whether visible or hidden, is part of why each figure takes an inordinate amount of time to complete. Holy Bear possesses impressive technical skills—the stitching on tiny ribbons is barely discernible.¹⁶ Another way Holy Bear honors her skillful and industrious ancestors is through innovative practices. She transforms a traditional Lakota item into a contemporary art form while using traditional techniques and materials such as semi-precious micro seed beads and porcupine quills. Specific materials integral to Holy Bear's work are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. The skill of brain-tanning hides is a dying art. As fewer artisans are producing this item, artists now incorporate commercially tanned hides into their work. Porcupine quills are also becoming difficult to procure, as well as sinew and antique semi-precious micro seed beads.¹⁷ Fewer people are willing to pay for

¹⁵ Arlene B. Hirschfelder, *Artists, and Craftspeople*. New York: Facts on File, 1994. 126.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Rhonda Holy Bear, phone interview with Linda Link, Merriam, KS, October 16, 2014.

the time and trouble it takes to produce cleaned quills, and as with hides, preparing them for use is very labor-intensive.

Lakota War Honor Dress is the earliest known iteration of a figure made by Holy Bear wearing a War Honor Dress (Figure 43).¹⁸ Made of wood, cloth over wire, deer hide, glass beads, hair, paint, *dentalium* shells, feathers, and porcupine quills, it was completed in 1988.¹⁹ This work portrays a proud Lakota woman wearing a three-hide dress with a beaded bodice. Beaded red crosses accent the field comprised of white, sky blue, yellow, and navy beads. The skirt is without beads but completely covered in painted depictions of a proud warrior. Both the bodice and the hem of the dress are fringed. The dress is cinched at the waist by a leather belt accented by large German silver *conchos*. In her left arm, she balances a staff sporting a faux patch of scalp with a ceremonial pipe carved into a twisted stem. She wears silver bracelets around her right wrist, and an ornately beaded pipe bag hangs from that hand. Her glorious hair is parted in the middle, neatly braided, and accentuated with *dentalium* shell accents. *Dentalium* shell earrings hang from her ears. She wears moccasins beaded in a historically accurate pattern.

Blue War Honor Dress was designed in 1989 in much the same style as *Lakota War Honor Dress* (Figure 44). The bodice of the three hide dress is fully beaded, and the underside of the sleeves are fringed. A striped band of quillwork decorates the shoulders from the neck to the end of the sleeves. Intricate depictions of a brave warrior adorn the front

¹⁸ Holy Bear designed this figure wearing a dress featuring both a fully beaded bodice and pictographic hide skirt. Historically, this particular dress required expert sewing and beading skills as well as a collaborative spirit to complete.

¹⁹ Museum label for Rhonda Holy Bear, *Little Big Horn War Honor Dress*, Chicago, Il., Field Museum of Natural History, January 10, 2017.

and back of her skirt, also decorated with fringe on the sides and bottom hem. She wears beaded moccasins and a leather belt embellished with large German silver *conchos*. Long *dentalium* shell earrings hang from her ears, and she wears a *dentalium* shell choker necklace. Holy Bear designed her with long dark hair with a center part and two braids. She wears a feather ornament on the right side.²⁰

The Last Lakota Horse Raid, completed in 1991, represents a stoic and resolute Lakota woman (Figure 45). She wears a War Honor Dress to honor the account of the last Lakota horse raid, as told by the great Lakota Warrior, White Bull.²¹ This impressive figure stands thirty inches tall and is made of basswood and clothed in an animal hide dress painted with ochre earth paint and entirely beaded with antique, Italian semi-precious micro seed beads in the pictorial Cheyenne River style. This work is an accurate representation of the culture of the Plains region during the late nineteenth century and tells the story of a successful horse raid carried out by brave Lakota warriors against the Crow in 1879. Embellishments on each of the accessories in this work include glass beads, tin cones, and brass. Her leggings sport a caterpillar design, and her fully beaded moccasins include dragonflies on the soles. She carries the horse stick crafted by her husband in honor of his cherished war horse killed in battle.²² Just as war honor dresses commemorated fallen warriors, war sticks were carried at dances and ceremonies to show pride in the bravery of deceased male family members and

²⁰ Museum label for Rhonda Holy Bear, Blue War Honor Dress, Chicago, IL, Field Museum of Natural History, January 10, 2017.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Gaylord Torrence. *The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky*. (New York: Skira Rizzoli), 2014, 129.

their favorite horses. The articulated purse she carries is lined with silk and covered in little beaded rows called lanes. Lane-stitch beadwork was sewn onto buckskin and applied over the framework of pre-made purses and became a popular fashion accessory among Sioux women in the early part of the twentieth century.²³ Her long belt embellished with German *conchos* and all the tools a respectable Lakota woman would need while going about her daily tasks grazes the ground. The images on the War Honor Dress designed by Holy Bear symbolize the end of Lakota freedom as well as the importance of White Buffalo Calf Woman, who provided the Lakota with the sacred pipe.²⁴

The fourth work constructed by Holy Bear reflecting the War Honor Dress tradition, *War Honor Dress* was made in 2014 (Figure 46). This figure, made of wood, hide, glass beads and pigments, wears a dress constructed of fabric to emulate the painted muslin style. Holy Bear constructed this rendition of a war honor dress from two pieces of fabric: a yoke and a skirt. The sleeves of the yoke have been left open in a manner that would allow for ease of movement. She edged the hems of the sleeves in blue pigment. The figure wears a long-sleeved garment under the dress. On her feet, she wears ornately beaded moccasins. Colorful depictions of a warrior's heroic deeds cover the entire dress. Holy Bear constructed this figure after she began utilizing clay to form heads and hands. This figure holds nothing in her hands, but they rest clenched at her sides. She wears a *dentalium* choker on her neck.

²³ Richard Greene, *A Warrior I Have Been: Plains Indian Culture in Transition* (Folsom: Written Heritage, Inc., 2008), confirming page no.

²⁴ Gaylord Torrence. *The Plains Indians: Artists of Earth and Sky*. (New York: Skira Rizzoli), 2014, 129.

Sees The Horses Woman, constructed in 2019, is the most recent work by Holy Bear, reflecting the War Honor Dress tradition (Figure 47). Holy Bear constructed this figure from carved balsa wood, metal armature, and human hair. Holy Bear painted her body red to symbolize the chokecherry tree of life and painted her face to represent the light of the moon. Holy Bear designed *Sees The Horses Woman* wearing a two-hide dress with fully beaded showing depictions of a proud warrior. The field is white with sky blue, black, green, royal blue, yellow, pink beadwork. The bodice is beaded to depict horse tracks, horses, and a star with a beaded U-shaped design symbolizing the animal tail included on early two-hide dresses (Figure 48). The fully beaded skirt depicts many brave deeds of a Lakota warrior.

The sleeves and hem of the dress are fully fringed. This figure's dress is cinched at the waist by a leather belt embellished with large German silver *conchos*. A knife in a beaded sheath and a fully beaded pouch suspend from the belt. Long *dentailium* earrings match the *dentailium* shell choker necklace accented by two dangling elk teeth. In her right hand, she carries a round-bottom leather bag embellished with micro-quill and beadwork, sequins and fringe. In the center of the bag is an eagle facing right on a field of dark red micro quillwork. Bands of blue, yellow, and white micro-quillwork encircle the eagle. In her left hand, she holds a pipe bag intricately painted, beaded and quilled. Inside the pipe bag is an accurate-to-scale pipe. Her long dark hair, parted in the middle by two front braids, hangs loose in the back. Groupings of red feathers and additional beadwork accent each braid. She wears a quilled medicine wheel embellished with a feather on the left side of her head. This figure, as does all of the Holy Bear's work, portrays a high level of skill, creativity, and intelligence.

Holy Bear's figures build upon the Lakota tradition of assembling dolls as teaching tools for young girls so they could learn valuable lessons about life. Historically, they provided

children a means to model the roles of men and women in society. Holy Bear's contemporary figures take that heritage further by teaching not only members of the Lakota culture about courageous role models of the past but educating non-Lakotas about the culture and, ultimately, reminds all they are "still here."²⁵

Further Incorporation of the War Honor Dress Practice in Contemporary Art

Artist and curator in the office of Museum Research at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian Emil Her Many Horses also tells the Lakota narrative from a Lakota perspective (Figure 49). As a young boy, Emil Her Many Horses, a member of the Oglala Lakota Sioux of the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota, attended many tribal powwows. It was there he learned to appreciate the hand-decorated regalia worn by dancers and participants. Unable to buy traditional garments, he learned to make his own. Renowned bead artist Alice Fish along with other artisans on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota began to teach him the skills he would later utilize.²⁶ Her Many Horses remembered seeing a photograph of a Plains Indian tipi with flaps painted to represent the American flag.²⁷ Even at a young age, he understood it was through service in the United States military that native men could redefine their role as warriors.

²⁵ Rhonda Holy Bear, phone interview with Linda Link, Merriam, KS, October 16, 2014.

²⁶ Joëlle Rostkowski, *Conversations with Remarkable Native Americans*, SUNY Series, Native Traces (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 23-28.

²⁷ Owen Edwards, "War and Remembrance," Smithsonian.org, accessed July 12, 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/war-and-remembrance-116259008/>.

Her Many Horses wanted to commemorate his uncle, Charles Pablo, for his military service. Pablo was a veteran who had completed three tours in Vietnam and personified his Indian name, *Takuni Kokipe Sni* (Afraid of Nothing). He utilized his beading skills to create a tableau in 2001 in his honor. *Honoring our Lakota Vietnam Veterans* is constructed of deer hide, deerskin, glass beads, cotton cloth, wool cloth, synthetic fabric, wood, and feathers (Figure 50).²⁸ The tableau contains eight 11-inch dolls and a 30-inch tipi embellished with illustrations of small helicopters. Her Many Horses included this mode of transportation because, according to his research, history referred to the Vietnam War as the helicopter war. He incorporated stars, eagles, and American flags in the depictions on the tipi cover. The cover wraps around lodge poles, and small wooden pins hold flaps together at the front. Four of the dolls in the tableau are male and constructed wearing military fatigues. One warrior carries an American flag, one carries a Prisoner of War/Missing in Action flag, and two warriors carry rifles. Rather than standard issue military boots, Her Many Horses accessorized their fatigues with traditional moccasins and braided their hair in the manner warriors would have traditionally worn.

The remaining four figures wear traditional Lakota dresses. Her Many Horses fashioned one female figure wearing an elk tooth dress in what resembles saved-list blue wool. She carries a fringed red shawl folded over her left arm and a feather fan in her right hand. Another female figure dons a red wool dress with the top portion decorated in *dentalium* shell. She carries a blue wool shawl folded over her left arm. The third female figure wears a

²⁸ Author Unknown, "Honoring Our Lakota Vietnam Veterans," <http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/>, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=Honoring+our+Lakota+Vietnam+Veterans>.

pale blue dress and a dark blue-fringed shawl over her shoulders and beautiful beaded necklaces around her neck. She wields a handkerchief in her right hand. The last female figure wears a dress reminiscent of a traditional deer hide dress. Bands of beads embellish the lengths of the arms and around the circumference of the sleeves. Long fringe hangs from under the sleeves. The neckline of the dress is ornately beaded as well, and she wears beaded necklaces around her neck. On her left arm, she holds a neatly folded red shawl and carries a feather fan in her right hand. The masterfully decorated hem of her dress includes a narrow band of beadwork and short fringe. All five female dolls wear intricately beaded moccasins and traditional leather belts embellished with large German silver *conchos*. Her Many Horses designed the dolls without facial features. Lengthy *dentalium* shell ornaments accentuate their carefully plaited braids.²⁹ In constructing this commemoration, Her Many Horses has paid close attention to detail and historical accuracy.

Just a year after its completion, the work was exhibited at the Northern Plains Tribal Arts Show in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where it won first place. Later that same year, the NMAI included the tableau in the permanent collection as a contemporary model of an art form dating back hundreds of years.³⁰ In contrast to early Lakota gender roles, Her Many Horses represents the interplay between a traditional and contemporary life that enabled indigenous cultures to survive, evolve, and flourish.

²⁹ Author Unknown, “Honoring Our Lakota Vietnam Veterans,” <http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/>, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://collections.si.edu/search/results.htm?q=Honoring+our+Lakota+Vietnam+Veterans>.

³⁰ Owen Edwards, “War and Remembrance,” Smithsonian.org, accessed July 12, 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/war-and-remembrance-116259008/>.

Continuity Of The War Honor Dress Tradition

A proliferation of literature became available in the 1970s, illustrating in vibrant color the artisanship of nineteenth-century clothing, household, and utilitarian objects. These printed materials provided contemporary artists access to their dynamic heritage.³¹ Not only is contemporary art still influenced by pictographic representations, but artists still practice the War Honor Dress tradition today, albeit in an adapted fashion befitting of the Lakota's ability to adjust and overcome. There are four known contemporary pictographic dresses in existence.

The first example was sewn and painted by British artist Peter Bowles in 2004 for Vanessa Jennings (Figure 51).³² Jennings is a well renowned Kiowa, Apache, Gila River Pima artist, and scholar.³³ Although the Kiowa nation does not have a tradition of ledger art drawn on muslin dresses, Jennings wanted to have such a dress made to honor her ancestor's war deeds at Scalp Dances she attends. Rather than commemorating the escapades of one brave warrior, Jennings' dress illustrates the brave deeds of multiple members of her family from her great-great-grandfather in the first half of the 19th century to a relative fighting off Germans in WWII.³⁴ It is impossible to look at this dress without comparing it to historical

³¹ Richard Pearce, *Women and Ledger Art: Four Contemporary Native American Artists* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), forward xiii.

³² Richard Pearce, "Pictographic Dresses: Picturing Brave Deeds," *Pictographic Dresses*, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://rpearce4.wixsite.com/pictographic-dresses>.

³³ Emil Her Many Horses, ed., *Identity by Design* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), pg. 54.

³⁴ Richard Pearce, "Pictographic Dresses: Picturing Brave Deeds," *Pictographic Dresses*, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://rpearce4.wixsite.com/pictographic-dresses>.

renditions. This dress, although not sewn by Jennings herself and painted by a male, not a member of the Kiowa tribe or relative of Jennings, has aspects in common with historical dresses. Constructed with a rounded neckline, the central portion of the dress utilized one long piece of undyed muslin. Long triangular strips of fabric, also known as gussets, were sewn into both sides of the dress and allowed for greater ease of movement. Pictographs have been painted in an appropriate scale to historical depictions using what appears to be synthetic dyes. Each vignette shows extreme attention to detail, and the action reads from the viewer's right to left as on historical dresses. The artist took great care to paint each scene in the same style as historic pictographic dresses.³⁵ This dress does show a depth of field.³⁶ Aside from the fact that Bowles constructed the dress, a contrast to historical dresses includes the undersides of the sleeves that have been sewn shut. It is unknown if this dress was hand-sewn.

Mark Sykes sewed the second example entitled *Pictographic Dress*. Artist Peter Bowles painted the images in 2011 in the same style men painted historic pictographs (Figure 52). The detailed illustrations painted on unbleached cotton in ink and red, yellow, blue, green, and black watercolor are imaginary and based on Bowles' knowledge of warrior art and societies; they depict Cheyenne and Lakota warriors attacking Arikara, Pawnee, and Crow warriors. Sykes sewed *Pictographic Dress* for an exhibition entitled *Warriors of the Plains*:

³⁵ Historic pictographs include stylized horse haunches and warrior's faces. The artist painted horses frozen in motion without legs touching the ground. He included hand silhouettes to represent the number of times the warrior touched the enemy without killing him.

³⁶ The artist accomplished depth of field by overlapping horses.

200 Years of Native North American Ritual and Honour in Leeds Museum's Lotharian Hall in 2011.³⁷

Lauren Good Day Giago both constructed and painted the third and most intricately decorated contemporary war honor dress entitled *A Warrior's Story, Honoring Grandpa Blue Bird* (Figure 53). Good Day Giago is Arikara and Hidatsa on her mother's side and Blackfeet and Plain's Cree on her father's. *A Warrior's Story, Honoring Grandpa Blue Bird* was sewn in muslin with cotton thread and decorated with wool, silk ribbon, dyes, brass beads, and imitation sinew. The Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian included the dress in *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains* in New York in 2016.³⁸

Colleen Cutschall, Oglala Lakota artist from Pine Ridge, South Dakota, made the final known contemporary war honor dress (Figure 54). In addition to making a name for herself as an artist, Cutschall is an art historian, curator, and retired professor from Brandon University in Manitoba, Canada. Cutschall titled her dress *Muddy Waters Dress* and constructed it from muslin, acrylic paint, ribbon, and sand in 2011.³⁹ Cutschall assembled her garment in the style of a small girl's dress. In this way, she honors all evacuees and survivors who have escaped natural disasters with perhaps only the clothes on their backs and are unable to go home or perhaps never return. This particular dress commemorates the spirit of community that occurs when fellow sufferers come together. She also brings much-needed

³⁷ Richard Pearce, "Pictographic Dresses: Picturing Brave Deeds," *Pictographic Dresses*, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://rpearce4.wixsite.com/pictographic-dresses>.

³⁸ Allison Meier, "Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains," National Museum of the American Indian, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://nmai.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/item/?id=951>.

³⁹ Richard Pearce, *Women and Ledger Art: Four Contemporary Native American Artists* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), 75.

attention to the consequences of climate change and super pollutants on our planet. Purple ribbon accentuates the rounded neck, sleeves, and side seams and serves to frame the vignettes on the dress. Cutschall painted muddy waters rolling down each shoulder and the front and back of the dress. She also included houses, vehicles, and street signs semi-submerged in muddy overflow. Motorboats carrying survivors bob in the water. At the water's edges, a small community depicted in historical ledger art style gathers garbed in vibrant traditional attire. Depicted with their backs to the observer, they watch the effects of the natural disaster in various poses intimating support and encouragement.

Personal amulets thought to be imbued with protective powers, often decorated Plains clothing.⁴⁰ Cutschall incorporated this practice by attaching protective medicine doubling as small sandbags on the front and back of the dress at the water's edge. In this work, motorboats, houses, cars, and trucks replace canoes, tipi's, and horses. The ability to depend on one's community though, has survived time and space. This dress is the only contemporary version to commemorate an unnamed collective. It mirrors historical styles but is a current gesture evoking renewal.⁴¹

This modern adaptation of traditional cultural practices does not render their commemoration any less significant. These shifts in tradition do not lessen the poignancy and significance of the War Honor Dresses made in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

⁴⁰ Max Carocci, *Warriors of the Plains: the Arts of Plains Indian Warfare*, McGill-Queen's Native and Northern Series (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), 38.

⁴¹ Richard Pearce, "Pictographic Dresses: Picturing Brave Deeds," *Pictographic Dresses*, accessed July 12, 2018, <http://rpearce4.wixsite.com/pictographic-dresses>.

Each version aptly serves its purpose to allow for a peripatetic embodied performance of memory after significant tragedy or loss.

CONCLUSION

I was impressionably young when Marsteller Advertising launched a joint anti-pollution public service announcement campaign with Keep America Beautiful and the Advertising Council.¹ In one ad, in particular, Iron Eyes Cody rides his horse through what appears to be pristine woodlands, but as he nears civilization, he crosses a polluted creek. He ultimately stands in a trash-strewn overlook with a four-lane highway in view (Figure 55). The viewer then sees “Keep America Beautiful, 99 Park Avenue, New York 10016” before the camera cuts to Iron Eyes Cody’s face.² When he turns from the carnage of pollution to break the fourth wall, a large tear rolls down his face. Even though the promotions featured an Italian-American actor, I was deeply affected by the stalwart and sensitive presence he portrayed in the ads. While this PSA airing in the 1970’s played a large and complex role in the world of advertising, it played an even more significant role in defining the path I later chose to take with my research.

Concurrent with the PSA campaign, my family took a trip to Dodge City, Kansas, to visit Boot Hill Museum, an interactive open-air experience situated on the site of the historic Boot Hill Cemetery. While there, we walked through a “Native American encampment.” This experience at an early age, coupled with an overactive imagination, resulted in believing an Indian Chief lived under my bed and was more than able to catch me by my ankles each

¹ Jane L. Levere, “After the ‘crying Indian,’ Keep America Beautiful Starts a New Campaign,” *New York Times*, July 16, 2013, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/17/business/media/decades-after-a-memorable-campaign-keep-america-beautiful-returns.html>.

² Chad Weidner, “Keep America Beautiful - Crying Indian On Horseback - Iron Eyes Cody,” *Youtube.com*, March 5, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_QGBWaD-A4.

night as I attempted to get into bed. Once asleep, American Indians saturated my sleep with vivid and lively dreams. I never saw Iron Eyes Cody at any scenic overlooks we encountered on family trips, and the Chief I adamantly believed lived under my bed never caught me by my ankles, but the fascination never went away. While researching my own Choctaw heritage, I took a college course on Native American art history. My research took me to museums where I became enamored of not only Native American ideology and worldviews but a rich material culture as well. I sketched designs found on war shirts, photographed intricate bead patterns, and interviewed contemporary artists. With what Gombrich would refer to as “Imaginative Sympathy,” I was empathically drawn to a particular rare garment on temporary loan to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.³ As I am a creative woman of Native American descent who has experienced the sudden loss of a loved one, the more research I conducted, the more emotionally attached I became to Silent Woman. She, as a resourceful Lakota woman, kept the memory of her loved one alive in a way that enabled her and her community to navigate and accept a profound loss. Her experience of loss and grief is relatable on many levels for many people. Though separated by more than 100 years, I felt a kinship with Silent Woman that neither time nor space could sever. I felt an inexplicable phenomenological connection with Silent Woman and *Pictographic Dress*, the same symbolic relation and empathic connections written about by Warburg.

Pictographic Dress, as well as its initial purpose, remains intact. The enduring spirit of Bobtail Bear lives on—those who have come behind him still learn of his bravery and gain

³ Gombrich’s concept of “Imaginative Sympathy” speaks to our ability to observe imagery and immerse ourselves in what we see and, through our imaginations, “see the scenes enacted in front of us.” E.H. Gombrich. *Art and Illusion; a Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 96.

courage from his strength. Through further research, I would like to determine how and when *Pictographic Dress* changed hands from Silent Woman to Marie Louise McLaughlin.

Additionally, I would like to locate relatives of Silent Woman and Bobtail Bear so that I may listen to their stories and songs about him. I would also like to ensure they know his memory continues, as the dress is visible to the public. By encouraging future generations to engage in the performance of memory and thrive in the complex historicity of their heritage,

Pictographic Dress brings Lakota values and beliefs full circle.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1: Silent Woman, Lakota (Teton Sioux), depiction artist(s) unknown, *Pictographic Dress*, both sides, c. 1885, Muslin, graphite, cotton thread, pigments, 4 ft 4 in. x 4 ft 5 in. Image courtesy of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art Archives, On long-term loan to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of art from Conception Abbey.

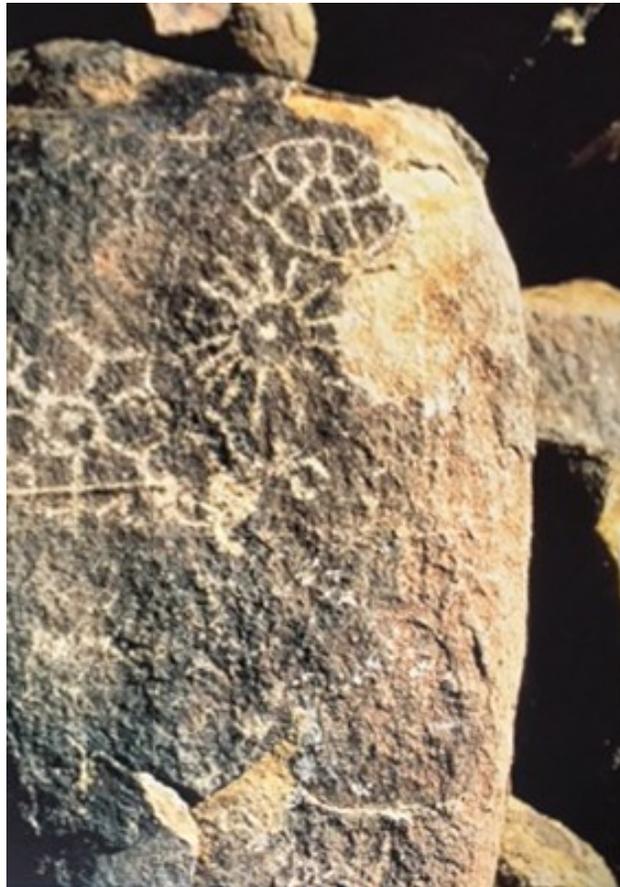


Figure 2: Circular sun rock paintings found in Saugaro National Monument , Arizona.

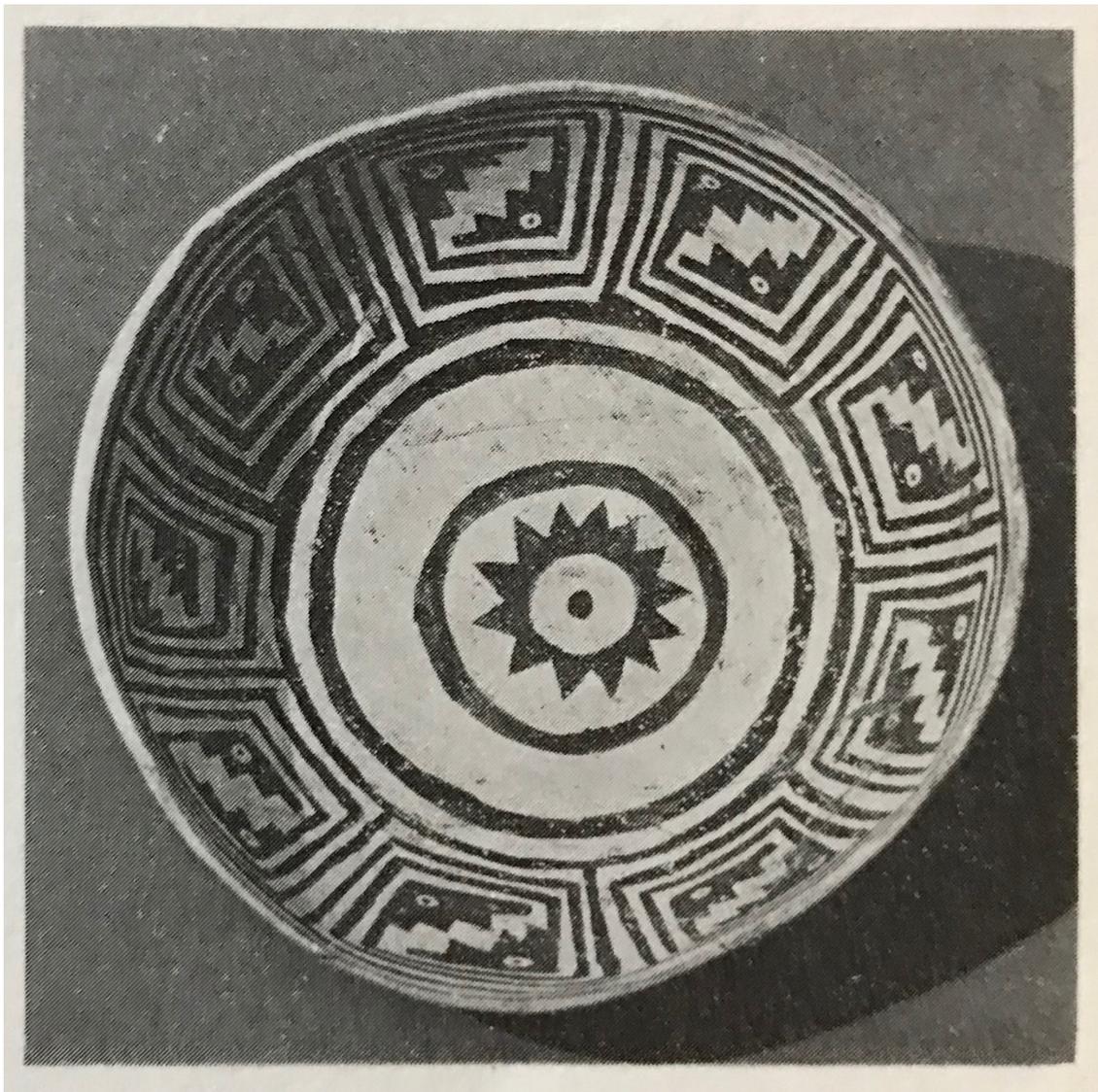


Figure 3: Anasazi black and white clay pot from a site near Snowflake, Arizona. Notice the celestial design positioned inside multiple circles.

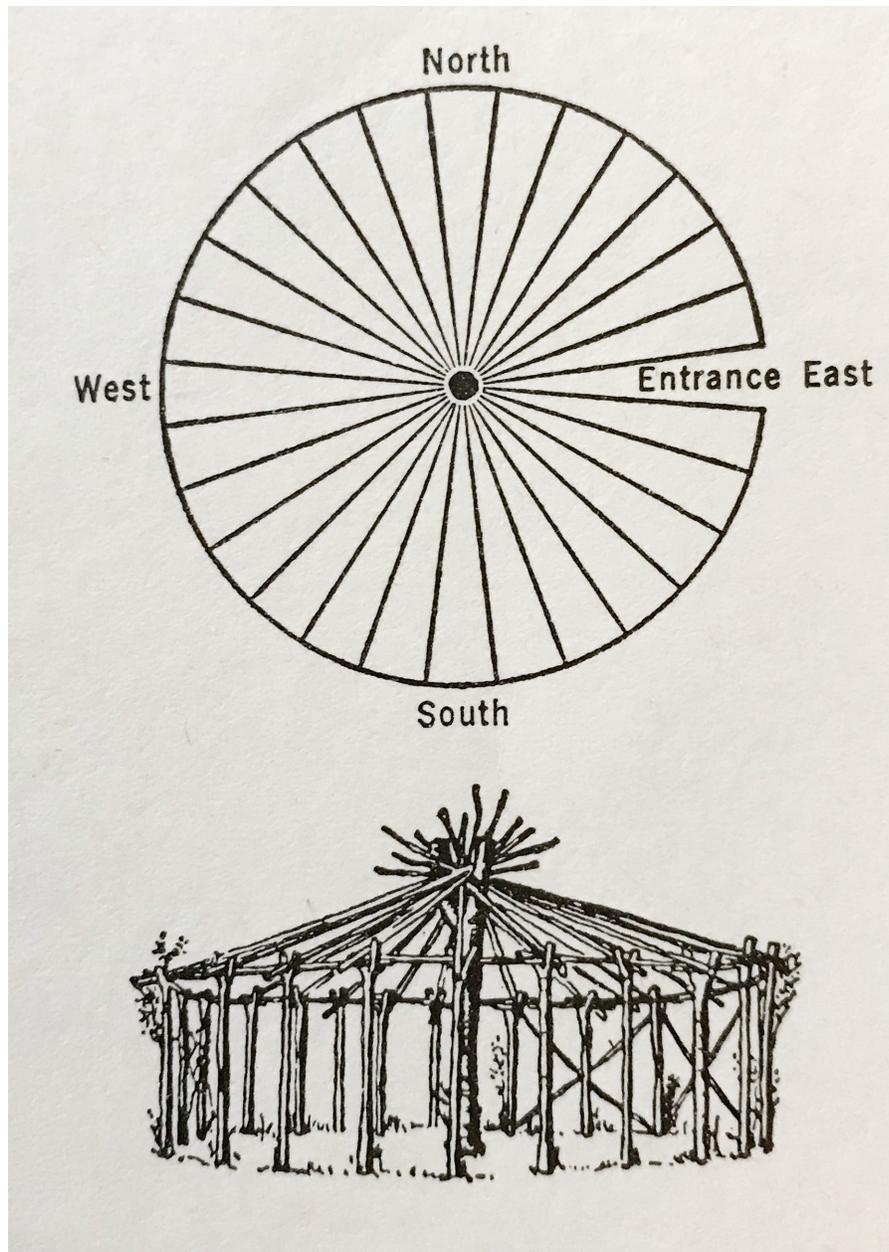


Figure 4: Depiction of a sacred circular Sundance lodge. Flat leather cut-outs in the shapes of buffalo, elk, and warriors tied to the top of the poles at the center of the lodge were multi-directional in function.



Figure 5: Three-tiered Warbonnet circular motif embellishes a buffalo robe. The Warbonnet design is a stylized view of the familiar eagle feather headdress, which when seen from behind, the feathers form a circular, sunburst pattern. 89 in. x 62.2 in.



Figure 6: Bird's eye view of Medicine Wheel in the Bighorn National Forest in Wyoming. The large white limestone circular structure holds both sacred and scientific significance. The site is located at an altitude of 9,642 ft near the summit of Medicine Mountain. It measures 80 ft in diameter and features 28 spokes extending from the rim to the center, and a series of seven stone circles.



Figure 7: Artist unknown, *Dance Shield*, Sioux, pigment, brass bells, feather, sinew, and painted hide.



Figure 8: Artist unknown, Blackfoot, *Warrior Shirt* with target design, 1880, hide, porcupine quills, glass, natural pigments and wool, 39 x 25.25 in., This shirt may have belonged to Blackfoot leader Red Crow.

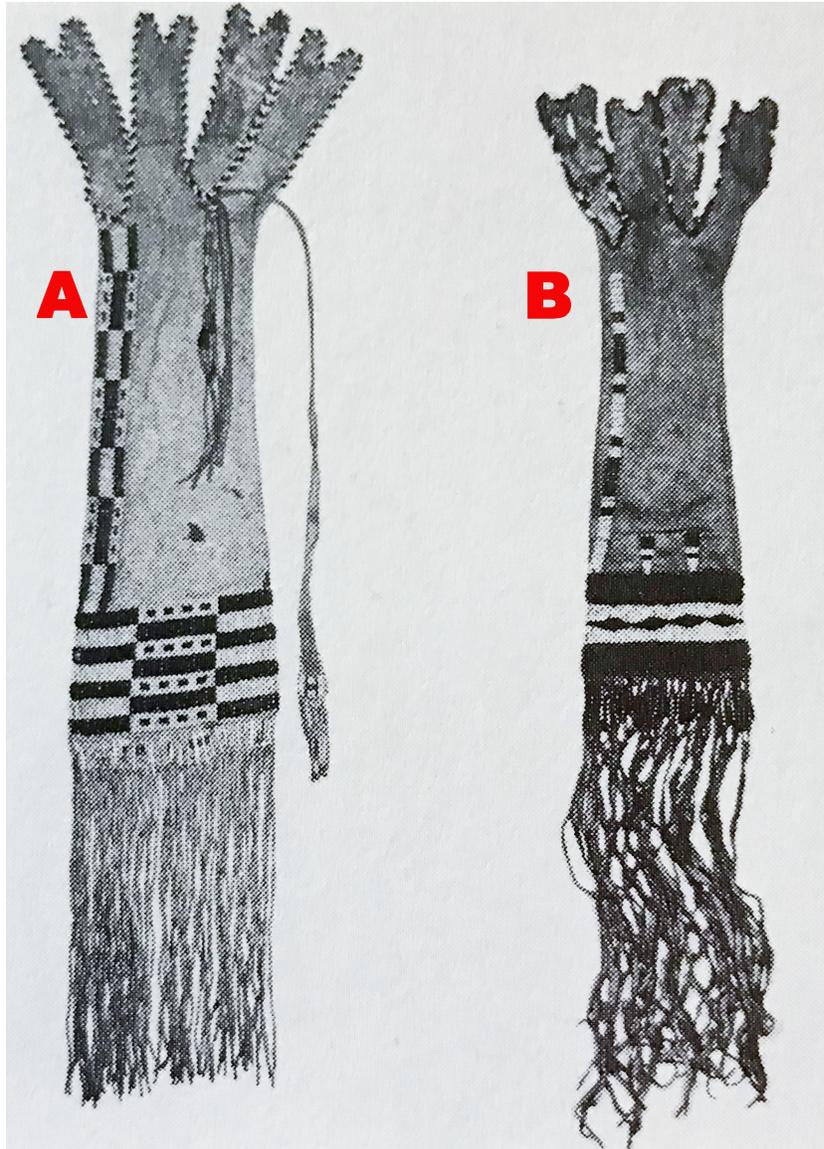


Figure 9: Pipe bags with flaps, Cheyenne, Buckskin, beads, tin.
A): 18.5 in. without fringe. Dated to approximately 1850. B):
14.75 in. long without fringe. Dated to before 1850. In the
collection of Hermann Vonbank.



Figure 10: Map delineating The Great Plains.



Figure 11: Tipis, also embellished with pictographic illustrations, emulate in function and appearance the same sacred domain pictographic dresses create when worn.



Figure 12: Moccasins featuring a geometric design, Lakota, 1910. Rawhide, brain-tanned leather, and glass beads. 10 1/2 in. Gift of Donald D. Jones to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.



Figure 13: Image of a small travois pulled by a dog.



Figure 14: Image of a horse hitched to a travois.



Figure 15: A Lakota Medicine Wheel.

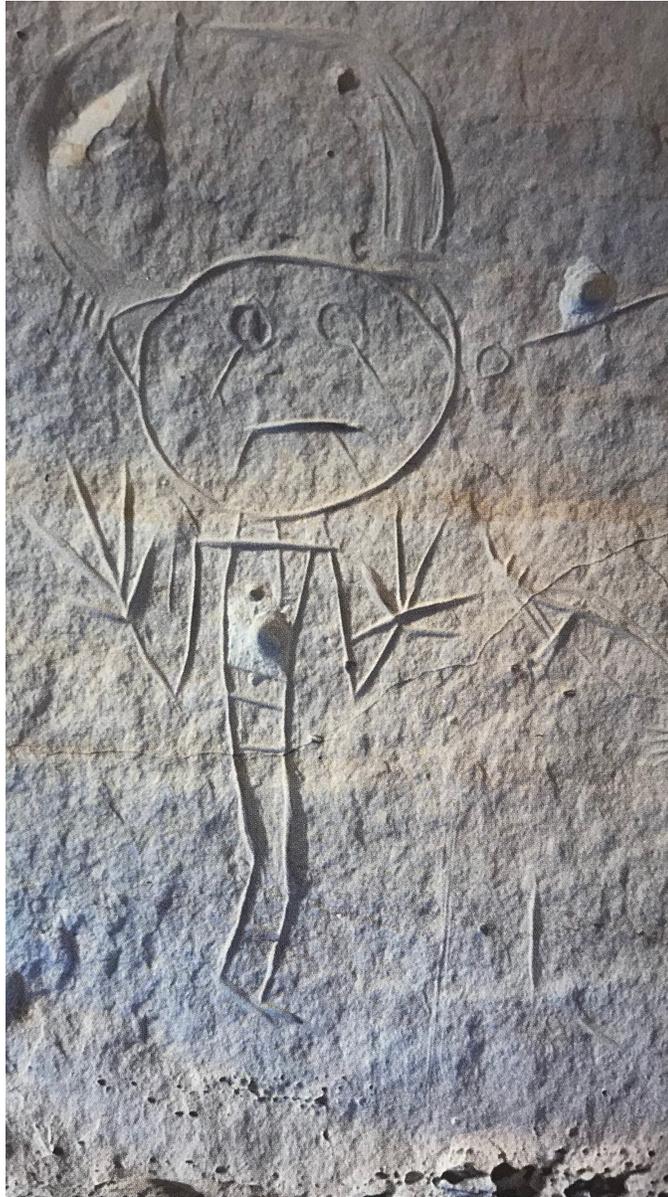


Figure 16: Example of Ceremonial Tradition Rock Art depicting a Comanche spirit figure, Tolar Petroglyphs, Point of Rocks (Wyoming).

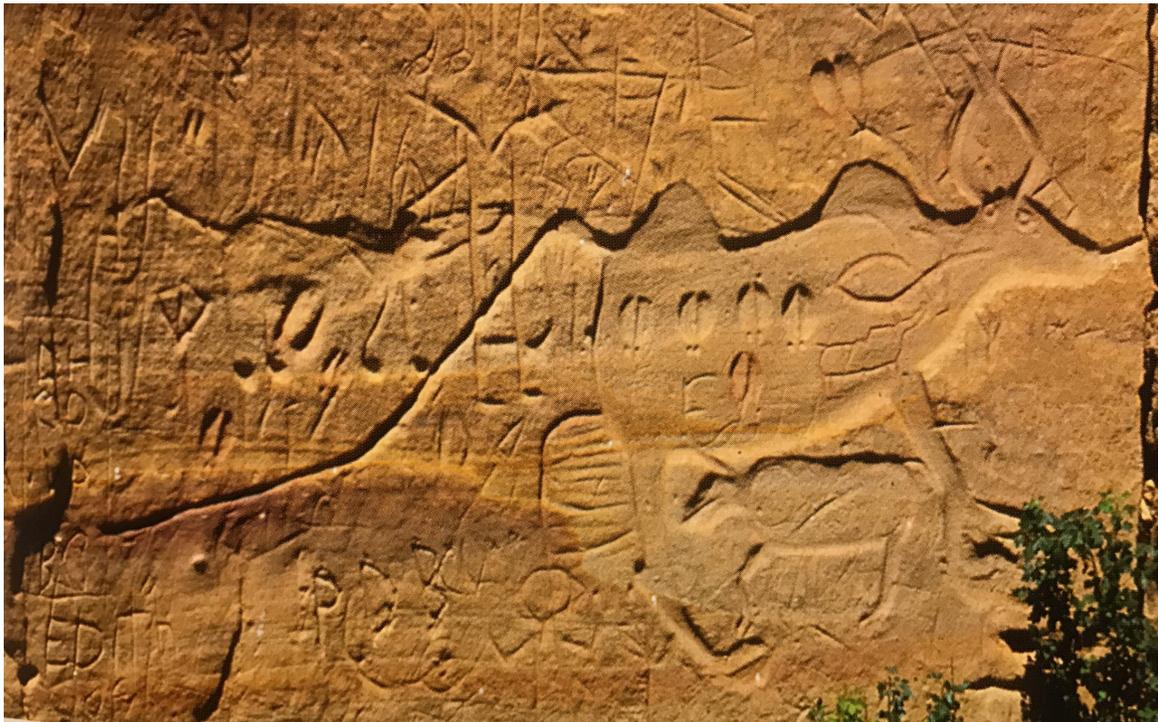


Figure 17: Example of Hoofprint Tradition Rock Art found at Spirit Buffalo at 39HN17, North Cave Hills (South Dakota).



Figure 18: Example of Biographic Tradition Rock Art depicting a Crow combat scene, Castle Butte (Montana).

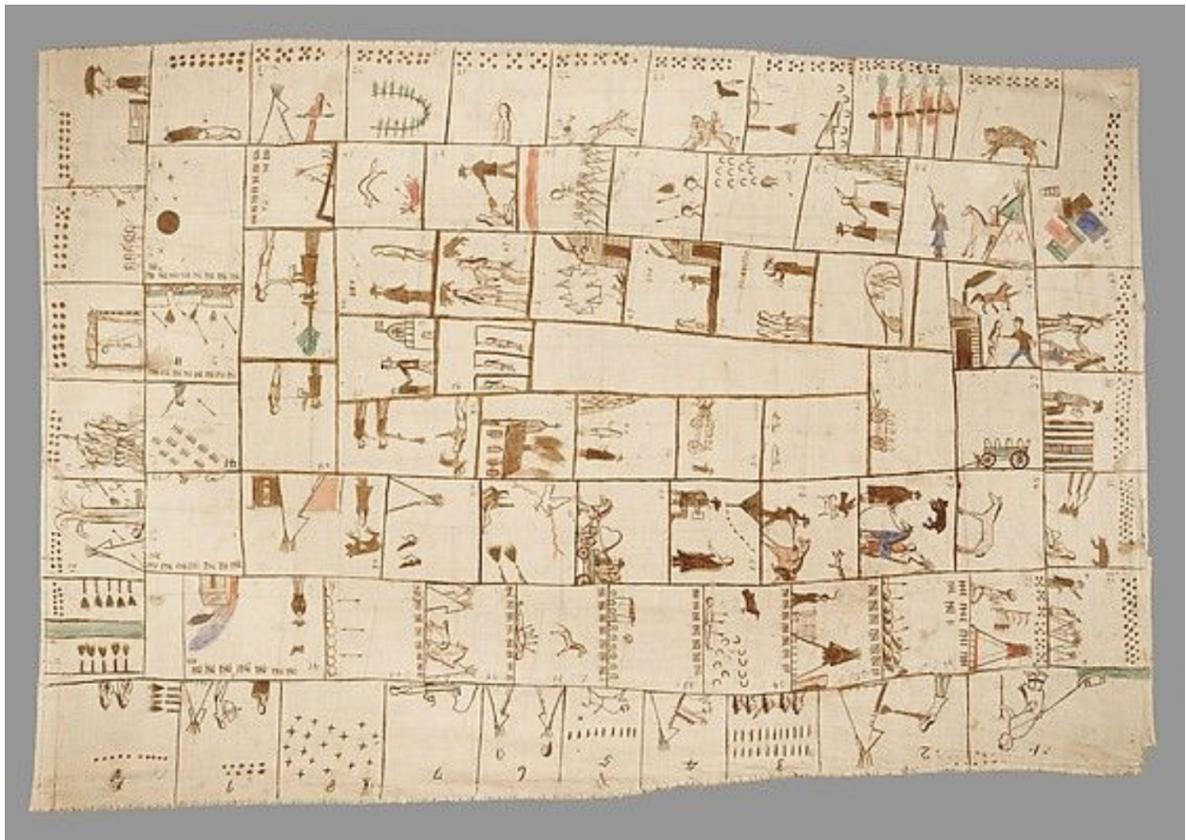


Figure 19: *Winter count*, Brule Lakota (Teton Sioux), 1902, ink and watercolor on muslin. 24 1/8 x 35 1/4 in. Gift of George Terasaki to The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.



Figure 20: Nellie Two Bear Gates Mahpiya Bogawin, Gathering of Clouds Woman 1854-?, Lakota (Teton Sioux), Standing Rock Reservation, *Valise*, 1903. Commercial and brain-tanned leather, glass beads, metal, 9.5x15", Hirschfield Family Collection.



Figure 21: Artist Unknown, Lakota (Teton Sioux), 1920. Commercial canvas and leather shoes, glass and metallic beads, 4 1/2 x 3 1/8 x 10 1/2 inches. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art collection.



Figure 22: Artist Unknown, Lakota, *Beaded Horse Saddle Cover*, late 1800's. Leather, glass beads, Denver Art Museum Collection.



SILENT WOMAN

Figure 23: Silent Woman, Lakota (Teton Sioux) wearing *Pictographic Dress* and singing “Learn the Songs of Victory” to honor her younger brother, Bobtail Bear. This image was published in *Teton Sioux Music and Culture* by American ethnologist, Francis Densmore in 1918. In this image, Silent Woman is wearing the dress with the possible death scene on her back.

No. 149. "Learn the Songs of Victory" (Catalogue No. 685)

Sung by SILENT WOMAN

Voice ♩ = 116

DRUM not recorded

The musical score consists of eight staves of music in G major (one sharp). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 116. The time signature changes throughout the piece: 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, 2/4, 3/4, 2/4, and 4/4. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Ma - to - oŋ - ǰiŋ - ǰa he he - yin
na ha i - ya - ye he he e Kaŋ -
ǰi wi - ǰa - ǰa ya o - wa - le kte - lo o
he - yin na ha i - ya - ye ye a he he taŋ -
ke lo - waŋ - pi kiŋ oŋ - spe i - ǰi - ǰi - ya - yo

WORDS

Mato'-oŋǰiŋ'ǰa.....	Bobtail Bear (man's name)
he heyin'.....	said this
na.....	and
iya'ye.....	went away, never to return—
Kaŋǰi' wiǰa'ǰa.....	"[the] Crow Indians

Figure 24: "Learn the Songs of Victory" as recorded by American ethnologist Francis Densmore when conducting research on the Standing Rock reservation. Her findings were published in *Teton Sioux Music and Culture* in 1918.

Song Words

Mató-oŋǰiŋǰa

he heyin

na

iyáye

Kaŋǰi wiǰaǰa

owále kteló

heyin

na

iyáyehe

taŋké

lowaŋpi kiŋ

victorious]

oŋspéiǰiǰiya yo

Bobtail Bear (man's name)

said this

and

went away, never to return-

"[the] Crow Indians

I will seek"

he said

and

went away, never to return-

"older sister

the songs [in honor of warriors who return]

you must learn"



Figure 25: Silent Woman, Lakota (Teton Sioux), depiction artist(s) *unknown*, *Pictographic Dress* detail showing Bobtail Bear's name glygh, c. 1885. Muslin, graphite, cotton thread, pigments, 4 ft 4 in. x 4 ft 5 in. On long-term loan to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of art from Conception Abbey.

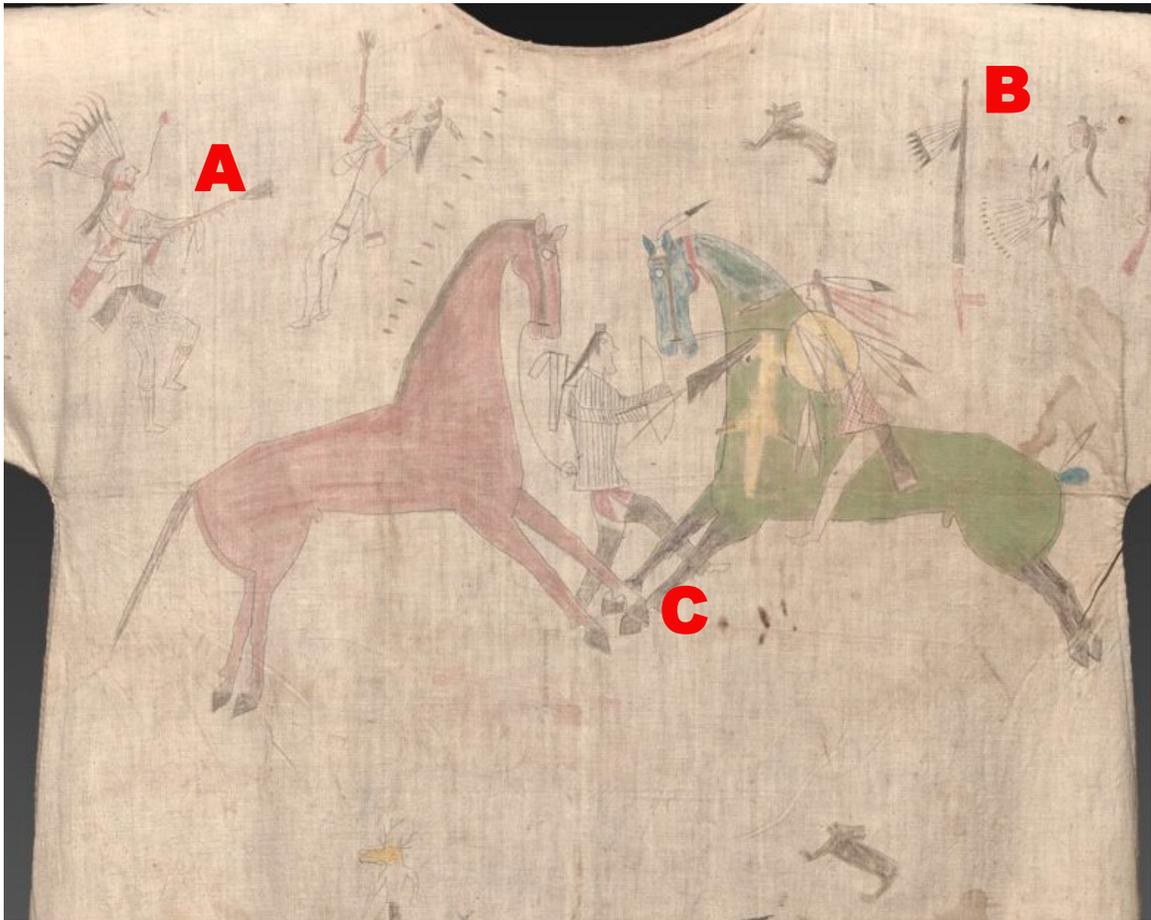


Figure 26: Silent Woman, Lakota (Teton Sioux), depiction artist(s) unknown, *Pictographic Dress*, possible death scene of Bobtail Bear on *Pictographic Dress*, c. 1885. Muslin, graphite, cotton thread, pigments, 4 ft 4 in. x 4 ft 5 in. On long-term loan to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art from Conception Abbey.



27



28



31



30



29

Figure 27-31: Silent Woman, Lakota (Teton Sioux), depiction artist(s) unknown, *Pictographic Dress*, (Clockwise L to R) Various name glyphs on *Pictographic Dress*, c. 1885. Muslin, graphite, cotton thread, pigments, 4 ft 4 in. x 4 ft 5 in. On long-term loan to the Nelson-Atkins Museum of art from Conception Abbey.



Figure 32: Seamstress and artist(s) unknown, Hunkpapa Lakota, *Woman's Dress*, both sides, 1880. Cotton cloth, wool cloth, silk ribbon, thread, paint, 55.7 x 50.5 in., National Museum of the American Indian Collection.



Figure 33: Seamstress and artist(s) unknown, *Dress Painted with Battle Scenes*, Sioux, 1890-1900. Cotton cloth, wool cloth, paint, thread, 60.2 x 54.1 in., National Museum of the American Indian Collection.



Figure 34: Seamstress and artist(s) unknown, *Dress Painted with Men's Battle Exploits*, possibly Sihasapa Lakota, c. 1890. Cotton cloth, denim, wool cloth, paint, thread, 61.4 x 50.4 in., The National Museum of the American Indian Collection.



Figure 35: Seamstress and artist(s) unknown, *Warrior shirt*, Oglala Sioux, two finely tanned deerskin hides, seamed across the top with a transverse neck opening, painted with yellow and blue pigments, sinew sewn on the front and back in numerous shades of tiny glass seed beads, with a radiant medallion, the shoulders and sleeves with hide strips sinew sewn in red, blue, and two shades of green against a white ground, with linear motifs, the bibs, in similar colors, with a split-panel design, trimmed with quill-wrapped hair pendants and silk ribbon in mustard yellow and deep green. 51.5 in. Sold by Sotheby's in 2007 to an anonymous buyer for \$2,658,500.



Figure 36: Birds eye view of a Powwow.

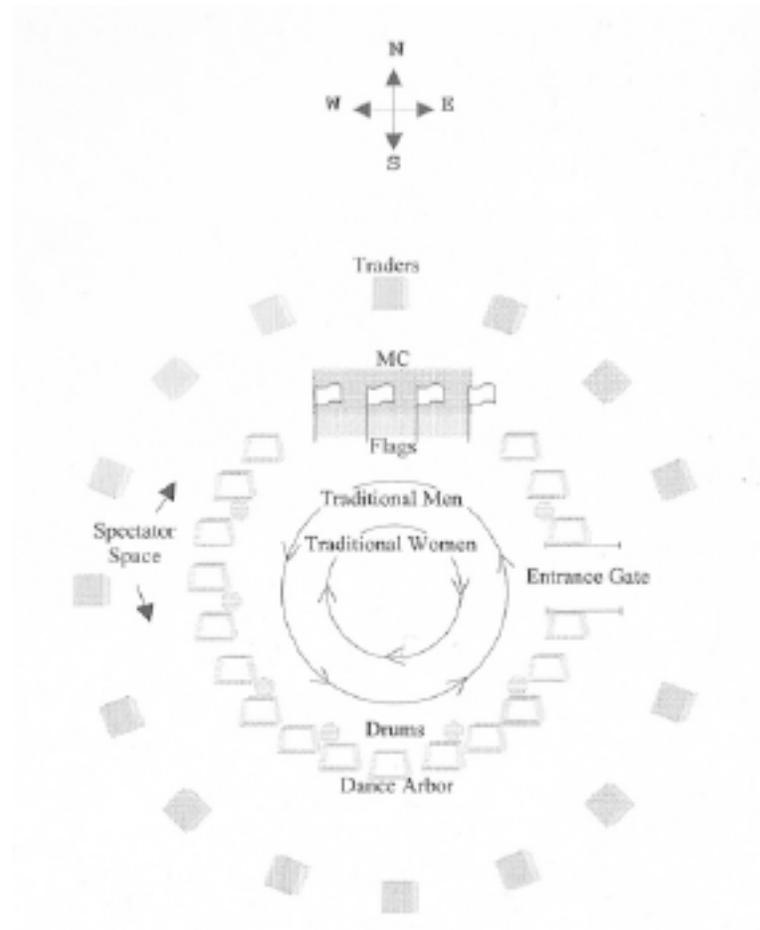


Figure 37: Diagram depicting the circular layout of a Powwow.



Figure 38: Walter McClintock, (1870-1949), *Camp Circle from Hill*, 1909. Nitrate Negative, 4x5 in., New Haven, CT, Yale University Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript library Yale collection of Western Americana, Walter McClintock Papers.

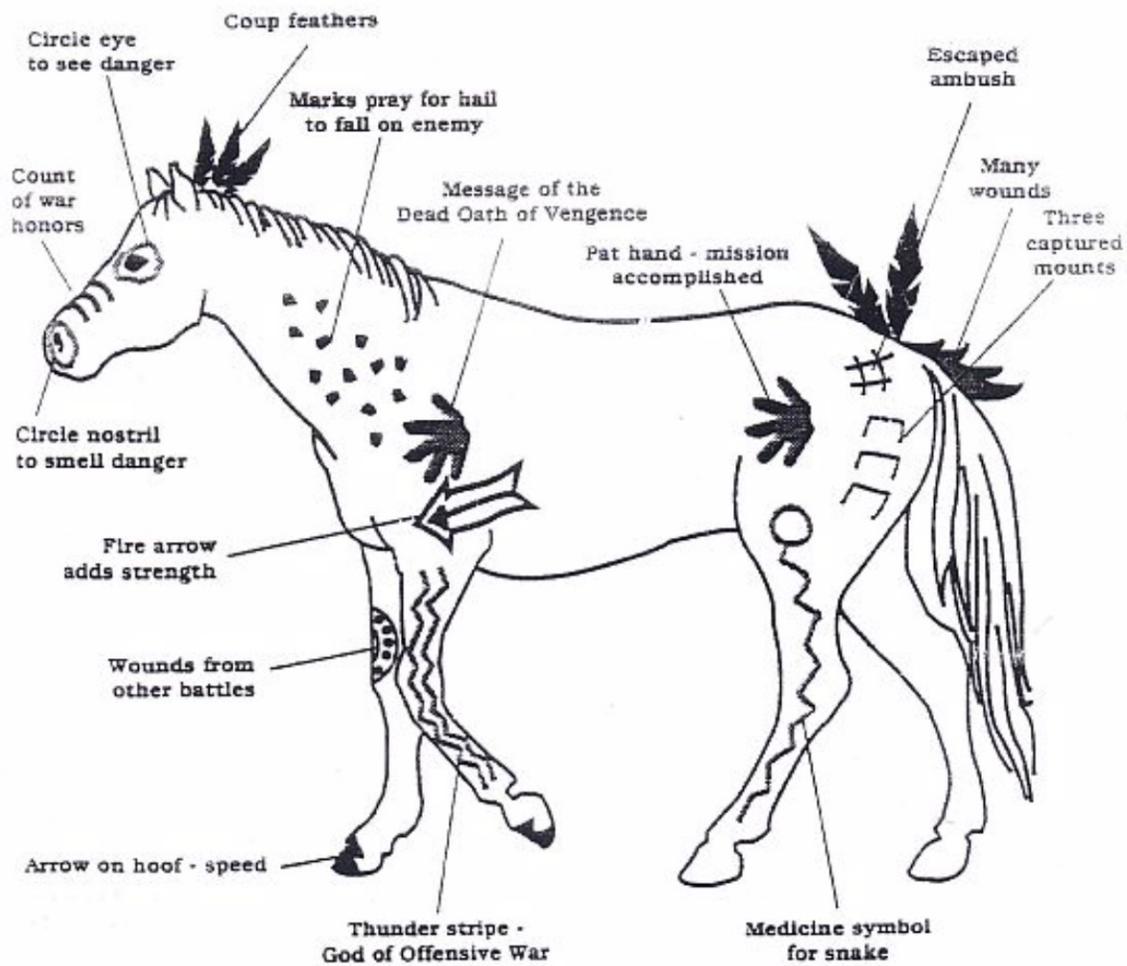


Figure 39: Horse Medicine Marks.



Figure 40: Horse painted to represent traditional war paint.



Figure 41: Rhonda Holy Bear with Interview with a Warrior, 2008. Wood, antique miniature glass beads, buckskin, cloth, ribbons, hair, turkey feathers and fur, 42 x15 x31 in. Interview with a Warrior honors the spirit of Chief Two Leggings of the Crow tribe. Image courtesy of Rhonda Holy Bear.



Figure 42: Rhonda Holy Bear, *Lakota War Honor Dress*, 1988. Detail showing historical tradition of wearing multiple skirts, wood, cloth over wire, hide, glass beads, hair, paint, dentalium shells, feathers, porcupine quills. Dimensions. Image courtesy of Rhonda Holy Bear. In the collection of Frank and Judith Sabatini.

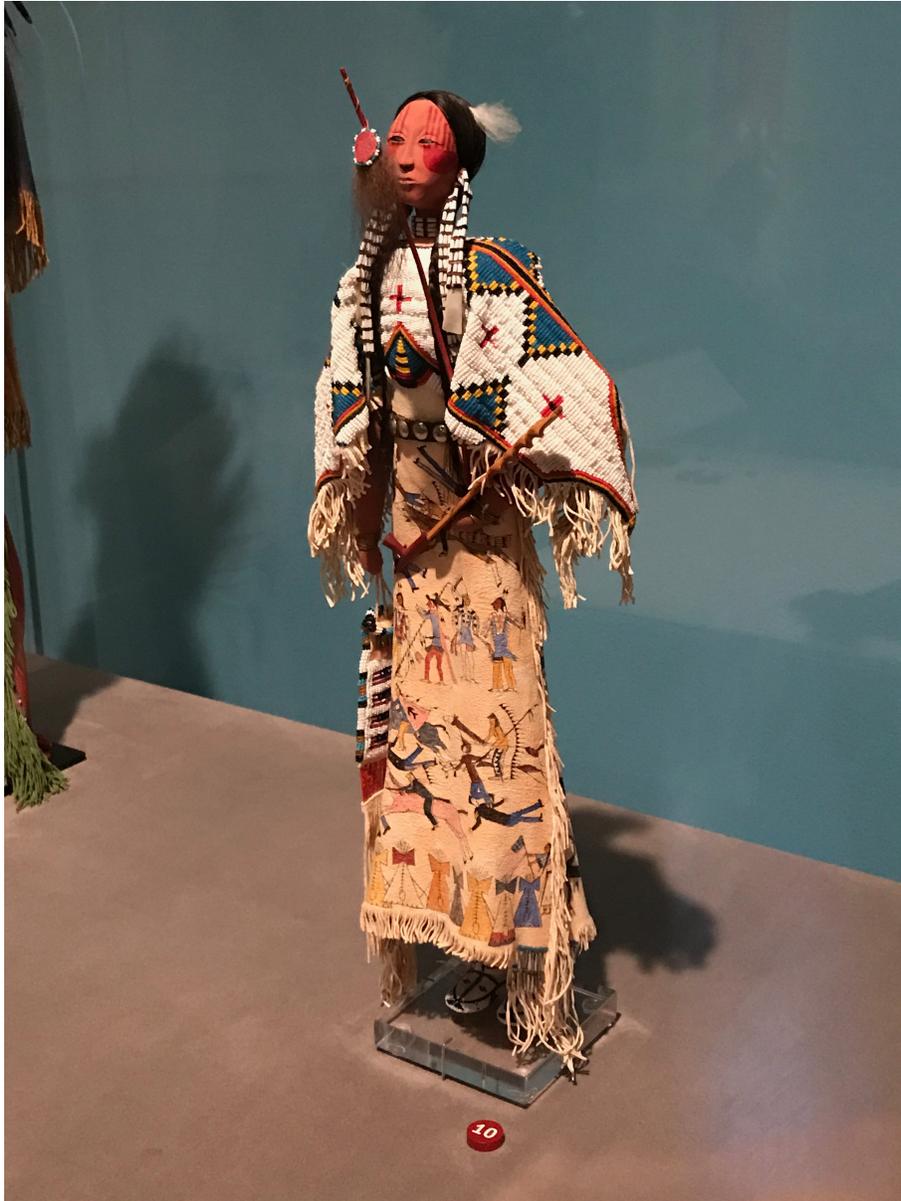


Figure 43: Rhonda Holy Bear, *Lakota War Honor Dress*, 1988. Wood, cloth over wire, hide, glass beads, hair, paint, dentalium shells, feathers, porcupine quills. Dimensions. Image courtesy of Linda Link. In the collection of Frank and Judith Sabatini.



Figure 44: Rhonda Holy Bear, *Blue War Honor Dress*, 1989. Wood, cloth over wire, hide, glass seed beads, hair, dentailium shells, acrylic paint, chicken feathers. Dimensions. Image courtesy of Linda Link. In the Collection of Joyce Chelberg.



Figure 45: Rhonda Holy Bear, *The Last Lakota Horse Raid*, 1991. Wood (basswood), native-tanned and commercial leather, glass beads, pigment, cotton cloth, hair, dentalium shells, abalone, German silver, metal cones, brass tacks, beads. 30". Image courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the collection of Joyce Chelberg.



Figure 46: Rhonda Holy Bear, *War Honor Dress*, 2013. Clay, hair, dentalium shells, wood, cotton fabric and thread over wire, commercial paint, Dimensions, Image courtesy of Rhonda Holy Bear.



Figure 47: Rhonda Holy Bear, *Sees the Horses Woman*, 2019. Clay, hair, dentalium shells, wood, micro beads, commercially tanned hide and thread over wire, commercial paint, feathers, metal, Dimensions. Image courtesy of Rhonda Holy Bear.

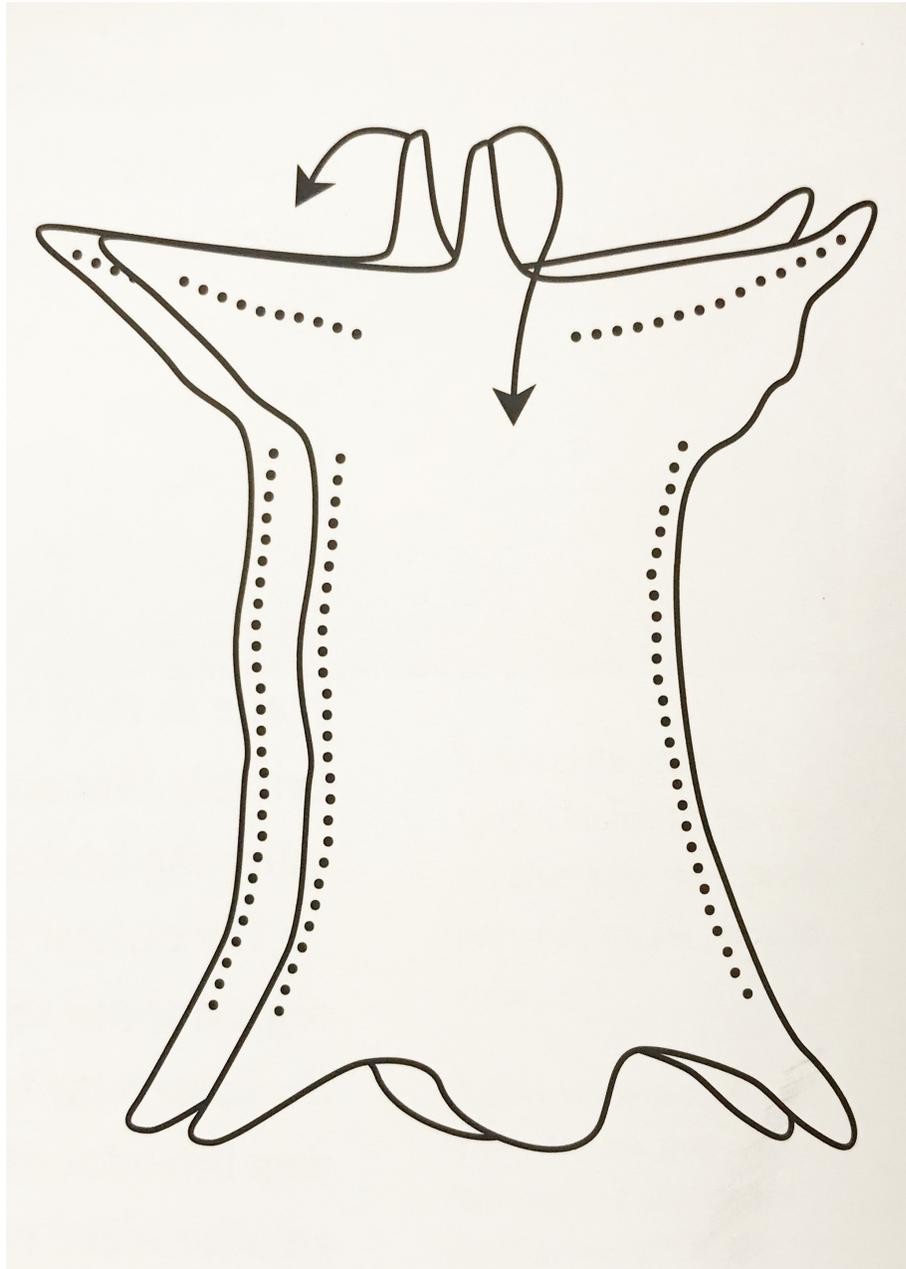


Figure 48: Diagram of a two-hide dress indicating how the tail of the animal remained intact on both hides. The entire section of the hind legs on both hides would be folded over to form a yoke or cape at the shoulders of the dress.



Figure 49: Emil Her Many Horses. Image courtesy of The Museum of the American Indian.



Figure 50: Emil Her Many Horses, *Honoring our Lakota Vietnam Veterans*. 2001, deer hide, deer skin, glass beads, cotton cloth, wool cloth, synthetic fabric, wood, and feathers. Image courtesy of Ernest Amoroso with Smithsonian Magazine.



Figure 51: Peter Bowles, *War Honor Dress*, both sides, muslin, paint, 2004. Constructed for Vanessa Paukieigope Jennings (Kiowa).



Figure 52: Peter Powles (dressmaker) and Mark Sykes (artist), *Pictographic Dress*, 2011. Unbleached cotton, water color, and ink, Photographer unknown. Current location unknown.



Figure 53: Lauren Good Day Giago, Arikara, Hidatsa, Blackfoot/Blackfeet, and Prairie Cree, *A Warrior's Story, Honoring Grandpa Blue Bird*, Muslin, wool cloth, brass bell/bells, sequins, satin ribbon, paint, cotton thread, imitation sinew, 59.4 x 55.7 x 1in. Purchase made possible by Devon Hutchins. Photo by R.A. Whiteside, NMAI.



Figure 54: Colleen Cutschall, Oglala Lakota, *Muddy Waters Dress*, 2011. Muslin, acrylic, ribbon, sand. Dimensions and current location unknown.

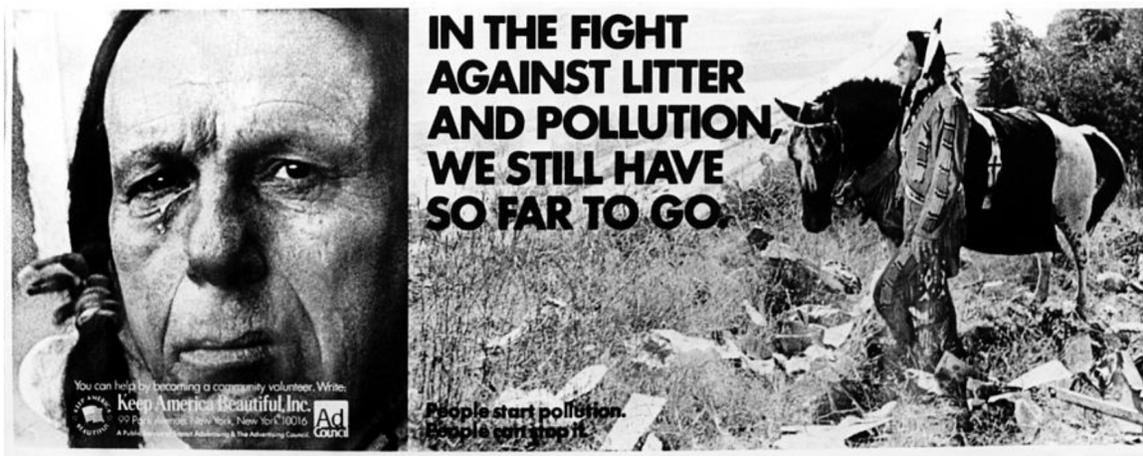


Figure 55: A depiction of “Iron Eyes Cody” portraying a Native American man in a national “Keep America Clean” public service announcement.

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VITA

Linda Link currently lives in Merriam, Kansas. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art with an emphasis in Graphic Design and Photography, and a minor in Art History from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. During her tenure at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, she worked as Graduate Teaching Assistant for Dr. Maude Wahlman, the Art Department Print Lab, and the UMKC Gallery of Art. She held consecutive positions of president and treasurer of the UMKC Graduate Art History Association as well. She held an internship for the Kansas City Indian Center and now serves on their board. Upon graduation, she entered the College of Graduate Studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City where she worked as grader for Professors Poppy DiCandeloro, Davin Watne, and Kati Toivanen.

Link enjoys serving on The Whole Person's Expressions committee, a group committed to promoting artists with disabilities by featuring their work in professionally organized art exhibitions and offering innovative educational and networking workshops. Upon completion of her degree requirements, She plans to continue working for D2 Reseach, a research company specializing in collections management, curation, professional research, writing and art photography. She also intends to continue her research in the intersection of phenomenology and function in Native American textiles and accouterment as well as the politics of material culture.