"DANCE YOUR STYLE!"

Towards Understanding Some of the Cultural Significances of Pow Wow References in First Nations' Literatures

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon

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Dedication: This work is dedicated to my daughter, Wynonah, in appreciation for all the joy, struggles, good work, sacrifices, suffering, and love that she shared with me during this long process. May you always dance your styles!

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Abstract
"Dance Your Style": Towards Understanding Some of the Cultural Significances of Pow Wow References in First Nations' Literatures

References to pow wows, pow wow dancers, and pow wow songs abound in First Nations' literatures. This dissertation proposes attending, observing and listening at pow wows - an aural principal and strategy - in order to learn from First Nations' people what these references may mean. Pow wows are a widespread First Nations' cultural activity, with ceremonial aspects, and one that is open to all. Pow wows therefore provide an ethically appropriate way for literary critics to come to some understandings of these references and settings in First Nations' literatures. It is also possible to learn about traditional values and principles that have significance beyond pow wow. The histories of and the histories in pow wow are both important in this study.

This framework is used to explicate Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer*, Drew Hayden Taylor's *Education is Our Right*, Tomson Highway's *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, Joy Harjo's "Strange Fruit," Beth Cuthand's "Post-Oka Kinda Woman," Louise Halfe's "Ghost Dance," Patricia Monture-Angus' "ohkwa:ri ta:re tenhanonniakwe" and Annharte's "Saskatchewan Indians Were Dancing."
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Introduction

Pow wow has all the things that we need to be strong spiritually. We have the songs; we have the drums, the dancers. We have the warriors, we have the women, the children...The feeling is that you're part of the Indian circle, right across North America...It's a great thing to be part of, it's solidarity...It makes you proud. (Unidentified young Indian man, as he is getting to ready to pow wow dance in *Indian Times 2*)

"Dance your style!" is the call that pow wow Emcees make, during Grand Entry or intertribals, to encourage dancers put forth their best efforts. "Your style" calls the dancers to demonstrate their individual skills within their collective dance category. "Dance Your Style", the dissertation, discusses what literary scholars could learn about First Nations' peoples and cultures if we too attended and attended to pow wow, particularly those in First Nations communities. Pow wows could be important for literary scholars as pow wows are frequent settings in First Nations' literatures. Many characters and voices are represented as dancers or singers. Overall, allusions and references to pow wows abound in the literary texts.
Yet, while there is some scholarship in other branches of Native studies\textsuperscript{1}, no literary criticism to date has substantively taken up these references, either through scholarship about pow wow or through direct observation. My proposal about attending pow wows is to address three matters. One is that such experiences and understanding will allow literary scholarship to explicate an important aspect of First Nations' culture and the literature. A second matter is that literary scholars can learn, not just from other scholars, but from First Nations' people, some of what pow wow means. Third is that while much of what pow wow is about is relationships, literary scholars attending and attending to pow wows can also address calls by First Nations' intellectuals, writers and scholars to form connections and relationships with First Nations' people and communities.

"Dance Your Style" - the pow wow quotation that entitles this work - proposes that literary scholars learn what this call means through direct experiences of pow wow - public events where First Nations' peoples celebrate who they are - and that what is learned there would be valuable for understanding the frequent references to pow wow within First

\textsuperscript{1} I will be using the lower case 's' when I mean the studies of Native people that may occur in a wide variety of disciplines and the upper case S, when I mean the specific discipline of Native Studies.
Nations' literary texts as well as addressing important concerns with research as raised by First Nations' scholars and community people.

My purpose in this dissertation is to engage in close readings of particular and exemplar First Nations' literary texts. I read these texts in conjunction with my own experiences and observations at pow wows; as well with the scholarly and intellectual discourses about pow wow and about literary studies of First Nations' texts. The particular interpretative method being proposed and demonstrated herein is also my attempt to respond to concerns about research and scholarship, particularly those calls within literary studies to understand First Nations' literatures within frameworks that are grounded in and therefore emerge from their own understandings and concerns and the suggestions that scholars engaged in academic work about Native peoples initiate and maintain relationships with those peoples and their communities. One further interest and concern underlies this work, and that is my own on-going interest in and reflective approach to pedagogy, particularly in terms of teaching First Nations' literatures with First Nations' students.

In terms of the scholarship about scholarship, there are long-standing and multiple calls, by First Nations' and other Indigenous scholars (Indigenous meaning worldwide) to set aside the strategy of
temporarily utilizing Native informants in favour of, not just initiating connections with Native peoples and their communities while undertaking a particular piece of research but rather to develop and maintain relationships with Native peoples and the communities.

It seems to me, when working on matters with respect to First Nations' people, that it is important to pay close attention to the concerns raised by First Nations' scholars. Patricia Monture-Angus, for example, declares, in the title to her first book *Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks*. A Mohawk woman and scholar not only "speaks" because she comes from an Oral Tradition, she - just as importantly - speaks to be heard, to be listened to and to have what she says taken into account. She speaks so that others can hear, think about and apply what she has to say. This is, of course, only my interpretation of what the subtitle means. Still, while literary studies have paid a great deal of attention to orality within First Nations' texts, the obvious concomitant expectation - aurality - seems to have been much less frequently attended to.

Second - with respect to First Nations' literary texts, pow wows are a frequent setting, character attribute and reference. Despite this clear tendency, there has been no substantive discussion of these references in
the literary criticism. And none which draw on or from pow wow events
themselves. Yet pow wows occur regularly throughout North America.
Furthermore, while this particular work deals with only a few texts, it is
my belief that the premise and method can be used to understand a very
large number of First Nations' texts. I mean by this, not only other texts
with direct pow wow references but, what we can learn at pow wows, in
terms of First Nations' principles and values, can also be fruitfully applied
to texts that do not reference pow wow. Understanding the principles and
values that underlie and ground pow wow could also serve to shift cultural
critiques of First Nations' literature away from the exotic or picturesque
and closer to considerations that matter to First Nations' peoples. There
are emerging concerns in the criticism about the types of cultural
frameworks employed thus far.

Therefore, I hope that my work herein is of interest to both
specialists in Native literature and non-specialists because it addresses a
gap in the literary criticism. I do not mean to suggest here that cultural
frameworks of interpretation are lacking in the field or that specialists are
somehow ignorant of these events. Fagan, for example, says, "The
"cultural" approach (sometimes called "culturalism") has been the most
popular way of thinking about Aboriginal literature and identifying
particular aspects of Aboriginal cultures (such as tricksters or medicine wheels) in a text" ("Tewatatha:wi" 2). She is, quite rightly, concerned that much of this work is distanced from "concrete political issues of law, land ownership, and governance" and culture is reduced to symbols that are merely used to "represent a nonchallenging form of difference" (2). It is also true, as Jane Haladay suggested when we were discussing my work, that surely all specialists in Native Literatures are familiar with pow wows. This familiarity, however, is not at all apparent in the criticism. I would also agree that pow wow can be and often is seen as an, perhaps 'the', Aboriginal colourful contribution to the Canadian cultural mosaic. Despite this, I will contend and demonstrate that both the representations and the actual events, can be read as much more than easy, warm and fuzzy symbols.

My next consideration was pedagogical. Teaching strategies that will actively engage students with the texts we present in our classrooms are of concern and interest in many literary fields. Within this field, respectful and appropriate approaches to Native literatures, especially with conventional\(^2\) classes is receiving considerable attention (see Fagan,

\(^2\) I use the term 'conventional' here to designate the typical university classes and students. Another frequently used term for this case is mainstream. Linda Tuhiwai Smith however rejects the term mainstream on the grounds that it implies courses, classes of and for Indigenous students are tributaries and asides.
Episkewen, Dudek, as well as Fee and Flick for just a few examples). I rarely teach conventional classes. The vast majority of my teaching experience with Native literatures has been with entirely or predominantly composed of First Nations' undergraduate students. Thus, for me it is important to work with texts that, as Mihesuah describes, "write about empowerment....have created a realistic role model that we can aspire to emulate...[and create] difficult situations and strong characters that show how to survive and emerge victorious from whatever is troubling them" (2).

Another reason for my ongoing, perhaps obsessive, concern with pedagogy is due to my structural and economic location as a sessional lecturer. As I sat invigilating a Spring Term exam and preparing to teach a Summer course (that would begin two days later), I realized the absence of privilege and economic security in my life means that much of my academic thinking consequently revolves around teaching.

Choosing the Literary Texts

My choices herein were then influenced by on-going concerns with pedagogy - a concern that is often discussed in the literary criticism in terms of what and how to teach these literatures. My particular choice of
texts was governed by a number of considerations: frequently taught
texts but ones where the pow wow implications have been insufficiently
recognized; texts that engage with the relationship between the First
Nations and the Canadian government; and texts that are frequently
taught but have received very little critical attention. I will also discuss, as
examples, several texts that could have been but were not included in
this study.

I have included Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer* and Tomson
Highway's *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* as examples of texts
wherein the pow wow implications have not been well addressed. While
the characters in *Dry Lips* do not meet Mihesuah's criteria of role models,
and certainly the play has been criticized on those grounds (see Annharte
"Angry Enough to Spit), in my explication I will argue that the play does
contain suggestions, at least partially grounded in pow wow, about how
to "win through". It also makes significant and affirmative references to
the ways in which First Nations' women are winning through. *The Grass
Dancer*, with its three pow wow settings as well as considerable
explanations of and about pow wow, has three important characters that
are dancers. Harley and Charlene both win through very difficult
situations, not just because of what they learn at or from pow wow,
although pow wow is important to both of them. Pumpkin too can be taken as inspirational; she certainly inspires other characters in the novel, and guides them even after she has passed away.

Drew Hayden Taylor's *Education is Our Right* and Annharte's "Saskatchewan Indians Were Dancing" were not included just because of their pow wow references. Rather I choose them for how they used those references in and as demonstrations of issues in past and present relationships between the First Nations' and the Canadian government. *Education is Our Right* is a powerfully explicit and politically provocative play about the cap on the post-secondary funding for status Indians. The cap is a concrete reality and ongoing concern that First Nations' students struggle with almost daily. It is also one that tends to be very poorly understood outside of First Nations' communities. In Annharte's poem, Saskatchewan Indians were and still are dancing. She references histories in pow wow, the NorthWest Rebellion of 1885 and fight to bring First Nations' cultures inside the penitentiaries as some of her examples.

The poetry chapter also utilizes the values learned at and from pow wow to test my contention that these values appear in literary texts that are not explicitly about pow wow. I also engage with several poems that are frequently taught but have not been much addressed in the written
literary criticism. Cuthand, Halfe and Annharte are included for that reason. "Post-Oka Kinda Woman" for example, is one such test case. While that poem has no explicit pow wow references, I would maintain that its dance rhythms and references as well as the central theme of the First Nations foundational imperative of 'responsibility' - a value spoken of and demonstrated repeatedly at pow wow - are crucial factors in understanding this and the other poems discussed in the poetry section.

This leaves two texts to justify - Harjo and Monture. I will repeat that an important purpose of the poetry chapter was to test the hypothesis that scholars could learn about important cultural imperatives at pow wows, and when these become critical concepts in literary studies, then those values would be applicable beyond explicit pow wow references. Those two choices then Harjo and Monture - one, an extremely well know poet and the other - also extremely well known albeit as an legal scholar - who chooses, when she undertakes poetry to use a pow wow dance setting - seemed appropriate choices for two reasons.

First, while "Strange Fruit" is not an explicitly pow wow poem, it is however, the poem from which Power drew for the epigraph to The Grass Dancer. This suggests to me that there are important common themes
between the poem and the novel, and that Harjo's Strange Fruit" could
serve as an important test of the applicability hypothesis.

Turning to Monture-Angus's poem, in terms of learning about important
First Nations' cultural epistemologies and worldviews, there may also be
some significance in that when Power and Monture-Angus - both well
trained in colonial law - undertake creative literary works - they both
chose pow wow settings. This choice may also indicate that pow wows
are events it is possible to begin to learn about First Nations' laws. And
one important aspect of those laws is 'responsibility' - an important
theme in the poetry chapter.

First Nations' Literary Texts that I did not choose

The texts discussed above are by no means the only First Nations'
literary texts with pow wow references. Waterlily, for instance, could be
described as the forerunner to The Grass Dancer. This novel also contains
significant allusions to the historical origins of what became pow wows.
Waterlily would certainly need to be included a larger, comprehensive
project on pow wows in First Nations literature. I did not include it in this
work as my focus is on contemporary literary references to the
contemporary events. I was more interested, in this particular work, on
the histories within contemporary pow wows than in the histories of pow wows (although I discuss those histories in the pow wow chapter).

Similarly, some might expect Tomson Highway's wonderful novel, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, to have been included. In the earlier planning stages of this work, it was. *Kiss of the Fur Queen* was going to stand in contrast to *The Grass Dancer*, whereby *The Grass Dancer* demonstrated how involvement in pow wow contributes to learning and living traditional values to the First Nations' people involved in these events. *Kiss of the Fur Queen* would demonstrate the implications and consequences of the absence of those values. I ultimately decided to not include *Kiss of the Fur Queen* for pedagogical reasons. I would agree that literary scholars should be engaging with this text and the profoundly important issues it demonstrates.

However, in my teaching experiences, I have yet to have any of my students (who choose, even after I warn them, to read it) - again, these are First Nations' students - be able to cope with the depictions of abuse and the traumatic consequences thereof in this novel.\(^3\) Highway represents and powerfully evokes widespread and extraordinarily painful

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\(^3\) My contentions here should not be taken as meaning that I always avoid novels with themes about sexual abuse. I do not. I do, however, choose these carefully. I have taught, and my students have enjoyed reading and discussing, Richard Van Camp's *The Lesser Blessed*.
matters that exist in the lives of First Nations' peoples. The pain represented in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* reverberates and explodes the similar pains within my students' lives, often sending them into considerable chaos and crisis. As I am suggesting the texts in this dissertation be used as course texts and, obviously, students must read a course text, I decided to leave out *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, as I could not, knowing the detrimental effects it has on my students, even appear to be recommending it as a course text.

I could also have discussed Wagamese's *Keeper 'N Me*. It has a substantial and wildly funny section set at a pow wow. I also think *Keeper 'N Me* is a good exemplar novel within First Nations' literature. Wagamese, through Keeper and Garnet's relationship, presents, defines, discusses, explores in action and then reflects on a number of significant First Nations' values and teachings. I frequently begin teaching Native Literature courses with *Keeper 'N Me* for that very reason. I do reference *Keeper 'N Me* in this work but did not include the novel as whole primarily because, I understand it, *Keeper 'N Me* is about learning these values on an individual basis and my thesis is about learning in a collective setting.

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4. Of course, similar conditions could also be true for non-First Nations' students. I am only arguing in the main text, that the frequency makes this situation much more likely for First Nations students. Both groups deserve this kind of consideration in text selection.
Keeper and Garnet's relationship is a very important way to learn. It is the relationship that I think is being suggested when Emcees say 'If you want to know more, go talk to the Elders.' In an expanded project, one that explored that second stage, *Keeper 'n Me* would need to be included. For the specifics of this study, however, *Keeper 'N Me* was, unfortunately, outside its scope.

My choice of Drew Hayden Taylor's *Education is Our Right*, rather than one of more pow wow based plays from the *Blues* trilogy could also be questioned. There are a number of reasons for that decision. First, I think having a foundational understanding of pow wow, the kind this dissertation seeks to develop, would certainly expand understandings of the *Blues* plays. There is extant literary criticism addressing Drew Hayden Taylor's work quite substantially, both for their humour and hybridity (see Nunn). However, in *Baby Blues*, for example, I am not sure attending pow wows would help readers understand Amos. I also felt, as I re-read these plays, that the popular culture references are becoming quite dated. Yet for all the attention the *Blues* trilogy and Taylor's other writings receive, *Education is Our Right* seems curiously absent. I see this as curious given the stated need to address Native politics as well as Native culture (see the literary review chapter). *Education is Our Right* is an overtly political
play and its particular political message, about the Treaty right to post-secondary education for First Nations' people, is, or should be, an important one within academia. Moreover, Education Present, the Spirit who addresses the crisis and consequences of the funding cap, is a pow wow dancer. And, as I will argue, she represents the dually important needs for conventional and First Nations' cultural knowledge and skills.

Another possibility that I have included is Robinson's "Queen of the North" from Traplines. I do think Adelaine's critique of what Thomas King would call "literary tourism" ("Godzilla" 246) is important and I will discuss it further in the literary review. I also read Cola's pow wow dancing and Pepsi's support of her sister's dancing as a balance to their otherwise seeming disinterest in First Nations' culture. Adelaine's contribution of her hard work to the pow wow is also significant in this regard. None of these characters (or any others in the Trapline stories) seem to demonstrate a full or ongoing engagement with their cultures. However, as LaRoque says, "This ground [acquiring and living Aboriginal cultures] is layered and 'unsedimented,' for there is here a complex imbrication of cultural continuity and discontinuity" (220). In this brief pow wow scenario, I see cultural continuity in that the girls behave themselves in culturally appropriate ways when they are at the pow wow.
However, again, that kind of analysis would need to rest on the foundation I develop in this work.\(^5\)

In terms of poetry, I could certainly have discussed a number of pow wow specific poems. Revard's "Ponca War Dancers" would have been a potential candidate. I do make reference to it in the pow wows chapter, as Revard's Uncle Gus, the man the poem was written about, is an extremely important figure in histories of pow wow. I could also have explicated pow wow poems critical of the events, such as Sherman Alexie's "The Business of Fancy Dancing." I had, however, two main purposes in that chapter. One, I wanted to have one section that gave exclusive focus to the voices in writing of First Nations' women. I made that space in the poetry chapter. As well, as I stated earlier however, I wanted to use poetry to test my contention that the values observed at pow wow appear elsewhere in First Nations literature and not just in explicit pow wow references. So, sometimes those poems contain explicit pow wow references, some make references to other First Nations' and even conventional dance styles and others do not or do not appear to have any pow wow reference. In other words, I tried to set up a range of

\(^5\) At the oral defense of this dissertation, I also mentioned that "Queen of the North" was included in *Traplines*, over Robinson's choice of "Terminal Avenue", perhaps especially because of this pow wow scene. It is the only clear signifier of 'Native' in any
poems with which to test my hypothesis. I do take responsibility for that choice.

And it is in terms of responsibility that this work focuses on what is celebrated and valued at and about pow wows. I do not mean to suggest by this work that pow wows are the sine qua non of First Nations' cultural celebrations or meanings. Criticisms of pow wow will be addressed in the pow wow chapter. I do contend that, for scholars, pow wows are public events, at which we can hear about (and often see demonstrations of) important First Nations' traditions, the values and cultural significance that underlie many of the literary references to pow wow. This raises another important question. What does 'traditional' mean?

What does 'traditional' mean? - definitions and explications of a key term

It is important to define and defend a number of the choices I make in terms that are used throughout this work. None of these terms have absolute, agreed-upon, definitions and many are the centres of intellectual debates. Some do not even have a correct spelling. For example, pow wow is sometimes spelled as those two separate words; sometimes it is hyphenated as in pow-wow, sometimes it is one word -
powwow; sometimes capitalized Pow wow; sometimes Pow Wow and then there is my word processing program's spell check system which continues to insist that both pow and wow should be in all capital letters. Within direct quotations, I use whichever spelling of pow wow the writer employs and in my own words, I use pow wow for the simple reason that the pow wow spelling seems to be the easiest to read. Another choice requires more elaborate discussions.

Probably the most contentious term, not only in this study but in all matters relating to studies of First Nations' peoples is the term and conceptualizations of tradition. Discussions and debates about what is and what is not tradition or traditional occur in diverse locations: academic conferences, university classrooms, around kitchen tables in First Nations' communities and, of course, at pow wows. For me, an important overarching principle within these debates is one shared by Professor and Third Degree Midewin initiate Edna Manitowabing in a community conference workshop (Laurentian University 1991). She said that historically differences in tradition and especially differences in traditional practices were not considered to be important issues between First Nation for two important reasons. One was because Creator had

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to re-access that website and so can no longer substantiate that contention.
given each First Nation their own instructions; therefore to question differences was to question Creator (not a good thing to do!) The second reason was that those original instructions are inextricably linked to the territory of the people and as territories differ, so too will the practices. Differences then were just that, differences, and not issues that could or should be judged as right or wrong, better or worse (Manitouwabing).

Perhaps a third and more contemporary reason for respecting differences is because as Taiaiake Alfred notes,

Working within a traditional framework, we must acknowledge that fact that cultures change and any particular notion of what constitutes 'tradition' will be contested. Nevertheless, we can identify certain common beliefs, values, and principles, and other cultural elements that form a persistent core of a community's culture. (xviii)

I cite this particular passage, not only out of respect for Alfred's scholarship and keen interest in the contemporary importance of tradition but because he also raises important issues, namely: change and notions about tradition and identification. Alfred is not the only First Nations' scholar to recognize these matters. Warrior too says "To understand what the "real meaning" of traditional revitalization is, then, American
Indians must realize that the power of those traditions is not in their formal superiority but in their adaptability to new challenges" (94). Given this adaptability, where do scholars look to identify or check for these values, beliefs and principles?

A number of different strategies are utilized in identifying not just tradition but the conceptualization of the inherent values within these. Monture-Angus says, "Whenever I am struggling to understand tradition...I always try to reclaim the meaning of the words in my own language. This is important to me as a method of understanding and I mention it often (Thunder 255). Monture-Angus employs a crosscheck between the English and Mohawk languages that looks within the original language of her people for these concepts and meanings. Although not a fluent speaker of her language, I also think it is important to understand that her reclaiming of meanings is not in the usual translations but occur on the level of First Nations' epistemology. Her example in this case is as follows:

In the Mohawk language when we say law, it does not really translate directly to the "Great Law of Peace," as many of us have been told. What it really means is "the way to live most nicely together." That is what law means to my Mohawk mind. (255)
She acknowledges the assistance of Awkwesasnae Bear Clan Chief Tom Porter in helping her understand what Mohawk law means. Dieter-McArthur too thanks twelve named Saskatchewan Cree Elders who helped her understand the *Dances of the Northern Plains*. She further lists four consultants and two translators who were involved in the project. While community respected Elders, traditionally chosen Chiefs and internally accredited teachers are certainly secure sources, not all scholars rely on these First Nations' community acknowledged endogenous intellectuals and knowledge carriers.

Browner, for example, uses as "consultants", people known to her from the pow wow circuit and that she has been involved with. She says, "every person who speaks through these interviews has far more expertise in his or her area of music and dance than I do" (14). So far, so good. Further down that same page though, Browner's argument goes on in a direction that I find less convincing. She states "by working with these consultants, *I am designating them as culture-bearers*; they, too, should accept responsibility within the larger Indian community for what they have said" (14 emphasis added). I added the italics, as emphasis, to highlight my concern that nowhere in Browner's text is there any recognition that she is the one choosing. There is no indication that either
the people who were her consultants or the "larger Indian community" designated, chose, acknowledged or accredited these folks as "culture-bearers." That was Browner's decision. Why then should these people be forced to take on that much higher level of responsibility for what they say?

Another important distinction suggested in Alfred's framework is between the historical and the traditional. It bears repeating that cultures and societies change and so, for First Nations, the traditional is not just what is historically accurate. Cultures and the way particular aspects of culture are practiced change. Even the Supreme Court of Canada - a body not known for its declarations of radical or progressive thought - accepted, in 1996, that First Nations' rights and practices cannot be "frozen in time" (see R. v Pamajewon in Morse). Change per se does not negate tradition. In a later section Alfred expands on his understanding of the relationship between tradition and change,

*Whatever you are doing, you need to keep the traditional teachings your heart and mind. Adapt, change, go forward, but always make sure you're listening to the traditional knowledge at the same time.*

*Commit yourself to uphold the first principles and values.* (xxiii)
Over and over and over again, in my search for and looking at definitions and explications of tradition, no matter what the particular topic - politics, law, nationalism, literature, or pow wow - what was most consistent were these references to principles and values. When these imperatives are applied to pow wow, as Ellis says,

Song and dance are expressions of belief and action that, despite decades of adaptation and change, have remained a forum for expressing values not always adequately or appropriately expressed through other means. Part ceremony and part public show, with roots in Indian and non-Indian worlds, the modern powwow has become an arena for maintaining and reinterpreting cultural practices that might otherwise disappear. (13)

I would not attempt to argue that pow wow is either wholly ceremonial or wholly traditional. Neither do I join with those who would say the non-Indian roots or influences debase or negate understanding pow wow as having cultural significance. As Leroy Little Bear argues, "In the Aboriginal way of thinking - in Blackfoot, my Native language - that type of dichotomizing doesn't occur. Good and evil [for example] are probably the two outside extremes. Most things exist in a grey area" (287). Seeing tradition in a "part public show" may also require specific ways of looking.
When Trujillo responds to a question about what is traditional about powwow dancing, he says, "Traditional dance is not just defined by the dance steps, but by the actual look of the clothing being worn. It's an attitude that goes with the particular dance" (27). Richard Wagamese's character Keeper brackets a lengthy explanation of the significance of culture and the meaning of tradition with references to powwow.

But lotsa our people think just learnin' the culture's gonna be their salvation. Gonna make 'em Indyun. Lotsa young ones out there learnin' how to beat the pow-wow drum and sing songs. Learnin' the dances and movin' around the pow-wow trail ev'ry summer. Lotsa people growin' hair and goin' to see ceremony. Think they're more Indyun that way. S'good to see...[but] just doin' the culture things don't make you no Indyun. Lotsa white people doin' our culture too now and they're never gonna be Indyun. Always just gonna be lookin' like people that can't dance. Heh, heh, heh.

What I'm tryin' to say is tradition gives strength to the culture. Makes it alive. Gotta know why you dance 'stead of just how. It's tradition that makes you Indyun. Sing and dance forever but if you're not practicin' tradition day by day you're not really bein' Indyun. ...See, it's all respect, kindness, honesty and sharin'. Built right in. Do that all the time and boy,
you just dance and sing up a real storm next time. (Wagamese Keeper 'N Me 38)

Keeper talks about the importance of knowing why Indian people dance, not just how to do the grass or fancy shawl dance steps. He says those reasons are within the cultures, explained within the traditions and teachings. There is, within the complete text, a long series of examples of traditional practices but he summarizes these with the list of important principles and values: respect, kindness, honesty, and sharing. As I read this, Keeper is not critical of pow wow per se, his emphasis in this passage is that doing without understanding what and why you are doing, is insufficient for really bein' Indyun, for genuine cultural revivals and for living a truly traditional First Nations' life.

I also see an implication in this that the strength of the traditions is not necessarily undercut by influences in or on pow wow from non-Indian ways. This position is akin to the one Womack takes on translations of Native literatures. He says,

I would like to argue that Native literatures, like the literatures of many other nations, have sufficient literary excellence they that often retain something of their power in translation. I would like to argue, further, that Native literature is of equal merit to other
literatures, so much so that it can, in fact, be translated, just like other literatures of excellence" (Womack *Red on Red* 64).

Furthermore, least some traditional teachings speak directly to the matter of non-Indian influences. To cite Monture-Angus again,

Any information or knowledge that I have gained from my involvement in Canadian universities and Canadian legal institutions over the last two decades is always brought to this core of my Kanien'kehaka identity where I compare and contrast new information to the values and teachings of my culture. This is my duty as I understand it. As a young woman, the Elders taught me that white things were not of necessity wrong but to take care and ensure that I was picking up only the "good stuff." (*Journeying* 40)

The standard then for what is traditional, as I understand it, is twofold. The first is that the practice be compatible with the values and principles as described in cultural teachings. Often these principles are profoundly simple. Keeper, as cited above, argues that respect, kindness, honesty, and sharing are the four fundamental values. I have heard other traditional teachers say there are really only two important traditional principles: everything is alive and we are all related. Two other oft cited values, responsibility and community, flow from these standards. Second, as Ellis
quotes one of his pow wow informants, "We don't do the dances the same way as a long time ago," a Cheyenne man told me, "but we hold on to the ideas, the thoughts that those old people taught us" (20).

Tradition therefore, as I use the term in this work, is when those principles and values are understood, expressed, and practiced by the characters and voices in the works I discuss.

Culture, Rights and Respects

In addition to working towards understanding traditional values in pow wow, my approach also focuses on the celebratory in order to respect the importance of pow wows as they are practiced in this territory. As Plains Cree scholar Kiera Ladner suggested in her lecture "When Rights Are Not Enough", research needs to respect the priorities and imperatives of the First Nations' people on whose territory we work (October 2005). One of her questions to the Mi'kmaw fishers was why fishing was so important to them that they were willing to be shot at, have their boats burned and endure the other violent reactions and attacks on their communities - just to fish. Their responses were that fishing rights are Mi'kmaw rights and that to be Mi'kmaw means to fish.
As an inherent right, this means they do not have to ask the Canadian government if they can fish. They just do it, they fish.

I am an outsider to First Nations' communities of much greater degree than Ladner. That situation is very important - for me to have engaged in a criticism of pow wows as practiced here - ran a high risk of offending the First Nations' people in whose territory I live and with whom I work. I'm not at all sure that in an analysis that seeks to develop primary understandings of the values in pow wows that negative criticisms are yet possible.

Furthermore, in any work about Native peoples, a primary specificity must be, as Acoose suggests and I discuss within my work, to recognize the distinctiveness of at least the largest categories of Native peoples, the First Nations, the Inuit and the Metis. I do not, would not and could not suggest that pow wows are a pan-Native practice that would explicate important cultural meanings for all of these peoples and facilitate understandings of their particular literatures. Pow wows have become a widespread 'Indian', First Nations' event but what is practiced and celebrated there is not likely helpful in understanding Métis or Inuit literatures. This work may suggest to other scholars that understanding the cultural dances specific to the Inuit or the Métis as important
expressions - the understanding of which could facilitate interpretations of those literatures. Again, as I quoted from Harjo's story, to understand non-western ideologies and philosophies those people said "we dance".

I would also argue that while this work seeks to understand the celebratory, it is not romanticized. I did not, nor did I suggest doing, as does the character Summer in Drew Hayden Taylor's *Baby Blues* - that we should arrive at pow wows, tape recorder in hand, to capture "the essence of being Native" (5). Summer can be understood as a demonstration of what not to do when undertaking the method I propose. I do acknowledge the difficulties in describing the celebratory without sounding overly romantic.

The other pole however is equally problematic. Scholarly language tends to be alienating. For example, when Summer says to Noble and Amos,

"since you were at both these pivotal events in Aboriginal history, [the standoff at Wounded Knee and Kanesataka], I would love to hear your opinion on the socio-political implications of both events in retrospect of today's Indigena politica agenda?

Noble [responds]: So would I. (29)
So while I am writing to scholars, I am also mindful of another, perhaps at this particular stage in my work, somewhat imaginary, audience and those are the people who pow wow. A concern with language that would obscure my work to those very peoples who are central to my understandings is an important reason for my preference of and tendency to use accessible language.

Since submitting this work, I heard three more scholarly calls to undertake research that directly engages scholars with Native communities. One is, again, the talk by Dr. Ladner in which she suggested that "allies" of First Nations people investigate ways to resolve issues between the First Nations' and Canadian peoples, particularly by building bridges of understanding between us. Going to First Nations' people, where they live and celebrate who they are, would, I suggest, be an important step in building bridges of relationship. The second is a call for papers from Yale that states "we are especially desirous of papers that demonstrate and discuss emergent approaches... that demonstrate an active involvement with Native communities" (CFP for "Cultural Intersections in Native North America" October 2005). Surely "active involvement" means working beyond published scholarship.
And finally, I was most interested to note that the local CTV news coverage of this year's Orientation Week pow wow included an interview with our university President, Peter MacKinnon (September 2005). He said in that interview that Aboriginal education, in the university classrooms, is an important priority for the University of Saskatchewan. But, he added and emphasized, for those kinds of learning to occur, we must also learn outside of the classroom, library and labs. MacKinnon stated that events like the pow wow offer even more important situations than those in the classroom. He also said that pow wow is a valuable learning opportunity for the entire University community and an important chance for us all to develop good relationships.

As I was teaching across the river during the 2005 Orientation Week pow wow, I cannot comment on how President MacKinnon took up the opportunity to "dance his style." I do appreciate his understanding that academics can learn from these events and that pow wows also serve as locations for developing relationships between First Nations' peoples and Canadians.
Literary Criticism: Cultural Frameworks and Community Relationships

The terrains of engagement - the territories, disciplines, and centres - for things Native within academia are replete with exhortations on a variety of dos and don'ts. These are grounded in and emerge from deep convictions on a vast range of matters. Any attempt to represent and select among these raises the risk of challenges to whatever choices that one makes. The profound differences among the many approaches to First Nations' literatures, as well as the conflicts and contradictions among these competing demands, facilitate such challenges. Still, in order to locate my work within the field, I shall begin with those that best represent the concerns and directions I have tried to follow in this work. While this will, in one sense, be a framework, it is less the scaffold within which I construct my work than it is a representation of the principles that underlie it.

There are several important and specific issues within studies of Native literatures that I will focus on. The first is that studies of, as well as those who study, Native literatures have come under criticism for focusing on aspects of these literatures that fail to contribute to the larger projects and needs important to Native peoples, their communities and Nations. There are also pointed criticisms of studies that view Native
literatures through a cultural lens. This has lead to studies that take politics, political definitions and political strategies for example, as their focus. As the interpretive framework of this study is still a cultural one, I will need to address why I still feel this kind of framework can offer important insights. Third, and most recent for literary studies, is the question of how do or how could literary scholars form relationships with the communities and people. While the issue of relationships has been important for a long time in Native Studies (the discipline) and other disciplines where Native peoples are studied, only lately has it been asked of and by literary scholars. I will begin my review with what the concerns are with cultural readings and conclude with the strengths these could still offer, particularly when these come from aspects of First Nations' cultures that are important to their current conditions.

Few would deny that sustaining their cultures is important to First Nations' peoples. This is not what lies behind the concerns with utilizing cultural frameworks to interpret First Nations' literatures. Rather, one of the important concerns with culturally based criticism is in its separation and distancing of Native culture(s) from Native political interests and aspirations. Fagan, for example cites Hulan's study of media representations and literature reviews to support her contention that a
similar divide exists within the criticism ("Tewatatha:wi" 2). More importantly, Fagan is concerned that "culture" can be a politically soft and shifty term. Our ideas about culture walk close to "folklore," associated with identifiable external symbols -- distinctive clothing, food, housing, language, and so on. Canada has a long fascination with such symbols; they represent a nonchallenging form of difference where Aboriginal peoples become yet another culture in the mosaic. (2)

Depictions of and interest in Native cultures as quaint and "frozen in time" is, of course, especially risky for First Nations' peoples in terms of contemporary law and politics. When culture is equated with historical, as suggested in "distinctive clothing, food and housing", the contemporary peoples, their rights, and struggles are vanished and the maintenance of culture becomes just like that of other ethnic groups.

When Hoy asks herself How Do I Read These?, she locates one important aspect of her response to concerns with cultural criticism, within the literary texts themselves:

Read as metacritical illumination, advice to the reader, the passage - "'How do I eat these?'...'With your mouth, asshole'" (Robinson Traplines 208) - reaffirms the importance of gustatory and
aesthetic pleasure. Stop worrying the issue of cultural difference, you asshole, Adelaine's rejoinder declares, and enjoy. Take delight in what you are offered. Taste what you are eating; don't just classify and anatomize it. (How 195)

As Hoy suggests in this passage, attentiveness to the texts as well as to the criticism is important for many of these works. Metacritical illumination, suggestions about what is and what is not important to First Nations' people, exists within the literatures as well within scholarship. I also concur with Hoy's interpretation that pleasure and enjoyment may be important balances to understandings that overemphasize the crises, chaos and adversity in Native lives and communities.

Furthermore, while cultural differences do exist, comparative cultural readings that attempt to draw across cultures, particularly between Eurocentric understandings and First Nations' can result in problematic interpretations. Denis Johnston, for example, once proposed that Nanabush in Highway's *The Rez Sisters* was "in effect, an Ojibwa Angel of Death" (258). This example illustrates another two problems with cultural readings. The first is that understandings and influences between First Nations' and Eurocentric cultures have important nuances that are neither straightforward nor deniable. The other is what has
become for many, an over-abundance of critical works, not just in literary studies, that seek identify and explicate trickster figures, characters and influences in many First Nations' artistic endeavours.

Johnston's example above, where he draws too straight a line between First Nations' and Christian belief systems, is one that indicates the need for more complex and nuanced understandings. Hoy, for example, finds in her work that,

The texts here raise and reward questions that broaden rather than confirm assumptions about the meaning of signifiers such as 'Native' or 'woman.' The texts refuse to be confined by these terms; they refuse to abandon either. Instead they demonstrate the many ways, both critical and creative, of inhabiting female and Native cultures. (192)

The texts and those who create them do live within and alongside a variety of belief systems and cultures. As Hoy suggests, these neither confine nor control critical, creative or, I would suggest, lived expressions. I will be arguing that pow wow and pow wow texts, as Hoy finds in the texts by Native women, broaden rather than narrow meaning and significance.
Fagan identifies trickster studies as an important part of "the most popular way of thinking about Aboriginal literature ("Tewatatha:wi" 2) and suggests there are many other modes that could and should be explored: "In examining the values of community, responsibility, and action, I attempt to move away from a superficial look at symbols of traditionalism to explore traditional principles and values" (5). In other words, as I understand her, part of what she is doing here is encouraging critics to move on from what are already over-utilized symbols and frameworks. I also agree with her concern about the superficiality of many of these examinations.

Mihesuah too comments on what she sees as an overabundance of both trickster and humour analyses (2,3). Part of Fagan and Mihesuah's concerns with these analyses could also be the superficiality of the links between tricksters and humour. Characters and their authors are too often identified as tricksters if what they do or say make readers laugh. Manossa however offers a Trickster description from within her Cree culture that would complicate that link:

In general, a trickster character is overly confident, boastful, arrogant and conceited; he seems to ridicule with his shortcomings. Even though Wayskaychak is capable of transforming into various
beings, his powers are limited, and in the end he is held accountable

for his wrong doings. (171)

This description is much closer to what I have come to understand about

tricksters. I understand that trickster identifications are most likely

intended to recognize and celebrate the humour, cleverness and intricate

literary strategies that such writers employ. Manoosa's explanation that,

within her (and other) First Nations' cultures, tricksters are laughed at

(not with) and serve as examples of wrong doing and the consequences

thereof is an important corrective to those lines of thinking.

Such cultural literacy, as Laroque recognizes, "plays a crucial role in

the appreciation of any particular literature" (213). Kelly too identifies

"one of the major obstacles in the analysis of Aboriginal literatures [as

being] the vast lack of knowledge regarding the histories of global and

local colonization" (148). This vast lack of knowledge, I would argue,

extends beyond cultures and histories, into law, politics and governance.

Furthermore, this ignorance is not just about the First Nations but, as

Kelly suggests, the realities of Canadian history, law and opaque social

norms as well. Cultural literacy here should include Vizenor's "discourse of

histories over [the Canadian] metanarratives" (168).
These discourses and contexts are, as many have discovered, crucial to the most basic understanding of Native literatures. Ruffo, for instance, began a recent public lecture on "Where the Voices Were Coming From: The Beginnings of Contemporary Aboriginal Poetry in Canada" with an extended explanation of the First Nations' and Canadian socio-political climate of the early 1970's, particularly the 1969 White Paper and the Red Paper response. Further complicating these inclusions and contexts is a problem many acknowledge: the particular difficulties in determining who and what may be reliable sources for this knowledge.

Determining reliability for contextual explications, perhaps for me, because of my simultaneous participation in English and Native Studies, may be slightly less problematic than for others. Although I do wonder why, when there seems to be such widespread agreement that appropriately contextualizing Native literatures requires reading outside the discipline of English, that so few literary scholars are able to locate and read reliable sources. Ric Knowles, for instance, in preparing his essay "The Hearts of Women: Rape, Residential Schools and Re-membering," read and then cites *The Circle Game*, *Stolen From Our Embrace*, and *Recognition of Being*, three of the best works on their respective topics. Mihesuah voices a similar concern,
When AIQ put out a call for opinions as to what works by
Indigenous authors have most influenced readers, the responses
were more than depressing. What I got were lists that featured 98
percent fiction writers. Incredibly, with the exception of Duane
Champagne's essay, "American Indian Studies is for Everyone," one
work on Julie Cruikshank, and Vine Deloria Jr. being mentioned
exactly once, there were no nonfiction writers included anywhere.

(2)

When the works cited above as well as many other fine works by
Native intellectuals and scholars are readily available, I really do not
understand why Davidson, Walton and Andrews, for example, would cite
Krupat in order to claim that "Native experience is collective in nature"
(98) rather than Weaver on communitism. They are aware of Weaver's
work as they quote from the text of Weaver's interview with Thomas
King. Similarly, Fee and Flick assert the need for "some understanding of
the [Blood] Sun Dance" in Green Grass, Running Water, yet the footnote
for their explanation of the significance of Blood face painting is to a
1969 work on the Northern Cheyenne by Father Peter J. Powell (133).

I do admire Hoy's personal and bravely admitted suggestion about
why First Nations' scholarship and intellectual work is not more
thoroughly utilized. In her description of an interview with partner Thomas King and herself, she says

At one point in the interview, trying to challenge ideas of a fixed, given content for Canadianess, of a Canadian character, I proposed that Canada be thought of as a conversation. Shortly thereafter, the interview shifted away from me temporarily, and I began self-consciously rehearsing what I had already said and worrying at the interview questions. Tom was elaborating one of his observations about Canada when he turned unexpectedly to me: 'You know. What's the word I'm looking for...?'

With the camera whirring and everyone's attention refocused in my direction, I had to disrupt his argument by confessing sheepishly, 'I'm sorry, I wasn't listening.'

The irony of that juxtaposition didn't make the final cut for the television program, but it might well have provided a salutary corrective to some of its rosier narratives of the nation. (10)

Canada and the literary discourses about Native literatures may be making space for Native literary voices, but, as Hoy and Mihesuah ask, who, if anyone, is listening to the voices on other topics. Mihesuah's answer to this kind of question is much harsher than Hoy's, "Many lit
critters do not want to pay attention to those people who make them uncomfortable. They do not want to have to be responsible" (2). Perhaps this is another reason for the emphasis on orality. To work with aurality as an important critical concept would mean literary critics need to listen and take responsibility for what they hear. I do agree, however, that aurality will mean hearing and reading that which may make lit critters uncomfortable.

Furthermore, soft interests in and interpretations of First Nations' cultures may mean missing either the literary writers' intentions or Native readers' understandings of these references. For many First Nations' people, it is the tenacity and vigour of their cultures that are important. In his discussion of associational Native literature, Thomas King says,

For the Native reader, associational literature helps remind us of the continuing values of our cultures, and it reinforces the notion that, in addition to the usable past that the concurrence of oral literature and traditional history provides us with, we have an active present marked by cultural tenacity and a viable future which may well organize itself around major revivals of language, philosophy, and spiritualism. (246)
The oral, traditional and active present are concurrent, going on right now. These are contemporary, challenging differences. Yet, as Mihesuah finds,

It is also disconcerting that some literary scholars only look for topics they want to find rather than acknowledging the messages the writer clearly wants readers to consider. (2)

In looking for the messages that writers want readers to consider, Eigenbrod approaches the issue of cultural-linguistic interpretation from a slightly different direction than the problematic approaches discussed above and may then have found a way into more accurate cultural readings.

Eigenbrod takes up the calls for literary scholars "to act upon changing the glaring contradiction between our celebration of Aboriginal arts and our negligence of Native communities" (76). She sees, in the unglossed Cree sentence which opens *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, "an invitation [from Highway] to learn about his people with his people, to leave the 'library fortress' and the 'scholarly garrison' (citing Hoy) in order to go out into the communities" (77). Eigenbrod connects with the Native, in this case the Cree community, by asking a Cree-speaking friend for an English translation of the sentence. In so doing, Eigenbrod says she
"created an oral connection beyond the written text and a link to a community outside academia (as the [Cree-speaking] friend needed to consult with other Cree speakers)" (76). Within this elegantly simple solution to locating reliable sources and connecting to Native community, I would also note Eigenbrod's appropriate avoidance of expecting or using one of her Native students as an informant. The very simplicity of this solution does make me question whether I am expecting too much with my suggestion that literary scholars can connect with First Nations' communities by attending events such as pow wows held in those communities.

Moving towards culturally aware criticisms means more than cultural sensitivity. Awareness may also require a high degree of specificity, as Hulan discovered, to her chagrin.

That literary value may be defined differently depending on cultural context became clear to me as I continued to teach in Native communities and confront the limitations inherent in my position. For example, when I chose to assign a letter written by Joseph Brant as an example of rhetoric to students at Kahnawake, they dismissed it as the work of an unredeemable traitor. My attempts to justify its inclusion on the syllabus on the basis of literary value
despite its problematic political and historic context were tolerated but did not convince anyone. Indeed, my position as cultural outsider had prevented me from anticipating the extent of this reaction. (222)

Part of the problem I see in this description is one of those linguistic or terminological oddities - in which all things Native are cultural whereas dominant societies have, not only culture, but law, social organization, politics, and history. The basis of her point, however, that there were significant gaps in her awareness of the particular people she was teaching remains true. Hulan reads this letter because she is going to teach in a Mohawk community. The problem, however, lies her reading of it, not just as a cultural outsider but in her unwitting ignorance of the specificities of Mohawk histories. Her cultural reading, that Brant as a Mohawk offers an important example of rhetorical challenge to the Canadian colonial metanarrative, does not matter in terms of Mohawk survivance to use another of Vizenor's terms (*Manifest Manners*).

Awareness that amongst First Nations' each culture and history has its own distinctiveness is another important critical and teaching framework.

When preparing to teach in a Mohawk community, an investigation into Mohawk histories may have helped predict the Kahnawake responses
to Brant's letter. I do agree with and practise the inclusion of community or territorially relevant readings. I also understand the necessity for an awareness of intra- and inter-community tensions. As Srivastava declares, "It is perfectly possible (and is often done) to teach Aboriginal literatures in deeply racist, colonialist, ahistorical and disrespectful ways - often unintentionally" (Proulx and Srivastava 189). I do not mean to suggest that Hulan is guilty of each of Srivastava's charges and most importantly, Hulan learns from this mistake.

Learning to do more deeply contextualized readings as well as ones that draw on First Nations' values as they understand those values may have further implications for scholarship and scholars. Eigenbrod also suggests that to make these kind of changes to the usual approaches in Native literary criticism "may signify a shift in the humanities which does not only relate to the study of Indigenous knowledges but is indicative of a larger process of a re-evaluation of scholarship influenced by Indigenous thought" (78). Thus far, the "study of" has fit well within the typical conventions of respectable academic work, but to be "influenced by" not only directly challenges the usual objective standard but marks a larger, more difficult project and process.
One example of the magnitude of this project is when Fee and Flick undertake "Coyote Pedagogy: [in order to understand] Where the Borders Are in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water.*" They argue that "the most striking effect of *Green Grass, Running Water* is its ability to arouse readers' desire to "get" the in-jokes, to track the allusions, and to find answers to a whole series of posed but unanswered questions....Coyote pedagogy requires training in illegal border-crossing" (131). While I suspect this effect strikes graduate students more than it does undergraduates, at least in terms of individual initiatives, still the very important point about the immense amount of preparation necessary in order to teach this novel effectively is well made:

 Anyone who wants to understand (or teach) the novel has to be prepared to cross the political border between [Canada and the United States], the disciplinary borders between English literature, Native Studies, and Anthropology, the literary border between Canadian and American literature. The most important border is between white ignorance and red knowledge: for King this is not a border that Euro-North Americans can cross without passing an IQ test. And this means, as the narrator says to Coyote "pay
attention...or we'll have to do this again" (King 104) and "forget being helpful and listen." (Fee and Flick 229)

Their large and significant list of areas of knowledge that the novel demands is certainly accurate. While it may be possible to question whether King is the kind of activist writer Mihesuah, Cook Lynn and Fagan and others are calling for literary critics to pay more attention to (King's work receives a great deal of attention), I must agree with Fee and Flick's contention that King is one of the best at delineating the risky and contentious border of white ignorance. "Coyote Pedagogy" as Fee and Flick engage in it is hard work as well as risky. I do appreciate it when a scholar of Fee's stature makes these bold interventions and contributions to the criticism. I see this as a clear demonstration of her utilizing her rank and privilege to make space for these kind of cultural analyses, analyses which assert the importance of listening to and using Indigenous knowledges as frameworks for literary interpretations.

I also think it is important to listen to the themes that Native critics think are important. As I said in my introductory chapter, one source of Mihesuah's distress with lists of influential writers respondents submitted to her were that "none of them wrote about empowerment. None have created a realistic role model that we can aspire to emulate. None have
created difficult situations and strong characters that show how to survive and to emerge victorious from whatever is troubling them" (2). I suspect that empowerment, of the type Mihesuah appreciates, comes from culture. I also think that those First Nations' fictive role models that she wants to see appreciated may require some degree of cultural awareness in order to be identified, unless I am prepared to make the kind of mistake that Hulan did with Joseph Brant. And I'm not.

I am also encouraged by some recent critical works that openly declare these and similar goals. In the Acknowledgements section of *StoryKeepers*, David says,

> Every single person who worked on this book with had the same hope: to spark an interest in Indigenous literature among Aboriginal students and readers, and to make them proud of their rich and varied cultures by introducing them to books that speak directly to their experiences. (4)

Cultural readings of these texts that could interest and inspire Aboriginal students and other Aboriginal readers should likewise acknowledge the richness and variety of those cultures.

First Nations' authors themselves have voiced specific expectations about how scholars could make community connections beyond research
into cultural interests. "Cree poet Louise Halfe once asked a group of Aboriginal literature critics why they were not out marching on the streets with Aboriginal activists" (cited in Fagan "Tewatatha:wii" 4). When last summer's march (July 2005) to raise awareness of the Aboriginal 'Missing Sisters' came through the University of Saskatchewan campus, as far as I could see, the only university personnel who joined it were: two members of the Sociology Department, the Native Studies departmental administrator and me. I do realize that summer is a time for vacations and off-campus research. This is still a disappointingly low turnout, especially when the march was organized by the family of one of those missing women, a woman who was a University of Saskatchewan student at the time of her disappearance.

Acknowledging and acting on such relationships are not only an important theme within Native literatures; they can also be a crucial benchmark for the acceptance of research and interpretations. When Kim Anderson was reviewing scholarship about Native women, she posed just this kind of test question.

In consideration of the significance of relationships, I am skeptical when I read Lande's analysis is the result of several months of fieldwork in the Ojibwa community. How does this compare with a
lifetime of lived experience? What types of relationships did she build that could have given her any insights into the culture?

(Anderson 43)

In explaining this type of credibility, like Monture-Angus, Smith refers to her Maori language to explain the link between relationships and credibility within her communities.

In Maori language there is the expression *Kanohi kitea* or the 'seen face', which conveys the sense of being seen by the people - showing your face, turning up at important cultural events - [This] cements your membership within a community in an ongoing way and is part of how one's credibility is continually developed and maintained. (15)

Being seen, in an ongoing way, not just one time, at one event, but having relationships that "extend beyond a research relationship to one involving families, communities, organizations and networks" (Smith 15) that function in times of need as well as celebration is what I understand this call for the connections to be about. As Halfe asks above, where are the literary scholars when Native peoples need political support?

I would also make some distinctions here between the types of events that scholars could attend and attend to. Joy Harjo's praise for
Womack's critical work contains a number of important considerations for cultural readings and my work in particular. "This is where any discussion of native literatures must begin, from the heart of the community....I always think of the story of a white anthropologist who asked a non-western people about their ideology, their philosophy. Their answer? We just dance" (Harjo, *Red on Red* back cover). As I read Harjo, she locates the beginning place for understanding Native literatures in Native communities. She, as have other First Nations' people, consistently remind us that their communities: the people, the land and the ways they live with these lands; are the heart and centre of what it means to be First Nations. Harjo also links this heart to culture, and ideology and philosophy to dance. She makes a clear suggestion that watching dance is a way to learn something about those philosophies. To go to communities to see those dances would also satisfy Smith's contention that the concomitant expectation, that of being seen in those communities, could be met.

Some, perhaps even many, important cultural events may be closed to outsiders. As Christopher Jock warns,

A critical distinction [exists] between what might constitute a ceremony for members of the participating ceremonial
community...and those aspects of it that are considered useful or accessible or teachable to others...[It is] an arrogant assumption that one can prepare to participate in ceremony, and in fact can earn the right to do so, in any way other than becoming a member of the community enacting the ceremony. (415)

While the ceremonies Jock evokes are the ones that would most clearly articulate those ideologies and philosophies that the white anthropologist and those attempting cultural readings would be looking for, to do so would clearly cross the boundary Jock draws.

Furthermore such distinctions are evident in the literature, the criticism and related scholarship. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, King sets a series of important scenes at the Blood Sun Dance but all the action he describes takes place in the encampment surrounding the Sun Dance. There is nothing at all about that most sacred ceremony itself. Womack, in *Drowning in Fire*, employs a similar strategy with respect to the Creek Stomp Dance. Much of "The Colors of Fire" chapter takes place during the Stomp Dance but the action and activities being described are in the camp sites around the Grounds, and not the dance itself (219-247).

Alfred, in his scholarship, goes a little further than do King or Womack in that Alfred uses the structure of the Condolence Ceremony to describe
the framework of his text. He does, however, acknowledge those boundaries in several key passages. For example,

> Now the ritual goes on to talk about a number of duties that are culturally specific to my people. In the book I'll talk instead about leadership. In the ceremony, these songs are very sacred. So, out of respect for their nature and meaning, in the book I will draw on their role in the overall ritual, but not go into the songs themselves" (Alfred xxii)

From these examples and cautions, I decided I could, however, watch and listen as First Nations' people dance, not as they dance in their sacred ceremonies, but as they dance their styles in the contemporary events known as pow wow. I could learn what these mean from what the Emcees say about the dance, the event and the traditional components that have been incorporated into these events. As Womack did, in Red on Red, I would look for "those ideas, articulated by Indian people, that best serve a contemporary critical framework" (4). I especially listened for the ideas and understandings that articulated traditional values and principles.

While the next chapter reviews the scholarship and intellectual work about pow wow, especially in terms of its origins and meanings in order to justify my particular cultural framework, I hope that work is not taken as a
substitute for attending these events. The forthcoming review is important in terms of scholarship but it will not lead to or satisfy expectations that literary scholars been seen at these (and other) important events. Understanding pow wow through reading about it will also not generate relationships with First Nations' people or initiate connections with their communities. I think it is also important to remain cognizant of Adelaine's aforementioned metacritical injunction to enjoy and delight in both the pow wow events and their representation in these literatures.
In his poetic memoir, *Winning the Dust Bowl*, Carter Revard describes some of the reasons that he and others decided to organize the first St. Louis Indian Powwow,

We hoped our powwows would also bring non-Indians to have a good time and learn something of Indian people.... That would be doing something for Indian and non-Indian community, as well as having ourselves a fine time, and keeping some of our Indian ways and understanding, and for that matter making our footsteps prayers for the well-being of our relatives and friends. (163)

These comments, as brief as they are, also contain most of the points to the theoretical framework of my understanding of pow wows. Most important for this particular work is that, as Revard suggests, non-Indian people, through attending pow wow, can learn about Indian peoples from Indian people. Pow wows can bring together Indian and non-Indian communities and so develop relationships between them.

Revard also notes that pow wows, for the Indians attending these events are fun. These events are celebrations and pleasurable occasions that include lots of laughter. Another important aspect of this pleasure may also, for the dancers in particular but not necessarily limited to just
the dancers, come from getting 'dressed up' for these events. I do not mean getting dressed up in the sense of putting on costumes. What the dancers wear should be referred to as outfits or regalia. However, there is a detectable sense that putting on these outfits is akin to how other peoples feel when they get dressed up for a formal or special occasion. Many spectators too will be wearing their best Indian clothing, ribbon shirts for example in some territories or elaborate Western (cowboy) shirts in others.

I would also maintain (as do others to be discussed later in this chapter) that even with the historical influence of some commercial productions on the beginnings of pow wow (the Wild West and Medicine shows, for example) and in contemporary competition pow wows, many underlying values and principles of First Nations' ideologies, including aspects of spirituality remain. As Revard says, the dancers' footsteps "become prayers for the well-being of our relatives and friends" (163). Furthermore, these relatives and friends may be from many First Nations.

In St. Louis, as was and is typical of many urban centres, the Indian community included Comanche, Omaha, Seneca, Cherokee, Kiowa and Arikawa people (160). Pow wow organizing, especially in cities or by institutions, as well as the events themselves can serve to make and
reinforce intertribal connections. These co-operative ventures are only one example of the kind of initiatives that can encourage or strengthen connections amongst Indian peoples.

Such co-operation need not be understood as erasing the specificities of particular First Nations. Within the general type of event known as pow wow, these events often have specific differences relative to the territory or the host Nation. Such distinctions may be in terms of dance styles, drum protocols, or the types and range of ceremonial aspects included with a particular pow wow. While pow wow dance styles and the particular drum used for pow wow may not have historical significance for many First Nations, there is no denying the popularity of these types of events and their spread across North America. Nor does this spread necessarily imply that pow wow perpetuates some kind of bland or pan-Indianness. Jerry Longboat, for example, gave an instructive responsive when he was asked why he, as an Iroquois man, dances the Plains Traditional Men's style. Longboat says,

It's a Plains dance, but powwow is contemporary, and ultimately an expression of self, of the gifts that you possess, so 300 years ago the outfit that you would wear everyday would talk about your power.
It begins with the acknowledgement of the connection all Native people once shared. Throughout Turtle Island there were vast and extensive trade routes, and culture was shared before the coming of western influence and the division of North America. Powwow is a modern expression of those historic connections.

(Elton 77)

While I am not denying the existence of pan-Indian problematics, an important purpose of this work is to demonstrate the continuity of First Nations' values as evidenced in pow wows. Longboat's acknowledgement that connections and cultural sharing amongst First Nations predates contact with Europeans is an indication that great care needs to be taken before indiscriminately and negatively labeling First Nations' cross cultural adoptions as pan-Indian. Furthermore, pow wow also has, even within its generalities, both specificities as well as diversity which even the basics of pow wow will show.

Pow Wow Basics

This section will outline the basics of a typical pow wow program, including both the usual components of the program and descriptions of the main dance styles. After a very brief comparison and overview of
types of pow wows, I will outline a typical session in the order that would be seen by observers.

A typical pow wow in this territory (the Canadian portion of the Plains) has five sessions: Friday evening, Saturday afternoon, Saturday evening, Sunday afternoon and Sunday evening. The occurrence and length of these sessions varies, sometimes according to local protocols and sometimes with local conditions. For example, south of the modern international border, due to the extreme summer heat, pow wow dancing may only take place during evening sessions. In those territories, afternoon sessions may be for tribally specific dances such as gourd dancing. This influence may even carry over into indoor pow wows. Ellis, for example, notes that even for Tulsa IICOT Powwow of Champions, held in "the air-conditioned comfort of a 10-acre indoor arena", afternoon sessions are for the Gourd Dance (1). I would also note that in many territories, and for urban pow wows, evening sessions do not last nearly as long as they do on First Nations' communities on the Plains. In eastern Canada, often the evening sessions end at or near sundown and before full darkness. Still most pow wows will have at least four of the above listed sessions.
Traditional and competition pow wows do not vary much from the basic structure I am about to describe. The particulars of what is seen to happen may not seem to be very different as the essential components and order will likely be the same. The main difference is that at a traditional pow wow, all registered dancers and drum groups receive 'day pay' - a small sum of money that supports their travel expenses and stay in the community. At a competition pow wow, only the contest winners receive prizes, usually money and often individualized jackets. In other words, both types of pow wow have some sort of payment system. Differences and the criticisms of those differences will be discussed in the pow wow histories and issues sections later in this chapter.

A pow wow session seems to begin with the Grand Entry. However, immediately prior to the Grand Entry, here and in many other territories, the Grass Dancers are asked to enter the dance area to prepare the ground. This preparation, as will be discussed in Powers' *The Grass Dancer*, is both physical and spiritual. Grass dance footwork smoothes the surface of the area and, in the spiritual aspects of this style, also serves to cleanse the area. Grand Entry takes place after this ceremony.

For Grand Entry, all dancers dance in with the flags. Numerous flags are carried in by the leading flag party. Both cloth flags and eagle staffs
are brought in. Cloth flags usually include Canadian and provincial flags, but there could also include be cloth flags of the particular community, its Nation and its Treaty group. In this territory, the Union Jack is frequently carried as well. Given the historical treatment of the First Nations by these colonial governments, honouring Canadian and British flags can appear contradictory to First Nations' Nationalisms and sovereignties. Blundell, for example, sees carrying the Canadian flag at a Kahnawake pow wow as a reminder to the Canadian state "of their commitment to [Canadian] nationalistic values" (7). There are at least two other, stronger reasons for this practice. As Biolosi notes in the American Lakota example,

Honoring the American flag...entails an indigenous subtext about *treaty rights*. Respect for the flag is connected to a legal, political, and moral claim Lakota people make to a special status in the United States, a status that many Lakota people conceptualize as based on treaties. (25)

From everything I have heard, at pow wows and other First Nations' gatherings in the territories of the Numbered Treaties, the Canadian flag and the Union Jack - also the flag under which those Treaties were signed - are carried and honoured for much the same reason. They serve as
reminders of and to emphasize the status of those Treaties and Treaty relationships.

It is also important to know that veterans carry the flags, although, as their numbers decrease, children and grandchildren of veterans may be given this role. I have overheard veterans ask to switch flags, from the current Canadian flag to the Union Jack, on the grounds they did not fight under the Maple Leaf. Furthermore, as I understand it, especially from what I have heard First Nations' World War II veterans say, they joined the Canadian forces as allies, not as Canadian citizens. They fought, nursed and otherwise participated as Cree, Mohawk or Sioux warriors helping their Canadian Treaty partner in a time of Canadian and British need, living up to one of their Treaty commitments.

At institutional pow wows, in prisons and at universities for example, where a more diverse group of Native peoples may be involved in the organization of the event, the Métis flag may also be one of the honoured flags. Other veterans, community members currently in the military and police forces are also in this part of the flag party. The flag party is often followed by the Chief and Council members of the community, prominent visitors, the pow wow (organizing) committee, and lastly the Pow wow Royalty - pow wow Princesses and Little Warriors. The
flag party lines up at the centre front of the dance arena, facing the speaker stand while the dancers come in.

The first category of dancers to enter the dance arena is the Golden Age Men. Usually these men are Traditional Dancers although, in this territory, I have seen a few Golden Age Grass Dancers. Lately, another men's style has begun to reappear, Men's Buckskin, and these men are often Golden Age dancers as well. The Men's Traditional category will follow behind the Golden Age men.

The Traditional Men's category comes first because, as Evans says, they dance as "the providers, protectors, and preservers of the traditional ways" (4). Emcees make very similar comments as these men enter the arena. For Jerry Longboat, dancing this style is about exploring the original teachings of manhood so that I may understand myself and my responsibilities as I journey through life. This is where the outfit or regalia is so integral. It is an acknowledgement of my relationship to the winged creatures, to the four-legged and the wisdom they carry, even to the sense of colour and design to acknowledge balance, flow and harmony in life. (Elton 77)
Traditional Men's dancing is graceful and contained, a serious style and "traditional values often go with the outfit and the dance" (Evans 18). Within this, and the other styles, however, Young Bear is quoted as saying that dancers should "dance to the songs in a personal interpretative way...dancing to each particular song...interpreting its special nature (quoted in Evans 18). There are then both expectations and freedom, similarities and differences, within as well as amongst these styles.

Next to enter would be the Grass Dancers. As George Horse Capture describes this style,

[The outfit] consists of colored cotton trousers and a separate shirt with long, brightly colored yarn fringes sewn on both pieces in chevron patterns. The unit is worn with no bustle....The dancer moves from side to side, lifting his feet higher than the traditional dancer, and his shoulders sway to get the fringe to flow like the long prairie grass. (28)

As considerable discussion of this style is forthcoming in The Grass Dancer chapter, little more will be said here. I do need to note that Horse Capture's description is of what would be called a contemporary Grass Dance outfit. Again, particularly in this territory, observers could also see Old-time Grass Dancers (a less brightly coloured and elaborate outfit) or,
recent years have seen the return of the Chicken Dance style. The Old-time style may be what Horse Capture describes as "an earlier conservative style...favoring black shirts and trousers decorated with shorter twisted white fringe" (28-29). The dancers' movements, that replicate the actions of the grouse or prairie chicken, will easily identify the Chicken Dance style.

In comparison to the movements described above, the last men's category, the Men's Fancy Dance style is by far the fastest and most vigorous. Dieter-McArthur says this style demands "great muscle control" and is "a test of endurance" (49). In the pow wow literature, it is this style that seems to be most consistently and closely linked to Wild West show influences. Evans and Reddick include a commentary to the effect that the contemporary Fancy Dance style came from Wild West show performers being encouraged to "execute the dance more in the way non-Indians believed it would be. Another influence was that of the Charleston" (7). While the added excitement and elaboration may have come from audience expectations of Wild West show performances, I admit I do not see a Charleston influence in the style today.

Furthermore, I would argue that there is a distinction to be made between those requests to 'fancy up' the dancing and how the dancers
responded to those requests. In an interesting example of the synchronicity that frequently happens in Native studies (the lower case 's' is again to indicate studies not necessarily within the discipline of Native Studies), Ellis attributes the development of the Fancy Dance style to Gus McDonald, one of Carter Revard's uncles and the dancer Revard pays tribute to in his poem "Ponca War Dancers".

A generation of Ponca dancers lead by Gus McDonald is invariably given credit for inventing and popularizing fancy dancing during the 1920s. One widely told story is that they were inspired by the bobbing head, pawing hooves, and quick turns of a spirited horse - movements that soon came to characterize the new dance style.

(Ellis 112)

While the impetus to 'fancy up' men's dancing came from show organizers, how those Ponca dancers choose to do that and from where they drew their inspiration - the movements of a spirited horse - seems to me to be just as important a consideration. I also see their inspiration as grounded in and coming from the importance of horses in many First Nations' ways.

Fancy Dance outfits are, however, more likely than the other Men's styles, to incorporate modern and vivid colours, fuchsia and neon green,
for example. While the Fancy Dance is a showy outfit and style, such that their competition rounds are often the highlights of a pow wow, pow wow people often joke that these men are the least 'traditional' and reliable. Despite or maybe because of this, Evans and Reddick note, in their discussion of Men's Fancy Dance, that "A dancer's attitude and demeanor off the dance ground at powwow are every bit as important as what he does while dancing contest" (9). Thus traditional behaviours are still expected of this most recent style.

This order of categories - Traditional, Grass and Fancy - is then repeated for each of the other two age categories: Teens and then Juniors.

After the Juniors Boys' Fancy Dancers, the women are lead in by the Golden Age Women. At least in these territories, the Golden Age Women are almost exclusively Traditional Dancers, although they might be either Buckskin or Southern Cloth. As with the Golden Age men, these women will be immediately followed by the Traditional Women. Browner describes the Buckskin outfits.

[Dancers wear] fully beaded yokes with long fringe, deer or cowhide skirts, women's breastplate (with vertically oriented bone pipes),
leggings, moccasins, a fan in their right hands and a shawl draped over their left. (50)

A Southern Cloth outfit looks similar with the main difference being the blouse and skirt are cloth rather than hide. And, rather than the dense, elaborate beadwork, the designs on the outfit are done in applique.

Women's Traditional dance style has two basic forms: a forward dance step, sliding one foot at a time; and a stationary style, with the upper body held still while bending the knees to 'bob' up and down. In the Women's Traditional styles, her feet are always in contact with the ground. Browner also notes that to dance this style well, it is "most important, while her feet are on the ground, the fringe on a woman's outfit should be in motion, swinging in wide arcs [with the rhythm of the song]" (50). Sandra Laronde also comments on her understanding of some of the cultural meaning of this style,

> When dancing traditional, for example, there is a downward rhythm of the body towards the earth, which acknowledges our connectedness with Mother Earth. Aboriginal dancing, like martial arts, uses the body's natural abilities and momentum. It does not go against the grain of natural movement. (21)

1. On one occasion, I did see a Golden Age Jingle Dress dancer. I was given to understand
As this is a slow-moving style, the Traditional Women often move directly to the outside of the circle while the remainder of the dancers continue to move into the circle and the by-now long line of dancers curls inwards in concentric spirals.

The next category will be the Women's Jingle Dress Dancers. This style is easily identified in both appearance and sound as their dresses are covered with metal cones. Like the Traditional Women, Jingle Dress Dancers usually carry a feather fan but, unlike the other two styles, they have no shawl. I would describe the faster foot work as sinuous with most of the steps being higher than those of the Traditional Dancers but much lower than that of the Fancy Shawl Dancers. Jingle Dress too has a slower, shuffle step style.

The history of this Dress is very important. Karen Pheasant explains how the dress came to the White family of the Lake of the Woods in a dream at a time when Maggie White, the original jingle dress dancer, was sick (Elton 83).² Pheasant also says that there are Teachings and songs specifically for that dress. There are interpretations of those teachings. For instance, the 365 cones on that she was visiting from Manitoba.

² Horse Capture includes a different version of the story wherein the dream came to a "holy man on the Mille Lacs Reservation, Minnesota" (27). From East to West here, however, I have only ever heard the White family story.
a Jingle Dress remind us that each day we should offer prayers, and practice balance and harmony. I don't go into detail a lot because if there's someone who wants to know, then they should make that visit to a grandma, or to an auntie. (Elton 84)

The Jingle Dress, with its attendant teachings, can be more than just a pow wow dance style. It can carry as may the men's counterpart - the Grass Dance - certain healing responsibilities and properties. As it is a relatively (in First Nations' terms) contemporary style, the Jingle Dress also serves as an example of on-going developments in First Nations' ways and so demonstrates that historical longevity is not necessarily a required characteristic for traditional and spiritual value. I would also underscore that Pheasant says, as do the pow wow Emcees, that if one wants to know those teachings, one is obliged to go to those women who hold and protect that knowledge. This is the means by which dancers learn, as Wagamese's Keeper says and I quoted in my introductory chapter, "Gotta know why you dance 'stead of just how" (Keeper N'Me 38). Such teachings are not revealed through public address at pow wows.

The Fancy Shawl Dancers, the most vigorous women's style, follow the Jingle Dress Dancers. Both the outfits - with beaded yokes and ornate
applique work - and the footwork of this style are fancy. These elaborate shawls are "spread across the back, [and] held by the ends. As the dancers take flight, these shawl wings help them soar and twist in the clouds, only rarely touching the earth" (Horse Capture 38). Adolf Hungry Wolf too says that "like the wings of a bird, the dancer's shawl accents every movement, its long fringes swaying to and fro like the roaches and feathers of the men" (120). It seems to me that the degree of vigour, with which this style is performed, can vary between different territories. For example, Fancy Shawl Dancers on the Plains move with greater emphasis and punch than do the lighter and more delicate Eastern Fancy Shawl Dancers. I should note, however, that both dance with grace and strength. And, again, as with the Men, these categories, Traditional, Jingle Dress and Fancy Shawl, will repeat for Teen and Junior age categories.

Last but absolutely not least, will be the Tiny Tots. Tiny Tot dancers can range from babies to children under seven years of age. All of these littlest dancers come in together. They may, sometimes, have started off being lined up in the gender and style categories with the boys coming in first but as they are very young, the arrangement may not last. The way I have usually heard the Tiny Tots introduced is as the future, not only the future of pow wow but the future of the First Nations
and the ones who, the current adults hope, will continue to carry and practice the cultures.

The above is only a basic outline of what may be seen during a typical Grand Entry. The particular order of the categories within the gender groups may vary in other territories. Horse Capture, for instance, describes the Fancy Shawl Dancers as coming in before the Jingle Dress Dancers (38). Another variation may be women dancing what are usually men's styles. Evans and Reddick have a section on women who have danced either Men's Fancy or Grass (19). Before moving onto to describe the rest of a session, I would also like to note that while each category does have its specific characteristics, there is, within each category, an expectation that dancers will develop a personal interpretation of the style and its songs. This is, as Trujillo described earlier part of a wholistic approach wherein, "traditional dance is something that is not defined just by the dance steps, but by the actual look of the clothing being worn. It's an attitude that goes with the particular dance" (26). It should also be obvious by now that while the broad styles are primarily gendered, a range of styles exists for both men and women.

After all of the dancers are in the arena, there will be a series of honour songs - for the flags and the veterans. These are followed by
prayers and sometimes, speeches. The dancing begins again with intertribals - songs that all of the styles can dance to. Anyone can enter the arena to dance during the intertribals, although some communities and territories may have particular requirements such as: moccasins, for anyone; men may only wear hats if there is an eagle feather on the hat; or that women wear or carry a shawl. At a competition pow wow, the intertribals immediately following Grand Entry may also be used as part of the judging for drum contests. After several intertribals, dances for each age group, in each style category, will begin.

Emcees announce the order in which the categories will have their turns. In some territories, the first group to dance their category will be the Tiny Tots. During at least three of five sessions, all of the categories (by style and age) dance two songs, one each of their quicker and slower styles. At a competition pow wow these will be judged, at a traditional pow wow they are danced as exhibitions. The pow wow committee will be determining the order of these dances and dancers need to be listening carefully to the Emcee in order to catch their turn. There will also be intertribals interspersed amongst the category dances. More often these days, at competition pow wows, after one of these intertribals, the pow wow committee will randomly 'take attendance' and award points to all
the dancers in the arena. This is to encourage and reward dancers who take part in the whole pow wow and not just their own category or special.

Specials may be age or dance style specific. These contests are often independent of the main competitions. They may held to honour events or people, as memorials or to keep a promise made during a previous pow wow season. While there will be prizes for the winners of these specials, there could also be smaller or larger giveaways as part of the special. The giveaway gifts may be distributed only to participating dancers or amongst the crowd at large. Moore makes several interesting comments on the political economy of pow wow (and other) giveaways.

One part of his analysis contrasts First Nations and Euro-American responses to the giveaway. Having already described Euro-American discomfort with receiving gifts from 'strangers', Moore goes on to say,

Another mystery to visitors is that persons honored by a giveaway or special do not themselves receive gifts, but are merely observers as their sponsors give away blankets, shawls, baskets of groceries, money, clothing, dishes, furniture, and even horses and automobiles to other people in attendance at the event. But in
Euro-America, it is the honoree who receives the plaque, the trophy, or the gold watch. (243-244)

While there are other kinds of honourings, wherein the honouree may receive a blanket, shawl, or other high-status gift, it is more the usual case that, for a giveaway, the honouree does not receive gifts. Perhaps I have become too acculturated and so developed quite bifurcated thinking, but this contrast had never occurred to me before reading Moore's analysis. In The Grass Dancer, Pumpkin is honoured with one of those other spontaneous (in the sense of not programmed) ceremonies and she does receive gifts. These may occur if, during the pow wow, people become aware of individuals or families who deserve such honouring or are in need of community support. These would not involve a dance special although most of the dancers and others in attendance would come out into the arena to take part in the process.

Pow wows put on by organizations or communities will usually have a large giveaway by the sponsoring group. This may be part of a dance special or it may not. As many people as the givers can reach will receive gifts as part of this giveaway. The protocol when receiving these gifts is to simply shake hands with the person who passes you the gift; no other form of thanks is expected. The organization's giveaway may be
concluded, in some territories, with an honour song. During this song, all the recipients stand and dance in place for the gifts they have received.

The only form of reciprocity that exists, especially for pow wows with no admission charge, is in the form of raffle tickets. Sellers will circulate through the crowd with, for example, 50/50 tickets. Princess and Little Warrior contestants (as well as their friends and family) will also come by with raffle tickets. Both of these raffles are fund-raising ventures that help support the cost of the pow wow.

There may also be vendors and craftworkers coming through the crowd selling raffle tickets for items of pow wow regalia, jewelry, hides, star quilts or other works of art. These sales may be to support a travelling family or group. They could also be fund raising for groups or activities within the community. Others may be selling actual items as well as tapes and CDs of the participating drum groups. Outside the dance arena and stands will be another circle of vendors selling food, crafts, regalia supplies, clothing - commercial or individually designed, jewelry and toys. These businesses pay a fee to the pow wow committee for their spaces.

Afternoon sessions conclude with flags being danced out. All available dancers should participate in this but the numbers are usually
much lower than for Grand Entry and, other than the flag bearers, few of the dancers will still be in their full formal regalia. In this territory, where dancing can go very late into the night, the flags may be danced out before the actual end of the evening session.

Pow wow Histories

In this section I will begin with several specific pow wow origin histories and then engage in a discussion of general pow wow histories. Pow wow origin stories are yet another example of the diversity and specificity within pow wow.

For the Blackfoot Confederacy, Cheryl Blood (Rides-at-the-doore) cites Orton Eagle Speaker’s explanation that pow wow came to them through the Kaispai, the Omaha and the Mandan:

The Kaispai visited Omaha traditional territory and observed them singing and dancing around a fire. [Eagle Speaker] said, "When Blackfeet raiders went to Kaispai territory\(^3\) and came back home, they held a dance. In later years, the Mandans came up to Lethbridge; it was just a small town then in the 1800's."...The

\(^{3}\) No date reference is given for this part of the story.
In the video *Indian Times 2*, an un-named Ojibwa Elder describes the origin of pow wow for his Nation.

A long time ago, a man from where the sun rises had a dream. His people were dancing and singing to the drum. They were all happy and shaking hands with each other. The Elders said the people should make the dream come true...for all time.

"Bawaajigewin" is "the Dream." Pow wow for short. (Sub-title translations)

In this particular territory, I frequently hear the late John Tootoosis and his wife credited with bringing the idea of contemporary pow wow back from their visits to Sioux territory. Another aspect of this Sioux influence is referenced by Dieter-McArthur who says contemporary pow wows are "activities [that] centre around the Grass Dance, a social dance brought to the Cree in the later 1880's. It was once known as Pwatsimo-win, or the Sioux dance, after the tribe that taught the dance to the Cree people" (41). Clearly pow wow has multiple origins within, between and among First Nations.
These multiple and relatively recent (in First Nations' terms) oral histories are also important indications of the need for an increased sensitivity to what First Nations' oral traditions really means. The oral traditions are not just what has been passed on from before contact. Ladner argues:

Just as the oral traditions of the Aboriginal collectives were constantly developing in pre-colonial times, they have continued to develop and adapt throughout the colonial experience...as new stories, songs and ceremonies were added to the traditional repertories and history continued to be recorded in the minds of the people. (104)

Within Ladner's definition, the stories cited above are clearly oral tradition. I would further argue that my interpretations are also grounded in those same traditions as the theory for this work comes from the stories, songs, histories and explanations I have heard at pow wows. That the explanations I draw on are given in public, at contemporary gatherings, about a set of current practices, would not necessarily exclude them from what Ladner calls the "traditional repertories" (104).
Throughout the remaining portions of this histories section, it will be important to bear in mind, as Browner states in the opening to her chapter on this topic, that

As I began researching the origins of pow-wows, conflicts among the pow-wow origin narratives became increasingly evident and problematic....Because pow-wow origins are a contested topic in Indian circles, presenting every Northern tribe's pow-wow history is well beyond the scope of this study. (19)

In this case, attempting to determine a generally agreed upon history of powwows would be further complicated by, in some cases similarities between First Nations experiences with the Canadian and American governments and, in some aspects, important differences.

Directionality and geography is a further complication in reconciling the two main overview studies that inform this review. Browner's study, subtitled *Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow* is focused on the Northern Plains of the United States. The index does not even include Canada or Canadian as a reference topic. Ellis' study of *Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains* takes as its centre, Oklahoma and North Carolina. In comparison, for Saskatchewan alone, there are two separate and distinct pow wow circuits, one from Saskatoon extending North and the
other including the South and Southeastern portions of the province. Most of my time has been spent travelling the Northern circuit, which seems to be most heavily influenced by Plains Cree powwow culture. In my few experiences of the Southern circuit, while there is, of course, still an important Plains Cree influence, Sioux powwow culture seems to carry considerable weight as well.

Furthermore, while Browner and others seem to assume that powwow, at least in its contemporary form, begins in the United States and somehow spreads North to Canada, there are tantalizing glimpses in some of the literature which are suggestive of origins and influences flowing in the opposite direction. Horse Capture states, in his discussion of pow wow music, that

The Indian people of Canada have long been a repository and garden of Indian music. It is well known that when Indian traditions were undergoing attack in the "Lower 48," they were alive and well up north. Since then songs have been passed south into the Dakota states, then west into Montana and Wyoming, then out to the world. (10)

I would not take this as meaning similar repressive measures were not underway in Canada. Still, the apparently widely held understanding that
pow wow music and other traditions were preserved and then shared back into the United States is an intriguing one. Even Browner discovers one informant who tells her of seeing Cree people from Canada doing an early form of the contemporary pow wow Grass Dance in the 1950's (52). Although she later finds what she considers evidence of an even early Sioux origin, I would take that 1950's piece of information as further confirmation of at least the possibility for North to South diffusions for some aspects of pow wow. I also see this as an underscoring of Longboat's contention about cultural sharing and pow wow as an event that makes and reinforces these connections.

Tracing pow wow origins also varies depending on which pow wow element is taken as the starting point. If I begin with dance styles, Men's dance styles are generally considered to all have evolved from the Omaha Grass Dance. I would also like to emphasize that this evolution should not be taken as indicative of the disappearance of either the Omaha Grass Dance Society or of other dances belonging to other First Nations' internal societies. Adaptations into more public or intertribal spheres did not replace the originals.

If I begin with terminology, Browner, for example, even though most of her tracing is through Plains origins, still argues that "The term pow-
wow is probably from the Algonquian language family of the northeastern United States and Canada and derived from the Nargansett words *pau wau*, which gloss as "he/she dreams" (27). This aspect is close to the Elder's story from *Indian Times* cited above.

Interestingly though, if I was to begin with an important central element of contemporary powwow - the powwow drum - multiple origin stories, as well as Nationally specific drum protocols and practices again begin to emerge. Drums and drumming are important elements in many First Nations' cultures. For powwow in particular Browner finds,

Over and over when I ask singers and dancers about their pow-wow experiences they refer to the drum and the power of its sound.

Unlike Western music, where instruments usually accompany vocalists and music is a backdrop for dancing, song and dance at pow-wow accompany the drum. (87)

Given then, the primacy of the drum and the innovation that the big powwow drum represents, I find it interesting that there is relatively little in the powwow scholarship I reviewed about the origins of these drums. I therefore turn to the accounts heard from First Nations' people and at pow wows.
One oft-repeated explanation comes from the Bawaajigewin dream story - the people were gathered around a big drum for an Ojibwa/Sioux peace-making celebration. I have also heard it said, at Plains Cree pow wows, that they appropriated the big drum from the Residential School marching bands. Drum protocols too may be specific to the First Nation's community in which the pow wow is taking place. A drum group will usually treat their drum according to their own ways and instructions, but it is not unusual to hear Emcees announce that a particular protocol is to be followed while in this community. Complying with such requests illustrates respect for one another's practices especially when on another people's territory as well as the respect for differences discussed in my introductory chapter. Both of these are important values that inform cross-cultural matters between First Nations. This begins to demonstrate, I believe, an important, if often misunderstood aspect of pow wow, that even within what might appear to be pan-Indian practices - i.e. the universal use of the big pow wow drum, specificity - the protocols for how these drums are treated - will often be retained.4

Attempts to trace the origins of contemporary pow wow as a large public (as compared to the collectively private) dance gathering is where

4. Obviously too, observations of differences in how drums are treated are not evidence
the largest degrees of diversity, the widest range of alleged influences and the most multiple of origin stories are found. While, as Browner and others have found, these may be described as "contested" and there are internal debates about where and with whom contemporary pow wows began, the tone of the assertions that I have most often heard at pow wows are more in terms of 'this is how we began to pow wow' or 'this is how pow wow came to us'. The tone I hear is such statements is much more about asserting the legitimacy of a particular community or Nation's history than it is about overtly challenging some other Nation's account or a metanarrative of pow wow history.

Still, even within the multiplicity, most accounts of the beginnings of the contemporary form describe these as occurring in the immediate post World War II period. Gatherings, as small as a family group and as large as a community, were held to welcome returning veterans. These events, sometimes described as picnics, also included dances. Few large, open, gatherings would have been held prior to that time as both the US and Canada had legislation in place prohibiting ceremonies, dancing and large gatherings not approved by Indian agents.

of a group's ignorance of protocols.
None of the scholarship suggests that these events represent a return to dancing after some long period of forced abstinence. Rather, many acknowledge that Indian dancing was, in fact, sustained during the earlier restrictive periods within the communities, albeit in some secrecy. Ellis comments on the irony that for some reservation communities, the individual allotments became "remote locales for [ceremonial] dances beyond the immediate reach of [Indian] agents" (18). Many returning World War II First Nations' veterans were no longer willing to accept such cultural (or the concomitant political) restrictions. In Oklahoma for example, the smaller celebrations began to grow in size and to merge with more open revitalizations of Warrior Society ceremonies - particularly those which honoured and treated returning warriors (see Ellis for example 22-24). As the size of these dance gatherings grew, they also began to attract Indian people from various communities, hence becoming the first of the contemporary pow wows. To further interrogate the origin and meaning of other elements of pow wow requires moving to a more theoretical level.
Theories and Issues

One of the main issues in understanding pow wows as cultural events is in terms of what may or may not be considered as traditionally or historically authentic. Criticism and doubts about the 'authenticity' of contemporary pow wow often give insufficient weight to the elements of pow wow that issue from sovereign sources. Instead, by emphasizing the notion that a number of the features of contemporary pow wow developed through Indian participation in Medicine and Wild West shows, critics assert that the pow wow is a form of debased pan-Indianism, relying on externally widely recognizable symbols, because pow wow developed out of performances for White entertainment.

Such emphases often propose what I see as overly simplistic responses to a number of important questions about complex conditions such as poverty, competition, and money, as well as misidentifications and interpretations of various elements. I admit that early in my involvement with First Nations' people, I made similar mistakes. As my initial relationships were with people committed to both living their traditions and political action, I was confused by how many of them, as well as many others, had been involved not just in peacetime military service for the colonial country within which they lived, but how many had
crossed the international border to join up. This seemed profoundly contradictory. When I finally asked one of my friends why First Nations' nationalists would join the colonial armies, his first response was a look of utter disdain - as if to say how can you be so naïve? His second and verbal response was 'poverty'. With this early example, I learned to look below superficial appearances and to include considerations of the structural conditions as well as what cultural or political\(^5\) imperatives might suggest would be appropriate.

Assessing Indian participation in the historical Medicine and Wild West shows deserves just this type of nuanced consideration. On both sides of the border, the colonial governments of that time were attempting to convert the on-reserve populations along a number of key features, from hunting-gathering to agriculture, from traditionalists to Christians and from travelers to sedentary. Few of these initiatives were ever fully successful, let alone the initial attempts. The enforced shift in First Nations' economic systems were, however, particularly burdensome and resulted in extreme hardships and poverty on the reserves and reservations.

\(^5\) In terms of the influence of military service on First Nations agency, the changes that returning World War II veterans brought to the political scene is well understood. For more contemporary examples, i.e. the returning Viet Nam veterans, little more than their presence in movements such as AIM and Mohawk Warrior Societies has been noted.
Poverty, in combination with the legislated prohibitions of cultural practices, made participation in the Medicine and Wild West shows attractive to Plains people. As Browner states "Wild West shows and country fair circuits were among the few legal venues where the Lakota and many other Plains people, now poverty stricken, could dance and earn income" (28). In a later passage, Browner also notes that the opportunity to travel and develop intertribal friendships were important aspects of participation in these shows (30). Ellis too says that "the chance to perform songs and dances for themselves encouraged many Indians to join [and shows] Indians knew that performing was neither a culturally moribund act nor a clear cut case of victimization" (emphasis added, 17).

Blundell argues an even stronger position in the case of Canadian Prairie Indians. Blundell says

[Canadian] Prairie Indians took advantage of opportunities offered by tourism to mould expressive forms to their own purposes. As Cox argues for the "Indian villages" set up at early Prairie fairs: "Perhaps the original stimulus for these Indian encampments came from the American Wild West shows, but there the comparison ends. These encampments were not cowboy and Indian shows, written, produced and directed by White impresarios. They were
native exhibitions and performances produced by the Indians themselves, and very much following their own "script." (4)

Thus, participation and performance in these shows can be seen as alleviating several central problems of Indian life - poverty, restrictions on cultural activities and travel, and being disconnected from other Indian peoples. In other words, First Nations' involvement in these shows was a creative response, largely grounded in their original cultures, to the conditions First Nations' people were facing.

The notion that the Medicine and Wild West shows introduced foreign values and practices that became part of contemporary pow wow can also be challenged. Competition is one such value that is often raised as being 'foreign' to First Nations' value systems and Eurocentric in orientation. Criticisms of contemporary pow wow attribute the introduction of competition rounds at pow wow to the auditions for and awarding of contracts to performers in the shows (see Ellis or Evans for examples of this). I have also heard critics further assert that historically First Nations' peoples did not compete against each other, let alone award valuable prizes to winners. While dancing may not have historically been as competitive as it is today, it is clear that First Nations held other
types of competitions, especially races - both foot races and later, horse races - where winners did receive valuable prizes.

It is interesting too that only competition pow wows are criticized for paying out money as prizes, whereas, as I noted above, traditional pow wows day-pay all dancers and drummers. It is also possible, however, to see competition pow wows, especially the very large ones, as rewarding excellence and the effort necessary to achieve these levels in dance. Karen Pheasant reports a conversation on this topic:

I was sitting with a traditional Jingle Dress dancer who mostly just dances at traditional powwows. She said, "Gee, Karen, I don't know about the spotlight dancing, and top 10 finalists, and drum roll, and all of this. What happened to the tradition of why we have dance?"
And I said, "Well, I think what happened is the world is recognizing Native dance as an art form, as much as ballet, jazz, or any other dance form. It's to be recognized, appreciated, and shown to the world, with as much pride and dignity as any other western dance form. And so, this is a venue for that. This is a venue for professional artists who dance full-time." (Elton 88)
I appreciate Pheasant’s paradigm shift, from criticisms of full time dancers as 'professional Indians' to that of professional artists of an Indian dance form.

Furthermore, for this territory Dieter-McArthur says that

In the past, certain tribes or bands gathered to camp in peace. Frequently, the bands would pick their best dancers or singers to compete for war trophies or other desired objects.

During *Pwatsimowin* (Grass Dance), people would place their wagers on their favourite dancer or singers. Competition dancing was known as racing. (49)

I can only speculate but perhaps the assumption that competition and prizes are post-contact and Eurocentric influences comes from the inclusion of dancing and singing competitions within the English language term "racing". No one would deny the historic existence among First Nations of foot and horse races or that these were competitions with prizes for the winners. To stretch the meaning of "racing" to include singing and dancing however, is beyond typical denotation or even
connotations of the term as it is used in more contemporary times hence suggesting one reason for this memory loss.⁶

Grand Entry too is often cited as a Eurocentric import - as an adoption of the parades that opened Wild West shows, rodeos and country fairs. Yet even Grand Entry may not be an entirely new feature. Browner cites Young Bear as saying "grand entry is based partly on some of the old warrior society parades" (30). While Young Bear does go on to say that today's Grand Entry looks much more like the show parades, I think more significance can be granted to those warrior society parades given the evolution of contemporary pow wow form from the inclusion of warrior society dances in those post World War II gatherings. In theorizing pow wow then, I find, as I have demonstrated above, that the histories in pow wow are as important as the histories of pow wow.

In terms of the contemporary significances of pow wow, pow wows may be one of two common entry points for First Nations' people who have not necessarily been raised with traditional ways.⁷ I hear frequent statements, often a number of times over a weekend, that participating in pow wows is an excellent alcohol and drug abuse prevention strategy.

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⁶ McArthur does not give the actual Cree term or a nuanced transliteration, either of which could be more suggestive than the plainer "racing".
Speakers repeatedly emphasize that alcohol and drug use is not part of the Indian way of life. The dancers and singers must be clean to enter the arbour, and the entire pow wow grounds are to be alcohol and drug free.

I have also heard many speakers, not just Emcees, say that bringing young ones into this circle gives them at least two important gifts. They often ask that the people look at the excitement and beauty of what is going on in the arena and use that sight to stop and think about what they are doing to themselves if they choose to pick alcohol or drugs. One of my personal strategies, that also gets mentioned, was to bring my daughter into pow wow circles (she started dancing when she was one) to give her a strong and positive sense of her Indian identity before the overt and systemic racism of dominant society started to undercut her self-esteem as an Indian woman. Once I became aware of these meanings for pow wow, it was quite simple to locate them in the literatures.

I hear such calls and explanations over and over again at pow wows. These dances, the ceremonies involved in and connected to pow wow hold crucial elements of First Nations’ identities. Particularly during Grand Entry, Emcees explain some of the meaning and significance of each of

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7. The heart-breaking reality is that, all too often, going to jail and becoming part of a Native Brotherhood or Sisterhood is the other way into such learning experiences. This would need to be the subject of another paper.
the dance styles as well as some the roles and responsibilities associated with the particular age and gender categories. Just as the dance styles represent a variety of ways to be a First Nations' person, so too pow wow is not necessarily the only way to be Indian. There are many other important ways to gain this knowledge and practice tradition. In other words, pow wows do not have the only ceremonies nor would I say that people who do not pow wow are not "real" Indians. Pow wow can be important and is, especially for my purposes herein, exemplary but it is by no means obligatory. It would also be grossly unfair to argue that "real" Indians only dance pow wow or other First Nations' dance styles.

These are important caveats. Pow wow is not a component of all First Nations' cultures. Many of the pow wow origin stories I have heard, including those discussed earlier in this chapter, describe a Plains or Woodland beginning for these events. The only overall conclusion I can draw is that contemporary pow wows developed in particular territories, in association with a variety of ceremonies, out of numerous impetuses and with a range of influences. While pow wows do not contain the most significant of First Nations' ceremonies, as I cited Jock saying earlier, those ceremonies are not open to scholars for research purposes. What pow wows can offer literary scholars are appropriate introductions to
many important First Nations' values and principles. Furthermore pow wows are widespread, occurring across the continent, and therefore readily accessible.

It is my contention, based on the welcoming remarks I have heard at every pow wow I ever attended and Carter Revard's comments that opened this chapter, that pow wow is a First Nations' event that may be appropriately observed by outsiders. It therefore offers the academic community opportunities to learn from First Nations' people who they are, as they understand themselves. Many First Nations' scholars and writers, including King and Williams, have called on literary academics to learn how to interpret cultural references, in and on First Nations' terms. This study has been my attempt to take up that call.

I understand the deep interests in cultural references within First Nations' literature and while some of that interest has come under the kind of criticism discussed in my review of the literature, I do not wish to entirely discourage that interest. I also understand a newly emerging tendency among some literary scholars to avoid interpreting cultural references, either out of respect for another set of demands, like that of Lenore Keeshig-Tobias to "Stop Stealing Our Stories," or out of fears of getting it 'wrong.' What I propose here is a middle ground, an
interpretative space between neglect and breaching traditional protocols. Pow wow is a space where appropriate and limited observations of traditions being explained and practiced can take place. And what is learned at pow wow can be used to discuss important allusions and references in First Nations' literature.

Many appropriate behaviours can learned at pow wow. Pow wow committees may also produce pamphlets that list important rules and expectations. I also watch to learn from how others behave, although this can be a more difficult undertaking as expectations can vary according to age, genders and health. There are also differences between communities and Nations in terms what mayor may not be done.

The most straightforward way to learn though is aural, listening to the Emcees. As Gelo says,

The "this is our way" speech is a standard device in which the emcee addresses onlookers to explain the significance of ritual details....Generosity and hospitality are reestablished as "our way" when the emcee explains the giveaway or the supper. The phrase "our way" is then used by onlookers to justify powwow customs. With such comments the emcee sets up a didactic chain; he reminds the Indians present of their own ideals while also teaching
the non-Indian onlookers, who are then taught further by the
Indians among them. (48)

Emcees then give instructions as well as explanations. They tell people when to stand, explain when prayers are about to begin and issue invitations if and when it might be appropriate to join in the dancing.

I will give one caution about listening to Emcees. Some of what they say are jokes. Gelo also warns, "the jokes are understanding tests imposed on the audience; they ultimately enhance common understanding but initially they are a challenge" (54). One of my students, whose name I will withhold, recently failed this test when she reported in an essay that women raise their fans during dances to "signal that they are single and looking for a boyfriend." I suspect this was an Emcee's joke that the student took to be the literal truth. I would hope, however, that scholars would not be so easily fooled.

Still, within these limits and cautions, what pow wows are about, in my understanding and in terms of what is important for literary criticism are the following:

1) Pow wows are events that make and reinforce intertribal connections.
2) Within the general type of these events, they often retain National and community specificities.

3) Even with the influences of commercial show productions (Wild West and Medicine shows), underlying values and principles from First Nations' ideologies and philosophies, including spirituality, remain important and evident.

4) Pow wows are celebratory and pleasurable. This demonstrates a full humanity - that even within the on-difficulties, First Nations' people and what they do is not just about struggle and pain.

5) Attending pow wows can serve as one way to concretely demonstrate that literary scholars are indeed interested in and willing to develop relationships with First Nations' people and communities.

My final contention is that when First Nations' literatures describe or make pow wow references, there are allusions that only people who have made the effort to see pow wows will appreciate. I am arguing that it is important to feel, rather than just read about: the resonant beat of the drums; the colour and motion of hundreds of dancers pouring in to the arena; the heart bursting pride evident in each and every Grand Entry; the excitement of the contests; the release of grief in memorials; the joy of initiations; and the love that goes into preparing each of the Tiny Tot
dancers. Being in a First Nation's community, on such occasions, also helps me recognize that all of this is deeply connected to the land on which we all live. The singing and dancing takes place on and for the land, as well as the people. And very little of what I have described in this paragraph can be found, as Eigenbrod says, in the "library fortress" or understood from within the "scholarly garrison" (77).

Particularly at a pow wow on Plains territory, I also remember that all of this illegal for decades and that dancers did hard labour in Stoney Mountain Penitentiary for the Indian Act crimes of even possessing an outfit, let alone dancing (Backhouse 68-69). This history serves as one reminder that I need to be humble at these events. Every time I hear the speakers welcoming "our White brothers and sisters" to the pow wow, I am in awe of the generosity of spirit that allows the people who worked so hard to destroy these ways to come and share in celebrating their continuity.

As you leave the pow wow arena and walk away from the bright lights of the arbour, I would also encourage you to look up - as I did with my girl as we returned to our camp at a Beardy's-Okemasis pow wow. Look up into the cool quiet deep dark of the summer night sky over the prairies. See the "Stars, Mommy, stars." See them not as 'a thousand
points of light' but as a canopy of the past, present and the future in a spectacle, like the Grand Entry, too dense and vast for words. Because that too is what I have learned at pow wow. While words in books are important for communicating with each other across cultures, sometimes those words are not enough.
Four Starts and Continuity: *The Grass Dancer*

Introduction

As is clear from the very title, pow wows and pow wow dancing are a central context, not just predominant settings, in Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer*. Pow wow as context means that these gatherings are represented in the novel as significant opportunities for cultural transmission to all participants (including observers). This framework involves not only aspects of the sacred, but just as importantly, the expectations, practices and even mistakes or failures in everyday responsibilities and relationships that are continuously demonstrated.

This introduction will begin with a review of literary criticism on *The Grass Dancer*. The next section will be stories I have heard about the Sioux and pow wow. The final section will be an outline of my interpretations of the novel, its four starts and then significant chapters will be discussed: "Grass Dancers," "Moonwalk," "Red Moccasins," "Snakes," "Swallowing the Birds," and "The Vision Pit."

The enormous and complex scope of this novel means that a number of approaches, in addition to the pow wow context, could be used in understanding this work. These are, for example, the intricate and detailed network of relationships, the range through various
historical epochs, and the variety of settings. Nor is pow wow necessarily the only cultural entrée into *The Grass Dancer*. While *The Grass Dancer* does not seem to have received nearly as much critical attention in comparison to the frequency of its use as a teaching text, still a few have taken up the critical challenges this novel presents and deserves.

The earliest sustained engagement with the novel came from Jacqueline Vaught Brogan. Her piece, sub-titled "The Revolutionary Call of Susan Power's *The Grass Dancer,*" argues the novel is a "radical and subversive call to Native Americans (particularly the Sioux) to resist assimilation within the larger white culture" (109). Brogan identifies the call as one that Power initially hears from Paula Gunn Allen in *The Sacred Hoop,* responds to, and pushes beyond Allen's original premise. Brogan interprets Power's characterization of Red Dress as representing "a gigantic serve away from" Gunn Allen's famous and sustained concern with pacifism and describes Red Dress as "quite militant" (114). Winters too sees the novel as centering on conflict between whites and Natives, and white and Native cultures (1). As she says, "In any time period, all of the characters...are challenged by fate and by the contrast between white and native cultures" (3).
While I would not deny the force of assimilation attempts, or the degrees of difference between White and First Nations' cultures, I am not convinced that Power's novel is actually conflict centered or, to use the categories King developed, "polemical" (Godzilla 244). Instead, I see *The Grass Dancer* as a work of "associational literature." To repeat King's definition, he argues they are literary texts that...

...help remind us [Native peoples] of the continuing values of our cultures, and it reinforces the notion that, in addition to the usable past that the concurrence of oral literature and traditional history provides us with, we also have an active present marked by cultural tenacity. (246)

Noting "cultural tenacity", I would argue, is an important paradigm shift away from the cultural conflict/contrast notion and towards analyses centred within the important First Nations' principles of maintaining and sustaining cultures. While there are, of course, works which do engage with the conflict/contrasts, literary criticism should also allow for other possibilities, especially those which, as King says in his conclusion, "do not depend on the arrival of Europeans for their *raison d'etre*" (248). The importance of cultural continuity, then, decenters
colonialism and assimilation, giving space and voice to those on-going First Nations' values.

And *The Grass Dancer* is clearly focused on many of those values. One could take up, for example, Wilson's contention that "Speaking of Home: The Idea of Center in Some Contemporary American Indian Writing" is a neglected aspect of these works. He cites Silko as saying that

...anthropologists and ethnologists have...tended to rule out all but the old and sacred and traditional stories and were not interested in family stories and the family's account of itself. But these family stories are just as important as the other stories-the older stories. These family stories [within Pueblo perspectives] are given equal importance. (133-134)

Although not the focus of this analysis, *The Grass Dancer* could be equally valuably interpreted as a family and community's "account of itself". Tracing and understanding the density of the relationships, within the contemporary setting as well as those across time, are important aspects of the novel, not just for a basic comprehension of the text but for its revelations about the on-going significances of kinship within First Nations communities.
I do agree with Brogan's contention that Red Dress is a central character (not the central character but a central character). However, rather than understanding Red Dress as a "call for resistance" I see her, as she presents herself in the "Snakes" chapter, as a link through time. As King says above, she is a part of "the useable past" and evidence of "cultural tenacity". Furthermore, Red Dress is the centre of the family stories of this community. And these, as Wilson and Silko attest, are as important as the stories that involve the whole of the Sioux nation.

Red Dress also experiences and shares those national stories, she witnesses her band's and her family's encounters with advances of colonialism. Her stories are remembered by Anna and Herod, her powers are still called on, in both positive and negative ways. Red Dress herself shares her stories and what she has learned with many of her relatives, from Charlene to Harley. I will also argue that Red Dress' use of the term "rebellion" is more a dating reference than a means of centring culture conflict. Ghost Horse's prior teaching that the warriors in their family "give their true heart to their people" also mitigates its militant potential (Power 330). As is the case with many of the explanations within the text, these are the culturally based
understandings of why the people do what they do, of the value and purpose these practices have.

Van Dyke takes up another aspect of the cultural implications of relationships in her comparative analysis "Encounters with Deer Woman: Sexual Relations in Susan Power's The Grass Dancer and Louise Erdrich's The Antelope's Wife." Van Dyke asserts that contemporary Native authors "use narratives from the oral tradition...to shift the paradigm" in their works away from the norms of dominant society and center the values of First Nations teachings in those oral tradition narratives (168). She argues that Power and Erdrich use

...Deer Woman stories...to weave cautionary tales about the kinds of relationships between men and women which are needed to sustain the community while delineating those which destroy group cohesiveness. ...[The Deer Woman spirit] bewitches those who are susceptible to her sexual favors and who can be enticed away from family and clan into the misuse of sexual energy.

(168, 170)

Van Dyke acknowledges that Deer Woman stories do not overtly appear in The Grass Dancer except as a "manifestation [and way of understanding] the disruptive behavior of Anna Thunder" (170). Her
contention that the depictions of Mercury's sexual relationships in the novel are an example of how these traditional narratives "can be used to fuel imaginative responses to the problems of the community" has only limited explanatory potential (182).

Mercury does, like the Deer Woman, "bewitch" men in the community. However, that is neither Mercury's only misuse of power nor does it seem to be the reason the community shuns her. Charlene no longer dances in the pow wow competitions because her grandmother acts against her competitors (27-28). Even the women of the community avoid eating food Mercury has prepared and no one from within the community will buy the outfits or pieces of regalia that Mercury makes (131-133). They also seem to be aware that Mercury forced Crystal to leave Charlene with her and forced Jeanette McVay to stay on the reservation. During the prison pow wow, at the end of the novel, they are warning their children and grandchildren to "look out...that one is more dangerous now that the nest is empty" (314). As Mercury is with the only boyfriend "who genuinely cared for her", the warning seems more likely to about the probability that Mercury looking for a child to teach than she is looking for another sexual relationship. Resolving her Deer Woman behaviour does not seem to
have reconciled Mercury to the community or the community to her. This particular narrative, the Deer Woman story, does not appear to have created a response to the problem of Mercury.

Oral and written First Nations' histories, especially, in this case, histories by and from Sioux frameworks, are however, important contexts for understanding the source of many of the problems in this and other First Nations communities. Brogan includes some of this historical context, although I question her choice in using After Columbus: The Smithsonian Chronicle of the North American Indians as her sole history reference. I find this choice especially troubling when both Brogan and Winters, who, after all, are attempting to depict the novel as being about the historical and on-going conflicts between white and Native peoples. Both note the characters' acknowledgment of the importance of their own peoples' understanding of their histories. If Frank Pipe can ask Jeanette McVay why she is not reading them their history from the works of Vine Deloria, why do these critics not turn to Deloria and others as important sources (Power 58-59)? Perhaps Brogan and Winters do not see Deloria as an authoritative source. They both refer to Deloria as merely "a writer" rather than as an academic
or scholar or any other term that would acknowledge his expertise in both White and Native, especially Sioux, ways (112, 3).

I do concur with Brogan's assessment that "the fictional and historically 'preterite' character of Red Dress is a sophisticated semiotician who can deftly analyze the literally 'con-scripting' effect of language on the actuality of her people and its lands" (122). I do not agree, however, that Red Dress is "a fictional revision of several actual men (including, notably, Red Cloud, Sitting Bull, and Crazy Horse, among others)" (114). I would also ask why must Red Dress be a revision of men. Brogan's assumption that strong Sioux women must be modeled on Sioux men is perhaps an unfortunate consequence of her reliance on a non-Sioux historical authority and a single Sioux, male, cultural source, *Black Elk Speaks*. Paying wider, multiple and engendered attention to Sioux sources, Deloria, Medicine and Cook Lynn, to name three obvious examples, would go further and more accurately into the directions Gunn Allen suggests in order to see First Nations' women.

The above acknowledges that there are a number of important ways to read *The Grass Dancer*. I still, however, maintain that understanding the novel through its pow wow framework allowed Power, and thus those reading the novel, to see and consider, as a
primary context, both what the characters learn about and from pow wow as well as what and how readers should understand these references. The density of this aspect of the work, therefore, requires that this interpretation include both the aspects of learning about and learning from pow wow.

In terms of understanding how pow wow came to the Sioux, I admit I cannot recall ever having heard a pow wow origin story from Sioux people. I have heard, at Ojibwa pow wows, that one of the ways pow wow has spread through the First Nations, is because the Ojibwa shared *Bawajigewin* with the Sioux as part of a peace-making between their Nations. Saulteaux Elder Alexander Wolfe, in his "Last Grass Dance" story writes that the Assiniboine, formerly part of the Sioux Nation, gave the Grass Dance to the Saulteaux. Dieter-McArthur traces the Grass Dance back even further. She says it originated with the Pawnee and was adopted by the Omaha who taught it to the Sioux. When the Dakota Sioux fled to Canada after the Battle of the Little Horn, they shared it with the Cree (33). Dieter McArthur also says the Assiniboine "practiced the dance in another style" (35). It seems that the Sioux, like many other First Nations, received the forms and components of pow wow from a variety of sources. They have also
likely been central in passing those components on to other Nations. I would emphasize, however, that none of these are Sioux stories.

The rest of this chapter is Sioux stories told by a Sioux, Dakota writer. I begin my analysis with looking at each of the novel's four starts. The novel has four beginnings: the title, the epigraph, the prologue and then the first chapter. I note that this evokes the beginning of a pow wow both in terms of the numerous preparations necessary before a pow wow begins and more specifically, for the way the Grass Dancers prepare the arena before Grand Entry. The first chapter "Grass Dancers" opens into the community's preparations for their outdoor pow wow. We are introduced to the characters in the midst of on-going lives and relationships, another important aspect of pow wows as gatherings that are important in how these reinforce and initiate relationships. The most significant new relationship, for the novel, are those formed with and influenced by, Pumpkin. She comes into this community as a female Grass Dancer, an urban and traditional woman, and one who is about to enter a prestigious university. Conversations with and about her - her life, her dancing and her death - explicate a number of cultural roles and responsibilities: on gender, dancing, dance styles and humour.
The next chapter I discuss is "Moonwalk." Margaret Many Wounds, a long-time traditional woman's dancer, is dying. While her daughters come to terms with her passing, in their own and differing ways, Margaret tells her life story and secrets to a spirit audience. As she passes from this physical plane to the Spirit World, she pauses to dance on the moon, showing herself to her grandson who sees her as he watches the Apollo moon landing. Margaret wants to show Harley, "There is still magic in the world" (121).

"Red Moccasins" is Mercury's story. This chapter explains her transformation from Anna to Mercury through calling on Red Dress' power and using for it her own benefit and revenge, rather than to help others. The character, Mercury, is an important exemplar of the context for mis-uses of power and the dysfunctions in First Nations' communities. Neither as Anna nor as Mercury does this character dance pow wow. However, both personas are excellent craftswomen who make outfits and pieces of regalia. Anna's only dance experience is "ice-dancing," skating with her White husband (226-229). Mercury, however, consistently attends pow wows and her behaviour there affects many of the characters, the community and other pow wow people.
"Snakes" is the story of Red Dress' life, her journey to Fort Laramie and how her spirit came to be trapped on this plane. One way Red Dress is important in the novel is as a link through Sioux histories with colonialism and as a spirit power whose stories are still known by her band. One significant juxtaposition in this chapter is between the way the soldiers move on the land and the way Grass Dancers are able to move with the land.

In "Swallowing the Birds" Charlene eventually wins free of Mercury and goes to her parents. She accomplishes this, partly through her own initiatives, including paying attention to appearances by Pumpkin's spirit. Her spirit is still helping others through her dancing. This chapter also includes a Stomp Dance at which Harley first grass dances. He works hard at grass dancing partly because he is holding onto his grief at Pumpkin's death and partly because he is still learning the style. While Charlene is struggling to break free of her past, Harley is being dragged down by his.

The final chapter of the novel, "The Vision Pit," begins at a prison pow wow that gathers in members of the community from inside and outside the prison walls. There are positive developments in this chapter for many of the characters, with the important exception of
Harley. Harley dances at this pow wow, in his grass dance regalia, drunk. For this offense to pow wow protocols, he must first be cleansed in a sweat. But Herod tells him that is not enough and that Harley must deal with the roots of his problems through fasting. During the fast, Harley is visited by significant relatives who advise him on the important relationships, roles, and responsibilities that he already has and still carries. The final visitor teaches Harley (and the readers) further grass dance responsibilities. This is not Pumpkin but Red Dress who tells Harley that resistance and rebellion come from knowing his history - his family history as well as that of his Nation - and maintaining their culture, through and beyond pow wow.

"Four Starts"

While those who follow through with the recommendations of this study may find it a challenge to ensure they arrive at pow wows in time for the beginning¹, to do so will allow a greater understanding of the multiple beginnings of this novel. An important feature of The Grass Dancer is that it begins four times, and each of the four beginnings is an important indicator of what is to come in the work. That there are
four beginnings is itself evocative of pow wows. At least for many Plains First Nations pow wows, before the Grand Entry (usually considered the beginning of a pow wow), the dance arena is "prepared" by the host drum and the grass dancers. A drum song is played and all grass dancers come out and dance for four "starts." A start, in terms of pow wow songs, is similar to a verse. The opening elements of The Grass Dancer - the title, the epigraph, the epilogue and the first chapter- reflect this aspect of pow wow.

As previously noted, in terms of when a pow wow begins, in addition to the preparations discussed in the previous chapter, many First Nations have other ceremonies and protocols that may be performed long before the Grand Entry. These may include raising a central arbour, pipe ceremonies, feasts or other National and geographically specific events. Again, the four starts to The Grass

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1. Posters and other notices for pow wows will list specific start times. However it is important to know that those times are more like estimates. The actual start of Grand Entry often relies on the completion of various other related ceremonies.
2. This responsibility is specifically addressed later in the novel.
3. I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Sekwun Ahenakew in identifying this similarity.
4. While I have and will continue to recommend pow wow videos for use in class, it is important to acknowledge that few, if any, of these would include these preparatory protocols. These would only be evident when actually attending pow wows.
5. For example, on the novel's territory, the Middle to Southern Plains, the afternoon dancing may not be pow wow but, as in Carter Revard's work, gourd dancing. This may also be a practicality of the locale. It is extremely hot down there during a summer afternoon on the open Plains. The vigor of many pow wow dance styles and weight of the outfits could preclude such efforts during the hottest parts of the day. Similarly, I have
Dancer can be said to signify the various preparations that take place before the dancing begins.

The four starts and multiple preparations also make an important suggestion about understanding the nature of time as it is employed in The Grass Dancer. The novel uses a very particular understanding of time which, while it originates in Dakota philosophy, may also be found in the philosophies of other First Nations. As will become evident, there are no concrete, fixed beginnings and endings in this novel. Pasts, presents and futures are multiple, fluid and ongoing in this work. These concurrent aspects of time speak to and in each other. They offer important understandings about the context of the lives revealed in the novel. Readers will find that tracing the relationships in the novel, rather attempting to re-order the chronology, allows them to understand this fundamental pattern in The Grass Dancer.

seen and heard references to Round Dances that take place during the evening after a pow wow. (The Indian Barbie series had a ‘round dance outfit’ Barbie a few years ago. People of this territory likely thought that was quite amusing. Her outfit was a pow wow outfit. No special regalia are expected for Round Dances here.) Furthermore, my First Nation students looked at Carter Revard with confusion when he made this suggestion. Plains pow wows, in this territory, as I have said, often go well into the early morning hours, until one or two o’clock, so the thought of dancing after that seemed odd. Again this points to the importance of recognizing specificities as well as commonalties within pow wows as paradigms.
As well, the very title indicates that readers should pay particular attention to "The" Grass dancer in the novel. Power's use of the definite article indicates that, while as is typical in First Nation literatures that all characters speak with equal authority, the character that is "The" Grass dancer will be crucial.6 Indeed the presence of and the examples shown by "The" Grass dancer, Pumpkin, at this Dakota community's pow wow are catalysts for change both in terms of characters rethinking their lives and what has been considered typical within their community. It is Pumpkin, as "The" Grass dancer, who directly and indirectly encourages Harley and Charlene, for example, to re-evaluate their lives.7

The second start is with the epigraph: a quotation from Creek poet Joy Harjo's work entitled “Strange Fruit” (Harjo, 11-12). Of course, Harjo herself acknowledges she is using the title of a song made famous by the great Blues artist, Billie Holiday. The "Strange Fruit" Lady Day's song refers to are the bodies of Black men lynched by the Klu Klux Klan. While there is a clear and fascinating pattern of

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6. Please note the use of the term 'crucial'. I use it explicitly to suggest influence rather than the dominance implicit in hero or heroine.
7. As becomes evident later in the novel, while such changes may be termed 'healing' by some, it is to Power's credit that she clearly demonstrates 'healing' is not the warm fuzzy experience that it is all too often assumed to be. Rather healing is fraught with pain, profoundly difficult risks and mistakes.
cross-cultural influences at work here, suffice to say in this study, the
title of the poem from which the epigraph was drawn, clearly alludes to
the work of the stones Red Dress carries to Fort Laramie. These
stones draw several soldiers out of the fort to hang themselves (268-
273).8

The actual epigraph, “Shush, we have too many stories to carry
on our backs like houses,” may be read a number of ways and I
encourage students to do just this. One obvious clue is that the novel
contains a number of stories. Furthermore, the epigraph suggests
these stories need to be told and not just "carried around," where they
will continue to weigh people down. Often the stories that weigh the
people down are the painful ones. And there can be great risk for First
Nations' writers in telling and revealing such stories. Taken out of the
context of the devastation wrought by colonialism, stories that reveal
the dysfunctions in First Nations' communities may be used as
evidence of the alleged inferiority of Indian people.

Nor is Power the only First Nation’s writer to use an epigraph
that speaks to the necessity of speaking about the pain in order to
move out of it. The epigraph Tomson Highway chose in the published

8. I apologize if this is tantalizing and perhaps frustrating reference. I do have a work in
edition of *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* makes a similar point. He cites Lyle Longclaws: “before the healing can take place, the poison must first be exposed” (1989). Both these writers are, no doubt, speaking to those who may have criticized their work for exposing the dysfunctions in communities in the midst of on-going racism. See, for example, in Highway's case, Annharte's essay entitled "Angry Enough to Spit but with Dry Lips It Hurts More than You Know." Literary scholars must take heed of these concerns and exercise great care in emphasizing the colonial context that created and continues to fuel these dysfunctions.

The third start is called a Prologue. Power uses a term more usually associated with a piece written in verse and spoken before a play or opera. Yet, her prologue is neither in verse nor introduces a to-be-staged work. It would be too facile to dismiss her use of this term as an error. She holds a M.F.A., but perhaps even more importantly she is a Harvard trained J.D. - a lawyer, both of which I think, allows me to assume that she chooses terminology with some precision and purpose. Typically a prologue describes what has come before the opening of a play. This term, prologue, may then be taken to signal
both that the past is important to the stories in the novel and that the
readers will be entering an on-going story.

This prologue has a sub-title, “Crowns of Glass” that clearly
refers to the Crown of Thorns placed on Christ at his crucifixion. This
 crucifixion signifies, to Christians, Christ’s sacrifice, through his
death, to save his people. He was "crowned" King of the Jews by the
Roman guards, those in power over his territory, in mockery of his
suffering and sacrifice. A notion of suffering and sacrifice is also
important in many First Nations’ ways. I have heard Sioux teachers in
particular speak about the importance of individuals needing to suffer
and make sacrifices for the good of all the people. It is important to
note in this respect that this sacrifice is made by more than one
person. There are "Crowns". Therefore, while this is in a limited sense
a Christian allusion, it also speaks to specific First Nations’
philosophical and political understandings wherein any and all may be
called on to suffer for the people. Such suffering is not then,
necessarily an archetypal hero. Employing an explicitly Christian
allusion also evokes the suffering, which the Christian churches themselves perpetrate against Indigenous peoples.\(^9\)

"Grass Dancers"

The last start is the first chapter, “Grass Dancers”. The single Grass dancer of the title has expanded into the plural as the novel opens out in the midst of preparations for the community’s summer pow wow. As Power has already encouraged readers to see the novel as a play, it is easy to imagine curtains drawing back and seeing a stage alive with people going about the activities of preparing the pow wow grounds. Furthermore, the characters, even in the first few pages, are in the middle of, not only on-going lives but, more importantly, well-established relationships. Chuck Norris - Frank’s dog - continues his battles with Charlene by pissing on her purse (11). He is able to do this because Charlene is on the speakers’ stand caught up in a fantasy of seducing Harley by breathing on him (11). The sounds she is making annoy the workers “but no one would interrupt her” (12). Charlene’s grandmother is known as “the reservation witch” (13) and

\(^9\). I use the term ‘Indigenous’ here to refer to the global situation, past and present.
therefore no one wants to provoke Mercury\textsuperscript{10}. The story of how and why Mercury has become a "witch" is revealed later in the novel and discussed later in this chapter. These are relationships and ways of dealing with each other which already exist. At pow wow, some dysfunctions become less evident as demonstrations of community and the sacred are important, still both problems and strengths may be seen.

There is also continuity, as particular characters move out of the immediate nexus of stories which the novel tells. Their lives do not end but rather move into different phases or onto different levels. This is another example of the continuity of time spoken of earlier. While readers may not, in this novel, follow through each of the characters' lives, we are given to understand that these lives are continuing. These story lines also reflect the pattern of traditional stories in that any one story relies on and leads into a number of other stories. As Dorris notes in his exegesis of a Tania story, "The Beaver and the Porcupine Woman," in order to appropriately understand this one small story, we must also know the stories that would explain to us

\textsuperscript{10} While the label 'witch' may appear to borrow from the Eurocentric, particularly patriarchal reconstitutions and denigrations of pre-Christian earth-based, women empowered ways, it is also important to understand that this particular borrowing does
the characteristics of beavers and porcupines (240-241). It is only then that we can begin to understand the Tania social and cultural meanings of the story. While this is not necessarily to suggest that not understanding the cultural details will result 'wrong' interpretations, I do want to point towards the importance of understanding the networks of traditional stories. Similarly the interconnections between Charlene, Chuck Norris, Harley and Mercury, at the very beginning of this novel both reflect and emphasize this concept of networks.

Pow wows, as gatherings of the people, are one way in which relationships between First Nations' peoples are maintained. They are also important means of initiating relationships. While the contemporary form of pow wows may gather people from longer distances than may have been possible in earlier days, the practice of summer gatherings of large groups of people, from many bands and perhaps even many Nations, to meet and dance together was a practice partly utilized to allow young people to meet new and different people and initiate couple relationships. The novel introduces one such group of dancers who travel to this pow wow. Pumpkin in particular is indicate the negative. Mercury consistently misuses and perverts the power and abilities
spending this summer "chasing pow wow" in order to reinforce her connections to First Nations cultures. This connection too is an important relationship.

Non-Native academics could learn much about how First Nations' students feel about university, by paying particular attention to the passage where Pumpkin describes why she is spending this summer on the pow wow trail. In her application to Stanford University she writes:

This goes beyond leaving home and my parents.... I know I am committed to a college education because I am willing to go to great lengths to earn one. I will have to put aside one worldview - perhaps only temporarily - to take up another. From what I have learned so far, I know the two are not complementary but rather incompatible, and melodramatic as it may sound, I sometimes feel I am risking my soul by leaving the Indian community. (17)

Pumpkin demonstrates a clear understanding of the Whiteness structurally embedded in academic institutions. She knows that virtually everything she will learn and experience will work against and undercut who she is as an Indian woman. So, for this last summer before university, Pumpkin will travel to as many pow wows as she can, she has inherited. Thus she is a witch as contrasted with an Elder.
immersing herself in the cultures and storing this up to protect her spirit as best she can.

What I read here an important analysis of institutional relationships with First Nations' university students. What they experience in classes is not a liberal, open minded exploration of knowledge but rather a determined effort to force them into ways of thinking which denigrate and violate the knowledge and understanding they already possess.\textsuperscript{11} In this sense, I believe it is also important to understand that Pumpkin is not a student leaving an isolated reservation and coming to a large urban city for the first time. She attended high school in Chicago (a large urban city by any standard) and still fears the weight of submersion in these bastions of Eurocentric thinking. For Pumpkin, a summer on the pow wow trail is to be a summer of belonging, of fit with and in First Nations' ways. She is preparing herself against the attempts to sever her ties to her communities, ties of relationship that she believes the university will attempt to cut.

\textsuperscript{11} The magnitude and reality of this risk was amply demonstrated in 1999 when this same university, Stanford, denied tenure to the brilliant and much accomplished Osage scholar, Robert Warrior. Patricia Monture-Angus faced a similar battle here at the University of Saskatchewan (see "Homelessness").
This explanation of Pumpkin's preparations is followed by a description of Harley's preparations for the pow wow. Despite his feelings of isolation, from his immediate family, his father and step-brother are dead and his mother, who never speaks, as Harley paints his face,

he thought he heard the dead grandfathers' voices .... *We are rising, we are rising*.... And when Harley's painted mask was in place, an angry magpie dive-bombed the bathroom window, screeching, *We are here, we are here* (19-20).

The particular design Harley is using is described as "ancient". His mother taught him the pattern. Applying the paint in these designs calls up the grandfathers and connects this contemporary Dakota youth to the relatives who have worn the designs before him. While Harley feels alone, as Pumpkin anticipates feeling alone, pow wow ways serve, actually and concretely, within First Nations' understandings, to connect him with his grandfathers. Harley hears the grandfathers coming as he is getting ready and knows that, when he is finished the design, the grandfathers are there with him. The presence of grandfathers should not be understood as merely symbolic. Where one relationship - Lydia and Harley, mother and son - may be lacking in
certain aspects, still Lydia has taught him the means by which Harley is embodied and embedded in the greater web of relationships with his ancestors.

With their preparations complete, both Harley and Pumpkin are noticeable in the Grand Entry for this powwow. Harley carries the Sioux flag - the community’s eagle staff - in the colour party who lead Grand Entry. While many communities, Nations and organizations of Nations have adapted the European custom of cloth flags, First Nations also maintain the tradition and importance of presenting their own indicators of Nationhood and sovereignty. Whether these are eagle staffs or other similar objects, they tend to be referred to in English as flags. Veterans or the children of veterans may carry either type of flags. To be chosen to carry one of the flags is an honour usually indicating to all who see this that the carrier is one who lives the traditional responsibilities and ways of their Nation. As such, Harley is completely focused on “dancing in the flags”. Neither he nor Leonard, the other flag carrier, even notice the reactions of the women dancers who behave in a myriad of ways to try and get the men’s attention (23). While Harley's obliviousness to this disgusts his friend Frank, it is appropriate behaviour during Grand Entry. It is likely the fact that
Harley never seems to notice the attention, at pow wow or at any other time, that offends Frank.

It is also Frank who draws his grandfather Herod’s attention to Pumpkin who, it turns out, is a grass dancer. The text notes that “It was unusual to see a woman in a man’s costume” so Frank asks Herod if he has ever seen a girl grass dancer. Frank, who is only beginning to be trained by his grandfather, is surprised by Herod’s response. Herod’s response is one of the most important passages in the novel and therefore needs to be quoted at length.

“No, I never did. But I guess it’s about time. They have every right.”

Frank looked at Herod in surprise. His grandfather wasn’t known to be very liberal when it came to women.

“You have to remember, there’s two kind of grass dancing,” the old man explained. “There’s the grass dancer who prepares the field for a powwow the old-time way, turning the grass over with his feet to flatten it down. Then there’s the spiritual dancer, who wants to learn grass secrets by imitating it, moving his body with

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12. This footnote is a reminder that the term "costume" is usually considered offensive when it is used to describe outfits or regalia. I am at a loss to explain why Power uses this term.
the wind. I guess a woman should be able to choose her own style.”

“Which is better?” Frank asked.

Herod laughed. “Archie, did you hear this one? Which is better? Both. Both. Wouldn’t it be the best thing to learn to become grass and learn to control the grass?”

“Let’s see what this one does,” Frank said. He collected lawn chairs from the back of Harley’s pickup for his grandfather, Archie and himself. They settled in the chairs to watch the girl dance. (25)

This passage is important for its delineation of a number of critically important First Nations’ ideologies. Herod begins his response to Frank’s question by invoking the matter of rights. It is clear, however, from Herod’s explanation that Herod means "rights" in an Indian way. "Rights" in First Nation laws carry a profoundly different meaning that does the same term in Eurocentric style laws. To illustrate a First Nations' meaning of rights, I follow a long line of scholars and activists in citing Patricia Monture-Angus’ justly famous explanation,

13. Rights in Eurocentric laws are typically protections against interference with citizens’ lives by the state.
My Elders taught me that I have only one [right].... It is the right to live as a Mohawk woman because that is the way the Creator made me. That is the only right I have. After that, I have a series of responsibilities, as a Mohawk woman, because that is how I was made (Thunder 87).

While a Dakota explanation might differ in some minor ways, Monture-Angus' explanation that rights in Mohawk law are limited is one common to many First Nations, including Sioux ways. In this case, the limit is the right to live as a Mohawk woman, after that comes the responsibility to live appropriately.

Herod says Pumpkin has the right to choose to grass dance. In taking up that right, she then has the responsibility to understand what that dance means - that there are two kinds of grass dancing and therefore three ways to be a grass dancer - to dance one of either the styles or to dance both. (Red Dress will add a fourth understanding at the end of the novel). The first kind of grass dancer is the one previously discussed, the dancers who dance the four starts before the Grand Entry to prepare the dance arena. As we shall see, Pumpkin has taken up grass dancing to become the second kind. She could appropriately become either of these types but Herod emphasizes that
to be both, to understand and be able to dance both of the styles, is the best. "Best" is also used in its First Nations' meaning – to have the most complete understanding and to carry out all of her responsibilities as a grass dancer.

Furthermore, Pumpkin can choose this style because, in Herod's explanation, none of these three possibilities includes a requirement that the grass dancer be of a particular gendered position. There may be such requirements for other styles. But, as Herod understands it, grass dancer responsibilities are not gender specific. Thus, as long as Pumpkin, or any other grass dancer, understands what they are doing, what their responsibilities as grass dancers are, they have the right to make the choice to dance that style.

It is also important to note that Herod attempts to shift Frank's understanding away from Eurocentric dualisms – "Which is better?" – to a First Nation's philosophy which embraces both a wider variety of possibilities and honours those who work towards understanding this range. Herod also laughs as he does this. Herod laughs because he is teasing Frank. As noted Sioux scholar Vine Deloria points out,

Rather than embarrass members of the tribe publicly, people used to tease individuals they considered out of step with
the consensus of tribal opinion. In this way egos were preserved and disputes within the tribe of a personal nature were held to a minimum. (147)

Herod does not scold his grandson; he teases and laughs with him about his mistake. That Frank accepts this correction in the spirit in which it is made is demonstrated when Frank gets the chairs for Herod and Archie. Frank continues to look after these Elders and relations, as is appropriate, and the passage ends with the three of them sitting together companionably to “watch the girl dance” (25).

Having set the terms by which Pumpkin’s grass dancing is appropriate, the novel moves on to other traditional considerations about how to dance. This discussion begins with one of the dance judges complimenting Charlene for dancing “exhibition” rather than competition (27). While the judge says it is nice to see her dancing for “fun”, fun is probably another Indian expression in English for a much more complex idea. Emcees will also remind dancers to understand the deeper meanings of the pow wow in that they all and always dance for the people, especially those who cannot dance. They dance to honour the styles, the drums and the continuity of First Nations’ ways.

Emcees frequently call the dancers to “Dance your style, dancers,
Dance your style” especially during the Victory Song. This call reminds dancers that they are able to dance these styles because of those who won through with protecting and maintaining these ways during very difficult times.

This is one of the ways in which powwows affirm life, all life. We at the University of Saskatchewan were able to see this affirmation with the 2001 Welcome Week Powwow on September 12. Despite the infamous events of the previous day, the decision was made to hold the powwow to honour those who had passed away and could no longer dance as well as to confirm and celebrate the continuity of life even under sad and frightening conditions. While dancing is indeed pleasurable, and Charlene enjoys dancing, a Standard English interpretation of this shorthand “fun” misses these important meanings. As Tayos/Warm Springs storyteller and intellectual Terry Tafoya notes “Often, for the sake of expediency and other reasons, Native American people may translate something that does not reflect how we perceive something but that works within a specific context” (195). The use of the term "fun" in this context, as demonstrated, illustrates one of these instances. It is important to be sensitive to
these probabilities in literary interpretations of First Nations’ texts and to remember to carefully consider and allow for these specific contexts.

Charlene herself does show some understanding of these other levels of meaning. She enjoys “moving so closely with the beat that she sometimes pretended she’d become the music” (27). She too works at becoming her style, as Herod said, but not in order to win prizes. Charlene no longer competes because her victories in competition were too often being tainted by her grandmother’s interference with the other dancers (27-28). Her grandmother’s disabling of other dancers moved Charlene into considering other aspects of dancing. Although, given her repeated exposures to negative uses of spiritual power, Charlene does not, understandably, immediately open herself up to the potential spiritual dimensions of powwow.

Charlene and Pumpkin have a conversation that explores how dancers come to dance a particular style. The conversation begins, as might be typical for young women, with discussing "boys." Pumpkin responds to Charlene’s question about whether Pumpkin has a boyfriend by laughing and saying “No. I think I’m too weird” (29).

14. I was both humbled and proud when my then 7-year-old daughter told me that day she
Pumpkin does not mean that she is weird just because she dances a men’s style. Rather, she both dances a men’s style and has no boyfriend “Because of the way I think” (29). Her dance style reflects Pumpkin thinking. It expresses who she is already and is a style that allows her to explore beyond her current limits. Clearly then, Pumpkin takes up and explores opportunities within and without her communities. Her weirdness lies in the way she challenges assumptions which others may try to make about her, from her open declaration of the risks that an Indian woman runs in attending White institutions of higher learning or as a woman dancing a men’s style.

The link between acts of self-expression within the context of community celebration can also be seen in the passage when Lydia (Harley’s mother) sings with the drum group. (31-33) The host drum has just finished a song honouring the veterans. They follow this honour song with a women’s song. The women's song is their response to the losses incurred during and, especially for Lydia, even after war. The women’s song of love and loss balances the honouring of warriors. The pair of songs serve to remind the people that war is not just about the glory of victories. In most First Nations' thinking, battles can only 

was dancing for the people in New York and Washington.
be undertaken with due concern for all of the lives involved (YoungWolf). As I understand this, because women are the means through which life is brought into this world, women carry the responsibility for presenting and articulating these concerns. Lydia takes up this responsibility when she comes to sing and dance, in the traditional women's stationary style, beside the drum. Harley joins her, dances beside her, taking up his place as her support and sharing in the expression of their loss.

Despite the fundamental importance of harmonious relationships and respect for men and women's (for example) equally important responsibilities demonstrated in this scene, dysfunction emerges to interrupt this ceremony within a ceremony. Mercury acts to disrupt the inherent balance: "A competing voice suddenly rolled across the arena: a flat, heavy voice, thick as tar, muffling all the others" (32). Mercury continues to try to compete with and defeat Lydia and Calvin's relationship. However, Mercury cannot overwhelm Lydia's voice so Mercury turns to intimidating the drum group until they can no longer continue. "But the song continued, undiminished" (33). Lydia's ability to continue comes from the strength of performing within her traditional responsibility and so she can ignore Mercury. The drummers notice
Mercury staring at them. Lydia's concentration means Mercury has no edge into her song. Thus Lydia completes her tribute.

The strength of women standing in their responsibilities is taken up again when Pumpkin talks with Harley about her dance style. Harley has been watching Pumpkin dance. His description of her skill is one of the most evocative passages in the novel. It also emphasizes her taking up of the responsibilities of what Herod has termed a spiritual grass dancer.

She was the best grass dancer on the field; she became a flexible stem, twisting with the wind. She was dry and brittle, shattered by drought, and then she was heavy with rain. (33)

Clearly this is a description of a dancer who "wants to learn grass secrets by imitating it" as Herod said earlier. It is also important to understand that dancing this well is a skill and not some essentialist or inherent ability. While dancers may receive instructions or gifts to dance particular styles, each dancer still needs to learn, practice and develop his or her own ability. Merely deciding or taking up the responsibility of a dance style does not automatically bring skill and finesse. The learning Herod refers to takes considerable effort to acquire. Harley and Pumpkin discuss some of her efforts:
"What made you decide to do grass style? [Harley] asked.

"It’s a challenge. I tried women’s traditional and women’s fancy shawl, but I was always myself out there. As a grass dancer, I’m trying to become something else. I step outside of myself. Do you know what I mean?"

Harley nodded. "I think so." (34)

While Harley understands her explanation as she gives it, further work may be required to understand her analysis.

Pumpkin says she tried two women’s styles, traditional and fancy shawl. Those with powwow experience will notice that she does not mention a third women’s style, the jingle dress. Perhaps this omission is because, while the jingle dress style too carries serious and important spiritual responsibilities, it may not involve as direct a becoming or merging as does grass dancing - a challenge that Pumpkin says she is look for in her dancing. Furthermore, while there are many jingle dress dancers here on the Plains, as I described in the pow wow chapter, it is a style that originated with the Anishnaebae people in the Eastern Woodlands. Pumpkin is Menominee - a Plains First Nation. The novel is set on a Dakota First Nation reservation so its concerns may be primarily those of Plains First Nations' people. Grass dancing, while
possibly having multiple origins, is a Plains style (Dieter-McArthur 33-35).

The previous sections describing Pumpkin have all included assessments that she is rather different from other Native people her own age and she appears to be a loner. In her pow wow dancing, however, she seeks to make a connection with something beyond herself, to "become something else" and to engage with the dance style on its deeper levels of meaning. In this case, she works at becoming the grass in order to understand how grass continues to live its original instructions. This "becoming" is not so much a metaphor of difference and disconnection as it is an exploration and grounding experience. Pumpkin, and others who make these kinds of attempts in their pow wow dancing, seek to understand grass, for example, as a standard of identity and behaviour. Becoming grass teaches what the grass is, what it does, why and how it serves its roles and responsibilities (as the description of her dancing on page 33 suggests). With this understanding, dancers can then apply what they have learned about grass to themselves, their place and responsibilities.
There is more of this kind of applying her pow wow knowledge in the scene when Harley and Pumpkin leave the powwow to spend the night together. Through what she learns in her pow wow dancing, Pumpkin is strongly connected with and in her body.

Her right foot pointed forward in a tendu and then rose from the floor to chest level in a taut arabesque. Moonlight played on her arch, accentuating its crescent curve. She moved her leg to the side, keeping it high and straight. For a moment it pulsed an inch higher; then it swiveled to the back. She leaned her torso forward, and as she tipped toward the ground, her right leg continued to rise. (40)

Pumpkin is demonstrating to Harley how she, as First Nations' peoples might say it, "stands in her body". As I have come to understand it, this phrase describes someone with a calm centred physical and psychological sureness. Power uses ballet terminology to describe the movements Pumpkin is making,¹⁵ but neither the usage of a more widely understood description nor the evidence that Pumpkin has also trained in conventional dance styles should be allowed to detract from the main point. Pumpkin, as a young woman, let alone a
young Indian woman, is clearly empowered within her physicality. As I argued earlier, the opportunity to develop such strength and confidence in their appearance and in their bodies, in a dominant social world which often does not appreciate the beauty of Indian women and has not respected their bodies, is an important reason why many First Nations' families encourage and support the children in taking up powwow ways.

Despite all of the positive commentary in the text, including Harley’s appreciation, Pumpkin is not looking for praise, “I believe in forces....Don’t tell them you’re here. Don’t light any bonfires. Walk in the shadows and you walk forever” (40). Pumpkin practices humility and wants Harley to practice this important value too. She is not looking for attention; indeed, she says the opposite “Walk in the shadows.” If you set yourself up (on a pedestal), put yourself out where all can see you, you may draw the attention of those who will then want to harm you. The principal is, rather, to simply be what you can without necessarily looking for external recognition or reward.

15. The movement which Power is initially describing, when Pumpkin raises her leg in front is actually closer to a battement longue than to an arabesque. In arabesque, the dancer’s leg is always behind the body (Tatchell, 41-43).
To pow wow dance with Pumpkin's level of skill also teaches those who watch the dancer. Although Herod is supposed to be judging the entire category of dancers, he is only able to watch Pumpkin.

He was not watching a girl, he thought, but the spirit of grass weaving its way through a mortal dancer. Pumpkin was the color of blazing grass: grass that is offered to the sky in prayer. (46)

Herod sees and is able to appreciate that Pumpkin is clearly a grass dancer who is dancing and learning the spiritual lessons of her style. She is further aligned with Dakota spirituality in that the blazing grass being referred to here is, no doubt, a sweetgrass offering. The smoke from this burning grass both cleanses those who are about to pray and helps carry the prayer up into the sky, to Creator. To see Pumpkin as a burning braid of sweetgrass may also be foreshadowing. Sweetgrass sacrifices its life to help the people with their prayers. While Pumpkin will win this competition, it will also be her last.

Recognition of the type Pumpkin wants to avoid may come however, even to those who are seen to live these values. Although Pumpkin comes first in the adult grass dancing competition, this is not the highest recognition she receives,
The emcee announced a special song to be performed in her honor. It was Harley’s doing. He had told the emcee that Pumpkin would be heading for Stanford in the fall, which delighted the old man.... “What an accomplishment!” he roared .... The audience clapped and whistled, the drummers pounded their drums, everyone was proud. (40-41)

To be the recipient of an honor song is the one of the highest forms of public recognition in Indian country (the emphasis here is on public; there are other means of recognition, which do not take place in such public venues). As the novel describes, the individual being honoured dances around the circle once on their own and then the people come out to shake hands, offer their own congratulations, and sometimes give small gifts to the person. This recognition comes, as in Pumpkin’s case, for what people have done (not what they say or say they might do). In this case it is both her accomplishment for getting into such a prestigious university and her courage in taking this step that are being honoured. The people at the pow wow understand and appreciate her for taking up the risk that Pumpkin (and I) articulated earlier.

Although Harley has been instrumental in this public recognition of Pumpkin, and despite her specific warning against such visibility,
he wasn’t frightened for her...he imagined that every
spirit, angel and god for miles around must have picked up
Pumpkin’s frequency and wafted to the powwow grounds to
witness her honor song. He had no doubt they would capitulate,
scamper ahead of her to chew the ground, transforming
obstacles in her path into pyramids of dust. (47)

Harley wants to see Pumpkin and her gifts, including the ones she
shares with him, celebrated in and by the community. He believes, in
accordance with his First Nation ways, and as the Emcee and others
demonstrate, this is appropriate and should not bring the harm that
Pumpkin fears.

Indeed it is not “dust” or earth that causes the accident that
kills Pumpkin and her friends. It is rain - water - that causes their car
to slide off the road and crash (49). As she passes onto the next
world, Pumpkin takes on a form that combines both the water and the
smoke referred to earlier, “but Pumpkin was still flying, ... until she
was distilled to a cool, creamy vapor. Pumpkin melted into the sky, and
so she never came down” (49). Pumpkin is not distressed with this
change, she feels “exhilarated” and she “smiles” (49). Her death feels
tragic to Harley and Charlene, but Pumpkin appreciates her movement and release.

Herod too offers yet another understanding of the deaths, illustrating again the fundamental First Nations' philosophy that events and stories all have a multiplicity of possible interpretations. When Herod sees the flattened grass around the accident scene he is relieved and excited,

"This reminds me of the powwow grounds from when I was little. Those old-time dancers did a good job of pounding the fields flat. They churned through waist-high stalks like they were wading into a river, and it went down like that...."

"What do you mean?" Frank asked. "Who do you think did it?"

"Those kids. Those four Menominees. Now they're the true kind of grass dancers. Now they really know how to prepare the way."

Frank looked skeptical, but Harley believed the old man, because the last time he glanced over his shoulder before climbing into the truck, he thought he saw four figures, graceful as waves, dancing the grass into a carpet. (53)

16. It is also not that other liquid, alcohol, which is all too often involved and all too often assumed to be involved in automobile accidents that kill Native people.
Herod has already seen Pumpkin dance in the spiritual way during the competition finals. Now he sees that she and her friends can also dance the old-time way. Thus they are the best, true grass dancers, the kind who can dance both ways. And this is something to be proud of and happy about. Harley too is able to leave behind some of his grief as he sees the four dancers and shares in Herod’s understanding. Harley comes to understand that Pumpkin has only passed on to another plane of existence, rather than that her spirit is gone.

"Moonwalk"

Even this first section of the novel clearly demonstrates the value of pow wow understandings in deepening our appreciation of First Nations’ literatures. While it is obvious that pow wow experiences will facilitate understanding pow wow scenes, learning at pow wows will also help readers understand other aspects of First Nations’ literatures. In the fourth section, entitled “Moonwalk”, the historical context of outfits and dances that have now become part of pow wows is referenced. “It’s all history,” as Margaret says (115). As the opening of the section states, “Margaret Many Wounds is dying” (99). Margaret has chosen to die at home rather than go to a hospital as she still has
matters to resolve before she can go on in peace. She needs to tell two important histories: the story of her own life and loves and the story of her grandmother’s dress. These histories involve both her personal and the much wider First Nations’ contexts.

While Margaret is telling these stories, the first to a spirit audience and the latter to her grandson, Harley, her daughters, Lydia and Evie, are preparing wastunkala (Sioux style corn soup). While Lydia continues her apparent drifting through life during this stressful time, Evie feels frustrated by the concerns and demands of Sioux ways. “She believed reservation life was out of balance; here everything that was trivial took an inordinate amount of time, while the momentous things occurred with obscene rapidity” (100). Power draws an implicit comparison between Evie and Margaret’s understandings of life and what is important to a good life. Evie knows her mother could die anytime, any minute, yet preparing the wastunkala takes at least two days. She thinks all this time consuming tedious preparation of the soup is wasted time.

This matter of taking time to properly prepare and do things correctly is one that is frequently addressed at powwows. The ordinary flow of the main competitions is often set aside for “specials”.
Specials are specific individual competitions that may either be memorials or to honour an individual. These do take what may seem to be a long time where little appears to be happening. What is happening occurs largely behind the scene. The family sponsoring the special is gathering; the give away and prizes are being prepared; speeches explaining the specifics of the special are given; prayers are said and honour songs are sung and danced. All this may appear trivial and seem to be taking up too much time if the point of all of this is understood as the competition. Rather, as Emcees often explain, the point, the momentousness of the practice, is contained in the preparation and ceremonial aspects that occur prior to the actual dance competition.

The comparison Evie makes about the obscene speed at which the momentous happens is further illustrated by Margaret’s story about her happy marriage with Charles Bad Holy MacLeod. The speed is “obscene” because of the rapid rate at which tragedies occur in First Nations’ communities. As in Margaret’s marriage, when they have only two happy years before Charles dies of tuberculosis (108). This ongoing onslaught of crises is partially rendered manageable by what Evie terms the trivial, the slow careful steps in preparing for and
conducting, for example, the ceremonial aspects of "specials". While the attention to detail is important in and of itself, the slower pace also allows for the contemplation of meaning and consideration of the reasons that the special is taking place. This slow and careful rate opens time for feeling and processing emotions while in the safe spiritual state evoked by the ceremony. Thus these apparently "trivial" preparations, whether this is waiting for the hominy corn to soak overnight or for all the relatives to gather at the speaker's stand before the prayers begin, all of these make a concrete contribution to allowing the people to deal with the momentous.

Power also highlights the irony that it is Evie, the concrete and practical daughter who created and maintains the greatest fantasy about her "father." She has even structured her own marriage based on this fantasy and in so doing has lost the possibility of real happiness. Meanwhile, Margaret, who has kept the truth of her second relationship from her daughters (largely to maintain her daughters' band membership as "full-bloods"), is finally revealing the family's story to the spirit audience.

Margaret's story telling, Lydia and Evie's preparation of the wastunkala are both going on while "the rest of the world" awaits the
Apollo moon landing. Evie sees this as an important event and is, again, frustrated that her mother is neither interested in nor impressed with this accomplishment. This major achievement for White society is one that Margaret accomplished as a child (113). This is not to say that the Apollo moon landing was without importance within First Nations' communities. For example, Hopi Elder Thomas Bianca’s recollection of the prophecy that when the Eagle lands on the moon, the Indian renaissance - the widespread reemergence of and reemphasis on traditional ways - will begin, is well known and I have heard it told frequently at First Nations' gatherings. Indeed this is exactly where the novel goes next.

While Evie is absorbed in the scientific accomplishment, Margaret teaches Harley about her grandmother’s dress. In her grandmother’s time, this “most beautiful and unusual dress...[was worn] to only the most sacred ceremonies, and when she danced at the edge of the dancers’ circle, she said she was dancing [the spirits of buffaloes and Dakota warriors] back to life” (114). There are several important aspects to this description. Clearly it comes from the time before women danced inside of the circles within the dance arenas. Again this is something Emcees discuss when talking about the Traditional
women's style. They describe how women used to dance, in place, at the edge of the circle. It is only in more recent times that women have danced within the circle and have had the three styles open to them. It is important to understand that dancing on and as the edge of the circle was neither exclusionary nor relegating women to a merely supportive role in such dances. Rather the men's movement and women's stillness should be seen as demonstrating a balance, the need for both forms.

Furthermore, the reference to bringing back the buffalo and the warriors is clearly intended to evoke the Ghost Dance. Sakej Henderson's analysis of the Ghost Dance is important here:

The normative visions and the dances were a sustained vision of how to resist colonialism. It was a vision of how to release all the spirits contained in the old ceremonies and rites. The dancers released these contained spirits or forces back into the deep caves of mother Earth, where they would be immune from colonizers' strategies and techniques. Their efforts were a noble sacrifice for future generations. What is more important, the dance would allow the spiritual teachings to renew the ecology, and eventually the forces of the ecology would forge a
traditional consciousness of the following generations. In time, through postcolonial ghost dancing, these forces would foster a new vision of Aboriginal renewal, thus restoring the traditional consciousness and order. (57-58)

In her explanation to Harley, Margaret, as Herod did earlier, is emphasizing the importance of the meaning of the dances. Note the high degree of similarity between Henderson’s explanation that the purpose of the ghost dances was to release the spirits and Margaret’s grandmother’s explanation that she was “dancing the spirits back to life” (114). As grandparents, these two characters clearly portray the role and responsibility of the old people to pass on these teachings, the stories that will assist the younger ones in understanding what they are to do and why they are to these things. Moreover, while Emcees will often give a basic explanation or interpretation of a dance style, these commentaries frequently end with a statement to the effect that if anyone wants to know more, they need to consult the Elders. Or, as can be seen here, within families, grandparents will share these stories with the children at appropriate times.

Margaret shares the story of her grandmother’s dress with two purposes in mind. One, as I just demonstrated, is to teach, remind or
perhaps reinforce Harley’s understandings of the deeper meanings of the traditional dance styles. The other is to pass on to him the task of retrieving the dress that currently languishes in the Field Museum in Chicago.

“Someone got hold of that dress after Grandma died, ... I was in Chicago just once, years ago, and that was the only thing I wanted to see. I stood there all day practically, trying to figure out how I could get that dress back.”...

“I’ll get it for you someday,” [Harley] said. (114)

Embedded in her description of the task are two other important standards of behaviour: the primary importance of kindness and a typical First Nations’ standard for justice, to "say sorry and fix it" (LaDuke, keynote speech). In terms of being kind, Margaret merely says someone “got hold of that dress.” She does not say someone stole it. Clearly this was an important dress both in a material and a sacred sense and therefore not one that the family would have freely given up. She is kind in her description, not accusatory or blaming. This situation can be "fixed" by getting the dress back. The apology aspect may be absent, however, it is safe to assume that Margaret is aware that apologies for the scavenging behaviour of collectors and previous
anthropologists are unlikely to be forthcoming. She simply wants the dress returned to the family. Harley indicates his understanding of why he is being told about this by promising to get the dress back.

When Margaret has completed telling her life story and passing on the responsibility for getting her grandmother’s dress back, she is ready to go. Rather than wait for the *wastunkala* she leaves "early" in order to pass on one more teaching. Margaret leaves this world in a similar fashion to the way in which she, indeed all of us, entered it, by sliding out on water. On the other side of the water she discovers she is dressed in her grandmother’s dress and that her body has recovered both strength and beauty. Charles Bad Holy MacLeod is waiting to guide her to the Spirit World but she has the one last task to accomplish before she can join him and the other ancestors.

As the coverage of the Apollo moon landing continues, Evie and Lydia prepare their mother’s body for the funeral. Together they dress Margaret in her traditional buckskin pow wow outfit. In this small scene Power shows the possibilities of cooperation within diversity or even conflict. As they wrap Margaret’s body in her Thunderbird shawl, Lydia thinks, “You will fly with powerful wings”, while Evie thinks, “You will never dance again” (119). Although the sisters clearly hold divergent
beliefs about what they are doing (and likely about the reasons for what they are doing as well) they are able to cooperate in this important task. Cooperation, the participation of divergent aspects of First Nations' communities, and those they interact with, can all be seen at pow wows.

As I said earlier, non-Native and even "our White Brothers and Sisters" are often explicitly welcomed at pow wows. Mounties and Canadian politicians will dance in the Grand Entry as honoured guests, despite the historical and on-going oppression delivered by these two systems. Some Christian First Nations' clerics will dance, dressed in traditional outfits featuring large crucifixes. Thus, pow wows, like many traditions, can systemically include considerable degrees of heterogeneity. As long as there is agreement as to the purpose at hand, differences are accepted.

While Margaret does not dance again, in that outfit and on this Earth, she does continue traditional dancing. Harley, who is still watching the Apollo moon landing, hears the Sioux Flag Song coming from the television. He then sees his grandmother dancing on the moon and hears her call to him. Margaret dances the whole way around the moon to teach, to show Harley “There is still magic in the world” (121).
This demonstration is Margaret’s last task before moving on to the Spirit World. She tells her grandson the story of how she went to the moon as a child, reinforces this by teaching him how to become the moon, and concludes her life on this plane by demonstrating that the cross over abilities still have power - “magic”. Clearly too these abilities may be drawn into what are now pow wow ways.

"Red Moccasins"

"Red Moccasins" also addresses the cultural possibilities in pow wow ways. This section, however, illustrates that the strengths of dance and pow wow, like any power or strength may also be abused. "Red Moccasins", as Mercury’s story, is a crucial explanation of why she has become the way she is. And, as with many of the other characters, the explanation is structured by pow wow and dance references but, in Mercury’s case, these references also show the direct, personal damage done to First Nations’ people by colonial practices.

In the beginning of the chapter, Mercury is still Anna. She is sitting in her kitchen while the children, her son and her niece, play together. Her son, Chaske, is drumming and singing while Dina and
Chaske’s pet owl dance (219). The time is the "Dirty Thirties" and while many settler people on the Plains are struggling to survive, the First Nations’ peoples, having been deprived well before the drought began and the mainstream economic system collapsed, are in extremely dire straits. As Anna herself says,

We heard that cities as distant as Chicago and New York were sprinkled with Plains topsoil. I thought it was fitting somehow. I imagined angry ancestors fed up with Removal grabbing fistfuls of parched earth to fling toward Washington, making the president choke on dust and ashes. We prayed for rain, and when it did not come, when instead we were choked by consumption, many people said the end of the world had come to the Sioux reservation. I was not a doomsday disciple. I wouldn’t let the world end while my son Chaske still had so much living to do. (220)

Anna here has strength of purpose. Despite the hardships, caused partly the settlers’ poor farming practices and partly by direct colonial government interventions, Anna will continue in order to ensure life for the future generations as represented in Chaske and Dina.
This very important element of First Nations’ philosophy is almost always stated as the Tiny Tot dancers come into the arena during Grand Entry. Emcees consistently describe the little ones as being the future of the Nations and those who will carry on these ways into the future. The Red Pheasant 1999 Powwow theme was “Honouring the Children.” Usually the Tiny Tot dancers are the last ones to enter the arena. For the Saturday afternoon Grand Entry however, the Junior and Tiny Tot dancers lead in all the other dancers. Some parents of Tiny Tot dancers rarely get to see much of the Grand Entries as we wait behind the speaker stand with the little ones. (Typically the Grand Entry ends as soon as the last of the Tiny Tots are in the arena.) On this one day at Red Pheasant, I was able to get my daughter into the dance arena and then go and watch. From up in the bleachers, the intensely moving sight of all of the smallest dancers, dancing their hearts out, for far longer than any of them had ever danced before, going around and around with the little ones becoming the very centre of the massive circle of dancers is one I will never forget. Shifting the relationship of the children so that they were the heart of a Grand Entry did indeed highlight their role and honour their participation in these events.
At this stage of the novel, Anna honours both of the children. Indeed Dina played important roles during the birth of Chaske (221). While they are quite different in terms of their appearance, Chaske and Dina are inextricably linked in Anna’s mind. Anna even picks up traditional responsibilities that should have been carried out by Dina’s mother. Joyce is “the next thing to useless,” so Anna is making Dina’s first traditional Sioux dress (221).

As Anna is working on the moccasins, Dina makes a startling request. She asks Anna to make her “rattlesnake hair ties” (222). Red Dress has come to Dina in a dream and given her young relative permission to wear these hair ties. Anna becomes angry at the idea that Red Dress would attempt to recruit Dina into what Anna believes are Red Dress’ negative ways, ironically the very ways Anna will soon take up herself. She tries to protect Dina from Red Dress’ influence by telling her, “When she comes after you, turn the other way” (222). Anna, the woman who will become Mercury, both looks after and gives important help to her niece. Shortly after this discussion, Dina’s father arrives to take her home. He also gives Anna a jar of bright red seed beads that Anna will use on Dina’s “Red Moccasins” (224). That night, the specific tragedy that will transform Anna begins.
The tragedy begins when Chaske develops a painful cough, the first sign of consumption. Two months earlier, a wild horse killed Anna’s husband - Emery - who also had consumption. Anna is grateful for his quick death. Her only regret is that she does not have a photograph of her husband, not out of her own need to remember but for Chaske. She tells Chaske their story, chants it to him as he sleeps. While both Anna and Mercury make pow wow outfits and attend pow wows, in neither persona is there any evidence that the woman herself dances pow wow. The only dancing either one does in the novel is when Anna first meets Emery and he invites her “to dance on water”, to come ice skating with him (226). “Our courtship was an ice dance, and Emery’s wedding present to me was my own set of silver blades he’d ordered from the Sears catalogue” (227). Her love for and with Emery is connected to this White (at that time) form of "dance" and not to pow wow or other First Nations' dance styles. When Emery dies, Anna packs both of their skates into the coffin with him so that “he could be waiting for me by a shallow frozen pond, ready to strap skates on my feet and take me ice-dancing" (229). While retaining many traditional beliefs and behaviours, Anna does not look to move onto the Spirit
World and be with her Sioux ancestors, as Margaret Many Wounds has, but rather, Anna wants to be reunited with Emery.

As I have already explained, Anna honours her family relationships, as indicated in her relationship with Dina, in traditional Sioux ways and still wishes to be with her husband after death. Emery has also showered Anna with gifts. He builds her a new house, buys furniture for it and gives Anna seven dresses. Anna is not truly comfortable with all these possessions. “All my life I had been taught that material goods were dispensable, things to be shared with friends and family. We were not supposed to have more than we needed, so there were endless rounds of giveaways at our dances” (228). Joyce is jealous of Emery’s gifts, although she claims she is only repeating the gossip of others. Anna attempts to re-balance her relationship with her Sioux relatives by holding a feast, which is concluded with a giveaway, on their first anniversary. While Anna forgives Joyce, as events unfold, it appears Joyce remains resentful.

Chaske, likely due to his youth and malnutrition, quickly succumbs to consumption. Anna does everything she can to try to treat and sustain the dying Chaske, including singing with a rattlesnake rattle. She thinks about going for the reservation medical doctor, an
incompetent and notorious alcoholic but decides she cannot leave her
son alone for that long. She even briefly wonders if she can call up
healing “magic” but thinks her family does not have that gift. Into this
desperate scene, come Joyce and Dina. Joyce has come to collect
Dina’s traditional dress for a pow wow at the community hall. Anna
asks Joyce to get the doctor and Joyce promises she will. Anna
imagines she can see Joyce riding to the doctor’s house but then the
picture changes and she sees what is really happening. Joyce has taken
Dina directly to the pow wow and is sitting there watching her
daughter. Dina is dancing in the outfit Anna made for her as Chaske
dies (232).

When Joyce comes to the house to express her sorrow, Anna’s
grief turns to rage. Joyce justifies her inaction on the grounds that the
doctor would not have come even if she had gone to get him, and
exacerbates the tension by trying to shift the blame to Anna “What
makes you think he’d come for yours? Is yours better than mine?”
(233). The confluence of structural conditions and her personal
circumstances: the drought, the Depression, Removal, the BIA’s hiring
of incompetent doctors to serve on reservations, losing her husband
and her son in less than three months, and her cousin’s failure to help,
push Anna to lash out at the only ones of these which she can reach. With her hope in and connection to the future gone, there is nothing that Anna can see or feel to hold her to the positive side.

Anna fasts, drinking only water, as she finishes what would be Dina's “Red Moccasins.” She lets the pet owl eat the food the rest of the community has brought, too grief stricken and enraged to take in their support. As she packs up Dina's completed outfit she does, however, call on support from Red Dress in the form of using the rattlesnake rattle as a hair tie. There is a last chance for Anna to stop. She feels “a sudden prick of heat deep inside" (234). It is too late and she deliberately smothers the heat with snow. When she gets to Joyce and Dina’s house, she calls on Red Dress to help her and the power comes to Anna. Her calling continues as she lures Dina, now called Bernadine, out in the winter night. Anna dresses Dina in the outfit and orders to her to dance. Dina’s father finds her body the next day, a mile away, in a frozen embrace with a tree. All that is left of the moccasins are “shreds of leather and beads” which cannot be removed from Dina’s feet without cutting off her very flesh (235). Thus, the strength and sustenance available from pow wows has been fully inverted to kill Dina.
While not excusing what Anna does, it is important to give due weight to the colonial conditions of the time. As Henderson warned earlier, the Ghost Dancers danced to release just such forces back into Mother Earth “so they would be immune from colonizers’ strategies and techniques” (58). In this novel, the force that is Red Dress was not protected in this way and therefore could be called on by Anna. Mercury is a disturbing character, but clearly Power did not write this novel with a romanticized New Age understanding of either First Nations’ peoples or their ways. Power shows her awareness that power can be used in a number of ways and that oppressed peoples dealing with on-going tragedies, whatever their potential for good, are also susceptible to and capable of wrong doing.

Anna is neither a ‘noble savage’ continually turning the other cheek and seeking solace only in the spirit realm, nor a ‘bloodthirsty savage’ killing irrationally, nor is she a rigid political analyst who can safely manage her emotions through understanding the systemic nature of her oppression. Rather she is an example of those whose goodness crumbles under the continuous onslaught of systemic, community and family tragedy and subsequently turn on those they can see, reach, and affect. Such people do exist in First Nations’ (and
other) communities. One explanation for the way Power creates Anna/Mercury is that this character represents an opportunity, not to reinforce the stereotypes of violence in these communities, but to demonstrate the root causes and personal outcomes of these. Mercury is not a classical Eurocentric anti-hero; she is, instead, the characterization of just one of the tragedies of colonialism, one who was not, despite her early strenuous efforts, in the end immune to its strategies and techniques.

Nor is Anna immune to the strategies of the Spirit World. Dina too continues to dance after her physical death. She dances around Anna’s house. Anna hears her but will not look for fear of seeing that Bernadine is still dancing with Chaske. She knows it is Dina from the red beads left behind after each visit. The beads, which Dina’s father gave Anna, are only one element that clearly identify the spirit purpose of the dancer. Even the magpies leave these spirit messages alone. The consequences of Anna’s actions are Anna’s to confront and deal with, and in this, even the relentlessly scavenging magpies will not interfere.
"Snakes"

With Anna having now drawn Red Dress into direct engagement with her contemporary descendants, this next chapter, "Snakes," is Red Dress' story. While it is largely concerned with supplying the historical context of this ancestress and her times, there are several significant references that involve the pow wow and dance theme. The references in this chapter evoke further parallels between White dance and movement and First Nation ways.

This chapter is dated 1864. Red Dress' journey to Fort Laramie - "a place of soldiers, treaties, and immigrant trains" - occurs between the time of the first Treaty negotiated at this Fort with the Sioux and other Plains First Nations, in 1851, and the infamous Battle of the Little Bighorn, in 1876 (246). Red Dress dreams of travelling to the Fort, through a landscape dead and buried under paper - most likely the parchment paper of the Treaties - which can also be seen as representing the suffocating effects of colonialism on both the land and the people. During her dream journey, buffalo grass regenerates in her footsteps. She says, "I am here for a reason....I am the uneasy voice of the grass" (246). While Red Dress is not overtly dancing in
this scene, the effect and purpose of her movement through the territory is, like the effects and purpose of grass dancers, a healing one.

During her actual journey to the Fort, she and her brother, Long Chase, ride into what they first assume is a valley of flowers. "Indeed, the flowers were actually swallowtail butterflies, their pale wings edged in blue. I had never seen so many in one place. There were enough of them to bend stems of grass; they dripped from the stalks" (250). Red Dress and Long Chase understand the butterflies to be their ancestors watching over them on their journey. In terms of pow wow styles, I have heard it said at many pow wows that butterflies are the guiding reference for Fancy Shawl dancers. Restoring such forces to the land and the people, as Henderson argues, will require the participation and co-operation of many styles and people.

The stones that Red Dress has carried to the Fort move from her to various soldiers and lead these men to suicide. The soldiers hang themselves – the dance of death. Even as the first soldier, Lemon Van Horn, walks to the hanging tree, "He is not graceful; his stumbling feet churn the dry grass" (268). He does not, likely cannot, dance to his

\[17. \text{For more on the specifics of these historical references, see Deloria "Revisions" 85,}\]
death. These soldiers, the real and the representative forces of Whiteness, cannot move with the territory. Van Horn’s stumbling merely churns and twists the grass in an implied contrast to the purposeful smoothing performed by grass dancers.

And so the soldiers die for the deaths they have brought to the Plains and Red Dress' people. The soldiers, as colonialism's first enforcers, become “Strange Fruit” of the cottonwood tree, as in the title of Harjo’s poem and the song made famous by Billie Holiday, thus inverting the usual pattern of racialized peoples being the ones who get hung from trees. Red Dress, however, like Margaret Many Wounds, dances even after her physical death. When Ghost Horse places her body in the tree, Red Dress at first fears she too will be caught and become like the "strange fruit", trapped in the tree. But her spirit helpers, the snakes, come and release her spirit to dance with them (280). The snakes, however, cannot fully release her so that she could move on to the Spirit World. Red Dress is “still hitched to the living, still moved by their concerns. My spirit never abandons the Dakota people” (281). She supports and encourages them during their many struggles and the tragedies of colonialism. The deaths of these few

88-89, Custer 148-150, Cook-Lynn Why I Can’t 57-58 or Dee Brown Bury My Heart
White soldiers do not prevent these tragedies; they merely mark a slight and symbolic rebalancing of the preponderance of damage done to the First Nations.

"Swallowing the Birds"

In “Swallowing the Birds”, Pumpkin, like Red Dress, is still a presence, supporting and encouraging those who are still struggling on this physical plane. The chapter opens with Charlene dreaming about “being pressed” (285). While the general idea of pressing comes from the Salem Witch trials, in Charlene’s dream the door is crosswise, rather than lengthwise, and it is Pumpkin whose dancing supplies the pressure (285). Again, while her action appears punishing at this stage, this is actually the grass dancer as healer. Pumpkin is dancing to release Mercury’s hold on Charlene. The door is across Charlene’s chest, abdomen, and thighs to loosen Mercury’s control over Charlene’s heart, spirit, and movement respectively. Waking from this dream does not immediately release Charlene from Mercury’s control. Indeed, her grandmother is right there with “her sturdy hand resting

at Wounded Knee 261-296.
on [Charlene's] heart” (286). Clearly Pumpkin can only assist Charlene in getting free of her grandmother, the rest, such as figuring out what the black birds mean, are efforts which Charlene herself must make.

This chapter also shows the second of the three First Nations' dance gatherings in the novel. This Stomp Dance takes place indoors, on Columbus Day. At this event, Harley is the only dancer in regalia. Rather than his usual traditional outfit, he has on a grass dance outfit, in Pumpkin's colours, but without the ankle bells. I have never heard a public explanation of the reason for the bells so I cannot give an internal explication of the significance of this omission. Power notes that this does mean Harley “moved silently, yarn cascading from his knees instead of the usual ringing bells” (292). As this is obviously a tribute in memory of Pumpkin, perhaps the silence recognizes and honours her passing. This possibility is supported by the description of the grass style that Harley dances.

While readers already know that Harley is a champion in the traditional men's style, this does not mean he is immediately able to do the grass dance styles with equal ease. As I have argued earlier, pow

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18. Photographs, from the early 1900's, of grass dancers do show them wearing ankle, knee and leg lengths of bells so this is obviously a part of even the old time outfits. See, for example, the photographs in HungryWolf's *Pow-Wow Dancer's and Craftworker's Handbook*. 
wow dancing is not an essentialist, inherent skill that all First Nations' people possess. Charlene thinks Harley dances "with a graceful sincerity, but he didn’t have Pumpkin’s skill" (293). Harley dances in the preparation of the field style, "dancing to get the job done, stepping with fierce concentration until sweat poured into his eyes" (293). Although he dances as Pumpkin and her friends danced after the car accident, for Harley even this initial aspect of grass dance style is hard work, as is the work of grieving and healing any significant loss.

Charlene, however, and despite Pumpkin’s help in the beginning of the chapter, is still stuck in and under Mercury’s influence. Dreams and spirit help are not magic wands that make everything right; effort is also required on the part of the individual. When Charlene finally does break free and goes to join her parents, Pumpkin once again appears to her, dancing alongside the bus (309-310). Even at this pace, Pumpkin’s dance is not a struggle: “her steps weren’t rushed or frantic” (309). And, although Charlene is initially fearful when the blackbirds appear, this time they do not die but fly into Charlene and sing forgiveness, forgiveness for the dysfunction, the pain which using medicine power in negative ways has caused (310). While the end of this chapter marks
the end of Charlene's role in the novel, it is important to note that her life is continuing; she too is only moving out of one stage and into another.

"The Vision Pit"

The last chapter, like the first, opens at an outdoor pow wow (and rodeo). While the prison setting for this pow wow may appear to be ironic and deeply symbolic, prison pow wows are now regular events. In many Canadian prisons, the annual pow wow is a highlight of the year for the prisoners. From the representation offered in this novel, it seems that the situation is similar in the USA. It is also quite typical that this fictional Dakota community has members on both sides of the wall, and that all are considered and included in community planning and events.

Bringing together this Dakota community, those both inside and outside the walls, also reinforces the main theme of this section. All of the main characters are moving to new levels of understanding, particularly in terms of relationships and responsibilities. Even Mercury, now on her own, her daughter and granddaughter having both
escaped her, comes to the pow wow with “Roger Bonnin – of all her previous boyfriends, the one who genuinely cared for her” (313).

Frank, who is now fully in training with Herod, is coming to more profound levels of awareness about the Dakota way. Frank's conversation with his cousin, Aljoe, who is one of the prisoners, clearly demonstrates Frank's development.

Frank's description of the difference between *Wakan Tanka* and the Christian God again emphasizes the necessity for effort – another example of "struggle and sacrifice" – in First Nations' traditional ways. In his discussion with Aljoe, Frank quotes Herod as having said,

[The] Christian God has a big lantern with the kerosene turned way up, and the people pray to Him for help, for guidance, and He lights the way. Now, *Wakan Tanka*, when you cry to Him for help, says, "Okay, here's how you start a fire." And then you have to make your own torch. (316)

I notice that both ways are described respectfully. If anything, the joke is in the description of Dakota ways. Neither way is presented as being better or worse, they are just different. While Frank does not really understand why Aljoe makes the choice to be "born again," Frank does respect this as being Aljoe's choice to make. Differences of this sort,
whether about dance styles or spiritual paths, are just that, only differences, and within First Nations' philosophies, there is no need to rank or denigrate them. Each way has its own purpose and appeal.

While Frank and Aljoe are both content with their choices, Harley is clearly still trapped in his grief over the death of Pumpkin. He has allowed the hole made by this loss to compound his previous losses and is literally, physically, hanging on to the pain. When Frank asks him why, “Harley flung his arms to his sides as if the answer were physical, something clenched in his fists” (318). Harley also literally and figuratively runs away from the work he needs to do. He has “become a person of swift gestures and abrupt departures...because he felt he had circumstances to leave behind” (319). Rather than releasing, working through and letting go of the intense pain, Harley continues to carry it with him. His physical moves do not reflect emotional movement.

His ability to move on to another level of understanding is also impeded by Harley comparing himself to others and their gifts, rather than looking for and acknowledging his own. Harley works through a series of comparisons, from Pumpkin to Chuck Norris, all the while failing to “recognize the one firm gift he possessed: his imagination”
The term "imagination" here is yet another example of the contextual specifics described by Tafoya earlier in this chapter (125). The details of what Harley sees in the prison yard suggest he has the gift of vision (rather than "imagination"). Harley is seeing the prison yard as it has been in the past. And vision is the term Power uses in the conclusion to this passage, "Harley Wind Soldier was ... wholly unaware of how remarkable his vision was" (320). From within his pain, however, he assumes that anyone and everyone can do this.

Meanwhile, his mother has been working from within her self-imposed strictures to explain both herself and the family history to her son. She has spent the past several years remaking her great-grandmother’s dress and updating parts of the outfit to include more recent histories. Lydia wears the traditional outfit for the first time at the Prison Rodeo pow wow.

*Now I am ready*, she thought with satisfaction. The woman's labors had nothing to do with vanity...and everything to do with embracing her past. Lydia would never use her voice to tell Harley what he needed to hear. She would offer a story he could read with his eyes. (322)
Lydia will not, cannot, speak this story, yet she recognizes that Harley must come to know and understand it. As is the original purpose of many outfits, Lydia's outfit tells her story and the story of her place within her Nation's history. Many outfits still follow this way. Former Sage columnist, Denis Okanee has described how all his boys have weasel tails on their outfits to honour their paternal grandfather's service in World War II (Sage on-line). Some parts of contemporary regalia, however, may also be gifts from people of other First Nations' and should not necessarily be understood simplistically as indications of pan-Indianism. Stories may not necessarily simply be read from outfits; therefore, literary critics must take care in our interpretations and allow for these other possibilities. With Lydia's outfit, the story is for her and Harley; no other readership particularly matters.

Yet, at this pow wow, Harley will not be able to "see" their family story, emphasizing the importance of clear seeing and vision. He has been getting drunk to fill the emptiness, another dysfunctional strategy. As he gets into his grass dance outfit, he cannot recognize his own red eyes, blurred from the alcohol. "He was reminded of a clown and decided to use the heyo'ka design that belonged to his
ancestor Ghost Horse” (320.) As Herod explains earlier in the novel, *heyo’ka* “do everything the opposite of the way it’s usually done” (68).

Thus, while some of what Harley does at this pow wow could be within this tradition, for Harley to be dancing, or even attending the pow wow when under the influence of alcohol or drugs, violates and obviates his efforts. As Harley breaks this rule in public, Lydia also disciplines him in front of everyone. She then gives him over to Frank and Herod for them to deal with the transgression.

Herod brings Harley back to a state in which he can see his mother again by taking him into a sweat lodge ceremony. This ceremony is not to punish Harley but, as Herod says, to “draw the sickness out of you” (325). Nor is this one ceremony enough; the sweat only cleans up the immediate problem. Herod also says, “There are ways to learn what is inside of you. We have all cried for ourselves a little, that’s natural, but don’t let it go on for too long. That is a child’s way. I think you want to be a man?” (325-326). Grieving is expected, "natural" as Herod says. Staying too long in that place of

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19. Having spent the past almost twenty years visiting various prisons and enduring the tedious, rigorous, picayune procedures of getting into prisons, I admit to having a difficult time believing Harley could actually just saunter into a prison when he is so obviously drunk.
grieving is what is harmful, and Harley must move on. This movement will again take place through ceremony and relationship.

The relationships that will support Harley’s moving to new levels of understanding he needs begin with his friend Frank. Frank prays for Harley as he begins his fast in “The Vision Pit”. Again it is important to understand that this fast is not a punishment; it is not about segregating an "offender" from the community. Rather, as I have come to understand it, these fasts are a time of isolation for the purpose of contemplation. And, while Harley appears to be alone in this ceremony, the context for such ceremonies is that they are only undertaken with the support of family and friends. For example, Harley is in the same pit that his father used. He has Herod’s pipe with him. Lydia and Alberta make tobacco ties for him (326). All of these elements would remind Harley that while he undertakes this test on his own, his friends and family are supporting his efforts.

Furthermore, during the fast, Harley receives a number of important visitors who support him in learning what he needs to know. The first to come are the Medicine Hole warriors (327). They take Harley to where he can crawl to the Spirit Level. At the council fire, he finds his grandmother, Margaret Many Wounds, as well as his brother
and father. Margaret reminds him that, as she passed on, she gave him a gift to carry him through just this sort of hard time. She "sent" him the "picture" of her dancing on the moon because “It can be of great comfort to know such things are possible” (329). Harley is also able to meet the brother and father he never knew, thus locating him more securely within his immediate family. His father Calvin, like his wife, will not and cannot, give his son the specific answers Harley needs, “But you are my son” (329). Thus Harley experiences the continuum and continuity of family relationships.

His uncle, Ghost Horse, is also there to help Harley become a man by explaining the ways of the warriors. “Warriors give their true heart to the people” (330). The truth of the heart is gentleness and trust, not strength and fighting, “not what you think” (320). In other words, warriors are not the stereotypical bloodthirsty savages as both Harley and some readers might assume. The Traditional men dancers, as I said earlier, are introduced as the protectors and defenders of the people. This is a warrior role that many First Nations' writers now also take up, as Jace Weaver demonstrates in his work of literary criticism That The People Might Live. Harley, if he is to leave being a traditional dancer and become a grass dancer, must understand both the responsibilities he is
putting down and the responsibilities he is picking up. Both styles and roles are necessary for the well being of the people.

Just before he leaves, Margaret explains to Harley that he will need to consider and reconsider what he has learned during this time. A vision quest fast is not an epiphany:20 “You have seen many things. How can you take it all in? Think of us over the years, and I promise you will learn something new every time you turn us in your mind” (330). Harley must return to the pit before his fasting time is up, as there is one more spirit who wants to see him. His last supportive visitor is his aunt, Red Dress. She comes to him both to further explain grass dancing and as one who has also suffered through being left behind after the death of a loved one.

Red Dress extends and deepens the explanations of grass dancing that Herod has already shared. She emphasizes that it is not just knowing what to wear and how to dance a particular style that is important. To take on a style and dance for the people, the dancer should understand what and why they are dancing. Red Dress says, “The grass has become yarn, a replacement for a replacement.... A long time ago, when we vanquished our enemies
in battle we would hold a victory dance and flaunt trophies of war - the long hair of our adversaries. So when you move through those old steps, remember that you are dancing a rebellion and that the pretty fringes are hiding blood and flesh and captured hair.” (331)

Considering Ghost Horse’s advice on what it means to be a man and a warrior, Red Dress’ speech may, at first glance, appear contradictory. It is important though to note the subtle dating in Red Dress’ explanation. For all intents and purposes, Ghost Horse speaks from pre-contact experience. The chief of their band had kept his people as far away from White influences as he possibly could (245-246). Thus, Ghost Horse’s explanation reflects a different set of experiences than those of Red Dress. She not only lived amongst Whites for a time but also, because she has been stuck on this physical level, Red Dress has also seen the continuing onslaught of colonialism.

That Red Dress is talking about dancing during early colonial times is obvious from her reference to “dancing a rebellion.” While First Nations did fight skirmishes with one another, both before and after contact, these could not be classified as “rebellions.” Battles

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20. Harley is not having an epiphany either in the Christian religious sense or the sense
between First Nations were not about taking over another band, nor
were they about breaking free of another nation or authority. Only the
latter that could be termed rebelling and no such conditions existed
prior to colonial times. Furthermore, there is much evidence to
suggest that scalping was a custom introduced to the First Nations by
European soldiers and bounty hunters. To cite a Canadian example of
this, in 1999, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs called for a
"repeal of a 242-year-old bounty...of twenty-five pounds for a male
Indian scalp." (on-line press release) This is not to say that Ghost
Horse represents a "purer" form of the Dakota warrior tradition.
Rather, Ghost Horse and Red Dress are describing different aspects of
the same tradition, as these may be utilized in different conditions.
Contemporary First Nations' men, such as Harley, are being called on to
remember their warrior role in resisting, rebelling against colonialism.
They are being asked to not just dance these styles but to live the
responsibilities attached to those ways.

The novel ends, not with the previously dominant imagery of
seeing and vision, but with hearing. Power is, once again, being careful
to balance her representations. Harley can sort through and recognize

of the literary.
each of the significant individuals within “the voices of his community” as they approach the pit (332). All except one. Having found his place within his immediate and extended family, extending even back through time, Harley is resentful that an outsider seems to have been brought into this important circle. “But what he heard was the music of his own voice, rising above the rest” (333). His vision quest has helped him to see his place and, through this new understanding, comes yet another ability, to hear himself within his community and circle.

Thus, while Harley and the others have learned much throughout the course of the novel, much of it beginning with pow wow lessons, this ending does not conclude or complete their development, but rather raises the characters to a new level of understanding for these people and their relationships. Pow wow has been important for them more in terms of where they began their understandings, but as the ending clearly shows, these lessons are not just for use at those gatherings nor is the totality of their (or that of any other First Nations’) culture transmitted through pow wow. This level will be yet another start, allowing for more continuity.
Dramatic Representations of a Lone Pow wow Dancer - *Education is Our Right* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*.

The previous chapter illustrated some of the significances of pow wow and dance within First Nations’ contexts. This chapter builds on that analysis and takes up the matter of pow wow as reference in two plays, *Education is Our Right* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. In these plays a dancer and a dance style, respectively, are utilized to call up the range of meanings carried by pow wows. Before taking up my analyses however I will, albeit briefly, address the questions surrounding what is Native theatre.

What is Native theatre?

What is not at issue within the criticism on Native theatre is its central purpose - to tell Native stories in Native ways. After this, however, two important issues emerge within discussions about 'What is Native theatre?' One is concerned with whether or not the very form itself is inherently Eurocentric or colonial and how this mitigates against the central purpose. The other is concerned with content. Content questions are in terms of what is or what should be represented on the stage. The content/representation questions tend to revolve around two
particular categories, gender and violence as one and culture as the other. I will first address the form debates.

Usami, for instance and as an example of one pole, states that "contemporary Native playwrights are forced to work in a genre without direct antecedent in their culture [sic] - although theatrical elements are present, of course, in many aspects of traditional ritual and storytelling" (1). Drew Hayden Taylor himself, however, has consistently maintained that Native theatre is a long-standing Indigenous form. In a 1996 essay, he asserts that Native theatre "is as old as the country, as old as the people who have been here for thousands of year, as old as the stories that are still told today. It is merely the presentation that has changed" ("Re-appearance" 51). Similarly, in 2004, he maintains that "theatre is so intrinsically close to storytelling that it's 'six inches to the left' of traditional storytelling" (quoted in David 18). A more middle ground is delineated by Nunn when he warns against seeing Native plays as having been "already assimilated into dominant white culture. The institution of theatre itself, however marginal it may appear to the dominant culture, is an integral part of it. To write plays, then, is to appear to work within the dominant culture" (96). The form at issue here, it seems to me, is not really the stories or even the plays per se, as much as it is the form and
structure of modern theatres and stages. The underlying question then becomes: Are these still Native stories when they are told within contemporary architecture? In my opinion, this is a spurious assertion.

Stripped to its essentials, such questions seem to be another aspect of the authenticity debates wherein any and all traces of Eurocentric influence are held to have so contaminated Nativeness that such representations retain little to none of their original cultural power or significance. However, as Rabbit declares (in the dialect letters), this can only be true "if you believe white always swallows up Red. I think Red stays Red, most ever time, even threwed in with white. Especially around white. It stands out more" (Womack 24). Or as Womack, speaking in a more scholarly tone, says later on, in and throughout *Red on Red*, rather than searching for authenticity, his position is that Native works "should have some kind of integrity in terms of their representations of the nations they purport to be written about" (120).

Like Rabbit, I do not believe that white always swallows up Red. Like Womack, I think that the integrity of representations makes for both a more respectful as well as a stronger standard. While Womack makes his assertions from the grounds of national specificity, I have not and would not undertake such an approach, as those would be much better
undertaken by scholars of the particular nation involved. Rather, this work and this chapter in particular, is more akin to Mojica and Knowles' identification that "the on-going challenge [for] Native theatre artists is to respect and protect what is collectively private within their cultures, while creating theatre rooted in aboriginal world views and sensibilities" (v). This "respect and protect" challenge may account for the use of powwow references to stand in, as public symbols, for deeper and "collectively private" aspects of First Nations cultures. The issue of what should remain "collectively private" is not necessarily limited to cultural matters. Representations of gender and violence - as examples of the dysfunctions inherited from colonialism - have also been challenged on similar grounds, through questions of whether these really do challenge audiences, particularly White audiences or whether these reinforce stereotypes.

Lundy and Knowles have both taken up this concern, albeit from differing positions. Lundy says that, in terms of the critical responses to *Dry Lips* in particular, critics who respond favourably to the play have failed to seriously engage with those who have condemned the play for its representations of misogyny (105). He respects these condemnations; especially those raised by Indigenous women such as Tuharsky and
Annharte (102-103). His response "to such [angry] criticisms lies in an examination of the representations of Whiteness and what these representations reveal in relation to representations of Indigenous identities" (105). This very important examination concludes that "the play clearly shows that issues of language and spirituality are intimately interrelated to gender issues, which, in turn, have been complicated by patriarchal colonial competition" (118). Lundy argues that in demonstrating these issues, Highway "returns the violence it depicts to its proper context, namely the violence of colonial genocide" (121).

Knowles too acknowledges the gender and violence concerns with "Rape as Emblem" in his contention that "a First Nations woman might be forgiven for saying...along with Scottish Canadian playwright Anne-Marie MacDonald in another context: 'Good going, boys, but get your fucking metaphors off of my body'" (248, 249). He turns to the plays by First Nations and Metis women for "a broader range of representations of sexual violence" (249). Knowles finds that, in plays by Native women, rape and sexual abuse are represented in "ways that are perhaps more shocking for their apparent ordinariness, as quotidian, hegemonic practices of subjugation that virtually come with the territory of being a Native woman in Canada" (251). Furthermore, he argues that what is of
concern in the women's plays is the "embodied struggle to remember and awake from the colonial nightmare" of these practices (252). In terms of my work, what is important is that in virtually all of these plays - whether by men or women- the most solid ground for the struggles towards re-membering is found within traditional cultural contexts.

The how to and when to represent traditional cultural contexts and practices is, furthermore, a matter that many Native artists seem to be taking very seriously and discuss in writing about their work. Floyd Favel Starr's interrogation of the very concept of "Native Performance Culture" contains important considerations about the collectively private or, as I have said earlier, the boundaries of the sacred (83). Starr delineates the boundary through reference to the Two Row Wampum and says,

This image obligates us as Native artists to have a working practical knowledge of our languages, songs, dances, stories and histories. Further than that, we apprehend and are in active collaboration with the world from our position on the opposite shore in a position of equality, and there is no internal conflict, colonization, or beggary.

(85)

With this "working knowledge," dance, for example, can be reduced "to its essentials" and "we can move away from attempting to put rituals on
stage" (84). Pow wow settings and solitary pow wow dancers can be
seen, in Starr's terms, as essentials - and already in the public domain -
while still being referents that resonate with the stories and histories,
without violating the rituals or ceremonies of the collectively private.
Native theatre can then be readily seen as Native in both form and
content.

Drew Hayden Taylor's *Education is Our Right*

*Education is Our Right* was written in the year following the
announcement that post-secondary funding for status Indians would be
capped (*Education* 78). Its subject matter would have or, at least, should
have been familiar even at that time. The form too, a parody of Dicken's
*A Christmas Carol*, is arguably familiar. Furthermore this particular subject
is clearly part of what Taylor describes as the important stories that
Native theatre tells, particularly that these stories will be "questioning
that history and the current repercussions that are affecting aboriginal
people today" ("Re-Appearance" 58). Ziaja-Bucholtz acknowledges this
aspect of the play when she says the play is "a straightforward
indictment of Pierre Cadieux, the then Federal Minister of Indian and
Northern Affairs, and his cap on post-secondary funding" (121). While
there seem to be few direct critical engagements with this play, Taylor and the styles he employs that are receiving attention that can be utilized in discussing *Education*.

Nunn, for example, while not specifically referring to *Education*, claims to see in Taylor's plays "a particular postcolonial strategy: the appropriation and mimicry of popular culture, which produces a hybrid articulation of the original" (96). Nunn has concerns with this strategy, however, in that he believes "Native theatre cannot pick up material from popular culture without reinscribing the unequal relationship between Native people and non-Native society" (104). Thieme as well argues that "Contemporary cross-cultural responses to [canonical texts] characteristically develop an ambivalent relationship to their source-texts, combining oppositional writing back with elements that intentionally or otherwise prove to be complicitous" (81). While such concerns may have some validity in some cases, as Rabbit has already declared, they more importantly seem to undervalue the strength of First Nations' stories (Womack 24). Furthermore, as Ridington has argued, failing the "Pizza
Test" proves nothing. First Nations' critics too see the strategy of
drawing from canonical and popular culture references quite differently.

Mojica and Knowles, for example, describe *Education* as "a sort of
agit-prop *Christmas Carol*" and assert that Taylor "adopts, adapts, and
rings variations on the sit-com genre" (313). While they acknowledge the
popular culture influences, to "adopt, adapt" and particularly to "ring
variations" cannot be seen as complicitous. Similarly, Daniel David Moses,
in explaining his deployment of stereotypes, argues that

Using stereotypical images [is] one of the strengths of theatre,
that when you have only an hour or two to get your story told, you
often have to start with the vulgar, easily recognizable version of
things and then do your best to try to shift and enrich it. (124)

Moses presents here an important understanding of not just the use of
stereotypes but, as he says, why playwrights might draw on an "easily
recognizable version of things". A play, particularly a one-act play such as
*Education*, has very little time to present and engage the audience in its
specific story. To appropriate popular culture or parody canonical texts is

1. Ridington explains the "Pizza Test" as referring to "a court case [Delgamuukw] in which
a lawyer for the Crown supposedly attempted to discredit an Indian land claim by
implying that Indians who eat pizza couldn't be truly aboriginal and thus retained no
aboriginal rights" (endnote 4, 27).
to deal with typical dramatic constraints in an inventive manner that challenges and "enrich[s]" rather complies with canonical values.

The (Spirit of Education) Present, who appears as a Fancy Shawl dancer, is the character who specifically, clearly, and consistently challenges the problem of the play. It is, therefore, especially important in terms of understanding her to know that, for status Indians [not all Native people, and just the ones who had Indian status under Canadian law], the free choice of post secondary education was available for only approximately twenty-five years. Before the mid-1960's, taking up post-secondary education meant probable disenfranchisement for a status Indian. Canada's abrogation of many of our Treaty responsibilities and the consequent decimation of First Nations' Treaty rights is one of the main sources of Present's anger with Ebenezer Cadieux.

Taylor's introductory stage directions for the Spirit of Education Present specify that she “has an angry, impatient attitude about her and

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2. It is also crucial to understand that it is highly inappropriate to refer to this post-secondary education funding as a 'free' education. Canadian support of the post-secondary education of First Nations' peoples is a Canadian treaty responsibility, akin to 'rent'. These monies are payments that we owe in exchange for the First Nations' agreement to share their land with us.

3. Canadian federal law and Department of Indian Affairs policy called this procedure "enfranchisement" to emphasize the gaining of 'full' citizenship. First Nations' peoples understand this as "disenfranchisement" as it entailed the loss of Indian status, the ability to reside in one's community (on reserve), First Nations' treaty rights, and easy access to language and culture.
gives a lot of lip” (105). This attitude and behaviour also works to implode another stereotype, as Taylor describes Present as “a pretty young girl” (105). Present is clearly not a noble savage, an Indian princess. It is also neither a coincidence, nor necessarily a matter of balanced gender representation amongst the Spirits, that Present is a woman. First Nations’ women are the majority of First Nations’ students within our institutions. Rather she shows and tells Cadieux, in no uncertain terms, that what the federal government is doing is wrong.

These considerations also mean that Education is Our Right is an important play to include in the post-secondary literary canon. It also satisfies an important pedagogical consideration for the introduction of Native matters: namely it allows for the familiar to be understood in an unfamiliar way. The nearly ubiquitous structure of A Christmas Carol (albeit with a necessary twist in the ending) allows readers to focus on the content of the Spirits’ education of Cadieux. Furthermore, open discussions of the reality of the Treaty rights and responsibilities to post-secondary education could go far in alleviating the sometimes underlying but all too often open resentment shown to many visible and identifying

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4. Although to be honest, this had not occurred to me until I actually posed the question of why is Present a woman to one of my classes. Immediately after those words left my
Native students. (The resentment is based on the false idea that ‘they’ are getting a ‘free’ education while ‘we’, non-Native students, have to pay – and incur enormous student loans.) This structural discrimination and the inter-personal racism which results tends to affect all Native students and constitutes an on-going barrier to their completing post-secondary education programs. Teaching this particular play can be an important contribution to ameliorating racism both on and off university campuses.

As this analysis focuses on the character Present, it is also important to discuss what Present is not representing. As should be evident by now, the figure of a lone pow wow dancer has become, in contemporary times and within White culture, an evocative icon of, in the sense that Daniel Francis used the term, “Indianness” (171-172). It is also one that could be said to be in some danger of reaching the classic stereotype status of lone Plains hunter/warrior on horseback. In other words, one pow wow dancer is a pretty picture of "Indianess", but one.

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1. ‘They’ will include all Native people, despite the facts that not all Native people have Indian status and even within the relatively small status portion, not all of those students are necessarily receiving federal funding. [Again this funding is somewhat mis-named 'band' funding. This devious strategy, of devolving the distribution of the limited post-secondary funds to the band level, ensured that the repercussions and consequent
which is significantly displaced, wrenched out of its social and cultural context, and may therefore be seen as part of a Eurocentric aesthetic of representations of First Nations' people.

In my experience, while First Nations' people and pow wow people in particular, do purchase, wear, and use T-shirts, cards, posters, and even refrigerator magnets with lone pow wow dancers on them, it is my impression that this may be done more for reasons of maintaining the pow wow spirit or as evocations, for another example, of interest and participation in these practices. Drew Hayden Taylor's Present is then, as a 'lone' pow wow dancer, a rarity (within First Nations' literatures) but, for all these reasons, a powerful representation of contemporary Indians. She demonstrates, again, as did Pumpkin, the full range of their interests and concerns. While Present does not appear in a pow wow context, she declares both this context as well as First Nations peoples' past and contemporary conditions. She is therefore situated within these realities and is not extracted from them for aesthetic purposes.

It is also clear from the very beginning of her appearance in the play that Present is a strong woman standing within relationships to other women's strengths. She responds to Cadieux's "My God!" with "Nah, she's arguments over who gets funded would take place within the individual First Nations'
busy" (*Education* 105). It is also important to note that it would probably be erroneous to assume this is a feminist stance. As Patricia Monture-Angus says, she too uses the female pronouns when she speaks of Creator to remind her listeners of the range of gendered energies within Creator (*Thunder* 246). Present too is “busy”, as a pow wow dancer, as the guiding spirit of Education Present, and as a working mother especially concerned with the consequences of government neglect of the well-being of First Nations' children. Although the stage directions state “*Cadieux is taken aback by the Spirit's rather abrasive manner. She is not a very likable Spirit*” (105), it is important for critics to understand that Cadieux is hardly alone in his reaction and understanding of Present. This is an all-too-common reaction and misinterpretation of strong First Nations' women, especially those who speak their minds.⁶ Cadieux, however, is trapped with Present and must listen.

Present is in a pow wow outfit because she has been planning to go to a pow wow. She has forgotten her appointment with Cadieux. Taylor takes this opportunity to employ an in-joke, again undercutting another First Nations' stereotype. While waiting for Present to appear, Cadieux

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⁶ See for example, Acoose and Monture-Angus, on being labeled 'angry' (*Iskwewak* 217-218, *Thunder* 1).
remarks "I hate a Spirit without a watch" (105), a comment clearly alluding to "Indian time." "Indian time" tends to be used as if it means Indians are always late or unconcerned with schedules. Yet, I often hear Emcees explain that what "Indian time" should really mean is that First Nations’ people do what is most appropriate or most responsible to be doing at that particular time, and in whatever length of time the process takes.

It is First Nations’ priorities and an important concern that preparations be correct and complete that determine timing and sequence, rather than a preset ‘schedule’. For example, helping a relative in immediate need will take precedence over a committee meeting. In terms of pow wow schedules, Pow Wow Committees and Emcees will rearrange the timing of a special contest in order to allow the whole family to be gathered and make their preparations. Present, a busy woman, actually does have a watch. She is ‘late’ or has forgotten her appointment with Cadieux because culture and community, as signified by pow wow, are more important to her than ‘educating’ yet another White guy. In my experience and from what I have heard, "Indian Time" is actually a quite rigorous standard when this concept is understood in terms of First Nations' values.
Cadieux is also surprised to find out that “Spirits go to pow wows? ... I was at a pow wow once, I don’t remember seeing you there” (106).

No doubt he could miss seeing this Spirit for at least two reasons. One could be that the overwhelming first impression of a pow wow is often that it is a vast array of sights and sounds. It does take repeated attendance to see the spirit, to understand the cultural and spiritual contexts and contents. Present is justifiably irritated that the Minister of Indian Affairs cannot understand either the spiritualities of the peoples he is responsible for or their individuality. Present articulates her own version of Acoose’s “big brown blob” critique when Present says, “I’ve always had this theory about the inability of blue eyes to accurately see brown skin” ("The Problem" 228, Education 106). She goes to challenge conventional academic understandings of and exogenous work on Indigenous peoples with “Let one of your anthropologists check that out” (106).7

While First Nations’ people have innumerable jokes about anthropologists (and what the discipline has said about them8), Present is also suggesting that non-Native people, could usefully undertake some self-examination before turning their gaze on Others. She then turns her

7. See Barsh for a similar critique and challenge (7-9).
8. See for example, Floyd Westerman's song "Here Come the Anthros" and Vine Deloria's "Indian Humour" in Custer Died for your Sins.
gaze - the gaze of the racialized, usually observed Other and Object - on Cadieux. Cadieux's discomfort with being the observed increases when Present informs him that he is discussed and analyzed by the Spirits of Education - at "their" office (107). Having relocated Cadieux, situated him in terms of a First Nations' structural understanding, Present begins to take him on his tour of the First Nations' responses to the post-secondary funding cap.

Their first visit is to a home where a father and his son are arguing about participating in the march to Ottawa⁹ (108-110). At this stage of the crisis, a widespread First Nations' cultural renaissance was well under way, there was strong national political leadership, and, as Cadieux later complains, a vastly increased First Nations' participation in post-secondary education (111). While communities, Nations and national organizations had been coming together in terms of language and cultural revivals, long-standing structural inequities meant that factions and infighting still occurred in other matters. However, as Boy says,

Ever since I can remember, that's how it's been around here.

It's like the fingers of a hand, all squabbling. Dad, for the first time

⁹. I was a member of the Ottawa Odawa Native Friendship Centre when these marches, from various communities, converged on Ottawa. It was an occasion that called forth
in a hell of a long time time, everybody here wants to do something together. The fingers are coming together. Half of the reserve is marching to Ottawa. I have to be part of it. (109)

While there had been localized protests in protection of First Nations' rights (the bridge protests at Awkwesasnae and the Incident at Restigouche, for example), national protests on the scale of the post-secondary funding cap, which drew in entire communities and occurred across the country, were just beginning.

Cadieux tries to argue that “The education budget kept doubling and tripling every few years. The money had to stop at some point” (111). As argued earlier, the doubling and tripling of the previous decade had only come with the increased freedom of choice. Notice that Cadieux is also trying to limit the language of "forever" used in Treaty negotiations with the First Nations. Present counters his attempt, in a manner similar to the one explained for "Indian Time", with a First Nations' concern, a question about what are the appropriate priorities, defense and “foreign” aid or the commitments made to the original inhabitants of the land.

tremendous efforts by many of us to feed and house the marchers as well as facilitating many other aspects of the protests taking place in the city.
At the end of this portion, Present takes off her pow wow outfit and reveals the contemporary ordinary clothes she wears underneath: “shorts, running shoes, and a t-shirt” (115). While most pow wow dancers do indeed wear t-shirts and track shorts under their outfits, Present can also be understood as demonstrating, not her assimilation, but rather that First Nations' cultural ways are contemporary (and not just historical), and that she (as well as any other First Nations' person) can fully participate in both First Nations' and conventional society. Her athletic garb also matches the comment that “We got to speed things up, I've got a hectic schedule to keep” (115). Living these doubled responsibilities takes enormous time, effort, and planning.

Cadieux, however, still is not getting "it": “How busy can a spirit be?” (116). Present’s response uses pow wow to signify a broader range of cultural practices.

There was a period when I had a lot of free time. No powwows, very little useful education, no nothing, everything was lost or dying. I almost went stir crazy from nothing to do. Now I'm so busy, it's great. She sneers at him. Till you came along. (116)
In this speech, pow wows and Canadian institutional education are points on a continuum of activities in full, rich, productive lives.\textsuperscript{10} That these are only two of the possibilities is underscored by her emphasis on nothing and everything. Cadieux attempts again to dismiss Present’s concerns with the angry label, “Why are you always acting so angry?” (116).

In response, Present does not cite a legitimate and lengthy list of grievances accumulated since contact\textsuperscript{11}. Rather she begins with the changes that came with the return of the WWII veterans. As I explained in the chapter on pow wows, this honouring of the veterans recalls Grand Entry when veterans are usually the first group to enter the dance arena. The First Nations’ WWII veterans’ experiences of relative equality in the Armed Forces encouraged a new generation of First Nations’ political leaders and organizations to again challenge the oppressive Indian Act structures within their communities, provincially and federally. Along with this increased activity, as well as activities in many other aspects of First Nations’ lives and communities, came increasing numbers of First Nations’ post-secondary students.

\textsuperscript{10} I would also note the lack of the questionable but oft posed "two worlds" metaphor. Pow wows and post-secondary education are both part of contemporary First Nations' lives.

\textsuperscript{11} I would also note that Cadieux seems to have already 'forgotten' what the Spirit of Education Past has shown him, the residential schools scenes. This lapse could also be
Present is holding Cadieux, as Minister of Indian Affairs, responsible for the funding cap. In so doing, Present is thinking and speaking from within a First Nations' understanding of responsibility in which the Minister of Indian Affairs is responsible to Indian people. Cadieux, on the other hand, is “sick and tired of always being the bad guy. For the last time, it was necessary” (116). In other words, Cadieux sees himself as responsible, first and foremost, to the federal Cabinet and Canadian taxpayers for “necessary” cost cutting. He also appears to assume that First Nations' people do not pay taxes (or vote). Cadieux's stance, coming from within the sole important consideration of electoral politics and budgets, is so fundamentally different from Present's concern with First Nations' responsibility and the well being and future of her peoples that he cannot even understand her. He responds to her speech with “What's the use?” and gives up on his attempt to educate her (117).12 Present agrees with Cadieux's frustration and shifts the scene in order to introduce him to the hunger strikers.

As Present says, the hunger strikers were “the kids that made you famous” (117). While the marches to Ottawa received some media read as foreshadowing the twist ending as well as further emphasizing conventional White society's apparent inability to learn from First Nations' histories.
attention, the hunger strikers made national broadcasts and headlines. Present takes Cadieux to witness one such media interview. During this interview, with Eric, the central message of the play is most clearly articulated. Eric is asked why the Indian Affairs post-secondary budget cutting is different from other federal budget cuts. He replies,

Other than the fact the promise of and guarantee of education is stated quite clearly in God knows how many treaties, the reason is simple. Educated Indians cause trouble. We know how to fight your way now. The government wants to stop that, stop the criticizing of its DIA policies and the fight over self-government. It wants to go back to the good old days when we did what we were told. (120)

Present, as a pow wow dancer, represents cultural and tradition. In her other job, her responsibility for present-day education, post-secondary conventional institutional education is about choices and the future. The Treaties, as the Saskatchewan Office of the Treaty Commissioner has termed them, are "A Bridge To The Future" (Office of the Treaty Commissioner sub-title). The Treaty terms are the structural link between the First Nations and the Canadian government, as well as the bridge from the past into the future. And, most importantly, the past, for First

12. The popular culture reference to the 'old' game show with the"$64,000 question"
Nations' peoples, whether that means cultural practices such as pow
wows or Treaty promises, is not merely 'historical'. Eric too, like Present,
holds Cadieux responsible for his words (the policy) and his behaviour. As
the young First Nations' students struggle and suffer for what they
believe, Eric wonders if Cadieux would "consider hunger striking to
promote his policy" (120).

Cadieux has an all-too-typical reaction that sets up the final
challenge in his time with Present. Cadieux feels 'hurt' by Eric's
comparison and defends himself by saying, "I'm not really a bad person,
you know" (120). In this statement, Cadieux attempts to shift the terms
of the crisis away from his positional and collective responsibility by
asserting his personal integrity. Non-First Nations' people, when the
matter of their collective responsibilities to the Treaties with the First
Nations' Treaty Rights is raised, all too often, make a similar retreat into
"But it's not my fault." "It" may mean anything from structural racism,
the Indian agricultural policies, to the residential school system or, indeed,
the close to abject failures of the Canadian government to fairly deliver
on almost all of our treaty responsibilities. It may be true that these are
not solely the fault of today's individuals. Canadians have received,

may also be a dated reference which instructors will need to explain to current students.
however, collective benefits (the ability to hold land titles, self-government, and economic benefits from the land - to cite just a few) from these matters and bear a collective responsibility for redress.

Present, kindly and sadly, agrees that, within these “misguided” limitations, Cadieux is not evil. And on this note, she prepares to leave him. Cadieux, however, needs more from her, “I just don’t know what to do now” (121).

Present refuses to give him any easy answers. Rather she meets him on the personal terms Cadieux himself raised. She invokes Cadieux as a father, a parent. Present reveals “two dirty, wretched looking children. They are shivering and quite miserable.... The girl is Want, the boy Ignorance” (122). Want and Ignorance, poverty and lack of knowledge and skills respectively, are Present’s children. Education, in the present (and in the future) is an important way out of the situations that Present and these children represent - First Nations’ single mothers, with multiple children, struggling both in and out of their homes. Present, in this new characteristic of employed mother, reveals yet another aspect that concretely connects her to many of today’s First Nations' women. Present is showing Cadieux the real cost of DIA policies and practices. This revelation marks the end of Present’s time with Cadieux.
In the immediate moments following Present’s departure, Cadieux seems to have understood her message. Feeling overwhelmed, he repeats Dorothy’s chant from The Wizard of Oz, “There’s no place like home” (123). It could be possible to feel some sympathy for Cadieux at this point. Many scholars have been so stuck in ignorance of even First Nations’ histories with colonialism and the consequent contemporary conditions that learning about these is often an overwhelming, deeply depressing experience. Yet again, (and another foreshadowing of the play’s conclusion) rather than resolving his feeling and responsibilities, Cadieux rejects feeling guilty and refuses to take responsibility, “I will not carry the burden of 500,000 Native people on my back. Just because I’m the Minister of Indian Affairs” (123). Yet, if the Minister of Indian Affairs will not accept responsibility for Indian peoples, why would other Canadians?

At the end of the play, Cadieux does employ just such a shift in responsibility, “when I’m shown the majority of Canadians don’t agree with it, then I’ll talk” (139). Readers and audiences should be left questioning whether this possibility could occur. The very process of this play devastatingly undercuts the commonplace platitude that simply educating non-First Nations’ people will systemically change conditions for
First Nations people. Cadieux has been taken through a rigorous educational experience and, unlike the original Scrooge, has not at all changed his thinking or behaviour. Thus I can only hope that Cadieux serves as a bad example to those who see or read the play.

Both pow wow and post-secondary education are important to and for First Nations' peoples. It is no coincidence that Education Present and her concern for full post-secondary funding is a pow wow dancer. Responsibility for the continuity of pow wow, as a representation of First Nations' cultures, lies with First Nations' people. Responsibility for ensuring the fair provision of Treaty Rights to First Nations' people belongs, as Cadieux says, to Canadians. Present insists on both.

Tomson Highway's *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*

*Dry Lips Oughta Move To Kapuskasing* often presents an opposite critical and teaching problem to *Education* in that Highway's presentation of the systemically induced dysfunctions within First Nations' communities may all too easily feed and reinforce commonly held

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13. In another of the dialect letters, Craig Womack has more recently challenged this 'optimism', "Educating white folks about Indians can only be taken so far. Hotgun claims it's like teaching hogs to sing: it wastes your time and only frustrates the hog" *(Red on*
stereotypes. And, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Highway did receive some criticism along these lines when *Dry Lips* was first produced. He addresses these concerns in the epigraph to the published version of the play, "before the healing can take place, the poison must first be exposed"(ii). In *Dry Lips* Highway depicts the effects of colonial poisons on First Nations' men. One of the main questions this play asks, is how will the men catch up to the women, particularly in terms of living responsibly? Halfway through the first act, Highway has presented three possibilities. Simon Starblanket has been given a pow wow bustle. Zachary Jeremiah Keechigeesik wants to start a bakery. Big Joey wants to start a radio station.

While pow wow regalia, in whole or in part, is often used as an easy signal of "Indian", Highway uses the bustles in *Dry Lips* for their range of resonant cultural and traditional meanings. Furthermore, Highway makes it clear that there is work to be done in order to 'use' a bustle; there are songs, dances, and protocols that a man would need to learn.

The proposition that First Nations' men have significant work to do is in direct contrast to both the women portrayed in *The Rez Sisters* and the women referred to *Dry Lips*. The fact that the women are moving is

*Red 21). In terms of the dangers involved in this pedagogical strategy, see YoungMan's*
an explicit worry that the men in *Dry Lips* discuss and, in Big Joey's case, is his excuse for lethal amounts of rage. Zachary and Big Joey are fighting over whose project should get funding from their Band. The women, meanwhile, are, along with "all the Indian women in Ontario's playing hockey now" (88). Indian women have, using their own initiative, as in *The Rez Sisters*, started their own teams and a provincial hockey league (88). It is also important to note that each of the three possibilities the men are involved in have also come about as a direct result of women's initiatives. Big Joey has linked his radio station proposal to the success of the women's hockey team. A key component of his proposal is broadcasting their hockey games (21). Gazelle Nataways has given Zachary the recipe for her very popular "bannock apple pie," and it will be the foundation for his bakery's success (20). Simon Starblanket has received the bustle from Patsy Pegahmagahbow and Rosie Kakapetum. The women of this community are moving in several significant directions. For the purposes of this analysis I will be focusing on Simon who is involved in or linked to many of these initiatives.

While the whole of the play may be Zachary's dream (or nightmare), the big questions that Highway is posing within the play are

"Token and Taboo".
often articulated by or represented in Simon's life and character. Early in the play, Simon is identified as being different from the rest of the men,

    BIG JOEY. You know, Zach, you and me, we work for the same cause, don't we?

    ZACHARY. Never said otherwise.

    BIG JOEY. We work for the betterment and the advancement of this community, don't we? And seeing as we're about the only two guys in this whole hell-hole who's got the get-up-and-go to do something...

    ZACHARY. That's not exactly true, Joe. Take a look at Simon Starblanket (22)

Big Joey and Zachary are in competition for "economic development" funds. While both of these men have good ideas, the limited funds supplied to bands (that bands then distribute) direct the tensions over this and other funds internally or between band members rather than externally to the under-resourcing of such initiatives.\textsuperscript{14}

This bit of dialogue also points to the assumed tension between economic development and cultural revival, wherein one is assumed to be

\textsuperscript{14} This is a similar consequence to that described in \textit{Education}. 
the opposite of and to exclude the other. Economic development is taken to represent modernization whereas cultural revival means a return to 'pre-history'. The problem here is the false presumption that only one of these moves can be achieved. It seems as if Big Joey cannot recognize that Simon's traditional efforts are even efforts at all. Simon, however, is implicated and involved in both the economic and the cultural initiatives.

Simon and Simon's relationships reflect a number of the conflicts and tensions within First Nations communities. For example, while Simon seems to be the only man in the play ever to have had paid employment, he is both Zachary's source of 'expertise' on how to run a bakery and will be the first employee. Zachary also wants Simon to retrieve the underwear Zachary left behind at Big Joey's house, whereas Simon's main concerns are with learning how to use the bustle and how to carry out whatever the directions are given to him in his dream (44-45). Simon wants to bring the men's traditions and culture back to the community.

Simon is already known to be working towards this goal. When Pierre St. Pierre explains why he has been chosen to be the new referee for the women's hockey games, he says it is because "The referee here's too damn perschnickety [sic]. That drum-bangin' young whipperschnapper, Simon Starblanket" (31). The drum that Simon is
banging could be a pow wow drum, given the link between pow wow and Simon's bustle. This does not mean that Simon is literally drumming during the hockey games. Rather "drum-bangin" is intended to refer to pow wow and traditional culture in general. His "perschnicketyness" - Simon's insistence on following rules to the letter - could also refer to the necessary rigour in traditional ways.

The bustles themselves make their first appearance shortly after this, with the smaller one at stage level and the larger one on the upper level (38). After they have played with each other, we see that Simon is holding the smaller one and Nanabush/Patsy has the larger one. Simon is very intent on his dancing and chanting, so intent that he cannot hear the emerging sound of Zachary's harmonica, and when Simon finally does hear Zachary's voice, he tries to ignore it (39). Throughout the play, Simon will introduce and maintain his drumbeats and chanting despite whatever other chaos may be going on.

Zachary is trying to get Simon to help him write the business plan for the bakery. Simon's supposed business and commercial baking expertise comes from his having been a dishwasher in a small Italian family bakery. This narrow ground is further undercut when Simon has no paper for Zachary to write on. Simon only has the dance bustle (41). The
ensuing dialogue is actually dual monologues about their individual goals and dreams. These speeches seem to be brought about through the influence of Nanabush/Patsy. While Zachary lists and describes each of the baked goods he hopes to make, Simon explains what he understands so far about the bustle and its meanings.

SIMON. ...like she [Patsy] made this for me, eh? ... She and her stepmother, Rosie Kakapetum, back in September, after my mother's funeral. (42)

The timing of the gift is important. Simon had been part of the drinking crowd on the reserve, and his mother's passing would, no doubt, have tested his resolve to stay sober. Patsy and Rosie could have given him the bustle as reminder and encouragement to continue on the traditional path, despite his grief. In most First Nations' beliefs, grieving is one of the ways in which loved ones who have passed on are honoured. This grieving however has its own pitfalls and must be limited (as Herod tells Harley in *The Grass Dancer*). Patsy and Rosie are trying to give Simon another way to show his respect for his mother's life and to deal with his grief, a way that could prevent him from sliding back into the alcoholic abyss.
Furthermore, they give him one bustle, the one bustle that the
Traditional Men Dancers would wear. One bustle tells those who
understand the different dance styles that Patsy and Rosie are
encouraging Simon to become a Men's Traditional Dancer.\textsuperscript{16} During Grand
Entry, when the Emcees describe some of the significance of each style,
the Traditional Men Dancers are most often described as the protectors
and defenders of the Nations. Emcees often say that the dancers'
movements depict those of hunters or scouts - looking for game or
watching for dangers. They are also the steady ones, walking tall and
carrying their responsibilities with strength and pride. Patsy and Rosie can
be understood as encouraging Simon to take on this kind of First Nations'
manhood.

While Simon understands some of this, he is also aware that there
is more to the traditional ways than this one dance style, that there are
many components to the process of First Nations' men picking up their
traditional responsibilities. He says later in this scene, "the drum has to
come back...the medicine, the power" (43). However, he also makes a
romantic and essentialist assumption about himself and his ability to use

\textsuperscript{15} The phrase "passed on" is not, in a First Nations' use of English, a euphemism. Rather
it expresses the belief the person has passed on to the Spirit World.
the bustle. He expects the dancing to come naturally to him, "like, if this...dance didn't come to me real natural, like from deep inside of me, then I was gonna burn it...Cuz then... it doesn't mean anything real to me, does it? Like it's false" (42). Simon is setting himself up to fail when he relies on essentialism to give him what he needs to dance well. The drum and the resonance of drumbeats with heartbeats are real. So the inspiration to dance is real and that is what would come from deep inside of him. The problem, what is false in this, is Simon's assumption that, just because he is an Indian man, actually dancing this particular style will come smoothly and "naturally" to him and with no effort.

When I teach this play, I use a portion of the FSIN 50th Anniversary Pow Wow video to illustrate this fallacy. For this purpose, I show the Junior Boy's exhibition song. Junior Boys are from seven to fourteen years old. Some of them are very good. Some of them are obviously still learning. The dance style does not, then, come naturally to any of them. There is work to be done in acquiring this or any of the other skills that Simon lists. Even though Simon can say "We've got to learn to dance again", it is not clear - given his previous comment - that he will allow himself this learning opportunity (43, emphasis added). Perhaps what

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16. The other two common men's styles would be, of course, grass dance - which has no
Simon needs to do is practise and allow himself to make and learn from his mistakes. Simon does appear to be practising throughout much of the play.

Simon is also troubled by two dreams. In his monologue, he tells Zachary about both of them. One is "where Indian people are dropping off like flies," and the other is about a baby trapped in a rock (42, 44-45). In the latter dream, an eagle with three women's faces tells him that "my grandchild is crying to hear the drum again" (45). Too many Indian people are dying too soon, too many children are being left alone, trapped in hard lives, and the pow wow drum sounds can be heard as a call to return to the strength of the First Nations' ways to resolve many of these crises. Yet, out of all of this, Zachary only picks up on the need to help the people. He tries to convince Simon that getting Zachary's shorts back would be "a good chance for you to do something for your people" (45). If Zachary's wife, Hera, finds out that he has had sex with Gazelle, Hera will not help him get the bakery started and that economic opportunity will be lost. Simon, however, does not even seem to hear Zachary as Simon is still thinking about the eagle dream: "I'm the one who has to bring the drum back" (45).

bustle - and the fancy bustle style - which has two bustles.
It is also important to note that included in the elements of traditional life are good family lives. Another crucial goal for Simon is that he marry Patsy, who is pregnant with their child, and for them to be a family. While at this time, Simon is trying to learn to dance, his goal is much more than individual: "And me and Patsy and our baby and this Nanabush character, we're gonna be dancing up and down Wasaychigan Hill like nobody's business" (52). He will use pow wow dance styles as a means of bringing together his family, the spirits and will spread these throughout the community.

Simon is aware that it will not be possible to accomplish all of this from within the Wasychigan community. For example, the "Best Man" that Simon can find for his wedding, is the severely Fetal Alcohol Syndrome damaged, Dickie Bird. At the hockey game, Simon explains to Dickie Bird that Dickie's qualification to be Best Man is because Dickie Bird's grandfather had been an important and powerful medicine man until the reserve priest spoke against him (65). Simon will have Dickie Bird as his Best Man in order to show Simon's respect for Nicotine Lacroix. The on-going denigration of the community's medicine people means that Simon

17. This strategy, of using a grandson to represent a long gone grandfather, is likely one that could only work in a First Nation's community where genealogy is a constant topic in conversation and not an individual hobby.
and Patsy are planning to visit Sioux territory in order to retrieve some of what their own community has lost. The specific references are in the form of "we're gonna dance with the Rosebud Sioux" (66).

At this point, there are influences at work from several First Nations' cultures. In the "Production Notes" for The Rez Sisters Highway says:

Both Cree and Ojibway are used freely in this text for the reasons that these two languages, belonging to the same linguistic family, are very similar and that the fictional reserve of Wasaychigan Hill has a mixture of both Cree and Ojibway residents. (Xl)

While Wasaychigan Hill has retained, in some respects, their languages, it is apparent, from Simon's contentions, that other aspects of their cultures, particularly the men's roles and responsibilities, have been lost. "Other aspects" does not mean all of the traditional knowledge has been lost. Rosie is described as a medicine woman with midwifery skills. She ends up assisting in the delivery of Spooky's daughter (122-123). Still the question remains, why go to the Sioux to regain pow wow, especially in a community which already has two First Nations' traditions to draw from.
My suggestion would be that Highway is preparing for and setting up dramatic tension between Big Joey’s forthcoming revelations about the decimation of his sense of self during the 1973 Stand Off at Wounded Knee and Simon’s proposal to go to the same location to regain a sense of Indian manhood. Highway may also suggesting that political activism, without the cultural grounding represented in this play through the pow wow references, is risky as the forces aligned against First Nations are formidable. I would also suggest that at the time the play was being written, the Stand Off at Wounded Knee had become an iconographic event for First Nations' peoples. As Moses said, earlier in this chapter, dramatists often use the easily recognizable to quick start their stories (124). Hence Highway’s location, for both Big Joey and Simon, of the source for loss and gain, activism and culture, politics and pow wow, in Sioux territory. While this may not fully redress concerns with the apparent merging of various First Nations’ ways in the play, Emcees do frequently describe this type of borrowing from or learning between First Nations and, I suggested earlier, the Sioux do seem to have been a central conduit for the diffusion of pow wow ways. Furthermore, I would also remember Longboat’s contention that such adopting and integrating ways learned from other Nations was a historical practice (Elton 77).
Further tensions are demonstrated by Dickie Bird as he holds Spooky's crucifix throughout this speech, he "watches, fascinated, particularly by the bustle Simon holds up in the air" (66). During the game, at which all the men are present and demonstrating their particular obsessions, Simon is chanting for Patsy and still stomping the floor to pow wow rhythms. When the game degenerates into a fight amongst the Wasy Wailers and the puck gets lost in Gazelle's breasts, all the men scream, including the previously mute Dickie Bird who "freaks out... breaking into a grotesque, fractured version of a Cree chant" (75). While Dickie Bird has finally spoken and his speech is in the form of a chant, he has done so out of terror and possibly horror, rather than belief or acceptance of the traditional ways. Act One closes with a frozen pose where Dickie Bird has collapsed between Simon holding the bustle and Spooky holding the crucifix. Dickie Bird's collapse between the bustle and the cross signifies the continuation of the induced dysfunctions and, hence, tensions in the community. These are the same tensions responsible for the damage to Dickie Bird. While there appears to be some breakthrough for Dickie Bird, more significantly, he is overwhelmed.
This symbolism is repeated as Act Two opens with Dickie Bird holding the crucifix but trying to chant like Simon (79). That it is Dickie Bird who collapses between these two belief systems, likely in an attempt to deal with his physical and emotional collapse at the hockey game, may be suggesting that only a crazy man would try to walk both of these divergent paths at the same time. In the years since the play was first produced, with increasing numbers of First Nations' peoples participating in their own ceremonies, many of the Christian churches have shifted strategies and moved to embrace bits and pieces of First Nations' cultures. Allowing First Nations' drums into the churches, substituting sweetgrass for incense, and other 'symbolic' choices have been employed in attempts to stem the loss of previously faithful First Nations' church goers. Still, traditional song prayers and the crucifix, Indian ways or White ways, are at the centre of many of the big questions in Act Two. The problems which colonialism has created for First Nations' people are also illustrated in the on-going memory and re-enactment of Dickie Bird's birth. The answers, the solutions, come only as specific situations arise.

The birth theme is also extremely important in Act 2. The men finally confront their responsibilities for Dickie Bird's condition, and the birth of Spooky's first child is imminent. Simon disrupts the beginning of
the memory, the re-enactment of Dickie Bird's birth, with a message from Rosie Kakapetum. Rosie will come and help Lalala give birth, rather than Lalala going to the hospital in Sudbury (88). The offer starts an argument about where Indian babies should be born - on the reserve with a First Nations' midwife or in the city, in a hospital "like any good Christian boy" (88-89).

Zachary and Pierre, in this argument, join Simon in trying to persuade Spooky that his child will be better off starting life in a good Indian way. Spooky reintroduces the example of Dickie Bird as evidence that the old medicine ways have no real power. Simon rebuts this with the problem that their own traditional ways have been too denigrated - "Because the medical establishment and the church establishment and people like you, Spooky Lacroix, have effectively put an end to [Rosie Kakapetum's] usefulness and the usefulness of people like her everywhere" (90). He also points out that Christianity has not been able to fix Dickie Bird either. As the argument stalemates, Pierre returns to the story of Dickie Bird's birth in the bar.

Simon becomes infuriated with the quibbling over small details; "The fact of the matter is, it never should have happened, that kind of
thing should never be allowed to happen" (94). As none of the men have any response to this, Simon launches into his second major speech of the play,

SIMON. You guys have given up, haven't you? You and your generation. You gave up a long time ago. Scared shitless to face up to the fact it's finally happening, that women are taking power back into their hands, that it was always them—not you, not men, who had the power, the power to give life, the power to keep it. Now you'd rather turn your back on the whole thing and pretend to laugh. (94)

Simon articulates a common First Nations' understanding of women. Again, during Grand Entry, the first category of women to enter the dance arena, is almost always the Women's Golden Age Traditional Dancers. They are typically introduced in much the same terms that Simon uses, as the ones who give life to the Nations as mothers and grandmothers. As such, any and all women are owed this respect.

Although it is outside the scope of this analysis, the respect due to all women is likely one of the reasons why Nanabush, in this play,

18. For a more detailed analysis of the consequences of hospital births for Indian babies, see Acoose Iskwewak 20-23.
becomes different women. Golden Age women are also praised for being the ones largely responsible for having maintained many of the traditional ways. Thus, across the introductions for the Traditional Men and the Traditional Women both of those genders are recognized for their power and contributions. Simon is accusing these men of having abdicated their power, ignored their roles and responsibilities, and stopped making any contributions to the life of the community or Nation. All they do is laugh at those who do try.

In the next scene, Dickie Bird is trying to resolve a number of the contradictions in his life. This scene takes place on the upper level, in the dream or spirit world. He is speaking, in Cree, with his mother. In this scene the character of Dickie's mother is the combined Nanabush/Black Lady Halked (95-97). Although she is getting ready to go out, presumably to yet another bar, she speaks against his interest in good Indian medicine and promotes Christian beliefs. Her avoidance of any real answers to his questions forces him to finally come to the realization that "Nipapa ana...Big Joey...("My father is...Big Joey.")" (97). Devastated that he has been lied to and that the taunts he has endured about being a "bastard" are true, Dickie Bird returns to the lower stage level.
Nanabush/Patsy finds him and tries to help him, in typically mothering ways, putting warmer clothes on him, offering to talk with him and suggesting he come and get something to eat. But, before they can go to her house, Dickie Bird will have to give up the crucifix. Her attempt to take away the crucifix triggers an extreme response from Dickie Bird that ends in him raping Nanabush/Patsy with the cross. Big Joey and Creature see this happening, but Big Joey stops Creature from going to help her. After Nanabush/Patsy and Creature have fled, Big Joey goes to Dickie Bird. Big Joey is able to take the crucifix away, comforting Dickie Bird and acknowledging that he is indeed his father. Dickie Bird can give up the symbol of the Father God once he has his 'real' father. The horrendous damage done to women and mothers - the pregnant Patsy, as well as to Nanabush and the Spirit World - remains.

Simon is, of course, enraged by this violence. All of the ways he has upheld thus far are overwhelmed by his need to strike back with violence and inflict his own damage on Dickie Bird. He even goes to Pierre's house, gun in hand, to get a bottle and says he is going to kill Dickie Bird. Rather than help Simon, Pierre and Creature go to warn Dickie Bird. Simon next appears, drunk, shooting off his gun, at the scene of the crime. He calls for the Tricksters to come back. However, he is calling for them as men:
"we need him" (110). Nanbush/Patsy's voice reminds Simon that the Tricksters are also "her". Simon is frustrated that he cannot say what he wants and means in English,

SIMON. ...weetha ("him/her" - i.e., no gender)... Christ! What is it? Him? Her? Stupid fucking language, fuck you, da Englesa. Me no speakum no more da goodie Englesa, in Cree we say "weetha," not "him" or "her" Nanabush, come back! (110-111)

Drunk or sober, English seems unable to communicate either the pain, rage and despair that Simon is feeling or, more importantly, the cultural understandings. Simon thinks English is unable to help him speak to the Spirits. Translations into English are presented as distorting the original meanings too much. There is further evidence of Simon's struggle with English in the dialogue between Simon and Nanbush/Patsy. The English words slide away from what Simon is trying to ask for, help from Nanbush and Weesageechak, and become the children's song "this way and that way" (111). His drunken ramble and despair return him to the gender issue of how to say that Nanabush is all and none of the particular genders.

The ramble continues until he can finally see Nanabush/Patsy (112-113). Nanabush/Patsy, while acknowledging her rape, "lifts her skirt
and displays the blood stain on her panties", encourages Simon to
dance, she takes off the prosthetic that is her huge bum and
holds it in one arm - she is holding her bum as a Traditional Men
Dancer would hold his shield (113). She then "holds an eagle feather
up in the air, ready to dance" (113). This gesture is one that all
dancers who carry an eagle feather or whole fan would do. She is, then,
using these aspects of various dance styles to demonstrate the gender
inclusiveness of the Tricksters. Simon does join her, stomping, singing,
and dancing. They promise each other that they will to go to South
Dakota and "eenpaysagee-itan ("I love you to death")" (114).

At this point, Zachary appears, carrying the apple pie he has just
finished making. Zachary offers Simon some pie as long as Simon will give
him the gun. As Highway is equally adept at language play in Cree and
English, Zachary's apple pie is also likely meant to suggest another level
of gender bending of sayings about "Mom and apple pie." It could also be
meant to recall Patsy's attempt to take away the crucifix by offering
Dickie Bird food. Again, this strategy is not enough to prevent a disaster.
Nanbush/Patsy comes down to stage level holding "Simon's dance
bustle in front of her, as in a ceremony" (115). As they have just
promised to love each to death, her pose is likely a parody of the
Christian wedding ceremony with the bustle taking the place of a bride's bouquet. She then hides Simon behind the bustle where he drops the rifle. Dropping the rifle causes it to accidentally go off, shooting Simon in the stomach (115). As he dies, Simon promises that he and Patsy will "come over" later for the pie (116).

This tragedy finally moves Zachary to really see the larger issues, and in very similar terms to the ones Simon had been using:

ZACHARY. What's happening? What's become of this place? What's happening to this place? What's happening to these people? My people. He didn't have to die...this kind of living has got to stop.

(116)

Zachary continues this speech by cursing the Christian God. He goes to Big Joey's to confront the rest of the men but especially Big Joey, in terms very like those that Simon would have used. Zachary seems to have picked up the responsibilities that Simon had been carrying: "Simon Starblanket was on his way to South Dakota where he could have learned a few things...Why did you let him [Dickie Bird] do it?" (118-120). Simon could have retrieved what Zachary now recognizes as important traditions that the men of Wasy have lost.
The reasons Big Joey let Dickie Bird rape Patsy are also located in South Dakota. Big Joey lost himself there, lost his sense of strong Indian manhood during the Standoff at Wounded Knee:

BIG JOEY. The FBI. They beat us to the ground. Again and again and again. Ever since that spring, I've had these dreams where blood is spillin' from my groin, nothin' there but blood and emptiness. It's like...I lost myself. So when I saw this baby comin' out of Caroline, Black Lady...I freaked out. I don't know what I did...and I knew it was mine... (120)

While many understand the 1973 Standoff at Wounded Knee as the beginning of a strong political and cultural resurgence - especially American First Nations' people - Big Joey felt only defeat and emasculation (see Smith and Warrior for example). Highway has divided this resurgence between Simon and Big Joey, perhaps to demonstrate that both are necessary. With no way to retaliate against the actual sources, he turns his pain and rage against reachable targets19, the women of his community:

19. I would also note that this is similar to Anna Thunder's reaction in *The Grass Dancer.*
BIG JOEY. Because I hate them! I hate them fuckin' bitches. Because they - our own women - took the fuckin' power away from us faster than the FBI ever did. (120)

Because he feels emasculated and unable to be a man, he will not help the women who can still carry out important aspects of their traditional roles and give life. He does nothing to protect either the pregnant Caroline or his son and nothing to protect the pregnant Patsy from his son. He uses one Eucrocentric style of logic to reason this out, stating his belief that for women to have power men must lose power. In many First Nations' philosophies, as previously identified, working towards balance and empowerment for all is the process and expectation. Yet even Spooky, the voice of Christianity, knows that the women "have always had it" (120). In saying this, Spooky also acknowledges that the men, as Simon has been telling them, must seek out and re-learn their traditional ways. They should be helping each other with this, as Zachary does when he speaks softly to Big Joey at the end of this scene.

While the argument has raged on, Simon has picked himself up and passed on to the upper level. The resolutions begin on the Spirit World stage level where Simon is once again chanting the songs. He is finally "wearing his powwow bustle" and not just holding it (120). Unlike his
song has said, however, he is not dancing in South Dakota with the Sioux but "dancing in the moon" (120). As well, it is the women who have dealt with the problems of Zachary's missing undershorts and the missing puck. Gazelle returned the undershorts to Hera, who then beats up Gazelle so badly that the missing puck finally pops out of her breasts (121). Lalala does not have her baby in the hospital, and Rosie does help her deliver the child (123). The air ambulance was busy taking Patsy to the hospital, where she is recuperating (123). Big Joey is broadcasting and announcing another women's hockey game; Pierre is refereeing; the rest of the men just watch.

Part way through the game, Zachary, in his baker's clothes, starts to undress and move backwards towards a couch - the same place he was at the beginning of the play, "except that this time, it will be his own couch" (124). This time, Zachary wakes up on his own couch with Hera and their baby girl. The women are not playing hockey, yet, and there is nothing in the closing scene to suggest that the bakery is a real plan. Zachary and Hera speak mostly Cree to each other, with Hera correcting his pronunciation. Again I would see this as suggesting that simply speaking the First Nations' languages, while important, will not be the whole solution to the problems dramatized in the play. The only
resolutions the closing scene offers, given that the specific problems in
the dream do not seem be happening, are the beauty of the family and
soundscape of Hera's Nanabush laugh, blending with the harmonica and
becoming the baby's laugh.

Conclusions

Neither Highway nor Taylor - in Education - offer easy endings.
Readers and audiences are, probably in accordance with First Nations'
story telling expectations, left to do their own thinking about the stories
and to draw their own conclusions about what could or should happen
next. In their dramatic depictions of the contemporary struggles in First
Nations' lives, both playwrights suggest pow wow as a readily available,
thriving route out of the colonial depredations. Both demonstrate that
pow wow, while an important celebration, can offer much more than most
multi-cultural forms of song and dance, in terms of regaining lost ground
and knowledge. Furthermore, they each use gender to ground their
cultural references. In Education, Present is a women's Fancy Shawl
dancer, suggesting that in the present, women have been central in both
continuing the cultures and in taking up post-secondary educational
opportunities. Highway has also gendered the presence of First Nations'
culture as female. In Dry Lips, the Nanabush character is a number of
women and Rosie Kakapetum has clearly and usefully continued to carry important aspects of the community's cultures. Patsy/Nanabush is raped but she survives. It is the men of *Dry Lips* who must pick up themselves, each other and their culture. And Simon's messages about dancing and the drums reference a range of traditional roles and responsibilities for these and other First Nations' men. Although each of the playwrights uses solitary or single dancers as the carriers of this message, both are clear that it is only in the full context of pow wow that these learning opportunities exist.
Inciting Responsibility: The Dancing Voices of First Nations' Women in Poetry

This last chapter of analysis takes poetry as its focus. While the rhythms of poetry and dance seem like an obvious connection, this chapter will also draw in explications of historical and legal allusions, particularly those that tend be referenced at or from pow wows. These interpretations will also test my contention that what can be learned at and from pow wow can be used as critical concepts beyond explicit pow wow references. These poems evoke a variety of dance forms and styles, some First Nations' and some not. Of the First Nations' dance styles, only some of these are from pow wow. For these poems, it is the voices in these poems that dance, not just in their rhythm but in their assertions of these life ways.

I will begin with a brief overview of First Nations' poetry. I will then discuss specific poems: Joy Harjo's "Strange Fruit" (the source of the epigraph for The Grass Dancer), Beth Cuthand's frequently taught "Post-Oka Kinda Woman", Louise Halfe's "Ghost Dance", Patricia Monture-Angus' "ohkwa:ri ta:re tenhanonniyahkwe", and Annharte's "Saskatchewan Indians Were Dancing." My interpretation of each of the poems will follow the typical practice of a line by line analysis.
While the work of Harjo, Cuthand and Halfe is, as I suggested, frequently taught and spoken about at conferences, with the exception of Harjo, there is surprising little literary criticism available in print on these important authors. There are book reviews of their work but almost no substantive engagement with their poems in the printed literary discourse. Monture-Angus, while a very important scholar and writer within her fields - and that work is frequently cited and engaged with - has only that one published poem. This is, therefore, the first literary criticism of that work. Therefore, the extant criticism will be discussed within each of the specific analyses.

On the other hand, poems about First Nations' women - as with other images and imaginings - have a long, if dubious, history, including works by such scurrilous personages in First Nations' histories as Duncan Campbell Scott. Yet, even those days, his poetry did not go unchallenged by the voice of First Nations' women. E. Pauline Johnson, writing in the same period as Scott, maintained that "My aim, my joy, my pride is to sing the glories of my own people" (quoted in Johnston 125). Furthermore, her 1893 essay, "A Strong Race Opinion on the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," attacked the literary images of Indian women in circulation at the time (reprinted in Johnston 110-111). Still, a lengthy
publishing gap is observable between Johnson and the poetic voices that began to appear in the late sixties and early seventies. I have no doubt that First Nations' women were writing during this silence, but little appears in print until the early seventies, when the Canadian federal government started direct funding to Native organizations (Lutz 171). As Ruffo explains, many of these organizations (as did DIA) moved to begin publishing newsletters and magazines that contained literary as well as political works ("Where the Voices").

In Lutz's thematic tracing of the trajectory of Canadian Native literature in the sixties, he lists Buffy Sainte Marie and Alanis Obomsawin as examples of the poetic voices that began to emerge. He does not, I would argue, fully recognizing their importance and likely influence. Sainte Marie was an especially public figure during this time, whose work and presence, no doubt, inspired many First Nations' women, as Johnson declared, to sing the glories of their people in many forms.

Perhaps it is another instance of the ideological constraints embedded within the English language that tends to limit discussions of influences largely to that of poetry on the page, thus excluding even contemporary references to Sainte Marie and other songwriters. Nor would I argue with suggestions that "poetry was and still is the most
predominant genre used by Native authors...[and that] this may have to do with structural affinities between poetry and certain ritualized forms of oratory" (Lutz 180). Womack too argues that "Native Americans have produced a tremendous body of first-rate poetry that often borrows from their own oral traditions of superlative song and chant and modifies the contemporary poetry scene through tribal vision" (223). Oral traditions are absolutely an ongoing influence and grounding, whether in poetry, drama, novels, and even First Nations' scholarly discourse.

Poets, however, have stated that the ground of the oral traditions, in both its contemporary and historical manifestations, is also where the delineation of their responsibilities is found. As Elizabeth Cook Lynn explains:

The idea that poets can speak for others, the idea that we can speak for the dispossessed, the weak, the voiceless, is indeed one of the great burdens of contemporary American poets today, for it is widely believed that we "speak for our tribes." The frank truth is that I don't know very many poets who say, "I speak for my people." It is not only unwise; it is probably impossible, and it is surely very arrogant. ("You May" 58)
First Nations' poets speak about their people and speak to their people but not for their people. She does identify as "the 'real' poets of our tribes, the men and women who sit at the drum and sing the old songs and create new ones....I have every confidence that they speak in our own language for the tribes" ("You May" 58). Again I would note that it would only be at pow wow that those of us from outside of First Nations' communities would have the opportunity to hear these real poets.

In terms of cultural awareness, even literary critics from with First Nations' communities know and accept that the particularities of each Nation's traditions are not universally understood. As Cranmer says, in reference to her discussion of Cuthand's "Horse Dance to Emerald Mountain," "Cree cultural specificity, of the Horse Dance ceremony, cannot necessarily be known, even by another First Nation (Kwakwaka'wakw) and literary critic" (131). While Cranmer's contention could support Womack's advocacy of "tribally specific literatures and critical approaches," it is equally clear that at least some do not take Womack's position as endorsing the exclusion of other approaches. Furthermore, in his poetry chapter that he asks, "How do we justify literary nationalism in relation to powerful pan-tribal movements?" (225). His response is that "Harjo's Creek grounding strengthens her pan-tribal
vision...[and that] tribal specificity and pan-tribalism might corroborate each other" (226). As I argued in the opening sections of this work, powwow has some aspects that are tribally specific and some that are intertribal. Powwow also offers some opportunity to hear those whom Cook Lynn calls "the real poets," as well as to gain insights towards cultural specificities and intertribal understandings of First Nations' ways.

While each of the poems to be discussed, contains references or parallels to dancing in various forms and styles, not all of these are powwow or even First Nations' styles. Still it is my contention that understanding the context of the dance references can serve to move readers more deeply into the dense layers of meaning in these poems. In each of these poems, the writers utilize lessons learned about or from First Nations' dance to demonstrate the traditional principals that underlie the particular responsibilities they raise. Furthermore, they invoke a range of responsibilities, but most especially those involved in human relationships.

All the poets to be discussed are women. There is a long tradition within First Nations' literatures, as early as, for example, E. Pauline Johnson, of women writing poems which are clearly rooted in their respective cultural ways, while also speaking to contemporary political
realities. It is that tradition that I want to honor here. This is not to say that there are not or have not been important works by First Nations' men. Rather, my choice to focus on the poems of First Nations' women is another part of my effort to raise their voices and highlight their own analyses, be these in prose or poetry.

Joy Harjo's "Strange Fruit"

I came to Harjo's "Strange Fruit" through my reading of The Grass Dancer and Power's use of the lines "Shush, we have too many stories to carry on our backs like houses" as the epigraph to her novel. This poem does not contain any pow wow references nor do I read it as a pow wow poem. This "Strange Fruit" depicts the lynching fears and death of an African-American woman. The types of dancing which is referenced in the poem are lynching - also known as the dance of death - and parallel historical begging dances - as sometimes done by African-American and sometimes First Nations' people. Ku Klux Klan activities on Prairie First Nations' reserves are another link between the particular subject of this poem and histories of this territory. I also include this poem as it was important and evocative enough to Power for her to have quoted from it for the epigraph to The Grass Dancer. Furthermore, "Strange Fruit"
allows to me to discuss the importance of body, movement and safe space that I see in pow wow but has equally significance resonance elsewhere.

While I did not find any criticism that specifically deals with this particular poem, some readings of Harjo's other works need to be noted. Womack's commentary on "Autobiography" for example, could apply equally well to the above-cited lines about stories. "Healthy people survive through storytelling, but sometimes the pain is so great that people bury themselves in silence and internalized anger" (237). Telling such untold stories, of oppression and even of the violence, has long been central to Harjo's poetic ethos. True, as well, comments that "Beginning with In Mad Love and War [the book in which "Strange Fruit" appears], her work has suggested new strength, insight and direction. Although it [also] continues to reflect anger, regret, and anguish over what she and the people she identifies with have endured" (2). Harjo's poem, a Creek woman's memorializing of the lynching death of an African-American woman, also "encourages those engaged with [Native American texts] to recognize and negotiate startling and uncomfortable cultural paradigms or belief systems" (Andrews 204). Harjo's "Strange Fruit" reflects White racism, Black American resistance and suffering within an understanding
that even, or maybe especially, the most painful stories must be told. As Robert Johnson notes, Harjo's poems are "usually born of some seed emotion that strikes profound associative chords" (20). "Strange Fruit" can stand as an example of associations between First Nations' and African-American experiences.

As I said in the chapter on *The Grass Dancer*, it has long been a part of my teaching strategy for the novel to engage students in a discussion of what they think the epigraph might mean.¹ Lately I have been following up on that discussion by giving students both Harjo's "Strange Fruit", in its entirety, and the lyrics to the song made famous by Billie Holiday. I do emphasize that this sort of tracing back, from epigraph to full source and from that source to its inspiration, is not necessarily the kind of literary research that I would expect undergraduates to do. I have found, however, that students, at least here, where the possibility to connect these allusions to Prairie First Nations' histories exists, become interested in the sorts of intertextual analyses that I will be discussing.

¹ I will also confess that I have frequently been gratified to learn, from essay and examination comments, that students have learned from this practice to pay attention to epigraphs rather than simply diving into the beginning of the main text.
Harjo's poem also reinforces Thomas King's point that in *Green Grass, Running Water*:

> I wanted to create this sort of world in which all of these things [fictional characters, historical personages, actual events] come together in a particular space and time, where they could all co-exist as they do in our brains....It is a crazy world, but for me it also has an awful sense of reality to it. These people are not dead. They are very much alive, and they are in positions of power. If we lost track of that we are in a lot of danger.

(Interview in Weaver *That the People* 154.)

I take King's point to be that the influence of historical personages such as Duncan Campbell Scott and organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan reverberate through contemporary people even in terms of agreement with their thinking and practices. As such, the danger, the evil in historical events lives on. Nor is the practice of lynching or other arbitrary killings of racialized peoples comfortably in the past. The power of this kind of racist thinking and practice has continued. Harjo says,

> I was out in the early evening, ...

> How quickly I smelled evil, then saw the hooded sheets ride
up in the not yet darkness, in the dusk carrying the moon, in the
dust behind
my tracks. Last night there were crosses burning in my dreams, and
the day
before a black cat stood in the middle of the road with a ghost
riding its
back. Something knocked on the window at midnight. My lover told
me:

*Shush, we have too many stories to carry on our backs like*
houses, we have
*struggled too long to let the monsters steal our sleep, sleep,*
go to sleep. (1-9)

The persona in Harjo's poem lives in all too recent times and yet is still
experiencing the terror of the Ku Klux Klan. Harjo wrote the poem,
published in 1990, for Jacqueline Peters, who was lynched in 1986. She
adopts the title of Holliday's famous 1939 recording of the song about
lynching, "Strange Fruit". While it has been almost twenty years since
Peters' death, it was only in June of 2005, that the man long known by
his community to be responsible for the lynching deaths of three Black
youths in the summer of 1964 is coming to trial. (AP "Defendant in civil
rights killings" 13) As King said above, much of these ugly histories are still powerful today.

Harjo's reference to "crosses burning" allows me to begin to link the poem to Prairie First Nations' histories. I admit I was stunned when, during a discussion of racism in my first year of teaching Native Studies, a Native student volunteered the story of looking out her bedroom window, as a child on the reserve, and watching a cross burn in a neighbour's yard.² At that time I had no idea that the Klan had even operated in Canada, let alone targeted First Nations' people and communities. Still, this disclosure links part of what the lover is saying, that there are indeed too many painful stories that have been kept within First Nations', as well as African-American houses, homes, families and communities. As Womack says about another of Harjo's poems, "Empathy and imagination are not always fun when 'blood is the undercurrent'. This is not the romantic stuff of ancestors calling from the hillsides, but a confrontation with the legacy of colonialism" (228). To remain fearful to the point of

². While that was the first time that I became aware of the depth of racism in Saskatchewan, it was not, even for that year, the last. All in all, that first year of teaching Introductory Native Studies, in Prince Albert, was shock after shock. I admit that I decided to move my First Nation's daughter and myself to Saskatchewan partly based on what now were clearly naive assumptions. I assumed that the proportionally larger First Nations' population here would mean my daughter could grow up in a social environment which would be more accepting and inclusive of Native peoples as the
being unable to sleep is to allow the human racist "monsters" to win their struggle to control and contain the reality of diversity.

The speaker, however, "never woke up" from the nightmare. How can she when it is on-going? The poem continues:

Dogs have been nipping at my heels since I learned to walk. I was taught to not dance for a rotten supper on the plates of my enemies. My mother taught me well. (10-12)

No one can wake up from a nightmare that begins so early in life, "since I learned to walk" and continues persistently. The dogs of racism (likely also those that assist the Klan in their hunting) have been after her since she could stand up and move on her own. To "stand up" or "get up" are also the terms which many First Nations' Elders use when speaking of the need for First Nations' people to regain their own knowledges, cultures and therefore pride and strength. The verb tense "have been" clearly indicates these dogs are still on the hunt. One way to deal with the province which gave Canada its main social democratic party (the CCF to the NDP) couldn't possibly be racist.

3. Harjo may also be commenting here on the 'well-intentioned' expectation - that people can and should 'get over' a racist 'incident.' As a White woman and one who regularly experiences racist backlash and witnesses almost daily examples of overt and covert racism, I find such sentiments serve to aggravate both my pain and the frustration. Even within my White skin privilege, I cannot 'get over' something that is not isolated, has happened before, is not over and will happen again and again and again.
constant harassment, which comes from standing up, is to bend, to comply with subservient expectations, to play along and do the expected song and dance routines. "Her mother," however, taught her not to do that.

It is also possible to understand this dance reference as suggesting parallels between African-American and First Nations' the historical "begging dances". Photographs of these First Nations' dances have been published both in Brock Silversides' *The Face Pullers* and Constance Backhouse's *Colour-Coded*. These dances took place in border towns during the early years of reserve living and were performed to earn money to buy the necessities of life, such as, of course, food or "a rotten supper on the plates of my enemies" (11).

I would also suggest the meaning of "mother" is layered. While her literal mother may well have taught her this, she would likely have also learned this lesson about not humbling and humiliating herself from her aunties and grandmothers, again strong figures in both communities. As is often noted, for peoples with an oral tradition, history is never older than two generations. I take this to mean that hearing histories directly from the people who lived it or know these stories from those who did live them, serves to make histories alive in a way that books (or maybe
lectures) do not. It therefore seems safe to assume that the lessons of history would be passed on and understood with great intensity.

The next verse, while it contains some typical excuses for lynching, also reinforces the humanity of the hunted,

I need a

song. I need a cigarette. I want to squeeze my baby's legs ... I want to dance under the full moon, or in the early morning on my lover's lap. (14-17)

Unlike the dance of death in hanging, or the begging dances, she wants to dance with joy, freedom, and sexuality, even though, as the next verse reminds readers, the danger is ever present. She has a scar "under her arm ... from tripping over a rope when I was small." (18) The same feet that tripped her also know "where to take me, to where sweet things grow" (11). Even inherent physical knowledge of what to do and where to go, however, is inadequate protection from the dangers of racism. The next line, "But not this tree" stands alone (22). The hanging tree with its strange fruit is not a place that she wants her wise feet to have to take her. It is not a place where sweet things grow.

Again she defends herself from the accusations that could lead to a lynching: thefts of food - "from your mother", interracial sex, burglary, or
attempts at dominance (23-25). She pleads with the Klansmen, "Please. Go away, hooded ghosts from hell on earth" (25). She only wants to be able to walk in the evening unmolested, to get home safely, to reach the house she can see "Down the road through the trees" where her lover and baby wait for her (26). Yet, "The moon hangs from the sky like a / swollen fruit", echoing the swollen fruit of a lynched body hanging from the deadly Southern trees (28-29). No matter what she does or does not do the threat of racist violence remains, hanging over her, ever present, like the moon in the night sky.

"My feet betray me, dance anyway from this killing tree" (30). This final line is another that stands alone. Her feet, in the opening, are involved in simple ordinary movements, "walking in the fields...walking to the store"(1-2). Her feet, like her mother's, that know how to take her to sweet places, in the end do not, cannot keep her safe. Indeed they betray her. Their ordinary movements carry her into danger. Despite living her life in a good way, despite her simple desires, despite her pleas, she is lynched and her feet dance from the "killing tree".

That the poem ends with the speaker's death would seem to contradict the survival impetus so often noted in Harjo's work. "Strange Fruit" does not pair "humour and irony with the lyric narrative to engage
with other minority women" that Andrews sees in Harjo's works (206). Nor does this poem seem to involve "the revelatory moment" where the speaker realizes "that dreaming and waking, natural and supernatural, are deeply intertwined, and moments of grace reveal these intricate relationships" (Womack 232). However, "what is significant...is the fact that [Peterson, in this case] comes alive again, in the artistic moment" (Womack 232) so that her story is told and heard. As Dickinson says, the call for "responsive listening", what I refer to aurality, requires critics to shift the ontology of meaning in literary criticism from its location in a fixed text to a larger social space that includes the text but also the discursive context (332). Harjo's "Strange Fruit," in its evocations of multiple cultural paradigms, many of them profoundly uncomfortable for critics, requires us to hear this story in its larger context of the on-going violence of racism in our social space. Its inclusion herein is as a reminder that while pow wow is often a safe space for First Nations' peoples, the surrounding social and physical territory is not necessarily so.

Beth Cuthand's "Post-Oka Kinda Woman"

Cuthand's "Post-Oka Kinda Woman" also claims her right to walk in the larger social space and have an ordinary life. This "sassy
sovereignist," however, a mere ten years later than the woman in "Strange Fruit", albeit in another colonial country, has a quite different attitude. The Post-Oka woman is not unaware of the kind of dangers that Harjo's "Strange Fruit" woman faces. Being a Post-Oka woman invokes the Haudenausonee women of Kahnestake who faced both the SQ and the Canadian Army, the forces of official governments that are, in many respects, a more frightening danger that those operating outside national laws. To be attacked by government security forces, as these women (and men) were, is to be clearly and publicly declared a danger. But the Post-Oka Kinda Woman takes pride in this declaration. She and the entire rhythm of the poem are "strutting", and not just out in a field, but "down your street" and in your face (1). She dances along the urban streets to a definite and defiant First Nations' beat.

This is one of those poems that demands to be read aloud in order to hear and understand the power of its rhythm. Cranmer too notes "the sheer energy of the rhythm" in Cuthand's work (130). Of particular importance is the second verse's list of terms and behaviours that she will no longer accept. Note the finger snapping rhythm in

She's done with victimization, reparation,

4. "Sassy sovereignist" is a term I devised to describe the woman in this poem.
Degradation, assimilation,

Devolution, coddled collusion,

The 'plight of the Native Peoples'. (3-6)

This rhythm serves to undercut the pitying and pitiful connotations in many of these terms while highlighting the need for First Nations' peoples to not just stand up but to dance.⁵ There is also, in addition to the unacceptable imposed conditions of, for example, assimilation or devolution, an equally strong condemnation of Native people who would use victimization or coddled collusion⁶ as excuses. Still the poem does not dwell in the realm of complaints. It celebrates this woman's ability to live comfortably and appropriately in both the White urban world and her First Nation's traditional world.

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⁵ When I read this poem in class, students much more easily understand the power and meaning of its rhythm but have also frequently commented that they expected me, at any moment during the reading, to break into a dance myself.

⁶ I was fortunate in 2004 to have the opportunity to teach with Beth Cuthand at the First Nations University of Canada (Saskatoon campus). This also meant I was able to have words with her, in the teasing sense, about the term "coddled collusion". It is a portion of the poem that usually requires some explanation. I interpret "coddled collusion" to mean the practice of rewarding (usually through monetary means) those First Nations' people who co-operate, especially with the Federal government, in endorsing or enacting Federally approved policies and desired outcomes. Despite the fact that I use safe contrasting examples to explain what coddled collusion means and no matter how strenuously I plead, particularly with Native students, not to use real names or examples when they are struggling to understand this term, as doing so puts us in danger of crossing into libel territory, inevitably someone does this. So I was able to warn Beth that, if I ever got in real trouble with this, she could expect me to drag her along. We both laughed. I should also report, she was pleased with my 'sassy sovereigntist' description of the Post-Oka Kinda Woman.
Both "Mackenzie Way [and] Riel Crescent belong to her," as do the conveniences of modern life "like software, [and] microwave ovens" (9-11). She does not, as Drew Hayden Taylor said in another context, need to be cooking over on outdoor fire or wood stove, in order to be living her culture (Funny You Don't 13-14). Nor do her children. Her daughter can wear Reeboks, she does not need to be constantly or only wearing moccasins. Her sons can help out in the kitchen. And "Her grandkids don't sass their Kohkum!/ No way" (12-15). While the whole family utilizes selected modern ways, they still behave in traditional ways, with the children, for example, respecting their grandmother.

Kohkom too "sweats on weekends, [and] colors her hair," meaning she regularly attends First Nations' ceremonies but does not need to be 'gray-haired' to be a traditional grandmother (17). And oh, how the Post Oka Kinda Woman dances through her life! She "Two steps Tuesdays" - goes country dancing; she "Round dances Wednesdays" - another First Nations' dance and often ceremonial event; and "Twelve steps when she needs it" (19-21). With the latter, she still takes care of her psychological self. The pun on Twelve Step programs as a dance is a wonderfully funny follow-through to the terms the Post Oka Kinda Woman rejected in the opening of the poem. As with many Native people, the
earlier list of harsh, imposed, colonial conditions resulted in some kind of addiction, hence a Twelve Step AA style program, but that is mostly behind her now.

She herself, however, is not behind anyone. A First Nations' traditional woman, she declares, does not walk "one step behind her man" (23). That is a convenient myth?, she neither wants nor needs "that shit ... treat her right" (24-26). The Post-Oka Kinda Woman asserts standards of thinking and behaviour for First Nations' peoples, for her family, for herself and for any man who wants to be part of her life. So what does she expect from the settler peoples in her territory and life?

For this group, she begins with a very immediate 'problem' - academics. "Talk to her of post-modern deconstructivism / She'll say 'What took you so long?'" (28). The Post-Oka Kinda Woman is no "dumb Indian". Nor is she intimidated by the patronizing tone. Not only is she not buffaloed by stratospheric flights of academic jargon, but she also understands and deconstructs the jargon with her response. She asks, What took (possibly White Male) academics so long to acknowledge diversity in experiences and world views when these were right in front in

7For more on this see, Rhonda Johnson et al, Rupert Ross (Returning) or Monture-Angus ("Organizing Against Oppression") .
them the whole time? Mushy yet still arrogant liberalism, likely too little, too late, is no cause for her congratulations.

Similarly, she will not be excited or even grateful that long outstanding First Nations' land claims are moving towards being settled. Again, these too are often insufficient: "she'd rather leave / her kids with a struggle than a bad settlement" (31-32). Note the line break here. She would rather leave, walk away from the procedures than leave (the repetition is implied) her kids with a settlement that will cause hardship for them and the future generations. She knows that it is better that the struggle for recognition of a full and appropriate set of First Nations' rights continues than there be a quick influx, of a too soon gone, cash settlement. The idea that she is referring to cash payouts is supported by her comment in the next section.

What does she think of Indian [Self-] Government? "Show her cold hard cash" (32-33). In other words, rather than proposing some nice philosophical, yet financially [and within Canadian law] unfeasible way for First Nations to take responsibility for themselves, show her how this will work in terms of the real concrete dollars. Money is important to resolving these problems, but money alone will not fix them.
I imagine that her final conversation with a settler person takes place after a poetry reading. "Tell her you've never talked to real live 'Indian' / She'll say: 'Isn't that special!'" (34-35). Her response suggests that this scenario is not one the Post-Oka Kinda Woman has wholly volunteered for. Yet, as a poet, doing public readings is an important way to promote her work, as First Nations' women poets since E. Pauline Johnson have known. Ironically, the "real live Indian" type of comment would have been familiar to E. Pauline Johnson. While Johnson had her own inimitable Mohawk style of being "cheeky" and she was, for her time and place, just as "bold", E. Pauline Johnson could likely not have allowed herself to be so "cold" in her responses (36-37). (Although I also imagine Johnson would applaud her latter day niece for doing so. I may be stretching the Haudenausonee allusion here.) Still, many, if not all First Nations' women poets, when asked about who or what inspires their work, claim that finding Johnson's poetry helped them realize that First Nations' women could write poetry or other forms of literature. Janice Acoose, for

8. Johnson's 'Indian' stage costume, which bore no resemblance whatsoever to traditional Haudenausonee women's dress, comes to mind as a good example. She mail-ordered the buckskin dress she wore for her poetry performances from what was then 'the NorthWest' and then altered it for even greater dramatic effect. See the description of the dress came from and how Johnson played with it in Sheila Johnston (113).
example, can recall learning to recite Johnson's poetry in residential
school (conversation).

The Post-Oka Kinda Woman concludes by reminding us "she don't
take no shit!" not from her people, her family, her man or any kind of
settler people (38). And if this can somehow still surprise us, well then all
she will give us a final sarcastic "No shit" (39). Cranmer argues that the
voice in Cuthand's "Horse Dance to Emerald Mountain" "[struggles] to
locate the essential I and authentic voice" (127). The Post-Oka Kinda
Woman loudly, clearly and joyfully, raises that found voice and uses it to
speak to both her people and the settler populations. The "Post-Oka
Kinda Woman" demonstrates not only how she lives her responsibilities,
including how she passes these on to her children and grandchildren, she
also clearly calls on all First Nations' people to pick themselves up and
dance, not just at community pow wows, but on the city streets as well.

Louise Halfe's "Ghost Dance"

Halfe's "Ghost Dance" makes for an interesting comparison with
Cuthand's "Post-Oka Kinda Woman" (Halfe, 4). Halfe's work is usually
considered to contain much "black comedy and cutting sarcasm", a quite
different use of humour from Cuthand's joyful and funky wit (back cover,
Bear Bones). David reports that "some readers have told [Halfe] that her writing can seem angry and bitter. [Halfe suggests that] anger can be used in a powerful way to bring a person out of a helpless state and into action" (59).

Still "Ghost Dance", one of two poems in the collection Bear Bones & Feathers with a title alluding to First Nations' dance, does not employ this tone. Rather, in this poem, Halfe undertakes, in Elizabeth Cook Lynn's term to, "consecrate history" ("You May" 59). Cook Lynn declares that it is one of primary responsibilities of First Nations' poets to consecrate, to make known and to make important, not only First Nations' histories but to also make these understood as the peoples themselves understand them. While the content of the poem is clearly about ghosts rising to dance, the title also recalls the Ghost Dance Movement of the 1890's. Halfe emphasizes this latter meaning in her epigraph of the frequently quoted lines from Stephen Vincent Benet's poem "American Names",

\[I\ shall\ not\ be\ there.\ I\ shall\ rise\ and\ pass.\ Bury\ my\ heart\ at\ Wounded\ Knee.\]

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9. Insofar as has been possible at this time, it appears that the First Nations reclaiming of these lines began after they were cited as the epigraph and title to Dee Brown's Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee.
The epigraph’s reference to the Massacre at Wounded Knee, which was part of the colonial over-reaction to the Ghost Dance Movement as well as being a consequence of the Battle of the Little Big Horn and American attempts to gain control of the Black Hills, reinforces the double meaning of the poem's title. As Cranmer suggests, this Cree poet’s reference to Sioux history is a reference that "points to the importance of journeying within to re/vision a collective past" (132). Furthermore, as Womack argues for Harjo, Halfe’s grounding in her Plains Cree culture, similarly strengthens her intertribal vision.

There can be little doubt that the "They" in the opening line of the poem are, at the first level, the ghosts of the American Indians massacred at Wounded Knee. The multiple locations of these ghosts, however, "in hills, / in bush and prairie" may also reference the many sites where Indians died as a result of colonial expansion into their territories (1-2). Furthermore, as the epigraph forewarns, these ghosts are neither silent nor still. They rise "clattering / shattered bones / chattering / laughing the dark" (3-6).

10. The impact and influence of these three events in and on First Nations’ Literatures across the Medicine Line could be the subject of yet another dissertation. Such a study could also include, just in terms of poetry, Elizabeth Cook Lynn’s "A Poet’s Lament: Concerning the Massacre of American Indians at Wounded Knee; Joseph Bruchac's "Routine Check"; and Annharte's "An Account of Tourist Terrorism".
Bones are a frequent image in Halfe's work. David extends this and suggests that "the motif of bones [is] an appropriate metaphor for Louise's life; it [is] an image rich in connotation" (56). Halfe responds to this idea by saying, "Writing, for me, can be a process of baring myself - to lick, tear, strip stories from my bones" (56). The bones in "Ghost Dance," however, are going about their own business. Nor is the noise, the "clattering," as they gather up their scattered and broken bones, an ominous breaking of a silent night. Rather this clattering becomes their chattering, as they laugh even in the dark night of continuing colonialism.

Across the sky, passing "Star after star / the wind carries" the sounds of their joining, "the knuckle of / whistling songs" (7-9). These ghosts gather their bones to rebuild themselves, with the wind at first whistling through their bones. They also gather together as a group to dance to sacred whistle songs. Whistle songs are a regular yet special occurrence at pow wows. There are a variety of reasons\(^\text{11}\) for these songs. It is a song and dance time that is held in the highest regard by the drummers, the dancers and the crowd. They begin when a dancer blows his eagle bone whistle and thus calls for the song to become a

\(^\text{11}\)In my observations, part of the protocol for whistle songs is that the man who blows his whistle, calling for the particular song to become a whistle song, explains to the crowd the reason for his call.
whistle song. Other drummers and singers will then join the group who were originally performing. All the dancers in the arena are required to stay in the arena and continue dancing for the entire song; any that were not dancing should also return to the arena to join in. All who can should stand, again, for the entire song.

Just as the whistle song gathers all the pow wow people into its ceremony, so too do these ghosts gather in the natural materials around them, "quills, moss / clay, feathers, and / bear bones / to flesh themselves" (11-14). They want to have more than their own skeletons for dancing, and much of what they pick would also form parts of the usual outfits of pow wow dancers: for example, the quills, feathers and bones. Thus the ghosts are linked to and join with their contemporary relatives in this dance.

"The drum beats / [and] Big Foot / [is] dancing" again (15-17). It is crucial to know that this Big Foot is not the Sasquatch monster but Chief Big Foot of the Minneconjou whose people were those massacred at Wounded Knee. As he dances to the whistle songs, eagles fly above and add their whistling calls to the music and joy. These are neither frightening nor sad, passive ghosts. They are "laughing, laughing" despite having come from "shattered, / gathered bones" (19-21). The colonial
powers' numerous and on-going attempts to shatter the First Nations' peoples - both literally and figuratively, to scatter their Nations and destroy their cultures - have not succeeded. Both the living and those who have passed on still gather, still continue to carry their responsibilities, to dance in honour and celebration of their ways.

Patricia Monture-Angus "Ohkwa:ri ta:re tenhanonniyahkew: The Bear Will Come Dance With You"

Despite the evidence of persistence thus far presented, the question of how this continuity has happened can still be posed. How have these traditional ways continued when the list of the ways and means by which colonial people tried to eliminate these societies and cultures is so long, when the onslaught has lasted for hundreds of years and the strategies employed have utilized every power of law and force available? "Ohkwa:ri ta:re tenhanonniyahkew" demonstrates one of the most important survival strategies - the determination of First Nations' women to pass on, to teach their children, and have their children participate in these ways. I have already discussed how the "Post-Oka Kinda Woman" did this, now I will show how another First Nations' woman carries out this responsibility.
The context of "ohkwâ:nî" demonstrates a point first raised in the "Pow wow" chapter of this work. Pow wow participation is often one of the ways in which First Nations' parents (and often grandparents) directly involve their children in learning and maintaining their cultures and traditions. The overt audience for the poem is the speaker's son. The voice in the poem, in the role of mother\textsuperscript{12} explains to her child, the "you" in the title, about how she understands his pow wow dancing, as well as the much more important effects of his dancing for the First Nations' people.

The poem's title, however, also reminds the little boy, and readers, that even at one year old, pow wow dancers are never alone in the circle, that they are never dancing by themselves. "The Bear Will Come Dance with You" is the mother telling her very small boy that he need never feel alone out there in the circle, even if none of the adults in his family are there to dance with him. As long as he is dancing for the right reasons, his clan spirit, the Bear, will be with him. His "bear shield" and the "bear claws" on his breastplate will identity him to the clan spirits (3,5). All dancers, including the youngest, those still in diapers, "pamper below breech cloth," are accompanied and protected in the circle (1). Even

\textsuperscript{12} Typically women do not explain men's responsibilities to men. Mothers speaking to
though the boy is an experienced dancer by the time in this poem, his "moccasins well-worn with hole in left toe"; the very little ones may need to be reminded of the safety of the pow wow dance circle (6).

The hole in his moccasins can be understood as another of these layers of protection. It is not a sign that his parents are either stereotypical or actually poor Indians who cannot afford to buy him new moccasins. Rather it is a common protocol that very young dancers have a hole in one of their moccasins. As I understand the Emcees explanations, the very young are still close to the Spirit World and the sacred aspects of dancing can bring the littlest ones even closer. If the Spirit World tries to call them, the hole in the moccasin allows them stay here because the tiny dancers can respond to this call by saying, 'I cannot walk the great distance to the Spirit World, I have a hole in my moccasin.' His "mother knows the bears dance with" him and that these are the bears of [his] father's clan", thus adding yet another layer of protection (8-9). This mother can feel very secure in sending him out into the pow wow circle by himself.

Within this knowledge, the boy can be totally focused on his dancing "never seeing the crowd watching you / smiling for you" (12-13).

their sons, however, is an exception to this.
His concentration "listening only [to] your spirit beat" adds the spiritual dimension to his dance such that it "heals those who watch every tiny spirit step you take" (16-17). As was discussed earlier, traditionally aware dancers know they also dance for those who cannot dance themselves. The pow wow Emcees often speak of the understanding that such dancing spreads the spiritual healing of these dances to those who cannot or do not dance.

Dancers who work to bring this level into their dancing may attract additional spirit helpers, as is the case with this boy, "in your shadow walks the eagle - the old woman told me" (18). Parents who carry out their responsibilities to pass on the cultures and traditions to their children benefit too. Because the boy is dancing well, with the appropriate attitude and performing a sacred duty, "the old woman" - clearly an Elder - shares her spiritual insights with the mother, affirming that this child is being raised right and adding to the mother's cultural knowledge. The old woman's observation does not surprise the mother. She has long known about her son's close connection to these ways. She tells her boy,

[you] sang indian songs before you talked
danced at one - right after you walked
eagle feather presented - you just turned two
This boy sang the vocables of Indian songs before he could pronounce words. He began to dance pow wow style as soon as he could move upright. His dedication is rewarded with the highest honour available amongst the First Nations: the Elders at this gathering give him an eagle feather because at his very young age, "just turned two," he has mastered one of most difficult types of Men's Traditional Dance, the sneak-up.

A sneak-up song is not a continuous song. It contains intermittent and irregular breaks in the music that the dancer must catch, stopping his dancing in time with the break. Emcees often make a great deal out of the challenge of these songs. They invoke a playful tension between the drum and the dancers. A sneak-up song also requires the dancer to evoke the actions of a hunter or warrior sneaking up on some prey. For a two year old to be able to do both of these tricky aspects is not only an important accomplishment, it would also have signaled to those Elders this boy's close spiritual connection to his peoples' ways. It is likely more the latter which would have made the Elders' smile. They would be very
pleased to see this. His parents too are deeply moved, "father's pride - mother's tears", by this tribute to their son (22).

The mother does not want her son or the readers to think it has been easy to maintain the cultures and the skills. This poem is not set in some long ago day before the European invasions of North America.¹³

This boy was

born on Columbus Day, 1990

irony of birth
day reclaimed for celebration

of you - tiny spirit dancer (24-27)

It might have been enough of an irony that this traditional First Nations' boy was born on the day that, for First Nations' peoples, marks the beginning of the on-going colonial onslaught. However, on this side of the Medicine Line, Columbus Day is usually the same day as the Canadian Thanksgiving. The colliding ironies would make this a very difficult set of holidays. Now, however, the meaning has changed; now it is a day on which his parents can celebrate, the birthday of a "good Indian" boy.

This good boy's dual strands of First Nations' ways are referenced in the fact that the title is in his mother's language - Mohawk, and in the

¹³ The reference to pampers would also signal the contemporary time of the poem.
aspects of his outfit which come from his father's Saskatchewan Plains Cree culture, particularly his "tiny braids wrapped in red felt" (4).\textsuperscript{14} The particular resistance and continuity of his father's people's ways are also celebrated in Annharte's "Saskatchewan Indians Were Dancing" (57).

Annharte "Saskatchewan Indians Were Dancing"

Dickinson describes Annharte as one of those poets whose work gives voice to Indigenous memory systems long silenced by the history of imperialism and transform[s] the usually solitary reading experience into a more cooperative and responsive act of listening. (320)

Her very strong voice articulates complex ideas, bringing together past and present to raise not only historic injustices but to show how these are concretely linked to current conditions. In so doing, Annharte is not only speaking into those oral traditions and histories but is also doing this in a traditional manner. Ridington says, for example, "episodic interrelated vignettes performed by a knowledgeable narrator are typical of traditional Indian oral literatures" (26). As I will show, Annharte uses such

\textsuperscript{14} It may also be important to note that these are specific and direct references to his parent's nationalities and not indications of a pan-Indian picking and choosing of 'Indian symbols'.
inter-related vignettes, for example, to link the criminal justice systems past and present. Her implied and imploded presentation of these vignettes requires, as Dickinson suggests, a very similar kind of active listening to that involved and expected in First Nations' storytelling traditions. Annharte does not and will not make it easy for readers or critics to understand her work.

In this poem Annharte describes the variety of levels at which the strategies to oppress the First Nations have operated and the consequent differences in what has survived within specific First Nations. All First Nations experienced extreme economic oppression\(^\text{15}\) until the 1960s when the federal government, typically using only short-term and project-based funding, began to pull "us from starvation"\(^1\). In the poem, "government jobs" also seems to represent bringing Indians into both conventional society and contemporary times \(^1\). Annharte then contrasts the layers of this image with the "antiquated Indians in Saskatchewan," who are still performing their traditional ceremonies as they "danced for rain"\(^2\).

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\(^{15}\) These long and very hard times are only referred to obliquely in public announcements at Plains pow wows. However, as pow wows are also gatherings of families and friends, often these histories are discussed within small groups. It is in those kinds of settings that I have learned a great deal of these histories.
"Antiquated" is no doubt Annharte using her familiar strategically sarcastic poetic voice to echo those who criticize First Nations' concerns with maintaining and continuing their cultures with such comments as "They can't continue to live in the past," or "They can't go back to tipis."

As Johanson says in his review of the book in which "Saskatchewan Indians" appears, "Don't look to Annharte for representations of the 'Indian' as spiritually wise, or possessing a special relationship to nature, or as crushed-abject, or for poems that trade on sacred knowledge for the white urban shaman" (160). Annharte is clearly aware of all of these expectations and reactions but refuses to conform to any of them.

This analysis is supported by the next line which says that "Manitoba Indian doings were hidden for a jealous me"(3). The "Manitoba Indians" would be Annharte's own people, as she is Anishinaabae of the Little Saskatchewan First Nation in Manitoba. The term "doings" is one I have frequently heard used as a general reference to ceremonies. The voice in this poem wants to attend these ceremonies but they are "hidden". She does not have the connections to or relationships with the appropriate people of her Nation that would allow her to learn from and be part of these ceremonies. As Johanson suggests above, she is not crushed by this lack but rather is "jealous", likely of both the
Saskatchewan and Manitoba Indians who are able to participate actively in their cultures.

She wants to pick up these responsibilities, to learn these ceremonies and dances, but all she has is "a 50's rock'n'roll step to copy from" (4). It is also extremely important to understand that neither of the First Nations' ways being referenced here are lost. The voice cannot access them, but the cultural practices are clearly continuing. In her cultural ignorance, all she can do is imagine and create Indian dancing from the dance styles she does know, rock'n'roll.\(^\text{16}\)

In comparison to the declaration in Harjo's poem that 'she' will not dance for her enemies, Annharte describes and implies her admiration for a First Nations' dancer performing for "strangers" - most likely White and therefore strangers to the cultures - a performer who is dancing "from deep defiance"(5). This dancer is dressed in full pow wow regalia. The regalia serves to show and hide a number of truths. The display of the regalia simultaneously declares and obscures the resistance implied in continuing these dances. It distracts the watching "strangers" from remembering the history of their treatment of Saskatchewan Indians. The

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\(^{16}\) I might also guess that Annharte is referencing the fact that 50's White rock'n'roll was itself a pale imitation of Black music and dance styles of the time.
dancer, though, remembers resistance. He remembers the Indian "rope dancing kicks" after the NorthWest Rebellion of 1885 (6).

Even though the federal government knew full well, at the time, that the Plains Cree and other First Nations of the Prairies had not joined the Metis in their 1885 rebellion, eight Indians were publicly hanged in Fort Battleford for rebellion-related crimes. In the poem, Annharte uses "the Crees" to stand for all the First Nations engulfed by this tragedy. The "Crees got out of line", although not as participants in the Rebellion but in attempting to assert their Treaty rights (7). They also got "out of line on the scaffold", with one of the eight singing his death song before the hanging (7). (See Stonechild and Waiser, 221-223).

The poem links the resistance of singing a death chant on the Fort Battleford scaffold with the typical albeit contemporary protest chant of "we want a [fill in the blank with the cause of your choice]" (9-10). This anachronistic chant, however, is then turned into the imagined calls of the people of Fort Battleford watching the hangings,

chant after teasing hey boy you first boy first one
dancing in the air show them how to teach us lesson

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17. This is the largest mass hanging in Canadian history. The largest mass hanging in US history is also a Indian group, the 38 Dakota hanged in 1862.
18. For more on this, the best work to date is Stonechild and Waiser's Loyal Til Death.
a public display of rationed revenge serves nothing
show example to culture clashed passive politicians (10-13)

Again, as in Harjo's poem, hanging is the dance of death. And, for similar reasons to the lynching of African-American peoples, it is done to teach the Others a lesson about staying in their proper, over-determined place. These hangings and the mass jailings that came from other convictions "serve" as settler revenge for the fear engendered during the days of the Rebellion. The poem declares, however, that such acts "of rationed revenge" actually serve no good purpose (12). What these hangings actually demonstrated to the Western First Nations' leadership was that political passivity would be the only safe route for many generations to come.

Political passivity is not to be matched by cultural passivity: "Crees hit them notes higher boys cover up ear drums." (14) The Plains Cree - "the antiquated Indians in Saskatchewan" - continued to sing and dance, hitting the high notes of pow wow songs, notes so high that they pierce listeners' eardrums. Singers at the drum may also cover their ears in order to maintain their place in the harmony. The poem's voice, however, is not calling the Crees to sing only at community pow wows or at "exhibitions" for those "strangers".
let other drums beat out natural powwow exhibitions

boys in the pen idle for a time listen up flag song

Cree hit parade will release some traditional lives

The "boys in the pen" is a layered image too (16). As one layer, many community pow wows set up three-sided box sections for each pow wow drum, a configuration which does look like the drum groups are enclosed in a pen.\(^{19}\) The "boys in the pen" are also the 'boys' - the Indian men in penitentiaries, the federal prisons. The poem rightly praises the drum groups who attend these prison pow wows to support their brothers and sisters behind the walls.\(^{20}\)

As with the prison pow wow in *The Grass Dancer*, participating in these events is a crucial recognition and affirmation for the prisoners, of the on-going relationships with their families and communities. Both the other drum groups - those not currently singing - and the inmates, released from their usual routines for the pow wow, are "idle" (16). They are to "listen up [to the] the flag song", the song representing the host First Nation, rather like a national anthem (16). As far as I have ever seen, every Grand Entry includes a flag song, and in Plains Cree territory,

\(^{19}\) And "the boys" - the drum groups - will sometimes acknowledge this similarity to a barnyard pen by mooing and crowing.

\(^{20}\) As I too have long been involved in supporting Native prisoners, I agree with Annharte that attending prison pow wows an important responsibility.
this would be one of their flag songs. This repetition is likened to a "Cree hit parade," and the pride in hearing the flag song, evidence of the continuity of their Nations and traditions, "will release some traditional lives" (17).

Again I can see in this prison pow wow scenario Annharte's use of irony and sarcasm. In the closing lines she returns to the first line's idea about Indians and government jobs through alluding to the massive number of government jobs created by the over-representation of First Nations' people in the criminal justice system. Despite First Nations' people being the vast majority of all Prairie prison populations, other than on these few special days, Indian "dancing [is] not allowed behind bars" (18). Historically, Indian dancing itself was against the law (until the mid 1950's) and Indians were put "behind bars" for dancing (18). Until very recently, Indian dancing and other ceremonies were not allowed in jails. Yet Annharte suggests that even within these restrictions, just hearing the songs could still "bring us back to good times when Saskatchewan Indians danced free", free of all of the aforementioned legal restrictions and when there were no jails or scaffolds (19).
It is fitting that this chapter's final discussion is of a poem that not only celebrates the continuity of Saskatchewan Indian ways but does so with a prison pow wow scenario. As should be abundantly clear by now, there is much that literary critics can learn about histories, law and the meanings of First Nations' traditions from attending and listening carefully at pow wows. Pow wows continue to be an extremely important part of Saskatchewan Indian cultures. As Annharte and others discussed in this work remind us, our attempts to more deeply and appropriately appreciate these works, must not forget either the past or on-going costs and effects of colonial efforts. That too is our responsibility.

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to return to a notion from the beginning of this chapter, that hearing songs, both those by the real tribal poets and the songs of contemporary popular singer-songwriters can each be important in terms of inciting responsibility. In his keynote speech to the "Returning the Gift XIII / Celebrating Our Words" conference, Craig Womack called on Indian intellectuals to protest the American war in Iraq on the grounds of solidarity with other invaded Indigenous peoples (Keynote). Given her courage on just such issues in the past, I was not then, as others may have been, surprised with Buffy Sainte Marie's song choice in her performance, a very few days later, at
the Lieutenant-Governor's Gala in Celebration of the Saskatchewan Provincial Centennial (*broadcast*). Rather than performing one of her 'Indian' songs, either from her protest and pride works or one of her First Nations' dance songs, she sang her most famous peace, anti-war song, "Universal Soldier." Clearly this is another example of a First Nations' woman inciting responsibility.
"Safe Journeys Home": Conclusions

While this thesis has worked with only a selection of First Nations' literatures, there are several findings that, I believe, have wider application. Literary references to pow wow can have important meanings in and of themselves, whether these are for pow wow as context, setting, character's involvement or as a cultural expression with which particular characters are engaged. Pow wow is also used in First Nations' literature to reference broader, deeper cultural meanings. It is also important to note that pow wow was not the only dance style referenced in many of these works, and that those involved in pow wow are also very much contemporary people living modern lives. These references did, however, also signal continuity with histories and, in many cases, intertribal solidarity.

One important range of meanings evoked by pow wow, in and of itself, was described by the young man quoted at the very beginning of this thesis when he says" Pow wow have everything we need to be strong spiritually" (Indian Times 2). As he says, pow wow has the songs, the dances and important categories of and for the people. Furthermore, as I learned at pow wow and as was reflected in the texts, there is also a range of possibilities within each of the wide categories he lists. Women
may, for example, dance any one of three main styles (Traditional, Fancy Shawl or Jingle Dress). Pumpkin and Harley, in *The Grass Dancer*, think about, work on and try out various styles in order to determine which style will best take them further along their developmental paths (Power 29, 34). Pow wow is also celebration and pleasure. One of the reasons (Education) Present is angry about having to take time to educate Cadieux is because it means she will miss out on the pow wow fun (Taylor *Education* 106). Although Cadieux has attended at least one pow wow, he does not seem to have learned from his experience there. Pow wow is important as a gathering and as singing and dancing. For literary critics, it is can also be a setting in which we can learn some of the First Nations' ideologies and philosophies (Harjo, *Red on Red* back cover).

While it is my contention that there is much that literary scholars can learn at and from pow wow, we should also recognize that these references may be to broader and deeper cultural meanings. Again, I would say that I do not think the young man in the *Indian Times 2* video is suggesting that pow wow is everything. As I understand his statement, he is saying that pow wow has many of the important elements for spiritual strength. That strength is located in the meaning and traditions embodied by and embedded in these elements, each of them, in
combination, and especially in those meanings beyond what is described at pow wow. It is those elements in these literary references that contain what Favel Starr describes as the "basic building blocks of the song and dance" (83). Pow wow references in this sense may also be allusions to that which is within what Mojica and Knowles described as the "collectively private", that which is protected within the boundaries of the sacred (v). In this sense, pow wow stands as a referent to First Nations' traditional cultures, particularly those aspects of the cultures which are not to be widely shared.

On the other hand, pow wow is not, nor is it represented as if, it is isolated from the rest of modern life. Pow wow is neither the only kind of dancing that many of these characters or voices participate in nor is pow wow their only contemporary activity. Pumpkin is a champion pow wow dancer and has had extensive training in conventional dance disciplines as well (40). She has also been accepted in an elite university. "Strange Fruit," "Post-Oka Kinda Woman" and "Saskatchewan Indians Were Dancing" all contain references to other kinds and styles of dancing, both from popular culture and First Nations' ways. Pow wow is not necessarily isolating - an either/or choice - and does not exclude other contemporary activities.
These references and the gathering itself are also indicative of continuity with First Nations' histories and contemporary intertribal solidarity. As a contemporary gathering and celebration, pow wow has come from and come to particular First Nations and territories in a variety of ways. Within this particular event as a general type, many First Nations, as the various oral histories described in the "Pow wow" chapter describes, have incorporated their own dances, ceremonies and specific histories. Pow wow is then both Nationally specific and intertribal. These are events at which we may learn about both the particular community hosting the event and intertribal commonalities.

During the summer of 2003 I had the opportunity to partially test these findings and discuss some of the theory which frames this dissertation. I was teaching a mixed, conventional section of a Native Literature course. While the class could have been predominantly non-Native or, at least, non-First Nations' students, there turned out to be a solid core group of First Nations' students in the class. As this was a summer course, I suggested, at the very beginning of the course, that students would be well advised to attend at least one pow wow during the term. This was not just so they would have a better understanding of The Grass Dancer, which was one of the course texts, but for many of the
reasons elaborated in this dissertation. A number of us, I and several of the students who are pow wow dancers, collected and shared the dates for that summer's pow wows which would be reasonably close to the city.

I would like to have been able to discuss at least Power's novel with them, in terms of what they saw and heard at pow wow. While there is much in the novel that can teach readers about pow wow, it is pow wow as context and not merely as setting which gives such resonance to pow wow references in First Nations' literatures. For example, while readers can imagine what Harley might look like carrying an eagle staff during Grand Entry, surely we can come to much more profound understandings when the such descriptions evoke the sights, sound and feelings of these men leading hundreds of dancers into the circle.

We should be able to have a much better understanding of what Simon is talking about, of the aspects of First Nations' manhood he wants to invigorate on Wasychigan, when we have seen a group of the Men's Traditional dancers wearing those bustles, using them as they were intended to be used. And while simply noticing the gender representations within First Nations' post-secondary students on campus

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1. We were also studying Daniel David Moses' *Almighty Voice and his Wife*. Hearing the variety of types of songs at a pow wow would also have increased their understanding of that play's elaborate soundscape.
can verify Drew Hayden Taylor's decision to have the Spirit of Education Present be a woman, to have seen the grace, strength and joy of Fancy Shawl dancers expands a too limiting angry label for this character. We will not likely see a female grass dancer but it would hard to miss the hush and intuit the profound respect paid to the sacred aspect of this dance style.

Perhaps even more important, for most of my student readers in that class, than seeing First Nations' people in all of this pride, strength and beauty, is the opportunity to see First Nations' people at their ease, in their own settings, place and communities. For students and scholars to be the Other in and on First Nations' terms must also evoke not just the obvious horror for the fate of the woman in "Strange Fruit" but empathy for the enormity of her efforts. To see how many "sassy sovereigntists" there are at home in First Nations' communities; to hear an eagle whistle and see the strenuous effort that each and every dancer puts forth for a whistle song; to see this effort and concentration writ small in a Tiny Tot dancer, with all that the flag bearers show, being taken up by even the littlest dancer; to hear and see the effect of the "Cree hit parade" Victory Song on the crowd as well as the dancers; to get all of
this out of one afternoon or evening cannot be too much to ask. Surely this is a small measure of taking responsibility.

Sad to say, it seemed that by the time we were discussing *The Grass Dancer* - the final text - none of the unexperienced students had made the attempt to attend even one pow wow, for even a part of one day. After this lack became apparent, several of the First Nations' students approached me after class and offered to bring in family members to speak about and demonstrate pow wow dancing for the class. My thanks go out to Amanda Cross, Renita Day and Carla Desjarlais for both this intervention and for giving their permission to share this story.

While I appreciated their offer, my first response was to decline. To have drums and full regalia in a classroom requires teaching students the protocols that protect these. I could tell a class that anyone who has been drinking or drugging in the past four days could not come in during that class nor could any woman who is on her moontime (menstruating). My difficulty comes when students get offended by these rules, especially women who see this as unfairly discriminatory. It is not discrimination
against women\textsuperscript{2} but it is well beyond my authority to give the background explanation for those moontime protocols. More importantly, all I can do is state the rules. I cannot guarantee they will be respected and followed. As I would be responsible for those guests, coming to my class, I also believe that I would bear some of the responsibility for harm that could come to the drums, regalia or my guests. And that is a risk I was not prepared to take. Even though this was a long held position for me, I did, after the class and into that evening, continue to consider the offer.

I finally thought this dilemma through by thinking about whether I would be prepared to bring in and risk my own regalia, my Jingle Dress outfit. I decided I would not do that. I could not, therefore, in good conscience, ask others to assume a risk I was not prepared to take myself. After class the next day, I asked the students who made the offer to stay for a few minutes so that I could speak with them again. I was concerned that I had appeared harsh or ungrateful for their generosity. I began by explaining that I had thought about their offer even though I had initially said no. As at least two of them already knew that I am a dancer, I explained my reasoning about my outfit.

\textsuperscript{2} In reality, my understanding is that these prohibitions are deeply respectful of women's power at this time.
I also explained that part of my reasons for suggesting that students attend a pow wow, especially a First Nations' community pow wow, was that I believe it can be important for non-Native students majoring in Native Studies (and of course, other academics specializing in or teaching about Native matters) to experience what it is like to be the Other. I asked them to think about what it is like for them to almost constantly be the Other, in their university classes (even in Native Studies classes). We then discussed if it was reasonable for such students to have even just pow wow culture delivered to them in their own safe and comfortable environment. Thinking about the matter in that way, they too concluded that being asked to go to one community pow wow, when First Nations students are a racialized minority, every day of their lives, even on their own territories, was not an unreasonable request or expectation. And if being the Other for even part of one day was too much for students to do, then the culture ought not just be handed over on easy terms.

Of course I was pleased that the women agreed with me. It would have been quite tragic for me if they had not. This work was nearly

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3. Even conventional Native Studies classes are not necessarily 'safe' learning space for Native students. I am regularly bombarded with accounts by Native students in conventional classes not even being able to share their insights and experiences and
completed and had they not agreed, my dissertation - and its premise that pow wow can be a valuable and appropriate learning opportunity - would have needed to start over again. Still, had they disagreed, I would have trashed this text and started again on another topic.

It is, as I have argued throughout this and all my other work in this field, an ethical necessity that scholarship, at the minimum, not violate First Nations' understandings of themselves. Furthermore, I have been careful in this work to not breech protocols around sharing particular knowledges. I based this work on understandings gained publicly at pow wows and that is all I have shared. I have not and do not suggest attempting to attend or participate in other ceremonies.

Still, it is true and some readers may notice that I seem to know more than I have revealed in these pages. I have perhaps drawn the boundaries more closely than absolutely necessary. Strictly respecting First Nations' boundaries is important to me for reasons beyond the academic ethics. The First Nations' communities and people that I have relationships with are important to me, to my family, and to future generations. If I have erred on the side of being overly cautious, it is because I have concerns and responsibilities beyond myself. More
importantly, I do not want to burden my child (and her probable children) with trying to live down the problem that her Mother came in, took and gave away knowledge she had no right or authority to share. Doing so would identify us as not to be trusted. As many academics are now learning, First Nations' communities have long memories with respect to such violations of trust. They have also developed a pretty good sense of humour about academics and the things we have said about "Indians." That is another set of jokes you will likely hear at pow wows.

Furthermore, to "Dance Your Style" in response to the call of pow wow does not, as I said at the beginning of this chapter, preclude or exclude dancing Other's styles. Pumpkin in The Grass Dancer, the "Post-Oka Kinda Woman" and, of course, my beautiful cover girl dance many conventional dance disciplines and the popular styles as well. First Nations' peoples engage with and in many aspects of high, middle and low Eurocentric cultures and societies, while still remaining First Nations' traditional people. Nor does this make them "hybrids." As Womack declares, "[Hybrid] is an argument that is only applied to Indians who, once they defy the stereotypes prevalent in popular imaginings, become

students.

4. Janice Manygreyhorses warned me that this can and has resulted in non-First Nations' family members being banned from attending community ceremonies.
suddenly less Indian" (141). To pow wow dance or round dance as well as ballet or line dance is simply and complexly, as Warrior says about First Nations' modern literatures, a crucial characteristic of First Nations' "visible inclusion in the contemporary world" ("Literature and Students" 124).

Pow wow is one aspect of how First Nations' lives are now, as is writing novels, plays, short stories, and poems. The traditional does not equal historical and the contemporary is not a dilution of or admixture to the traditional. Pow wow is continuity, from how life was, to, for the Tiny Tots, how there is hope for the way that their lives will be. For literary scholars, pow wow is a First Nations' event at which we are welcomed and invited to see, hear, and learn about First Nations' cultures and peoples as they continue to live by these principles and ways today.

So, even if your reading or teaching of Native Literature is limited to one text in a survey course, go to a First Nations' community pow wow next summer. Take your lawn chairs, sunscreen, bug juice and parkas so you can stay for a whole day. Yes, you may feel visible and alone but listen to the welcome the Emcee will offer. It is sincere. Listen to and follow the rules of behaviour. If you accidentally make a mistake, most

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5. For more on this, including its effects on even Native people doing research, see Linda
likely it will not be considered a major offense. You might be teased but that too is part of the community spirit, and humility in these endeavors is a good thing. And the gains you can make, in seeing and being seen, as well as the gains in understanding First Nations' ways will be invaluable both to your teaching and your scholarship.

If you persevere and stay the whole day, then you will experience the spectacle and strength of the contemporary First Nations, you will carry home with you the good wishes and First Nations' prayers for a safe journey and you could also see the "Stars, Mommy, stars".

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