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Destruction and Resiliency: Decolonizing Settler Knowledge in Native American Literature Through the Peoplehood Matrix

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Renissa R. Gannie

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Be grateful for your life, every detail of it, and your face will come to shine like a sun, and everyone who sees it will be made glad and peaceful. Persist in gratitude, and you will slowly become one with the Sun of Love, and Love will shine through you its all-healing joy. The path of gratitude is not for children; it is path of tender heroes, of the heroes of tenderness who, whatever happens, keep burning on the altar of their hearts the flame of adoration.

— *Rumi*

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my loved ones. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Lin Zeller, you have been my rock and support. Michelina and Jasmine Nelson-Olivieri, thank you! Carol Helstosky; where do I begin? You have been constantly assuring me and supporting me. Thank you! Doug Richards, thank you for believing in me, even when I question my belongingness in academia; without you, I would not be here. Finally, to G, thank you for all the conversations. They were much appreciated, leading to one of the most pivotal moments, and Chad Leahy, thank you for listening to me and supporting me through this process. Your kindness and encouraging words never fail to lift my spirits.

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Introduction

Edward Curtis “The vanishing race” 1868-1952 [Navajo Indian]

Stories are composed of words and of such implications as storyteller places upon the words. . . Stories are true to our common experience; their statements which concern the human condition. To the extent that the human condition involves moral considerations, stories have moral implications. . . stories are not subject to the imposition of such questions as true or false, fact or fiction. Stories are realities lived and believed. They are true.

N. Scott Momaday.

Native American literature has produced a series of claims and counterclaims that make a case for decolonization and post-colonialism. Notably, the campaign to accommodate native peoples so that they may progress toward full autonomy and decolonization finds its voice in literature, especially because native American[1] literature addresses the destructive forces of settler colonialism and reclaims culture and identity. However, does the settler colonial framework actually offer a way to comprehend native Americans' past in an intercontinental milieu? In turn, does this framework lead to understanding indigenous encounters with modernity as an ongoing struggle with colonial rule?

To address these questions, this thesis will explore and analyze the themes found in the works of native writers, especially Leslie Marmon Silko, Gerald Vizenor, Frances Washburn, Stephen Graham Jones, and N. Scott Momaday. Their narratives and the characters they contain will then be read through the "Peoplehood Matrix" developed by Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis. The Peoplehood Matrix is appropriate for this study because native Americans historically have been subjected to settler colonialism, and their peoplehood, manifested in sacred history, ceremonial cycle, language, and place/territory, has been damaged or even outright destroyed by this form of colonialism. Likewise, this struggle with peoplehood and the fight for recognition on a historical and social scale manifests within native American literature, as well. Thus, this

[1] In this thesis, the word native Americans or indigenous will not be capitalized; aboriginal/first nation/native Americans/amerindians people should be called by their tribal names whenever possible. I believe that is the most respectful way of honoring them and the nation and culture they are from. For example, I am part Arawak, and this is how I honor my ancestors.

thesis questions how settler colonialism has impacted native Americans, particularly in Leslie Marmon Silko's Laguna Pueblo culture, Frances Washburn's Lakota culture, Gerald Vizenor's Anishinaabe culture, and Stephen Graham Jones's Blackfeet culture – because the links between native American culture, history, and literature are almost indistinguishable as they are tied together in works of literature. In what follows, I will attempt to determine how a series of native authors confront and challenge narratives surrounding the erasure of native culture and identity. I claim that *Ceremony, Elsie's Business, The Heirs of Columbus, Ledfeather,* and *House Made of Dawn* are not just works of fiction but powerful tools for understanding the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism in native American communities.

This thesis will approach literature through the theoretical framework of the Peoplehood Matrix to question the validity and interrupt the dominant interpretive conception of native people within native literature. Specifically, the Peoplehood Matrix is a unifying theory expanded by Tom Holm, J. Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis to "transcend the notions of statehood, nationalism, gender, ethnicity, and sectarian membership" (Holm, Pearson, and Chavis 11). The authors reference Robert K. Thomas' idea that "human enclaves were the direct result of colonialism and that these groups most often were identified as having distinct languages, religions, and territories that the colonizers sought to destroy or, in the case of territory, claim for themselves" (Holm et al.12). Likewise, the four factors of peoplehood are distinguished as "language, sacred history, religion, and land," which are "intertwined and reliant on one another" (Holm et

al.12). As a result, the Peoplehood Matrix comprises interrelated mechanisms that fall under the classification of sacred stories, ceremonial practice, language, and land.

This model is a widely applicable framework, addressing the lived and historical experiences of indigenous peoples in the United States while also having the flexibility to be applied to indigenous cultures in other parts of the world. In addition, the matrix accounts for the power dynamics that shape the experiences of indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups, although it may not fully capture how colonialism has created and maintained unequal power relationships between indigenous peoples and dominant societies. That said, the Peoplehood Matrix is offered as a paradigm for American Indian Studies to help identify areas of strength and potential for growth and to develop strategies for promoting sustainable progress of indigenous communities. Therefore, this thesis will not follow a traditional academic approach to the Peoplehood Matrix because I will apply this model specifically to native American literature. Instead, I will address the structure of the method of the four elements that anchor the Peoplehood Matrix approach to indigenous nations to investigate how "native American knowledge is [linked to] the understanding of how the elements of Holm's matrix [sacred stories, ceremonies, land/territory, and language] are interrelated and are continuously interacting" (Stratton) through their literature.

Specifically, my argument will follow a hermeneutic approach and apply the ideas of sacred history, ceremonial cycle, language, and territory or place that have been extended and applied to native literature by Billy J. Stratton and Frances Washburn, who argue that "the interpretive value of the Peoplehood Matrix is in its ability to provide a

culturally specific understanding of Native forms of knowledge, while, at the same time, promoting a heteroholistic epistemological framework" (Stratton and Washburn 63).[2] This approach by Stratton and Washburn grounds criticism *in* indigenous perspectives, which has become a significant thread in 21st-Century approaches to native American literature. Additionally, Stratton and Washburn's response to the Peoplehood Matrix avoids the risk of analyzing literature from any particular perspective and allows for a richer understanding of the issue at hand. This thesis will hypothesize some of the significant aspects of native literary subjectivities and address the thread that connects native people and experiences in the context of North America while avoiding the colonial trap of identity politics and essentialism.[3]

To examine the context of the chosen novels, I will analyze and question whether and how elements of settler colonialism are present in the diverse narratives under analysis. I will then examine the stories through a postcolonial point of view and incorporate the native theory, indigenous knowledge, and the Peoplehood Matrix, as reflected in the narratives of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, Frances Washburn's

[2] Billy J Stratton and Frances Washburn, "The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature" 55.; Billy J Stratton. "Reading Through Peoplehood Towards a Culturally Responsive Approach to Native American Literary Discourse. 63.
According to Billy Stratton and Frances Washburn, "heteroholism combines the intellectual and spiritual or visionary ways of knowing that are grounded in particular spatial and temporal sites that—read as inextricably connected—distinguish native worldviews and knowledge. The essential quality of heteroholism reveals that tribally specific cosmologies produce physical and metaphysical realities that are anchored in a multitude of sacred places—including geologic features such as mountains, rivers, forests, swamps, deserts, tundra, and oceans—without making any claim to universal exclusivity" (63).

[3] The idea is to include Cross-blood people and people who live outside the reservation. Also, there are 574 federally recognizes tribes by the American government. Therefore, I am opting for inclusivity as there may be tribes not counted by the government.

Elsie's Business, Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus,* and Stephen Graham Jones's *Ledfeather*, to see if native literature has addressed the impact of settler colonialism while simultaneously determining whether these texts represent settler colonialism as having destroyed or irreparably harmed native culture.

As such, settler colonialism is an important factor in this analytical approach, which, is ironic because colonialism is damaging through the systematic subjugation and exploitation of indigenous populations for the benefit of colonizers, it often results in violence, cultural genocide, environmental destruction, and ongoing inequality and injustice. Tuck and Yang define settler colonialism[4] as distinctive from other forms of colonialism, in that settlers intend to make a new home on the indigenous land. This home-making establishes settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain. In turn, in the U.S. context, this mindset forced native peoples onto barren pieces of land to rely solely upon the power of coloniality, which does not help them visualize the idea of decolonization. Settler colonialism is founded upon the destruction and displacement of indigenous peoples to possess the land/territory and institute a new settler society in their place, which Patrick Wolfe equates as the "logic of elimination." This desire for access to land has and continues to manifest in genocidal practices against native Americans, as well as forms of erasure and displacement. For over five hundred years, these policies of

[4] There are many different types of definitions of settler colonialism. This construct by Tuck and Yang is a version that describes settler colonialism. However, there are many forms of settler colonialism- French, Dutch, Spanish and British, German, and Portuguese. This thesis focuses on the United States' implementation of settler colonialism.

forced assimilation and genocide have included boarding schools, forced sterilization, water pollution, and government violations of indigenous sovereignty.

Even so, the land becomes valuable and essential to native peoples and cultures because the settlers *continue to desire* to make indigenous land their new home and source of capital. Thus, the disruption of indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, and cosmological violence. For example, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada are prime examples of colonial settler states. In each of these countries, indigenous peoples inhabited the land for years prior to the arrival of European colonizers. However, through a combination of violence, disease, and forced assimilation, European settlers were able to assert control over the land and its resources, which led to devastating consequences for indigenous communities. The aim of settler colonialism differs from other forms of colonialism in that it aims to permanently displace indigenous peoples and establish a new society on their lands (Veracini). That being said, it is important that settler colonialism is not mistaken for resource extraction, which is another form of colonialism. Places such as the Belgian Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and British Guiana (now Guyana) are examples of resource extraction inherent in the wider concept of colonialism itself.[5] The Belgian and British governments controlled the territory to extract rubber and bauxite, along with other natural resources, but they did not establish permanent settlements or seek to

[5] India and China were once extraction resource nations.

displace the local population. In fact, the local population is rather irrelevant in this form of colonialism because the resources are more important to the colonizing states.

Considering the continuous effects of settler colonialism, the concept of the Peoplehood Matrix is central to understanding native stories, as these stories connect the four tenets that bind native Americans. These principles of sacred history, territory, language, and ceremony unite various tribes and simultaneously combat the dominant narrative perpetuated by the colonial power. This method also provides a critical engagement of the texts, which affords readers a better understanding of indigenous people while discouraging the colonial view of natives as exotic, like the "noble savage" (Other Destinies, Owens 53). It also creates discourse and knowledge of another culture, capturing the predominant narrative that becomes accessible while reaffirming the soul of the counter-narrative. In a sense, this theory is a bridge between native literature and people. The Peoplehood Matrix also thoroughly categorizes the disparity in the criticism surrounding the predominant narrative of the history of indigenous people of the United States and reveals the connection between history and literature through the cultural narrative of oral history, which confronts and probes the text. This holistic approach recognizes that the sense of community and shared identity within indigeneity is shaped by a complex interplay of factors rather than any single element in isolation. Each of the four key components of shared history, ceremonial practice, language, and territory/land is interconnected and contributes to the overall sense of peoplehood. Thus, the Peoplehood Matrix influences the life of native and indigenous people and their literature

in that their sense of history and their relationship with the organic concept of the four elements are vital to their very survival.

Since the inception of American Indian/Native American Studies, native literature has been examined almost exclusively from a Western point of view; however, with the development of postcolonial theory, which seeks to understand how colonialism and imperialism continue to shape contemporary societies and cultures, approaches that center native epistemologies and lifeways have emerged. Therefore, it would seem that the concepts of the postcolonial theory are ideal for studying native literature.

My thesis begins with an analysis and argument of *House Made of Dawn.* In 1968, N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* was selected for the Pulitzer Prize in literature. This recognition sparked what is known as the Native American Renaissance. Slowly, since this moment, native literature has been increasing in influence, especially with works by creators like Leslie Marmon Silko, Gerald Vizenor, James Welch, Louis Owens, Joy Harjo, Louise Erdrich, and Luci Tapahonso. These writers, poets, and storytellers have introduced non-native people to different styles of storytelling, non-linear timelines, and oral narratives, while also challenging the popular idea of what it means to be an indigenous person and offering critical insight into the nature and status of oral narratives. Specifically, such works address the struggles and displacement inherent in native life, *natives'* semblance of history, and their constant fight for survival. Above all, the authors and their works serve as proof of survivance.[6] With widespread

[6] Native survivance is an active sense of presence over historical absence, deracination, and oblivion. As survival and endurance or survival and resistance, "survivance" describes the persistence of a people that

acceptance, academia and the American public began recognizing and valuing these works. However, since the development of Native American/American Indian Studies as a unique academic discipline, scholars have advocated for decolonization and autonomy, to combat and alleviate ongoing problems facing indigenous peoples. Today, the thorough exploration of the representation of native American literature is still in its beginning stages, as those in the field continue to develop strategies and practices that evaluate the ever-growing body of work. For example, native writers are still working to overcome the effects of romanticizing the "Indian." Romanticizing indigenous peoples leads to stereotyping, erasure of diversity, historical inaccuracies, and disrespect of sovereignty. For Owens and other indigenous authors, it is important to acknowledge and appreciate native peoples as individuals with unique cultures and histories rather than romanticize them.

Writers and critics such as Paula Gunn Allen, Simon Ortiz, and Gerald Vizenor have questioned this exclusion of native American literature in the American literary canon, which signifies that native American literature is regarded as *exotic* and not *exactly standard enough* to be part of the required curriculum. As such, the question again reverts to where to place native literature as it grapples with the destructive forces of settler colonialism. This example is another reason why critics like Elizabeth Cook-Lynn ask whether native American literature is considered third-world literature and, if

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the structures of power intend to erase through genocide and assimilation. Thus, the adherence of a community to its shared identity, culture, and history in the face of this attempted violent erasure and silencing is, in Vizenor's theorization, an act of resistance. (Gerald Vizenor Survivance: Narrative of Native Presence) 11.

so, why is that the case. In her article, "The American Indian Fiction Writers: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, the Third World, and First Nation Sovereignty," Cook-Lynn argues:

> It seems, then, that these preliminary examples serve to further suggest the need that pedagogical works in tribal literature be critiqued within a *Third World* theoretical considerations more often than they are at present. The idea of decolonization is not new to tribal peoples. Therefore, it should not be absent from critical theory of all literary works, both traditional and contemporary (Cook-Lynn 35).

However, because the term *Third World* did not exist until 1970, Cook-Lynn's statement still implies a "placement problem" with native literature, in that academics struggle where "to place" such works. What emerges from these questions and issues is the fact that indigenous people occupy a double bind, where they are consigned to and defined by non-native terms, yet native Americans can fight back against this double bind. According to Paul Chaat Smith's *Everything You Know About Indians is Wrong*, "silence about our own complicated histories supports the colonizers' idea that the only real Indians are full-blooded, from a reservation, speak their language and practice the religion of the ancestors" (Smith 18). In inhabiting a temporal space that is interwoven in the past yet connected to the present, native Americans are in a unique position: they *can* dismantle certain structures of governance.[7] The impact of settler colonialism in the United States is palpable, as there is a certain kind of amnesia regarding the historical process of subjugation; for example, many native Americans assert that the reservations

[7] Mark Rifkin *Beyond Settler Time*
Johannes Fabian coined the term "denial of coevalness" which works as a description for native people who are locked into a past and denied a present but also do nonetheless exist in the present.

are their tribal homelands and that these homelands are governed customarily. However, native literature provides an ideal arena to study questions on the impact of settler colonialism – which is a way to dismantle the settler colonial system (or even *begin* to dismantle it). For example, native literature raises legal questions, such as the case of *Oklahoma v Castro Huerta* or *Haaland v Brackeen.* The *Oklahoma v Castro Huerta* case is about the fight for sovereignty on the native land*;* the court held that, "as a matter of state sovereignty, a state has jurisdiction over all of its territory, including Indian country," suggesting that a state has presumptive jurisdiction to act over Indian country (Stratton, Cornell Law). Native literature often draws on the experiences of native American communities in these court cases, like *Oklahoma v Castro Huerta and Haaland v Brackeen* (otherwise known as the Indian Child Welfare Act), as a means of raising awareness of ongoing struggles and promoting social justice. These court cases are often discussed in the context of broader themes of resistance, survival, and resilience, as native American individuals and communities continue to fight for their rights, traditions, and ways of life. Native literature can also address territorial issues related to sovereignty, as is the case in *Oklahoma v Castro Huerta.* These issues also reveal more complex problems, such as the results of being disconnected from culture, especially the loss of language and oral narratives.

In *Neither Settler Nor Native,* Mahmood Mamdani states, "Colonial powers had come to define civil rights for the master race and customary rights for so-called tribes considered indigenous to the colonial districts or homelands assigned to them" (Mamdani 342). Thus, the idea that settler colonialism *still* plays an integral part in native

Americans' lives, even in our contemporary world, is a pattern that recurs repeatedly. This perception of how this settler colonialism impacts the peoplehood centered on the desire for land and the obstruction of sacred history, ceremonies, and language. It seems simply that settler colonialism itself is almost cyclical and never-ending. However, the remarkable thing is that native literature provides the space to work out viable solutions to these problems, such as any disconnection between identity, memory, and language that arises from peoplehood, as a means to mitigate the impact on individuals and native communities. What is clear is that native literature is one place to look for answers.

Native American literature has been a powerful tool for native American writers to confront and reckon with the legacy of settler colonialism. Many native American writers use their work to explore how settler colonialism has impacted their communities and challenge the dominant narratives that have historically marginalized native voices. One common theme in native American literature is the idea of *survivance*, which refers to the notion that native American communities have not only survived the process of colonization but have also found ways to resist and persist, despite tremendous adversity. This theme is often explored through stories of individual and collective resilience and how native American communities have maintained their cultural traditions and identities in the face of ongoing oppression. Additionally, a common theme in native American literature is the idea of *decolonization,* which refers to reclaiming native American land, language, and culture from the forces of "colonization." Decolonization refers to undoing or challenging the structures, systems, and ideologies of colonialism. It involves addressing the historical and ongoing effects of colonization on indigenous peoples and

communities. Decolonization seeks to restore autonomy, sovereignty, and self-determination to colonized and oppressed groups, allowing them to reclaim their land, culture, and identity. However, at its core, decolonization aims to dismantle the power dynamics and inequalities established through colonial practices and policies. According to Vine Deloria Jr and Gerald Vizenor, the central idea of decolonization involves dismantling the structures of power and control imposed by colonial forces and reclaiming indigenous identity, knowledge, and land. They stress the need for indigenous peoples to assert their own narratives and shape their own futures, free from external domination and interference. Decolonization is not just a process of undoing the legacies of colonialism but also a creative and transformative endeavor. It involves engaging with indigenous cultural expressions, reclaiming autonomy, and envisioning alternative futures prioritizing indigenous values, land stewardship, and community well-being. For example, sacred history – i.e., stories and the ceremonial cycle – often serves a central role in native American literature, which, consequently, becomes a form of sacred history itself. As a result, native American writers use their work to explore how decolonization can be achieved and how native American communities can assert their sovereignty and reclaim their cultural heritage. Also, through their work, native American writers can challenge dominant narratives, assert their cultural identities, and promote healing and reconciliation for themselves and their communities.

Through native literature, many native nations are fighting for their rights and recognition to become “decolonized” or potentially enter into the postcolonial world. However, a reckoning or sovenance regarding what it means to be native should occur.

Vizenor defines sovenance as “that sense of presence in remembrance or that trace of creation” (Vizenor 15). That sovenance refers to the resilience, creativity, and adaptability of indigenous cultures and peoples in maintaining their traditions, languages, and worldviews despite the efforts of colonial powers to suppress or eradicate them. Vizenor argues that sovenance represents a form of resistance to colonialism and serves as a way of reclaiming and affirming indigenous identities and knowledge systems. Sovenance comes from stories that synthesize and reconceptualize the tenets of its relationship with native people. Through stories, one can understand the sacred history, ceremonies, language, and territory of native peoples; in other words, “these stories are a personal and collective affirmation of the continuity of native stories, the recognition of their ongoing potential, and the celebration of their renaissance in the life of the narrator and the reader” (Vizenor 15). These elements are connected and interwoven through all the native American tribes and nations, and they form a bond that tells of the pain and sovenance of people subjugated by forms of authority yet still fighting to be seen. As such, the concept of sovenance wipes away the blanket assimilation narrative that colonial powers used politically to distinguish and “Other” native and indigenous people.

Subsequently, Edward Said made significant claims in his theory of *Orientalism*, which opened the door for marginalized people and forced acknowledgment in postcolonial studies. For example, Said draws attention to how Western cultures have constructed and represented the “Other,” or non-Western cultures, through literature, art, and other forms of discourse. He then argues that the West’s portrayal of the Orient was not based on an accurate understanding of the people and cultures of the region but rather

on a set of cultural stereotypes and assumptions *shaped by* colonialism and imperialism. These arguments inspired scholars to question the dominant narrative that shapes our understanding of the world. For example, Jodie Byrd claims that, in Edward Said's *Orientalism*:

> theories arose to confront the cultural legacies of racism and colonialism, especially within the cosmopole, and scholars also returned to question the demarcation of when, exactly, U.S. empire began. Or whether it ever really did. Or whether that empire, if it had indeed emerged, was such a bad thing after all. 'Empire…is materializing before our very eyes' (Byrd 45).

However, even though a complete assessment of the representation of native literature is tied to postcolonial theory, native literature continues to be underrepresented in this field. This lack of inclusion and respect, whether conscious or unconscious, manifests through a language of victimization, or what Vizenor calls "aesthetic victimry," which continues to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and reduces indigenous experiences to simplistic and distorted narratives (Vizenor). It seems that mentioning postcolonial theory and native American literature in the same breath cannot be done, as theorists assume that native Americans are not living in the colonial aftermath or a postcolonial condition.

Also, while it seems native fiction is ideal for postcolonial theory, since a thorough investigation of settler colonialism can occur, Jodie Byrd posits, "How we [indigenous people] have come to know intimacy, kinship, and identity within an empire born out of settler colonialism is predicated upon discourses of indigenous displacements that remain within the present everydayness of settler colonialism" (Byrd 19). Byrd's perspective allows indigenous people to see themselves clearly but in a relationship through peoplehood, which *should* develop identity and discourse across tribal nations.

Yet, this same thinking leads many native scholars, such as Jace Weaver, Leanne Simpson, Kim TallBear, and Glen Coulthard, to reject the concept of postcolonialism; to them, one cannot live in subjugation and still be treated like children *and* exist in a postcolonial world. Because "postcolonial" primarily means "after colonialism," indigenous people are not a part of it, and many contend that they do *not* live in the aftermath of colonialism and do not want to be categorized under that umbrella term. For example, the Māori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, declares in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* that postcolonialism has a negative connotation in the indigenous world because postcolonialism implies that colonialism and its practices are over. However, native and indigenous people in the Americas and globally are still colonized in one form or the other. Therefore, the term "postcolonialism" does not work for her.

However, in the field of postcolonial studies, settler colonialism, and postcolonialism are tied together and attempt to move beyond the paradigm of white coloniality to indigeneity. It reinscribes a set of theoretical protocols that efface any real consideration of indigenous sovereignty and its practices. Settler colonial scholarship is particularly guilty of deferring indigenous sovereignty. But, as Smith says:

> A constant reworking of our understanding of the impact of imperialism and colonialism is an important aspect of indigenous cultural politics and forms the basis of an indigenous language of critique. Within this critique…the notion of authenticity [and] of time before colonialization in which we are intact as indigenous people [exists]" (Smith 26).

On the other hand, some indigenous academics want to use the umbrella term of "postcolonialism" as a strategy of reinscription or restatement, to express the privilege of

non-indigenous scholars. Essentially, postcolonial discourse is often restricted in ways that leave out indigenous voices and their present apprehensions while relying on "postcolonial" terms to bring those issues to the forefront.

Nonetheless, as Owens puts it, "We should also keep carefully in mind the fact that America does not participate in what is sometimes termed the 'colonial aftermath' or postcolonial condition" (Owens 14).[8] Therefore, to employ the terms of postcolonialism, settler colonialism, or even decolonization, one must consider all its ramifications. For example, in arguing for decolonization, Russell Means' "For the World to Live: Europe Must Die" disregards the idea of Western education leading the way in the decolonization effort. Instead, Means maintains that European ideas and ideologies caused problems for indigenous peoples, and the solution must be an "Indian" one that is unique to natives; such a solution does not involve leaders and answers strengthened by European beliefs or ways of thinking within universities that were forced upon native people (Means).[9] Therefore, settler colonialism also convolutes native identity, in that tribal identity, culture, and histories are entangled with the broader context of colonialism. However, many indigenous peoples it tries to find identity in peoplehood.

For example, Vizenor argues in *Fugitive Poses* that the "*indian"* is a colonial invention, "a simulation;" in other words, "the *indian* is…the absence of natives,"[10] the

[8] Louis Owens, As If an Indian Were Really an Indian" 14.

[9] Russel Means, "'I am not a leader': Russel Means' 1980 Mother Jones Cover Story", Mother Jones, October 22, 2012. https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/10/russell-means-mother-jones-interview-1980/. Russel Means was a leader of AIM.

[10] Gerald Vizenor Fugitive Poses 4.

indian transposes the real, and the simulation of the real have no referent memories or native stories. Thus, the term "Indian" has a colonial subjectivity attached to it, and it is a form of epistemic violence that needs to be redefined. If the label "Indian" is hyperreal or a simulation, as Vizenor argues, then what does the title "Indian" mean in terms of identity for native Americans and their representational literature? Essentially, the label "Indian" is an erasure and an insult to the indigenous people living in North America, as this term is tied to and flattened by settler colonialism.

To challenge settler colonialism and enter a postcolonial world, some native scholars want a specific pan-Indian identity to oppose the concept of colonialism, to combat, as Elizabeth Cook-Lynn states, "the policy by which a nation maintains or extends control over foreign dependencies" (Cook-Lynn vi). This remains a compelling and relevant topic in American Indian studies because native Americans still live under colonial institutions. If native people are *in* (settler) colonialism, then postcolonial and decolonization in the native or indigenous framework is purely talk, an empty idea without substance. Native and indigenous people remain "the most colonized people on the planet" (Cook-Lynn v).

Furthermore, American colonialism permeates many aspects of native American life, such as the scholarly tradition, which in itself is a colonial construct, forcing natives to strive for acceptance in Western intellectual models and continually to fight for academia to distinguish indigeneity as a serious category of analysis. Thus, to be supportive of postcolonial studies is to be unremittingly hopeful. Even if many scholars believe that, at some point, there will be an end to the extensive antagonism of

colonialism and its resistance, it is doubtful that there will be a reckoning of the long-term consequences, especially within academia.

All these nuances and contradictions distill into a single question: if indigenous and native people are still under colonialism, how can they find identity and culture *within* settler colonialism or postcolonialism? According to Coulthard, "One of the preconditions for establishing a 'postcolonial' relationship is the development of an intellectual community of indigenous 'word warriors' [Vizenor's term] capable of engaging the legal and political discourses of the state" (Coulthard 44). Yet, those conditions do not readily apply to native Americans; as Coulthard says, it is an unfortunate but inevitable fact that the rights and will of indigenous peoples are construed and interpreted by judges and policymakers from non-indigenous institutions.

One final point I want to raise in this introduction is the nature of settler colonialism and the confrontation between the United States government and the native people through the American Indian Movement (AIM)[11] and court cases demanding fundamental rights and fair treatment. Native Americans need to re-think the question of settler colonialism from a different perspective and use native literature, particularly through the Peoplehood Matrix, because this model connects all indigenous Americans, to establish a strong identity through the four sacred elements sacred history, ceremonial cycle, language, and land. In short, the oppressors of native Americans have never left, so

[11] The work of the American Indian Movement. AIM was founded in 1968 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This movement was grassroots to fight against police brutality and racial profiling. It launched the Indigenous Civil Rights Movement.

the issue is settler colonialism still. To combat this concept and expose exploitation, we must confront the question of the damage and destruction of settler colonialism.

Chapter One addresses traditional oral stories known in the Peoplehood Matrix as sacred history. This chapter follows the works of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony,* and Frances Washburn's *Elsie's Business* as they challenge the dominant narrative and illustrate that native experiences are not just defined to a large extent by stories of anguish, brutality, cruelty, and unpredictable violence. Instead, these stories have helped guide native American communities. All these novels expose the destructive forces of settler colonialism and its impact on culture.

Chapter Two discusses the element of Ceremonial Cycles in the Peoplehood Matrix, through the novels of N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn,* Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony,* and Francis Washburn *Elsie's Business.* Native People use ceremonies to honor the natural world for the provisions and bounty of life. The Peoplehood Matrix states that Ceremonial Cycle is a series of interconnected ceremonies that are an essential part of indigenous cultures. These ceremonies serve multiple purposes, including reinforcing cultural values and beliefs, strengthening social bonds, and providing a way to connect with the spiritual realm. The Peoplehood Matrix sees the Ceremonial Cycle as a crucial aspect of native peoples' cultural survival and resilience. By participating in these ceremonies and passing them on to future generations, native communities can maintain their cultural identity and strengthen their connection to their ancestors and the natural world.

Chapter Three focuses on Language and the loss and reclaiming of language. The Peoplehood Matrix states that indigeneity is tied to the four factors of language, land, sacred history, and ceremony cycle. This chapter uses history to demonstrate how the storytellers like Momaday, Silko, Washburn, Vizenor, and Jones explore identity, sovereignty, and self-determination issues for indigenous people through language as language is tied to the four categories and is an essential part of indigenous identity and culture. The authors illustrate how language was used as a tool of oppression against indigenous peoples. However, Momaday, Silko, Washburn, and Jones highlight that the efforts to revitalize indigenous languages are part of a larger movement toward decolonization and self-determination.

Chapter Four concerns land; in the Peoplehood Matrix, land is seen as a dynamic and evolving concept, with different meanings and values assigned to it by the many tribes/nations that once occupied that space before settler colonialism. The Peoplehood Matrix proclaims the importance of recognizing and respecting the diversity of indigenous perspectives on land while also advocating for the protection and restoration of tribal lands and natural resources. This chapter uses history, along with the texts of Silko, Momaday, Washburn, and Jones, to discuss the devastating impact of settler colonialism and the current fight for native land back. In the texts, Silko, Momaday, Washburn, and Jones indicate how important the land is to native people and the concept that the land and landscape provide balance and healing.

Chapter One: Sacred Stories

The Peoplehood Matrix is a theory developed by indigenous scholars that seeks to define what it means to be indigenous. The theory states that indigeneity is tied to the four categories of sacred history, ceremonial cycle, language, and place, so much so that a loss of even one of the components would mean a loss of identity or peoplehood. The Peoplehood Matrix is often used in indigenous Studies to explore issues related to identity, sovereignty, and self-determination. In native studies, the peoplehood matrix is an essential framework focusing on indigeneity. The concept illustrates that indigenous people are not monolithic but encompassing in that there are diverse conceptions on practically all elements of cultural identity. According to Cherokee scholar Tom Holm, indigenous Peoplehood consists of four overarching and interpenetrating elements. These categories of language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and land/territory exhibit an interconnectedness that highlights native culture and transcends notions of statehood, nationalism, gender, ethnicity, and sectarian memberships. Holm's conception of peoplehood shows that no single factor is more important than the others because there is no hierarchy. Instead, Peoplehood centers indigenous people and gives them a system of shared responsibilities and communal relationships, which permits the people to recognize themselves and provide order to their reality. The connections between sacred history and the other elements of the ceremonial cycle, language, and land seem evident. However:

> The most resourceful means by which sacred history can be transmitted is through stories, although winter counts, wampum, pictographs, and petroglyphs have also been used by Native peoples to pass on historical information. In the creation stories of many different peoples from the Navajo and Laguna to the Kiowa, it is through language, usually oral stories, that existence is called into being. The maintenance of sacred history— the dialogic acts of remembering and retelling— requires ceremonial performance as a reminder, sometimes as a way to honor spirits or gods, which ties the two meaning-making activities together and to the people (Holms et al. 61-2).

Sacred stories are important for indigenous people as they play a significant role in their social, cultural, and spiritual lives. These stories are referred to as oral traditions, as they are passed down through generations and are considered a fundamental part of native American identity and heritage. This is the concept Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Frances Washburn's *Elsie's Business* use to convey the importance of sacred history [stories] in their significant culture and the culture of other tribal nations to the peoplehood. In reclaiming these stories, these authors' work becomes a narrative that is not just a work of fiction but a powerful tool for understanding the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism in native American communities.

Since the history of the United States is not the history of the native American people, it is no secret that native populations have suffered from genocide at the hands of their Euro-American colonists due to settler colonialism. Native peoples have been degraded and stripped of their identities, culture, and land, often for their supposed betterment. In the novel *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko seeks to reclaim the sacred history of the native American people, particularly the Laguna Pueblo people culture, through the framework of the Peoplehood Matrix. Silko points out the devastating effects of settler colonialism through her characters. The peoplehood model unlocks new areas

for native literary studies because writings by native Americans are compared to the established Western literary canon. However, these comparisons are often without substance because much of native American literature is connected to the peoplehood or, as Holms, Pearson, and Chavis state, "the literature of the peoplehood rather than of individual alienation or conflict" (18). Billy J Stratton and Frances Washburn said, "Sacred histories were predicated upon events that happened at specific places that could be visited by tribal members and stand as monuments that keep contemporary people to their past" (Stratton and Washburn 68). What Silko's *Ceremony* does is confront the dominant narrative and show that the native experiences are not just defined to a large extent by stories of anguish, brutality, cruelty, and unpredictable violence.

In the later part of the twentieth century, native writers started to address this burden of history. The Anishinaabe thinker and storier Gerald Vizenor responded with the adoption and redefinition of the term survivance. "Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (Vizenor 11). However, survivance is a way for indigenous Americans to assert their cultural sovereignty and challenge the dominant narratives of American history and identity. Native American stories are more than mere entertainment or folklore; they are a means of survival and resistance against settler colonialism and cultural erasure. By telling and retelling these stories, native Americans can maintain a connection to their cultural heritage and assert their own cultural identity in the face of assimilation.

Furthermore, one stylistic method that dominates native literature is the use of oral narrative or tradition in the form of stories, which construct the sacred history of native people. These oral traditions vary according to the tribe or nation involved. For example, the feature that binds them together is the Peoplehood which shows the details of the rich history of the once-authentic and organic world that native people once inhabit. These stories offer insight into the past and invoke the past into the present and future. In turn, this native storytelling can act as a form of healing, as stories have a unique way of holding and knitting together the fabrics of native societies:

> Native stories are not just ways of presenting Native beliefs or history but are strategies for survival. They are means for producing and directing critical knowledge, insight, and energy. Native stories create consciousness of Native realities and opportunities for survival beyond the boundaries of colonialism and domination. They are active modes of survivance (Vizenor 11).

Equally, native Americans have a different history-recording method, in which they pass down tribal experience, indicating that the story itself – not its precise chronological location – is important. Some tribes, particularly the plains Indians, adopt the idea of recording a specific time sequence to remember the community's immediate practices – in that "the best-known method of recording these experiences was the winter count of the plains Indian; a large animal hide, usually buffaloes, would be specially tanned, and each year a figure or symbol illustrating the most memorable event experienced by a community would be painted on the hide" (Vine Deloria, Jr. God Is Red. 99-100). Native Americans have also used other practices to record their histories and cultural traditions. For example, many native American cultures have constructed sophisticated and comprehensive works of art, such as paintings, carvings, and weaving, that tell stories

and convey cultural meanings. They also used petroglyphs, pictographs, and other forms of rock art to record their histories and beliefs.

Each native culture has different methods of ceremony and traditional storytelling, which reflect phenomenal memories and recitations of events. Native history is also generational as it is passed from one generation to the next and often in ways that invoke the notion of the sacred. This is often accomplished through a medicine man, a storyteller, or a tribal elder, highlighting the critical role oral tradition and storytelling continues to have in the lives and culture of native American people. Not only do these stories frame the concept of reality, but they also bind literature and history, along with spirituality and language, together, thereby creating a conception of cultural identity or peoplehood. Oral storytelling traditions have given great comfort to many as native people have suffered from the violence of oppression and deracination at the hands of their Euro-American oppressors. Oral tradition offers an intimate knowledge of a language that connects the past to the present and forms a bond through shared struggles of what was lost while celebrating the capacity for native survivance.

The vital importance of a native oral tradition and narrative storytelling is illustrated in the works of Leslie Marmon Silko, as she integrates traditional Laguna stories and sacred histories into works such as *Storyteller* and *Ceremony*. In the opening of *Ceremony,* Silko starts with a Laguna Pueblo creation story and reveals how the world came into being:

> Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman is sitting in her room
> and whatever she thinks about appears.
> She thought of her sisters,

> Nau'ts'ity'i and I'tcts'ity'i,
> And together they created the Universe
> this world
> and the four worlds below.
> Thought-Woman, the spider,
> named things and as she named
> them they appeared (Silko 4).

The historical significance of this framing story/narrative is crucial to the Laguna Pueblo people as this oral narrative gives an alternative to how the world came to be, which differs from the Christian concept of the world and the Biblical creation stories that were particularly forced onto indigenous people. It is critical to see how Ts'its'tsi'nako/ Thought-Woman works as she thinks the world comes into being. Essentially, the world comes into being based on the words *inside* the head of a strong mother, who births her children into life from ideas, connecting them to the cosmos all around them. Unlike the Christian god, Ts'its'tsi'nako does not *need* to actually speak the words to create life. Also, the narrative shows the crucial function of storytelling and the service it provides to the Laguna Pueblo culture. Oral traditions or sacred history is not for just passing on history, entertainment, and religious beliefs to the peoplehood. It is about sharing the rituals of ceremonies that link this world to the mythological divinities and concepts that act as a guide for them.

This story offers a compelling illustration of how sacred history operates in the Peoplehood Matrix, which provides a deeper understanding of the complex issues and themes that Silko explores in the novel. The Peoplehood matrix highlights the interconnectedness of various factors that influence the lives and experiences of Tayo and the Laguna Pueblo people and offers insights into the ways in which individuals and

communities navigate these challenges. For example, Silko touches on the importance of passing these sacred histories through the generations, the influence they have, and the pride elders take in combatting the dominant culture and its assimilationist outlook, reconstructing these stories as a re-memory to understand the universe and how they came into being. As part of the sacred history of the Laguna Pueblo people, this creation tale sustains an inherent power that can support their community beyond immediate clan and tribal influence and even after long periods of time. For example, the power of storytelling is demonstrated through the character of Betonie, a medicine man who guides Tayo on his healing journey. As Betonie explains, the stories he tells are not his own but rather belong to the collective consciousness of his people. That collective consciousness is a fundamental part of Laguna Pueblo and other tribal nations' cultural heritage and identity. These stories contain teachings, morals, and values that have been passed down from generation to generation, and they serve as a way of preserving and transmitting the cultural knowledge of native American peoples.

As Ts'its'tsi'nako [Thought Woman] thinks, the world comes into being. Therefore, these creation stories directly reflect the worlds of the Laguna Pueblo people, who they are, and where they come from. These stories are an integral part of the community as they guide and share through the generation the simplicity and the complication of life. For illustration, the stories serve as a means of communication, education, and healing, connecting individuals with their heritage, culture, and spirituality. Through the power of storytelling, the community is strengthened and sustained, passing on wisdom and tradition to future generations. For example, the story

of how *Fly and Hummingbird* honor Corn Mother, “They gave her blue pollen and yellow pollen/they gave her turquoise beads/they gave her prayer stick” (70), teaches how to honor the earth. Such is the power in the sacred history that helps the Laguna Pueblo people in their struggle for self-determination, as these stories are tied to memories that help indigenous communities cope with the complications of colonial trauma while informing them of their duty to the Ts’its’tsi’nako. The stories in *Ceremony* serve as a means of resistance against settler colonialism and assimilation. They connect the Laguna Pueblo and other tribal nations and individuals with their cultural roots and help them resist the dominant culture’s efforts to erase their history and identity.

To demonstrate, the story of the Pueblo creation story is used to teach the younger generation about the importance of respecting and living in harmony with nature, which is crucial to the Pueblo way of life. Besides, the stories in the novel highlight the resilience and strength of indigenous communities in the face of oppression. Particularly the story of the native American soldiers who fought in World War II points out the struggle for self-determination and the resistance against the dominant culture’s attempts to strip indigenous people of their agency. In sharing details of the struggles that native men faced after the return from the war, Silko is testifying to the hardship, showing the struggle for self-determination of the Laguna Pueblo and other tribal nations and their efforts to heal from the traumatic impact of settler colonialism and other factors that still affect indigenous people. Furthermore, the traditional oral stories serve as a means of resistance against assimilation, reconnecting individuals with their cultural heritage and identity. These stories highlight the resistance, resilience, and strength of the

Laguna Pueblo and other indigenous communities in the face of oppression, illustrating the importance of preserving cultural memory and history for future generations. In other words, this history grounds native people like the Laguna Pueblo and opens pathways for healing from trauma.

Silko's *Ceremony* follows Tayo, a young cross-blood Laguna Pueblo person[12] returning home from World War II to the reservation. He has PTSD and cannot cope with his memories, as well as the sense of survivor guilt he carries due to the death of a cousin who went to war with him. Tayo suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder because of his experience in the war. However, Tayo also suffers from what Lawrence Gross calls Post Apocalypse Stress Syndrome:

> The theory of postapocalypse stress syndrome argues that in the wake of the apocalypse, Indian societies are in a situation in which post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has become a pandemic to the culture. It also has a social dimension in that institutions cannot fulfill their historical mission of maintaining a stable and viable society. Additionally, since PASS affects social institutions as well, it cannot simply be thought of as PTSD raised to a cultural whole. Normally, social institutions would help society recover from disaster. But, without the assistance of social institutions, post-apocalypse stress syndrome affects successive generations, and it takes a culture at least 100-150 years to fully recover from its effects" (Lawrence W. Gross. "The Comic Vision of Anishinaabe Culture and Religion (437).

Therefore, Post Apocalypse Stress Syndrome differs from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which is an anxiety disorder that develops in reaction to physical injury and severe mental and emotional distress. Each disorder adds many complexities to Silko's character of Tayo as he has to navigate these distressing factors and many other issues to help

[12] The Laguna Pueblo People are from West-Central Albuquerque, New Mexico. They are a federally recognized tribe. The Laguna Pueblo are lives are still influenced by the Catholic church.

himself and rebuild his community. It is clear that Tayo suffers from PASS and PTSD as Silko demonstrates the generational trauma Tayo is reared under and his active PTSD, and survivor's guilt. For example, Tayo cannot cope because he feels guilty that he survives and his cousin/brother did not. He is also punished for his mother's mistakes and treated differently because of his mix-blood status--- a "half breed," his light skin and hazel eyes a constant reminder of his mother's transgression. "Since he could remember, he had known Auntie's shame for what his mother had done, and Auntie's shame for him…Years later, he understood what it was about white men and Indian women; the disgrace of Indian women who went with them" (57). These stories by Auntie to Tayo about his mother shape some of Tayo's struggles with his identity.[13]

Additionally, he is still emotionally connected to the jungle of the Philippines as he remembers the trauma he witnessed and endured. "My uncle Josiah was there that day. Yet I know he couldn't have been there [.] He was thousands of miles away, at home in Laguna. We were in the Philippine jungles" (114). It seems like Silko is demonstrating how the effects of PASS and PTSD are and how they shape and play an important aspect in society, especially Tayo's connection with the past and the present. Thus, by telling and retelling these oral traditions, along with how indigenous people learn not to take each other for granted. Retelling the stories also builds up and molds the community to form a strong connection with the ancestors. For example, Betonie stresses that everyone has a role in the community and that each person's contributions are vital. He stresses the

[13] This concept with discussed through Homi Bhabha's "Theory of Mimicry" in chapter two.

importance of not taking each other for granted and treating each other with kindness and respect. In helping Tayo and sharing his story and the importance of ceremony,

> The people nowadays have an idea about the ceremonies. They think ceremonies must be performed exactly as they have always been done, maybe because one slip-up or mistake and the whole ceremony must stopped…That much is true. . .but long ago when the people were given these ceremonies, the changing began… you see in many ways, the ceremonies have always been changing" (Silko 116).

Betonie's story is a powerful reminder of the significance of oral traditions in the Laguna Pueblo's cultures and the significance of community and solidarity in overcoming adversity. As Lawrence Gross claims, "relying on our traditional stories to learn the lessons of being a good relative can help contribute to that cause. Having healthy families will, in turn, help the culture remain strong and vibrant." (Gross 134).[14] However, not all scholars of native American literature were supportive of Silko's approach, with Paula Gunn Allen claiming that she revealed and shared sacred history precious to the Laguna people in an unauthorized way with the public.

Allen argues that "the story she [Leslie Marmon Silko] lays alongside the novel is a clan story [Laguna Pueblo] and is not to be told outside of the clan" (Allen 383).[15] To Allen and many others, origin stories are real and imbued with a supernatural element. However, an argument can be made that Silko is reclaiming the stories from Franz Boas,

[14] Cultural Sovereignty and Native American Hermeneutics in the Interpretation of the Sacred Stories of the Anishinaabe 134.

[15] Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's "Ceremony."

who revealed and published many of these stories in 1898, 1916, and 1935.[16] Thus, in using the stories, she is reclaiming them for her people. In response to Paula Gunn Allen's criticism of the use of sacred stories in *Ceremony,* Silko has acknowledged the sensitivity of working with traditional Laguna Pueblo stories and the potential for misinterpretation or misrepresentation. However, she argues that these stories are a vital part of the cultural heritage of the Laguna Pueblo communities and should be shared and passed down to future generations. Silko emphasizes the importance of understanding the cultural context and meaning behind these stories rather than appropriating them for personal gain or literary effect. She points out that her use of sacred stories in the novel *Ceremony* was not meant to be a literal retelling but rather a reimagining and interpretation of these stories for a contemporary audience (Paula Gunn Allen "Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's 'Ceremony"). Therefore, it is baffling, then, that Allen takes such a strong offense in the sharing of these sacred stories because Silko did not objectify nor desecrate the sacred history, nor did she explain in detail or even fetishize the narrative. Instead, Silko uses them for what they are: a tool for self-discovery and guidance to reconnect with nature and with other native people, which offers ceremonial healing.

To illustrate, through the use of these stories, Silko creates a powerful sense of continuity and connection between the present-day characters and their ancestors. This connection is especially important for Tayo, as he struggles to come to terms with his

[16] See Frank Boas's *Keresan Texts Volume VIII Part 1* for the sacred stories Leslie Marmon Silko used in her novel *Ceremony*.

experiences as a World War II veteran and his place in the world as a crossblood person. In addition, these traditional stories in the novel serve to guide or map Tayo as he embarks on his journey of self-discovery. For example, the story of Reed Woman, the healer, teaches Tayo to listen to nature:

> This one," she said, pointing at a tall dark green plant with around pointed leaves, deep veined like fossil shells. The flat seed pods were so thick and green, but later in the fall, the sky would dry thin and cold winds would strip away the hull to the last translucent membrane, holding the dark eyes of the seed inside it. . . I will remember it (Silko 211).

What Silko did was simply disturb the process of things and take steps toward decolonization. The novel *Ceremony* is a compelling critique of the destructive effects of settler colonialism and a call for decolonization. To clarify through the portrayal of the experiences of the protagonist Tayo and other Laguna Pueblo and native American characters, Silko highlights the ways in which settler colonialism has disrupted the natural order of things and has caused deep trauma and suffering. Additionally, *Ceremony* takes steps towards decolonization by reclaiming and celebrating native American traditions and stories. In using traditional Laguna Pueblo stories and other native American narratives, Silko asserts the value and importance of indigenous knowledge and perspectives while critiquing the Western scientific worldview that has been imposed on native American communities, arguing that this worldview has contributed to the destruction of the natural world and the loss of cultural traditions. In "Indigenous Radical Resurgence and Multispecies Landscapes Leslie Marmon Silko's The Turquoise Ledge." Nathaniel Otjen claims that:

> Leslie Marmon Silko, in particular, has used literature to defy, critique, and dismantle historical and ongoing forms of settler colonialism, especially in Storyteller, Ceremony, and Almanac of the Dead. By exposing the structures and operations of colonization, globalization, militarization, and technology throughout her oeuvre, Silko replaces dominant claims to power with Indigenous, decolonial claims to place (Otjen 135-6).

To explain, Silko uses the stories to display and form an understanding of what happened in the devastating past and continues to occur in the present- oral stories are a way to come to terms as the world keeps merging. Silko claims that "the fifth world has become entangled with European names: the names of the rivers, the hills, the names of the animals and plants- all of creation suddenly has two names: an Indian name and white name" (62). Silko is reasserting the past and incorporating into the novel the old-time story about Hummingbird and Green Fly, who help the people purify their town to bring back the "Corn Mother" (XV). Corn Mother represents the abundance and fertility of the earth, and in the Laguna Pueblo culture, corn is a sacred crop that is believed to have been given to the people by the Corn Mother. She is seen as the protector and sustainer of the people. Corn Mother represents a connection to the cultural heritage and a source of healing for native people, and her teachings and blessings are passed down through generations. These "old-time" stories/oral traditions are actually sacred histories that are powerful in their own right, as they guide people and teach them right from wrong and also inform them of things to avoid.

These creation stories are in natural motion in the sense that they are part of the every day- from the exciting to the mundane, as they connect the Laguna Pueblo people to the essence of their being and help develop a solid foundation for their identity because

many stories are tied to family and nature. Furthermore, these creation stories connect with the reality of the world and offer a modicum of peace and healing in their telling, as seen through Tayo. To overcome this trauma, Tayo returns to his heritage; he breaks the cycle of destruction through ceremonies found in oral traditions and shamans, eventually freeing himself from ruination. It appears that Silko is deliberately using Tayo to critique as she is making a statement on settler colonialism through him. Tayo is a product of the forced assimilation policies of the United States government, which sought to erase native American cultures and replace them with white American values. In an interview with Donna Perry, Silko states, "I was acutely aware of how the teachers made fun of Pueblo beliefs about animals and plants. It was really shoved in the faces of Native American people how backward they were and how white man's science was just so great and so wonderful" (Perry 318). Therefore, Silko is following Ortiz and other indigenous writers in taking a stand, protesting, and advocating for her people. In "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism," Simon Ortiz proclaims that:

> In the decade of the 70's, it has been the predominant subject and theme that has concerned Indian writers. And it has been the oral tradition which has carried this concern in the hearts of Indian people until today it is being expressed not only in the novel but in poetry and drama as well. Nevertheless, it is not the oral tradition as transmitted from ages past alone which is the inspiration and source for contemporary Indian literature. It is also because of the acknowledgement by Indian writers of a responsibility to advocate for their people's self-government, [and] sovereignty (Ortiz 12).[17]

[17]Simon J. Ortiz. "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism Author" 12.

Thus, in using oral traditions in Tayo's story, Silko is heeding Ortiz's call and showing a young Laguna Pueblo crossblood man dislocated from his surroundings and searching for peace through the sacred stories that heal. Silko portrays the destructive effects of settler colonialism on the natural environment and shows how native people have a deep connection to the land and see themselves as stewards of the earth. However, settler colonialism and industrialization have destroyed the natural world, with the land being stripped of its resources and polluted by industry. This is reflected in Tayo's experiences with the Laguna Pueblo and his connection to the land.

Equally important is the sacred oral story of Iktoa'ak'o'ya (Reed Woman) and Corn Woman. This oral narrative hints at the parallel worlds inhabited, particularly the fourth world. However, the narrative is not straightforward as the tale tells of drought. Tayo is suffering because he believes he caused the drought in Laguna Pueblo lands as he curses the rain in the Philippines, "he damned the rain until his words were a chant, and he sang it while he crawled through the mud" (11). Unbeknownst to Tayo, the drought has been happening for six years since his departure - "They said it had been that way for the past six years while he was gone" (10). Nevertheless, the narrative of Corn Woman and her sister Reed Woman offers insights and parallels between the telling and Tayo's inner struggles:

> It was summertime
> And Iktoa'ak'o'ya- Reed Woman
> was always taking a bath.
> she spent all day long
> sitting in the river
> splashing down
> the summer rain.

but our sister
Corn Woman
worked hard all day
sweating in the sun
getting sore hands
in the cornfield.
Corn woman got tired of that
she got angry
she scolded
her sister for bathing all day long (12).

This oral narrative, which describes the interaction and reasoning between the two sisters, highlights the temporary identity with Iktoa'ak'o'ya- Reed Woman. This identity is not complete because while Tayo returns to Laguna lands, the drought is still present, and the orientation of the figure of Tayo with that of Reed woman serves to remind that although Tayo is home, he is himself and therefore not present spiritually. There is a fracture in the land spiritually- the narrative of Iktoa'ak'o'ya- Reed Woman and Corn Woman is the representation of that fracture. Tayo is connected to that fracture because of the conflicts he has within himself. Therefore, the story of Reed Woman and Corn Woman resembles Tayo's inner discord. This oral narrative highlights and calls attention to Tayo's sense of responsibility for the drought. Tayo recalls his desperate attempt to keep his dying brother Rocky alive from a Japanese Corporal during the death march "he could hear his own voice praying against the rain" (10). Tayo parallels this narrative as he could "see the consequence of his praying" (13). Therefore, he identifies with Corn Mother- as her feelings triggered the departure of her water spirit sister Reed Woman and, by extension, Tayo's brother/cousin Rocky became aligned with the figure of Reed Woman- one of the siblings pair. This is a very strategic placement by Leslie Marmon Silko as it allows

readers to learn from the story of Reed woman. The moral of the narrative, however, according to Robert M Nelson, is that Tayo "need to see beyond the apparent separation between himself and Rocky, between himself and the rain, between himself and the land, and between the White and the Indian in himself" (69). It is of consequence that Tayo figures out his disconnection as to heal, he has to embrace every aspect of himself. In using Iktoa'ak'o'ya and Corn Woman in Tayo's journey of healing and self-discovery, Silko represents the different aspects of his cultural identity and provides him with the guidance and support he needs to overcome his feelings of displacement and alienation. Tayo's encounters with these mythological figures help him to find a sense of wholeness and integration that allows him to move forward with his life. In "Story Telling: The Fiction of Leslie Silko," James Ruppert contends that these oral traditions are genuine:

> It is the stories that grant order and form to the flow of events, and these stories codify meaning in such a way that the listener or reader can understand events in the world around him. Only when the reader understands the meaning of events can he act in an effective manner. But to do so, it is essential that the reader understands that the stories and reality in the novel are one (Ruppert 78-85).[18]

By utilizing this sacred history, Silko ties Tayo's struggles to the happenings in the Laguna Pueblo community. Tayo suffers from Post-Apocalypse Stress Syndrome/PASS and his guilt for surviving when his cousin/brother Rocky did not. Tayo struggles with feelings of alienation and displacement as he tries to reintegrate into his Laguna Pueblo community. Therefore, Tayo's experiences are an example of the ways in which the

[18] Ruppert James. "Stories" The Laguna Pueblo People are from West-Central Albuquerque, New Mexico. They are a federally recognized tribe. The Laguna Pueblo are lives are still influenced by the Catholic church.

Laguna Pueblo and other tribal nations have been subjected to assimilation into the Western world. However, thanks to his Uncle Josiah, Tayo can navigate back into the life he *wants* because the sacred oral narrative is with him to guide him on this journey. Silko tracks Tayo's tale of finding peace, which is similar to the journey of discovery undertaken by N. Scott Momaday's main protagonist, Abel, in *House Made of Dawn*. Although Tayo did not succumb to the temptation of murder and living in exile, Abel's path is similarly traumatic and anchorless. Abel, like Tayo, feels disenfranchised after serving in World War II, and the only way they can truly heal is through the oral traditions that guided them back to their authentic world. Abel was able to find himself in the stories his grandfather told. For Abel, being rooted in Pueblo Jemez tradition serves as a way for him to connect with his cultural heritage and identity. As Abel listens to his grandfather's stories, he begins to see himself reflected in the characters and experiences described. For example, he hears about a Kiowa warrior who is forced to leave his people and return to a world that is unfamiliar and hostile. Abel sees himself in this character and begins to understand that his own struggles with alienation and dislocation are not unique, "he could hear the faintest edge of his grandfather's voice on the deep and distant breathing out of sight, going on and on toward the dawn" (Momaday 197). In returning home and remembering the old stories, Abel found some peace in himself.

Another story that parallels what Tayo is experiencing is the tale of Pa'caya'nyi, which is a prime example of guidance. Pa'caya'nyi's narrative is intended to teach appropriate conduct and warn of the consequences of actions if one does not follow the

right path. According to Billy J. Stratton and Frances Washburn in "The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature:"

> The story of Pa'caya'nyi included in *Ceremony* is an example of a type of sacred oral history that is meant to teach proper ways of behavior. The implicit lesson in this story is that people need to pay attention to, and honor, their own sacred traditions and ceremonies in order to maintain balance in their lives. The stories from oral tradition in *Ceremony* are not only told in parallel form but are also interwoven and interconnected to the main plot structure of the novel (Billy J. Stratton and Frances Washburn. "The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature" 63).

This sacred history follows a fatherless medicine man, Ck'o'yo, who is enamored with magic and often performs magic tricks for people, making miraculous things appear out of walls, such as bears and water. Ck'o'yo is a witch [not a trickster, tricksters are not destructive in the way he is] who calls himself a medicine man, and so he fools the brothers who tend Mother Corn's altar into abandoning Mother Corn and her altar and pursuing magic instead. The point of this story is to caution people that life is not easy and that things that seem too good to be true often are. An indication of witchery or magic may be fun for a time, but it cannot sustain the plants and animals. Therefore, one must think before accepting quick fixes without proof that they actually work. In sharing Pa'caya'nyi's story, Silko offers a glimpse into the Laguna Pueblo community. She subtly warns that all is not as it appears—for example, the behaviors of the World War II veterans Harley, Pinky, Leroy, and Emo; each of these characters have inner struggles and seems to be missing an integral part of themselves. Harley drinks to feel, Pinky and Leroy want to relive the war, a time they felt like they were relevant, and Emo is angry and wants justice for what was lost to native Americans. The Pa'caya'nyi narrative tells

us there is something amiss among the people, perhaps that they have strayed too far from their heritage and their mother. “The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget when people misbehave” (42). Through the portrayal of native military veterans, Silko is hinting not only at “battle fatigue” or PTSD, but Post Apocalypse Stress Syndrome, a form of generational trauma affecting indigenous people more broadly. It should be understood that World War II had an adverse effect on indigenous men. In a sense, they were accepted by society and almost revered, but when the war was over, they were discarded and had to struggle to reconnect with who they were and their culture. Thus, with each oral tradition, Silko parallels the hardship of settler colonialism and the aftermath that Tayo and the community battle daily. Ultimately, the stories illustrate the systemic failures of Western culture and guide Tayo back to his home, where he can heal and find some semblance of peace in nature.

Whereas the sacred history from *Ceremony* deals with tales of the origins and deep tribal history and pantheon of the Laguna Pueblo, the sacred history presented in Frances Washburn’s *Elsie’s Business* emphasizes the stories and traditions of Oglala Sioux people, who are part of the Lakota Nation.[19] Washburn uses the rich oral traditions revered by the Lakota people to weave her tale of trauma and tragedy of the not-too-distant past and the present. Washburn evocatively opens the novel with intriguing narration:

[19] The Oglala Sioux Tribe is federally recognized in South Dakota. The Oglala are part of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota people. Many members of the tribe members reject the term “Sioux.” However, it is in the official name on their site. [Oglalalakokotanation.net] Therefore, I will refer to them as Oglala Sioux. Most of the Oglala live on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

> if you want to know more about Elsie's story than just the official reports, you have to ask one of the grandfathers, because they know all the old stories as well as the new ones, the latest gossip, and sometimes it is all the same stories happening over and over. Someone just changes things up a little bit, a name here, a place there (Washburn 1).

These opening lines frame the mystery that the novel seeks to address within the context of oral traditions and the subjective meaning one can derive from the telling of stories. It seems somewhat strange from a Western epistemological point of view that gossip is treated as serious material. However, for native peoples whose most sacred stories are conveyed through spoken language, we might understand how there can be valuable meaning in every word, even so-called idle rumors.

Additionally, oral narratives are preserved as memories and employed as historically valid and culturally valuable information about the past. Furthermore, storytelling provides answers to a people's history regarding where they come from and how to live properly in the world and survive. These memories then become stories that move into dialogue with other accounts, providing caution and telling a tribe when to act and react.

By focalizing Elsie's story through the perspective of an elder/grandfather figure, Washburn points readers to a vital source of oral traditions, those who possess the knowledge to retell the tale using a contextual understanding of the past. In fact, Washburn utilizes a similar method to Silko's, stating that these stories always have been around; only the names of the people have changed: "It seems like I already heard these stories before . . . [here and throughout] only thing is, the names sound different"(Silko 242). For example, the first chapter in *Elsie's Business* is entitled "Anukite," but before

the grandfather figure can explain who Anukite is, he has to relay her origins. He tells of a Spider called Inktomi who was bored and perhaps a little too curious. Inktomi has a knack for being in everyone's business, and being a trickster, he convinces the first man and the first woman that he can help them. But trickster figures do not help; instead, they create chaos:

> *So one day, Inktomi, the Spider was going along*
> *And he was thinking heavy.*
> *All the people were busy going about their business and*
> *Inktomi had no business to go about.*
> *Whenever he tried to work with the people, they told him*
> *To go away and mind his own business.*
> *But he didn't have any business to mind.*
> *So, Inktomi, the Spider was just going along*
> *And he walked by the lodge of the first man and first woman,*
> *Wazi and Wakanka.*
> *Inktomi noticed that they were just sitting there,*
> *not doing anything.*
> *They sighed real big from time to time, and they didn't look happy.*
> *So Inktomi stops.*
> *"What's wrong?" he asks.*
> *"Oh, it's nothing that you can fix," Wazi says.*
> *"How do you know that?" Inktomi replies. "Ask me."*
> *"Go mind your own business," says Wakanka.*
> *"Let me help! I can make your business be my business,"*
> . . .
> *He does not see Inktomi, peeking from the corner.*
> *Anpetu Wi looks and his eyes are open. Anpetu Wi points his finger and half of Ite's face turns ugly.*
> *He points again and Ite is banished to the Earth and ever afterwards,*
> *The people will call her Anukite*
> *The Double Faced Woman* (Washburn 5-7).

Inktomi's tale reveals a crafty being who would do anything to create anarchy and mess with people's minds. However, this trickster figure is not evil but has a misplaced sense of what helping means. But a trickster always knows what it is doing—and mostly thinks

to “test” human characters. It seems that by framing Elsie Roberts’s story with the story of a trickster figure, Washburn sets up a tale that will be distorted, manipulated, and altered, depending on who is doing the telling. In using the Double-faced woman from Lakota oral history, Washburn illustrates the importance of the different stages of life and womanhood through Anukite.

Nevertheless, Washburn is crafty in using the trickster and the Double-Faced Woman’s origin as a means to interrogate and expose Elsie and her Lakota community. Washburn uses sacred history to invoke the past to reveal how Anukite, the Double-Faced Woman, came into existence and the role she represents to the Lakota people. Lakota's stories are not well known. Therefore, Washburn’s invitation to non-Lakota people and even non-natives to see Elsie’s story from a native perspective is provocative. Likewise, to explore the circumstances of Elsie’s life and death, Washburn is summoning the past and relating it to the present, correlating events to show that traditional oral stories are alive and helping her community understand the happening in society. However, this method of storytelling is the only way to convey Elsie’s story, as the oral narrative offers the most effective and Lakota-centered way to understand the community’s treatment of one of their own and the seriousness of violating conventional Lakota norms. To clarify, Elsie is punished for her mother’s actions. There is an importance of cultural values and norms in shaping social relationships and maintaining harmony within the community. Elsie’s mother was considered a *one-only* – as Oscar states, “some rules must not be broken. Elsie came to be as the result of broken rules, and then she broke some herself, and that’s the heartbreak of it all” (4). The oral stories also

connect Elsie to the location and her ancestral land - Standing Rock and they have a larger purpose in exposing Elsie's business. For example, once the grandfather figure, Oscar DuCharme finishes discussing Inktomi and the creation of Anukite; readers are left with questions about the significance of the Double-Faced Woman. In Lakota cosmology, Anukite is a fascinating phenomenon. She has three manifestations, and in each form, she is dangerous (Vine Deloria Jr). Her first is Anukite, with faces on both sides of her head. Her second manifestation is two women tied together, and her third is called Sinte Sapela Win – or the Black-Tailed Deer Woman, who tempts and seduces hunters to madness and death. Anukite represents duality and symbolizes one side more than the other because she is not all one thing. As such, she is neither good nor evil; she *is* the duality that people struggle with daily. From one origin story in the sacred history of the Lakota, Washburn artfully constructs the tale of Elsie Roberts within a specifically Lakota epistemological framework. It is unique that oral tradition can address matters such as what happened to Elsie as we know from the opening pages that she is dead in the narrative present, but who she is as a Lakota woman and what she became in the eyes of the community.

Washburn uses all the forms of Anukite to represent Elsie as a Double-Faced Woman who appears innocent but can also play the role of seductress, finally embodying the Sinte Sapela Win. Elsie's story is not new, as the Lakota sacred history portrays it as an old, familiar story. During the colonial experience, indigenous women struggled (and *still* struggle) to protect themselves from a brutal system that inflicted injustice on them. For illustration, "Lakota Woman" by Mary Crow Dog states that Lakota women "had

been stripped of their pride, their dignity, their sense of self-worth. They had lost their roles too. They had lost their land, their homes, their families, [and] their way of life. And they had lost their dignity as women. They were being raped by white men and beaten by Indian men. They had nothing left" (Crow Dog). Therefore, sacred history, as Anukite teaches modern Lakota women about the dangers of the world and the possibility of protecting themselves.

In utilizing the sacred history, Washburn retells the story of the Double-Faced Woman, reforming it as a modern version of *Elsie's Business,* especially by showing the brutal attack a group of violent young white men commits against Elsie. The brutal assault Washburn presents readers with establishes the atrocious history of settler colonialism and systematic violence against native women, emphasizing the helplessness they face when society refuses to help. Even as a modern story, Elsie is subjected to victim-blaming, the burning of the evidence, and society and authorities' refusal to accuse the boys of rape and attempted murder. "I also want to know when you goddamned Indians are going to quit trying to kill each other…was she drinking" (29). Essentially, *Elsie's Business* illustrates the effect of settler colonialism and the dangers that the Lakota and other native and indigenous women have faced and continue to face at the hands of the colonizers. The fact that Elsie does not receive justice for the crimes committed against her emphasizes that she must seek justice and heal for herself. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that Elsie *is* the Double-Faced Woman, and she exacts her revenge – *her* form of justice that cannot be denied – until she is stopped.

Therefore, Elsie, as a retelling of the Double-Faced Woman, is a step toward decolonization because the violence within forces the American (colonizers') authorities to encounter and recognize that indigenous and native people are oppressed continuously through legal, political, and economic means. Washburn emphasizes that traditional oral narratives are cultural inheritance because these stories act as a guidebook and inspire the fight for fundamental rights and sovereignty. That is why native authors apply oral stories to their work, as such stories communicate the struggles of ongoing trauma and preserve the culture while opening up a pathway for decolonization.

In exploring the sacred stories presented in *Ceremony* and *Elsie's Business*, many forms of settler colonialism seemed to affect the community. However, sacred stories guide the peoplehood towards healing and acts of decolonization methods in each narrative. Each of the stories follows the aspect of the Peoplehood Matrix and explores their work, and covers aspects of oral narratives in their novel to challenge dominant narratives of native American history and culture. By incorporating traditional storytelling techniques, each author seeks to undermine the colonialist assumptions that have long dominated Western representations of native American people and offer alternative perspectives on the history and culture of indigenous communities. Native oral stories and written narratives frame the lives of native people and help them preserve their authentic selves and still live and traverse the modern world.

Native oral stories and written narratives play a crucial role in the lives of native people by helping to preserve their cultural traditions, histories, and values in the face of ongoing pressures of assimilation and cultural erasure. These narratives provide a way for

native people to connect with their ancestors and maintain a sense of cultural continuity and identity in the face of modernization and globalization. Additionally, traditional oral narratives allow native people to navigate the complexities and challenges of the modern world by providing a framework for understanding their place within contemporary society to grapple with and resist the ongoing effects of settler colonization and systemic oppression.

In practical terms, this entails a variety of different practices and strategies. For example, many native communities strongly emphasize the transmission of oral narratives and traditional knowledge from one generation to the next through storytelling, ceremony, and other cultural practices. Other communities may also use written narratives, such as novels, poetry, or memoirs, to explore and express their experiences of cultural hybridity, displacement, and resilience. But the use of oral and written narratives in native cultures reflects the ongoing struggles and challenges of indigenous peoples to maintain their cultural traditions and identities in the face of systemic oppression and cultural erasure. By engaging with these narratives and using them to frame their lives and experiences, native people can forge meaningful connections with their past, present, and future and navigate the complex terrain of the modern world with strength, resilience, and dignity.

These stories of *Ceremony*, and *Elsie's Business,* represent a powerful example of not just works of fiction but authoritative tools for understanding the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism in native American communities. Moreover, texts engage with the ongoing struggles that challenge indigenous peoples to maintain their cultural traditions

and identities in the face of the effects of settler colonialism and cultural erasure. However, through its creative use of narrative techniques and its powerful exploration of themes of trauma, healing, and cultural renewal, each novel and the authors offer a compelling and profoundly moving critique of the legacies of settler colonialism and the ongoing struggle for cultural survival and resilience.

Chapter Two: Ceremonial Cycles

The Peoplehood Matrix ceremonial cycle is interwoven and connected to the other three factors of sacred history, language, and land/territory. Native People use ceremonies to honor the natural world for the provisions and bounty of life. According to the Peoplehood Matrix, the ceremonial cycle is a series of interconnected ceremonies that are essential to indigenous cultures. These ceremonies serve multiple purposes, including reinforcing cultural values and beliefs, strengthening social bonds, and providing a way to connect with the spiritual realm. The Peoplehood Matrix sees the ceremonial cycle as crucial to native peoples' cultural survival and resilience; that is why N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony,* and Frances Washburn's *Elsie's Business* use the ceremonial cycle to connect the practice to their culture and the peoplehood to demonstrate that their narrative does not just work as fiction but a powerful tool for understanding the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism in native American communities. These authors use their character to illustrate how vital the ceremonial cycle is to peoplehood, the effects of the practice, and how healing, revitalization, and clarity can manifest.

By participating in these ceremonies and passing them on to future generations, native communities can maintain their cultural identity and strengthen their connection to their ancestors and the natural world. The ceremonial cycle often coincides with seasonal, stellar, planetary, solar, floral, or faunal change that occurs above, below, on the surface,

or within a group's territorial range. In short, the ceremonial cycle is linked through language and sacred history to a particular environment and ecology. It makes up a group's "world" and directly affects its worldview (Holmes et al. 14-15).

Before 1492, the people who inhabited this land had their own cultures, traditional values, and beliefs. These beliefs were significantly unique to each tribe and nation, as they have different oral traditions and sacred stories about their origins. In addition, the rituals and ceremonies of the indigenous people conflicted with European colonial cultures, perspectives, and practices of the colonizers, who then used laws, policies, and institutions to transform how indigenous people thought and acted. To repress native people and decimate their traditions, the United States government promoted policies aimed at eradicating native American cultures and ways of life. To accomplish this, the government introduced its Euro-Christian beliefs and traditional Western values to the natives and then forcefully removing them from their territories, which included the sites where ceremonies and rituals were performed. For example, the 1830 Indian removal act led to the Trails of Tears and, later, to the horror of the Navajo Long Walk[20]. This tactic of dispossession and removal was executed through organized warfare, guerrilla attacks, and forced assimilation. Yet, the United States did not account for the tenacity and strong

[20] The Trail of Tears was an ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of about 60,000 people from the "Five Civilized Tribes" between 1830 and 1850 by the United States government. The Trail of Tears is a particular case I will explore later in the chapter titled "Sacred Lands."
In 1860, Americans and Europeans began settling on Navajo lands in northeastern Arizona and northwestern New Mexico, which led to conflicts between native groups and the United States government. In response to the conflict, the government decided to remove the Navajo from their homeland and march them in the dead of winter for 300 miles to Bosque Redondo Reservation. As a result, two hundred Navajo died from starvation and exposure.

values native Americans had, especially in their connection to traditional beliefs and identity. Recognizing how critical spiritual traditions and ceremonies are to native cultural identity, the United States government banned all native ceremonies in 1883 [Religious Crimes Code of 1883]:

> The Department of Interior's 1883 Code of Indian Offenses—de facto laws that applied only to American Indians—punished Indian dances and feasts by imprisonment or withholding food (treaty rations) for up to 30 days. In addition, any medicine man convicted of encouraging others to follow traditional practices was confined in the agency prison for ten days or until he could provide evidence that he had abandoned his beliefs (Zotigh).[21]

This law includes the related practices of dancing, potlatches, and the ceremonial activities of a medicine person. Indian Agents reinforced this rule through imprisonment and withholding rations. This ban, essentially on native Americans' expressions and practice of their religion, led to one of the most famous ceremonies *and* massacres of native Americans. The Ghost Dance was a spiritual movement developed amongst the Paiute people in 1869. The ceremonial dance began with visions from Waoziwob, an elder of the tribe who predicted a renewal of the Earth and explained the help promised by their ancestors. Another Paiute tribal member, Wovoka, dreamed that the Europeans would leave, the buffalo would return, their ancestors would return to the land, and peace would reign again. The hopeful message of the Ghost Dance was one of peace, with some merging and adoption of Christian ideals in that the ceremonial circle dance promoted the

[21] Zotigh, Dennis. "Native Perspectives on the 40th Anniversary of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act." *Smithsonianmag.com*, Smithsonian Magazine, 30 Nov. 2018, www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2018/11/30/native-perspectives-american-indian-religious-freedom-act/.

idea of a peaceful world to come. This dance spread to many tribes, especially on the northern plains, suffering from European diseases, land encroachment, and constant fighting. James Mooney states:

> The dance induced a hypnotic state in some dancers, with some making an effort to achieve a trance. To help this process, someone would stand in the circle waving a feather or a cloth for dancers to watch. Songs with a faster rhythm were sung to help the dancers wishing to achieve a trance and perhaps experience visions. Those experiencing a trance might leave the circle of dancers and dance on their own or lie on the ground (Mooney). [22]

The Ghost Dance ceremony alarmed the Indian Agents in numerous reservations across the West as they did not like how it brought together different native tribal nations. They thought the Ghost Dance was irrational as they did not understand the movement and the pattern in the style of dancing. To many Euro-Americans at the time, the dance seemed like a reflection of a form of savagery. This interaction became an increasingly urgent concern for the United States Army, who saw the performance of the Ghost Dance as militant and warlike in the movement pattern. The dance appeared alien, exotic, and aggressive to the United States Army. In actuality, the dance:

> was quite the opposite — an emergence of a peaceful resistance movement based on Indian beliefs. It was also a movement of desperation, as existing treaties had been violated, and Indians in the West were forced onto reservations. For the Plains Indians, this was a period of starvation as the buffalo were slaughtered, destroying their way of life and main source of food (Mooney).[23]

The Ghost Dance created a sense of unity and solidarity among native Americans, which was crucial in resisting settler colonization and maintaining their traditional ways of life.

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[22] James Mooney Recordings of American Indian Ghost Dance Songs, 1894. Library of Congress.

[23] James Mooney Recordings of American Indian Ghost Dance Songs, 1894. Library of Congress

But the ceremonial cycle for indigenous Americans serves as a way of honoring and respecting the natural world and connecting with the spiritual realm. Ceremonies also affirm cultural identity, promote healing and well-being, and build a sense of community and belonging.

In 1969, N. Scott Momaday won the Pulitzer Prize for *House Made of Dawn,* a novel that introduced concepts of indigenous ceremonies, rituals, and traditions to a larger Western audience. Momaday highlights the importance of the ceremonies and rituals of native people and the lengths they went to preserve the traditions secretly. In this novel, the character of Abel has assimilated almost fully into Western culture and life. Still, his experiences during World War II have alienated and disoriented him, so he cannot relate to his traditionalist grandfather. Abel struggles to find his place in his community and reconnect with his cultural identity. Abel suffers from PASS and PTSD as he returns to Jemez Pueblo. "For the first time since coming home he had done away with his uniform" (Momaday 42). Momaday writes that Abel “slept through the day and night in his grandfather's house" (10). As he rises and looks over the landscape, he relives the past trauma remembering his dead brother and mother. "It was nothing he was told, but he knew it anyway and without understanding, as he knew already the motion of the sun and the seasons. . . His mother died in October" (11-12). It is clear that Abel is traumatized by his past and then by his war experiences. Nathan Pfaff's “Abel’s Military Service and Belonging in N. Scott Momaday’s House Made of Dawn” states, “Momaday highlights how minorities within a dominant culture bear an unfair burden of representation” (Pfaff 41). Since Abel is suffering from PASS and PTSD, the salience of

Momaday's depiction of Abel does not stop with native traditions and native culture; his depiction also displays that past and present are interconnected and converge through Abel. In Abel committing the insensible act of murder, he is removed from his community to serve a prison sentence. Momaday implies that "One of the most tragic things about Abel. . . is his inability to express himself. He is in some ways a man without a voice. . . . So I think of him as having been removed from oral tradition" (N. Scott Momaday, *A Conversation* 19). To overcome his supposed weakness and embrace himself, Abel will have to rely on the wisdom of his culture, which he learns from his grandfather and his friend Ben Benally. Momaday uses Abel symbolically, from the murder of an albino, representing the white man, who appears to Abel as a witch snake rather than a human being. The unique thing is that each trial and tribulation Abel faces before he can return home seems ritualized, as in a ceremony as Abel is himself, self-destructive, and each step is a path leading him home.

To begin the healing process, Abel must eventually understand his world, exercise some control over it, and prepare himself to function sufficiently and morally in this world, even though he suffers from all the trials and tribulations he encounters. "He was going home, and he was going to be all right again" (Momaday 145). In a sense going home is a sort of purification ritual that Abel undergoes. Momaday hints that many traditional rituals are modified. Therefore, Abel returning home to care for his dying grandfather is part of a ceremony he had to perform. Abel returns from his years in prison and self-isolation living in Los Angles. Although different from World War II, it would seem as if he was in a new kind of war fought on an alien region; it must seem to him that

these trials might be a new ritual, worked out in terms of his own experience, and unlike traditional ceremonies. Therefore, Abel's transformation is for himself. In returning to perform the last ritual for his dying grandfather, Abel is still struggling with disorientation and the influence of the Western world, but as he listens to his grandfather—

> Abel sat in the dark of his grandfather's house. Evening was coming on, and the bare gray light had begun to fail at the window. He had been there all day with his head hanging down in the darkness, getting up only to turn the fire and look in the old man's face. And he had been there the day before, and the day before that. He had been there a part of every day since his return… he had been there six days of dawn, listening to his grandfather's voice. He heard it now, but it had no meaning" (195).

As Francisco, the Longhair, lies in his death throes, Abel finally understands where he belongs. It dawns on him that only the ceremonial Dawn Race can give him the focus he needs to begin the healing process. Although Abel cannot express himself in the Western world and could not pray when he first returns home, he silently sings the ritual song when he finally finds the right pace as a "Dawn Runner." Abel realizes that, as he embraces his culture and performs the ceremony of the Dawn Race for himself and to honor his grandfather, he can heal:

> It was almost there, and he saw the runner standing away in the distance. He came among them and they huddled in the cold together, waiting, and the pale light before the dawn rose up in the valley...They held their eyes upon it waiting, and, too slow and various to see, the void began to deepen and to change…. he was running and his body cracked open with pain, and he was running on. He was running and there was no reason to run but the running itself and the lawn and the dawn disappearing… he was running and a cold sweat broke out upon him and his breath heaved with the pain of running. His legs buckled and he fell in the snow. The rain fell upon him in the snow, and he saw his broken hands, how the rain made streaks upon them and dripped soot upon the snow, and he got up and ran on. He was alone and running on. All of his being was concentrated in the sheer

> motion of running on, and he was past caring about the pain. Pure exhaustion laid hold of his mind, and he could see at last without having to think. He could see the Canyon and the mountains and the sky. He could see the rain and the river and the fields beyond. He could see the dark hills at dawn. He was running and under his breath he began to sing. There was no sound and he had no voice; he had only the words of a song. And he went running on the rise of the song house made of pollen, house made of dawn (Momaday 210-12).

This ceremony opened Abel up to the land's beauty and reestablished his relationship with the rhythms of nature. It also helps him fight for *himself* and understand that his people, the Pueblo Jemez, are proof of survivance. Thus, the ceremonial Dawn Race clears the fog from Abel's mind. In "Making Do: Momaday's Survivance Ceremonies," Kenneth M. Roemer argues that with:

> great frequency and variety of depictions of making-do ceremonies is a response to five hundred years of disease, military defeats, forced religious and secular assimilation programs, relocation, world wars, destructive legislation, dysfunctional family life, and rapidly changing cultural contexts that have joined forces to undermine or even destroy the transfer and development of traditional ceremonial life (Roemer 79).

Therefore, as Abel reconnects with nature, he can finally understand his grandfather Francisco's stories and why tradition and rituals are indispensable. In participating in the Dawn Race, the race of the dead. Abel honors his grandfather and takes his place as the last surviving male of his line. Abel gains an appreciation for his people's ceremonies, symbols, and customs and his connection to the physical world he inhabits. The ceremony allows Abel to return to his birthright and become the torchbearer, as he is the head of his family and one who is in charge of the ceremonies and must keep the traditions alive and honors his ancestors by passing on the customs and traditions of his people to the next generation. N. Scott Monday creates the world of Abel to show the

curative aspect of ceremonies and their effect on believers. Momaday wants it known that the Jemez Pueblo and other tribal nations' ceremonies can heal, grant a feeling of sovereignty, bring self-awareness, and offer identity and peoplehood. In "The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature," Stratton and Washburn point out that:

> In traditional Native societies, creation stories were something that everyone knew, and these stories were an effective vehicle for the dissemination of information concerning a group's common origins and the sacred history that bound them together. Not surprisingly, Native authors often adapt aspects of oral tradition into their own written text (Stratton and Washburn 61).

Therefore, it is unsurprising that Momaday uses the ceremonial cycle to highlight the disparities he witnessed in returning soldiers from World War II.

It must have been frustrating to watch young men returning from World War II Anglicized and suffering from Post Apocalypse Stress Syndrome and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, essentially lost within themselves. Yet, *House Made of Dawn* has a structure that emphasizes the many rejuvenating and restoring ceremonies of the Jemez Pueblo people. In Momaday introducing ceremonies to the forefront of his novel, he calls to attention the laws that banned native Americans from performing ceremonies and practicing their religion. Vine Deloria, Jr said:

> After four centuries of pressure and religious imperialism, many tribal religions [along with traditions, rituals, and ceremonies] disappeared. Some disappeared because the tribes were destroyed or were reduced to such few members that the survivor, dropping their own religion, joined larger tribes and accepted the practice of the host tribe" (Deloria, Jr 239).

Therefore, the portrayal of the ceremonies is employed to reach out to native Americans searching for identity. *House Made of Dawn* displays the efficacy of ceremonies and

demonstrates to the world that even though the indigenous people of the United States have to been prohibited from practicing their ceremonies and rituals through harsh punishments and harrowing amounts of losses, and while certain traditions vanished during those difficult years, many others survived. They are alive and well, in traditions and used to call for unity, self-awareness, and change. According to Billy J Stratton and Frances Washburn:

> Momaday succinctly encapsulates all four pillars of the Peoplehood Matrix: language, sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and place or territory. Thus, a ceremonial cycle can refer to the annual recurring ceremonies that are common to everyone within a particular culture but also to individual or personal ceremonies that allow individuals to move through a maturing process or a cycle of ceremonies to promote healing (Stratton and Washburn 65).

Likewise, in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, the traditions of ceremonies are vital for survival, especially for Tayo, another veteran who returns from World War II. Tayo is adrift and cannot locate himself in the universe. For example, when Tayo was ordered to shoot enemy soldiers, he could not differentiate between the enemy soldiers and his people, noting that:

> they looked too familiar even when they were alive. When the Sergeant told them to kill all the Japanese soldiers lined up in front of the cave with their hands on their heads, Tayo could not pull the trigger… he couldn't see clearly; in that instant, he saw Josiah standing there. While they fire at the soldiers and he watched his uncle fall, and he *knew* it was Josiah (Silko 7).

Returning to his community, Tayo couldn't cope, so he buries his pain through self-harm – i.e., alcoholism. To reconnect to his ancestors and home, Tayo must understand where he comes from and his connection with the traditions and ceremonies that will heal him from all ailments the white world cannot understand. Even though Tayo is in the hospital,

he is not getting better as he is isolated from his community, and he can only find healing through nature and the rituals of his people. The Peoplehood Matrix displays many of the connections between native American literature and the participating native protagonist "who become entangled or trapped in the white world and who eventually return to their Native roots for renewal and healing" (Holm et al. 18). Silko wants to demonstrate the connection of ceremonies to sacred stories to the land and language. According to Holm et al., "the land, the ceremonies, the language, and the stories drawn from the Native group's sacred history make the protagonist whole and resolve his or her conflicts. Native American literary protagonists are seemingly always caught in the middle of two worlds, but instead of actually becoming marginalized, they are rejuvenated by being reintroduced to their own sense of peoplehood" (18).

In following this model, Silko illustrates the importance of rituals to the Laguna Pueblo people, especially the Scalp Ceremony. However, before Tayo can begin his journey, he must deal with his Auntie, who cannot stand the old ways. Aunt believes in the Western way and is a staunch Catholic who attends mass almost daily. Aunt is an assimilated Laguna Christian who has taken on the colonizers' way and thinking. She is opposed to ceremonies that her mother wants Tayo to participate in. Silko exposes some aspects of assimilation through the character of Auntie, who embodies colonialism and hates anything to do with traditional Laguna culture. Yet, the narrative relies on several ceremonies to cure Tayo. By navigating through the importance of ceremonies and Laguna spirituality, Silko emphasizes the unjust years of forced assimilation and the added pressure of two sides warring. By exposing the effects of forced assimilation, Silko

especially depicts the adverse effects of boarding school and the trauma it imposed on the generation that survived the attempted cultural extermination. This critique of the boarding school system is disturbing as it shines a light on the other side of the coin on the rituals and ceremonies Aunt uses to comfort herself. For example, Silko shows Auntie going through her ritual as she prepares for church:

> Auntie got out her black church shoes and wiped them carefully with a clean damp cloth, putting her finger inside the cloth and cleaning around each of the eyelets where the laces were strung; she examined them closely by the lamp on the table to make sure that any dust or spots of dirt left from last Sunday had been removed. . .she liked it that way going to church by herself where she could show the people that she was a devout Christian and not any immoral or Pagan like the rest of the family when it came to saving her own soul she wanted to be careful that there were no mistakes (Silko 71).

This ritual/ceremony by Auntie no doubt gives her comfort, as Silko hinted that Auntie attends church routinely. In postcolonial theory, Homi Bhabha coins the phrase *mimicry*. In the concept of mimicry, colonized society and subjects imitate the ways of the colonizer, such as their dress and language, manners, and ideas. Bhabha suggests that cultural mimicry can lead to internalized oppression in colonized subjects. Bhabha argues that mimicry is a form of imitation that takes place when a colonized subject adopts the cultural practices and behaviors of the colonizer. In mimicry, the colonized subject imitates and resists the colonizer's culture, creating a hybrid cultural identity. However, Bhabha asserts that mimicry can also result in the internalization of oppressive cultural norms and values. The colonized subject may begin to internalize the cultural norms of the colonizer, leading to a sense of self-alienation and loss of cultural identity. (Homi K. Bhabha 121-131). The subject may also begin to view their own culture as inferior,

perpetuating a sense of internalized oppression. However, the character Auntie displays mimicry, as the mimicry results from conditioning, forced trauma, and physical and mental abuse, also a form of internalization of colonialism itself. This concept of mimicry underlines how cultural identity and power are intricately linked and how cultural imitation can lead to both hybridity and internalized oppression. It is clear that Auntie has lost her culture, yet she is trapped between the colonized world and her culture, where, in one world, she is deficient, and in the other, she is reviled.[24] Although Auntie's conduct results from forced assimilation and a boarding school education, her behavior shows she observes the letter rather than the spirit of her traditions, which leads her to condemn any relationship outside of the community entirely. Auntie's blind adherence to the dominant culture's social mores and her role as a devout Christian paint her as a martyr who thinks that what is *perceived* is the right path, thus ignoring the importance and morality of actions.

In essence, practicing mimicry suggests that colonized figures such as Auntie might disenfranchise themselves from the barriers that colonial discourse relations present and end their silence.[25] However, in using a poststructuralist approach to colonial and postcolonial texts, Bhabha distinguishes the paradoxical and changing nature of the ideological struggle on which the power relation of colonialism is based. For example, he speculates that mimicry undermines colonial discourse by uncovering its intrinsic

[24] The character of Auntie must be discussed. I will not go in-depth, but the nature of Auntie shows the hardship of holding on to culture and traditions, especially from outside *and* inside forces.

[25] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 122.

contradiction (Bhabha 126).[26] However, in its application (especially to Auntie), the success of Bhabha's argument and methodical understanding is contestable. Auntie's mimicry is contested because of her forced adoption of white American cultural norms and practices. However, this is seen as perhaps a betrayal by members of the community and toward the Laguna Pueblo culture and traditions. Therefore, while Auntie's mimicry allows her to gain power and influence in the community, it is also contested by those who see it as a betrayal of the Laguna Pueblo culture. This complexity emphasizes the contestable nature of Bhabha's theory of mimicry and its application in *Ceremony*. Silko shows Auntie as a symbol of the loss of cultural identity and the erosion of native American traditions- which is a critique against settler colonialism. However, the cultural hybridity established by the act of mimicry serves to emphasize differences and alienate the colonized further. This form of mimicry is seen in Auntie's behavior in how she treats people she deems different. For example, towards the character of Night Swan, Auntie *others* her and exude extreme hate towards her calling her "that dirty Mexican woman" (70). She also has an intense dislike for the character of Ulibarri because he is Mexican. "That dirty Mexican woman did so Ulibarri could get rid of those worthless cattle. The gypped him…made an old fool out of him" (70). There is also the reference to the word *gypped*. The origin of *gypped* is a stereotypical reference to the Roma/Romani or Gypsies[27] people that traveled across Europe. The word gypped dates to the 1899 Oxford

[26] Homi Bhabha "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" 126.

[27] The Roma (Gypsies) originated in the Punjab region of northern India as nomadic people. They traveled to Europe around the 8th and 10th centuries. A Gypsy is a member of a group that travels from place to place in caravans. They have a distinct culture.

Dictionary in reference to Roma/ Gypsy. The Oxford Dictionary uses the abbreviation for gypped, meaning "a sly unscrupulous fellow," to describe the Gypsy people that were intensely disliked. Another example of mimicry comes from N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, in which the character of Martinez, a Hispanic man, and cop, is portrayed as a thug, thief, and person who hates native people and targets them. Momaday writes this scene with characters Ben Benally and Abel:

> Martinez stepped out in front of us. He just stood there at first, tapping that stick in his hand and looking at us. He made us jump. . . we shut up, you know. . .I was scared and shaking. . . your hands, Benally they're shaking. . . Then he asked me how much money I had. He knew I was paid, and I give him all I had left…I could see his hands in the light, and they were open and almost steady [reference to Abel]. . .Then suddenly the light jumped, and he brought the stick down hard and fast" [on Abel] (Momaday 174-5).

Culture, which is a part of ceremony, and Language have been tools of colonization as it was a form of persecution that native people have been subjugated to. Indigenous people were considered savages, and while some indigenous people learned to communicate in the colonizers' tongue, countless indigenous people were forced to communicate and express themselves against exploitation in the colonizer's language. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o states in *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* that "Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation" (9). Therefore, forced assimilation created a surrogate colonizer who embodies these teachings. In addition, M. S. Nagarajan, *English Literary Criticism and Theory*, argues that "colonialist ideology created colonial subjects who behaved in the way the colonizer had programmed. They willingly accepted the superiority of the colonizer and their own inferiority" (187). Thus, indigenous people were forced to imitate the West.

Additionally, as Josiah and Auntie reveal, many native peoples are caught in the undertow of colonial oppression and racial biases that were instilled in them, emphasizing the importance of native traditions and the notion of the culture geared to native life and the way of things. However, in discussing the importance of ceremonies and the adverse effects of the colonizers, it must be acknowledged that Auntie is the embodiment of forced assimilation due to a loss of her cultural identity, which stems from the banning of native and indigenous religions and the performance of native ceremonies and traditions and internalized oppression, for example, "She told him that she prayed they would be baptized. . .she could show the people that she was a devout Christian and not immoral or pagan like the rest of the family" (71). Auntie is a prime example of a postcolonial perspective of mimicry. She also exposes how mimicry can subvert colonial authority and contradiction, reinforcing *otherness* that perpetuates n negative stereotypes and prejudices.

However, given the history of religious repression in native space, it is of utmost importance that native people's traditions and culture are geared to native life and act as protection from the insistence of encroachment of the Western world. That is why in the telling of Tayo's story, Silko must use the scalp ceremony to demonstrate that native ceremonies and rituals are still a fundamental part of native lives. The scalp ceremony is a ritual that plays a significant role as it contributes to healing. The ceremony involves cutting a lock of hair from a person's head to symbolize the taking of an enemy's scalp. The scalp ceremony is a traditional ritual that is performed as a way of restoring balance and harmony in the individual. While the scalp ceremony is symbolic, cutting the evil or

witchery at its sources is fundamental. Silko portrays this through Josiah, who guides Tayo through the sacred stories of his childhood/adolescent years, and eventually Betonie, a medicine man who will perform the scalp ceremony. “Tayo has to arrive in the right moment and be willing to receive help- you’ve been doing something all alone. All this time, and now you are at an important place in this story” (114). Tayo, however, is still somewhat resistant, “Look… I’ve been sick, and half the time I don’t know if I’m still crazy or not I don’t know anything about ceremonies or these things you talk about I don’t know how long anything has been going on. I just need help” (115). The only help Betonie can offer is advice and the performing of the scalp ceremony for Tayo. “We all have been waiting for help for a long time. However, it never has been easy. The people must do it. You must do it” (115). In explaining the importance of ceremonies and Betonie also expounds on witchery.

Although Tayo still has to prove that he is worthy and not give in to the call of witchery until he is purified against evil. It seems as though the sacred stories that Tayo’s uncle Joisha guided him with in childhood have prepared him for the undertaking and the evil lurking in the community. Using the actual Diné and Laguna Pueblo rites and rituals exposes the importance these ceremonies play in the lives of each indigenous nation. For example, using the ceremony of cleansing and purifying:

> they unraveled
> the dead skin
> coyote threw
> on hum.
> They cut it up
> bundle by bundle.
> Every evil

> which entangled him
> was cut
> to pieces (240).

This final purification ceremony symbolizes Tayo finally understanding how valuable these rituals are and the importance of performing them as they connect with sacred stories. Silko demonstrates the interconnectedness between the sacred stories and ceremonies as the Peoplehood Matrix shows. According to Carol Mitchell:

> ceremonial explanation of the connection between stories and ceremony. The stories are not just entertainment, they are the heritage of a people, they validate the traditions of the culture, they make the past come alive in the present, and they reassure that the past will continue into the future (Mitchell 28).

In the performance of the ceremony, Tayo finally can heal and find peace as he is reconnected with the land and defeats the witchery that's been playing with the community. The other equally important ceremonies, particularly the purification ritual, will ensure that the sun will rise and shine on the Laguna Pueblo people, and there is hope that the rain will return to the land. The illustration of this ritual explains how removing the sickness in Tayo and the witchery lurking around the community will also bring everyone together. Remember, through Old Grandma, we learned that these stories were always around. "I guess I must be getting old. . .because these goings-on around Laguna…It seems like I already heard these stories before. . . only thing is the names sound different" (Silko 242). Old Grandma refers to Emo, Leroy, and Pinky and the evil and mayhem happenings- which directly references the witchery and the presence in the community. Therefore, in Tayo, undergoing and completing the ceremonies, he can begin a healing process through the ceremonies that involve reconnecting with his cultural

heritage and traditional practices, including overcoming his trauma. According to Paula Gunn Allen,[28] "Betonie's magic propels Tayo along his ceremonial journey which takes him to Ts'eh, the mountain spirit woman. Through her aid Tayo finds and rescues Josiah's breed cattle, and, through loving her, he finds his own completeness within himself" (15). This process will help Tayo remove the witchery from his life, manifesting the negative influences of settler colonialism and cultural assimilation on his community. After all, the telling of the witchery takes many forms, including alcoholism, violence, and the suppression of traditional practices and beliefs. Thus, by removing the witchery from his life and undergoing the ceremony, Tayo can heal himself and become a positive force in his community. His healing journey serves as an example to others in the community who may be struggling with similar issues. His reconnection with traditional practices helps revitalize and preserve native American culture.

Through Tayo, one can conclude that the community is awakened from a daze and can finally see what is happening around them. In performing this cleansing ritual, Tayo and the medicine men Kuu'oosh and Betonie offer hope to the community, revealing that the old ways are alive and well and still an intricate part of guiding and healing. According to Carol Mitchell:

> While one novel alone cannot revive or replace the traditions and ceremonies of a people, Silko's novel is itself a curing ceremony. It weaves the old stories and traditions into the contemporary story of Tayo in a way that helps to make the old ways understandable and relevant to the contemporary situation (28).

[28] A Stranger in My Own Life: Alienation in American Indian Prose and Poetry 15.

In addition, ceremonies have educated native people about the tenets of their culture and given them a sense of holism, synergy, reverence, respect, responsibility, interrelatedness, and identity. According to "Rethinking the Role of Diagnosis in Navajo Religious Healing," Derek Milne and Wilson Howard write that "ceremonies may address specific illness and life problems, or they may be prophylactic; they may be intended to ameliorate the cause of suffering, or they may be intended to enhance health, the quality of social relationships, and financial well-being"[29] (Milne and Howard 543-7). Therefore, the rites and rituals offered by Betonie hold the community together and form literacies that unite the people with each other, the land, and the *Grandfather Spirit*. But above all, in these ceremonies, there is a sense of return and reaffirmation that substantiate life.

In Frances Washburn's *Elsie's Business,* the traditions of ceremonies are similarly used to heal the community and honor the dead. Focusing on her Lakota culture and introducing non-native readers into her world, Washburn reveals native rituals have the power to author tribes as they are connected to tribal stories and the past. Moreover, the ceremonies Washburn includes are of vital importance as they can hold the tribe together and offer hope in times of difficulty and need. The story of Elsie Roberts serves as the centering tragedy of the narrative as Elsie can be seen as an incarnation of the Lakota spiritual figure of the deer woman. She is isolated from her community as she is born from a one-only, a child that was born from *a supposed wrong*, "some rules must not be

[29] Milne, Derek, and Wilson Howard. "Rethinking the Role of Diagnosis in Navajo Religious Healing." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2000): 543–70. http://www.jstor.org/stable/649720. 545.

broken. Elsie came to be as the result of broken rules, and then she broke some herself, and that's the heartbreak of it all" (4). Washburn writes that:

> Elsie's mother was a one only… It means a woman who marries only once, no matter what happens . . . a one-only woman could be one of those demons the Christians talk about, and she would still be respected by her own people, revered even, no matter what else she did, just because of her devotion to a dead man (4).

However, Mary Roberts broke the rule and did stay loyal to her dead husband. She shared a night of pleasure with George Washington, a traveling farm worker, which resulted in Elsie. This breaking of the cultural norm ostracizes Mary Roberts and her daughter from the Lakota community. Farther, her work with deer hide sets her on the fringes of her community. It is rumored that Mary "has seen the deer woman" (65). In the Lakota culture, the people were afraid of Deer Woman. It was said that "Men who see the deer woman go crazy, but women who see her are rewarded with the ability to make beautiful things – maybe bead-work or quillwork. Mary Roberts, they said, had met the deer woman, and been gifted" (59). Elsie and her mother were Deer Women in the eyes of their community, and since the indigenous community remembered the deer woman stories as something to heed and fear. Elsie and her mother slip through the cracks.

> They (Lakota) remembered the deer woman stories, remembered that in the stories, none of the men afflicted had ever attacked the deer woman herself [reference to Elsie] head-on. She was too powerful, but they were afraid it might have been one of their own, that some new story with a far different twist had come into being in Jackson, and they feared that the end had not been told yet (Washburn 183).

From reference to the stories of Deer Woman from the Oscar and the Lakota community, it would seem that the Lakota community distances themselves from Elsie and her mother. To make matters worse, Elsie's birth is held against her by the Lakota

community, as they fear her. However, as tragedy strikes and Elsie is murdered, the Lakota community remembers that they failed Elsie in life but will not fail her in death. So, to honor her, the Lakota people decided to hold the ghost feast ceremony, "the Roberts family are going to hold a ghost feast, a wiping of the tears ceremony for Elsie up in the canyon. It's been just a little over a year since she died, so it's time to put away mourning now and let her go from us" (195). This ritual is about honoring the dead and the living and helping both sides move on and heal. In performing the ceremony, the community comes together, mourns as one, and helps each other through grieving and sharing in any burdens the family faces. In this ritual, the Lakota people pay tribute to the dead and bring peace to the living through the dead and the ancestors' long past. The ghost feast ceremony displays an in-depth look at the culture that was able to preserve this ritual from assimilation. In the performance of the *Wiping the Tears* [ghost feast] ritual, the deceased is honored by loved ones through offering food and semaa [tobacco] at a community meal. The tobacco is presented to the spirit fire as a tribute to the ancestors at the gathering. The food is prepared to feed the ancestors at the spirit fire. This ceremony brings healing and a semblance of peace to the community.

In introducing this ceremony to non-natives in her work, Washburn emphasizes that the native ways of life are not a thing of the past. That ceremonies are still an essential aspect of life and that the Lakota culture and religion are alive and well despite the onslaught of the ongoing fight with the United States government. Therefore, the approach to ceremony shows the value and meaning of people still connected with their past. In this scenario, the plurality of the rituals is part of an accepted value system, a

system that is part of a good life, and Washburn exhibits the humility, generosity, and kindness of her culture. This ceremony also recognizes the place of the community in the interpretive process that follows a philosophy of respectful individualism, which allows the individual to enjoy great freedom in self-expression as part of the community. It is interesting that even though these ceremonies put great emphasis on community, they also help individuals find their way. Ultimately, Washburn wanted readers to understand that the Lakota culture is rebuilding, and ceremonies are part of the cultural world, a process of reworking the stories and traditions. [For example, the Lakota is embracing change by challenging the US government through land rights]. That is why Washburn blends traditional oral stories and ceremonies in *Elsie's Business*. "The women were at their wits end, and then Georgie claimed he saw a deer walking down Main Street in broad daylight, looking in the windows of the package liquor store where he had went to buy a little courage. He trembled and pointed, yelling something unintelligible. The men who were ambulatory and able went to Oscar for ceremonies, advice" (Washburn 161-2). The blend of sacred stories and ceremonies highlights the peoplehood, which is central to the concepts of Lakota life that tell the stories of the past and how the present and the future are connected.

Additionally, the *Wiping the Tears* ceremony demonstrates that despite the genocide, forced assimilation, and confinement, the Lakota culture have maintained a link to their ancestors and past. In accentuating these important cleansing ceremonies, Washburn illustrates the distinctive identity, the exercising of sovereignty, and the expression of the humanity of the Lakota people. Like Momaday and Silko, Washburn

strives to show in *Elsie's Business* that ceremonies are an indispensable part of traditional native healing because physical and spiritual health are intimately connected to the body and spirit. These entities must heal together. Traditional healing ceremonies promote wellness by reflecting on native concepts of the spirit creator and the universe. Ceremonies are often performed for the purposes of cleansing, reestablishing balance and harmony, as well as to mark a rite of passage. For indigenous people, ceremonies seek to connect people to the physical and spiritual world, provide healing and clarity, make significant life moments, or offer remembrance and gratitude; each ceremony has a specific purpose and holds an important place in native history. In accentuating the importance of ceremonies, the authors are taking back power from the United States and returning it to their people. The Peoplehood Matrix states,

> Most Native American literature contains this kind of cyclical, or at least nonlinear, structure and recognizes the holistic nature of the societies that these protagonists leave and to which they return. The land, the ceremonies, the language, and the stories drawn from the Native group's sacred history make the protagonist whole and resolve his or her conflicts. Native American literary protagonists are seemingly always caught in the middle of two worlds, but instead of actually becoming marginalized they are rejuvenated by being reintroduced to their own sense of peoplehood" (Holm et al.18).

In passing the 1833 code of Indian offenses, which made Indian religious practice illegal, the United States attempted to decimate the rich culture of the native people. However, settler colonialism is present in many ceremonies as the adaptation of many sacred ceremonies have colonizers worship religion and saints. According to the Peoplehood Matrix:

> The extraordinary persistence of peoplehood is a study in and of itself. Many Native American peoples have undergone change without losing their sense of

> group identity. The occurrence of syncretic change is especially interesting. Native American peoples have taken foreign ideas, institutions, and material goods, filtered them through the matrix of peoplehood, and given them meaning within their own cultures and societies" (Holm et al.18).

The understanding of ceremony as a critical element of native American culture and identity reflects the deep spiritual and communal connections central to many native American worldviews. The Peoplehood Matrix framework emphasizes the importance of ceremony to foster individual and collective healing and cultural revitalization. Unfortunately, there is no way for native people to reclaim the lost traditions and rituals of ceremonies. The significant devastation of the lost ritual tradition, ceremonial objects, and dress is another point of contention that these authors and their text address.

Chapter Three: Language

The Peoplehood Matrix states that indigeneity is tied to the four factors of language, land, sacred history, and ceremony cycle, so much so that a loss of even one of the components would mean a loss of identity or peoplehood. However, Billy J Stratton and Frances Washburn state that out of the four categories of the Peoplehood Matrix:

> perhaps, that of language could be viewed as the most problematic category because, to date, few, if any major literary works by American Indians have been published in American Indian languages. However, as language is con-conceptualized within this framework, the lack of Native languages in the production of literary texts, in fact, illustrates one of the key points: language does not exist in a cultural vacuum but emanates from culture, which is in a constant state of change and inextricably linked to territory, ceremony, and sacred history (Stratton and Washburn 57).

Therefore, a loss of one element from the Peoplehood Matrix does mean a loss of peoplehood. The Peoplehood Matrix is often used to explore indigenous people's identity, sovereignty, and self-determination issues. The concept of language is tied to the four categories. Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony,* Frances Washburn's *Elsie's Business,* Gerald Vizenor's *The Heirs of Columbus,* Stephen Graham Jones *Ledfeather,* and N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* uses language to connect the practice to their culture and peoplehood to demonstrate that their narrative does not just work as fiction but a powerful tool for understanding the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism in native American communities. Language is an essential part of indigenous identity and culture, and language was once used as a tool of oppression against indigenous peoples.

However, the efforts to revitalize indigenous languages are part of a larger movement toward decolonization, self-determination, and healing. According to the Peoplehood Matrix:

> the four factors as they intertwine, interpenetrate, and interact. Having a distinct language, of course, sets a group apart in and of itself. But a group-particular language, by way of its nuances, references, and grammar, gives a sacred history a meaning of its own, particularly if origin, creation, migration, and other stories are spoken rather than written. Language defines [a] place and vice versa (Holm et al. 13).

In the Pre- Columbian era, [30] there were over 1000 distinctive native American tribal nations/civilizations with their own unique languages. Some of these languages were similar enough to be grouped by modern scholars into language families; for example, the Algonquin language is spoken by the Cree, Mohicans, Ojibwa, Shawnee, and other tribes from the American Northeast, but with varying dialects. Today, because of genocide, forced assimilation, and forced attendance at boarding schools, only approximately one in 10 Native Americans over age 65 speak their original tribal language.[31] Notably, of the "150 tribal languages spoken in the United States and Canada, only 20 of these languages are spoken by children"[32] (Treuer 164), including Hawaiian and Alaskan. To further complicate things, many native languages have evolved over the last 100 years, like any other living thing, changing as their speakers were forced onto reservations and even fusing with English. As many native Americans blend their language with the dominant

[30] Pre-Columbian means before the influence of European or other cultures.

[31] United States Census.

[32] Anton Treuer's *Everything You Wanted To Know About Indians But Were Afraid To Ask*. 164.

tongue, few tribes have monolingual speakers of their native tongues, so English is employed as a peer language. Still, despite all the atrocities, indigenous people have valued their languages as a cornerstone of their identity and a method for communicating with their ancestors. It is also a defining factor of nationhood and part of sovereignty. Language plays a considerable role in defining nationhood and is a crucial aspect of sovereignty for native Americans. For many indigenous nations, language is a tool for communicating cultural values, traditions, and knowledge and is a vital link to their history and identity. Historically, native American languages have been restricted and even banned by the colonial powers seeking to impose their language and culture through assimilation. However, in recent years, there has been a renewed interest in preserving and revitalizing indigenous languages, with many native American communities working to ensure that their languages are passed down to future generations. The continuation and use of indigenous languages are critical for preserving tribal sovereignty. In many cases, language is incorporated into the tribal constitution as a fundamental aspect of sovereignty and self-determination. For example, the Navajo Nation's constitution identifies the Navajo language as the foundation of the Navajo culture.

Tribal languages tell the story of survivance and demonstrate that, despite 500 years of settler colonialism, tribal languages will always be a gateway to spiritual understanding, especially by defining indigenous people as distinct from the colonizers. Languages for indigenous people carry a sense of deep cultural knowledge and insights; thus, losing their languages means they have lost a sense of how they see the world. However, as Vizenor argues, victimry can lead to a sense of absence or emptiness, both

on an individual and cultural level. When a language is lost, there is a sense of something missing, a void that cannot be filled. This absence can be especially acute for indigenous peoples, for whom language is often deeply intertwined with cultural identity and spiritual practices. However, Vizenor also suggests that this absence can be a powerful force for creativity and resilience. He believes that indigenous peoples can use the absence created by language loss as a space for imagining new possibilities and creating new forms of cultural expression. In this sense, absence can become a catalyst for innovation and transformation. According to Vizenor in *Manifest Manners*:

> The English language has been the linear tongue of colonial discoveries, racial cruelties, invented names, the simulation of tribal cultures, manifest manners, and the unheard literature of dominance in tribal communities; at they say the same time, this mother tongue of para colonialism has been a language of invincible imagination and liberation for many tribal people in the postindian world. English, a language of paradoxes, learned under duress by tribal people admission and federal schools, was one of the languages that carried the vision and shadows of the Ghost Dance, the religion of renewal, from tribe to tribe on the vast plains at the end of the nineteenth century (Vizenor 105).

Nevertheless, because of their experiences in the American education system, indigenous scholars have utilized the colonizers' language to tell their stories. Native Americans write *their* stories and subsequently challenge the history of the dominant culture. *In Reinventing The Enemy's Language,* Joy Harjo states that:

> to write is still suspect in their tribal communities, and understandably so. It is through writing in the colonizer's language that our lands have been stolen, children taken away. We have often been betrayed by those who first learned to write and to speak the language of the occupier of our lands (20).

However, Harjo understood that to reclaim power, native people had to reinvent the enemy language, especially to challenge the dominant narrative. Therefore, native

American storytellers and poets have taken on reinventing the enemies' language in the telling of their stories; however, they use a combination of their native language and English as a way to preserve their identity while calling for sovereignty and decolonization. Joy Harjo says:

> To speak, at whatever the cost, is to become empowered rather than victimized by destruction. In our tribal cultures the power of language to heal, to regenerate, and to create is understood. These colonizers' languages, which often usurped our own tribal languages or diminished them, now hand back emblems of our cultures, our own designs; beadwork, quills if you will. We have transformed these enemy languages (Harjo and Byrd 21-2).

For example, Luci Tapahonso, Louise Erdrich, Frances Washburn, and many others use their tribal language and English in their works to express themselves, thereby preserving and normalizing native languages in modern America.

N. Scott Momaday opened his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *House Made of Dawn* with the word *Dypaloh*. This simple word loosely means "once upon a time." However, in the Jemez Pueblo language, *Dypaloh* signals that the audience is entering into a story. In opening his novel with the Jemez Pueblo language of his surroundings, Momaday is honoring the ancestors and displaying the strength of the language of native people. In a true storyteller fashion, the author ends the novel with the word *Qtsedaba*, which signals the end of the narrative and places the story in the format of oral traditions, according to Lawrence J. Evers. "House Made of Dawn opens and closes with the formulaic words which enclose all Jemez pueblo tales - dypaloh and qtsedaba, placing it consciously in that oral tradition" (300). In embracing the Jemez Pueblo language, Momaday denotes the performative function of the language and the distinct quality it brings to storytelling.

“I see [House Made of Dawn] as a circle. It ends where it begins, and it's informed with a kind of thread that runs through it and holds everything together” (A Conversation with N. Scott Momaday 19). He also analyzes the role language plays between the two cultures in his novel, accentuating Abel’s position between the two worlds- “You ought to do this and that, his grandfather said. But the old man has not understood, would not understand…It was time to go” (23). In Momaday showing, Abel’s “excitement and dread” (23) in leaving his homeland and entering the Western world through the army. He demonstrates that Abel seeks a sense of direction and a clearer understanding of his place in the world. Abel does not quite fit into the reservation as “He did not know who his father was. His father was a Navajo, they said, or a Sia, or an Isleta, an outsider anyway, which made him and his mother and Vidal somehow foreign and strange” (11). Even though Abel is excited to enter the Western world, he cannot communicate and cannot find his place. Abel's struggle with identity is through language, which is seen in the Peoplehood Matrix as Holm state, “the language, and the stories drawn from the Native group sacred history make the protagonist whole and resolve his or her conflicts. Native American literary protagonists are seemingly always caught in the middle of two worlds” (18). As the Peoplehood is, interconnected language is interwoven to land, sacred history, and ceremonial cycles. In “Hegemonic Registers in Momaday’s House Made of Dawn,” Guillermo Bartelt asserts that:

> restoring the multi-accentual nature of crucial words by confronting differences of meaning which exist in different styles of language (Fowler 202). Also, Momaday’s abrupt insertion of hegemonic registers seems to coincide with Proust’s concept of the involuntary memory, which is triggered by a sensation

> associated with an original past experience. Central to the ability to reconstruct the past in the present, according to Proust, is language (Bartelt 446-7).

Markedly, native American cultures believe storytelling is performative, and language is imperative because words have power in how the story materializes into words. According to N. Scott Momaday in *The Man Made of Words,* "between language and experience. It seems. . .that in a certain sense we are made of words; that our most essential being consists in language" (82). In using the native word *Daypaloh* from the Jemez Pueblo people, Momaday indicates that stories are essential to native people and their histories. Language is part of the imagination, and indigenous people exist in the element of language that gives way to stories that are integrated into them. While Momaday continues the rest of the story in English, native words are utilized in many expressions and function as a form of memory throughout the text. Although these words or phrases may be nostalgic, they are a reminder of what was lost—for example, the native word *Tsegihi,* which means "white house," a place that leads to the house made of dawn. "I wanted to pray…I didn't want anybody but him to hear. Tsegihi. House made of dawn, House made of evening light" (146). In invoking the word Tsegihi, Momaday signals that the character Ben Benally is entering the sacred with his chant prayer song. Thus, Momaday is showing the importance of indigenous language and how one word changes the dynamics of chant. In turn, language and stories are complex and sacred to indigenous people. Since language is part of posterity, it is linked to self-indemnity. Indigenous language today is endangered, and using specific terms linguistically displays a sense of self-identity. Thus, by starting his novel with the Jemez Pueblo word *Dypaloh*,

the author makes a poignant statement about the importance of keeping the indigenous language alive. According to Momaday, any form of Indigenous language is "that miracle of symbols and sounds that enable us to think, and therefore to define ourselves as human beings" (Momaday 1).[33] Even within a certain word or short phrase is the historic reminder of the legacy of colonial abuse and linguistic encumbrance that still dominates indigenous people. It is clear that native language and thought are fundamentally interwoven, which is why indigenous people use their language, even if there is a lack of fluency and their language has evolved into another linguistic version mixed with English. However, even though native people may not entirely understand their tribe's language, a word or phrase is still powerful enough as a symbol of identity.

In *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko uses the colonialist language to perform the Laguna Pueblo storytelling and to narrate Tayo's story. In using English, Silko inflects and uses tone and rhythm to reflect and copy the familiar linguistic patterns of the Laguna Pueblo people. Even the cadence in the telling further strengthens the memory of the lost language. As a result, indigenous poets, authors, and even singers take great care in the telling of stories; care is taken as indigenous people believe in bringing out the attitude of the characters reflected in the songs. For example, in the performance of the stories, the storyteller uses verbal language to share their history, legends, ritual, and traditions to create a colorful narrative. These intonations on the cadence give meaning to the tribal history that teaches life lessons and their connection to nature. It is of absolute

[33] Momaday, N. Scott. *The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages /*. 1st ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. 1.

importance that the storyteller displays the symbiotic relation to the earth and intimate relationships with the animals that the tribes depended on through the storytelling. As the language of storytelling is, an important concept to the Laguna Pueblo culture Leslie Marmon Silko accentuates the resiliency of the Laguna Pueblo culture. She writes in her essay "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective:"

> Many individual words have their own stories. So, when one is telling a story, and one is using words to tell the story, each word that one is speaking has a story of its own, too. Often the speakers or tellers will go into these word-stories, creating an elaborate structure of stories within stories. This structure, which becomes very apparent in the actual telling of a story, informs contemporary Pueblo writing and storytelling as well as the traditional narratives. This perspective on narrative - of story within [a] story, the idea that one story is only the beginning of many stories, and the sense that stories never truly end represents an important contribution of Native American cultures to the English language (Silko 59).[34]

In the performance of these stories using English, native Americans bring forth a deep and unconditional belief in the effectiveness of the language because words are inherently powerful. They are magical and invoke certain native words along with the use of English in the telling of oral history. Native Americans can still connect to the scared past and narratives.[35] Silko's experimentation with English cadence is remarkable as she incorporates the rhythm with Laguna Pueblo pace; this allows her to adapt the dominant language to her purpose while highlighting how English acts as a form of colonial oppression on Tayo and his family. "Their evil is mighty but it can't stand up to our stories. So they destroy the stories let the stories be confused or forgotten. They would

[34] Leslie Marmon Silko Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective 59.

[35] N. Scott Momaday. The Man Made of Words.

like that. They would be happy. Because we would be defenseless then" (2). *Ceremony* specifically underscores how the Laguna Pueblo people had to change their ceremonies due to the loss of their language. For instance, Silko refers to the spiritual entity of "Thought Woman" to connect Laguna people and places in her story to a spiritual realm that embodies nature. Ts'its'nako, or in English, "Thought Woman," may not be the *exact* term that the Laguna Pueblo once used, but the phrase takes on its own shape, which can be easily recognized and connected to something familiar for modern Laguna Pueblo. Silko's use of English projects the plot of the story, but using English also hints, through the character Betonie, that something is amiss. Betonie is part Navajo and part Mexican, who attended boarding school and is a learned shaman who has traversed both the Western world and the native world. "She sent me to school. Sherman Institute, Riverside, California…I told her I didn't want to go she said, 'It is carried on in all languages now you have to know English too'" (112). In a sense, Betonie lives in a double bind. "Tayo could feel the tiny hairs along his spine spring up. This Betonie didn't talk the way Tayo expected a medicine man to talk. He didn't act like a medicine man at all" (108). As Mark Rifkin states:

> Native people occupy a double bind within a dominant settler reckonings of time. Either they are consigned to the past, or they are inserted into a present defined on non-native terms. From this perspective, Native people (s) do not so much exist within the flow of time as erupt from it as an anomaly, one usually understood as emanating from bygone era" (Rifkin vii).[36]

[36] *Beyond Settler Time.*

It seems that Betonie embodies this concept - “The old man was tall, and his chest was wide…he kept his hair tied back neatly with red yarn in a chongo knot, like the oldtimers wore. . .People ask me why I live here’ he said, in good English” (107-8). In a sense, Betonie is reminiscent of the old-world values in the character of Francisco, the Longhair in Scott Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* that personifies traditions of the Jemez Pueblo culture. In using the character of Betonie Silko, displays the coming together of the world through someone that witnessed the evils committed against her people. Through Betonie, Silko reveals how language is used in the Laguna Pueblo traditions and how the concept of language evolved into different meanings. For example:

> There was something about the way the old man said the word “comfortable.” It had a different meaning-not the comfort of the big houses, and rich food or even clean streets, but the comfort of belonging with the land and the peace of being with these hills. But the special meaning the old man had given to the English word was burned away by the glare of the sun on tin cans and broken glass, blinding reflections off the mirrors and chrome of the wrecked cars in the dump below (Silko 108).

By stressing the word “comfortable,” Silko indicates that there are many English words that contain a sense of duality in their meaning for the Laguna Pueblo people. The term “comfort” normally means material luxuries and reassurances, but, for the Laguna Pueblo people and especially Betonie, the word “comfortable” means existing in a space that may look inharmonious but serves as a place of belonging for native people. By reflecting on a different sense of the word within a Laguna Pueblo context, Silko illustrates how the Laguna Pueblo people reconstruct and activate familiarity with the language while turning the dominant English language into a tool for the expression of their own personal meaning. For example, they develop a version of English that only

they understand. This can be seen when Betonie uses the word "*comfortable,*[37] the special meaning the old man had given to the English word was burned away" (108). In other words, transforming meaning is a type of power that enables the Laguna Pueblo people to create and recreate themselves in stories and literature, even *with* the colonizers' language. According to the Peoplehood Matrix, there is a "linkages between language, place, ceremony, and history. Practically anyone can learn a Native language, but without the understanding of its intricacies and its nuances in terms of preserving and passing along the knowledge of the people who speak it, the language is rendered useless" (18-9). Language is not primary; it is simply an equal part of the Peoplehood Matrix. In "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective," Silko suggests that story and communication are essential to the Pueblo people, and the *type* of language used is unimportant as long as the stories are understood. Silko states, "I believe, from a view of narrative particular to the Pueblo and other Native American peoples - that is, that language is story" (1-2). [38] Thus, for Silko, combining languages and changing meanings imbues any language with a sense of agency.

> He was excited and from time to time he would say something to himself in Navajo. . .Finally he pulled out a bronze spiral notebook with torn cover; he thumbed through the pages slowly moving his lips slightly… 'I'm beginning to see something he said his eyes closed, 'yes'. Something very important. 'This has

[37] See Dine form of English, Jamaican Patois, Haitian Creole, Spanglish, code-switching, and Pidgin. Hymes, Dell. "Pidginization and Creolization of Languages: Their Social Contexts " *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, vol. 2020, no. 263, 2020, pp. 99-109. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2020-2088; Hackert, Stephanie. "Creole Distinctiveness? Insights from English-Lexifier Pidgins, Creoles, and Related Varieties." *English and Spanish: World Languages in Interaction*, edited by Danae Perez et al., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2021. 92–114.

[38] Leslie Marmon Silko "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective." 1-2.

> been going on for a long time. They will try to stop you from completing the ceremony (115).

In Betonie combining the Navajo language and English, Silko displays how important it is to communicate and maintain some semblance of indigenous language. In "The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Indian Perspective on American Indian Literature," Paula Gunna Allen claims that:

> The tribes seek, through song, ceremony, legend, sacred stories (myths), and tales to embody, articulate, and share reality, to bring the isolated private self into harmony and balance with this reality, to verbalize the sense of the majesty and reverent mystery of all things, and to actualize, in language, those truths of being and experience that give to humanity its greatest significance and dignity. The artistry of the tribes is married to the essence of language itself, for in language we seek to share our being with that of the community, and thus to share in the communal awareness of the tribe (Allen 145).

The speakers of the languages enact their own agency when they tell stories. For example, Tayo struggles to communicate his experiences and emotions, in part because he must navigate between the different cultural and linguistic contexts. When Tayo meets Ku'oosh for the first time, he struggles to communicate with him, "he spoke softly, using the old dialect of full sentences that were involuted with explanations of their own origin… Tayo had to strain to catch the meaning, dense with place names he had never heard. His language was childish, interspersed with English words, and he could feel shame tightening his throat" (31-2). According to Gloria Bird's "Towards a Decolonization of the Mind and Text 1," "Tayo's knowledge of and relationship to the older language is taxed in that he can only speak in broken Indian, a fact which creates in him an extreme self-consciousness." Bird sees this moment as a "liberating recognition.

Only in the moments when we are able to name the source of our deepest pain can we truly be said to be free of the burdens they represent" (2). Gloria Bird was able to recognize in the Tayo the loss of her cultural language and connect to the character on a profound level. This loss for Bird seems visceral as her tribe, the Spokane Tribe of Washington State, is trying to revitalize the Salish Spokane-Kalispel language.[39] Brid reaction to Tayo demonstrates the connection that other tribal nations who have lost their language can connect through peoplehood and their quest for identity.

Furthermore, language is a vital force in the way native peoples define and understand the world and reality. Notably, language is an active force that creates reality through stories, as historically, language was forcibly taken from Indigenous people. For example, Peter Nabokov's *Native American* testimony illustrates the story of a Paiute girl Annie Lowry and how she had to fight to keep her language. According to Lowry, the only way she could keep her language was to disobey her father and hide from him:

> My father named me "Annie" for his sisters and with patience, saw to it that I spoke my first words in English rather than the Indian tongue…He was clever, well-read, and a wonderful businessman. He did not reckon with the forces of Indian training and tradition. His vain, silly ambition would have had more chance of coming true if his work had kept him home after I was four or five years old. Then he could attended my education. Instead…he would be gone for six weeks at a time… when he was home, he insisted that I speak good English and discouraged all Paiute talk (Nabokov 205). [40]

As a mixed-race Paiute girl, Annie's father forces her to forget her culture, especially her language, in order to purge the indigenousness, i.e., the Indian, out of her system. He had

[39] Spokane Tribe. "Children of the Sun | Spokane Tribe." *Spokanetribe.com*, 2017, spokanetribe.com/.

[40] Peter Nabokov *Native American Testimony* 205.

planned to leave his Paiute wife, put his daughter in a convent, and remarry a white woman so that no one would know that his children are native. Yet, for Annie, being taught to discard her Paiute customs and instead focus on learning the English language is debilitating, forcing her to abandon her mother and one-half of her very identity. What happens to Annie is rooted in the history of the boarding school system. Similarly, Silko touches on Boarding school and its effects and destructive force on Auntie (Thelma) and Little Sister. Thelma turned her back on her culture, and Little Sister acted out to hide her pain and became self-destructive. The boarding school system was developed by R.H. Pratt, who wanted to solve the *so-called Indian problem.* In 1892, Captain R. H. Pratt addressed the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities:

> A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one, and that high sanction of his destruction has been an enormous factor in promoting Indian massacres. In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man. We are just now making a great pretence [pretense] of anxiety to civilize the Indians (R.H Pratt 46-7). [41]

In an analysis of the impact of boarding schools on native language, Ruth Spack claims that:

> in other instances of colonization, control over language served as an important instrument in political as well as cultural exploitation, for it could be used to represent indigenous people's lives in such a way as to weaken claims to native

[41] R.H. Pratt. *The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites*. The Nineteenth annual charity conference 46-7; Pratt believed that he could "save the man" through white civilization and subsequent assimilation, and by 1883, 83% of Indigenous children were victims of boarding schools, which wiped out their identity, culture, and peoplehood. Pratt wanted to destroy every aspect of Indigenous identity, by stripping away Indigenous culture.

> sovereignty and strengthen the United States government's bureaucratic and territorial agendas (Spack 14).[42]

Essentially, the boarding school became the solution for the United States' "Indian problem," by depriving native children of their native tongues and replacing them with English. If the children were caught speaking their language, they were disciplined through solitary confinement and beatings.[43] Silko gives examples of the boarding school system in the form of Auntie, Little Sister, Josiah, and Betonie. "She sent me to school. Sherman Institute, Riverside, California. In exposing some aspects of boarding school, Silko highlights the different ways it affects each character. As a survivor of a boarding school, Sun Elk, a Taos Pueblo, says, "I remember one evening when we were all lined up in a room, and one of the boys said something in Indian to another boy. The man in charge of us pounced on the boy, caught him by the shirt, and threw him across the room. Later we found out that his collar-bone was broken."[44] Thus, native children like Sun Elk and even Annie Lowry lost significant parts of their very being once their language was stripped away. Stories like Sun Elk expose the brutality indigenous children faced at the hands of the American government and their Christian colonizers. Their stories also expose the colonizers' conscious effort to assimilate native children and force them to live

[42] Ruth Spack *America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860–1900*. 14.

[43] Ruth Spack. *America's Second Tongue: American Indian Education and the Ownership of English, 1860–1900.* 35.

[44] Peter Nabokov Native American testimony 220.

without their language, which is like living with a missing limb. A prime example of this is seen in Silko's character of Auntie [Thelma].

Language is often the key to preserving cultural heritage because it carries with it the stories, traditions, and values of a community; when a language is lost, so too is the cultural heritage it carries. This can lead to a sense of disconnection from one's history and ancestry. In addition, the historical reality of losing one's language is linked to losing identity; this has encouraged native people and authors to adapt English into a vehicle of expression that projects native stories. Ironically, then, English serves as a means for native authors to revitalize and heal their communities and restore cultural values. For example, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony,* N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, and Frances Washburn's *Elsie's Business* utilize English and the Laguna Pueblo, Jemez Pueblo, and the Lakota language to tell their stories.

Moreover, in using the colonizers' language, native people accentuate the capabilities of practical and political language as instruments of change in their lived reality. According to Louis Owens, "the Native American writer, like almost all colonized people, must also function within an essentially appropriated language" (Owens 12).[45] Thus, language is a connection not only to history but to the community and can play a vital role in healing. Compelling evidence relating to the normalizing of native languages comes from Frances Washburn's *Elsie Business*, where Washburn combines Lakota phrases and English to tell the story of Elsie Roberts.

[45] Louis Owens *Other Destinies* 12.

Washburn intermixes and weaves native culture and Western culture as a way to mediate the context of the narrative. In using Lakota words and phrases, Washburn introduces her readers – Lakota, native and non-native alike – to the power of her language, revealing that the Lakota language makes the story of *Elsie's Business* comprehensible. She does this by infusing Lakota words and phrases throughout the narrative, including Hau: "Hello" or "Yes." Mitakuye oyasin (we are all related, waste yelo (it is good), hau (hello, okay, yes), kola (friend), cunksi (daughter), wasicu (white man, person, non-native), ho eyes (yes or I agree), wicasa wakan (the shaman), tokeske oyaunyanpi, heno, anagoptnye, wastepe, pilamaya, he ha'yela owi'hake each of these words and phrases in Lakota carry significant meaning and while some of these phrases are in everyday words, the way Washburn incorporates the Lakota language is flawless. In correlating the tribalography in the reading of *Elsie's Business* clarifies how indigenous communities engage in cultural traditions such as storytelling and using the Lakota language, intermittingly with English, Washburn thus revitalizes their culture in the colonial context, which is a way of safeguarding indigenous knowledge. This act illuminates a strategic form of healing to keep the culture alive. In incorporating Lakota languages differently, Washburn expresses that Lakota's ways of knowing are not easily translatable for non-native readers. However, through specific treatment of the Lakota language, she discloses the subversive power of language.

Furthermore, Washburn's linguistic choices of Lakota words and phrases like mitakuye oyasin, waste yelo, hau, kola, cunksi, wasicu, etc., assert political implications. However, by applying Lakota words and phrases, from greetings, expressions, and

ceremonies, Hau, waste yelo, and wicasa wakan, to the English used throughout her novel, Washburn is preserving her culture and documenting that the Lakota remain present, despite years of subjugation and attempted erasure and establishes that the Lakota language survived.

Throughout *Elsie's Business,* Washburn depends on contextual clues to expound upon key Lakota terms. For instance, in the opening chapter, Washburn welcomes readers into the narrative via the story of *Anukite*, or the "deer woman," as the story unfolds, the reader comes to see *Anukite* as a liminal figure in exposing her true form as a deer woman. This figure is used in much the same way Silko employs the Laguna stories related to drought as representing Elsie. The character of Elsie is presented in duality, "It was like there was two Elsies" (148), one who is a victim and then the one who is a deer woman, similar to the story of Anukite as a Double-Faced Woman who appears innocent but is also a seductress, finally embodying the Sinte Sapela Win. According to Frances Washburn, Elsie is the victim of strange men, but she is avenged by the deer woman. Then she becomes the deer woman" (Washburn, 2011). In explaining Deer Woman, Washburn delineates the thought process of the Lakota and reveals that things are more complicated than Western binaries allow relating to Lakota thought, language, and knowledge. For the Lakota people, the world is in shades of grey, as things are not always as they seem- "they were afraid it might have been one of their own. . . that some new story with a different twist…. They feared that the end had not been told yet. Elsie was dead, but the Indian committee feared the spirit of Elsie as much as they feared her murderer. They smudged their houses with cedar and sage to repel bad spirits" (183).

That is why in interspersing the narrative with Lakota terms and concepts, Washburn is giving an insight into the Lakota culture so readers can understand Elsie's decisions. Elsie was complicated as she marched to her own drums. She was labeled and feared as a deer woman and is a victim of rape and assault. Elsie, however, lived according to her own rules, "bantering with the children, showing them her turtles" (153); this is Elsie's special language for kids and her turtles.

Likewise, Washburn introduces her readers to the Lakota language through Elsie and her mother's interactions, letting context do the work of translation. For example, Washburn writes this scene where Elsie and her mother are playing, "'*Ina*, help me.' Elsie's mother takes a long step into the mud" (25). Later, Elsie continues her dialogue with, "'*Ina*, look!' She loosens her grip on the fabric, and there inside are three tiny turtles" (25). Thus, the meaning of the word *Ina* becomes clear from these clues, as in the Lakota language, *Ina* is the word for "mother." Washburn also provides the translation for the word *Cunski* ("daughter") and *Pilamaya* ("thank you") through clues and comments made by Grandfather Oscar as he teaches George Washington some words and phrases in the Lakota language. In a sense, it is like Washburn is teaching her readers the Lakota language and patience; readers can comprehend that the everyday phrase, *Hau,* has a double meaning, of both "hello" and "welcome." By and large, though, Washburn demurs from explaining particular Lakota terms and phrases to accommodate non-Lakota readers. According to "The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature" by Billy J Stratton and Frances Washburn:

> language is conceptualized within this framework, the lack of Native languages in the production of literary texts, in fact, illustrates one of the key points: language does not exist in a cultural vacuum but emanates from culture, which is in a constant state of change and inextricably linked to territory, ceremony, and sacred history (Stratton and Washburn 57).

Therefore, Washburn's choice to make the non-Lakota reader aware of a Lakota perspective without attempting to describe the language meaning gives added significance and agency to her Lakota language and culture while introducing non-Lakota readers to some critical aspects of Lakota culture and language, like the *Wiping the Tear Ceremony*, "Hau, kola," Roger hollers at the men. One of them comes over to him and they clasp shoulders. "Ho eyes, tokeske oyaunyanpi huo?" the man says. "Hena, waste yelo." (198). Washburn left these sentences untranslated, revealing to her readers that some things cannot be easily translated, as many specific Lakota terms will lose meaning when translated into Western languages. So, while Washburn makes Lakota language accessible in her novel, she pushes the translation through a context that is indicative and attempts at *direct* translation sacrifice the nuance of meaning.

Significantly, Washburn's withholding of direct translation offers insight into the differing way Lakota perceives the world. The Lakota tradition believes in being hospitable and is entrenched in the practices of *Wacantognaka* (generosity), which means to give freely. In *Elsie's Business,* the character of Oscar is following the culture of his people by offering visitor sustenance and his time. He is continuing the culture and traditions of his people by welcoming a stranger into his home; In many native American cultures, it's tradition to welcome people with food and a pipe. For the Lakota people, it is part of their four values. This tradition connects Oscar to his roots and exemplifies the

proud heritage of the Lakota culture. This is most apparent in Washburn's use of phrases like *Mitakuye oyasin* – "we are all related," –in which she offers no translation or meaning. This phrase simply exists as a part of the Lakota practice of good hospitality; *Mitakuye oyasin* is for everyone, regardless of color or creed:

> Relax, think. Remember. Eat good food. It's a time out from time, when you don't have to be doing anything, an ain't much anybody can do to you. Family. Well, you don't have any here, that's for sure. He catches your eye, and probably your thoughts, because he says softly, *Mitakuye oyasin* (Washburn 92).

Washburn wants her audience to understand that while reading *Elsie's Business*, they are entering the Lakota world. Washburn's decision to use English to tell a significant part of *Elsie's Business* does not dilute the text's linguistic and political connotations but strengthens the Lakota language. English is used as a subversive linguistic tool, allowing Washburn to incorporate Lakota language and storytelling – indicating that English alone cannot express the full story of *Elsie's Business*. In applying the context of English to insert Lakota details, Washburn reclaims English to propagate a Lakota observation of the world, ultimately submersing non-Lakota readers into an interactive Lakota world without fully revealing the nuances of Lakota beliefs. Protecting native languages is an act of survivance, and the power of using a once-forbidden language demonstrates the perseverance of the indigenous communities. Gerald Vizenor's concept of survivance touches on native stories' "renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry" (Vizenor Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence 2).

In *The Heirs of Columbus,* Vizenor addresses language and knowledge and how the colonizers use native language as a weapon to exploit native people and control them. The colonizers have historically used native language as a weapon to exploit native people by imposing their own language and cultural values on indigenous communities. This Vizenor reveals through the character of Doric, whose ancestor, an Indian Agent, exploited his Anishinaabe great-grandmother and learned her language to further assimilated the tribes. “The tribes were doomed, he promised, because they would not survive their miseries and moral depravity. He became more concerned with the salvation of the tribes than with their economic development or assimilation… Schoolcraft learned their language and revealed a moral weakness in their own words” (Vizenor 49). Vizenor states that the imposition of colonizers' language on indigenous people has had a damaging effect on the native language and culture.

By forcing native people to abandon their own language and adopt the colonizers' language, colonizers have disrupted the transmission of traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and values from one generation to the next. To combat this effect, Vizenor’s *The Heirs of Columbus* embark on a journey that challenges the status quo, and in a battle of wills to define the self, the colonizers must destroy every aspect of the individual—for example, destroying all the elements of the peoplehood that promotes identity, like language, sacred history, ceremony, and place. The colonizer succeeds in erasing native people, then remaking them through assimilation. Therefore, when the colonizers use language as a weapon to devastate the people, it has far-reaching consequences. Specifically, the deprivation of native peoples from their original languages acts to

demolish the very foundation of personal and cultural identity. For example, when indigenous languages stop being spoken, aboriginal people lose a sense of self. Thus, they must turn to the use of colonial languages for communication. The character of Stone Columbus, who is a language scholar and a descendant of Christopher Columbus, is interested in the various languages spoken in the Americas. Stone seeks to understand their cultural significance. Through Stone's character, Vizenor suggests that language is a significant aspect of cultural identity and that its preservation is essential for the survival of cultural diversity. Because language is not just a means of communication but a carrier of cultural identity and history, Vizenor explores the ways in which cultural identity is constructed, negotiated, and sometimes even invented. Therefore, Vizenor uses the trickster to perform some kind of healing or liberation, for "trickster stories can liberate the mind in language games" (82). However, as Vizenor explores through *The Heirs of Columbus* with the concept of trickster hermeneutics, the idea of the endless exploitation of native culture. As the Brotherhood of American Explorers represents, the colonizers always wanting the “ownership of land and language” (50) as a way in which language is used to assert power and control. Vizenor explores the ideology behind the colonizers' thinking through the character Henry Rowe Schoolcraft the Indian Agent of the Anishinaabe tribe who is Doric ancestor:

> Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, son of a glassmaker from New York and the first Indian Agent in the territory of Michigan married the crossblood daughter of Johnston and the granddaughter of White Fisher. Jane was educated and fluent in three languages; what her husband learned about the language and stories of the tribe he learned from her relatives. The mission ethnographer, however, seldom cited his sources, and he demonstrated no gratitude to the tribe for his reputation as an

> expert on the language and culture of the Anishinaabe…Schoolcraft learned their language and revealed a moral weakness in their own words. (48-9).

Through this marriage and the legacy, the character of Doric emerged; he is a descendant of the colonizer Indian Agent and a crossblood Anishinaabe woman. Therefore, Doric has native ancestry, but he is far removed from the associated native identity due to his ancestor's influence of othering his crossblood great-grandmother's ancestors and teaches him that being a part of the colonizers' world is the only way to live. "Their pagan language [Ojibwe/Ojibwa] and the economic environment of the tribe had fostered moral depravities that resisted the wisest missions"(49); as a result, Doric contemplates how to manipulate his native ancestry, language, and artifacts for his own selfish benefit. "Doric Michéd pretended to be tribal when his timeworn crossblood heirs served his economic and political interests; he denied his obscure associations and tribal responsibilities." (47-8). According to Barry E. Laga:

> Western culture creates myths important to its stability, reducing anxiety by explaining away contradictions or providing a way of living with them. The ultimate consequence of these myths, now taken as natural or inevitable instead of as constructs, is a 'racist denial of tribal languages and ceremonies.' Myths suppress what the dominant culture does not want to recognize (Laga 73).

To counteract this myth, Vizenor uses the trickster to offer much more than an analysis of the mythic character. To prove his point, he invokes the Derridean concept of *freeplay*, using the trickster as a semiotic sign (both a signifier-physical evidence of the sign-and the signified-a mental concept common to all members of the same culture who share the same language), a communal sign, a holotrope, "a discourse in a narrative" (73). Vizenor deploys tricksters to expose the character Doric and illustrate how the loss of language prevents people from manifesting their native identities. Notably, Doric has a connection

to the Anishinaabe culture. He is also part of the Brotherhood of American Explorers who want to destroy new worlds. Their motto is "explore new worlds, discover with impunities, represent with manners, but never retreat from the ownership of land and language" (50). Doric ignores his cultural lineage and exploits and sells indigenous artifacts to increase his legitimacy as a member of the brotherhood. His primary concern seems to be in gaining wealth and being part of a society that participates in the exploitation and destruction of indigenous artifacts, land, and language. It seems he is a firm believer in his cause as he states, "Never retreat from the ownership of land and language"(50). Vizenor approaches this topic of language by saying, through the character of Lappet. "The languages we understand are games," and then calling it a "prison." In calling language, a prison, Vizenor refers to the limits it sets on the users and the meaning behind the language use. Since language is interconnected to identity and culture, it can become a burden when it is destroyed. However, in true Vizenorian fashion, he presents a solution to the loss of the language, and that is through the power of "trickster stories [which] liberate the mind in language games" (82). Using the trickster narrative, Vizenor dismantles the powerful Western hegemonic concept of language. *The Heirs of Columbus* represents language as a complex and multifaceted aspect of cultural identity. In that language can be used to assert power and control but also celebrates its potential for cultural preservation and healing. In utilizing the trickster, Vizenor employs many forms of chaos. Vizenor says the trickster is "that wild space over and between sounds, words, sentences, and narratives" (Vizenor 196). It is clear that the trickster is simultaneously a presence and an absence. Therefore, the tricksters are also protectors,

but most importantly, the tricksters create order out of chaos. Utilizing the trickster figure in *The Heirs of Columbus*, Vizenor is leveling the playing field and returning power to the Anishinaabe people. For example, Vizenor expresses through a letter from the character of Pellegrine Treves to Felipa Flowers regarding the remains of Pocahontas, "that you honor your dead with a metaphor from our language would be reason enough to reveal a ceremonial discretion" (95). By injecting stories of resistance connected with the trickster through oral tradition, ceremonies, and language, Vizenor is attempting to rewrite the wrongs of history through whom he calls the heirs of Columbus- Stone and Felipa and the grave injustice in the loss of identity and encourage them to use the trickster figure to find survivance and eventually healing. That is why Vizenor is looking to peoplehood, as this method connects and guides indigenous people to survive. He wants to evoke the tricksters and put them to work to counteract the loss of the language and ask the native community to revitalize their language. "The game that saved the heirs from the water demons, there is nothing to lose at the feet of the Trickster of Liberty"(179). Using the symbology of the trickster figure, Vizenor is uniting his people under the branch of survivance. He writes, "Tricksters . . . are not real people, tricksters are figures in stories, no more than the language games of a rich and wild imagination, and in our tribe [Anishinaabe], the trickster is unleashed with a dash of *Priapean* sexism" (80).[46] Through the trickster figure, Vizenor is fighting back through his writing.

[46] Gerald Vizenor. *The Heir of Columbus* 80: Priapean (comparative more Priapean, superlative most Priapean) (Greek mythology) Of or relating to Priapus or Priapos, a minor rustic fertility god, protector of livestock, fruit plants, gardens, and male genitalia.

The Heirs of Columbus provoke a reaction in which Vizenor uses a person with native ancestry as part of the problem. In highlighting the dialogical process, Vizenor is exposing the heart of the tricker discourse in tribal society. The trickster discourse serves as a cultural entity, and the trickster is appreciated in that wholeness because the trickster is a liberator and a healer. Since the trickster engages in language games, “the "tribal trickster is atavistic, a revenant holotrope in new and recurrent narratives” (205).[47] Vizenor uses the trickster figure because they do not die; they return to life in new disguises and new stories. According to Lawrence Gross, “the trickster can face the onslaught of the European invasion, and rather than "vanish," as seems to have been the hope of earlier Euro-Americans, the trickster mutates into something even greater” (Gross 456).[48]

Likewise, by showing that many native people have been assimilated under the force of colonial knowledge and taken on the colonizers' hegemonic mentality, Vizenor reminds us that a change also needs to happen within the tribal community to ensure cultural survivance. The characters of *The Heirs of Columbus*, such as Stone and Miigis, create their own sovereign national enclave to challenge the larger corruption that has infected the White Earth community, appealing to the people of such communities to do their part in promoting healing. It seems like Vizenor is working against the clock through characters like Felipa Flowers of *The Heirs of Columbus* because he understands

[47] Gerald Vizenor 3. "Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games." In Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures, edited by Gerald Vizenor. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 205.

[48] Lawrence Gross: The Comic Vision of Anishinaabe Culture and Religion 456.

that language is crucial to preserving traditions, solace, spiritual aspects, memories, and narrative. The absence of language represents the continuous colonization of all native American people, and revitalizing the language is an essential step toward sovereignty and self-identity. Language is such an important aspect of native American identity that it literally defines knowledge and reality. Therefore, language carries the memories, stories, traditions, and hearts of many nations.

In the United States, the colonists-imposed settler colonialism grounded in European language, religion, and the concept of property in ways that were beneficial to them. Given this context, it is up to the indigenous people of the Americas to fight back and to keep telling their own stories. Whereas Silko, Washburn, and Vizenor address and use words and phrases in their indigenous language, Stephen Graham Jones approaches language differently. Jones uses the colonizers' language to tell the story of the Blackfoot people and the Browning reservation in his novel *Ledfeather*. In using the colonizers' language, Jones tackles the history of the Blackfeet people and holds a mirror to the United States to expose the brutality against that tribe and others. In using English to tell the harrowing story of settler colonialism, the absent Blackfeet language in the novel demonstrates an experience that is missing and inevitably engages within a broader context of the novel as language plays an important aspect in *Ledfeather*.

In the novel's opening scene, for example, Jones refers to the language being spoken but does not use Kainai/Swiksika or Piegan[49] language. The narrator observes, "It

[49] The Blackfeet nation language is commonly referred to as the Kainai. This language is a form of the Algonquian language spoken by four Blackfoot nations. The Kainai/Swiksika has been an endangered

was Indian, two words maybe, or one long one, and I was pretty sure Junior only knew four or five" (12). Jones signifies the idea of language, but the Blackfeet/Piegan words and phrases are clearly missing. This experience displays the effects of assimilation and the impacts on individuals and societies in the interpretation of history, the version of the present, and perhaps hope for the future. The missing Kainai language of *Ledfeather* exhibits the perpetuating historical trend of erasing the Kainai/Blackfeet language as well as other native American languages and cultures. Many native American languages have been lost over time due to a range of factors, including government policies that banned their use in schools and public spaces. As a result, the preservation and revitalization of native American languages has become an important issue for many indigenous communities. As Gerald Vizenor writes in *Manifest Manners*:

> The English language has been the linear tongue of colonial discoveries, racial cruelties, invented names, the simulation of tribal cultures, manifest manners, and the unheard literature of dominance in tribal communities; at the same time, this mother tongue of paracolonialism has been a language of invincible imagination and liberation for many tribal people in the postindian world (Vizenor 105).[50]

Therefore, in using English, Jones weaves an agonizing tale that uncovers a traumatic past that still affects the future. Additionally, by using English, Jones is empowering himself and his tribal nation by telling their story because in using the enemy's language, Jones is communicating with a wider audience and advocating for all native Americans' rights and interests. Language itself is a story, and it often expounds on the difference in

language since the 1960s. However, they have been efforts to revitalize the language. Dempsey Hugh A. "Kainai: Blackfoot Language | the Canadian Encyclopedia." *Www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca*, The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2021.

[50] Gerald Vizenor. *Manifest Manners.* 105.

the description and framing of a nation's idea. Language generates situations in stories. Therefore, in using English, Jones is utilizing the language of the colonizer so he can discuss and use the same language and discourse to analyze and criticize the colonizer. In *Ledfeather*, the Indian agent Frances Dalimpere speaks three languages (English, French, and broken Kainai/ Piegan), but so does the mysterious Piegan Yellow Tail (Kainai /Piegan, French, and English). Yellow Tail's first language is Kainai/Piegan, and Dalimpere's is English, but to communicate on the reservation, the Indian Agent relies on Yellow Tail. Both characters attempt to outwit each other in their languages. "I looked up to him as if seeing him for the first time, and nodded once, yes. His French is easily as good as mine" (Jones 62). Here the Indian Agent realizes that Yellow Tail is highly intelligent. "I feel he has a plan for me, Claire, Yellow Tail. And I can no more see it than I can count the grains of snow as yet filling the hollow places of the reservation" (63). In outmatching, Dalimpere, Yellowtail subverts the Indian agent's authority and gives himself agency. Jones shows that Yellow Tail can outwit the Indian Agent in all his languages and then play mind games with him, "Yellow Tail asks in his sly, childlike voice, I can not tell whether they're mere savage conjecture meant to probe the white man's mind or whether there's a more devious point to all this" (74). In outmaneuvering, the Indian Agent Jones emphasized the importance of preserving and revitalizing Kainai/Piegan languages as a way to maintain cultural heritage and identity but also demonstrates that memory, language itself— English, French, Kainai/Piegan— so carries all the insignia that challenges and give agencies which will begin the healing process and survivance. In realizing the difference in the sounds and the ideas, along with the

meaning expressed through the language, the character can recognize that words are not singular. They have various meanings. For example, Dalimpere's letter to his wife can be interpreted to have several implications. According to Joseph Gaudet, "Jones opens up the possibility for alternative presents and futures; by proffering a postironic belief in the power of language to not merely imprison but to liberate, he offers belief in the face of delimiting material realities and indomitable alienation" (Gaudet 24). The Indian Agent writes in a letter to his wife, Clair, about how he is changing and suffering with the Blackfeet people. When analyzing the letters, different meaning emerges from the context:

> But I lied, Claire. And not just to you. You would not recognize me, I fear. Like them, I am starving. Have you received any of my recent posts, I wonder? Yesterday and for two days prior there's been an Indian man smiling at me from the water trough by the horse pens. This is the man I've been reduced to entrusting to deliver my correspondence to the stage. He knows something, Claire. He watches me even as I write this. And no, I have yet to tell you about last Winter. This is because there are not the words. But I lie again (47-8).

In looking at the language closely, there is a mystery afoot. Why is the agent suspicious of the Piegan man, and what did he lie about? The Indian Agent is deathly afraid of something. The question is, what did he do, and why does he think that Yellow Tail wants to interfere with his letters? Dalimpere is in charge of the Blackfeet encampment. Why is he concerned with the Blackfeet/Piegan man – Yellow Tail – knowing his secrets? It seems that the Indian Agent is suspicious that the Blackfeet/Piegan man is reading his correspondence and therefore knows his thoughts and actions. Thus, the Indian Agent cannot communicate directly in his preferred language, reinforcing his sense of dislocation. Essentially, his experiences with his surroundings and his inability

to express those experiences entirely have made him powerless and isolated. These feelings convince Dalimpere to factor the questions of a racial/ethnic schemata into the equation. For example, he could not communicate with the Blackfeet people even though there was a sense of superiority over them, as words can be interpreted in different ways by different individuals based on their cultural backgrounds, personal experiences, and beliefs. Moreover, language is not just about conveying information but also about expressing emotions, attitudes, and values of culture and identity. This means that even seemingly innocuous statements can contain underlying meanings that can trigger people to differentiate consciously and create volatility. Therefore, it is important to be mindful of the language because of the potential impact it may have on others. In not being able to fully communicate with Yellow Tail, Frances Dalimpere sees danger where perhaps there is none. As a result, Dalimpere slowly begins to change. This incapacity to communicate explains his frustrations in trying to negotiate his experiences between his dominant culture and the Piegan culture, which is the basis of his identity. Therefore, in writing to his wife, Claire, Dalimpere is trying to find a lifeline so that he does not lose himself in the Piegan way of life. For example, Jones narrates:

> Again one of the other two Piegan men leaned forward, mumbled something in their guttural tongue, and smiled himself back to the wall. Yellow Tail nodded, smiled with him. So he remembered his language, at least. What else? His nameless wife, his children? Lead Feather? No. The massacre. Marias. Yellow Tail had given it away precisely for this, the Indian Agent told himself. In anticipation of forgetting himself, of losing himself. What he'd done was place his experience in a primitive confabulation and then passed it on so it could return to him someday, wake him from an open-eyed slumber. [51]

[51] Stephen Graham Jones. *Ledfeather* 111.

Frances Dalimpere's powerlessness makes him envious of the Blackfeet people because they can communicate, while he is slowly losing his language and culture. Essentially, he is isolated and cannot speak his own language unless Yellow Tail indulges him. All the Indian Agent has is the letters he writes to his wife; even those letters are suspected of tampering. Thus, the power dynamic between Dalimpere and Yellow Tail is shifting due to language, and the context for understanding the nature of authority and power relations is expressed through these characters.

Still, there is irony in this narrative. By rendering Dalimpere as the powerless one due to his loss of culture, Jones transforms Dalimpere into a stranger from all things familiar, i.e., his wife, language, and culture. Thus, Jones exhibits the power of language and how it can handicap the powerful, even someone as (once) powerful as Dalimpere. By entering the complex world of the Piegan treatment of place and time, the Indian Agent cannot handle the loss of his culture and identity. So, he bargains to return to a place he once helped fracture. "If I die out here the land will inter my bones but my soul, Claire…I do not know. Yellow Tail has polluted my thoughts. He's noticed the leather bag I carry on my belt, and thinks it embarrassing for me, that I'm trying to have medicine like him, that I would rather be Indian than Indian Agent" (77). In displaying the changes that the Dalimpere is going through, Jones is slowly showing how the Blackfeet culture is impacting him, "the Indian Agent, trying to safe guard himself, to save his soul for his estranged wife, said simply, and in the baroque Piegan counting. . .One hundred years hence. . .A person can not call down his own fate, even in trade, even in a language he knows but imperfectly" (156). Jones's use of language in *Ledfeather*

defamiliarizes the dominant cultural ideals. In discombobulating Dalimpere, Jones parallels the experience many modern native people have faced and continue to battle when entering the dominant culture. There is a sense of perhaps disconnection from their cultural roots and a search for a way to reconnect with their heritage. *Ledfeather* stresses the ongoing struggles of the Blackfeet tribe and other native people who want to assert their sovereignty and maintain their cultural traditions in the face of ongoing oppression and marginalization. Jones also emphasizes that healing and reconciliation can only occur through recognition of the ongoing effects of historical trauma and a commitment to addressing the root causes of these traumas. Thus, Jones is aware that not every indigenous story can have a *"happy ending."* According to John Gamber:

> Jones does not craft a situation in which each tribal nation regains control over its own land, nations in which the people speak tribal languages fluently and practice traditional cultural elements while still existing within the global political, economic, and cultural milieu as nations equal to any and all others (Gamber 31).[52]

In 1990, the United States government passed the native American Language Act. This policy is supposed to save many of the indigenous languages of America from the endangered list. This law also allows native children to learn their nation/tribal language in school. However, the United States government was far too late in the passage of this legislation, as many tribes and nations lost their languages. At the same time, many other tribal languages have no speakers left and few written resources and are in danger of being lost. According to Billy J Stratton and Frances Washburn:

[52] John Gamber The End (of the Trail) Is the Beginning: Stephen Graham Jones's "The Bird Is Gone" 31.

> Of the four categories of the peoplehood model, perhaps, that of language could be viewed as the most problematic category because, to date, few, if any major literary works by American Indians have been published in American Indian languages. However, as language is conceptualized within this framework, the lack of Native languages in the production of literary texts in fact illustrates one of the key points: language does not exist in a cultural vacuum but emanates from culture, which is in a constant state of change and inextricably linked to territory, ceremony, and sacred history (Stratton and Washburn 57).

This situation forced an adaptation of language to develop as a result. As a result, many tribes have a version of their language mixed with English and other native languages. Leslie Marmon Silko, Frances Washburn, Gerald Vizenor, and Stephen Graham Jones all address the complicated ways in which language operates in a diverse selection of native cultures and communities. In exploring languages through the peoplehood and the novels of *Ceremony, House Made of Dawn, Elsie's Business, The Heirs of Columbus*, *and Ledfeather,* a pattern emerged that these pieces of literature are powerful tools for understanding the ongoing legacy of colonialism of language in native American communities. Each of these authors uses language to reclaim cultural identity and challenges the dominant narrative to tell their stories and promote survivance and healing. They've made their native language accessible to non-natives and adapted and adopted English to transform it into their own tool of liberation so they can defend themselves from the dominant culture's narrative and tell their own stories. For instance, removing language is typically an act of aggression – a way to conquer, exploit, and dehumanize the Other. However, native Americans have adopted the English language to continue to tell their stories.

Chapter Four: Land

In the Peoplehood Matrix, land/territory is seen as a dynamic and evolving concept, with different meanings and values assigned to it by the many tribes/nations that once occupied that space before settler colonialism. N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, Frances Washburn's *Elsie's Business*, and Stephen Graham Jones *Ledfeather* use the element of land to connect to the sacred places in their culture through the peoplehood to demonstrate that their narrative does not just work as fiction but a powerful tool for understanding the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism in native American communities. The Peoplehood Matrix proclaims the importance of recognizing and respecting the diversity of indigenous perspectives on land while also advocating for the protection and restoration of tribal lands and natural resources. Thus, the Peoplehood Matrix asserts that the element of land is central to the Peoplehood Matrix, as it is the physical and cultural foundation upon which native American communities are built. Land is seen as not only the source of subsistence and economic livelihood but also the basis for cultural identity and spirituality. According to Holms, Pearson, and Chavis:

> Land, from this point of view, is equal to that which it produces or to what its actual market value might be. Another relationship with land is organic in nature. It is a living relationship in which humans use the land and consider it part of their heritage. That is to say, some human groups seem to have a special esteem for their homeland that goes beyond its cash value or level of productivity. Particular territories are always mentioned in sacred histories, and quite often creation and

> migration stories specify certain landmarks as being especially holy. Ancestors are buried in particular places (Holms et al. 14).

The authors argue that land is not simply a commodity or resource to be owned and exploited but is a sacred and integral part of native American culture and tradition. Therefore, the domain of land is a crucial aspect of the Peoplehood Matrix, as it plays a central role in shaping native American identity, culture, and nationhood. For example, a connection to the land is not unique to indigenous people as the Celts of Scotland and Ireland, Vikings from the North of Europe, and many more cultures maintain a strong connection to their native land. Many cultures perceived the presence of the supernatural as connected to, and linked with, the material world, where every river, mountain, spring, marsh, tree, and rocky outcrop are inspirited (Bernhard Maier). For indigenous people, the land they inhabit is connected to their culture and identity. In their belief system, the land is part of and connected through the four elements of sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and language, which teaches the peoplehood about the origins of where the first people come from. According to Billy J Stratton and Frances Washburn:

> Land is reconceptualized as place or territory, and religion is integrated into the much more comprehensive category of ceremonial cycle, while the four factors continue to be understood as inextricably connected and interdependent. Typically [,] in American Indian literature all of these factors are present, but in some cases, especially in short works of fiction or of poetry, only two or three of the factors may be clearly evident (Stratton and Washburn 56).

In exploring the concept of losing one factor of peoplehood, Stratton and Washburn shows that there is still a strong connection implied through sacred history, ceremonial cycle, and language. The loss of one is not a loss of peoplehood. The land holds a sacred place in native cultures as their sacred stories, ceremonial practices, and languages are all

connected to the land that birthed, nourished, and grew them. The land is organic and sovereign; therefore, from an indigenous ontological perspective, it cannot be owned. Within the colonial context of the United States, tribal nations have lost approximately ninety-nine percent of their lands through forced migration, theft, treaty cessions, and devastating government policies intended to erode native sovereignty and culture. These injustices corresponded with the devastation to the wildlife population and habitat that tribal nations have long taken care of and lived alongside; many of these nations have actively shaped lands in propitious ways. That is why currently, many native tribal nations are fighting the government for their land back. For example, one of the most famous cases is the *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians,* in which the Sioux Nation refused to accept compensation worth two billion dollars for the sacred place of the Black Hills. Another example of indigenous people fighting to protect their land is the *Keystone XL* pipeline which put corporate interests over the health and well-being of native Americans from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Assiniboine Nakoda, and Gros Ventre Aaniiih Tribes. Out of the fight against the *Keystone Xl Pipeline* came the Land Back- an indigenous-led environmental, political, and cultural movement seeking to return aboriginal land to indigenous hands. This movement has mobilized many indigenous communities as well as non-indigenous allies in the fight against environmental injustice. The *Land Back* movement is connected to the Peoplehood Matrix as it seeks to heal and reclaim through sacred stories, ceremonies, and languages, as well as basic needs such as governmental sovereignty, food, housing security, education, and equitable access to healthcare.

It is clear that the concept of place/land/territory is very important to native Americans as the peoplehood connects each distinct tribal nation to a sacred origin story connected to a specific place as a very loose "claim" on a physical space. For example, the Dine (Navajo), Hopi, Paiute, and Zuni believe they emerged into this world from various sites within the Grand Canyon. Paha Sapa (Black Hills) is sacred territory for the Lakota people. It is also a sacred territory for the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Crow people. Mato Tipila (Devil's Tower) in Wyoming is a sacred site for over twenty plains tribe people because it was a place for ceremonial practice and vision quests for centuries, as well as origins. The Peoplehood Matrix offers the insight that all roads lead back to the land. However, for indigenous people, the land is just not the land; it's much more.

This is something that the United States government is still struggling with when it comes to native Americans and the concept of land. Indigenous philosophy seeks harmony with the people's surroundings, which emphasizes a reciprocal relationship with the land; this involves caring for the land in exchange for its gifts. There is a sense of respecting the natural world, taking only what is needed, and leaving the land in better condition than it was found. Many indigenous cultures also have specific practices and rituals that are designed to honor the land and maintain a relationship with it. For example, in N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, there is a reference to the harvest and how the Jemez Pueblo honored the land. "That harvest, like the deer in the mountains, is the gift of God. . .Francisco remembered the race for good hunting and harvest. Once he had played a part; he rubbed himself in soot, and he ran on the wagon

road at dawn" (6-7), in highlighting that the Jemez Pueblo and other indigenous communities have ceremonies to ask for permission before hunting or harvesting plants. Momaday exhibits the importance of the land and its role in the lives and culture of the Jemez Pueblo and other tribal nations. He also demonstrates the harmonizing philosophy of the Jemez Pueblo and other tribal nations for the land and nature. Indigenous philosophies prioritize a deep respect for the natural world and a recognition of the interdependence between humans and the environment.

Indigenous people seek to live in balance with nature rather than seeking to dominate or exploit it. A Shawnee leader called Tecumseh once said, "Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the great sea, as well as the earth"[53] (Nerburn 39). This concept of land was foreign and inconvenient to Euro-American colonizers, which convinced them that they could devise ways to steal away from the native Americans' land. For example, in 1671, the Wampanoag Confederacy of southeast Massachusetts negotiated and signed a treaty with the Plymouth Colony for peace. Unfortunately, this treaty was broken when English settlers began capturing the Wampanoag people and selling them into slavery.[54] This treaty was one of five hundred treaties signed with native American tribes. Today,

[53] Kent Nerburn, *The wisdom of the Native Americans* 39.

[54] The 1671 Treaty was the first treaty signed with Plymouth Colony. However, due to the greed of the colonist in 1675, the war between the two broke out. The war was one of the bloodiest in American history. Today it is known as King Philip's War. History.com.

all five hundred treaties have been broken in some form by the United States government (Deloria 27).[55]

In 1786, the first native American reservation was established to deal with the "Indian problem." According to President James Monroe, "treating Native Americans this way flattered their pride, retarded their improvement, and in many instances paved the way to their destruction."[56] Quite simply, reservations were created to confine native people and give free rein to Euro-American settlers to exploit native land. The Removal Act of 1830 forced the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Creek people to move westward on foot, often in chains with little or no food supply, and relocate to the 'Indian-designated territory of Oklahoma. Today native Americans call this crime the *Trail of Tears*.[57] Many tribal nations moved west due to the pioneers' encroachment and greed for land. The Chickasaws who lived in the Tennessee Valley did not want to leave their home for an unknown territory West of the Mississippi River. However, they signed a removal treaty of 1832 and 1834 because they felt they had no choice. The spokesperson for the tribe, Levi Colbert, penned this statement for remembrance:

> We never had a thought of exchanging our land for any others, we think that we would not find a country that would suit us as well as this we now occupy. It being the land of our forefathers, if we should exchange our land for any other, bearing the consequences may be similar to transplanting an old tree, which

[55] Deloria Vine. *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties an Indian Declaration of Independence. [the Goundbreaking Work by the Preeminent Spokesperson for American Indian Rights]* 27.

[56] Removing Native Americans from their Land. The Library of Congress.

[57] Museum of the Cherokee Indian.

> would wither and die away, and we are fearful we would come to the same…We have no lands to exchange for any other (Nabokov 151-2).[58]

Although the Chickasaws arrived in 'Indian territory' with significantly less damage to their bodies and spirit than the Creek, Cherokee, and Choctaw, they still suffered the loss of their land and culture. In addition, not all indigenous people submitted to the intent of the Removal Act; While other tribes, like the Cherokee, tried to fight the act through legal means, the Cherokee used the courts in the case Cherokee Nation v. Georgia.[59] Some tribal nations fled to remote areas,

Furthermore, many native Americans also tried to hide from the U.S. Army and government officials, who were tasked with enforcing the Indian Removal Act, while others tried to blend in with non-native American communities.[60] Nevertheless, one tribal nation decided to fight back. For example, the Seminoles of Florida[61] refused to leave

[58] Peter Nabokov. Native American Testimony 151-2.

[59] Cherokee Nation V. Georgia (1832). The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Cherokee Nation was sovereign. Chief Justice Judge John Marshall rendered the decision that the state of Georgia had no right to enforce state laws on the Cherokee in its territory. The case was for tribal sovereignty—Museum.

[60] The Cherokee who survived the Trail of Tears. Today call themself the Georgia Tribe of Eastern Cherokee. These Eastern Cherokee people are the descents of the Dahlonega area, who managed to escape the *Trail of Tears.* Georgiaindiancouncil.com.

[61] The Seminoles of Florida call themselves the "Unconquered People," descendants of just 300 Indians who managed to elude capture by the U.S. army in the 19th century. In the 1950s, the United States threatened to eliminate the Seminole reservations in a policy called Termination. The Florida Seminoles, but the tribal nation, were one of the few to successfully resist it. In exchange for maintaining their self-governance and reservation lands, the Seminoles agreed to create a democratic centralized tribe. The Seminoles wrote and ratified a constitution that formally created The Seminole Tribe of Florida in 1957. The tribe is governed by a President [man or woman] who oversees the Board of Directors and a Tribal Council with voting representatives from its three largest reservations (Hollywood, Big Cypress, and Brighton). Frank, Andrew K. “Research Guides: Florida State University & the Relationship with the Seminole Tribe of Florida and Seminole Nation of Oklahoma: A Very Brief History of the Seminoles.” *Guides.lib.fsu.edu,* 2023, guides.lib.fsu.edu/.

their homeland and engaged in guerrilla warfare against the U.S. Army and were able to avoid removal for a period of time.[62] However, despite their efforts, many native Americans were ultimately forced to leave their homes and were subjected to harsh conditions during their forced relocation. As a result, the Indian Removal Act is considered a dark chapter in U.S. history, and its legacy continues to impact native American communities today.

The relocation took the surviving native Americans to a reservation. Many of the reservations were often desolate, barren strips of land that indigenous people struggled with and often could not farm or hunt. To make matters worse, they could not leave the reservation without permission, and when and if they did, white settlers and soldiers attacked them. One such attack happened in Wyoming. The killing at Lightning Creek establishes how the violence towards indigenous people at the hands of the United States government and Euro-American settlers was common. Desperately needing medicinal supplies and food, a group of old men, women, and children from the Lakota tribe were out scouring the hills for medicinal plants. On their way home, William Miller, the local Sheriff of Newcastle, Weston County, Wyoming, and a group of white men brutally attacked them, killing the men and young boys. This atrocious event made scapegoats of the native people, citing that the group was illegally hunting. In forcing native Americans onto the reservation, the United States government displaced indigenous people not just from their homes but sacred places of ceremonies, worship, and traditions of various

[62] https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/timeline/280.html.

importance. In "The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature," Billy J Stratton and Frances Washburn argue:

> The relocation forced or voluntary, of Native peoples from their traditional homelands as a result of colonialism disrupted connections with the land, which were necessary for the performance of ceremonies tied to particular geographical locations. Sacred histories were predicated upon events that happened at specific places that could be visited by tribal members and stand as monuments that keep contemporary people to their pasts. Migration and relocation eliminated or curtailed the ability of Native people to visit sacred sites for ceremonial purposes, or to nurture memories related to oral sacred history (Stratton and Washburn 68).

Being forcibly removed from their land and confined to the reservation, indigenous people could not leave. Instead, they were bullied into assimilating into another's way of life. They were forced to wear white clothing and live in close quarters, often spreading disease, which decimated the population and forced them to see their sacred places through the European notion. Billy J. Stratton and Frances Washburn also state that:

> The concept of land as owned property arises out of the European concepts of land as mechanistic, as a commodity in the capitalistic sense of an economic item to be bought and sold on the marketplace. These are notions that did not exist in American Indian cultures who considered land as an organic, communally owned entity, a source of physical survival, but also of spiritual survival. Land as property, then, is a European concept that doesn't fit well with American Indian cultural concepts, as Holm, Pearson, and Chavis seem to recognize by relabeling land as "place or territory." These are oppositional cultural concepts of land as a commodity within European cultural concepts, and land as place within American Indian cultural concepts, as a material and spiritual provider (66-7).

In learning from the Euromerican concept of land, many tribal nations have begun repurchasing their land from the government, and many also utilize the federal court to fight the United States government. At the same time, some of the case verdicts favor native people, while others discard civic policies. For example, the latest case, Oklahoma v. Castro-Huerta, was an incursion on tribal sovereignty as the decision diminished the

ability of tribal nations to self-govern, instead making tribal citizens rely on institutions that are not designed to represent native people and historically fought against and oppressed them. This case is essential as it indicates that native Americans are still fighting for sovereignty on their land. The concept of land and connection to indigenous people and their identity is still foreign even after 500 years of indigenous people fighting for some of their sacred sites back. Indigenous literature has tried to educate and has proven to be the location where the power and the connection to the land are illustrated. Native authors have created a liminal space where readers can intersect with the symbolic and try to understand the desire to connect spiritually with a territorial birthright. Moreover, indigenous authors have continuously addressed notions that intersect with the elements of the peoplehood matrix to share with readers how their beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, traditions, and stories are connected to the land. In exploring their cultural knowledge, Momaday, Silko, Washburn, and Jones produce literature that challenges the dominant narrative and demands the decolonization process with stories.

In *House Made of Dawn*, N. Scott Momaday explores the importance of land and location to cultural identity and spiritual well-being. For the Jemez Pueblo, there is the focus of place not simply a physical location but a profoundly spiritual and cultural concept. The land is seen as a living entity imbued with history, meaning, and power. This spiritual connection to the land is reflected in Jemez Pueblo's religious rituals, centered around the cycles of nature and the changing of the seasons. Through the protagonist, Abel, Momaday reveals that the land and the connection the Jemez Pueblo people feel towards it are vital to the well-being of their personhood/peoplehood. The

character of Abel, who left the reservation to fight for the United States government in World War II, returns home, but he faces issues of displacement and cultural dislocation. In leaving his homeland, he loses a part of himself due to his experience in the war. The trauma that haunts him creates a visceral vacuum that threatens to overcome Abel's being, leaving him feeling lost, lonely, and frustrated. These feelings and emotions result in his inability to communicate or commune with nature. "His mind turned on him again in the silence and the heat, and he could not hold still." It is only when he goes for a walk in the surrounding landscape that "for a moment everything was all right with him. He was at home" (Momaday 30). For Abel, the connection to the land is embedded within him, and he must find a way to return to the therapeutic properties of his birthright. According to Christopher Douglas, 'Momaday insists on a spiritual relation to the land that the long-standing animals and Native peoples have, as opposed to the superficial life of the colonizing white Christians. This ongoing spiritual relation should be heard to imply an ongoing legal title to the land, no matter if official paper shows white ownership" (Douglas 229). In setting up the means by which Abel might attain healing, Momaday opens the novel with a scene that highlights the beauty and life-giving power of nature and the healing effect to be surrounding that beauty:

> There was a house made of dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain. And the land was very old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills, and the plain was bright with different colored clays and sands. Red and blue and spotted horses grazed in the plain, and there was a dark wilderness on the mountains beyond. The land was still and strong. It was beautiful all around (Momaday 1).

This prayer/chant is Dine [Navajo] in origin and is part of a healing ceremony. The Dine people believe that harmony is associated with health and beauty; therefore, in all its

greatness and diversity, the land's beauty closely links the idea of healing rituals and sacred oral stories. Each character, including Francisco -the Longhair and Father Olguin, has some form of connection to the land. They either rely on and relate to the land they live on to articulate a measure of oneness within themselves due to their relationship with the land. Conversely, a negative connotation comes with being alienated and embittered from the land and the self as he has lost sight of the beauty and healing quality of his surroundings because he was exposed to and embraced the Western world's thinking and attitude. Perhaps Abel's exposure to the violence and trauma of war has caused him to lose faith in the traditional Jemez Pueblo beliefs and values that once gave his life meaning. He becomes alienated from his grandfather and community, and he turns to alcohol and violence as a way to cope with his feelings of displacement and despair. In turning to alcohol, he further exacerbates his sense of dislocation, "Abel had drunk some wine. . .he, too, though the wine had made him sullen . . . he was drunk, and his legs would not work for him" (14). As Abel becomes increasingly entangled in the Western world, he loses touch with the spiritual and cultural traditions that once defined his identity as a Jemez Pueblo/native American. "He could see his grandfather, others, working below in the summit fields. The breeze was very faint, and it bore the scent of art and grain; and for a moment, everything was all right with him. He was home" (30). In a sense, the landscape and the place grounds Abel and give him meaning and a connection with the land and his grandfather Francisco's legacy. However, this feeling of peace and harmony quickly disappears as Able sense of displacement is tied to the effects of Post-apocalyptic syndrome and post-traumatic stress disorder [PASS/PTSD], which

renders him unable to function in his community. According to Paula Gunn Allen, "Abel, in House Made of Dawn, is essentially an outsider to his people even before he is drafted, but by the time he returns, he has lost the power of speech. Estranged from his own people as well as from himself, he lives his days remembering events that marked his strangeness and his isolation from all that should have been familiar to him" (Allen 12).[63] Therefore, it is no surprise that Abel sees evil because of the war and kills a man— but it is more than that as Abel is not connected through the peoplehood; his inability to partake in the ceremonial life of the village has left him secluded from the traditions that organize the seasons and human relationships into an important pattern to the land and the healing it brings. Paula Gunn Allen argues that:

> Abel has no norms, no means of understanding his experiencing and naming his experience. He cannot structure what happens to him or around him. His only response to events is violence, as he attempts to destroy what is destroying him. In the inarticulateness of his powerlessness and isolation, he first talks to, then murders the albino, believing him, as a witch, to be responsible for all the pain and grief which he has suffered. Abel struggles with the stark facts of the destruction colonization brings in its wake, and displaces his terror onto the strange being who has humiliated him as the white soldiers humiliated him during his tour (Allen 12).

The performance of this act cements Abel's isolation and takes him back to a place where he is farther away from a place that can soothe his soul. Momaday writes, "The breeze was very faint, and it bore the scent of art and grain; and for a moment, everything was all right with him. He was home" (30). It seems like the land/place already impacted Abel in moments, but one act further disconnects Abel from his environment and his

[63]A Stranger in My Own Life: Alienation in American Indian Prose and Poetry."

grandfather Francisco – the Longhair. Momaday contrasts Abel with Francisco, as Francisco has maintained a strong connection with the land and the traditions and customs of his culture and has taught his grandson [Abel] the importance of the relationship with the land. "Of all the places that he knew, this valley alone could reflect the great spatial majesty of the sky. It was scooped out of the dark peaks like the well of a great, gathering storm, deep umber and blue smoke-colored. . . Each new site of it always brought him up short, and he had to catch his breath" (16-17). In sharing this place with Abel, Francisco has shared the peace and healing the land can bring.

In turn, by moving away into the white world and from his grandfather, Abel further alienates himself from the only place that can give him peace. In disconnecting from his environment, Abel relies on alcohol to help him feel and cope in a world that has no use for him. Paula Gunn Allen contends:

> Abel is destroyed in his struggle to make sense of modem imperatives and history. He has no tradition to which he can relate, and no words in which to articulate his perception. He lacks the security of self-knowledge and belonging that Francisco possesses; his memories are not those of a priest nor of an Indian raised securely within a village untouched by tragedy (Allen 16-17).

It took Abel getting hurt to appreciate his place in the world and the importance of land in his ancestry and family. In hearing the words of stories reminiscent of the oral tradition from the character of Angela St. John, a white woman whom he once worked for and helped while she was looking for healing away from the city. "He followed her silently into the house and through the dark rooms. She turned on the lights in the kitchen, and the sudden bursts of it made her shrink ever so little. . . He sat listening to her, not waiting, gently taking hold of her distress, passing it off. She was grateful---and

chagrined" (Momaday 62). In Angela, reciting the story of the bear and the maiden as witnessed by Ben Benally. "Ei yei A bear! A bear and a maiden. And she was a white woman, and she thought it up, you know, made it up out of her own mind, and it was like that old grandfather talking to me, telling me about Esdza shash nadle, or Dzil quigi" (187). Abel can gain clarity and understand that he must return and reconnect with his past. In returning home Abel confront his past, "his own sickness had settled into a despair, He had been sick a long time" (195). In grandfather Francisco -the Longhair, dying Abel could reconnect to the memories of the shared history and lessons his grandfather taught him about the land:

> These things he told to his grandsons carefully, slowly and at length, because they were old and true, they could be lost forever as easily as one generation is lost to the next, as easily as one old man might lose his voice… but his grandson knew already; not the name or the strict position of the sun each day in relation to its house, but the larger motion and meaning of the great organic calendar itself, the emergency of dawn and dusk, summer and winter, the very cycle of the sun and of all the suns that were and were to come. And he knew they knew (198).

This whisper dawn confession forced Abel to confront himself and to see and envision the land and its beauty in all that his grandfather had taught him. Abel finally found that it is necessary to gain insight and comprehend how all things in nature are linked and how they are in balance with each other. In connecting with nature and practicing the ceremonies that are part of the land, Abel exercises his demons of not knowing his father, the loss of his brother and mother, and his war experience to carry on his people's traditions and thus discover peace within himself.

Similarly, in *Ceremony*, Leslie Marmon Silko uses the land of the Laguna Pueblo to call attention to how indigenous people derived power and connection with their

territory. The Laguna Pueblo people are so connected with the land that they believe all things -even rocks and water- have a spirit [Silko Yellow Woman]. The people derive "balances and harmonies" from the land, and because that balance and harmonies are always shifting, it is "always necessary to maintain "(Silko 120). Wilma Shires's "Balances and Harmonies Always Shifting": An Ecopostcolonial Borderlands Reading of Silko's Ceremony" suggests that the elements of transition, change, becoming, balance, and harmony in ceremony are used by Silko to convey a restoration of health to both the earth as well as to the novel's protagonist, Tayo. However, the disconnect in *Ceremony* comes down to the land. Betonie says, "We always come back to that, don't we? It was planned that way. For all the anger and frustration and the guilt too. Indians wake up every morning of their lives to see the land which was stolen" (Shires 117). Because of the theft of the land, the land has become a source of profit instead of being the respected Ts'its'tsi'nako [Thought-Woman] that should be honored by her children. This shift causes an imbalance in nature, as Silko portrays in the story of *Corn Woman, Humming Brid, and Fly*, "She's angry with us,' the people said" (49). As the Sacred Mother is angry, the people encounter drought, poverty, mental illness, and a divide in themselves and between each other. To restore balance, Tayo must complete the ceremony started by Betonie. "This has been going on for a long time now. It's up to you. Don't let them stop you. Don't let them finish off this world" (141). Wilma Shires states, "Tayo must work closely with nature, with medicine men, and with a nature goddess from one or all of the previous four worlds, all while grappling with the constraints and racist attitudes that come with living in a colonized nation" (76). Therefore, a person's value lies in how they

treat the land and animals. Ts'its'tsi'nako created all things; thus, everything is connected. There must be a balance in the universe, and Silko signifies that connection through Tayo. "The Psychological Landscape of Ceremony" uses elements of ecocriticism combined with Laguna Pueblo cultural facts to argue that "Tayo's illness is a result of separation from the ancient unity of person with land, and his healing is a result of his recognition of this oneness" (7). Sharon Holm's "The 'Lie' of the Land: Native Sovereignty, Indian Literary Nationalism, and Early Indigenism in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony" apply poststructuralism, colonialism, and semiotics to argue that even though Tayo may need his home, or a sense of belonging, to heal his "internalized colonization" (Holm 261),[64] the Laguna Pueblo have a stronger connection to their land than other tribes have because Laguna Pueblo was never forced to relocate (Holm 244). Therefore, their stories are directly tied to the landscape that surrounds them and that they have always seen. The Laguna Pueblo are in a unique position as they got to hold on to their peoplehood in the form of sacred stories, ceremonies, language, and land. While many other indigenous Americans who were forced to relocate, who lost their sacred place and had to confront landscape changes, had to reckon with stories that become severed and discounted, which at times resulted in a shift in cosmology.

While Tayo's journey is reminiscent of Abel's in that they both struggle with the effects of disconnection from their environment after returning home from World War II. Tayo doubts his value and wants to give up because he suffers survivor's guilt. Tayo is a

[64] This not in the language section because the concept of the people transends and connects. Therefore, all elements are connected.

traditionalist who has always accepted his family's Laguna way of life and adhered to its practices. For example, Tayo honors the deer spirit by offering cornmeal in thanks. "They had to show their love and respect, their appreciation; otherwise, the deer would be offended, and they would not come to die for them the following year" (Momaday 47). Tayo also refuses to kill flies because of the traditional oral story of the Greenbottle fly and Hummingbird:

> He was thinking about the time when he was young and swatting flies in the kitchen with a willow switch because it was fun to chase them. . . Josiah had come in from outside and he asked Tayo what he was doing, and Tayo had pointed proudly to the pile of dead flies on the kitchen floor. Josiah looked at them and shook his head. . . She said they are bad and carry sickness. I don't know about that but you see, long time ago, way back in the time immemorial, the mother of the people got angry at them for the way they were behaving. For all she cared, they could go to hell----starve to death, the animal disappeared, the plants disappeared, and no rain came for a long time. It was the greenbottle fly who went to her, asking forgiveness for the people (Silko 93).

In helping the people gain forgiveness from their mother, the greenbottle fly is revered in the Laguna Pueblo culture and becomes a part of balance and harmony. In embodying these stories, Tayo takes on the responsibility of restoring balance. For the Laguna Pueblo people, the land is a necessity that takes care of them; essentially, the Earth is their mother as she provides for the people. In addition, "the Laguna Pueblo [people] have a stronger connection to their land than other tribes have because [the] Laguna Pueblo was never forced to relocate" (Shire 77). Thus, their stories are tied more securely to the land and their surroundings, which form a historical bond with their ancestors and heritage. *Ceremony* exposes the connection to the Peoplehood Matrix by sharing the common aspect in the relationship between Laguna Pueblo people and oral stories,

ceremonies, and sacred relationships with the land. In “The "Lie" of the Land,” Sharon Holm argues that:

> Silko emphasizes that the Laguna "have always been able to stay with the land," and as a consequence of this geographical stability there is an unimpeachable quality to Laguna cultural authority: "Stories are so much a part of these places that it is almost impossible for future generations to lose them? there is story connected with every place, every object in the landscape."4 For Silko, land not only generates stories but also author(ize)s them as cultural identity. This personal and tribal experience of historical and geographic isolation, coupled with "the powers and potencies" of a synaesthetic experience of landscape, has led to the critical assumption that Ceremony, along with other Native American novels such as N. Scott Momaday's House Made of Dawn. . .exhibits a particularly untroubled, almost unmediated, spiritual relationship between words and place (Holm 244).

This ties the concept of peoplehood together, as each element is interconnected, even though there are names for places. Silko suggests that there is a fundamental connection in native American epistemology in that there is a strong connection to self and the community and a physical and metaphysical dimension of the land. Stratton and Washburn state in “The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature” the “different names that the Hopi and Diné have for the San Francisco Peaks demonstrates how language, place, ceremony, and history are intertwined in American Indian cultural experiences” (56). Therefore, when Tayo blames himself for praying away the rain because of his grief over his brother/cousin’s death; “he started repeating, ‘Goddamn, goddam!’. . . inside his head. He damned the rain until words were a chant, and he sang it while he crawled through the mud” (11). Tayo, in a fit of devastation, wishes the rain in the rainforest of the Philippines away. Subsequently, returning home six years later, he feels immense guilt over the drought when he discovers the land is and

has been in a drought six years now. As Tayo struggles with the disconnection because of the loss of his uncle/father and cousin/brother, he wonders if he is to be blamed for the drought in the Laguna Pueblo land.

Moreover, Wilma Shires states that "the setting of Ceremony is more than just the "time and place of the story"; the landscape is necessary to move the plot forward. For example, the severe drought causes the characters in the novel to think about traditional stories that explain causes and remedies, thus setting into motion Tayo's drive to heal his land, his people, and himself" (79). Since the Laguna Pueblo people are attuned to their environment and see the physical land and landscape as a sacred place to find community and live as one with nature; to them, a connection to the natural world is necessary as it counters the anguish and isolation encouraged by white society. In "Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony: Witchery and Sacrifice of Self," Monica Avila argues that:

> Tayo takes on the care of his land and makes peace with his demons, becoming whole again in body, mind, and spirit. He witnesses the destroyers in action and is able to see clearly why his community is struggling for survival. Once he lets go of his personal barriers and lets the stories manifest themselves, he is able to see the path for the future. Tayo sees Grandmother Spider, the life-giver, continuing the web of stories and guiding the future by reminding us that witchery has a way of coming back to haunt itself. She says, "It has stiffened with the effects of its own witchery. It is dead for now" (261). Tayo has let his individual self go and, in doing so, has defeated the witches and brought hope for his community (Avila 55).

In taking on the responsibility and finding healing, Tayo must participate in ceremonial rituals. These ceremonies are performed by the community medicine man Ku'oosh. This elderly medicine man is highly respected in the community and is considered a guardian of the tribe's cultural heritage. Ku'oosh reconnects Tayo to his cultural roots and

introduces him to the traditional healing practices and ceremonies through the land. For example, Ku'oosh attempts to cure Tayo of his war-sickness with a scalp ceremony but fails because the warrior ceremony changed:

> He nodded to the old man because he knew this place. People said back in the old days they took the scalps and threw them down there. Tayo knew what the old man had come for. Ku'oosh continued slowly, in a soft chanting voice, saying, maybe you don't know some of these things… but you know, grandson, this world is 'fragile.' The word he chose to express fragile was filled with intricacies of continuing process, and with the strength inherit in spider webs woven across paths through sand hills where early in the morning the sun becomes entangled in each filament of web, it took a long time to exploit the fragility and intricacy because no word exists alone, and the reason for choosing each word had to be explained with the story about why it must be said this certain way that was the responsibility that went with being human, old Ku'oosh said, the story behind each word must be told so there could be no mistake in the meaning of what had been said; and this demanded great patience and love (Silko 32-3).

Ku'oosh bridges the past and the present, connecting Tayo to the ancestral spirits and guiding him on his journey toward wholeness. He represents the continuity of the Laguna Pueblo culture and the importance of preserving and passing on traditional knowledge and wisdom to future generations. It seems Ku'oosh uses the land -canyon to emphasize the need for a renewed relationship with the land that is rooted in respect, reciprocity, and spiritual connection. In a sense, he embodies the spiritual and cultural resilience of the Laguna Pueblo people and their commitment to maintaining their traditions in the face of modernity and settler colonialism. However, as a medicine man, Ku'oosh recognizes that Tayo needs more help than he can provide and sends him Betonie. Betonie is a cross-blood shaman whose approaches to medicine are different from Ku'oosh and the white doctors. At the same time, Ku'oosh drew his power from stories and sacred places.

Betonie's method comes from the depth of understanding and wisdom he has collected by studying society, stories and searching for a balance between culture and nature.

Additionally, the ceremony Betonie performs for Tayo helps him understand his feelings and the pain inside. Betonie shows Tayo that he is not in balance. He recognizes that Tayo's illness is complicated as his identity is part of his struggles. Betonie is wise enough to know that to help, Tayo must understand and know the stories so then he can then wield them to defend himself. Sharon Holm ground critical analysis in claiming that everywhere Tayo looked, "he saw a world made of stories, the long ago, time immemorial stories, as old Grandma called them. It was a world alive, always changing and moving; and if you knew where to look, you could see it."(Silko 94). Silko, in common with many native American and Indigenous writers, sees an exact and direct relationship between oral narrative forms such as myths, ceremonies, and stories and a tribally specific geosacred relationship with the land or landscape? With the landscape encompassing the animate matrix between and including land and sky and all plants and beings within" (Holm 243); Tayo is able to understand the stories and the importance of the land and finding balance. So, to cure himself and find penance, he decided that he was going to find his Uncle Josiah's cattle. These cattle were specially bred by Josiah to withstand drought conditions, and the cattle are Tayo's link to his uncle and the land. In a way finding the cattle is part of a ceremony he must complete. The cattle facilitate Tayo's ceremony, providing him with a much need sense of community and connection to the land, which is a vital part of the ceremony. In the search for the lost cattle, Tayo comes to the realization that all aspects of his life function symbolically and that he is fighting

against practices that have long been in place. Therefore, he must find balance within himself and works hard to resist the force that tries to destroy him. Tayo eventually relies on the stories and takes strength in the land. In finding the cattle, "Tayo swung the tailgate open. He stood in the coral behind the cattle and waved his arms at them until one by one they hesitantly stepped into the back of the cattle truck" (Silko 199). He completes the ceremony and gives himself hope for a new sunrise.

Other native American novels also rely on the trope of connection to the land and the connection and healing that can be found in nature. In comparison, Frances Washburn's narrative focuses on Elsie Roberts and her death, not the concept of land. Nevertheless, the land and landscape play a significant part in the narrative. For example, the concept of immigration plays into the story as "Klaus Schmidt and his bride stepped off the boat at Ellis Island [to move to] South Dakota, just south of Mobridge, [where they had] one hundred and sixty acres. The land was beautiful. The land! It rolled on endlessly, a great ocean of grass, green waves of it" (Washburn 20). This beautiful land is where Elsie's attacker meets their faith with the *deer woman*.[65] "The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature" claims that:

> supernatural beings and animals often interact with each other and with human characters in both appropriate and inappropriate ways, providing guidance for proper relationships with other group members and demonstrating consequences for both good and bad behavior. In addition, these types of stories are often centered around specific geographical locations or geological formations that were created and/or transformed as a result of actions within the stories, thereby grounding stories within the surrounding landscape (Holm et al. 61).

[65] The story of deer woman is discussed in chapter one.

Therefore, land and place are crucial in the telling of Elsie's story. Also, I must point out that Elsie is removed from her ancestors' land and lives among the non-natives in the town. In a sense, Elsie is out of place, like Momaday's Abel, in his self-exile. So, while it seems like Washburn rejects the predictable native subject matter, the structure of her story embraces the deepest native traditions in their implicit approach to "truth."

Frances Washburn subtly hints at the loss of her homeland and is able to slip into the narrative of the tragic history that surrounds the concept of indigenous land through humor. Moreover, through her grandfather figure, who knows the story. "If you want to know about… you have to ask one of the grandfathers because they know all the old stories as well as the new ones, the latest gossip, and sometimes it's all the same stories happening over and over" (1). The first example of land from in the form of an oral story of "Two Boys" and the greed of *wasicu* (whites) and their intention of getting the land by fair or foul means:

> There was this one man named Two Boys because he was a twin and the other one died. Anyway, he didn't have no family or nothing, but he had been kind of raised by this other Indi'n family, so he wanted his piece of land near their place, but someone else, some takasi of the wife wanted that land, too, so the old man gave up his claim and let the wife's cousin have it. He accepted another piece of land quite a ways from them, but he didn't want to live on it. He lived up there around Red Shirt Table with this other one family. So, turns out, the piece of land he got was down near here, and it turned out to be good farmland, flat you know, good dirt. Somehow the wasicun overlooked it, and Two Boys got this piece. So then, different wasicun tried to get him drunk, you know, get him to sell it, but Two Boys didn't drink. Not much anyway, not enough to loose his sense (193).

In telling this tale, Washburn brings the concept of land to the forefront of her narrative and opens the door for discussion on the role land plays in the novel and in history. *Two Boys* story shows how avarice seems to be the currency and what non-native understands.

Further, as the story goes, “a long time ago,” the government divided up the land, which is Washburn’s allusion to the Dawes Act of 1887; this legislation allotted indigenous lands to white settlers, simultaneously destroying the collective structure that native people practiced. Although the federal government deemed it a form of protection for indigenous people, the Dawes Act left indigenous people with little or no land and money. The Lakota children who grew up on reservations and were assimilated lost the concept of the land as part of their identity, which Washburn highlights by saying, “They gave those old Indians deeds to it, you know, my ancestors, too, but sometimes there were disputes over the best pieces” (193). Washburn explains that the government “gave pieces of [land] out to the people because there were few of us” (193). In simple terms, Washburn evokes history as a reckoning with the past and illustrates the sins for all to see. It seems that she wants people to remember the effects of confinement on her people, the Lakota – especially their suffering from violence and starvation on their own land. She highlights that “the *wasicu* knew if they made the pieces they gave out to us small enough, there would be lots of big pieces left over for them” (193).

Simply put, the people lost their land, part of their identity and culture. According to Billy J Stratton and Frances Washburn, in “The Peoplehood Matrix: A New Theory for American Indian Literature,”’ Land as property, then, is a European concept that doesn't fit well with American Indian cultural concepts, as Holm, Pearson, and Chavis seem to recognize by relabeling land as "place or territory." These are oppositional cultural concepts of land as a commodity within European cultural concepts, and land as place within American Indian cultural concepts, as a material and spiritual provider” (Stratton

and Washburn 67). To highlight that the Dawes Act *still* inflicts pain on native Americans, Washburn continues her story through *Two Boys*, who, through allegory, reveals the history of the Lakota and the indigenous people of America:

> Two Boys played dumb Indi'n, you know. He wore his hair old style in braids, kept the blanket, pretended not to speak much English. . .. Well, the guy thinks he's going to intimidate Two Boys, make him feel stupid and little, see, so he brings a bunch of his white friends with him, and they're sitting there around a table drinking coffee when Two Boys comes along. This wasicu, he says to Two Boys, 'Hau, kola,' just like they're old friends. "Then the wasicu, he picks up his water glass and drinks it all, and he says to Two Boys, 'Go get me a glass of water.' "Two Boys takes the glass. . . Two Boys takes the glass and goes off again. "All this guy's friends, they're laughing, cause they think it's funny to see this ignorant old Indi'n jump to wait on their friend. "Two Boys comes back with a second glass of water, and the wasicu farmer says, 'I'm still thirsty. More water.' Two Boys takes the glass and disappears again to the back of the restaurant, but he comes back holding the empty glass" (193-4).

Although it is humorous, this oral story addresses the violations of the Euro-American settlers. The oral narrative also illustrates the lengths the colonizer went to steal the land from indigenous people, including getting them drunk, convincing them to sign papers they did not understand, and sometimes downright murdering the people occupying the land. According to Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird's *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*:

> to write is still suspect in their tribal communities, and understandably so. It is through writing in the colonizer's language that our lands have been stolen, children taken away. We have often been betrayed by those who first learned to write and to speak the language of the occupier of our lands (Harjo and Bird 20).

The story of "Two Boys" is a metaphor for the U.S. government and Euro-American greed of the Allotment Act of 1887, which aimed to break up native American reservations and allot land to individual native Americans. The story about *Two Boys* represents the government officials who sought to exploit native American lands for

profit. For Lakota and other tribal nations, the land is seen as a source of sustenance, identity, and connection to ancestors and future generations. However, this relationship is threatened by the encroachment of white settlers and their efforts to dispossess native Americans of their lands. The question, however, is why the colonizers were not satisfied with small portions of land or sharing resources with native people.

In providing forming an indelible link between land and the narrative in Elsie's *Business*, Washburn connects to the peoplehood. While *Elsie's Business* mainly focuses on identity, Washburn is tribally specific about the sacred relationship with the land and landscape. Still, she emphasizes that the landscape embraces the conscious and connects the peoplehood. Furthermore, land is not just a physical space or a resource but is deeply intertwined with native American cultural and spiritual identity. The land represents a connection to their ancestors, a source of nourishment and healing, and a place where they can practice their traditional ways of life. Therefore, when native Americans are dispossessed of their lands, it can have a profound and lasting impact on their communities and their sense of identity. The trauma of land dispossession and forced removal has been passed down through generations of native Americans. The loss of their lands, which was often taken through violence, deception, or legislation such as the Dawes Act or the Allotment Act, caused immense physical, emotional, and spiritual harm to indigenous American communities. It led to the destruction of traditional ways of life, loss of cultural identity, and the disruption of communal bonds. The trauma of land dispossession has been likened to a form of cultural genocide, as it seeks to erase the culture and identity of native American people by severing their connection to the land.

On Mount Rushmore, the colonizers' faces desecrates one of the most sacred sites to the Lakota people. Washburn comments on the sacrilege of the colonizers' images on Paha Sapa through the character of Mary Margaret Nancy Hoskins Marks, known as Nancy; She is a staunch Catholic and volunteers with her church. Nancy essentially is Elsie's ally and treats her with kindness and childlikeness. On the way to meet Elsie for the first time, she notices "the Black Hills; Nancy observes the "presidents' heads popping up out of a mountain, bodies, and feet permanently planted in land not their own" (Washburn 43). Basically, Washburn wants the reader to understand the impact of settler colonialism, especially the fact that colonialism is an ongoing state and continues, and native people are *still* fighting for their territory and the sacred sites it holds. The Lakota eventually sued the United States government to return the Black Hills to their tribes, and in 1980, the US Supreme Court ruled that the United States had legally appropriated the Black Hills, awarding more than $100 million in reparation. (United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians, Cutlip).[66] However, the Oglala Lakota nation refused to accept the money, maintaining that they will not be satisfied until Paha Sapa and the surrounding land are returned.[67] According to Robert M. Nelson, "to put the matter into existential terms, the 'existence' of the land precedes the 'essences' (cultural and personal identities, and the

[66] United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians, 448 U.S. 371 (1980).
1877, Congress passed an Act (1877 Act) implementing this "agreement" and thus, in effect, abrogated the Fort Laramie Treaty. Throughout the ensuing years, the Sioux regarded the 1877 Act as a breach of that treaty, but Congress did not enact any mechanism by which they could litigate their claims against the United States until 1920 when a special jurisdictional Act was passed. Pursuant to this Act, the Sioux brought suit in the Court of Claims, alleging that the Government had taken the Black Hills without just compensation, in violation of the Fifth Amendment.

[67] In 1970, a group of Native American activists scaled Mount Rushmore and occupied it for months to demand the land be returned to the Sioux.

stories about those identities) that come into being there. Acquisition of a 'realistic' vision of the landscape is . . . a prerequisite to the acquisition of a verifiable cultural identity" (Nelson 15). in *Elsie's Business* exhibit the natives' perspectives on and continued reckoning with the effects of imperialism and settler colonialism.

In effect, stories are a part of the land in that land ground the tale. So, for example, Elsie's "wiping of the tears ceremony was done up in the canyon" (196). This sacred site of Ghost Hawk Canyon is how Elsie's story ends. Therefore, this sacred site will be part of Elsie's narrative. It is often difficult for future generations to be acquainted with ancestral land, forcing young indigenous people to lose their stories. Since stories are connected with specific places and objects in the landscape, it is essential to be connected to these sacred sites, as they are a part of culture and identity.

Furthermore, Stephen Graham Jones's *Ledfeather* honors his Blackfeet identity and reveals how the land is still under settler colonialism. Jones highlights the lengths the United States government went to exterminate the Blackfeet people through starvation and outright murder. He addresses the Marias massacre in 1870 that killed over 200 children, women, and older men in the pursuit of settling more lands. Indian Agent Frances Dalimpere reflects this colonist attitude toward indigenous people. For example, the former Indian Agent and his soldier stole the ration blanket meant for the Piegan people and then blame the theft on the native people, "then [I] explained to Marsh that the meat, now, would be handed out the following morning. Provided none of the blankets or coffee or flour or beans or potatoes or sugar went missing as well" (Jones 172). Even though Dalimpere was manipulated in his action, this punishment from

Dalimpere came in the form of starvation for the Piegan people he was overseeing. Therefore, Dalimpere is complicit in starving the Blackfeet people to satisfy and impress his boss, “instead of allowing the Piegan the indignity of supping on the remains, the soldiers instead raked them to the dogs, who snarled and snapped and ate as dogs do, which is without chewing” (173). It seems the United States soldier and the former Indian agent had figured that if the Piegan people starved, the land would be available. In understanding that his people, the colonizers, deceived him, Dalimpere is tormented with guilt for his actions. Leah Pennywark reasons in the “Narrative Possession in Stephen Graham Jones's *Ledfeather*” that “The seemingly dead past haunts the living in Ledfeather, bound to the present and future through a doubled sense of possession within the context of Blackfeet heritage, land, and narrative form” (Pennywark 89); in Jones uses the Indian Agent dually -in that, he faces an identity crisis and represents the historical and ongoing exploitation of the Blackfeet's land and culture by the dominant culture. He symbolizes the forces that seek to control and manipulate native Americans for their own purposes, often at the expense of the indigenous people's culture, tradition, and way of life. However, *Ledfeather* is not a common native American troupe because it is entangled with the colonial narrative of assimilation and land rights. But, to control the narrative of the past, Jones remakes the story using the Indian Agent, where he is haunted by the past and possessed, losing his agency and futurity. The hunting through, where the Indian Agent is forced to confront his policies on the reservation, which cause devastation to the Blackfeet people, is the ultimate punishment for a man who contributes to the destruction of settler colonialism. In using the structural form in the narrative,

imagine a connection between the past and the present that and then must confront his actions and live the horror he helps perpetuate. The story does not center on possession but offers prospects for transcending as the Indian Agent is not leaving the reservation. According to Leah Pennywark:

> Ledfeather is not the story of Doby's return to Native traditions or to the land, nor is it a story about how he learns to navigate double consciousness. As William Bevis argues, many canonical Native texts follow a homing plot that rewrites the European bildungsroman. Protagonists discover themselves in their return home rather than in their projection into the external world (582). In an excellent essay on Jones's earlier novel The Bird Is Gone (2003), John Gamber points out that this well-recognized plot "has never represented the totality of literature written by Native people" (29). Though the novel is invested in the Blackfeet relationship to land, it is in terms of the frontier gothic rather than the bildungsroman or homing plot. What is at stake is not a return to the land— neither Doby nor Francis leaves it, after all— but the way the machinations of colonialism create an alienation from land (Pennywark 105).

Haunted by his surrounding, "The Indian Agent turned away, breathed into the hollow fist of his hand and asked himself what if Yellow Tail hadn't engineered this, but was a victim of the elements as well. . . So he remembered his language, at least. What else? His nameless wife, his children? Lead Feather? No. The massacre. Marias" (111). Dalimpere completes a ceremony by asking an animal for its power "The moose laid down right in front" (Jones 209). In completing the ceremony, Francis Dalimpere – the Indian Agent soul, lay dormant till a descent of Yellowtail and a Mallory to produce a child. This child, Dobby [Blackfeet boy], and Dalimpere will share a soul. Therefore, the Indian Agent will return to the reservation and live as an indigenous person. This act of contrition shows that the Indian agent started to see the error of his way and wanted redemption and another chance to find his love. Returning to the same reservation, where

his rules and laws shaped the community, Dalimpere becomes Doby Saxon, discovers what his actions have done to the Blackfeet people, and realizes that he must face the repercussion of his cruelty. In displaying this narrative, Jones forces a reckoning and a new discourse where settler colonialism is on display. In weaving the horror of the Marias massacre in the narrative, Jones exhibits the ideology of settler colonialism and the enduring forms of oppression that have damaged the Blackfeet culture and other indigenous cultures that caused deep-seated, transgenerational trauma. According to Lawrence Gross:

> There are no Indian cultures in the United States that remain wholly unaffected by the presence of Euro-Americans … In effect, the old world of our ancestors has come to an end … This is not to say that the worldview that previously informed the cultures has also become defunct. It simply means that American Indians are in the process of building new worlds—worlds that are true to our history but cognizant of present realities (Gross 449).

Jones wants a better future for indigenous people, so he projects a discourse world that is intensely calculating to secure a better future. In having Dalimpere confronted with the conditions of the Blackfeet people, Jones is challenging the policies that Indian Agents implemented on the reservation for the United States government to promote their power. Indian Agents stole land from native people. The passing of the Dawes and the Curtis Act of 1898 caused the amalgamation of indigenous land into the United States.

Clearly, land is an essential aspect of indigenous culture, and Jones honors that identity and proves that land is still a big part of indigenous life. For example, it is a rite of passage for many young generations and sustains struggling families. He writes, “This is land we’ve been hunting since before America was America, I mean, and if we don’t

manage the Glacier herd, the cows will all be starving come January" (17).[68] Jones wants it understood that native people will always honor mother earth, and the ritual of taking what she provides is part of that ceremony and identity.

Unlike many indigenous writers, Jones does not follow their troupe of indigenous fiction where deliverance lies in the return to native roots and the restoration of the lands and ancestors' way of life. Instead, Jones illuminates the factors of the consequence of settler colonialism and pushes for the idea of decolonization in what academia calls a postcolonial world.

In confronting the destruction of settler colonialism through the concept of land, N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, Frances Washburn's *Elsie's Business,* Stephen Graham Jones *Ledfeather* demonstrate how the land is an integral part of their culture and how the destructive policies of settler colonialism have devastated their culture by stripping them of their sacred space, land, which is an attempt at culture erasure. Therefore, these novels demonstrate that they are not just powerful tools for understanding the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism in the United States but the legacy of hope for survival.

[68] Stephen Graham Jones's *Ledfeather*, 17.

Conclusion

The five authors analyzed in this thesis display various literary styles and approaches in their critiques of settler colonialism. Each of these stories emphasizes the impact and destructive forces of colonialism within the movement of their culture. In turn, the theoretical framework of the Peoplehood Matrix displays the interconnectivity of indigenous people, and, in their novels, the authors illustrate how colonial powers have attempted to deprive indigenous people of the four elements of the Peoplehood Matrix: sacred stories, ceremonial cycle, language, and land/place/ territory. Specifically, this thesis has explored the consequences of settler colonialism in Leslie Marmon Silko's Laguna Pueblo culture, Frances Washburn's Lakota culture, Gerald Vizenor's Anishinaabe, and Stephen Graham Jones's Blackfeet culture. These texts present the links between native American culture, history, and literature as almost indistinguishable. Through each analysis of the novel's themes, motifs, and symbols, it has become clear that these authors' works offer a powerful critique of settler colonialism and its impact on indigenous communities. This research has shown that *Ceremony, Elsie's Business, The Heirs of Columbus, Ledfeather,* and *House Made of Dawn* are not just works of fiction but powerful tools for understanding the ongoing legacy of colonialism in native American communities.

Moving forward, it is crucial that future studies on these authors' work continue to explore the impact of settler colonialism on indigenous communities and how literature can be used as a tool for resistance and healing. As we grapple with the ongoing legacy of settler colonialism, these authors' works serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of centering indigenous voices and experiences in our understanding of native American culture. Specifically, the evolution of native American novels has moved toward social criticism. A tribal postmodern irony affects the representation of Peoplehood in literary works, and it exposes the influence of colonialism and its devastating effects on native culture and identity. Thus, these novels have employed the interconnective elements of the Peoplehood Matrix to demonstrate how they have started the healing process towards rebuilding, finding survivance, and planting the seed towards decolonization and sovereignty.

Through the experiences of Tayo, Elsie, Stone Columbus, Abel, and Dobby, along with the other characters in the novels, we are reminded of the resilience and strength of native American communities and the importance of supporting efforts to reclaim and rebuild their cultural traditions for future generations. These authors and their works challenge us to question the dominant narratives of history and consider the perspectives and experiences of marginalized communities. In recent years, the field of native American fiction has been growing as native authors have produced many diverse works, from fiction and non-fiction to drama, painting, and poetry, that have shared their stories to raise awareness toward healing. Notable, the Peoplehood Matrix (along with principles associated with French structuralism) serves as a generative tool for understanding how

these authors call into question and investigate the concepts of decolonization, sovereignty, and healing. In addition, these authors have deliberately reapplied oral traditions drawn from their own native communities to Western canonized literary and historiographic narratives in order to challenge dominant discourses of oppression. Essentially, they have written themselves *back into* history by crafting literature from their unique indigenous perspectives.

At the same time, this process began with N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*. This form of expression redefines the genre of native literature from the exploitative narratives and images that white writers perpetuated, like Friday in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* or the figure of "representation" in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem "The Song of Hiawatha," James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans,* and James Lincoln Collier's *The Corn Raid A Story of the Jamestown Settlement.* Such works depicted indigenous people either as savages inferior to Europeans, tragic and all doomed, or as a thing of exoticism, such as "romanticization of the indian" or noble or ignoble. However, this simplification and distillation of indigenous peoples' images is far from reality. Accordingly, Edward Said argues *In Culture and Imperialism* that,

> The various struggles for dominance among states, nationalisms, ethnic groups, regions, and cultural entities have conducted and amplified a manipulation of opinion and discourse, a production and consumption of ideological media representations, a simplification and reduction of vast complexities into easy currency, the easier to deploy and exploit them in the interest of state policies. In all of this intellectuals have played an important role, nowhere in my opinion more crucial and more compromised than in the overlapping region of experience and culture that is colonialism's legacy where the politics of secular interpretation is carried on for very high stakes (Said 36).

Said is correct in that intellectuals have played a significant part in their complicity with the reproduction of the colonial order through academic discourse. At the same time, recent academic work that takes up the disciplinary call to interrogate the legacies of colonialism and to imagine spaces of action and being that escape the toxic residues of coloniality has served to nudge conversations in productive directions. Nevertheless, there is more that needs to be done, as settler colonialism is a branch of colonialism that still needs to be reckoned with. Said also indivisibly connects colonial conquest with the European novel in suggesting that such literary production would not be the same without Empire. In this way, Said also belies a lack of imagination in not considering what might lie outside of that colonial-imperial order, for example, in the realm of native experience, native epistemologies, and native forms of storytelling.

The texts studied in this thesis engage in precisely this sort of imaginative and critical work. To develop the unique structural incorporation of tribal oral literature, Momaday, Silko, and Washburn adapt postmodern deconstructions of Western form and content. On the other hand, Vizenor and Jones were influenced by other postmodern fiction. When compared, these native writers seem to have defined a more optimistic approach to native literature. The general characteristic of current native fiction is the increasing use of humor, irony, and playfulness to critique and showcase the destructive legacies of settler colonialism while also promoting healing and identity.

At present, however, the situation of native communities remains marked by enormous social problems, exposed in the five novels present in this thesis. Each story

underlines a unique culture that imparts lessons that emphasize the importance of peoplehood and offers a connection with identity. These texts also center on the importance of nurturing, instructive communities, which create individuals who, in turn, are responsible for preserving the delicate balance of their world. The stories, ceremonial cycle, language, and land remind us, the listeners of these oral stories, how compelling a role our ancestors play in our life. This is particularly so when considering that the implied audience includes, in a particular way, members of the very indigenous communities of which these writers are a part. In presenting the damages of settler colonialism through traditional oral storytelling, Silko, Washburn, Momaday, Vizenor, and Jones create a temporal space where the stories live and are shared. In materializing the destructive forces of settler colonialism through literary performance, these authors hope readers have acknowledged the harm done to native American communities and encourage them creatively to work towards meaningful healing and reconciliation.

Finally, these novels are created by storytellers. I must insist that, in traditional oral storytelling culture, listeners become participants in the story and are then responsible as keepers of the story. As readers of these novels, we become the keepers of Tayo, Elsie, Stone Columbus, Abel, and Doby's narratives. We are now responsible for these stories' survival. Stories are to be carried, held, revered, and shared, as it is how we—myself and other indigenous people—have survived thus far. Therefore, we are responsible for remembering the stories and destructive forces of settler colonialism. We must pass these stories on, along with the hope of healing and survivance of native American people and culture, to inspire each other toward change.

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