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## **CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OF LAKOTA HUNTING AND GATHERING PRACTICES AND THEIR CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS THROUGHOUT COLONIAL TIMES**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Aim of the Thesis

This thesis is thematically centered on the practice of hunting and gathering and its historical and contemporary significance in Lakota society.

In particular, my main aim here is to point at the driving factors – sought in changing natural environments, technologies, political infrastructures and policies – which led to rather rapid ruptures or shifts in the economy, effecting socio-cultural changes in other areas of Lakota society, especially in regard to social organization, politics and religion. My focus in analyzing historical processes will be laid on the changes and continuities in social structures and functions of hunting and gathering practices primarily among Lakota reservation communities, but also other Indigenous people in their geographical vicinity exposed to and experiencing similar developments. I intend to investigate which geopolitical environmental developments impacted and instituted social change and altered the role of hunting and gathering for peoples of the Northern Great Plains, ultimately leading to its contemporary place and meaning in Lakota and other Plains-Indian reservation or reserve communities.

My analysis of the present social embeddedness and significance of hunting will be threefold: On a micro level, I want to emphasize Indigenous hunters' personal and shared sentiments about the economic and ideational, cultural and spiritual importance hunting has to them in life. On a meso level, I intend to look at the infrastructural and institutional environments within which Indigenous people can or cannot – depending on time and place – enact their rights to hunt, gather and fish, also pointing at areas of conflict over authority between hunters, tribal and state institutions. Lastly, from a macro perspective, my aim is to show how hunting and gathering related cultural knowledge is inherently interwoven with certain culture-specific worldviews and values and how it becomes relevant in the context of Native nations' aspirations towards cultural revitalization affecting tribal programs, strategies for economic development as well as self-representation and (legal) rhetoric in politics of identity. In doing so, I want to reveal that hunting and gathering, understood as representative cultural trait and heritage, has become a marker of cultural identity applied in tribal education, health and wellness programs, economics and politics, which by delivering a pathway towards cultural self-discovery motivating individual action, aims to raise the quality of life on reservations, secures tribal sovereignty and fosters a culturally self-determined development of tribal nations in the US and Canada.

In alignment with the elaborations above I have framed the following three main research questions, which shall be adequately attended to and discussed in this thesis:

- Which changes in regard to the cultural significance of hunting (and gathering) can be recognized among Lakota as a result of a (forced) shift from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle on reservations?
- What is the economic and cultural meaning or value of hunting (and gathering) for Indigenous practitioners and what kind of infrastructural environments are they exposed to in pursuing this activity today, especially on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation?
- How are hunting and gathering as cultural features relevant in the context of Native nations' efforts towards cultural revitalization and consequently how are they deployed as markers of cultural identity and heritage in Indigenous education, economy and politics of recognition?

## 1.2 Hypothesis and Main Arguments

The above questions have led me to formulate the following hypothesis (in one sentence), reflecting the essence of my findings to be validated through a methodological mix of first hand empirically collected data, other primary sources such as legal documents, secondary anthropological, historical as well as Indigenous scholars' literature:

*Due to multiple complex causalities resulting from settler-colonial Euroamerican expansion, the economy and cultural significance of hunting and gathering has shifted among Lakota communities from being a vital means for subsistence to becoming first and foremost a marker of identity and cultural heritage.*

*The cultural revitalization of a worldview and related ethics developed as foragers in the past presents tribes with a means to emphasize cultural difference and with a source of inspiration informing self-determined cultural development, aiming to maintain and extend tribal sovereignty of Native nations.*

The hypothesis is based on the following line of arguments, to become specified in the two main parts/chapters of this thesis:

The first part of my thesis, chapter 2, is mainly dedicated to a historically materialist analysis aiming to explain how the forced shift from nomadic lifestyle as bison hunters and the subsequent life on reservations under governmental assimilation policies have contributed substantially to certain restructurings and changes in Plains peoples' societies in regard to aspects of social organization, political leadership and religious life also affecting internal ruptures apparent in the two extreme positions of so-called "traditionalists" and "progressivists" found amongst tribal members.

Hunting used to be a central means of meeting nutritional and material needs in Plains peoples' subsistence economies. Migrating onto the Plains due to a complex dynamic of push and pull factors, new markets and consequent conflict between tribes, the Lakota culturally adapted to the Plains environment, also adopting European induced horses and guns in the process. Following political pressures and the near extinction of the buffalo through settler-colonial invasion, extensive hunting and trapping due to a growing fur industry's demand and US military campaigns for territorial expansion, Lakota and other Plains tribes were forced to abandon their nomadic lifestyle, sign treaties and settle on reservations and reserves set aside for them by the US and Canadian governments. Due to scarcity of wildlife, the incapability of

migrating with herds by being restricted to remain within reservation borders, the Horse Days of Plains Indians had abruptly come to an end and the people were economically and politically pushed to resort to horticultural farming, cattle ranching and later seeking wage labor in cities. However, hunting and trapping smaller game has survived as a complementary means of food supply and income into the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century and is still practiced by a substantial number of Lakota families and individuals today, of whom some carry on ancestral traditions and regard them as continuance of their “traditional” way of life. In the latter context, animals such as deer and elk are not only seen as cultural foods, but also deliver materials for producing ceremonial objects and so-called Regalia, “traditional” clothes and items worn at religious or communal cultural events. Also, the intimate relationship with the buffalo (through its historical role as life-sustaining source in society) continues to be reflected in myths and ceremonies still recalled and performed today. Historically, hunting played a key role in defining the relationship of Plains peoples with their natural environment reflected in a traditional worldview of cosmic interrelation. Today hunting is still imbued with deep spiritual significance for traditional practitioners who draw upon this worldview by adhering to traditional values, among them most prominently respect for all life, humility and generosity. This not only continues to affect Indigenous hunters’ code of conduct during the hunt but also the ways in which meat, hide and other goods gained from animals are distributed within the extended family and local communities.

In the second part, or chapter 3, following the analysis of historical processes and dynamics of hybridization, I intend to validate my other main argument, that hunting also (re-)gained discursive and practical relevance in contemporary political contexts by pointing at its role in supporting tribal efforts of cultural revitalization, where it is used as symbolic practice or point of reference (especially when it comes to traditional values) by tribes and activists in the rhetorical and ideological (re-)production of a sense of collective cultural or Indigenous identity expressed through shared sentiments about cultural heritage and inherent ancestral values.

The red line of my argument in this chapter is thus composed of the analysis and interpretative discussion of how a hunter-gatherer way of life, worldview and value-system is being represented, emphasized, utilized, applied, made visible or reflected upon – in short, instrumentalized – within contexts of cultural performativity and revival, (1) ideationally by hunters themselves in pursuit of that practice, religious practitioners in ceremonies or participants in cultural activities and communal life, as well as (2) politically by tribal nations (and Indigenous activists) in education, economic development and the politics of recognition.

Two driving forces for the (re-)production and application of hunting values and worldview for Indigenous self-identification and representation could thus be identified in contemporary Lakota social structure: (1) its ideational function in delivering meaning/order in life on an individual level and (2) its political function of serving social groups' interests on a band, tribal, pan-Indian and transnational Indigenous collective level.

Interdependencies, blurring lines and tensions between the ideational and political dimension (the latter being understood as an underlying power dynamic only becoming visible from a macro perspective) of people expressing these values will be discussed. It will be pointed out that aside from tribal governmental officials and activists, who quite obviously are following clear political agendas with their statements, representations and actionable policies fostering cultural difference, most Indigenous individuals do not primarily define their cultural identity with a political goal in mind, but base it on a worldview defining of a way of life that is taken seriously and regarded as a personal source of meaning, self-discovery and empowerment.

That hunting itself continues to be widely recognized and advocated as being of central cultural significance for Indigenous people also became very apparent in the fight of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe against the implementation of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). The Standing Rock Lakota's rights to hunt, fish and gather being potentially threatened by the likely event of an oil spill negatively affecting local wildlife, plant and fish species delivered the decisive argument in court for the judge to rule in favor of the pipeline opponents and order a temporary halt of operations. The case demonstrates, that the legacy of "living off the land" and the related traditional ecological knowledge of ancestors and the continuing pursuit of hunting and gathering practices present an asset for tribal nations, Indigenous activists and their allies. Moreover, in claiming to be "stewards of the land", Indigenous peoples have recognized and seized the opportunity to politically instrumentalize popularly ascribed notions about environmentalist values being inherent in Indigenous philosophies, as a tool in legal fights for rights to self-determination. Such strategic essentializing, however, also reproduces romantic stereotypes through the non-reflective ennoblement of Indigenous peoples. As a result of extensive lobbying aimed at attracting support from a broad public, the stigma of the "noble savage" has been reinforced in internationally recognized legal documents, aimed at protecting the rights of Indigenous peoples – a process that has been termed ethnic formalization.

In short, cultural hunting and gathering practices, related worldviews and values form a part of Indigenous peoples' cultural heritage and are used as a marker of cultural difference in conflicts over rights between Indigenous groups with external powers such as state governments (and

authorities) or corporations, underlining their flexible deployment as a political asset by tribes (and activists) to maintain ethnic boundaries and advocate for the recognition of rights.

However, as a layer or means of cultural identification, the hunter-gatherer way of life and ethos also promotes historical self-awareness amongst individuals which again strengthens political integrity within tribal nations, also fostering self-determined economic development.

Conscious about its key function as marker of cultural identity and knowledge, relevant aspects of hunting and gathering procedures are sometimes pedagogically deployed in tribal education and healthcare programs to teach about Indigenous values, worldview and enhance nutritional awareness among members, to not only build up a sort of culturally rooted self-esteem but also inspire a change in food habits to lower the high rates of diabetes on reservations and reserves. Furthermore, Indigenous educators stress the importance of learning about one's peoples' past which is key in the process of re-discovering one's lost sense of self as part of a cultural collective. The idea is that realizing one's cultural origin and the struggles one's ancestors had to go through in protecting their ways in the face of colonization gives people a sense of belonging. In other words, knowing where they come from and learning about their historically inherited suffering, so-called intergenerational trauma (accumulated through effects of genocide, the residential school system and other assimilation policies), provide people with a greater self-awareness and stability in the perception of themselves, and thus aids them in the process of rediscovering and acknowledging their cultural roots and shared identity as part of a collective.

To encourage people's participation in economic development, the object of the hunt in today's world is now often being rhetorically depicted in emic discourse as "proper education" for its role in preparing young people for the job market. The metaphorical use of education as substituting role for buffalo in "the hunt" for food is discursively justified by the argument that it serves the same purpose as the buffalo in "traditional" economies, namely to sustain the survival of the band or cultural community. From this perspective, it is not only hunting and gathering that provides for a groups' well-being today, but equally so trained experts in other professions, who guarantee tribal competitiveness in today's national and global political and economic environments, thus not only helping to maintain tribal integrity and sovereignty but also to improve standards of living for their people on and off reservations and reserves.

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

Both parts or main chapters of this thesis will be divided into three sections or subchapters.

In chapter 2.1. I will elaborate on the historical development, shapes and forms of what came to be known as “traditional way of life” of Plains Indians, in particular of the Western/Teton Sioux or Lakota. In pointing out the multiple (often interwoven) driving factors that led to the rise and fall of the so-called Plains Indian cultural complex, I intend to reveal the fluid and ever-changing character of culture, thus deconstructing essentialist notions of authenticity which fixes or freezes cultures in place and time. Causalities at root to changes in economic activities and altering social and ecological environments and how they affected socio-political life and organization among Lakota groups will be discussed alongside the contextual explanation and deconstruction of anthropological concepts or sociological categories such as band, tribe, nation as well as other means of (ascribed) ordering and naming (upon which scientific knowledge production is based), predominantly in chapter 2.1.1 and 2.1.2.

In contrast, in chapter 2.1.3 I will shed light onto emic understandings of the world from a traditional Lakota perspective, explain key concepts in Lakota cosmology and spiritual thought and conclude with embedding my insights within anthropology’s ontological debate revolving around Amerindian worldviews in general and how to deal with them analytically within the discipline.

Chapter 2.2 will build on the previous chapter in illuminating dynamics at play instituting the cultural formation of equestrian Plains nomadism. Only this time the Lakota’s history of conquest and dominance over the Northern Great Plains will take the center stage. In particular, the close economic dependence on hunting buffalo for subsistence and trade in the Euroamerican market will be shown to be central for the Lakota’s geopolitical successes and downfall. This way, interrelations between changing environments, economies, internal and external politics will become apparent and stereotypes depicting Native American societies as environmentally friendly or primitive will be dissolved through the logical presentation of facts based on materialistic reasoning. Rather than meeting any specific ideals projected onto them, Native Americans prove to act quite pragmatically according to economic opportunities within the framework of adapting culturally conditioned liberties and constraints, emphasizing their human condition (although not to be confused with cultural sameness or delusive imaginings of human equality downplaying cultural determinations).

Lastly, chapter 2.3 will be dedicated to show that hunting and gathering practices never ceased to exist, despite drastic economic changes resulting from the demise of the previously thriving

buffalo-based hunting economy and the forced transition to Euroamerican ways of production due to Euroamerican expansion conditioning environmental and political pressures pushing for cultural assimilation. Throughout the early reservation era people continued to forage for survival and a hard core of traditionalists pursue these activities until today, many of whom regard themselves as in line with following their ancestors' footsteps in carrying on and maintaining (of what they feel to be) the "traditional" Lakota way of life, which, as I argue, is inherently based on foraging.

Moving on to the present, the focus of the first two subchapters of chapter 3.1 is put on contemporary hunting and gathering practices of members of Plains-Indian communities, looking at local opportunity structures faced by reservation/reserve hunters (and gatherers) based on the ethnographic example of the Standing Rock Sioux, sometimes confining by limiting or restricting the pursuit of their (desired/intended/accustomed) activities. In chapter 3.1.3, I will evaluate whether current pathways undertaken to capitalize off of hunting and gathering related knowledge and practices through eco- and hunting tourism and the primary industrial sector of production through the provision of bison meat present viable solutions to maintain a hunting-gathering based way of life.

In chapter 3.2 I will have a closer look on social impacts caused by hunting and gathering as primary mode of production. Concepts of primitive communism, commensality and causalities at the root of differing degrees of hierarchies or egalitarianism will be discussed in regard to (and at the example of) changes in Lakota society within the past two centuries. Environmental ethics deducted from traditional Lakota worldview conceptually stemming or deriving from their historical socio-cultural existence as hunter-gatherers will be shown to deliver a solid foundation for offering principle-based guidance in political decision-making processes of today. However, I will also argue that the over-simplifying labelling of Native Americans as generally environmentally responsible stewards of the earth (noble savages) through processes ethnic formalization or strategic essentializing (in so-called identity politics), although sometimes maybe presenting an advantage in attaining legal benefits and rights, contains the danger of public outrage in the event of unmet ideals and thus can inhibit real Native contributions in sustainability discourse to be taken seriously by other parties as has been pointed out by Native scholars themselves.

Finally, in chapter 3.3, after presenting some exemplary attempts of Indigenous individuals and groups to escape the culturally destructive effects of colonization to their ways of life, first and foremost genocidal politics and assimilation policies, in the subchapters 3.3.1 and 3.3.2, I focus



on discussing intentions and meanings of cultural revitalization in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context informed by Indigenous advocates and its application in domestic and external politics. Instead of trying to restore or revert back to precolonial lifeways, I will show that cultural revitalization is much rather an attempt to smoothly reintegrate and apply cultural knowledge as active heritage to build upon and inform decision-making for self-determined cultural development of tribes in the present. The role of hunting and gathering as practice and ethos in delivering a tool for cultural self-discovery, awareness and source of knowledge to Indigenous individuals is regarded by many as foundational in this process of cultural healing and individual as well as collective Indigenous re-empowerment.

## 1.4 Theoretical Perspectives: Hunter-Gatherers in Anthropology

Since I focus on the Lakota's historical and present-day social realities as so-called hunters and gatherers, I ought to explain first what is meant by that category, how and by whom it has been used or applied in discourse and how I personally intend to theoretically employ it in this thesis. Like many hunter-gatherer societies in the contemporary globalized and (post-) industrialized world, the Lakota of today are living in mixed economies and under the influence of a multitude of political regimes affecting their everyday livelihoods and lifeways (Seidl/Saxinger 2016: 4). As outlined by Koukkanen, "[m]ixed economies are characterized by a mix of activities such as subsistence, commodity production, wage labor, transfers (social assistance, unemployment insurance, welfare, pensions, and other statutory or fiduciary payments), and enterprise" (Koukkanen 2011: 221). However, as highlighted by Barnard and Spencer, also in the past (and throughout history), "most hunter-gatherers have been engaged in activities other than hunting and gathering, such as trading with agricultural and pastoral neighbors or even practicing a small amount of cultivation or animal rearing themselves" (Bernard/Spencer 2002: 436).

This already points at potential conceptual shortcomings implicit in the terminological definition or utilization of "hunter-gatherers" as a sociological category, since it somewhat distorts the fact that most people defined as such, neither in the past nor in the contemporary context solely relied upon these economic activities, and if so, rather present an exception to the rule<sup>1</sup> (Panter-Brick et al. 2001: 2 f.).

Nevertheless, a "minimal definition" of foraging as an economic form compromised by a mix of hunting, gathering and fishing, provided by Lee and Daly (1999: 3), continues to deliver a starting point for anthropological investigations of people labeled as "hunter-gatherers" (Seidl/Saxinger 2016: 4; Panter-Brick 2001: 2). Panter-Brick et al. built on this definition to come up with what they call a working definition for (the study of) hunter-gatherers, whom they depict as characterized by their main economic preoccupation with hunting, gathering, fishing and little or no domestication of plant and animal species for subsistence (Panter-Brick et al. 2001: 2). Drawing from quantitative data of Murdoch's Ethnographic Atlas, they reveal that the vast majority from a sample of 200 societies depend on cultivated products either to less than five percent or more than 45 percent of their diets, thus concluding that "the distinction

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<sup>1</sup> Exemplary for solely hunting and gathering peoples independent of other forms of economy were traditional Inuit and Australian Aborigines previous to colonial contact (Spencer/Bernard 136). But, as I will demonstrate at the example of the Lakota, hunting and gathering peoples have always adapted to environments and the possibilities it offered for survival, thus often switching the emphasis in their economic practices according to what suited them best in a specific (environmental and social) context.

between hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists has empirical utility at least in economic terms” (Panter-Brick et al 2001: 3).

This economically grounded definition, may have categorized the historic Lakota of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, as hunter-gatherers, but certainly would exclude contemporary Lakota tribal nations, whose members pursue a multitude of economic pathways seizing the full range of opportunities available to them, extending far beyond their ancestors’ traditional foraging practices. Given this, would it not seem to be outdated to call the contemporary Lakota hunter-gatherers?

When following the economically based working definition brought forth by Panter-Brick et al. the answer would be yes. However, such a narrow economically reductionist perspective of hunter-gatherers would severely limit the study of social changes of such societies, since they would simply vanish “out of existence” as soon as their “mode of production” alters. Even more so, cultural continuities in practices which are based on or have developed from a historic hunting and gathering economy would simply be left unattended or unrecognized.

Thus, if one was to investigate social change and continuities among hunter-gatherers one must extend the definition of that analytical category to encompass also other aspects of society, such as social organization and ontological conceptions characteristic of these peoples as had been put forward by Lee and Daly (1993: 3).

From a cultural materialist perspective, I would contend that the various types of hunting and gathering were key to the mode of production of many pre-colonial Indigenous economies and thus had a foundational impact on shaping a social organization and worldview corresponding to and reinforcing that economic form. According to Harris (1980), a society’s infrastructure, made up by people’s embeddedness with ecological and social environments resulting in the provision of a certain range of opportunities for various types of cultural economies, probabilistically determines a society’s structure or, in other words, its social organization and forms of governance. Consequently, both of the latter categories create the basis for a society’s superstructure, representing its immaterial ideational realm, made up by worldviews and related ethics, which Harris generally sees as reconfirming the social order in terms of economy and the social networks and relationships built upon it.

After decades, if not to say centuries of periodic waves of genocidal politics and assimilation policies imposed by the settler-colonialist nation-states targeted to crush the socio-cultural coherence of Native American Societies in North America (Koukkanen 2011: 223), destroying or largely suppressing traditional lifestyles, one might ask why and how certain cultural

elements of a former way of life have persisted into contemporary times amongst many Native American communities today?

When students of Franz Boas such as Clark Wissler, Ella Deloria or Robert Lowie, whose works continue to inform about historical social and cultural lifeways and customs of American Indian populations (particularly Plains tribes) in North America (and thus are also still referenced where relevant throughout this thesis), went about to collect their data (mostly attained by means of so-called “memory ethnography”<sup>2</sup>) from elderly Indians on reservations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, evolutionist notions popular amongst scientific scholarship at the time predicted, that Native American tribes and their traditional ways of life – sooner or later – would die out or become absorbed by the expanding, supposedly more advanced Euroamerican cultural complex. The latter was imagined (or argued) by evolutionists to represent the top of the evolutionary ladder (Morgan [1908] 1979).

So-called acculturation studies of the 1930s and 40s (f. i. Satterlee/Malan 1975) shared the common underlying presumption that “the direction change takes, is from a primitive, underdeveloped society [...] to a civilized, developed society that becomes fully integrated into the dominant White society”, as an early critic phrased it (Jorgensen 1971: 68 cited by Bolz 1986: 17).

The idea of “development” promoted in modernization theories throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century labeled Indigenous societies as backwards, poor and an obstacle to progress and civilization efforts (Seidl/Saxinger 2016: 7), and as the ideology of Manifest Destiny has served for much longer, delivered a basis to justify genocide and assimilation policies in North America.

Although dated evolutionist concepts inherent in these modernization regimes demanding that the technologically “inefficient” and “primitive” lifeways of Indigenous peoples are to be overcome, had already been challenged by historical analyses of dependency theorists in the 1960s, Seidl and Saxinger (2016: 7) stress that it was post-developmental theorists in the 1980s and 90s that exposed the developmental notion of societies as linearly and inevitably

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<sup>2</sup> Memory ethnography is methodologically based on reconstructing social livelihoods preceding colonial subjugation and assimilation of a people by analyzing data from interviews of cultural bearers, who have lived in those times and recall information and stories about their past lives and livelihoods from their memories. Among the Lakota, James Walker (1982) and Ella Deloria (2007) have used this method when studying “traditional” Lakota society in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as did Franz Boas’s students Wissler (1914) and Lowie (1954) during research among other Plains tribes. Since participant observation is made impossible under such circumstances, accounts cannot be checked for accuracy or validity (which may result in exaggerated or essentialist depictions in some regard) and can result in deviating conclusions about historical realities, depending on the author.

progressing from simple “earth-based” states to more complex social and economic forms of organization as teleological programs (Koukkanen 2011: 221).

Also, when looking at unfolding social realities in practice, one is able to recognize that many Indigenous communities in North America today have successfully managed to find pathways to preserve, revive or reinterpret and apply certain economic, social and cultural traditions, knowledges and models in present-day contexts, despite pressuring socio-political environments of the “dominant culture” and rapidly changing ecological circumstances. Today, cultural technologies, knowledges and traditions do not appear as hindrance, but instead have been proven to represent viable alternative solutions needed to inform so-called “wise practices” in Indigenous community development, as has been convincingly argued and practically demonstrated (through the provision of guidance) by contemporary Native American scholars, who could be said are pursuing a sort of “applied” or “action anthropology” (Voyager et al. 2015).

Many of the hunter-gatherer practices and social systematics have survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century amongst Native communities in North America, to whom it continues to serve - to a greater or lesser extent – as subsistence-based mode of production in making up a substantial part in mixed economic settings and – probably even of more importance in today’s context– as ethos defining of a specific social order, recreating social relationships and networks, worldviews and ethical norms (Zedeño 2013; Koukkanen 2011).

This holistic understanding of hunting and gathering as a social system in which the activity is both constituting but also being constituted by a culture-specific worldview, has been an outcome of what could be called “New Environmental Anthropology” brought forth by authors like Kopnina and Shoreman-Ouimet (2013), which stands in contrast to theoretically limited or arguably one-sided behavioral ecologist approaches in the study of human-environment relationships, which categorically confined it to being merely a “mode of production” (f. i. Winterhalder 2001; Kelly 1995), neglecting the ontological dimensions it has as a “mode of thought” or worldview, permeating all spheres of social life (Zedeño 2013; Koukkanen 2011; Ingold 2000). Especially amongst “modern” hunter-gatherers, where the subsistence-economic practice plays a rather marginal role, the hunting and gathering related worldview, ontologically shaped by and defining human-environmental interaction, attains more and more relevance in informing about ethical ways of culturally interrelating between individuals, social groups and their larger socio-ecological embeddedness. Thus, I align with Zedeño when he states in his contribution on contemporary hunting practices of reservation-era Blackfeet, that, “as millenary

tradition, *hunting is just not what people do but who they are*” (Zedeño 2013: 145, *emphasis added* by the author himself).

However, when aiming to investigate changes and continuities in hunting and gathering practices throughout history, as I am doing it with the Lakota, it will be necessary to analyze both, the different social and ecological environments that people had been exposed and had to adapt to and the culturally determined ways (encompassing traditions and worldviews) in accordance with human individuals’ and groups’ physical and mental agencies, in which people could and did make use of their environments, as put forth by Panter-Brick et al., who see the range of human behaviors and biology “as arising both through responses to different environments and through the trajectory of different cultural traditions” (Panter-Brick et al. 2001: 6).

In this endeavor ecological historians (of the Plains region) like Isenberg (2000, 1996), Merchant (2007), Krech (2005, 1999), Dobak (1996) and Flores (2007) cited throughout this thesis, who deliver in-depth multi-level historical analyses of impacts economic, social and ecological environments had on (nomadic) hunting and gathering groups, their reactionary culture-specific adaptations and/or socio-cultural adoptions in response to environments, deliver useful explanations (grounded in human-environmental relations) for cultural changes and continuities of societies. This sort of historical materialism does not only help to expose teleological fallacies narrating social change but also serves to deconstruct essentialist (and racist) notions about Native Americans, which were ascribed to these populations by missionaries, explorers (Lescarbot) and western intellectuals (e. g. Rousseau and Thoreau), as a result of the “colonial encounter”, either romanticizing them as “noble savages” or demonizing/negatively connoting them as primitive, barbarian “others” (Ellingson 2001).

Although historical and cultural materialist perspectives prove useful in revealing and breaking with ideological myths about people by emphasizing the shared human condition of all people, their natural embeddedness and agency beyond the sometimes distorting or deterring vision of cultural lenses (which sometimes reinforce positive or negative prejudice notions due to conceptual misinterpretations of behaviors of cultural others), they fail to grasp political dimensions. Many authors deploying this theoretical approach remain silent or do not reflect about their own epistemological background and thus find themselves often criticized (such as Krech by Ranco 2007) for their unawareness or reluctance of power relations that lie at root and are reinforced through the very production of knowledge. Thus, whilst materialist approaches might very well denounce mythical, racist and/or essentialist (idealistic)

conceptions about cultural others as false (or untrue in the face of ration-based logical explanations for certain behaviors and phenomena in different contexts), they do not satisfy in delivering answers as to why and against what socio-cultural background these mythical notions about others were made up or developed in the first place, namely in serving as “a mirror to generate occidental self-awareness and identity”, as Seidl and Saxinger (2016: 9) pointedly put it.

Frederick Barth (1992 [1969]) was one of the first anthropologists to convincingly show according to a multitude of ethnographic examples that ethnicity was a phenomenon that existed between and not within groups in recognizing that ethnic identity was a product of self-identification and ascriptions by cultural others to ideologically aiding in the maintenance of group related ethnic boundaries and thus securing the materialization of cultural integrity of certain forms of social and political organization. Most scholars engaging with issues revolving around questions of ethnicity, including so-called identity politics base their elaborations on the theoretical premises established by Barth and his colleagues (Erikson 2010: 68), since they remain useful and relevant for the understanding of interethnic relationships and their political formations.

Social criticisms, like Thoreau’s (2010; 1971) or Rousseau’s (1998) or the imagined superiority (Morgan [1908] 1979) of Euroamericans’ own social setting in contrast to Native American societies was thus rather an (ab)use of these “exotic others” as (self-)reflective category than a truly interest based attempt to understand these people’s socio-cultural systems according to their own logic. As critical post-modern scholars like Steward Hall (1994), Talal Asad (1973) and Edward Said (1995) have shown, the so-called “west” discursively co-constructed itself through its own ethnocentric description and study of the (colonized) cultural “other”. Anthropology, the formalized form of this type of scientific knowledge production, thus played a major part in supporting colonial projects in ideologically fostering notions of social development grounded in theories about human evolution used to justify the subjugation and assimilation of supposedly “undeveloped”, “impoverished” primitives or savages. By objectifying extra-European societies in order to identify universal truths explaining human cultural evolution, the discipline itself was founded upon the study of what Trouillot (1991) coined as “the savage slot”, a category against which theoretical assumptions about (idealtypes of) human nature could be projected. As correctly summarized by Seidl and Saxinger,

“anthropology as a discipline took shape in an unequal colonial encounter [...]. What is at stake here, from a de-colonial perspective, is the separation between Euro-centric *humanitas* and non-European *anthropoid* in the process of colonization, which

constitutes a structural division between hegemonic and subaltern knowledge, between privileged and suppressed bodies, between assumed historic agency and assumed timelessness” (Seidl/Saxinger 2016: 10).

In the light of this it seems ever more so important to retain a critical stance towards ones’ own disciplinary background as an anthropologist and remain extra-aware, culturally sensitive and self-reflected about one’s actions in the field and sociological conclusions afterwards, when conducting investigations about humans, societies and cultures. Ideally, this is done on a mutual basis of respect and appreciation of one another, deconstructing or reducing social hierarchies between researcher and the researched to a minimum. Part of this is the recognition of culturally emic (insider) perspectives as being equally valuable and important as etic (outsider) conceptions. As one of my Native interlocutors, Jimmy O’Chiese explained:

“We’re supposed to help each other, to learn about each other. [...] I’m very thankful that people want to understand us, especially our White brothers. They could’ve learned a lot from us right away across the continent if we were allowed to teach what, what we had. But unfortunately, *we were found*. Somebody thought that we didn’t know anything, so we had to be educated, we had to be told how to live. [...] Now w[e]’re allowed to explain, and to educate people about the real, what they call ‘Native-Studies’. We don’t need to be studied anymore. [...] Now, you actually get the, the knowledge and information directly from an Indigenous person. No more studies, because studies cannot tell you who, when, as accurately as we can tell about ourselves” (O’Chiese, Jimmy Formal Interview 09/18/2017, *emphasis added*).

The scientific ration-based logic of knowledge production is one way of seeing the world. However, since the ontological turn in anthropology there is widespread shared recognition across the discipline that a vast number of ontologies of different peoples exist in the world (e. g. Descola 2005, 2014; Halbmayer 2012; Viveiros de Castro 1998), all of which have distinct forms of knowledge production and deserve attention. Instead of regarding them as (f. i. evolutionary or culturally) inferior or (f. i. spiritually) superior, people (especially anthropologists) should not judge them as better or worse but simply accept them as culturally conditioned versions of reality coherent according to and within their own systematic logics. As pointed out by Seidl and Saxinger (2016: 11), the awareness of many contemporary hunter-gatherers about their contextual embeddedness within globally expanding capitalist markets and industries delivers to them a strategic advantage as active agents of their self-determined development in negotiating their own futures. In doing so, they are able to break with popular stereotypes ascribed to them and educate a broader public about who they really are through their everyday actions and participation in academic and political discourses (thus manipulating the production of dominant narratives).



Critical scholarship has highlighted potential pitfalls of so-called “strategic essentialism” (Spivak [1985] 1996) or “ethnic formalization” (Niezen 2009) sometimes actively deployed by Indigenous stakeholders or an outcome of political struggles, (for instance, for the reclamation or acknowledgement of rights to land, titles etc.), which range from inhibiting meaningful discourse to reinforcing stereotypes (Smithers 2015). However, ambiguous as they may be, they nevertheless present a necessary means for Indigenous peoples to achieve desired goals (of rights and entitlements) in certain legal and political situations or contexts.

Anthropologists aware of that political dimension are more capable and better equipped to free themselves from their own prejudices and recognize (the real) driving reasons/motives for political actions and discursive positioning undertaken by Indigenous nations, politicians, activists, educators and intellectuals (e. g. Deloria 2002, 1969; LaDuke 2005), whose general purpose (in the majority of cases) is first and foremost to foster the quality of life of certain groups of people, rather than to meet questionable ideological ideals.

## 1.5 Methodology

### 1.5.1 Multi-sited ethnographic Fieldwork in Plains-Indian Communities

In the summer of 2017, between June 29<sup>th</sup> until October 17<sup>th</sup> I spent about three months visiting and living in Cree and Lakota communities on (and outside of) reserves or reservations in the province of Alberta and the states of North and South Dakota, all of them located entirely in the Northern Great Plains, a geographical area shared by the US and Canada. Following a multi-sited fieldwork strategy, I visited Lakota/Dakota reservations in North and South Dakota (USA), but also Plains-Cree reserves in Alberta (Canada) to contrast my findings with the situation in other Plains-Indian communities in the greater Northern Plains region<sup>3</sup>, an area encompassing roughly 180 million acres that spans across five US States and two Canadian provinces. However, most of my time was dedicated to empirical field research on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, which thus makes it also the regional main locus and focus of my thesis. Nevertheless, empirical data collected in other Lakota and Plains-Indian communities will be used as a means to contrast experiences on the ground and their embeddedness within larger institutional contexts.

Although my original plan was to do single-site fieldwork exploring local livelihoods, cultural and community life at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation and later contrast my findings to historical social realities to detect continuities and changes in lifestyles and societal structures, once in the field, I decided to expand the scope of my research in order to be able to do a transnational and regional comparison, looking at similarities and differences in contemporary infrastructures, social life and cultural practices of Indigenous people residing on Plains Indian reserves and reservations.<sup>4</sup> Embarking on a two dimensional comparative approach along lines

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the Great Plains as Cultural Area see DeMaille 2001: 3 ff.

<sup>4</sup> As Gingrich and many other scholars point out, the choice of research methods – empirical and analytical – is based first and foremost on the central research question(s) defining a problem of anthropological concern (Gingrich 2012: 214). Putting a regional focus on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation originally framed my research as a local case study about social realities and ethnic identity (re-) construction. However, since I started my fieldtrip close to Edmonton, Canada with attending the World Indigenous Nations Games hosted by the Maskwacis and Enoch Cree Nation, I already tested my original research questions by reframing and extending the scope of my investigation to include lived experiences on the ground and enactments of traditional or cultural life within the context of these respective Cree reserves. Although the main emphasis of my research remained to be set on the Lakota (of Standing Rock), the additional inclusion of Plains Cree communities in Canada during my fieldwork enabled me to make use of anthropological comparison as a methodological procedure during and as an analytical tool after fieldwork. Thus, committing to a multi-sited ethnographic research strategy led me to recognize and look at differences, but even more so at structural similarities in everyday livelihoods and cultural life of Cree communities in Canada and Lakota communities in the United States. Some insights and findings from data collected in Cree communities that proved particularly fit for an anthropological comparison explaining larger contexts in line with my elaborations and key arguments made in regard to hunting and gathering practices at Standing Rock will be brought up in my thesis. Including this comparative dimension is not intended to support

of time and space – historical and regional – maximized the conditions of openness needed “to allow for encounters with the unexpected and hence for discovery” during research, as Barker (2012: 65) put it, and aided me in the process of attaining macro perspectives in detecting parallels of phenomena in its aftermath.

My rather spontaneous commitment to do multi-sited ethnography was heavily influenced through my participation at the World Indigenous Nations (WIN) Games, hosted by the Enoch and Maskwacis Cree Nations (in Treaty Six territory, which was emphasized by the hosts on multiple occasions), close to the city of Edmonton, where I initially flew in coming from Vienna, Austria. Helping out as a volunteer, filming at sports events and conferences as well as taking part at a couple of competitions as an athlete myself, gave me the opportunity to meet and get to know a broad spectrum of Indigenous locals and visitors (mostly from other parts of Canada, the United States but also worldwide), from activists, educators to politicians, entrepreneurs, motivational speakers and change-makers in their communities.

In the face of such favorable circumstances I already started conducting interviews in the second half of the event and continuously increased my activity as an anthropological investigator from that moment on. After the games ended and delegations had left I stayed for a couple more days at the Enoch Cree reserve before I continued my journey to North Dakota, whereto I had already bought plain tickets before departing to North America. I was accompanied by Dr. Judith Binder, an Austrian medical doctor, who had heard about my intention to do research among the Lakota/Dakota of Standing Rock from the activist group AKIN – *Arbeitskreis Indianer Nordamerikas* –, a human rights watch supporting Indigenous self-determination, where I am an active member, and had wanted to join me during the first three weeks of my stay abroad.

After buying a used pick-up truck in Bismarck to be mobile in rural America, we drove to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, where I checked in with Mr. Mafany Molongho, the director of the Institutional Review Board at the Sitting Bull College, where I had applied to conduct research in advance. Judith and I continued then to the Black Hills region of South Dakota, where I also met up with an old Lakota friend, Coy Amiotte, whom I had met during a foreign exchange semester at the Lyman High School in Presho, South Dakota and had gotten back in contact about a year before doing research in the Dakotas. As a student at the Oglala Lakota College on the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation and growing up as a so-called mixed blood on

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any universalist theoretical claims, but rather to deliver readers with another first-hand reference (primary source), creating a more nuanced and differentiated picture of Indigenous peoples’ emphasizing some similarities and differences of structural embeddedness and experienced socio-cultural realities on the ground.

multiple Lakota reservations but also in different cities across South Dakota, the life experiences he shared with me, gave me valuable insights and initial advice on Indian-White relations and social dynamics in and around reservations.

On July 23<sup>rd</sup> I dropped off Judith at the airport in Rapid City, the second largest city in South Dakota at the foot of Black Hills or *Paha Sapa*, a historically and spiritually highly meaningful place for many Lakota, and headed back north, where I would spend the next couple of weeks at the Standing Rock Sioux and later also at the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation attending various cultural, religious, community events and visiting remnant “water-protector” camps of the “NoDAPL movement”, get myself accustomed to the setting and known among residents, tribal members and activists. In this explorative phase of my fieldtrip characterized by “deep hanging out” (Fontein 2013: 58 f.), I primarily focused on applying anthropology’s key method of participant observation to grasp social realities and immerse in the field through interacting and engaging in conversations with people I met, thus building up relationships and sustained social contact with different agents. I only held very few formal interviews during that first stay in the Dakotas, but rather drew a lot of insider-information from unrecorded informal talks, which I would later summarize in protocols, often in the evening.

In doing so, I constantly reflected on my experiences very much following the concept of grounded theory-building (Corbin/Strauss 2008), which led me to develop my primary focus on hunting (and gathering) as a practice and marker of cultural identity. My interest in that cultural and economic aspect often perceived and promoted (by Native and non-Native people) as characteristic for Indigenous peoples’ way of life had already been triggered when filming at a butcher workshop at a Youth Conference held by a Plains-Cree hunter within the framework of the WIN games on the Maskwacis reserve. When I met a Lakota show dancer of the Native American music band “Brulé” in the Black Hills, who emphasized his connection to the land as a hunter-gatherer and got to talk to another Lakota hunter in the very early phase of my research in Standing Rock at a march to create awareness for “missing and murdered Indigenous women and men” organized by Native Studies students of the Sitting Bull College (Fieldnotes 07/27/2017), my attention was again redirected towards contemporary hunting (and gathering) practices and I intensified my investigation in that area, recognizing its continuing symbolic centrality among some circles of tribal members, especially as a means of self-identification with what is often referred to by themselves (and outsiders) as “traditional” life. That hunting was highly valued among practitioners in traditional ceremonies and plays an important role in religious contexts as cultural category and point of reference itself, became also apparent when I was invited to help out at a local Sundance, hosted by the Kidder family

close to the town of Fort Yates, where the organizers themselves but also the majority of dancers, supporters and viewers were involved in one way or another in helping out – be it preparing crafts or foods, dancing, drumming or singing – dependent on or ideologically relating to hunting (and gathering). A great variety of ceremonial objects and decorative assets on traditional clothes (regalia) worn by dancers at *wacipis* (or *powwows*)<sup>5</sup> and Sundances are, in many cases harvested through hunting as I was told on multiple occasions and locations during my fieldtrip. Although not actively hunted in the open Prairie any more (since the landscape is all parceled up into allotted sections, owned by the tribe, state, federal government or individuals), but rather shot in a controlled fenced area, buffalo are ranched by tribes (and private landowners) on Lakota reservations mainly because of their continuing historical and cultural importance and symbolism, especially in “traditional” religious contexts. In the light of the initial findings presented above, I align with many other scholars (e. g. Zedeño 2013), who have pointed out that hunting is more than just an economic activity, but rather has to be understood as constituting part of a way of life, defining of a culture specific worldview and related/deducted ethics. From this perspective, ceremonial and subsistence hunting and gathering thus still forms a constitutive aspect of Indigenous peoples’ sense of cultural identity. In mid-August I went on a vacational break to British Columbia and afterwards drove back to Alberta, where I reunited with a Plains-Cree friend, Steven Morin, in Jasper, whom I got to know at the WIN Games. Together we would continue to Banff, where I met Brian Calliou, director of the Banff Centre for a talk and an expert interview about current culture-based strategies in community development and leadership training. Steve and I then returned to Enoch reserve and only a few days after I attended, filmed and interviewed at the National Gathering of Elders held from the 11<sup>th</sup> until the 14<sup>th</sup> of September at the Edmonton Expo Centre. I stayed in Enoch for another week and a half to investigate local infrastructures and “traditional” life, which I regard as comprised by ceremonial events or practices and various applications of what can be defined as being culturally unique traits or ways (for example, language and values) in educational and entrepreneurial contexts. Until the end of September I toured with Steve, who not only had become a close friend but also a key informant, assisting and guiding a part of my research journey. First, he introduced me to the community of Kinuso in the Swan Lake reserve (where Steve had family) and then to Mountain Cree Camp, an enclave of Plains-Cree, who had moved into the foothills of the Canadian Rockies in the 60s to

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<sup>5</sup> *Wacipi* is a Lakota term for what is more popularly known under the Narragansett word *Powwow*, which are communal cultural dancing events held since the mid-19th century in slightly varying ways by many North American Indian Tribal Nations until today.

protect their ceremonies and traditions and to escape from devastating effects of colonial policies and resulting challenges on Maskwacis reserve. Sojourns at these two places were comparatively short, lasting not longer than a week and were mostly comprised of a methodological mix of bits and pieces of participant observation, (deep) hanging-out, a number of recorded and unrecorded informal talks but also some formal interviews, again with a focus on hunting and its contemporary relevance among community members. Especially the interconnections and cognitive intersections of ceremonies, values, human-nature relationships, spiritual beliefs and worldviews were of increasing interest to me as these turned out to be ideologically foundational for the continuance of cultural hunting and gathering practices, since these aspects were emphasized by interviewees and people I talked to on the ground time and again.

#### 1.5.1.1 *Mixing Methods: Experimenting with “Going-Along”*

As Gingrich points out in his article on methodology, following a multi-site research strategy prioritizes conversational interviews and due to temporal constraints has obvious restrictions on participant observation, which is a key means in contrasting “what people actually do, as opposed to what they say they do” (Gingrich 2013).

Aware of this circumstance, I chose an experimental approach in making use of the so-called go-along method for my particular ends in researching contemporary Indigenous hunting and gathering practices on reservations and reserves. “Going-along” or walking interviews as an ethnographic tool have been designed and deployed mainly by geographers, landscape planners and anthropologists to learn from locals about their experiences in, sentiments towards, social, cultural or material associations with and perceptions of places, areas, environments or infrastructures, where their (daily) routines and lives take place and manifest (Bergeron et al. 2012; Evans/Jones 2011).

Applying this method in the context of Indigenous hunting and gathering practices basically provided me with a model to inquire about topic-related information while following the interviewees in the pursuit of the very activities I was investigating. This way, I reduced the disturbance I posed as a researcher to the mundane life of people interviewed and was able to participate as observer (Flick 2009: 223) in the activity (occasionally also filming sequences) and simultaneously listen to people’s stories about their ways, challenges and joys often relating directly to the contexts within which we were moving – on foot or by car. However, since the rifle hunting season for deer and other big game only started on Lakota reservations in late

October shortly before I left, I was only able to join Plains-Cree hunters in Mountain Cree Camp on an actual hunt.

Nevertheless, a local hunter in Standing Rock took me on a drive through the reservation one day to show me where he was and was not able to hunt. Sometimes I would also only partake in the post-processing of animals, but also then interviews were held in a suitable setting to talk about hunting and what it entails. Numerous scholars have pointed at the determining effects of social and natural environments on the kind and depth of information shared (Evans/Jones 2011: 849 f.). As a matter of fact, this has been expressed in the anthropological principle of embeddedness as a key dimension to be considered in ethnographic fieldwork, which has already been emphasized by anthropologist Sidney Mintz (1984: 309 cited in Barker 2012: 58). However, as Barker points out, no interview is more embedded than another, “it is just that it is embedded in very different kinds of social fields, discourses and sets of practices” (Barker 2012: 57), which influence the outcome of information shared.

Especially when investigating what kind of concepts and values were expressed by Natives in reference to hunting, the go-along method has proved to be an effective means to suitably embed interviews within the very fields of knowledge that were of primary ethnographic interest to me. As Bergeron explains: “Participants normally proceed as ‘tour guides’ by leading the walk or drive, while providing information on their familiar surroundings. Because of their personal and direct involvement, the resulting information is normally of subjective nature and reveals people’s value systems”. Furthermore, he declares that “by being encouraged to lead the way, participants gain control over the exercise, which allows to reduce the hierarchy between interviewer and interviewee” (Bergeron et. al. 2012: 110 f.). Due to reasons given, going along presented an insightful research strategy adding to the list of and sometimes also extending more conventional methods I used in the field, including ethnographic filming (videography), narrative-biographical, structured and semi-structured interviews as well as formal and informal conversations, next to participant observation.

### **1.5.2 Grounded Theory Based Data Analysis with MaxQDa**

Since this thesis is primarily based on empirical data gathered in the field through methods mentioned above, compared with other topic-related ethnographies and mainly secondary but also primary historical sources, the validation of anthropological theories to explain larger social dynamics and connections have not been a focus of this work.

Nevertheless, approaches and concepts of anthropological theory have been utilized or mentioned and will be introduced in contexts where relevant throughout the thesis.

However, many of the research questions have been answered through the systematic means of the Grounded Theory Model developed by Corbin and Strauss (2008), according to which I deducted and generated insights about social realities in regard to contemporary hunting and gathering practices from coding and then analyzing my empirical data partially supported by “MaxQDa”, a qualitative data analysis tool. These insights were then compared and reflected against historical and ethnographic writings about past and present Lakota culture and livelihoods, as well as a vast array of anthropological literature on hunter and gatherers and political and socio-cultural research on Indigenous peoples (in the contemporary world) in general.

Starting with “open coding”, I first categorized the data into constructed or in-vivo codes in the process of reading through the material. As I progressed, I integrated more data and simultaneously deleted, exchanged, combined or created new categories or codes, depending on new conceptual inputs gained from the data and literature read parallel to coding. Through this second procedure of “axial coding”, the categories and subcategories became already more specified in relating to and seeking to answer the research questions in mind. In the last step of “selective coding”, I put the material into a categorical structure of codes, each coherent in content but interrelating with one another, which defined and largely corresponded with the conceptual structure of the thesis, guiding the writing process that followed.<sup>6</sup>

### **1.5.3 Representing the “Other”: Who Am I? Personal Reflections about Doing Fieldwork in Native North America**

Who am I to write about Native American Life and Livelihoods? Since I aim to represent social realities of people considering themselves and being considered part of certain cultural collectives in this thesis, which have been and are referred to in literature as Plains peoples, Native Americans, Aborigines, First peoples or nations, Indigenous peoples of North America and Amerindians or Indians, to name the most popular at last, and of which I am an outsider to, I deem it vital to openly state what personally motivated to do so.

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<sup>6</sup> A summary of basic concepts used in Grounded Theory building is found in Flick (2009: 305 ff.). Kuckartz (2010: 73 ff.) further elaborates on its application within “MaxQDa”.



#### 1.5.3.1 *Finding the Field: My Background and Journey to Anthropology*

I grew up and was socialized in Austria in a five-member family, my parents, two brothers and me being the oldest of the three. While I spent my early childhood in Linz, my family and I moved to Vienna when I was seven years old, where I continued and successfully completed my education in the Austrian school system. Having academic parents, my mother being a teacher, my father a lawyer, I was encouraged to pursue an academic career as well. After I had tried myself in Business Administration and Law, since these studies were promoted by people surrounding me as reasonable choices in contrast to most other subjects, especially Social Sciences and Arts, I soon realized that both were not apt for me: Apart from being incapable of finding motivation, both studies were clearly too systemic in themselves being some of the key pillars of the social order of a society, I neither really felt comfortable with nor wanted to be part of. Therefore, Social and Cultural Anthropology delivered an opportunity to study alternative socio-cultural systems, societies or simply put, cultures, different to the one that I had been born into and raised. Romantic conceptions and stereotypes of Native Americans supposedly having lived a free life in harmony with nature initially inspired me to follow an interest and investigate historical and contemporary ways of life of these “peoples”. This interest, fueled by novels, biographies about prominent figures like Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse of the Lakota in my teens, later intensified by reading up on colonial history of North America and the devastating effects Euroamerican arrival had had on Native American society and culture let me decide to start studying Anthropology, where I had been able to further pursue this interest, if not to say fascination. Being inspired during my bachelors by introductory literature I had to read in classes, deconstructing a lot of the notions, concepts and ideals that I had been brought up with, I decided to focus on historical social systems in Europe, seeking for possible answers on how to realize communally centered ways of life in the present, delivering a viable alternative to the highest maxim or dogma of individual profit-maximization, material enrichment and “success” perpetuated in capitalistically orientated “consume-cultures” like the social systems I was living in, which becomes apparent in my theoretical and empirical Bachelor theses (Bergthaler 2015a; Bergthaler 2015b).

In the course of my Master studies I eventually found back to my fascination with Native Americans, after visiting introductory courses on Indigenous peoples of Latin America and ontologies or worldviews of Amazonian Amerindians, which gave me the opportunity to write a seminar paper on historic Lakota Beliefs and Rituals during much of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Lakota society had not yet been subjugated and exposed to forced assimilation policies by the US government (Bergthaler 2016). Around the same time, I stumbled across an

information table of the Vienna-based human rights watch AKIN – *Arbeitskreis Nordamerikas* at the “Volksstimme-Fest” in Vienna, which is a voluntary Austrian working circle lobbying for the rights of Indigenous peoples of North America, being part of a larger European Network of groups supporting Indigenous peoples from across the world at international congresses and institution such as the United Nations. After visiting some of their weekly meetings and co-organizing public action events, for instance a rally in solidarity of the Standing Rock Sioux fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) having been built without their consent and through historic burial grounds in close proximity to their reservation or a presentation held by a Guarani who reported on the situation of his people in Mato Grosso, I soon became an active member of AKIN. Since the opposition of the DAPL by activists in support of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe happened to take place right at the time when I visited a seminar on resource extraction and related Indigenous rights at the anthropology department in Vienna, I had time and the possibility to intensify my knowledge on the issue and its impact and meaning in contemporary Lakota identity construction (Bergthaler 2017).

As I found myself faced with the task of writing a Master’s thesis in the same year, I thus sensed a valid opportunity to do fieldwork on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, to look at local livelihoods and how they were impacted by the presence of activists and their camps during protests on site, roughly lasting from April 2016 throughout late February 2017. Consequently, I wrote a Master-research proposal to my department, applied and was granted the needed or obligatory permission to do fieldwork at Standing Rock through the Sitting Bull College’s Institutional Review Board, and managed to generate some funding from the University of Vienna for the endeavor.

However, by the time I arrived, the protests locally had been largely abandoned, also due to the tribal council’s request to do so, largely owed to economic pressures (caused by financial losses in tribal gaming and some of its other enterprises, suffering from infrastructural shortcomings of traffic because of blocked roads). Still, in the field I managed to get in contact with remnant activists in Standing Rock, before they finally broke off the last resistance-camp on site after their participation at a local Sundance hosted by the traditionalist Kidder family close to fort Yates. Although I had also visited the Wakpa Waste Camp at Cheyenne River, which helped homeless “water-protectors” to start over and transition back into a mundane routine on the reservation, which I continuously supported with materials and food during my fieldwork and also afterwards in creating a promotion video to ask the public for monetary donations aiding the camp to prepare for the upcoming winter (URL 1), I decided to focus my research on cultural

and/or subsistence hunting and gathering practices still perused by tribal members today, for reasons given above.

#### 1.5.3.2 *In the Field: Navigating between Activism and Research*

As the title suggests, I came to the field with multiple roles and intentions, which did not always combine well: Even if the comprising term “action anthropology” suggests that Activism and Anthropology can go hand in hand, I felt sometimes restrained by one or the other in my methodological approaches in the field. On the one hand I was thinking of myself as an anthropologist, who tries to collect valid, “authentic” data for this Master’s thesis, not influenced by my own clear anti-colonial political position as an activist supportive of Indigenous peoples’ cultural and social self-determination, on the other hand, I regarded myself on the mission to establish contacts with local grassroots activists and politicians to stay with in direct exchange about challenges faced on reservations and reserves visited.

I solved my personal issue of feeling caught up in-between by simply emphasizing my intentions in regards to one of the two missions I was on when introducing myself, first, to not confuse people with too much information and diverging goals I had in interacting with them, and second, to pursue a clear agenda from the beginning of either wanting to attain unbiased information about an issue or aiming from the start to exchange for political or cultural cooperation for future projects in declaring my political stance. Since I filmed most of my interviews, events and some of my encounters and conversations with people in the field I managed to gather unfiltered first-hand accounts of people’s opinions and socio-culturally contextualized embeddedness delivered through picture and sound.

#### 1.5.3.3 *In the Field: Power Relations*

Following Gingrich’s elaborations on anthropological methodology, I could see myself perfectly reflected at first sight in his description of the ‘lonely wolf’ profile, which he brings up as exemplary for a past tradition in anthropology in regard to single-sited fieldwork, when writing:

“It is true that the single-site model for ethnographic field work has a very long tradition of appealing primarily to younger men from the world’s academic centers, but it also is true that this specific tradition became obsolete long ago, and has been interrupted and broken in many parts of global anthropology today”, adding that: “Of course there is

nothing a priori wrong if a young white man wants to do his fieldwork alone, but today's anthropology students are of all colors and primarily female. Small groups of two to four ethnographers quite often may work equally well if not better for single-site ethnographic field work" (Gingrich 2013).

Although I initially started out with this classical approach to ethnographic fieldwork, most prominently informed if not invented as such by one of anthropologies so-called founding fathers, Bronislaw Malinowski, perpetuated through his most famous work "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" (1922), which is still discussed as central or standard literature in bachelor classes in anthropology, I changed to more experimental methods during research – such as videography, multi-sited ethnography and several types of interviewing and conversing while going along with people, as presented above. Also, I did not always travel alone but was accompanied by voluntary assistants for parts of my journey, as mentioned above.

However, I was aware of my "privileged" position as a young White male, stemming from a middle-class family, with a considerable amount of intellectual (symbolic) and financial support, having enjoyed (quasi) free higher education at university, a steady income from my quite successful activity as an self-employed entrepreneur in running a small transportation company, and my parents aid, in addition to the funding I received from university to finance my trip to North America. These privileges just voiced stood in sharp contrast to opportunity structures faced by most tribal residents on reservations and reserves I visited, met, interviewed and interacted with. My appearance or status as a researcher and/or filmmaker and/or Indigenous rights activist from Austria, Europe, dependent on the situation/context, often aided me in being granted access to events and elitist circles amongst the reservation/reserve populace, which would have been probably denied to me otherwise. This experience stands to some extent in alignment with Gingrich's notions of "studying down", which, according to him, meant that,

"[t]hrough that colonial legacy, most socio-cultural relations were hierarchized with regard to persons coming from the metropolitan and colonial centers [and ...] that the researcher had better access to people in the upper tiers of the local hierarchy" (Gingrich 2013).

#### 1.5.3.3.1 Research Ethics

In conducting my research, I strictly adhered to the research ethics demanded from any researcher by the Sitting Bull College's Institutional Review Board. It was also in my personal interest to report back to the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and other reservation and reserve communities visited with my findings, after finishing my thesis. Everything that is written, cited or stated in here has been reviewed and consented to by the Sitting Bull College's Institutional Review Board prior to publication. Furthermore, prior to research, I had prepared Informed Consent Forms (see appendix), signed by both, research participants and researcher, contractually binding both parties to certain rights and duties: Most importantly, every participant cited in here has been informed about his or her being mentioned in this thesis, was sent a digital copy of it and a full transcript of his or her video, and/or voice recorded interview or conversation with me. They have been given the right to withdraw from or consent with being cited and been given the opportunity to rephrase their statements in the transcripts, voice criticism about their contextualization and give me feedback on the thesis. Moreover, I invited them to discuss my findings and elaborations with them to profit from constructive input.

### 1.6 Note on Terminology

In this thesis I use the terms Indians, Amerindians, Native Americans/Native(s), First Nations, Aborigines, and Indigenous peoples interchangeably. Aware that all of these above-mentioned labels carry different connotations and political emphases, I however sometimes discuss or explain their meaning and discursive application in particular contexts.

“Indigenous” and “Native” will be only written with a capital, carrying a political connotation. As descriptive terms without any intended political implications they will lowercased.



## **2 A HUNTING AND GATHERING CENTERED ETHNOHISTORY OF THE LAKOTA**

Much has been published about Plains Indian history, their historical lifestyles and livelihoods and probably even more so about the Lakota in particular and their expansion onto the Plains. Nevertheless, as my main concern in here is to illuminate continuities and changes in Lakota hunting and gathering practices and why they remain to be of central economic and cultural significance today to many descendants of the Lakota/Dakota (and other Plains peoples), who regard it as inseparable part of their identity and “traditional” way of life, it is unavoidable to analyze the history of these peoples’ subsistence practices explaining how their ecological and social embeddedness shaped specific types of social organization and ontological conceptions amongst them.

Thus, as the title of this chapter already suggests, the historical analysis which follows will be limited to and centered around changing economies and hunting and gathering activities of the Lakota or Teton Sioux during the time of Euroamerican presence and settler-colonial expansion on the continent, encompassing their migration onto the Great Plains, their economic and cultural adaption to that environment as well as their successful military conquest resulting in their territorial dominance on the Northern Plains, all of which played a fundamental role in shaping a way of life, cultural worldview and value-system, reflected in many spheres of socio-cultural life of Lakota/Dakota communities on reservations until today. I will show that subsistence hunting and gathering is one of the most basic, if not the most essential element defining the “traditional” Lakota way of life in setting the conditions for a way of being in the world, a way of interrelating with and perceiving the environment, which to some extent ideationally persists and deeply affects contemporary social, economic and political life on reservations.

Therefore, exploring the historical development of Lakota hunting and gathering practices is vital to recognize cultural continuities and shifts in social organization, economics and philosophical thought throughout times. Only against this historical backdrop the questions why hunting and gathering practices persisted and why they play such a pivotal role in constructing Indigenous identities can be adequately attended to and answered.

For reasons given, the primary step must be the investigation of historical processes explaining the interdependencies and dynamics between hunting and gathering and other aspects of the Lakota socio-cultural system, as well as how, why and when different forms and ways of

hunting and gathering evolved as an outcome of the Lakota's exposure to geopolitical and environmental changes largely resulting from colonial powers', especially Euroamericans', market, military and settler-colonial invasion.

As already Eric Wolf (1982) most popularly revealed in the anthropological classic "Europe and the People without history", given the dynamic and changing character of cultures in processes of adaption to environments and external forces, it is clear that there never has been a single primeval authentic or traditional way of life of a people. The Lakota, as other peoples, were neither static and unchanging, nor isolated or cut off from other civilizations, but were always in contact and interaction with neighboring tribes or groups, as also most contemporary authors writing about Lakota culture and society cannot emphasize enough (Gagnon 2012: 6; Gibbon 2003: 56).

In the light of this, it is not surprising that what has been widely referred to and essentialized in literature (see f. i. Deloria 2007; Bolz 1986; Satterlee/Malan 1975) as well as by the Lakota themselves as traditional way of life as equestrian nomadic buffalo-hunters, actually only existed as such for a specific, in fact a very short, period of time, approximately lasting for about a hundred years (Gibbon 2003: 1), which due to their iconic relevance in US history are often treated and defined in historical literature as the so-called "heydays" (Calloway 1982: 25) of Plains Indians.

As will be shown throughout this chapter, European colonization of the North American continent and its peoples greatly affected, if not to say conditioned the formation of what came to be known as traditional Lakota culture and lifeway.



## **2.1 Lakota Cultural Adaption to the Plains Environment: Social Change and Implications for Society**

### **2.1.1 Sioux Westward Movement**

The Lakota's own historical records, the winter counts (Wildhage 1988; Feest 2009b; Deloria 1929), seem to match with early European explorers' and missionaries' descriptions localizing them in the woodlands of present-day Minnesota, before their bands migrated farther west and eventually out onto Prairie and Plains country throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Feest 2009a: 18). The French explorers Pierre Esprit Radisson and his brother-in-law the Medart Chouard de Grosseilliers were the first to reportedly make contact with eastern Sioux in the winter of 1659-60 (Hassrick 1992: 173). Other adventurers followed in successive decades. They reported that "the Sioux occupied a vast expanse of territory that stretched from the woodlands of central Minnesota into the tall-grass Prairies of the eastern Dakotas" as Gibbon (2003: 50) summarizes in his history of "the Lakota and Dakota Nations" (as he titled his book). During the time of first contact with Europeans, the Sioux were already politically organized in the three divisions of Dakota, Yankton-Yanktonai (Wiciyela) and the Lakota, differing in dialect, cultural customs and way of life, as Gibbon (2003: 51) recounts from available records. Gibbon states that "[b]y 1500, the Sioux 'tribe' had come to include three distinct identities that became more differentiated as the centuries passed" (2004: 5).

Formally, these tribal groups which stemmed from a shared Sioux origin seem to have been politically allied by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as Oceti Sakowin, the seven council-fires, made up of the four Dakota or Santee tribes, the two Wiciyela tribes and the Lakota or Teton-Sioux tribe, of which the latter was the geographically most western group (Bolz 1986: 33). However, they never undertook any concerted political actions in which all tribes of this union were involved (Feest 2009a: 16).

At this point categorical distinctions between tribes and bands need to be pinpointed as a means of clarification: While bands consist of only up to about a hundred people, a tribal form of social organization can incorporate thousands. Moreover, bands are mostly living off hunting and gathering and are nomadic. Tribes on the other hand, are often cultivators of various sorts of crops and/or pastoralists living off domesticated animals and settle in permanent or semi-permanent villages rather than roaming nomadically according to Gibbon (2003: 18 f.). Gibbon further differentiates the two in stating that

“[L]ike bands, tribes are generally egalitarian, functionally generalized multi-community societies linked together through kinship and friendship ties, a common derivation and customs, and a common language. However, pan-tribal devices, such as sodalities, age-grades, secret societies, ritual congregations, and crosscutting associations devoted to kinship affiliations, link them together” (Gibbon 2003: 20).

As becomes apparent both categories are anthropological/scholarly constructs aimed at describing and classifying different types of social organization identified by cross-cultural commonalities. When still living in the woodlands of present-day Minnesota the Lakota were divided into three subgroups, the Oglala, Brule and Saones, of which the latter would later split up into the Itazipico, Oohenonpa, Sihasapa, Mineconjou and Hunkpapa as White asserts (1978: 321). Although these subgroups originally predominantly met the characteristics of bands, they would often be categorized as tribes in ethnological literature as populations grew rapidly with their advance onto the Plains (Feest 2009a: 17; Bolz 1986: 33). This points not only at the organizational change of ethnic groups<sup>7</sup> but also at the methodological limits of classification and the fluidity between categories, which however in having been frequently presented in the ethnographic present in terms of literary style, distorts from the fact that they are not fixed but time and context bound. Before some Lakota tribes temporarily united under widely recognized leaders such as Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse in the latter half of 19<sup>th</sup> century as a response to the US American military threat, the Lakota did not have a common leadership but were rather a loose alliance of subtribes, of which each was again divided into individual bands made up of the smallest social unit of the Lakota, the extended family, a so-called tipi-group or *tiospaye*, which had their own headmen/chief or so-called *itancan* (Gagnon 2012: 105 f.; MacFarlane 2010: 299), to use the Lakota term. For the duration of the annual Dakota Rendezvous taking place throughout the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some influential and powerful Lakota were apparently acknowledged as *ataya itancan* (Bray 2009: 54), headmen of all, according to the US army officer Zebulon Pike, as anthropologist Bray Kinsley remarks (2009: 54). Many authors emphasize that this national self-representation and concerted appearance of the Sioux was a result of politics and trading relations with officials from Euroamerican society, which demanded and expected such a figure in political and commercial negotiations. However, after the event when tribes separated again into smaller socio-political units, these men would lose the authority to rule over other headmen of bands, although they maintained their position within their own respective tribes (Bray 2009: 55).

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<sup>7</sup> I use the term ethnic group here as linking people that recognize a shared ancestral culture and language.

In the attempt to identify and outline a few generally recognizable systematic principles in tribalization processes, Gibbon concludes that,

“[r]egardless of the specific cause, the emergence of tribal social organization is not considered an internal evolutionary development but a strategy by marginal groups to cope with asymmetrical power relationships with neighboring groups. [...]he presence of more complexly organized, warlike neighbors with a tribal social organization might also push bands toward a tribal level of sociopolitical organization for the sake of survival. In the process of coalescing for defense, bands-cum-tribes generally adopt some of the social, political, and symbolic features of their aggressive neighbors” (Gibbon 2003: 20 f.).

Although DeMaille (1978: 240 cited by Bolz 1986: 33) argues that individual Sioux tribes like the Oglala historically neither had a collective sense or self-conception as tribal groups nor as Sioux, today, many Lakota see themselves as part of the Sioux nation in accordance with the ideal of the socio-political unit as Oceti Sakowin. Henning (1982: 64 cited in Bolz 1986: 43) who did a systematic analysis of Lakota winter counts, increasing interaction with Whites through commerce and war led to a rapidly exaggerating collective (ethnic) identification as Sioux among the individual band members. In the light of this argumentation, which is also in alignment with other theoretical notions in anthropology about identity construction that emphasize the constituting effect of social interaction between individuals and groups/social organisms in this process (as most popularly presented by Barth [1969] 1998) it seems logical that, as a consequence of US American political suppression and dominance artificially constructed tribal nations of the Sioux reservations have formally politically unified as United Sioux Tribes (Bolz 1986: 34), but are de facto run as individual sovereigns and have no common government or leadership. Even today, as Gagnon is convinced, “[a]ll of the Sioux recognize that they are part of a single mythic nation, the Oceti Sakowin (the Seven Council Fires)” (Gagnon 2004: 5).

While the most widely accepted reason for Lakota movement onto the Prairies cited by scholars is exerted pressure from Ojibwa/Anishinabe and Cree (f.i. Satterlee/Malan 1975: 11, Sanstead 1995: 8) tribes, also supported by one of my interlocutors who stated, “we were chased out of the east” (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017), others like Anderson (1980: 36) regard economic incentives as the main driver for westward migration. Also, historian Richard White argues that the „brunt of their attacks would be borne by the Santee Sioux who acted as a buffer against powerful eastern tribes”, and instead concludes that the „potential profits of the region's abundant beaver and the ready food supply provided by the buffalo herds lured them [the Lakota bands] into the open lands” (White 1978:

322). As pointed out by anthropologist Kathleen Pickering (2000: 3) the Lakota were already incorporated into the global market economy by entering the fur trade with Europeans in the early 17th century. This granted them a steady supply of European goods, including guns, which not only enabled them to defend themselves against a strong alliance of Cree and Assiniboiné (who for a brief period had held a monopoly on firearms by having been first in trading with the French) attacking from the north and pressuring them to move south, but also to drive tribes to their south and west such as the Omahas, Otos, Cheyennes, Missouris, and Iowas off their lands to acquire new hunting grounds primarily for the fur trade but also subsistence purposes (White 1978: 321 f.).

Additionally to the sheer chain reaction of tribal conflicts over land and resources exerted through a general wave of peoples migrating westwards, Gibbon lists a number of possible factors such as the “Little Ice Age; declining animal populations in the eastern fringe of their territory; the appearance of the horse on the Plains; the southwestward migration of bison herds” (Gibbon 2003: 53), which to lesser or greater extend may have contributed to cause the majority of Sioux to leave the homelands in the northern forests of Minnesota in the conquest of new terrains. The question which factor ultimately was the most decisive in effecting so many Lakota groups to move west cannot be finally answered from today’s standpoint, given the slim amount of first hand sources. However, as can be deducted from my previous argumentation, most scholars elaborate on a complex matrix of dynamic push and pull factors resulting from a penetrating European market and settler-colonial expansion causing tribes to move west and forge alliances to fight over (hunting) territories and access to resources whilst being drawn into networks of commerce with Europeans through dependencies on their goods. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the shift of the European fur market from beaver, whose populations had become almost extinct across most of North America by the time, to buffalo hides (Pickering 2000: 4) coincided with the advent of the Lakota’s arrival on the Northern Plains. While Yankton and Yanktonai groups still concentrated to a great extent on beaver trapping in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Lakota bands had adopted almost entirely to hunting buffalo. Aiding in that enterprise was the horse which had been gradually integrated into Sioux cultural patterns throughout the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (White 1978: 323).

Had the Lakota based their subsistence in the woodlands on hunting game like deer and elk indigenous to these forested areas, gathering wild rice, different edible fruits and plants as well as fishing in the lakes and streams accompanied by seasonal buffalo hunting trips, but also seasonally cultivating corn (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 11; Sanstead 1995: 5), their horticultural activities and semi-permanent village residency (Gibbon 2003: 54) gradually declined until they

were completely abandoned once the Lakota had fully transitioned to a nomadic lifestyle of hunters of bison on the Plains. However, still then, the Lakota would supplement their diets with gathered foods such as turnips, wild berries and traded or plundered crops from neighboring tribes.

Entertaining a vivid trade network with their Dakota relatives, who bartered for European goods at trade fairs in the east had delivered Lakota bands with a steady and constant supply of guns, which played a determining role for success in the initial stages of the Lakota's campaigns of territorial conquest for hunting grounds on the Northern Great Plains (Gibbon 2003: 53). This advantage however faded by the 1770s when other Plains tribes had also acquired firearms through trade (White 1978: 323).

As can already be seen from above elaborations, the migration of Lakota (and later, as Beaver populations had become too scarce, also Yankton and Yanktonai) bands onto the Plains partly demanded and partly resulted in fundamental changes differing from their previous way of life in the woodlands, which their Dakota allies continued to live by. Theoretically, I can only align here with Gibbon who stresses that

“[b]y implication, if fundamental aspects of a culture change, other aspects of that culture are likely to change as well. We should anticipate finding, then, broad-scale changes in the values, gender roles, and family organization of the Sioux as their economic base shifted from wild rice harvesting, to bison hunting, to reservation dependency, to casino gaming” (Gibbon 2003: 57).

Indeed, fundamental for the Plains-Sioux (Lakota, Yankton and Yanktonai) in determining changes of cultural traits and institutions – in terms of social organization, values, belief and ritual life was the transition to a lifestyle as hunter-gatherers on the Plains, as I will discuss in the following chapter.

In sharp contrast to the forced shift into reservation life, this pathway, although greatly conditioned by externally induced market and colonially caused migratory forces, limiting viable alternative developments (and in this regard the Lakota deliver proof to the quite opportunistic nature of hunter-gatherer societies), was chosen freely and self-determined by the Lakota people. Although the Lakota left the woodlands due to conditions not of their choice supporting a movement onto the Plains and favoring an adaption of many of the cultural traits of Plains peoples, they were not directly subjected or forced by a dominating people to assimilate and change their ways according to certain cultural ideals imposed upon them. I argue that this circumstance, namely if a people are left to develop according to their own standards and needs or if they are pushed towards certain habits, greatly influences the outcome

of processes of cultures' adaptations and adoptions within ever-changing socio-political contexts and accompanying shifts in power-relations. I align with Spicer (1971) in arguing that cultural resistance, expressed through persistency, parallel existence of and insistence on upholding certain "traditional" cultural traits and ways, is the Lakota reaction and response to suppressive military and political action and forced assimilation.

As I will elaborate later in more detail, the Lakota never entirely ceased to hunt and gather and have kept or revitalized many of their cultural institutions and ceremonial ways. A complete shift to a market economy in the way US Indian policy had encouraged it, has not been successfully realized or been put in place on reservations until this day. I align with many scholars, who point out that the Lakota as well as many other Indigenous nations in North America are undergoing a cultural renaissance (Gibbon 2003: 201) and, as I will show at the example of the Lakota (Plains-Cree and others), hunting and gathering plays a fundamental part in it.

### **2.1.2 The "Traditional"<sup>8</sup> Way of Life?**

Due to the Lakota's famous history of having been the most dominant tribe on the Northern Great Plains at the time of increased European migration and settlement in that area taking up around the 1830s at an ever accelerating pace, they became known as "the prototype of all Plains Indians in popular imagination", as Gibbon suitably formulates it, adding that

"[t]hey were associated with war bonnets, bison robes, the hide trade, medicine bundles, sacred shields, horse gear and horsemanship, military societies, sign language, guns, the military complex and coup counting, the Sun Dance, and the vision quest. This was the classic Plains complex that existed among one group or another from about 1800 to 1880" (Gibbon 2003: 89).

As their expansion onto the Plains marked a time of unprecedented and unmatched prosperity and wealth for the Lakota, which can be defined as their cultural flowering, it is rather unsurprising that the so-called "Horse Days"<sup>9</sup> of their past continue to be glorified by their Lakota descendants until today, acting as a source of pride and a shared marker of cultural

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<sup>8</sup> "Traditional" in the context of the Lakota denotes an often romanticized, sometimes mythic form of Lakota culture, which had developed during the period of increased Euroamerican contact and continues to shape the collective memory and popular imagination of and about the Sioux and (Plains-) Indians in general until today as I have explained above and will further elaborate on in this chapter.

<sup>9</sup> This term is commonly used in ethnographic literature (Wissler 1914: 24), chronicling "the span of time between the Dog Days and the reserve era" (McMillan/Yellowhorn 2004: 144), marking a specific way of life of Indigenous groups that I will attend to in more depth in the subsequent chapter, which as the naming of that epoch already suggests, was instituted through the introduction and spread of European horses on the North American Plains.

identity. Bolz (1986: 51) also concludes that Lakota identification with their history is centered around their lifestyle as buffalo-hunters on the Plains in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which they however do not regard as limited period of history but as time immemorial. From a Lakota perspective they have always lived a way of life as hunters of the buffalo on the High Plains, which are both the very animals and landscapes at the base of their mythical origin (Bolz 2009: 71).

Thus, when the Lakota denote a specific cultural phenomenon as tradition or traditional, they are often locating it in an ethnographic present referring to an everlasting and unchanging version of primordial being, which is historically rooted and dated around the 1850s, when the Lakota were approaching the peak of their political, economic and cultural dominance on the Great Plains. This circumstance applies also to the popular (western) conception of traditional Lakota culture (Feest 2009c: 41), as also concluded by Gagnon, who states that

“‘[t]raditional’ is the descriptive term selected to describe the Sioux of the eighteenth through much of the nineteenth century. This is the period when Sioux culture reached its florescence. It is when Sioux cultural development was most distinct and when the Sioux were politically sovereign. The Sioux of common imagination lived in this period with a distinctively Sioux worldview, religion, and way of life” (Gagnon 2012: 7).

#### 2.1.2.1 *Subsistence Hunting and Gathering*

“*Tatanka* gives himself up to us. That’s our general story. *Tatanka*. The *tatanka*, the buffalo. We get the tools, the cooking tools, we get our tipi from there, we get our clothes from there. We get our sinew from there. We get the bones. Tools and weapons, whatever you wanna make. It’s got the glue and the hooves, it’s just a, you name it. It was K-Mart for us. No matter how high you look at it. The Lakota learned to adapt to it and they called him the brother, who gave himself to us. The Lakota when they pray they hold a scull up there and give thanks to *Wakan Tanka*, that he put the buffalo on the ground for us to survive on. And we survive from the deer also but, *šúŋkawakǵáŋ*. They put the *šúŋkawakǵáŋ*, the horse on the ground so we learned how to tame it and broke and break it and pick the fast ones to run down the buffalo. It’s a, it’s in the world of Lakota itself, the reasons for a lot of these things ever happening. It was for us. No other culture could come and do what the Lakota did. They would ride right along the buffalo and bring it down with the arrow. And with their two hands free they would stay on that horse. So, there is a lot of things that a young kid like myself always wondered about. And there is a lot of stories about my grandfather, and great grandfather, how he ran down some buffalo on foot” (Kills Pretty Enemy Sr., Michael Formal Interview 10/10/2017).

With the migration onto the Plains, the Lakota and later also Yankton-Yanktonai groups adapted to the environment on the Plains as hunting and gathering nomads with an economy centered around the buffalo. The vast bison populations on the Plains delivered the Lakota not only with an at least seemingly endless supply of meat, serving as their main source of nutrition,

but, as indicated in the quote above, other parts of the buffalo were also essential for the production of tools sustaining a nomadic way of life on the High Plains.<sup>10</sup>

Vital in the successful pursuit and hunt of bison on the Plains was the integration of the Spanish one-toed horse by the mid-1800s into Lakota culture as a means of transportation superseding dogs in carrying belongings thus allowing for increased mobility, which enabled the Lakota to follow buffalo herds throughout most of the year, except in winter (Feest/Van Bussel 2009: 28). In contrast to sedentary tribes, the lifestyle as equestrian nomads reduced material belongings of the Lakota to a bare minimum of necessary items, which could be easily wrapped up and loaded onto so-called travois fastened to horses for transport. Tipis<sup>11</sup>, specific tents based on a tripod of wooden poles covered by hides, became the new form of housing and a number of other aspects in material culture were altered to fit this new way of life on the Plains (Feest/Van Bussel 2009: 30; Satterlee 1975: 11).

The location for setting up camps always depended on their vicinity to large herds of bison and could remain at the same place for weeks or even months if a constant supply of meat could be granted (Hassrick 1994: 166). The Lakota followed migratory patterns of bison as far as possible, but the complexity of environmental factors determining the buffalo's reactionary behavior, made their movements quite unpredictable, sometimes resulting in their apparently spontaneous disappearance (Brown 1996: 9). For instance: "Fire, whether set by humans (purposefully or accidentally) or by lightning, could alter the range of the buffalo for a season, and inflict hardship on people who depended on the animals for their livelihood" (Dobak 1996: 37), as environmental historian William A. Dobak points out. The Lakota had their own ontological explanations for such phenomena: As noted by Dan Flores in following Browns' elaborations on Lakota people's historical culture-specific perspectives and explanations of their environments, "the periodic disappearances of bison, for example, appeared to the Lakota to be associated with seasonal winds from the north and south. The fact that bison did sometimes disappear confirmed their belief (and it was a general one across the Plains) that bison had their origins underground" (Flores 2007: 158).

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<sup>10</sup> For detailed accounts on Lakota material culture, especially the processing of different parts of the bison see Hassrick 1992: 203 ff., Feest/Van Bussel 2009: 27; Wissler 1934: 21 ff.; Lowie 1954: 15 ff.).

<sup>11</sup> According to some authors, the first ones to use buffalo-hide tipis were the Lakota bands. Only then this type of housing was adopted by other Plains nomads, who like the Crow or Blackfeet developed their own artistic and technological variations of it. The latter generally used higher poles, and had a structural basis of four poles, instead of three, as the Lakota did. Furthermore, they painted/carved symbols onto their outside tipi walls, which the Lakota apparently adapted at a later time (Feest/Van Bussel 2009: 30 f.).



While during summer the bison merged into large herds which, as Carolyn Merchant (2007: 15) writes in her book on the environmental history of North America, could be up to 12 million head strong, averaging at around four million animals and covering up to 50 square miles<sup>12</sup>, they separated into much smaller herds in winter. Similarly during winter, due to scarcity of resources available including next to animals and edible wild plants, vegetables and berries, especially wood for fuel and fodder for horses, the Lakota lived in small groups of one or a conglomerate of few *tiospaye*, which acted as “extremely efficient hunting units” throughout most of the year, as Brown (1996: 9) remarks, and would congregate as larger bands or tribes only in summer to unite for communal hunts and religious ceremonies, the most important one being the annual Sundance (Bolz 1986: 52; Gibbon 2003: 91). Furthermore, fairs were held during summer with their tribal allies to exchange goods, the central one being the so-called Lakota Rendezvous which I have already mentioned above at the James River in eastern South Dakota, where once a year groups from all Sioux tribes of the Oceti Sakowin would gather for trading accompanied by feasts, races, other games and council meetings until the event faded out of existence in the 1820s, (eventually partly owed to some internal differences among the tribes concerning the character of relationships with Euroamericans, some embracing trade and showing willingness to culturally assimilate in economic regards, while others like the Hunkpapa increasingly favored isolation from Euroamerican cultural influence as they had to move farther west in pursuit of shrinking buffalo herds (Bray 2009: 54).

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<sup>12</sup> Brown reports: “One account from 1871 describes a herd on the Arkansas River that was approximately 25-50 miles wide by 50 miles long and took five days to pass a given point” (Brown 1997: 5).

#### 2.1.2.2 *Changes in Social Life and Social Organization*

The fundamental trigger which brought about fundamental socio-cultural shifts in Lakota society and the root of their expansionist success was the adaption and integration of the horse into the Lakota cultural complex, which had become integral to their then new way of life on the Plains by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Mobility was immensely increased, as horses were able to carry heavier loads at a faster pace. Consequently, tipis of previously already nomadic Plains peoples also became larger and migration routes longer and more far extending (Hassrick 1992: 176; Anderson 1995: 58 ff.). Hunting techniques of bison and other game evolved, as methods of driving or surrounding were advanced and new ones on horseback promoted a more individualist hunt of (mostly) mounted men, taking down animals by themselves rather than through collaborative action. In pre-equestrian times, so-called hunting chiefs were leading the hunting parties and there were strictly distributed occupations in the highly coordinated endeavor. According to Gibbon,

“nineteenth-century bison hunting among the Lakota bore little resemblance to the eighteenth-century form. By now, the horse-and-chase method of bison hunting, which emphasized individual hunters rather than groups, had supplanted the earlier pound-and-cliff drive as the paramount form of hunting” (Gibbon 2003: 90).

Two types of communal hunts existed among the Lakota: the *Tate* or hunting within the *Tiospaye*, which acted as highly efficient hunting units during most of the year, and the *Wana-sapi*, a bison chase collectively conducted by the whole band or tribe, where extravagant and complex hunting methods like the renowned cliff drive, involving fine-tuned planning, preparation, and concerted precisely coordinated action of high numbers of participating hunters were embraced (Hassrick 1992: 184).

Although communal hunts were still conducted during the post-equestrian era, individuals were now more flexible to hunt on their own and more likely to be recognized as extraordinary hunters during group hunts by killing more animals than others. In contrast to Anderson, who argued that the power of hunting leaders diminished or became marginal (Anderson 1995: 60), others such as Hassrick (1992: 196) and Walker (1992: 74 ff.) emphasize the contrary, in pointing at the continuing socially constituting importance of the communal hunt as complexly organized endeavor with strictly enforced internal hierarchies during its preparation, conduct and aftermath. To demonstrate the seriousness of the matter and the reversing effect it had on established authorities and power-relations, Walker recounts the following anecdote: “At one time, Red Cloud, the head chief of the Oglalas, who was of turbulent disposition, refused to

obey the orders of a marshal [*akicita*] to break camp. When the marshal lashed him repeatedly and severely across the face, he quietly submitted” adding that, “[t]he people moved in this manner until they came to the territory where they proposed to hunt for herds of buffalo large enough to chase in the communal manner” (Walker 1992: 87). While meat at first continued to be considered collective property and was distributed quite equally amongst group members, certain desired delicacies like the liver and tongue, previously often reserved for hunting leaders only now became commodities of the animals’ slaughterers (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 15). According to Anderson, in most Plains cultures it became customary that the whole bison was appropriated by the family of the hunter who had killed it, which in the case of the Oglala is validated as truth when trusting the records of Dr. James Walker (1992: 74), a physician on Pine Ridge with a fad for ethnography. Poor families of less skilled hunters could make up for lack of hunted game in helping with butchering and transporting other hunters’ buffalo, a service for which they would be repaid in meat and/or goods (Anderson 1995: 61). Also, Hassrick notes specifically for the Lakota that the bison were owned by the hunter that killed it, which was clearly recognized by marked arrowheads informing about the identity of the shooter. However, he also points out that meat could not be denied to unsuccessful hunters or men (accompanying the hunt) if they had marked their claim for a share in a slaughtered animals’ meat by making a knot in the tail<sup>13</sup> (Hassrick 1992: 198). Hides became the individual property of hunters’ women, who would tan them and use them for various household needs but also process them for trade. In regards to institutional changes in social organization, Gibbon points out that “more hides supported an increase in polygyny because the household was the basic unit of production and more wives were needed as husbands became more efficient at killing buffalo” (Gibbon 2003: 98), and Merchant highlights that, in becoming “signs of wealth and prestige [...] greater social differentiation emerged as a result of the arrival of the horse” (Merchant 2007: 18). Horses, hides and other buffalo products such as pemmican (dried bison meat) or tongues were sold to European traders in exchange for “[g]uns, powder, blankets, iron, pots, needles, pins, axes, coffee, sugar, beads, body paints, cotton and wool clothing, and many other items [...] which] added to the material wealth of the Sioux” (Gagnon 2012: 98) integrating them and other Plains peoples into the vivid market dynamics of the world economy. Greater wealth also supported the rise of population numbers, although (especially southern Plains) groups had to disperse into smaller social units throughout most of the year to secure enough grazing for their often-vast horse-herds (Merchant 2007: 18).

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<sup>13</sup> So-called demand-sharing, in other words the necessity to share due to social pressure is a common feature which has been noticed by anthropologists studying hunter-gatherer societies (Panter-Brick 2001).

Although a man's prestige and social status were partly determined by his success in the hunt and battles granting material capital, one's generosity (and ability to be generous) was a decisive factor for acquiring leadership positions (Feest/Van Bussel 2009: 30). As pointed out by Satterlee and Malan, "one of the greatest virtues among the Dakota was that of hospitality or the sharing of property upon demand. Wealth was measured by one's tradition of giving rather than accumulating" (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 15). Logically, this was largely built on social ties that were manifested through gift giving, which was again a privilege of the wealthy due to their agency in contrast to impoverished members of society to do so (Hassrick 1992: 177). As Hassrick (1992: 178) puts it, one's possibility to give away more than others, was a marker of personal superiority.

Demand for horses, most prominently acquired through theft, which also manifested as a *rite de passage* for young males (to prove themselves) in equestrian Plains societies, and hunting territories resulted in intensified intertribal conflicts with other nomadic and non-nomadic Plains peoples and thus promoted the institutionalization of warfare (Anderson 1995: 61).

With war forming a central element in Lakota society, there was a constant need for a willing and able fighting force. Among the Lakota, warfare was predominantly a profession of men, although women also fought on special occasions and supported men in a number of ways, for example by singing in preparatory rituals for war. Even though a gender-based division<sup>14</sup> of labor tends to be well-developed in traditional hunter-gatherer societies, engendered occupations are not rendered of higher or lesser value and "egalitarianism extends to gender relations, and the activities, rights, status, and social spheres of men and women tend to be equal", as Gibbon (2003: 98) explains, however, stressing that

"[w]arfare tends to devalue women and favor the localization of related men, who dominate the allocation of prestige. As a rule, women are the main subsistence workers, with polygyny increasing household production by bringing women together. The result is gender stratification, with women having unequal access to power, prestige, personal freedom, and access to socially valued resources" (Gibbon 2003: 99).

At the peak of the Lakota's political and military dominance as de facto undisputed established tribal power on the Northern Great Plains, Lakota means of education encouraged young men to practice and perfect the skills necessary to become successful hunters and warriors (Medicine 1985: 25). After being taught how to effectively use basic weaponry and tools at an early age, most importantly bow and arrow, children would be allowed to participate in various games

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<sup>14</sup> For an account of traditional roles of men and women read for instance Walker 1992: 40.

imitating war like situations, (at last even the event itself would be introduced to them by elderly boys) to prepare them for adulthood (Lindner 2009: 45 ff.; Hassrick 1992: 84 ff.).

However, it is important to note that war was not (seen as) an ideological ideal, but a necessary means to sustain the Lakota's way of life on the Plains. As Lakota scholar Yellow Horse Brave Heart highlights, Oglala Lakota holy man Black Elk, who experienced to live and partake in the famous battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876, "said that warriors painted their faces black to hide from the Creator because they knew war was not a good thing" (Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al. 2012: 52).

Above all, it were virtues such as bravery and perseverance held high in Lakota society that motivated young males to go to war, for it presented an ideal possibility for men to live up to them. By going to war Lakota men could prove their technical abilities and willingness to risk everything, even death, for their people, which was (and still is) considered to be the most honorable gift one can present to or sacrifice for the community. In regard to war, fearlessness was seen as the main criterion for bravery. To measure and compare their fearlessness or bravery with each other, Lakota warriors counted "coup" for a number of courageous actions taken in battle. This further stimulated competition among warriors and thus surely enhanced their military effectiveness and consequent success in battle (Hassrick 1992: 47 ff.; Lindner 2009: 45 ff.).

The most prestigious form of coup was to kill or scalp the enemy within short range or even simply to touch the enemy, usually done with a coup stick or other weaponry available, for instance the tip of a bow, which was seen as the utmost form of humiliation of a hostile warrior (Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al. 2012: 178). However, for scouting an enemy or stealing horses one could also score coup. Horses meant also a material gain for men, since they remained their property, while except for war gear and a couple of other exceptions everything including the hunted meat was owned by the women or considered collective property (Hassrick 1992: 106). The seven different Lakota (sub-)tribes (Feest 2009a: 16 f.; Marshall III 2004: xxiii f.) had developed complex codes of signs referring to honorable deeds varying in degree designated by the use of paint, artifacts or types and shapes of feathers. A golden eagle's feather worn in upward position could for example symbolize a direct coup, while a hawk's feather with only the top left would honor a scout's qualities and a double cross a rescue-action of an affiliate warrior on horseback during a fight (Hassrick 1992: 105 f.).

These distinctive marks were worn by warriors with pride like medals and determined their social status within the tribe's military hierarchy. If a warrior had counted enough coups, he could manufacture a war bonnet, which he would wear "in battle to show his ability" (Utley

1988a: 38). In regard to one's achievements in the battlefield, modesty was rather seen as weakness or a lack of self-confidence while outwardly bragging about accomplishments was perceived as strength. Exciting stories of warriors about heroic actions in battle would again serve to trigger the fascination of children listening to them at camp (Hassrick 1992, 50 f.). As expressed by Lakota expert Thomas E. Mails: „Warriors were living legends themselves, and their impact upon receptive young minds [must have been ...] phenomenal” (Mails 1998: 8 cited in Gilbertson 2011: 6).

Thus, successful warriors were also idols for young aspiring men. As the basic means to attain wealth, influence and social recognition, war had become institutionalized in Lakota society, granting “security through aggression” (Hassrick 1992: 109). Sacrificing one's life for the protection of his or her people was and still is seen as the highest possible service or gift one can give back to the community. In this way Lakota men were socialized to become ethnocentric patriots “ready to die” in battle to protect their people's life standard (Hassrick 1992: 88). Anthropologist Royal B. Hassrick writes in his book on “the Sioux” that the warrior identity was used to suppress natural fears in highly stressful and critical situations.

According to Hassrick, the social obligations of men in Lakota society would exceed a man's “natural” abilities or psychological limits (Hassrick 1992: 107). He suggests that the likely event of dying in battle put a great deal of psychological distress on young men. For that reason, Lakota men had to develop certain techniques to handle the pressure.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, war became a spiritually highly significant endeavor, which is why warriors painted their shields with patterns or protective spirits they saw or encountered in visions (Lowie 1954: 105). As anthropologist Al Carroll points out, war required “an extensive ritual preparation to enter into and even more extensive purification to return to a normal and balanced mental state afterward” (Carroll 2008: 13 cited in Gilbertson 2011: 6). This was also seen as a necessary means to peacefully reenter the tribal society (Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al. 2012: 178).

Young men would, together with a holy man or *wicasa wakan*, make a war medicine according to men's visions gained often during sweatlodge (or *inipi*) ceremonies and/or Vision Quests (the *hanbelceya*, directly translated as crying for visions), which were also (functioning as) *rites de passage* to prepare Lakota for manhood (Bolz 2009: 72 f.).

Befriended warriors would test the medicine in battle and if successful would continue to use it. Some warrior societies were originally founded on the basis of a shared medicine.

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<sup>15</sup> Although Hassrick's account of “traditional” Teton-Sioux society has been appraised by many scholars as one of the most comprehensive and extensive in Sioux historiography, ethnography and literature in general, his socio-psychological theoretical approach has often been criticized (Gagnon 2001: 171).

Warrior societies were highly exclusive clubs, restricted to warriors with outstanding reputation, who fulfilled certain requirements to enter. Members of warrior societies shared material features in clothing and equipment and performed immaterial customs such as dances and war songs. Furthermore, they were expected, even obliged by oath to help or support each other in battle. The most prestigious warrior among them would usually be collectively chosen as the society's leader. These brotherhoods were highly effective fighting units contributing substantially to the expanding dominance of the Lakota on the Northern Great Plains. Again, fierce competition with other warrior societies made them live up to their professions' best.

In times of peace the warrior societies switched in their roles as *akicitas*, a sort of police force, obliged to guarantee order and social control in bigger camps when the many individual bands came together as a tribe during summer months. Among other things this meant to hinder aspiring youngsters to exit the camp and potentially scare away game (by hunting ahead of time), to supervise hunts and raids, to teach the young, to care for the elderly and helpless, to punish criminals and to protect the people inside the encampment (Bray 2009: 52 ff.; Hassrick 1992: 100, Gibbon 2003: 127; Brown 1996: 9).

One needs to be aware that “before the advent of the White man on the Plains in the 1830s, fighting between tribes was usually small and sporadic”, as emphasized by Robert M. Utley, the official historian of the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in Montana. Aimed at winning economic benefits, political control, glory and respect by performing brave deeds on the battlefield,

“[t]here were two types of forays: horse raids in which the object was to steal into an enemy village and make off with its horses, and war parties, which were usually mounted for revenge or tribal defense. Horse raids might number from a few warriors to 15 or 20. War parties were usually larger, perhaps as many as a hundred warriors plus a few boys for menial chores and a few women for cooking” (Utley 1988a, 38).

However, “the colonization of the Americas changed the nature of warfare and the balance between tribal groups. The introduction of scalping by Europeans altered the traditional practice of cutting off a hostile warrior's braid in combat, and the introduction of guns and alcohol altered warfare and traditional values”, so Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al. (2012: 179), as is confirmed by Plains wars expert McGinnis (2012: 455 ff.).

Facing ever-larger contingents of invading US soldiers, the Lakota war parties merged to form bigger armies and “total warfare” was adopted as a new military strategy. These armies, in their size formerly unseen in the Northern Prairies, marked a switch from the rather socially reproductive way of warring among Plains tribes to completely destructive methods of warfare.

This became especially apparent in one of the last military encounters between the Sioux and the Pawnee in 1873, when an army of about a thousand Lakota warriors drove the Pawnees out of their claimed hunting grounds, killing almost two hundred of their enemies including women, children and elderly men, who had camped at the southern shores of the Platte River (Hassrick 1992: 86). This tremendously violent, brutally consequent and extreme military action/tactic was later taken as a legitimation by Crow and Pawnee warriors to scout for the US army campaigning against the Sioux during the so-called Plains Indian Wars in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, for they regarded their service as “a matter of protection” against Sioux aggression, as pointed out in an interview by the last “traditional” Crow war chief, Joe Medicine Crow, a descendent of one of Custer’s scouts (URL 2).

In the light of all the dramatic and rapid changes of societal institutions governing human relations in traditional Plains Indian societies like the Lakota’s instituted by their adaption of the horse, the enormous impact this single indicator had on Indigenous livelihoods on the Plains becomes even more apparent: it led to higher social stratification amongst previously more egalitarian band level and tribally organized societies, the erosion of gender equality in favor of men, accompanied by the interdependent phenomena of rising population numbers and a shift from mere hunter-gatherer to a mainly hunting and warring based economy. As perfectly summarized by anthropologist Terry L. Anderson, who deploys an economist perspective on American Indian history,

“[w]hile the nomadic horseman is an accepted symbol of the Indian life encountered by the first white men on the western frontier, the horse and its accompanying technology and institutions were relatively new to Indians. Had the whites arrived a few decades earlier, they would have found less mobile groups well organized for hunting but less well organized for dealing with outsiders. As the horse increased the potential for trade and conflict among Indians, it also better prepared them for trading and warring with whites. In fact, had the Indians not developed their military institutions in response to the demands of intertribal warfare, it is problematic whether they could have resisted the onslaught of whites as long as they did” (Anderson 1995: 64).



### 2.1.3 Cultural Modes of Perceiving and Interacting with the Environment: Ontological Investigations of Lakota Beliefs and Rituals

As the title of this chapter suggests, my central aim is to deliver an understanding of key concepts in traditional<sup>16</sup> Lakota beliefs and rituals to the reader, which I intend to do through the detailed explanation of ontological complexities. My predominant focus here will be mainly put on deciphering Lakota terms such as *wakan*, *Wakan Tanka* and *wicasa wakan* to point at their respective cosmological meanings in Lakota society. Based there upon, putting piece after piece to render a broader picture, I would like to present the reader with a differentiated introduction into Lakota philosophical thought, granting insight into concepts, patterns and symbols used by Lakota individuals to position themselves in their world/universe. In this endeavor I will have to generalize sometimes when constructing an ideal-typical depiction of traditional Lakota worldview. Thus, I want to clarify this picture will not necessarily be fully applicable for all Lakota, neither for those having lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century nor (even more so) the ones living today, since I am mainly using primary and secondary sources of Lakota authors and (early) anthropologists referring to the (religious) situation at the turn of the century. The latter subchapters of this section will be devoted to showing how the aforementioned Lakota notions were (and are – when explicitly referring to the present) integrated in everyday Lakota life, become apparent in ritual and, as will be shown continuously throughout this thesis, are given expression in ethical standards dictating ideal social behavior (in some cases until today), which are taught for a big part through myths and ascribing meanings to the sensually perceived existence in the universe from an anthropocentric perspective.

To conclude, I want to again summarize key elements in Lakota worldview and its practical implementation by simultaneously embedding or locating Lakota philosophical concepts within the larger framework of the ontological debate led in anthropology in order to integrate my findings into broader contexts of sociological thought and knowledge production.

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<sup>16</sup> By using the term traditional, I am referring to a period in history approximately ranging from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century (the arrival of the Lakota on the Plains) to around the year 1876, when some bands of the Lakota were still “properly” free people and not yet more or less forcefully Christianized on reservations (having been forbidden to perform some religious rituals since 1883), which in many cases went hand in hand with the mixing of or even the replacement of the previous religious system with Christian theological dogmas (Kreis 2009: 77 f.; Bolz 2009: 76). Similarly, I am mostly writing in past tense, for I do not want to uncritically ascribe a historically widely shared worldview to a majority of contemporary Lakota, who had to endure dramatic shifts in their way of life in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to external forces driven mostly by US policies. Nevertheless, I sometimes write in present tense, which is however only the case for Lakota religious conceptions that are still highly accurate and intact today.

### 2.1.3.1 What is the *wakan* in *Wakan Tanka*? Key Concepts in Lakota Cosmology

Traditionally, the Lakota cherished all visible things on earth, no matter if they would be rendered as organic or inorganic by science, for their inner – and supposedly living – spiritual essence, which was in itself a mystery to them or to put it in Lakota words, was *wakan* – a term also used to describe everything that was perceived as „weird or miraculous, thrilling or awe-inspiring“<sup>17</sup> (Lowie 1954: 154).

This Great Mystery was (and still is) called *Wakan Tanka*, a sort of divine electricity (Müller 1970: 255), intelligence or life force (Standing Bear 1933: 193 cited in Martinez 2004: 83) believed to flow in and through everything, which is ultimately “given expression in a range of animal, plant and mineral consciousnesses in addition to human awareness” (Martinez 2004: 83). *Wakan Tanka* represented the totality of all existence in the universe and was simultaneously regarded as its creator (Bolz 2009: 71). Mihai Stroe from the University of Bucharest, who points at similarities in Lakota and romantic philosophical thought, compares *Wakan Tanka* to Jakob Böhme’s “Ungrund” – a divine unfathomable deep, rooted in the Germanic concept of the *gap ginnunga* or “great abyss” – for it also “never had birth and never could die [... thus forming] ‘an amorphous category most precisely defined by incomprehensibility’” (Stroe 2008: 25), as already stated by Densmore in 1918 (Densmore 1918: 85 cited in Stroe 2008: 25). Early missionaries facing epistemological problems when trying to translate “God” into Lakota, simply took *Wakan Tanka* for it (Bolz 2009: 71) – at best under a somewhat optimistic or rather naive and vague assumption that the term would soon adapt to Christian notions as put forward by Stephan R. Riggs, an American Board missionary to the Dakota in the 1830s (Siems 1998: 165). However, Siems points out that it takes several generations for deep linguistic structures ascribing conceptual meanings to certain terms rooted in the cosmological holistic cognition of people from a certain socio-cultural background to change, which is far longer than Riggs had expected. Siems further concludes from his examinations of missionary texts written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that the “over-exoticizing”<sup>18</sup> of “primitive”<sup>19</sup> ideas as well as the negative labeling and categorization of Sioux religion as a

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<sup>17</sup> Anthropologist Dr. Beatrice Medicine, a Lakota herself, used the term *wakan ki* to describe “all things that are mysterious, sacred or unable to be explained”, and reports from her childhood that *wakan* was considered as something awesome for one “could not fathom its power” (Medicine 1985: 26 f.).

<sup>18</sup> In his volume “Theories of Primitive Religions”, E.E. Evans Pritchard stated that “the mind of the primitive was [believed by translators to be] so different from ours that its ideas could not be expressed in our vocabularies and categories” (E.E. Evans Pritchard 1965: 12 cited in Siems 1998: 168).

<sup>19</sup> This term and is highly suggestive of societal hierarchies in contexts of Indigenous populations, for whom it has been used not only by missionaries and other colonizers but also in science (up until almost the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) to express technological inferiority. Following a Social-Darwinist model, Dakota beliefs and practices were rendered by 19<sup>th</sup> century missionaries as defective religious forms on the bottom of the evolutionary scale.

pagan polytheistic demon-worship of “spirits of darkness” (Riggs’s emphasis) resulted in a “near-total failure to appreciate the systematic nature of the Dakota religion and its place in a universe, that differed dramatically from the missionaries’ own” (Siems 1998: 175).

Such Euro- and egocentrically motivated disinterest, ignorance and disgust towards alternative belief systems shown by these early (mis-)interpreters of the Dakota language led to the spreading of many misconceptions of Sioux vocabulary, which also later gave empirical researchers like James R. Walker<sup>20</sup> a hard time to gain an authentic understanding of Lakota notions and language beyond the surface structures, having been misguided by these translation errors (Bolz 2009: 72).

Contrary to a God, *Wakan Tanka* cannot be grasped as single entity or personified God but as all-interfusing and encompassing life energy, existing as many single individual beings but at the same time compromising the totality of phenomena, including space and time (Stroe 2008: 25). Thus, from a traditional Lakota perspective everything is unified by a shared universal oneness. Consequently, the distinction between humanity and nature did not exist in Lakota worldview, just as much as other Cartesian dualisms, like the division between body and soul, nature and culture or the natural and the supernatural are absent (conceptions) in the precolonial Lakota imaginative spectrum or order of things. However, they nevertheless differentiated between casual and *wakan* or exceptional experiences, which were beyond their full comprehension, the sum of all inconceivable that can be found within each thing being *Wakan Tanka*, a Great Mystery (Bolz 2009: 71; Lowie 1954: 154).

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Initially Dakota were categorized as polytheistic, which was believed to precede monotheism on the evolutionary ladder at the time. Missionaries’ findings of spurious parallels in non-Native pagan religions supported this notion (Siems 1998: 173).

<sup>20</sup> As Martinez correctly explains: “Walker was the government physician at Pine Ridge from 1896 to 1914, and took it upon himself to preserve a record of Lakota culture and history, including an account of origin stories, which he collected with the collaboration of [Sioux holy men/ *wicasa wakan* such as] George Sword, Left Heron, Bad Wound, Little Wound, No Flesh, and Thomas Tyon” (Martinez, 2004: 100).

### 2.1.3.2 *Mitake Oyasin*: A Worldview of Interrelation

Müller (1970: 257) correctly highlights that this “unity of beings” brought about by *Wakan Tanka* should not be misunderstood as pantheism, since creation is not the expansion or made up of a single God, but everything in cosmos has its own inherent spiritual essence, being all connected through the fraternizing life force of *Wakan Tanka*. In the end, the Great Spirit is best explained with a Lakota phrase and prayer: *Mitake Oyasin*, meaning “We are all related”, the interconnecting element being *Wakan Tanka* (Brown/Cousins 2001: 90).

The relatedness of all *wakan* beings was also expressed in the language, by referring to all existing things in kinship terms with mother, father, grandfather and so on (Bolz 2009: 71).

According to Müller (1970: 135 f.) such anthropomorphic corporatization of the perceivable appearances in the world and in cosmos through language, everything in the natural realm was only brought closer to the senses – to better visualize the vividness and complexity of things, which does not mean that they were seen as humans, but as emotional or spiritual relatives.

When it comes to belief systems, Siems suggests to categorize them into religions based on worldviews of correspondence and ones based on worldviews of causality. The latter is predominantly present in western society through Christianity and Islam, where “causality is characterized by a separation between God and the World [sic], the Creator and His [sic] creation, in which the transcendent deity stands outside, yet causes all worldly phenomena” (Siems 1998: 176), and also in science, the fundamental principle of causality dictates that every “effect” has a “cause”. Contrary, for the Lakota an external, separate, undetached force was unimaginable (Müller 1970: 65), but instead it was generally assumed that “human and transcendent cosmos were both made of the same ‘worldstuff’ and programmed by their own charts of existence” (Siems 1998: 176).

According to Stroe (2008: 24), Romanticisms central philosophical aim was to transcend the borders of conditional thought of naturalism by entering the imaginative realms indeterminately and unconditionally – to embrace and proclaim the “spiritual man”. The nature-mystic William Blake embraced this notion by decoding the “spontaneous” element of “cause” in scientific thought, that “appears to logically endorse such biological hypothesis as that regarding the spontaneous generation of living beings [...] as having spiritual roots” (Stroe 2008: 26). Stroe further shows that Blake’s ideas of “Natural Effects having Spiritual Causes”, of material creation “flowing forth like visible out of the invisible” is matching the Lakota conception of spirit being at one with matter.

Müller denominates the spiritual component of the equation in German as “das Ursame” or “Ursprüngliche”, to be translated into English as “primordial” or “original essence”: this he explains is the sacral or unconceivable or *wakan* behind all manifestations or visibly perceivable appearances, of which the “ur” refers to “die hintergründige Wirklichkeit, in der alle Dinge im Glanz des ersten Schöpfungstages leuchten, quellfrisch und unmittelbar und nicht getrübt durch die Abspiegelung der Wiederholung”<sup>21</sup> (Müller 1970: 250). Basic human senses, he states based on one of Walker’s main informants about Lakota religion, the *wicasa wakan* or *wakan* man George Sword and also similar formulations by the Lakota shaman – to borrow a Siberian term (Lowie 1954: 161) for the same profession - Black Elk, can only conceive of mere reflections or shadows of the original, which ultimately lies behind the physical reality (Müller 1970: 249). According to Lakota worldview one can enter the spiritual or original realm only through visions, which is, as can be extracted from the German quotation above, perceived as the “real”, fresh, undisturbed and unaltered reality in the world (Müller 1970, 68; Stroe 2008, 26). It is the dimension inside of the outside every being carries at its heart. *Wakan*, thus, is the divine particle in the here, pointing at the original state of being in the “there”, which is the real world or the *wakan* world (Müller 1970: 251). As discussed before, *Wakan Tanka* is thus not a single person, but many beings, manifesting themselves in all kinds of species and – scientifically regarded as inorganic but in Lakota thought very well seen as living – forms. The Lakota term *wakondagi* – meaning “in possession of *wakan*” (Müller 1970: 150) - expresses this inherent *wakan*-ness in beings, which was used at all first occasions and events in human life: when a child was born it was *wakan*<sup>22</sup>, when it took its first steps, spoke its first words it was *wakondagi* and so forth (Medicine 1985, 27 f.; Stroe 2008, 26).

### 2.1.3.3 *Wicasa Wakans* and their Order of Things

Since the Lakota cosmos was infused with *wakan*, there was also the possibility to make use of the powers of some mighty *wakan* beings, which were hierarchically placed above humans (who were again believed to be superior to animals), simply because they had more *wakan* (Müller 1970: 151). Thus, magic, by definition “the use of supernatural techniques for gaining one’s ends” (Lowie 1954: 154), existed and was worked and dealt with within the framework of this cosmovision. A *wicasa wakan*, not to be mixed up with *wicasa pejuta*, a Lakota doctor

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<sup>21</sup> This could be translated as “the profound reality, in which all things appear/shine in the splendor of the first day of creation, fresh and unfiltered or undimmed by the reflection of repetition”.

<sup>22</sup> Not only the event of birth was *wakan* but also the child itself and the quality of women to give birth (Medicine 1985, 27 f.).

or literally medicine man<sup>23</sup>, “had learned to take advantage of the basic unity of the world”, as proclaimed by Siems (1998: 176), who goes as far to suggest that magic was the science of the Lakota.

Similarly, a *wicasa wakan* is by definition a man who has the power to transfer *wakan* to other things<sup>24</sup> (Bolz 2009: 72). The term *wasicun*, still frequently in use among Lakota today to denominate White people or of European descent, was probably originally also akin to Native shamans: As Siems explains, “one who has *sicun*, which can be defined as ‘that mysterious spirit-like power which all things possess’” which can be added to, expanded, and utilized to help others, “is obtained by a person when one of its non-human possessors conveys it to him or her in the course of a visionary experience” (Siems 1998: 171).

Riggs noticed during his mission that the Dakota called Whites *wa-she-choon*, which he interpreted in literal translation as God, also as Siems abstracted from his writings because he was under the then common perception that when Indians made initial contact with Europeans, they were so impressed or overwhelmed by the technologized Euroamerican newcomers with their “fire-speaking guns, and their bird-like ships” (Riggs 1869: 73 in Siems 1998: 172) that they took the White intruders for divine beings. However considering the fact that the first Europeans the Sioux met and exchanged with were French traders “lends a distinct possibility to the contemporary Dakota view that Riggs got the name wrong altogether”, as outlined by Siems, since the term *wasicun* only slightly differs from the term *wasicu* (the “n” not being nasalized at the end) meaning “fat-takers”, which in the context of a trade situation would denote “one who keeps the best part for himself” (Siems 1998, 172).

Feest (2009b: 21) argues that this theory was of younger folk etymological origin, highlighting the contrariety of the two meanings. For Lakota elder Michael Kills Pretty Enemy, who teaches the Lakota language to students of all ages at the Sitting Bull College, calling the White Man *wasicu* makes perfect sense. As he explains:

“*Wasi* is fat, *icu* is ‘they take the fat’, you know and so growing up, my grandfathers always say ‘oh they are gonna go to Macintosh, we’re gonna go to Lemon and we’re gonna go pick the meat scraps, we’re gonna buy meat scraps from the butcherers up

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<sup>23</sup> The label “medicine man” is still often uncritically ascribed to shamans also by scholars of social sciences (see f.i. Bolz 2009: 73 or Lowie 1954: 161), although the medical treatment with natural/chemical substances for curing health issues was a profession in many cultural contexts not necessarily held by shamans, as was the case with the Lakota. In the same vein, to give another example from a different part of the world, the Zulu also distinguished between a Nyanga, a plant doctor, and a Sangoma, a spiritual healer (Bergthaler 2016c). On the other hand again, Stroe (2008: 26) confuses the *Wicasa Wakan* with priests, who in traditional Lakota society were also no shamans or “holy men”, as they are also sometimes referred to in English translations, but ritual specialists, who prepared and helped at ceremonies.

<sup>24</sup> Through blessings an object was provided with *tunwan*, “a spiritual essence or power enabling that thing to do *wakan* things” (Stroe 2008, 25).

there' So I always wondered about that. *Wasicu*. So, after they take all the good meat, good fat, then they leave them for us Indians so we can go up and have all the good soup that we need to survive on. So ok, we go for that, we'll go out there and get that fat, that bones you know. And things like that I kind of put together and see why our grandfathers were calling the White man '*wasicu*'. *Wasicu*. And right from the beginning that name went with them and it stays to this day"

(Kills Pretty Enemy Sr., Michael Formal Interview 10/10/2017).

Entering the visionary realm was a central experience for Lakota, not only because of the high religious importance that was attested to this divine dimension or original reality (as mentioned earlier), but also due to its potential impact on social status for one was believed to be able to acquire *wakan* there and thus could gain social prestige within the community (Müller 1970: 67; Bolz 2009: 72). This implies that an inherently egoistic motivation in allying with and through the uniting powers of the universe with other animal or non-human beings lies at heart of the urge to maintain good relations with the aiding powers of *Wakan Tanka*.

The ideal to attain supernatural aid from the powers of the universe among 19<sup>th</sup> century and other nomadic Plains cultures during the Horse Days, however, was instituted by their social organization as equestrian hunting and warring based societies.

In egalitarian small-scale hunter-gatherer societies, where an entirely communally organized economy and social structure minimizes individualism and the perception of an egoistic self dictates/determines that everything is ideationally defined through a "we" (Winterhalder 2001: 31), a personal spiritual relationship with a supernatural/higher/more powerful may become obsolete. In Plains peoples warring and hunting societies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the belief in partnership with a higher power, which could aid oneself if in need, provided warriors with a useful psychological crutch/support when going to battle (see chapter 2.2.3).

Against this backdrop, religion reveals itself as a system of knowledge-production, which delivers an ideational basis in a society for the institutionalization of power (which is gained and maintained through understanding, controlling, utilizing and thus (re-)producing or advancing knowledge-systems in accordance to its principal logics) within a social, economic and political environment providing the conditions, opportunity or necessity to do so.

In the case of the Lakota, warfare became part of their way of life to secure resources – above all access to hunting grounds where bison were abundant - needed to maintain an acquired standard of life based on subsistence hunting, production for exchange through trade and plundering.

As I have explained in the previous chapter (2.2.3), warring fostered individualism amongst a previously highly communally organized society, by war-deeds becoming ideationally glorified

in serving as markers of prestige. As such, war provided a mechanism to reproduce a social system that fit the lifestyle of equestrian nomadic hunting bands of the North American Plains during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This socio-cultural setting also delivered the conditions for holy men or spiritual leaders like Sitting Bull to rise to power, who also due to his successes at hunts and battles, was recognized as maintaining a powerful relationship with *Wakan Tanka*, which ideationally legitimated his political power as provider of “strong medicine” and guidance through his actions and visions to the people.

Following the aim to systematically structure the *wakan* universe and its seemingly infinite number of appearances, the *wicasa wakan*, by extracting from the common pool of (visionary and non-visionary) experiences and myths, constructed a complex set of relations between and meanings of what they considered to be the most popular and powerful figures, which they deemed representative for all the other *wakan* beings as well (Müller 1970: 252 f.; Bolz 2009: 72). They identified two types of *wakan* beings, benevolent and malevolent ones towards humans. The evil *wakan*-spirits, the *Wakan Tanka Sica*, mostly made up of creatures from different Lakota myths, were left unclustered in chaotic disorder. Only the well-disposed *wakan*-beings were classified in a model of “four times four”, which formed the *Wakan Tanka Waschte*. The *tobtob kin* as this quaternary structure is called was kept secret and only passed on to initiates within shamanic circles as the Lakota holy man Finger revealed to Walker (Müller 1970: 257; Stroe 2008: 25; Walker 1980: 99).

As four was the holy number of *Wakan Tanka Waschte*, so was the whole cosmologic life cycle visualized and by all means organized in fours as Tyon, another one of Walkers’ informants confirms: for instance, there were four directions, four time-perceptions (day, night, month, year), four stages of human life (childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age) and so on (Müller 1970: 259 f.).

Symbolically the totality of the universe or *Wakan Tanka* was represented by the so-called “sacred hoop” or *cangleska wakan*, a unifying circle in which a cross is inscribed, dividing it all up into four again (Walker 1970: 258; Stroe 2008: 26).

#### 2.1.3.4 Lakota Conceptions of the Soul and the Afterlife

Four was also the number of souls believed to rest inside all beings on earth. Deriving from various places (or dimensions) in the spirit world, they only manifest upon their arrival on earth in various forms – as trees, antelopes, rocks and whatsoever – who thus all share “a similar metaphysical reality” as ascertained by Brown and Cousins (2001: 89). *Niya*, the first soul



infuses all beings with “life breath”. It can leave the body of persons during rituals to interact with other spirit beings in the other or “real” world, from which visions are obtained. Coming closest to the concept of the ghost, the second soul, *Nagi* is an immaterial mirror image of the physical body maintaining the idiosyncrasies and personality of its possessor after his or her death, which is why some people are believed to have the *Nagi* of a deceased person if they behave in resembling ways. Speaking the same spiritual language, the *Nagis* of beings differing in physicality can communicate with each other, which is often happening during vision quests, when human *Nagis* talk to animal, plant or supernatural beings’ *Nagis*. *Sicun*, the third soul is the spiritual wisdom that resides within each being and is transferable (in the case of humans by *wicasa wakan* or during vision quests also f.i. by visiting animals) to other beings or objects. It can be understood as a blessing or protecting spirit (given to babies upon birth) and is believed to escort the *Nagi* to the afterlife in the spirit world, which is assumed to be located behind the Milky Way or *Wanagi Tacanku*, “the Spirit’s Road” (Bolz 2009: 72; Stroe 2008: 26; Lowie 1954: 164). Finally, the fourth soul is called *Nagila*, the embodiment of *Taku Skan Skan*, the cosmic energy, which per definition of the Lakota artist Arthur Amiotte is “that which moves and causes all life to move or to live, as though the entire universe were injected or infused with a common source and type of energy [... It is] the mysterious force that makes all things and beings relatives to each other and to their common ancestor” (Amiotte 1988: 75 cited in Siems 1998: 171), the *Nagila* as it is inherent to all being that sacred element that is interconnecting the totality of existence (Brown/Cousins 2001: 90). In the light of this religious wisdom, Stroe detects again a common realization in romantic theory and Lakota philosophy: “man, as all living beings, already contains in himself the infinity it searches” (Stroe 2008: 26).

The Lakota did not very distinctively imagine posthumous existence. Reports of people who had been “to the other side” in visions are rare and in any case only paint a picture similar to the Lakota’s earthly “Dasein” or ways of being. However, the *wicasa wakan* were believed to have enjoyed a prenatal life among the Thunders, envisioned as supernatural eagles, who were their (subconscious) source of wisdom<sup>25</sup> and to whom they would return upon death (Lowie 1954: 161). According to a Wahpeton Dakota myth, shamans even have the gift of reincorporation and can be reborn if they correctly fulfilled their duties as humans.

Apart from holy men, common people (in the form of their soul *Nagi* accompanied by *Sicun*) were believed to cross the Milky Way “to reach *Maya Owichapaha* - the old woman who judges each soul. If she judged it worthy, she sent the soul to the right to *Wakan Tanka*. Unworthy

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<sup>25</sup> However, they only are revealed to or remember their rich inherent knowledge with maturity when a sign reveals their destinies as shamans to them (usually during a vision), as Lowie (1954, 161) pointed out.

souls were sent to the left where they remained until they finally could become purified and join *Wakan Tanka*”, as Brown reports from Black Elk’s accounts (URL 3).

By cutting off a bundle of hair or a lock from a dead person and putting it into a so-called “ghost bundle” (and hanging it outside above the entrance of a tipi together with bison skin, eagle feathers or other holy artifacts on nice days), it was believed that the bereaved were able to store the *Nagi* of a deceased relative to have him or her still around close to their hearts (Bolz 2009: 73). The practice of “Ghost Keeping” or *wanagi uhapi* was seen as a guarantor for a harmonious life of the respective family and was an extended well-fare to a person’s *Nagi*, which would be released after one year in general. Ceremonially the end of mourning was marked with a giveaway ceremony, where relatives of a deceased would surrender all their belongings – including their clothes - to community members, thus becoming completely dependent upon their immediate aid afterwards.

Müller writes that in 1890 during the so-called “Assimilation Period” and the peak of the Ghost Dance Movement<sup>26</sup>, the US administration had ordered that all souls were to be released on reservations, which points at the pervasive repression of Indigenous religions by all means at the turn of the century (Müller 1970: 319).

#### 2.1.3.5 Ceremonial life: The Seven Rites of White Buffalo Calf Woman

A central object in ritual life of the Lakota was the pipe, its round head symbolizing the all-encompassing ring of the universe. The smoke one could produce with it was believed to create a direct link to *Wakan Tanka* and to enable a communication with spirit-beings. Sending smoke-signs in the six cardinal directions, north, south, east, west, up and down, representing the six “boundary-stones” of the cosmos of which the smoker him or herself marked the ideational middle, was a way to pay symbolic tribute to the universe by also recognizing one’s place in it, seven being another magical number in Lakota Mythology representing its totality (Müller 1970: 262 f.). Seven was the number of elements given to the Lakota by *Wakan Tanka* – “land, air, water, rocks, animals, plants, and fire” (Forbes-Boyte 2004: 105) – and of the seven most powerful earthly phenomena – “Night, Heaven, Earth, Thunder, Sun, Moon and Morning Star” (Müller 1970: 262). Furthermore, the seven Council fires or *Oceti Sakowin* were representative of all Sioux, each standing for a tribe out of one of the three dialect groups Dakota (Santee), Nakota (Wiciyena) and Lakota (Feest 2009a, 16 f.) thereby repeating the cosmos in the overall social structure of the Sioux. According to Forbes-Boyte, the Lakota believed to have originally

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<sup>26</sup> For further information on the Ghost Dance Movement, read Feest 2009j: 157 f.

emerged from the seven stars of the Big Dipper (home to the “Star nation”), which were also symbolizing the seven sacred Rites.<sup>27</sup>

In mythology the first pipe and the seven Rites were brought to the Lakota in primordial times by the White Buffalo Calf Woman. Bierhorst (1993: 170) recounts the version of the *wicasa wakan* Elk Head, the protector of the original “Buffalo Calf Pipe” (a relic kept by the Lakota until this day) according to whom the Lakota originally lived at a lake in Minnesota<sup>28</sup>, from where they left due to a strong winter, wandering westwards with two scouts ahead. As the two men succumbed a deer, a woman appeared in front of them. Overwhelmed of her beauty, one of them approached her with lust only to vanish in the mist. The other one she commanded to bring the rest of his people the next day, which he did. Upon their arrival, she taught them seven rites and handed them the “Calf Pipe”, stressing that if they would stop venerating this pipe they would stop being a people. Then she turned into a white and then a black buffalo and disappeared. As with all myths there are various versions, but the core of the story only differs in detail. Concluding from the pipe’s form Bierhorst (1993: 171) suggests that it originally stems from the Arikara, a Caddo-speaking Plains tribe. Although rivals for the most part of the Lakota’s history on the Great Plains, some bands of the Lakota settled next to the Arikaras along the Missouri River between 1785 and 1800, where they also adopted their horticultural practices (White 1978: 324). Also, when looking at Oglala Teton Ben Kindle’s “Winter Count”, the Lakota’s traditional chronic made up of various symbols (with which one or two sentences were memorized by the annalist) (Feest 2009b: 22 f.), one finds that between 1785 and 1800 indeed twice a woman was mentioned in there, which could have been the (historical model for or actual) mythological figure of the White Buffalo Calf Woman: One time in 1792 a woman in white looking towards the sun was spotted by three men on a hunt in the Prairie, and another time in 1798, a “Great Spirit Woman”, who gave advice and subsequently vanished, was reported to have been met by again three hunters at midnight (Beckwith 1930: 349 ff.). Most probably the seven rites<sup>29</sup> historically formed from existing rituals that had merged with customs of neighboring or befriended tribes as it was the case with the Sundance ceremony

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<sup>27</sup> There exist however a variety of alternatives to this “myth of origin”, as presented by Bierhorst (1993: 154 f.), Bolz (1998: 71) and Martinez (2004: 84 f.), which although sharing the common narrative that the ancestors of the Sioux in general (Bierhorst and Bolz) or Lakota specifically (Martinez) stem from under(neath) the earth, differ harshly in other aspects.

<sup>28</sup> This corresponds to the historical migration of the Teton Sioux, only later calling themselves Lakota, which actually was their dialect-term for the seven Sioux tribes, the *Oceti Sakowin*. The Tetons’ migration westward had multiple causes – economic, social and political ones, as I presented in chapter 3.1. The most commonly recounted reason given in literature is increased military pressure from the Ojibwa and Cree tribes, who in settling east of the Sioux, had attained earlier access to guns through trade networks, which they effectively used in fighting against the Sioux (Feest 2009a, 17 f.).

<sup>29</sup> For a complete listing with explanations of each one of the seven Lakota rites go to URL 4.

(Müller 1970: 193) or were a product of individuals' visionary experiences (Bolz 2009: 72), which was in its socially established form as vision quest or *hanbleceya*, the “crying for a vision” (Medicine 1985: 27), one of the seven itself. In the following two subchapters, I am going to present these two, which remain until today the most important ceremonies for the Lakota by especially focusing on their embeddedness in Lakota belief and worldview.

#### 2.1.3.5.1 The Vision Quest

Due to a strong emphasis on religious autonomy and the consequent absence of a dogmatic theology the quest for spiritual enlightenment was (and still is today) seen as a very personal endeavor among Lakota. Although there was a general consensus about a few fundamental religious concepts, everyone was encouraged to further develop an individual approach and relationship to *Wakan Tanka* through visionary experiences, where all ideas were thought to originate from (Lowie 1954: 161; Stroe 2006: 26). The appropriate means to do this was through a ritualized form of fasting called the *hanbleceya* or vision quest, which created the necessary space for soul-searching and self-reflection.

The practice of visionary fasting was usually commenced by Lakota during puberty and continued as personal exercise throughout one's life as a means to seek guidance and to deal with all kinds of problems (Müller 1970: 286). Traditionally, the vision quest was primarily a male concern and functioned not only as initiation into traditional religious practices but also as a *rite de passage* to prepare young men for adulthood by delivering them with impulses for their future roles in society as hunters, scouts or warriors (Forbes Boyte 1996: 104; Martinez 2004: 88, 97). As a mechanism for identity formation, a vision thus defined which responsibilities one was to take in the world, which is why expectations of the individual and the *tiospaye*, praying for a vision seekers success, were high, exerting social pressure on young males as Dakota Ella Deloria, a student of Franz Boas, explains: A vision seeker “hoped to see something supernaturally significant that would help him become a worth-while man [...] he wanted power to be useful in his tribe” (Deloria 1998: 59 cited in Martinez 2004, 82). Adherence to ethical standards was seen as the greatest determinant of one's visionary success. Rather than seeking personal gain, one was obliged to pray for blessings (directed at benefitting all members of a community), for visions were not acquired by an ambitious ego, but a humbled soul, as the name *hanbleceya* suggests. The crying and suffering (through abstinence from water and food) in solitude was meant as a personal sacrifice to attract a *wakan-being's* attention and arouse its pity, so it would imbue the vision quester with supernatural power and strength.

Vision questers prayed to *wakan*-spirits to accept them as their relatives, to build or found a relationship with them resembling that of a patron and a protégé. If successful, the spirits delivered them with different kind of advice on how to attain power and use it for the good of their people by for instance letting them know (in mystical ways) what dances to perform, songs to sing and symbols to paint on shields or ingredients to use for the preparation of medicine bundles or imposed certain dietary or behavioral rules upon them (Lowie 1954: 159 f.). According to Bolz, there was no clear communication or concrete transfer of knowledge and instructions, but meanings of events happening during the experience were ascribed to them afterwards from visionary patterns (Bolz 2009: 73). However, only an honestly humbled soul was believed to maintain power, for it was perceived as not belonging to oneself (for humans were in fact believed to be powerless and thus needed to ask for it in the first place), but as an external force which would only stay with people who use it wisely and responsibly (Martinez 2009: 94). Misbehavior or disregard were believed to result in the loss of a guardian spirit or even cause it to turn against oneself (Lowie 1954: 160; Bolz 2009: 73).

Of course, the strong emphasis on humility and obedience originates and receives its backing from a myth, in which the necessity for these moral standards and behaviors was taught and explained. It is the same myth the shamans' legitimacy as leaders and spiritual elites partly derives from, since in Mythology the first *wicasa wakan* was *Wazi*, an elderly and wise man of the *Pte Oyate* (the mythological Buffalo-forefathers of the Lakota), who was the only one to be instructed by the spirits personally how to properly communicate with *wakan*-beings<sup>30</sup>. Thus, the *Wicasa Wakan*, having the oldest and closest relationship with *Wakan Tanka*, were the ones who knew best how to interpret visions (and evaluate what it can contribute/give back to the community) and were also the first to be approached, when an individual wanted to go on vision quest (Martinez 2004: 84 ff.). It was on them to create the proper environment and ritualized framework for the visionary experience to take place and to see to the well-being of initiates. Preparations often began well ahead before conduct, following a number of prerequisite measures aimed at an inner holistic cleansing, involving smoking the pipe to directly connect the heart of the smoker with *Wakan Tanka* and many ceremonial sweatlodge or *inipi* sessions, to rid the candidate of tiredness, disease and wrong thoughts (Forbes-Boyte 1996: 105;

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<sup>30</sup> For further reference read Martinez 2004: 84 f. Bierhorst also delivers a possible mythological explanation for the visionary powers and spiritual connection of the *witkowins*, who could be representative of *Wohpe* (*Meteor*) – the name of the White Buffalo Calf Woman in Walker's myth of creation – who is a female intermediary between the *wakans* and humans. Also, the *witkowins* could be associated with the woman in one of Bierhorst's versions of the Lakota myth of origin, who got stuck on the way up to the surface of the earth and blocked the way for half of the people (who stayed immortals down there) forever and thus being the one to mediate between both worlds (Bierhorst 1993: 158 ff.).

Martinez 2004: 88 f.). For the Lakota the place to go on vision quest were (and are) the Black Hills, which are regarded as holy and very powerful, for being rooted as points of reference in myths, in which they are home to many *wakan*-beings, as mentioned above). When initiates were spiritually, emotionally and physically ready, a camp was set up by ritual assistants ideally on top of a Butte, clearing the ground of all vegetation and even bugs or worms to create an atmosphere of absolutely undisturbed originality intended to resemble the spirit world (Martinez 2004: 89). There the vision quester was to meditate for up to four days<sup>31</sup> in solitude and inner retreat. Afterwards he would descend and get back to the communal campsite, singing loudly if successful and having his face covered if not<sup>32</sup> (Walker 1980: 86).

According to Martinez the visionary experience included all senses to recognize any messenger. Fasting, prayer and seclusion stimulated and constantly intensified a sensually attentive and probably already initially emotional state. Furthermore, the visionary experience was shaped by a sense of self that was shaped by the vision seeker's socio-cultural embeddedness (Martinez 2004: 97), accounts of others and individual peculiarities for instance someone being an auditory or visionary type (Lowie 1954: 158). Animals were frequently encountered visitants during visions, but not in their phenomenal form but rather in their archetypal essence known from mythology as can be deduced from reports, illuminating the strong influence of locally common myths (Martinez 2004: 93).

Lowie argued further that when reporting of one's visionary experiences afterwards, people would unconsciously adapt to tribal vision patterns, by bridging over obscure points and filling gaps (Lowie 1954: 159). Although visions impacted on one's social status by ascribing a new role to young men, their real effects (in respect to increased power) ultimately had to be validated through an individual's achievements as an adult (Martinez 2004: 94).

Unlike other traditional Lakota rituals like the *isnati awicaliwanpi* "a girl's coming of age" and the *tapa wankaye* – "the throwing of the ball"<sup>33</sup>, the practice of the *hanbleceya* quest continued until today and is also pursued now by women "as a therapy or mode for dealing with dissonances caused by intrusions from another culture" (Medicine 1985: 27) and an effective mechanism for Lakota identity formation to become a respected and integral member within communities.

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<sup>31</sup> According to one of Walker's informants, George Sword, one had to stay until receiving a vision or "is nearly perished" (Walker 1980: 86).

<sup>32</sup> Lowie reports of the Crow that those who were unable to obtain a vision could become the protégé of more fortunate tribesmen, who sold part of their power to them (Lowie 1954: 161). There is however no certainty that the same applied to the Lakota.

<sup>33</sup> Medicine calls the ball throwing rites *tapa ex peya* and the puberty rite for girls *esh-na-ti* (1985: 27).

#### 2.1.3.5.2 The Sundance

The annual Sundance ceremony was and remains until today the main socio-religious event among the Lakota as for many other Plains tribes (Lowie 1954: 178; Richter 1998: 12; Bolz 2009: 74). Originally the Sundance was a ritual of the Cheyenne and Arapaho and was only taken over by the Lakota and other Plains peoples upon their arrival and spread in the Prairie between 1750 and 1850. Often the ritual was modified and combined with preexisting rituals of the various tribes, as was for instance the case with the older beaver-bundle ritual of the Blackfoot (Richter 1998: 13) or also the former world-tree ceremony of the Sioux (Müller 1970: 193). The Lakota denomination for it is *wi wan(ya)ng wacipi*, meaning “to stare into the sun” or “sungazing”, which makes up a part of the Lakota version of the ritual (Medicine 1985: 27; Bolz 2009: 74). Although the English name might suggest that it is a ritual for the worship of the sun<sup>34</sup>, which (admittedly) might have been seen by many Lakota as a representative embodiment of *Wakan Tanka* according to Bolz (2009: 72), it was for many Plains tribes primarily a celebration of the renewal of the world, a thanksgiving to the earth’s fertility (Bierhorst 1993: 156).

Next to its purpose to strengthen social coherence among the many bands as an expression of shared identity through the affirmation of the common belief (in the unity of *Wakan Tanka*), it was particularly for the Oglala Lakota an initiation ritual of *wicasa wakan* or holy men in the first place marked by the “dramatic” self-display of their personal sacrifice<sup>35</sup> (Müller 1970: 299). In other (Lakota and non-Lakota) Plains tribes all those took part in the Sundance who wanted to express their gratitude for rescue from a difficult situation or the ones who wanted to pray for their or a relative’s salvation from a suffering (Bolz 2009: 74; Müller 1970: 294). It was these few protagonists that were performing the dance, the rest of the tribal community was most of the time merely watching and singing in a circle around them. The main aim or goal of shaman candidates was, as that of vision questers, the praying for the retention of *wakan* powers for the community and one’s personal ends in life. Again, this was done by delivering personal sacrifices, ranging from intense fasting way ahead of the actual ritual right through to acts of self-torture like blowing on eagle-whistles to enhance their thrust while dancing or/and driving wooden sticks through their breasts, which were connected to a central tree with ropes, into which they leaned when dancing (it was actually only a very simple toe tipping move) forth towards and backwards away from the big tree until they burst out (Müller 1970: 299 f.).

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<sup>34</sup> According to Bolz, this was actually the case for most other Plains tribes (Bolz 2009: 74).

<sup>35</sup> To get the original translation of George Sword’s description of the traditional Oglala Sundance read Deloria 1929: 354-413.

While most sources say that the Sundance was traditionally held by Plains-tribes during mid-summer between the end of July and August (f.i. Bolz 2009: 75), others suggest that sometimes celebrations started already in late spring (Bierhorst 1993: 153). In reference to Walker's reports about the Oglala Sundance, Müller states that the eighth and last day of preparation and setup of the ceremonial grounds was planned to fall together with the summer solstice around June 21<sup>st</sup> (Müller 1970: 300). Accorded to the holy number four, the Sundance lasted four days in total, but highly ritualized preparations of individuals began weeks or even months before. "A sacred cottonwood tree is the centerpole [of the circular hut where the ceremony takes place] around which twenty-eight other poles radiate, representing the twenty-eight phases of the lunar month" as explained by geographer of religion Anne Buttimer (2006: 199). In fact, it was originally two concentric circles of sixteen poles each surrounding the central tree, only the space between the outer poles being covered by a roof so the dancers would be exposed to maximum sunshine from dusk until dawn (Bolz 2009: 74; Müller 1970: 301). Black Elk highlighted that each tree represented a *wakan*-being, the whole circle being "the entire creation and the one tree at the center [...] is *Wakan Tanka*, the Great Spirit or Life Energy that is in everything" (Black Elk 1961 cited in Buttimer 2006: 199).

The hardest test for shaman initiates and other dancers, the above-described piercing, took place on the fourth day of the ceremony. In addition to the dancing, some candidates would let themselves become drawn up the middle post and hang there in order to attain a transcendental state and receive visions – by doing this they were symbolically perceived as containing the cosmos (represented by the ceremonial lodge) within themselves (Müller 1970: 299). Relatives would cut out small pieces of skin from their upper arm as an act of solidarity and children were pierced in the ears to symbolize their belonging to the community. Since a few years also women taking part in the Sundance do the piercing (Bolz 2009: 75). When the Sundance was outlawed in 1883 by the US government, because it was seen as hindrance to cultural assimilation, the Sundance was nevertheless continued to be practiced in secret. However, although having been legally allowed again with the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934 it had almost completely lost its appeal to young Lakota by the 1960s, only to be taken up again with the rise of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the 1970s (Bolz 2009: 76). Albert White Hat proudly reports about the revival of the Sundance by telling that when he had visited a Sundance in 1973, the same year the AIM occupied Wounded Knee, only three songs were sung, but today more than twenty are known to people again (Deloria 1998: 436). Today, the continuous practice of the Sundance has multiple meanings for Lakota: Among others it is a



symbol of resistance against a dominant Anglo-American society and a marker of ethnic identity, preserving traditional religious beliefs and related values.

#### 2.1.3.6 *Analytical Conclusions: Locating traditional Lakota Philosophy in Anthropology's Ontological Debate*

After having outlined widely shared or accepted philosophical key concepts in (traditional) Lakota Cosmology and how they were (and are) practically expressed through rituals I now aim to examine their representation in theories about Amerindian ontological thought as currently debated in Anthropology.

First, I want to give a general introduction into Viveiros de Castro's heavily discussed notion of perspectivism, which, according to Rival, "greatly facilitated the 'ontological turn' in anthropology, [...a] systematic attempt to clear anthropological theory from all traces of ethnocentrism" (Rival 2012: 129). Subsequently, I intend to investigate how animic ontologies differ from "western" naturalism according to the dominant discussants Descola and Ingold and what is criticized about these notions by other scholars namely Rival, Halbmayer, Farage and Neurath, by simultaneously pointing at similarities or contrasts of their arguments to the concepts represented in traditional Lakota worldview, thereby integrating it as ethnographic example into the discourse.

Viveiros de Castro (1998: 470 ff.) defines perspectivism as a theory in Amerindian cosmologies, in which the difference in perceiving reality between varying subjectivities such as animals, plants, spirits and humans is emphasized. Every subject is believed to perceive itself as anthropomorphic being, experiencing its own habits and characteristics as culture, its respective perspective being expressed through relations to other subjects. Each species can be thought of as only wearing a physical envelope (clothing) underneath which a humanlike consciousness, soul or spirit rests. These conceptual models can be found in Lakota beliefs as well, since non-human entities such as stones, four-legged beings, winged beings, crawling beings, standing beings (plants), and fish beings are considered as persons sharing interrelating *wakan* souls.

According to Viveiros de Castro, in animic ontologies, shamans, who are said to have access to multiple perspectives by being able to shift their subjectivity or envelope (through rituals, hallucinogens), communicate these perspectives between different beings, making different dimensional ways of living tangible for humans. One could assume that this applies also to holy

men or *wicasa wakan* of the Lakota, who shift their subjectivity, when entering the dreamworld, which is considered the real world or spirit world, in which communication with other beings becomes possible. Although only Lakota shamans were commonly believed to descend from thunder-beings, to whom they owe their wisdom and whom they can ask for advice, also other members of the community can have visionary experiences where they encounter other beings at eye level, when they engage in a spiritual quest mostly through ritual fasting in solitude and/or self-torturing during Sundance.

Viveiros de Castro further highlights that since the concept of animality is absent in Amerindian thought, both humans and non-humans are perceived as peoples. Also, linguistically Amerindian self-designations including or using the term “people” refer not to humans as a species but are meant to denote the social condition of personhood, pointing at the positioning of their perspective as subjects, as for instance in the case of the Lakota, humans are called *Icke Oyate*, “Common People”, and bison, *Pte Oyate*, “Buffalo People”. Consequently, “People” does not mean humans, but is used as personal pronoun marking the point of view or perspective of subjects.

As pointed out by Viveiros de Castro, every subject is believed to possess a soul and whatever possesses a soul, has a point of view. As humans are just seen as a species among others Viveiros de Castro concludes that the western dichotomy between “nature” and “culture” does not exist neither in Amerindian contexts (and can thus not be applied in Amerindian cosmologies), since the natural environment of animals (and other non-human species) is perceived as their cultural landscape. This holds true for the Tukano Amazonian Indians, who see themselves as participants in the universe permeated by the energy circuit of *boga* as prominently demonstrated by Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996: 9) and also for the Lakota, who in spite of perceiving Nature as external understood themselves as interconnected part of *Wakan Tanka* through *Taku Skan Skan*, the spiritual life-giving essence inherent to all beings interrelating the totality of all existence.

Similarly, to a Lakota “Worldview of Correspondence”, in which everything is regarded as related to one another, by criticizing what he calls the “building perspective”, labeling it as western scientific approach to knowledge, Ingold promotes a “dwelling perspective” (Gingrich/Mader: 2002: 23 f.) emphasizing that “life is an emergent property of a relational system in which everything is in perpetual flux and movement” (Rival 2012: 130). Thus, for him the construction of separating categories such as nature and culture or organic and inorganic is misleading since “[p]ersons and environment are mutually constitutive components of the same world” (Ingold 1992: 51).

Descola (2005: 5), who regards perspectivism as only a specific form of animism, aligns with Viveiros De Castro by stating that the western culture and nature dichotomy is inverted in animic ontologies, whereby the interiority, soul or consciousness becomes the common feature of beings providing them with a respective cultural perspective, while (in the case of Viveiros De Castro) their substance or physical form (for Descola, who argues that material substance is universally the same) naturally causes the various entities to live in a different culture.

Vivieros De Castro equates the shared interiority of beings with humanity, which he (mis-)interprets as the original shared condition of humans and animals in (his) Amerindian perspectivism in general, probably just because it creates a perfect opposition to western scientific theory, where humans are considered to be ex-animals (Halbmayer 2012: 13). Similarly, Descola concludes that, “Animism is thus ‘anthropogenic’ rather than anthropocentric, in that it derives from interactions between humans all that is necessary to make it possible for humans to be treated as humans. By contrast”, Descola highlights, “naturalism is properly anthropocentric in that its spokespersons define nonhumans tautologically, by their lack of humanity [...and thus] of moral dignity” (Descola 2014: 296).

However, Rival and Halbmayer challenge the notion of a general common human origin of beings in Animism by delivering convincing ethnographic examples, proving that in many peoples’ myths of origin, humans are said to have animal ancestors. Also, in Lakota Mythology, the *Icke Oyate* (Common People) derived from the *Pte Oyate*, the Buffalo People, which clearly indicates their animal descent. Furthermore, Halbmayer and Rival independently show that there are also non-personalized forms of life and agency in animic ontologies by revealing that beings are not only differentiated according to their physicality, but also “along dimensions of animacy, agentivity, consciousness, the ability to communicate” (Halbmayer 2012: 14), as also expressed by Rival, when she stresses at the example of the Huarani that: “in any case, the cosmic force that causes plants and animal and human bodies to grow and live is neither singularized nor anthropomorphized” (Rival 2012: 135), which is also applicable to *Taku Skan Skan*, a being of no form, but manifest within everything. Following Brown’s elucidations, the fact that different levels of agency are ascribed to non-humans meets with Lakota conceptions as well, since apparently animals for them, only reflect certain aspects of *Wakan Tanka*, suggesting limitations in their consciousness, while humans represent its totality and thus bear the greatest potential of all (Brown/Cousins 2001: 92).

However, as Lakota elder Karen Little Thunder from Rosebud Indian Reservation, emphasizes:

“I can not accept to say that the origins of our Lakota people involve buffalo and the Wind Cave and a spiritual obligation shared between the buffalo and ourselves as human

beings. Ehm (pause) ehm, we ehm in our Lakota ways there is no clear distinction, there is no separation between the animals and ourselves. The term for it is “*wamakashga*” which means basically that we are one. There's no difference. We, we, we are all, we are one sacred unit. Is basically what I believe. And all that was removed and erased and obliterated in between 1855 and today which is a hundred and sixty some years. I believe that's where we need to go back to - is acknowledging and honoring that spiritual bond between the buffalo and ourselves” (Little Thunder, Karen Formal Interview 10/14/2017).

Although Karen, like no one, can speak for everyone's culturally and individually rooted spiritual beliefs, her comment suggests that myths can also only act as a partial cultural explanation in defining spiritual relationships between (a) people and animals as one must recognize the deeper ideational thought structures present in the cultural context within which they originated. As a firm believer in the concept of (interconnected) Oneness (expressed in Lakota thought through the phrase *Mitakuye Oasin*), for Karen, the spiritual essence, which unites all beings is at the center of defining the animal-human connection and relationship on an ideational level. Materialistically, this perception of the environment and way of interrelating is rooted in and developed from the strong economic and culturally-symbolic dependence on wildlife (and plants) of the historically subsistence hunter-gathering based Lakota bands as pre-equestrian woodland and post-equestrian Plains people. But myths deliver ideational explanations for hierarchical relations between beings, as exemplified by the story of the Great Race in Lakota Mythology, which defined that humans were to be buffalo-eaters and not the other way around<sup>36</sup>.

Promoting an ecological approach to Amerindian cosmologies, Rival pleads for the acknowledgement of Indigenous biological knowledge beyond personification, which she sees neglected or marginalized in the ontological debate, since leading figures such as Descola, Viveiros De Castro and Ingold, despite their distinct theoretical approaches, all depict animism as antithetical to modern scientific knowledge. However, she argues, “such a rejection of biology disregards the fact that it is over-simplistic to treat science as an objectivist knowledge system predicated on binary opposition between nature and culture” (Rival 2012: 138). Anthropologist Nadia Farage supported the latter argument in a Lecture at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna, titled “Ideas on Nature and Animality” on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 by refuting the simplistic notion that the Cartesian dualism ascribed to western thought is the exclusive perspective ever developed by Euroamerican

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<sup>36</sup> The Great Race will be attended to in more detail in chapter 2.2.2.

societies. She did so by highlighting that around the turn of the century immigrant village communities formed in more or less “untouched natural landscapes” far apart from urban centers, which adhered to Rousseauian naturalist ideas, rejecting communism as production (being at the heart of communist social organization) was believed to produce only slaves and condemning capitalism as only corrupting human beings: All artificial things, tools or techniques were perceived to only lead to weakening dependencies of humans on them. Instead, it was suggested to go back to nature, to reincorporate into the self-regulatory natural flow of things, following the general notion that everything was part of the same network, which again resembled Lakota notions described above. According to Rousseauian naturalists, man as a species among other species should only have a limited capacity of knowledge. As Siems highlights when pointing at similarities in Lakota and romantic thought, the Lakota believed that “it was beyond humanity’s power to ever know [... or understand the universe] fully” (DeMaille 1988: 32 cited in Siems 2008: 26). In this context science (especially chemistry) was criticized by these Rousseauian movements as being a device of capital that only gives birth to human suffering, rather than being of any help: In any case man was not seen as a “Homo Faber” transforming nature, but as being transformed by it. For naturalists, societies living in natural environments such as Amerindians delivered proof that a return to nature presented a possible alternative to industrial production, since all labor and artificial means are in fact useless, following the dogma that “when you come back to nature, you don’t need anything else”. With help of this example Farage disqualified the assumption that before the ontological turn no other perspectives on or approaches towards human-nature relationships than the monolithically dualist one have existed and thus points at the missing historicity in the ontological debate.

Similarly, Neurath (2015: 58 f.) promotes a more differentiated view, when arguing that the presumed unity of being is the “last safe haven of Eurocentrism” (Neurath 2015: 59) left in anthropological scholars’ writings about ontologies by their deploying of the latter term as substitute for culture, a term which was greatly scrutinized in Anthropology for all too easily ascribing an ideal-typical conformity and homogeneity to societies. At the example of ambiguous outlooks on and multiple meanings of symbolic practices in Huichol Ritual and Art, caused by viewers’ or participants’ varying perspectives, Neurath challenges the assumption, that the majority of a certain Indigenous group needs to ontologically be in one and the same world. Polyontologies existed in what I term traditional Lakota society without question as well, not only because of increased efforts of Christianization throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were initially at best of uncertain or superficial success especially due to missionaries’

conceptual mistranslations (as I've shown in previous chapters), but also because of the strong social emphasis on religious autonomy making it everyone's personal duty to form his or her own belief system, building only on a few commonly shared conceptions since more specific spiritual knowledge was only kept and shared among *wicasa wakan*.

Today, as individuals living in a technologically interconnected world have ever more access to a multitude of ideas, the global spread of various perspectives – even though corporate controlled mainstream media often only reproducing pop-cultural, simplifications, essentializations and romanticisms, takes up a dominant position in the process of shaping opinions, self-identifications and ascriptions to “others” – on (different) phenomena leads to their even if only minor or partial representation in almost every group or society.

## **2.2 Rise and Fall of Lakota Dominance on the Northern Great Plains: Identifying Causal Dynamics and Interdependencies between Environment, Economy, Politics and Warfare**

Many scholars (such as White 1978, Calloway 1982, Flores 2007) have convincingly argued that the Lakota's rise to power in the 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted from a conglomeration of favorable economic, political and environmental conditions, many of which can again be traced back to European induced economic and military pressures, causing Lakota migration onto the Plains in the first place. In the following chapter, I intend to analyze how external factors affected the cultural development of the Lakota during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, which will deliver the necessary historically informed foundation to properly contextualize (at the example of Plains peoples) Amerindians' Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and properly attend to discussing the question of Amerindian ecological sustainability in the past, which will be subject to subsequent chapters, and in the present, to be further discussed in chapter 3.2.

### **2.2.1 Lakota Expansionism: A matter of Circumstances? How Infrastructural Advantages and Timing Instituted Successful Conquest**

DeMaille (1977: 102) emphasized that the Lakota had already integrated warfare as cultural characteristic when arriving on the Plains in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, they looked back at a long record of involvement in intertribal warfare coming from the conflict-ridden woodlands, where fur trade and population pressure has led to intensified competition over (hunting) territories and resources in the preceding century. Additionally, horses gave rise to a number of new war-tactics, enabling the Lakota to do plundering raids and sudden surprise attacks of sedentary villagers and other neighboring tribes (Feest/Van Bussel 2009: 28), without having to fear immediate retribution due to their flexibility as nomads to move camp within minutes if needs be (Hassrick 1992: 168). But horses alone did not give the Lakota any particular advantage over other numerically large and politically powerful nomadic horse mounted tribal groups, which arose during the 1700s, such as the Arapaho, Assiniboine, Astana, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Comanche, Crow, Kiowa or Plains Cree.

However, at the advent of their arrival on the Plains in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Lakota were already well equipped with guns (supplied by them through trade networks with their Dakota allies, who got them from English and French traders), which is regarded by many scholars (Hassrick 1992: 70 ff.; White 1978: 322; McGinnis 1990: 71 ff.) as a major initial

advantage the Tetons had in contrast to most Plains tribes, who only acquired guns later. Whether the front-loader rifles presented the Lakota with a real advantage remains nevertheless disputed at best, since they were not easy to handle and took quite long to reload, as also outlined by Bolz (1986: 47). This seems quite plausible, when considering that, “[e]arly explorers noted that Indians, who carried a hundred arrows in a quiver case and were able to keep ten arrows in the air at once, were superior to a man with a rifle” (Merchant 2009: 17) at least until more technologically advanced weapons, such as the Colt Six Shooter, had been developed, as Merchant remarks. Likewise, Wissler (1934: 25) argues that the rapidity and precision of the bow was only to be expelled by the repeating rifle, which was an invention of the 1870s.

Another factor for the Lakota’s successful territorial conquest on the Northern Plains which Bolz (1986: 47) underlines as a potentially benefitting western Sioux bands could have been their relatively large and rapidly growing population in comparison to other tribes. For White, their superiority in numbers, instead of being a precondition when entering the Plains, was rather a result of their immunity and absence during multiple outbursts of smallpox epidemics in 1837 and 1838 that had depleted the majority of the previously powerful sedentary Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara tribes settled along the Missouri as well as the Pawnees living in the proximity of the Platte and Loup Rivers (White 1978: 325). As highlighted by White,

“In 1832 the Office of Indian Affairs sent doctors up the river to vaccinate the Indians. Many of the Sioux refused to cooperate, but well over a thousand people, mostly Yanktonais, received vaccinations. Only enough money was appropriated to send the doctors as far upriver as the Sioux; so the Mandans and Hidatsas further upriver remained unvaccinated” (White 1978: 329).

Apart from receiving vaccinations their nomadic lifestyle and seasonally conditioned compartmentalization into smaller groups scattered across the country had aided the Lakota in escaping devastating effects of European introduced diseases (Gibbon 2003: 89).

Discrepancies between White (1978: 330) and Bolz (1986: 47) are owed to their reliance on different sources informing about Plains populations at the time. Whereas White estimates that, upon their emergence on the eastern edges of the Plains in 1804, the western Sioux had numbered only about 5000, Bolz relies on Wood and Liberty (1980: 293 cited in Bolz 1986: 47), who estimate the total population of Sioux numbering around 25,000 in 1780. Lowie (1963:13) also cites an estimate of 1780, according to which the Teton Sioux numbered around 10,000 at that time. White argues that the Lakota population has risen to 25,000 people by 1950, while Bolz refers to the Indian Bureau’s estimate of 1842 totaling the Lakota at 12,000, which



Thomas (1910: 737 cited in Bolz 1986: 47) regards as being too low, due to a census counting 16,426 Lakota in 1890. Gibbon, who does not deliver any numbers merely states that by the 1840s, the Lakota outnumbered their middle and eastern Sioux allies, the Yankton-Yanktonai and Dakota forces combined (Gibbon 2003: 88).

However, all scholars cited above agree that the Lakota's increase in numbers was largely owed to their thriving bison centered economy, meeting all their needs through hunting and trade. The rising demand for European goods especially metal based products, but also other commodities like coffee or alcohol, marked a shift in emphasis of the Lakota and other Plains tribes from the priority of subsistence hunting to a preoccupation with market-oriented production (of mostly buffalo hides and robes) for exchange (Gibbon 2003: 90). Similarly, Dan Flores notes that: "buffalo robes had become a major hunting motive for Plains Indians at least as early as the 1820s, when river craft were shipping nearly 100,000 robes to New Orleans every year" (Flores 2007: 160).

As the bison populations east of the Missouri had become depleted and remaining large herds moved farther west towards the Rocky Mountain range (Bolz 1986: 49), so did nomadic Indian bands, who had become economically dependent on them. Consequently, with diminishing herds of bison in the face of ever-shrinking, undisturbed habitats, intertribal warfare among resident and competing Plains peoples over bison rich territories intensified. On top of that, the Lakota, apparently not known for abundance and quality of their horse herds (White 1978: 331), of which they frequently suffered considerable losses during cold winters on the Northern Plains, were dependent on stealing from other tribes to secure horses for bison hunting and warfare. Moreover, horse raiding had become an important means for upward mobility of (young) males among equestrian Plains tribes (McMillan/Yellowhorn 2004: 151), as already mentioned in chapter 2.3.2.

"It is in this context of increasing population, increasing demand for buffalos and horses, the declining and retreating bison populations, and attempted domination of the sedentary villagers that the final phase of Sioux expansion during the 19<sup>th</sup> century took place", as White (1978: 332) proclaims, who discussed the Lakota rise to dominance in detail. Through cutting off trading routes and preventing their hunting parties from supplying their people with buffalo, western and middle Sioux tribes managed to limit economic activities of weakened sedentary tribes, who had suffered great losses by smallpox in the late 1830s. Through occasional raids or pressured trades the Sioux kept the decimated Arikara, Mandan and Hidatsa from ever recovering from the devastating epidemics and were able to extend their territorial dominance to the west, driving off Omaha, Iowa, Ponca, Assiniboin, Kiowa, Crow, and Cheyenne from

their occupied lands (Gibbon 2003: 88; White 1978: 322 f.; Bolz 1986: 49). With the latter and the Arapahos, they forged a strong political alliance aiding them in attaining and maintaining control over increasingly contested hunting grounds. While the geographically most western tribes of the Lakota, the Oglala and Brule pushed beyond the Black Hills into the Powder River valley previously held by the Crow, who had also lost almost half of their populace to smallpox, Hunkpapa and Yanktonai tribes advanced northwest fighting the Plains-Cree, Assiniboinés and Red River Metis, who had become fierce opponents in the fur and hide trade since the 1820s onwards (Bolz 1986: 49). As did the Plains-Indians, the Red River Metis, who according to Dobak were “the most often-counted people hunting the Canadian buffalo” (Dobak 1996: 42), slaughtered bison for hides, robes, tongues and pemmican<sup>37</sup>. Dobak states that their “first hunt, that of 1820, included 540 Red River carts, two-wheeled vehicles of wood and rawhide construction that could haul a nine-hundred-pound load when drawn by an ox; 20 years later, the 1840 hunt included 1,210 carts” (Dobak 1996: 43). Their extensive harvests of bison during communal hunts, similarly organized as the ones of Plains tribes in summer and fall, had brought them not only into conflict with the Lakota, but also other Indian tribes, who were in competition with them over buffalo, above all the Cree, one of Canada’s largest Indian ethnics, to whom the Metis’ Red River settlement was equal in size, totaling around 11,000 people according to estimates (Dobak 1996: 40 ff.; Milloy 1988: 107 ff.).

In the course of their territorial expansion the Lakota battled against at least 26 other tribes on the Prairies and Plains (Bolz 1986: 49). In pursuit of wildlife, they continuously penetrated into so-called neutral (or yet uncontrolled) grounds in the following decades, which were unoccupied areas acting as buffer zones between the tribes, few dared to cross or travel through except for war parties. These zones, although occasionally exploited by neighboring bands in times of game shortage in their tribal lands, provided few refuges for “hard-pressed” bison herds to roam relatively unmolested (White 1978: 334 f.). Unsurprisingly, these places, although dangerous must have exerted a near irresistible attraction to the predominantly hunting based nomadic peoples of the Plains, facing the challenge of having to survive off of decreasing numbers of bison, within an increasingly competitive market environment demanding ever more hides and other buffalo products.

In citing a contemporary chronist, Father Pierre DeSmet, Dobak pointedly states:

“As the buffalo range contracted, intertribal competition stiffened. ‘The Plains where the buffalo graze are becoming more and more of a desert, and at every season’s hunt

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<sup>37</sup> According to Dobak, due to its durability, pemmican had largely been used by the Hudson Bay Company to supply its boatmen with durable rations (Dobak 1996: 33).

the different Indian tribes find themselves closer together, ‘ DeSmet observed in 1846; ‘whenever they meet, it is war to the death.’ Buffer zones were narrowing as the tribes converged, and the area in which the buffalo might exist undisturbed shrank accordingly” (Dobak 1996: 47).

## 2.2.2 “Living off the Land”<sup>38</sup>: Contrasting Native Ennoblement Against Historical Lifeways and Livelihoods of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lakota

Despite the swift reduction of bison, and the constant need of the Lakota and other groups of equestrian Plains nomads to expand their horizon (wandering farther into bison country) on the lookout for ever-dwindling pockets of bison, most bands continued to hunt for the market. According to Dobak’s mathematical projections based on contrasting data informing about annual numbers of traded buffalo products recorded (in particular by the Hudson Bay Company trading posts) and different estimates about Plains Indian populations throughout the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an average percentage of one-third of buffalo hunted and killed by Plains-tribes were deemed for trade, exceeding by far the amounts of buffalo needed for self-sustenance (Dobak 1996: 46 f.: 51).

In his often-cited book about the Sioux, anthropologist Royal B. Hassrick recounts Lakota leader Iron Shell’s words in his depiction of the Sioux as pragmatic opportunists, who apparently stated that as nomadic hunter-gatherers they had to take out what they could (in regard to natural resources), whenever they could get it. Thus, when bison herds had been sighted close to camp, tribal hunting parties were immediately organized and sent out to grant a constant supply of meat (Hassrick 1992: 169). Feest (2009: 28) and Bolz (1994: 49) independently from one another recount the famous (artistically unschooled) Indian-portrait and landscape painter George Catlin’s observation of hunting Sioux, who had slaughtered 1,400 buffalo only to cut out their tongues (leaving the rest to rot in the fields), to trade them for a few gallons of whiskey at the close-by Fort Pierre in present day South Dakota in May of 1832. This example delivers a sharp contrast to the romantic European (invention and) imagination of the ecologically noble savage<sup>39</sup>, and the myth that nothing went to waste in Indian cultures

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<sup>38</sup> This almost already iconic phrase has become frequently used as synonymous to denominate a hunter-gathering way of life (and related social organizations) based on these very collaborative self-sufficient, subsistence economic practices (see URL 5).

<sup>39</sup> Ellingson (2001) illuminates that the concept originated from early French explorer Lescarbot’s writings about his travels in the “New World” at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and only later to become associated also with Rousseau’s naturalist work. As put forward by anthropologist Raymond Hames, “[a]s a stereotype it was employed to highlight problems faced by modern Europeans and pointed to a way of life in which these problems were absent” (Hames 2007: 179). Problems addressed by Hames here are mostly rooted in a (market-economic) capitalist system based on and promoting the accumulation of wealth and the maximization of profit, instead of the enhancement of human welfare, high standards of living and future human and societal survival, as it is destructive of its own existential foundation.

So far no – in terms of resource exploitation – holistically sustainable social organization able to maintain or foster a human-life supporting environment on planet earth for a hypothetically endless rebirth of human generations (in the quantity of the globe’s contemporary population) has (or has been) developed. For me, two scenarios seem plausible in this regard: Either, the extinction of the majority of humanity and resorting (back) to less complex forms of social organization based on economic systems (which have historically already existed), or humanity’s adaption to larger forms of social organization fit to sustainably thrive on the planet, materialistically and

dominant in western literature and other media<sup>40</sup> (Bolz 1986: 65; Whyte/Reo 2011: 23), which prevails as persistent stereotype and prejudice in the popular perception of Amerindians until today. Since this sentiment was so strongly promoted in past and present – even in various sorts of ethnological publications and in other domains (ab)using a scientific label - many contemporary Native Americans self-identify with and believe in this ascribed stereotype (Bolz 1994: 54; Gagnon 2012: 145). I will return to discussing further political complexities at the root of this phenomenon later.

Although (in another publication) Bolz (1986: 48) finds it to be an undeniable truth that (at least the majority of) the Lakota people or in abstracting even further, “Indianer Nordamerikas” (North American Indians), have developed an intensified perception of and morale towards nature, which he regards as rooted in economic necessity (determining their way of life) as well as to attuned religious conceptions, he points at the fact that this did not restrain them in exploiting their environments with the most effective technologies available to them. He goes

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ideationally ridding itself from the self-destructive way of production following the sentiment or (potential il)logic of infinite growth or successful expansion into space as politically united earth power through occupying/conquering other human life-supporting planets in our galaxy. Both scenarios, however, are based on the prerequisite of sufficient (mostly economic and ecological) environmental pressure to stimulate an effective transformation towards this direction as predicated by the fundamental hypothetical assumption that: human social organisms aka. societies, being opportunistic by nature, will only change/adapt (and adopt new technologies) if they need to, in other words, if the natural conditions immediately demand it for their very survival. In any case, Native peoples cannot offer the form of social organization and economic system needed to sustain contemporary populations’ survival on the planet under the current ecological carrying capacities, due to lack of efficiency (and available resources): As highlighted by Hames,

“[t]he development of evolutionarily and microeconomically informed approaches emphasizing the individual level of selection and detailed ethnographic (e. g., Alvard 1993) and historic studies (e.g., Krech 1981) of foraging and other extractive behaviors demonstrated that conservation of natural resources by native peoples either did not occur or was a side-effect of low population density, simple technology and lack of external markets to spur over-exploitation (Hunn 1982)” (Hames 2007: 180).

I do not entirely agree with Hames here, since dictated by religious leaders providing regulations (preventing over-exploitation) for hunting and gathering practices based on superstitious explanations (acknowledged by the common people) were indeed a form of conscious (and effective/functioning) conservation efforts, as shown by multiple ethnographic studies (e. g., Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996 or Grünberg 2003). In the light of all this, hunter-gatherer societies, despite not being conservationist in nature, nevertheless have proven that they can function/exist in ecologically unharmed ways if given the right circumstances (above all global population size) and thus present models revealing humans’ potential to live ecologically sustainable on earth.

The challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be to switch to increasing efficiency in accordance to the facilitation of human survival in such quantities, instead of delivering profits. For that to happen, our societies’ elites (in terms of financial and symbolic capital) would need to change their system for reproducing power (voluntarily or would need to be overthrown/replaced by new elites) organizationally directed to carry/rule under the premise of a new world order with ecological, economic (and – ethically informed by my personal humanitarian point of view – ideally also social) sustainability as its core principle(s).

<sup>40</sup> Even scholars like Satterlee and Malan (1975) have contributed to the solidification of such stereotypes through a superficial, essentializing and uncritical depiction of religious or cultural notions about how Indians perceive and relate to their environment. Without delivering any further contextual explanations to the reader, Satterlee simply states: “As he [the Indian] felt himself to be kin to all living things, he then felt it quite impossible to take from this life more than was needed for simple subsistence. To kill bison or to reap the produce of wild plants beyond one’s daily needs was to exploit nature for which such violation he would pay retribution” (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 15).

on stating that for the Lakota there was no need to protect or conserve their resources, since they could easily move on to attain them elsewhere. Also, Hassrick writes in this context: “The Sioux could hardly have foreseen the end of the buffalo, for they understood the concept of depletion no better than the White hunters, who later killed off the great herds” (translated from the original version of Hassrick 1992: 203).

Even though being realistic and pragmatic in the manners and ways they hunted, anthropologist Joseph Epes Brown emphasizes that Lakota “attitudes towards the animals and nature in general were never purely materialistic nor quantitative. Rather, the reality of the pursuit of game was intensified and supported by cultural tradition, making quest for game a religious activity to be prepared for and concluded by ritual” (Brown 1996: 10).

In the light of this, I regard it as important to take a closer look at qualitative dimensions of Lakota relationships with animals and their environment in order to illuminate complexities that lie beyond romantic sentimentalism and pure materialism and to break with stereotypical extremes of the noble and barbaric savage imagery unfortunately all too often reproduced through one-sided approaches in lay literature until today. In discussing Lakota worldview and related values/virtues, it will also become apparent that popular notions, perceptions and ways of interrelating with the environment have persisted until today among Lakota and other Plains tribes’ descendants self-identifying with their cultural heritage as nomadic buffalo-hunters on the Plains. Additionally, in chapter 3.3 I will elaborate on fundamental dynamics at play, delivering reasons why culture and in particular cultural hunting practices still represent a central part in Lakota society politically and in many Indigenous individuals’ ideational (self-) construction of their identities. However, for the purpose of making my point in this chapter it will suffice for now to ontologically locate the buffalo within Lakota (and other Plains tribes’) worldview and mythology, to deliver some causal explanations and cultural legitimizations of a behavioral ecology, which scientists would render today as unsustainable hunting practices, as they were made out by environmental scholars like Flores (2001, 2007), Dobak (1996) and most famously by anthropologist Shepard Krech III (1999).

To begin with, the Lakota also referred to themselves as the *Pte Oyate*, which translates into Buffalo People. This association already clearly highlights the Lakota’s veneration of the bison. As key component for sustaining the Lakota way of life during most of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that buffalo played a significant role in Lakota mythology and belief. Different myths inform about this intimate relationship. Among the most prominent ranks the story of White Buffalo Calf Woman, who delivered the seven sacred rites to the Lakota upon their arrival on the Plains. After she had gifted the Lakota with these instructions for ceremonial conduct, she

is said to have turned into a brown, then again into a white Buffalo calf, before vanishing (Bolz 2009: 71). The Great Race, another myth, tells about a race around the Black Hills between the “two legged” and the “four legged” beings ultimately deciding on who was to be preyed upon by whom. Although the buffalo were leading the race, a magpie sitting between a buffalo’s head for most of the time, flew across the finish line first. The outcome “determined that man would be the hunter while buffalo supplied food, shelter, and many other helpful things” (Gagnon 2003: 136).

According to one Lakota origin story, their ancestors evolved from underneath the earth, where they used to live with the buffalo cow people, who, since that time would continuously supply Lakota with buffalo to be hunted as some of them moved up and out of the underworld to live on the open Plains (Feest/Van Bussel 2009: 27). In this sense, the virtue of hospitality “was undoubtedly seen by the Oglala to be a general function of the generosity of the earth, which gave forth the seemingly inexhaustible supply of bison” as Brown (1997: 15) finds. As already outlined above, the belief that the buffalo came from underground<sup>41</sup> was popular among historic Plains peoples (Krech 2005: 79). Dobak cites a British officer, who in 1873 was reportedly told by a Cree: “it is from under that lake that our buffalo comes. You say they are all gone; but look, they come again and again to us. We cannot kill them all-they are there under that lake” (Dobak 1996: 49). For him and Flores (2007), Plains peoples’ belief in an inexhaustible supply of buffalo from underneath the earth offers a possibly viable explanation for these peoples’ “unsustainable” hunting practices, even in times when buffalo herds were becoming more and more difficult to be made out/spotted. Instead of sparing animals not ultimately needed for subsistence, Plains tribes reacted to the fact that bison became harder to find in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with so-called buffalo calling ceremonies, “to entice the animals to come near or to emerge from the ground” (Flores 2007: 158). According to Hassrick (1992: 196), the Lakota would also seek guidance and advice from “buffalo dreamers”, who due to their special connection with the animals, would direct them to buffalo herds. Apart from these superstitious methods to attain buffalo, warfare delivered a means to secure good hunting grounds from other tribes, a dynamic I will discuss in more detail beyond.

Ever-rising market demand pressured herds to an extent outstripping animal reproduction, eventually leading to at least some tribes’ retreat from hunting for trade, as argued by Flores (2007: 161). However, if this was a conservationist move to spare bison remains unknown.

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<sup>41</sup> In case of the Lakota, from places like Wind Cave (Mesteth 2016).

Dobak (1996: 50 f.) suggests in assessing accounts of contemporaries, who were unable to recognize the inherent unsustainability of hunting practices of Euroamericans and Indians killing buffalo in the thousands at a time, that for people, including the Indians living on the Plains, it must have been hard to predict or confidentially evaluate the effects of their actions on the overall bison populations, since buffalo, when encountered, were seen in vast/high numbers: “Hunters, both Native and European, continued to see large herds because the density looked the same, even though fewer buffalo occupied a smaller range” (Dobak 1996: 51). Dan Flores reconstructs a possible emic perspective, which could have existed among western Sioux in the mid-1800s when faced with diminishing bison populations:

“Pushing into these new buffalo grounds in the 1840s, their numbers growing almost yearly, the western Siouan bands now confronted a riddle. Everywhere they looked, just beyond their reach there seemed to be great numbers of animals ripe for the taking. Yet inevitably, whenever they seized these new countries to the west, wildlife populations appeared to decrease not very many years after their arrival. It was a paradox that set them up inevitably to push on yet again” (Flores 2007: 162).

However, as Dobak (1996: 47) emphasizes, on its outskirts the shrinkage of the buffalo range was indeed noticed by far travelled men like Father DeSmet in the late 1840s, or tribes like the Assiniboinés and Cree, inhabiting the Plains’ northeastern edges, who complained outspokenly about the Métis’ threat to their buffalo herds. Ten years later traders began to report of serious declines, even predicting the bison’s extinction. It also becomes quite evident from some other accounts (Flores 2007: 161 ff.) that there must have been critical observers among the Lakota, who could very well see through cultural filters and were not satisfied by one-dimensional superstitious explanations for the buffalo’s disappearance and were clearly able to identify the human induced causes for the buffalo’s successive decimation. The most obvious answer was found in increased Euroamerican encroachment onto their territories. Devastating effects on bison populations of White hunters, trappers and sportsmen, enhanced traffic of gold-seekers and settlers as well as later the construction of the railroad cutting through their prime range did not remain unnoticed by Plains tribes. In the contrary, Whites got to be directly associated as generally disturbing the herds and scaring away the bison (Flores 2007: 167).



### **2.2.3 The End of Lakota Suzerainty on the Northern Great Plains**

The Platte River valley which had been seized by the Lakota for its abundance in herds from the Crow, would shortly thereafter become a main access road to the Plains for migration streams to destinations like Oregon, California and Utah during the 1840s (White 1978: 338). In an attempt to protect White travelers and commerce on the Plains from tribes' aggression directing towards them for disturbing and decimating game, US Indian officials sought to reimburse tribes for their economic loss, also with the intent to pacify the war-ridden Plains in settling intertribal competition in specifically assigning certain territories to the various tribal groups. White argues that in contrast to an ethnocentric history depicting the Fort Laramie treaty as an interference to "divide and conquer", the purpose was to establish peace in order

"to draw firm boundaries between the tribes, [so] they [the US] could hold a tribe responsible for any depredations committed within its allotted area. Furthermore, by granting compensation for the destruction of game, the government gave itself an entree into tribal politics: by allowing or withholding payments, they could directly influence the conduct of the Indians" (White 1978: 340).

Following White's interpretation, the Fort Laramie Treaty thus delivered the US with a tool to politically control the area by economic means (White 1978: 340). However, in severely reducing buffalo populations, Whites, next to their tribal enemies, had become perceived as competitors over buffalo and grassland as Flores (2007: 167) notes, referring to a decision made by western Sioux leaders at an annual gathering at Bear Butte in the Black Hills in the summer of 1857, to "whip out" all Whites, except traders, entering their precious hunting grounds (Bolz 1986: 65). In choosing to prohibit any further land cessions to the US, Sioux leaders must have realized that the progressing conversion of Prairies to farm and ranchlands at the time not only promoted an economy that stood in sharp contrast to their own, but also posed a threat to their way of life as nomadic hunting (and gathering) people. The strong attachment to this way of being is reflected in its remaining relevance for Lakota identity today, even though the contemporary landscape on the Plains is all cut up into individual often barb wire-fenced parcels of land. This becomes apparent in a statement made by elder (and compassionate hunter) BJ Kidder from the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, who told me during a drive through the reservation:

"When I see people, it's hard for them to understand that this is what we do, we live off this wildlife, we enjoy it. The scenery, everything combined as one, that's hunting for us. It's in our blood. We gather food. We don't grow corn or whatever or raising cattle,

we're used to wildlife" (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017).

Unsurprisingly, the Tetons were outraged when their Yankton allies had sold land at the Missouri a year later in 1858, to which they still claimed title although, by that time, they had left the area decades ago (White 1878: 342). As Pickering (2000: 4) points out, dwindling bison herds in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century coincided with a shift in the world economy's focus from furs to agriculture. The resulting conflict in land-use interests steadily intensified tensions between the US and the Lakota culminating in what came to be known as Red Cloud's War, which as Flores bluntly puts it, "ought to be seen as a war to save the buffalo" from a Lakota perspective (Flores 2007: 153).

Indeed, the Bozeman trail used by fortune seekers heading towards newly discovered goldfields in Montana in 1863 led directly through the heart of Lakota hunting grounds (what is now western South Dakota and northeastern Wyoming), which had been recognized as their land and been promised to be protected from White intruders by the US government in the treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851 (Gibbon 2003: 114 f.; Feest 2009d: 89). Regardless of the negotiated treaty rights and obligations, the US army general William Tecumseh Sherman ordered the construction of a number of military posts and forts along the trail to control the area and protect the gold seekers rushing through Lakota lands.

Simultaneously, in 1866 renewed negotiations were held at Fort Laramie as an attempt by the US government to push Lakota leaders to cede more lands to the US. However, when Red Cloud was informed by a soldier that construction of forts along the Bozeman Trail had already been decided, he appealed to the Lakota delegation to abandon the treaty talks and fight all intruders of their territory that had been promised to them in the Fort Laramie of 1851 (Sanstead 1995: 11).

What followed was a series of battles between the US and Lakota, the former trying to maintain the trail, the latter aiming to destroy it. The most famous military encounter between the two powers came to be known as the "Fetterman Massacre" at the time, only much later accurately rebranded and renamed to "Fetterman Fight"<sup>42</sup> in American literature: In the attempt to clear the trail Lieutenant Colonial William Fetterman and eighty US soldiers were killed in an ambush attack led by the famous Lakota war chief Crazy Horse in 1866 (Dunbar-Oritz 2014: 145; Uteley 1988b: 174). At last the Lakota emerged as winners, when two years later the Bozeman Trail was closed and abandoned fortifications along the road were burnt down after

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<sup>42</sup> Once enough temporal distance had been gained for definition-based reason to dominate over ethnocentrically rooted emotion based argumentation.

a number of unsuccessful military campaigns by the army to fight the Lakota on their own terms. Another treaty was negotiated with the Sioux again in Fort Laramie in 1868 (Sanstead 1995: 12): Although smaller than their initial territory (negotiated in 1851), basically the whole of today's South Dakota west of the Missouri River plus some parts of land north, east and south of it was declared the "Great Sioux Reservation" (Feest 2009d: 92). Again, as a compensation for lost hunting grounds, annuities, food rations, and other forms of economic and social support were promised to the Lakota.

While Red Cloud, who seemed to have made his point agreed to the conditions and moved onto the reservation, other powerful leaders at the time among them Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull refused to sign the treaty document and continued to hunt and roam outside of the newly set reservation boundaries. However, as news spread about discoveries of Gold in the Black Hills, which had become a sacred shrine to the Lakota, which they visited for ceremonies, also acting as a natural reserve for game other than buffalo, needed to supplement Lakota diet and the production of different crafts and clothing<sup>43</sup>, another large flow of White migrants were attracted to Lakota lands. Resulting conflicts delivered enough (perceivably legitimating) reasons for the US army to send out a military expedition into the Black Hills (Sanstead 1995: 12 ff.).

In this sense the treaty of 1868 can be also interpreted as a strategic move by the US to grant protection to settlers, while recovering their resources for renewed attacks, especially after the progressively supported explorations and the subsequent discoveries of gold in the Black Hills (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014: 152; Feest 2009d: 89 ff.). In 1873 Sherman wrote to president Grant: "We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to their extermination men, women, and children. [...] during an assault, the soldiers cannot pause to distinguish between male and female, or even discriminate to age" (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014: 145). Lieutenant George Armstrong Custer, who had previously proved his ability in genocidal warfare against the Cheyenne when indiscriminately massacring unarmed civilians at the Southern Cheyenne reservation in today's Oklahoma, led one of the regiments sent out to finally break the last resistance of the Northern Cheyenne, Arapaho and Lakota Indians, which had united under popular leaders like Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull (Gibbon 2003: 116 f.; Dunbar-Ortiz 2014: 145). However, this first attempt utterly failed: In 1876 Custer and more than 200 US soldiers of the seventh cavalry regiment were helplessly outnumbered and killed in battle by an estimated 1500 to 2000 Lakota

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<sup>43</sup> According to Brown, Black Elk (with whom he became friends when doing research among the Lakota), would sometimes refer to the Black Hills as the Lakota's "ice box", for they provided them with animals in times of food scarcity, when no bison were to be found on the Plains (Brown 1996: 6).

and Northern Cheyenne warriors, when attempting to attack their encampment at the Little Big Horn, known to the Lakota as Greasy Grass River (Lührmann 2009: 98; Utley 1988a).

But the success was short-lived. Lakota military resistance seized, as tribes were soon forced to split up into smaller groups, again due to lack of game (Feest 2009e: 104). In fear of revenge by US troops many bands moved onto the lands of the Great Sioux Reservation. Sitting Bull fled to Canada<sup>44</sup>, while Crazy Horse remained in the Black Hills area, surrendering in 1877 out of starvation (and exhaustion) (Feest 2009e: 105). In 1881, after many hardships, most of his followers had already returned to the reservations in the US, Sitting Bull also had to leave Canada as all but a few bison had disappeared from the Canadian steppe as well<sup>45</sup> (Feest 2009g: 112; Dobak 1996: 49).

In the end it was not the US military that had triumphed over the Lakota, but their economic dependency on buffalo had finally forced them to give up their nomadism and permanently settle down on reservations. But far from having surrendered and replaced this very foundational aspect of their traditional way of life, hunting and gathering practices and ethos have shown historical continuity and remain alive and well in the representation and performance of Lakota culture today, as I will discuss in chapter 3.

#### 2.2.3.1 *“Where have our relatives gone?”<sup>46</sup>: The destruction of the American Bison and the Demise of Plains Nomadism*

One key question remained unanswered in the elaborations above: What were after all the driving forces that had caused the North American bison to become almost completely extinct, though they have been populating the continent in such vast, seemingly inexhaustible numbers?

Considering that according to estimates 30 to 60 million buffalo inhabited North America before the advent of European arrival on the continent (Brown 1997: 5) it could simply be stated that European colonization demanding ever more territory for economic and political expansion, bereft the buffalo of its habitat, simultaneously diminishing the space for the

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<sup>44</sup> According to Dobak (1996: 48), probably up to 5000 Sioux entered Canada in 1877. Feest (2009e: 105; 2009f: 108) reports that Sitting Bull was only accompanied by roughly 1100 followers, of which 900 Hunkpapa returned with him to the US again in 1881.

<sup>45</sup> According to Brown (1996: 6) only a few pockets of bison were estimated to have remained on the Canadian Plains by 1889, totaling not more than 600 animals, while in the US 265 head were counted around that time (Brown 1992: 6).

<sup>46</sup> This headline was taken from a title of a children’s book written by Nancy Rae Clark, a Jicarilla-Apache wildlife protector, co-founder of the Native food sovereignty initiative “Herbal Gardens Wellness” (Clark 2017).

coexistence of Indigenous peoples' natural resource-based way of life. However, I want to shortly engage into a slightly more detailed discussion illuminating complexities as they reveal how the buffalo's (near) extinction is strongly intertwined with the cultural and physical genocide of Indigenous populations resulting from colonial politics. The Europeans' and later the Canadians' and Americans' transformation of (predominantly processual or only slightly systematically altered) landscapes into productive agricultural spaces and their exploitation of endemic plant and animal species for commerce, soon had caused the woodland buffalo in the eastern parkland forests to become extinct (URL 6). Indigenous populations, forced off their lands were drawn into the European market through trade as a result of increased competition over land and resources. Locked into the European fur trade industrial complex as suppliers and profiteers, a prerogative to stay competitive and persist in the face of growing socio-economic and military pressures, Indigenous peoples had to exploit game populations for their economic wellbeing and survival as micro-societies. The high demand for animal products far outstripped animal reproduction (Pickering 2001: 4). The advent of the horse on the Plains gave rise to the Plains nomadic cultural complex, primarily based on hunting buffalo for sustenance but as time progressed increasingly for trade as well. But, as I have shown above, the European market was already deeply shaping intertribal relations in benefitting some peoples more than others in the contest over hunting grounds. Thriving economies based on subsistence and trade caused Indigenous populations on the Plains to rise up as also an increasing number of Euroamericans – hunters, traders, over-landers, settlers (listed in the succession of their appearance) – entered the Plains environment (Flores 2007: 155). All of these interdependent factors, the horse and human population increase in combination with simultaneous market expansion demanded grass, space and nutrition for growth, thus logically stressing the dominant indigenous animal populations most abundant since adapted best to the Plains environment, the North American *Plains bison*<sup>47</sup>, that had evolved over the past thousands of years before European survival as the dominant specimen of the Plains.

Although scholars have highlighted a variety of climatological and environmental factors, above all extreme droughts during the 1840s, 50s and 60s (Merchant 2007: 15 ff.; Dobak 1996: 38 f.), which according to some authors' estimates lessened the grasslands' carrying capacity of buffalo up to 60 percent (Bryson 1981 cited in Flores 2007: 164), fires and grasshoppers even reducing the extent of the bison's range further but also European introduced animal sicknesses such as the Bovine disease (Flores 2007: 164) severely contributing to the the bison's

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<sup>47</sup> denominating a subspecies of *bison bison* in biological terminology, the latter being the only remnant species of the genus *bison* in the contemporary world.

rapid decrease in numbers, there is general agreement that the “coup de grace” of destruction was a result from human overhunting.

A considerable amount of ecological historians (Krech 1999; Isenberg 1996, 2000; Merchant 2007; Flores 2001, 2007; Dobak 1996) from fields like anthropology, history and environmental studies wanting to evaluate the human impact causing wild, migratory bison to disappear from the Great Plains, have added a racial dimension to their inquiry in trying to compare how (much) each of the different (politically/culturally separate) units or parties involved in the slaughter – most favorably categorized as Indians, Metis, White trappers and hunters or simply put, the (colonizing) Whites – contributed to the buffalo’s demise, resulting in them subtly or openly giving their judgement on who was to blame to what extent and why. The underlying motive to do so, I find, is rooted in an attempt to demystify popular notions of Indians as natural environmentalists by seeking to disprove generalizing racial ascriptions of enhanced ecological sensitivity and conservationist attitudes of Native Americans. In most cases, this is done through a well-researched analysis of historical accounts, scientific data as well as other evidence aimed at reconstructing and grasping historical realities and complexities. Such an approach has most famously been pursued by Shepard Krech III in his “Ecological Indian”, who shows that Amerindians practiced both, environmental conservation and resource exploitation prior and after colonization with the intent to naturalize Indians by stating “in Indian country as in the larger society, conservation is often sacrificed for economic security” (Krech 1999: 227). Although they may come from different angles in terms of their regional focus and sources used, this type of scholarship emphasizes peoples’ exposure and subjection to their human condition and environmental, cultural, social, economic and political dynamics in which they were/are entangled, dictating, determining or influencing their behaviors. While they all come to similar conclusions, they present their findings in quite differing ways. Unfortunately, most of them fall into the same trap Krech tapped into and has been criticized for (Ranco 2007), namely in neglecting to emphasize – policy driven and – historical colonial and contemporary neocolonial power dynamics at play, which often made and make conservationist or sustainable practices (next to) impossible.

Dobak, who, as it turns out, only pretends to assess whether Native peoples, in particular Plains Indians (on whom his analysis focusses on), would have “established a society in ecological equilibrium”, for he closes the case in stating towards the end of his article that this “is to ask the unanswerable, for these peoples never existed in isolation”, adding that “the forces with which they had to contend made ‘a healthy, functioning ecology’, sustainable “over the long term”, impossible to achieve” (Dobak 1996: 52). Nevertheless, he concludes from his

calculations that Plains Indians killed buffalo at an unsustainable rate taking out 30 per cent more animals than they needed for subsistence. He also emphasizes that, being able to hunt on horseback Plains Indians preferred to select cows<sup>48</sup> over bulls, for their skins were lighter, more easily tanned and worked on and the meat would be more tender (Dobak 1996: 46, 49, 51). In this sense the horse, giving rise to Plains nomads during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in the first place, did not just become a competitor for grass<sup>49</sup> (Merchant 2007: 18), but gave way to new hunting techniques (based on the pursuit on horseback), which severely stressed the reproductive capacities of bison herds.

Although many Plains tribes fell victim to devastating diseases, their overall populations grew at a rapid pace (Lowie 1954: 12 f.), increasing their numbers in the Canadian Plains alone by 60 percent within a 15-year period between 1862 and 1877 (Dobak 1996: 49). This was again owed to their prospering economies based on hunting buffalo for subsistence and trade. As many after him have done in a more detailed manner, Hassrick (1992: 202) argues that the economic dependence on buffalo inevitably had to result in a cultural “catastrophy” (or breakdown) for the Lakota people as external conditions changed. Speaking for Plains Indian nomadism in general, Dobak notes as a final remark:

“The Plains equestrian way of life, only a few generations old, would last as long as the buffalo that sustained it; the intrusion of market forces of European provenance, as was the horse, would end it” (Dobak 1996: 52).

Similarly, Isenberg concludes that by

“embracing the emerging Euroamerican market, the Plains nomads bound their fate to the Euroamerican economic and ecological complex. In the nineteenth century, the dynamic grassland environment, commercial exploitation of the bison, and epidemic disease would bring an end to the nomads’ dominance of the western Plains” (Isenberg 2000).

Flores stands in line with the general tenor of above cited arguments, but his emphasis differs:

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<sup>48</sup> Multiple accounts confirm the preoccupation of Indians to hunt cows for their special properties. According to Bolz (1986: 64) and McMillan/Yellowhorn (2004: 146). Iron Shells’ winter count reports of a bison hunt conducted by his band in 1857, where hunters discovered only after killing off the whole herd, that all animals had been male (Hassrick 1992: 367). This confirms that cows were already severely scarce by that time.

Also, orphaned calves-robies had been especially sought after for trade, since they had “unusually fine, silky” fur, from adopting cows licking their coats to signal their taking responsibility as step-mother (Brown 1996: 15). Even contemporary hunters I have interviewed in 2017 told me that they would rather hunt top quality young animals, for their meat tastes better, which harshly differs from trophy hunters’ interests, who rarely even take the meat (Fieldnotes 07/27/2017).

<sup>49</sup> Dobak notes that competition for forage between buffalo and horses was not so much of an issue on the northern Plains, since horse herds maintained northern tribes were much smaller than in the south, where peoples had accumulated horses in vast numbers severely impacting the capacity of the ranges (Dobak 1996: 38).

“Of all the causes of buffalo decline in the nineteenth century [...] the global market’s conversion of Indian hunters into market hunters was perhaps the most *pernicious*. Yet given the advantages of trade and trade contacts, few could resist its pull” (Flores 2007: 161, *emphasis added*).

Although Flores explicitly states in a note following his admittedly well-argued “interpretive synthesis”, that he does not intend to make certain individuals or groups “look bad” (Flores 2007: 168), I find his wording, counter to more reason-based formulations cited above, to be quite judgmental (and ethnocentric – for his comment is inherently based on a European constructed Native ennoblement) in directly blaming Indians for having played the most “pernicious” part in the buffalo’s demise. This becomes especially apparent when he writes towards the end that “for the better part of a century the western Sioux themselves had been executing a Pac-Man-like march westward, devouring one pocket of buffalo after another”, insinuating right after that, “[h]onest individuals among them must have known that [the destructive effects it had on the ecosystem] very well” (Flores 2007: 168). In highlighting the Indians’ own contribution to the destruction of their very way of life<sup>50</sup>, but neglecting colonial dimensions deeply intertwined if not to say at the very basis of the development of the nomadic Plains Indian lifestyle, Flores not only (deliberately or unconsciously) passes (a silent) judgement on Indians for not fitting the noble savage ideal, but also fails to fully grasp the power relations at play, which would have shifted his emphasis away from the Indians’ “wrong-doing” to their mere embeddedness within larger contexts and exposure to environmental, economic and social (colonially induced) forces determining tribes’, yet every society’s “decision-making” process and developmental dynamic in the past and today.

Isenberg, although on a more neutral grounding, also emphasizes agency to a problematic extent as I would argue, in making it look like Plains tribes had much of an alternative to “embracing the emerging Euroamerican market” (see quote above). And who were the “few” that could resist its pull, Flores writes of? Sure, he brings up the example of one Hunkpapa group among the Lakota, under the leadership of Little Bear that stopped trading with the Whites (Flores 2007: 161). But, Little Bears’ band was just only one rebellious particle of a much larger cultural complex, the Lakota tribe(s), who continued to maintain trade relations with Whites

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<sup>50</sup> Estimates about the extent to which Plains tribes actually overhunted bison populations differ extensively: While Dobak (1996) identifies them as majorly contributing to the bison’s rapid decimation (at least in Canada), scholars like Brown rely on data from the 1840s, stating that “the Indians made use of not more than approximately two million head annually” (Brown 1996: 6).



out of political and economic necessity to foster prosperity and wealth among its members and secure power to its elites.

As I have shown above, it was trade with the Whites that had enabled the Lakota in the first place to keep up in the arms race with the Crees and Ojibwas in their woodland homelands and even might have helped them gain an advantage in their advance westwards against other tribes already settling or roaming on the Plains. I conclude from my personal research that the Indians' entry into the fur trade, which, although it may initially not have been an instant necessity, was surely attracting by opening up space for new possibilities and learning as also convincingly argued by Satterlee and Malan (1975: 23) who categorized this consent-based cultural exchange as "permissive acculturation", soon became not so much a matter of choice as it was a matter of survival. Native peoples had to acquire guns and other European weaponry in order to defend themselves according to the times' technological standards when faced with increased intertribal competition in their world progressively shrinking as the Euroamerican frontier was pushed further and further west for the sake of US America's expansion as a nation, claiming its place on the international battlefield for power. Thus, when looking at macro-dynamics at play, one is more likely to abstain from blaming one party or another.

However, on the individual level irresponsible or reluctant behavior is indeed a matter of deliberate choice. The Lakota observed by George Catlin killing 1,400 bison just to cut out tongues for "buying" whiskey were no better than the sportsman indiscriminately shooting bison for "fun"/pleasure in the latter half of the century. Of course, the fight for survival, economic pressures and socialization within a certain cultural context strongly impact individual decision making as well, but cultures have their own independent dynamic. It is out of the hand of the individual to determine a society's development. As a social organism, having a life of its own, society is following its own strategy to survive as it is a product of its environment in constantly re-adapting to it. This understanding of society also explains why the Lakota as a people have persisted until today: suppression and humiliation by the dominant power maintained a strong core of unwillingness and resistance to western assimilation by a fluctuating number of people identified by scholars as "traditionalists", who share a collective sense about aspects representing Lakota cultural identity, that provides them with an alternative

or at least additional way of life to a simply capitalist market-economic America<sup>51</sup>. Much of the Lakota culture is still alive and well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as I will show at the example of Indigenous people's hunting and gathering practices (and ethos) on the Standing Rock Sioux reservations and (Plains reservations and reserves) beyond its borders in chapter 3.

Before ending this chapter, it needs to be pointed out that the great bulk of destruction, finally wiping out the last free roaming buffalo herds on the Plains, was carried through by Metis traders highly specialized in the commercial trade with desired buffalo products, and a vast amount of White bison hunters and so-called buffalo hunting war parties of recreational shooters in the 1870s and 1880s (Dobak 1996; Flores 2007; Merchant 2007).

“Records showed 120 buffalo killed in 40 minutes and 2,000 in a month. The average buffalo hunter killed one hundred a day. One hundred thousand buffalo were killed each year, until they were on the verge of extinction, removing the subsistence base from Indian cultures”, as summarized by Merchant (2007: 20).

Although some scholars (Isenberg 2000 and Flores 2007) arose doubts about the accuracy of sources, there seems to be substantial evidence as brought forth by Merchant (2007: 20) and Dunbar-Oritz (2014: 142 ff.) that US policy supported, and army officials encouraged the slaughter of buffalo as a war tactic to rid Plains tribes of their subsistence base and starve them to surrender to US rule and subjugation onto reservations. Today, the few last remaining genetically unaltered wild migratory buffalo, which have never been resettled or forcefully removed, are to be found migrating in and around the Yellowstone National Park (Gates et al. 2005). In 1882, their numbers were down to as few as 23 animals, guarded from hide hunters by the US military (Meagher 1973) but could recover to a population of approximately 4000 within the last century. The last words on the subject shall be given to Native wilderness activist Nancy Rae Clark who worked for the Buffalo Field Campaign (URL 7), an initiative trying to stop the slaughter of Yellowstone buffalo as a measure of population control by the Yellowstone National Parks' wildlife management in cooperation with the Montana

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<sup>51</sup> Cynthia, a self-proclaimed traditionalist from the Enoch Cree Nation, told me about the hardships of trying to balance and satisfy both, her traditional obligations as a Cree woman and her duties as a mother of three with a job that pays the bills:

“We are trying to live here with you, but we also trying to do our stuff too. And we have to work extra hard to hang on, to what we do, cause we are also trying to live in this world. So what I never looked at it that way, but I had a friend who pointed it out for me. I just came from class all day and then that night, we were going to a night ceremony and she timed it. We left the house at six. We got home, at like, three. That's like nine hours. And she is like, that's a full-time job. So you just came from full-time school to do the ceremony, but that's a full-time job and she is like, and then you have to find out how to sleep in there. In the middle of that. We are doing that all the time. That's normal for our family and, so, it would be nice to be in a society that understood that we need that time to nurture that culture and that spirituality” (Cowan, Cynthia Formal Interview 09/15/2017).

Department of Livestock (to serve corporate interests of the cattle ranch industry and farming enterprises in the vicinity of the park), who in an interview with me, when I visited her in early October 2017, drew parallels between the treatment of American bison and Indigenous populations in the US, pointing at some perceived correlations between the genocidal politics of the US against Indigenous people and the American bison<sup>52</sup> that continue to persist until today:

“You know, what they do to the buffalo, they do to us. [Like us, the buffalo] are being told, you know, that they have to stay behind boundaries in a park. The buffalo are on reservation systems. They are monitored, they are watched, their hazing is just like racism, you know? They have people that don’t like them, they call them pests, you know? We get called these names, too. We, we’re considered vermin, that we’re somehow less than somebody, because of the color of our skin and the way that we walk and our prayer. And the buffalo are treated that way. You know, the elk are treated better than the buffalo, the elk are allowed to roam all the way down to Mexico, New Mexico. We’re still allowed to hunt them on the Jicarilla reservation, we have hunting guidelines for them. But no buffalo, the buffalo were tortured and killed because of our relationship with them and they’re still being tortured because of our belief and our relationship with them. They register them now, like travel numbers in the American Buffalo Association by bloodline blood quantum.<sup>53</sup> That’s the same that they do to us. you know, Native nations, we didn’t see anybody as being different, we didn’t see them as being separate from us, if they were French and we adopted them, they were Native. They were our family. Buffalo are the same way. Stephanie Sawyer, the media coordinator, tells us the story of finding this calf and they couldn’t find the mother, the mother had been killed. And the other buffalo, our buffalo cows came and they took that calf under their wing and adopted it, Hunkpapa ceremony<sup>54</sup>. That’s where we learned it! You know? And everything the buffalo are, we are, from the amino acid structure, their atoms, to the way that they’re treated, to the way that we’re all treated” (Clark, Nancy Rae Formal Interview 10/04/2017).

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<sup>52</sup> Ironically, the bison had been declared national mammal and icon of the US in May 2016 by the Obama administration, but a change of management policies was explicitly mentioned as not being intended and effected by the National Bison Legacy Act, where it states in Section 3 (b) under: “RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.— Nothing in this Act or the adoption of the North American bison as the national mammal of the United States shall be construed or used as a reason to alter, change, modify, or otherwise affect any plan, policy, management decision, regulation, or other action by the Federal Government”(URL 8).

<sup>53</sup> The degree of blood quantum, informing about the percentage of Indian blood is issued through certificates by both the US and Canada. Tribal nations in the US can decide for themselves, if or what percentage of blood they demand or require for membership (Muckle 2013: 11 f.). In Standing Rock, ¼ Indian blood (Gagnon 2012: 145 f.) is needed to be accepted and to register as enrolled member on the reservation. However, as Gagnon notes, it has been

“estimated that the number of Sioux of ¼ Sioux blood will be only about 40 percent of the population by about 2050. [...] Since Sioux tribal constitutions include a blood quantum requirement, reservation governments will have to address this issue or watch as they are bred out of existence. The accompanying question is will the American government and American public accept a tribal solution based on something other than race?” (Gagnon: 2012: 146)

Against this backdrop, Wolfe (2011) even argues that the policy of blood quanta is a continuance of a settler-colonial elimination strategy, now targeted towards Indian societies’ assimilation and incorporation.

<sup>54</sup> According to Brown, the Lakota had taken notice of the buffalo’s habit to adopt and accept calves of another blood-related subgroup of the larger herd, whose mother has died or been killed in the hunt (Brown 1997: 15).

The following chapter is dedicated to point at continuities in hunting practices on Lakota reservations in general and at the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in particular, before I discuss the contemporary situation of hunting and gathering among descendants of equestrian Plains tribes in chapter 3, revealing their persistency throughout time and continuing economic and cultural significance especially in regard to the (re-)construction of Lakota other Plains-Indian identities.

## **2.3 Reservation-Era Hunting and Gathering Practices among the Lakota: Economic Shifts and Continuities under Colonial Rule**

Numerous publications (e. g.: Hedren 2011; Feest 2009; Ostler 2001; Sanstead 1995; Satterlee/Malan 1975) inform about the transition of Lakota social structure caused by the shift from a nomadic way of life to permanent settlement on reservations and the exposure to US assimilation policy. Instead of recounting this history in detail, I will focus on effects these (forced) changes in ways of life had on hunting and gathering practices pursued by Lakota and how a hunter-gatherer ethos hampered US policy driven and imposed economic development on the reservation. My intent is to reveal how the strong association with the nomadic past as bison hunters (for many, especially men) continued to play a fundamental role in re-constituting Lakota identity.

### **2.3.1 Confinement onto Reservations and forced Sedentism**

By 1881, with Sitting Bull and his followers being the last, all Sioux had officially been moved to reservations (Gagnon 2012: 47; Feest 2009g: 112; Feest 2009i: 142 f.). Although the 1868 Fort Laramie treaty had endowed the Sioux with the right to hunt buffalo in so-called “Unceded Indian Territories” in present-day Wyoming, Montana and North Dakota, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs had ordered that all Indians must report and move to their respective Indian Agencies by January 31<sup>st</sup> 1876, or would otherwise be considered enemies and subject to prosecution by the US military (Sanstead 1995: 16 f.). A year earlier, on January 30<sup>th</sup> of 1875, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs Edward P. Smith had already consented with the request to extinguish Sioux hunting rights under the Fort Laramie treaty of 1868, stating in a Letter to the Department of Interior that

“[i]t is very desirable to put an end to these hunting parties north of the North Platte River, as they are of no material advantage to the Indians engaged in such hunts, (since the buffalo have in the main left the country,) but are a source of continual annoyance to white settlers in that country, and so long as said rights are not extinguished the settlement of that country will be postponed” (Letter From The Secretary of the Interior, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1875).

While the remaining free-roaming bands were forced to surrender under military pressure and lack of food after the battle of the Little Big Horn, Lakota leaders on reservations were pushed under threats to sign a document ceding the Black Hills to the US (Feest 2009e: 104; Bolz 1986: 70). Despite the delegations’ inability to meet the required approval of four fifths of Sioux males for further land cessions according to the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty (Feest 2009e: 104), US congress ratified the act in 1877, which also extinguished the Sioux’s hunting rights in lands, previously demarcated as “Unceded Indian Territories” (Sanstead 1992: 17, 36). Held on the reservation as “prisoners of war”, not being allowed to venture outside its borders, bands were soon unable to effectively maintain their nomadic lifestyle based on hunting and gathering as “the decrease in land base exacerbated the insufficiency of buffalo and other animal resources to sustain Lakota communities” (Pickering 2000: 5).

While, according to Ostler (2001: 117), the last large bison hunts on the Great Sioux Reservation actually took place in 1883, James McLaughlin, who had become the new Agent at the Standing Rock Sioux Agency in 1881 idealized the hunts conducted by the bands at Standing Rock in the summer of 1882 in his report as *the last bison hunts*, supposedly marking the end of Plains-Indians’ traditional way of life. Regarding it as a final symbolic act, McLaughlin led the Sioux, whose horses and guns had been confiscated in the preceding years, on two big bison hunts, where up to 7000 animals were killed in total, thus closing a “chapter in these peoples’ history”, as Feest (2009: 121) put it. As pointed out by Ostler (2001: 116 f.), McLaughlin’s ethnocentric description perfectly fit with the popular narrative of *the vanishing Indian* predominant among the (settler-) colonialists at the time, which also becomes apparent through its (continuing) perpetuation in North Dakota’s State Seal, framed in 1889, depicting an ideal-type Plains-Indian warrior on horseback with headdress and lance chasing a buffalo towards the setting sun on the left side of the frame, as both – animal and “stone-age” hunter – are gradually replaced by the arrival of “modern” agricultural tools (plow, anvil and sledge) for cultivation representative of the “inevitable” cultural progress. McLaughlin was a firm believer in the just above depicted logic of social evolutionism based on the (empirically falsified) premise or “belief that culture [or socio-cultural systems] generally develops in a uniform and progressive manner” (URL 9), politically abused to perpetuate the racist ideology of “Manifest

Destiny”<sup>55</sup>, which essentially delivered the ideological justification for the treatment of Native Americans. As such, he held the opinion of many US politicians at the time, including the majority of members of the loosely organized association of so-called “Friends of the Indians” (Gagnon 2012: 50), who were convinced that the Indians’ only chance to escape extinction would be their successful assimilation to Euroamerican standards. Like his colleagues at other agencies McLaughlin was eager to see a rapid transition of the Lakota to the “White Man’s Ways” through Christian value-based education and by making farmers (and later also cattle ranching pastoralists) out of them (Ostler 2001: 115 f.).

However, initially many Lakota remained reluctant to accept their assumed their “fate” of becoming either “civilized” or perish. Ostler argues, that the Lakota, who had stopped the slaughter of buffalo after taking out only 5000 animals from the herd in their first hunt, must have interpreted the event differently than McLaughlin observed it, in concluding from his analysis of McLaughlin’s notes and other historical records, that “the Standing Rock hunters hoped that if the bison could avoid being slaughtered by non-Indian hide hunters and if they themselves practiced conservation, the animals would continue to give themselves to the Indians” (Ostler 2001: 117). As a matter of fact, buffalo calling ceremonies continued to be held by Lakota holy men like Black Elk and Red Dog (Ostler 2001: 117), but as Feest (2009: 122) remarks, soon lost their significance as bison would not return to the reservation. Bereft of and unable to retrieve their traditional way of life, many Lakota blamed the White Man for killing off the herds, thus holding the US government responsible to make up for their loss in having to pay for their life expenses (Bolz 1986: 72; Satterlee/Malan 1975: 21 f.). According to Pine Ridge Indian Agent McGillicuddy, Red Cloud stated one time that, “the Great Spirit did not make us to work. He made us to hunt and fish. [...] The White man owes us a living for the lands he has taken from us” (McGillicuddy 1941 in Satterlee/Malan 1975: 39). The 1876 Agreement which ceded the Black Hills from the Lakota had stated that government rations

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<sup>55</sup> Politically, social evolutionist models of scientific categorization differentiating socio-cultural systems or societies according to their levels of socio-structural complexity, were frequently abused to hierarchize societies, declaring complexly organized societies as the technologically and culturally farthest progressed, in other words, as the most civilized, which served as argumentative foundation to regard western European societies as superior to all others, naturalizing White supremacy as the only form capable and, thus, eligible to exist and lead humanity into the future (URL 9). Thus, the ideological instrumentalization (through the misinterpretation) of evolutionist theories delivered a supposedly science-based justification for Native American societies’ assimilation or elimination in rendering the dominance of the “fittest” or most advanced culture as being part of a natural evolutionary development. In this way, it perfectly fit and built on the settler-colonial ideology of Euroamerican Expansionism, coined “Manifest Destiny”, which rendered the subjection of its “primitive” inhabitants and the occupation and acquisition of their lands, as predestined legitimate development consistent with the will of God. Within this logic, European colonizers had seen themselves as being divinely ordained with the mission to conquer and settle the lands in the New World (URL 10; URL 11).

would be provided as long until the Lakota would be able to sustain themselves on the reservation, predominantly through agriculture, as was initially intended (Ostler 2001: 118).

### **2.3.2 Economic Assimilation: Agriculture and Cattle Ranching**

Despite the fact that Lakota could look back at their own history of horticultural practices, the idea of resorting to agricultural labor for economic survival was met with strong resentments by the majority of Lakota males. Although the Lakota, just like their middle and eastern Sioux allies in their woodland homelands, have planted different crops until the late 1700s, and at times continued to do so in the early 1800s, when, for instance, some of their bands settled next to the sedentary Arikaras (adopting many aspects of their lifestyle) for a while as buffalo herds had been depleted east of the Missouri (White 1978: 324), Lakota men, even though some of them would have been able to recall gardening practices of their ancestors of earlier generations (Ostler 2001: 120), had become strongly accustomed to their identities as nomadic hunters and warriors and were thus hesitant to take up farming. As Gibbon states: “For an experienced warrior, nothing replaced the exhilaration and material success of horse stealing, counting coup, and bison hunting” (Gibbon 2003: 120). Additionally, working the fields has been dismissed by Lakota men as being the “economic role of women” (White 1978: 326), with which most could not associate themselves (Hassrick 1992: 333). Red Cloud reportedly stated that he would only have his women look after the fields for this would not be a job for men (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 26). As Satterlee points out, in contrast to men, women’s roles did not “suffer as much as that of the males by the destruction of the hunting and gathering culture. The hunt and the raid were men's activities, and while the hunters and warriors lost their reason for being, the duties of mother and housewife continued” (Satterlee 1975: 33).

According to Ostler (2001: 120), Sioux women did most of the agricultural work in the 1880s. In time however, especially older men would join them in the activity. Apparently, elderly men had less inner conflicts in becoming farmers than younger ones, who often still felt a want to prove themselves as hunters and warriors, having been socialized to fit these ideals (Ostler 2001: 120). In the early reservation era, men and women would continue to hunt, fish and gather for subsistence wherever possible, and if they had the weapons to do so (Gibbon 2003: 140). Although outlawed, people would continue to make their own weapons. While women and children would see to gathering different wild plants, especially in summer, hunting parties made up of mainly adult males would go on multi-day hunting trips, scanning the land “on the

lookout for anything that was edible” (Ostler 2001: 118). As bison were all gone from the Prairies by the mid-1880s, elk, deer, pronghorn, antelope, and other smaller game and different types of birds became the predominant objectives of the hunt. Although legally restricted to the reservation boundaries, hunting parties would sometimes extend their range far across its borders often into their former hunting grounds as reported by ranchers and members of White communities living adjacent to the Great Sioux reservation (Ostler 2001: 118). Sanderson emphasized that large scale cattle ranchers, probably being the ones who sighted trespassing Sioux hunters most frequently, were often illegally grazing their livestock on reservation lands, thus trespassing themselves. Consequently, there seemed to have been something like an unspoken agreement between both parties to mutually tolerate each other’s presence and look “the other way when they saw a trespasser”, as expressed by Sanderson, concluding that “[i]f the cowboys kept quiet to the agent about Indians hunting north of the Cheyenne, it was understood [by ranchers taking their herds onto reservation lands] that the Sioux would not complain about cattle south of the river“ (Sanderson 2011: 56 f.).

Since subsistence activities such as hunting, fishing, gathering and gardening would not suffice for making a living on the reservation, the Sioux depended on rations supplied to them by the government. These were intended to provide them with clothing and agricultural tools to meet basic nutritional needs until Indians would be able to support themselves (Ostler 2001: 118). The release of cattle “on the hoof” to band leaders, enabled men to reenact their role as hunters in shooting the issued stock on horseback (Bolz 1986: 72; Ostler 2001: 118).

Later the animals would be butchered and skinned by women and most of their parts utilized for making tools and leather crafts, such as moccasins, which could then again be sold to traders in exchange for desired goods. When US officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs ordered that beef be issued “on the block” to prevent a feared reproduction of what they defined to be “barbaric patterns”, Sioux leaders fiercely objected this change of practice. They did so, not only because of the strong meaning the live slaughter of cows had in delivering one of few means for men to maintain a traditional identity as hunters<sup>56</sup>, as Ostler highlights, but also due to the fact that it deprived the Sioux from important parts of the animals, such as liver, intestines and hides, which would have been otherwise made use of as mentioned before (Ostler 2001: 118 f.).

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<sup>56</sup> Ostler writes that the „Sioux called issue day *wanasapi*, the word for a communal buffalo hunt” and in this sense “‘hunting’ cattle connected the Sioux to their past and allowed them to exercise valued skills and to perform ‘traditional’ roles” (Ostler 2001: 118).



Despite the Sioux's economic reliance on them, rations were successively reduced and cut by half already in the 1890s (before they were completely denied), since they became regarded as obstacles for the Sioux on their way to self-sufficiency. However, this was ordered and executed, without providing the Sioux with proper means to compensate their loss and only reinforced their dependency on the government (Bolz 1986: 71; Satterlee 1975: 44 f.).

Far more attractive than agriculture was the lifestyle as cowboys to Lakota men, who stemmed from a cultural background of equestrian nomadism (Bolz 1986: 81). Although the soil in the High Plains was anything but ideal for planting crops, the agricultural space for growing corn, potatoes, wheat, vegetables, oats, melons and other gardening products was constantly enhanced on the reservation. Raising cattle would have been more effective in that landscape, but government policy focused on pushing for an economic transition towards farming (Feest 2009h: 121; Bolz 1986: 81; Ostler 2001: 120). Ostler argues that this circumstance was owed to the fact that some agents had feared that "cattle raising would retard Indians' progress toward civilization by reinforcing their 'nomadic love of roaming'" (Ostler 2001: 120). Eventually however, after some devastating droughts and the unpopularity of farming among the Sioux, some of the agents like McGillicuddy in Pine Ridge recognized that the only realistic pathway for the Sioux to achieve self-sustenance in the Plains environment was through cattle ranching (Bolz 1986: 71, 81). By the late 1880s most families had acquired a few head of cattle, although most cattle on reservations were owned by only a few families, mostly "half breeds"<sup>57</sup> (Ostler 2001: 120). Satterlee and Malan stressed that

"cowboys became the chief culture-bearers to the Dakotas [which refers here to all Sioux, since this used to be common scholarly practice during the time of Satterlee's and Malan's publication] because they lived out-of-doors, moved independently, and were the equals of the Indian as horsemen and marksmen. The former way of life of the Dakotas could easily be converted to these activities, and the generation of Indians originally placed on reservations [...] made an excellent transition to the culture of the white Plainsman as their herds prospered" (Satterlee 1975: 27).

Cowboy lifestyle and clothing are still recognizable among Lakota residents on reservations today as it has manifested as integral part of reservation culture (Bolz 1986: 81). Predominantly, it remains a privilege of rich, mixed-blood or economically successful traditionalist families,

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<sup>57</sup> Half-breeds were mixed bloods, who by growing up in two worlds could take advantage of both. Their racial profile as being partially White aided them in gaining trust of agents, who again instrumentalized them for the promotion of assimilation by having them profit the most from progressive policies fostering cultural and economic adaption to US society on the reservation. The economic dominance of half breeds that resulted from this power dynamic is a manifest reality until today (Pickering 2000: 85).

who often either stem from a line of hereditary chiefs or have been elected chairman in the past, thus having historically enjoyed easier access to power and resources (Stromberg 2010: 83). Although Sioux families were generally doing better as cattle ranchers than as farmers and their herds tended to increase for a while, traditional values demanding generosity and hospitality were seen by agents as barriers to the “civilizing efforts” indented to assimilate them to act as “expectant capitalists” in America’s market economy (Ostler 2001: 121). As a measure to prevent people from giving away cattle for feasts at cultural celebrations as an expression of generosity or to slaughter animals to feed needy and poor relatives, punishments for slaughtering stock counter to capitalist interests were imposed by agents on the basis of what was deemed to be irrational, improper tradition-based behavior (Bolz 1986: 74).

### **2.3.3 Land Seizure and Dispossession**

#### **2.3.3.1 Allotment**

In 1887 the General Allotment Act, also known as Dawes Act – named after the senator who wrote it – was passed in Congress. Its objective was to break up communal ways of kin-based collaboration and living, which, in the case of the Lakota, had been structured in bands and *tiospayes* (extended families), and instead introduce the western model of the individual/nuclear family and strengthen the sentiment of private ownership in Native American communities. By allotting between 160 and 320 acres of land to each head of family, so-called “surplus land” on the reservation could be acquired by the government for White settlement, corporate or state use (Gibbon 2003: 135 f.; Bolz 1986: 74; Sanstead 1992: 22).

Although not all White stakeholders in the area<sup>58</sup>, most businessmen, railroad executives and settlers celebrated the passage of the act, many of them had complained already for years that Indians would not use the land productively and that in this sense reservations presented a barrier to local economic development, thus demanding their dissolution (Sanderson 2011: 65). Indian Rights Associations and other humanitarian organizations also supported the policy<sup>59</sup>,

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<sup>58</sup> Free range cattle ranchers that had migrated to the Dakotas during the 1870s and 1880s were interested in upholding the sovereignty of the Great Sioux Reservation, because it provided them with open pastures to feed their cattle save from White farmers, who were regarded by cowboys and cattle-men as competitors for space (Sanderson 2011).

<sup>59</sup> However, it must be noted that the ways in which Lakota, Dakota people were pressured into signing the land-seizure agreements were condemned and protested by these support groups (Bolz 1986: 74).

imagining White homesteaders sweeping onto reservations to act as “models for Indians” that “would help them learn about ‘superior’ American civilization” (Gagnon 2012: 50).

As a matter of fact, the Lakota were at no time unproductive during the early reservation period, but rather, while continuing traditional hunting and gathering practices wherever possible – among them also collecting bison bones of the slaughtered herds on the Prairie for trade<sup>60</sup>, they perused different labors ranging from farming, ranching, freighting, selling beadwork to performing in wild west shows (Ostler 2001). That the Lakota simply had different conceptions and ways of using the land was completely overlooked, ignored or devalued at the time. The widespread dogma among the majority of White contemporaries and political decision-makers in Washington was that the White Man’s way was the only way forward, which becomes apparent in a BIA report of 1889:

“The Indians must conform to the White Man’s Ways, peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must. They must adjust themselves to their environment and conform their way of living substantially to our civilization” (BIA Report 1889 in Sanstead 1992: 21).

Communal labor, sharing property and resources were not accepted as a legitimate alternative to the market-ideology of individual ownership and acquisition of wealth. In a hunter-gatherer society land was not seen as something to be first transformed and then exploited for profit, but rather valued “for the things it produced that sustained life”, as historian Janet McDonell argued. Satterlee and Malan also note that “White methods of exploiting the natural resources of the continent were completely out of joint with Dakota ideas of land use” (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 28). They go on arguing that the Sioux’s inability to adapt fast enough to the changed circumstances under US domination accounts for their loss of lands and resources during the early reservation era (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 28). However, as I will show beyond, a successful adaption was made impossible by the very policies that were officially intended to guarantee assimilation, but rather fostered termination. The Sioux’s ability to culturally and physically survive those destructive changes for their traditional economy were largely owed to the persistence of social structures and elements rooted in their hunter-gatherer way of life, which were inherited and partially carried on into present-day, as also recognized by Satterlee and Malan, when they write that the Lakota

“have managed, however, on a greatly diminished life base to maintain themselves for several generations. This struggle for survival on very limited resources has been possible only because elements of their old value system, such sharing and economic

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<sup>60</sup> These were sold to be processed and used as fertilizer on fields (Merchant 2007: 20).

cooperation, have endured in spite of the difficult economic situation on the reservations” (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 28).

Before the General Allotment Act could go in effect, the government needed to convince the Sioux that the Great Sioux Reservation be divided into multiple smaller reservations and the remaining land sold to the United States. In 1887 and 1889 commissions were sent to the respective Sioux agencies, pressuring and threatening the Sioux to sign away their land for the money offered or to suffer from consequences if not, these being the seizure of their lands and the total termination of governmental rations, upon which the survival of many families depended in these times of food scarcity. Although many renowned Lakota and Dakota leaders publicly opposed the signature of the so-called “Sioux Bill”, “Sioux Act” or “Great Sioux Agreement”, among them also Sitting Bull, who had never signed a treaty during his lifetime, the commission managed to accumulate the necessary number of signatures needed to “legally” buy the lands from the Sioux, opening up nine million acres of land for White homesteading in the simultaneously newly founded states of North and South Dakota (Feest 2007: 107 ff.; Sanstead 1995: 21 ff.).

According to Sanstead, the long-term goal of allotment and other assimilationist policy was directed to end tribalism and the reservation system, as it was believed

“that Indian people would suddenly drop their values, teachings, language, and cultural practices if they could be moved onto individual plots of land, learned English, and dressed in the fashion of mainstream Americans” (Sanstead 1992: 22).

Reality however looked and turned out to be somewhat different. Initially people would continue to live and work together within their bands and *tiospayes*, sharing property and goods for communal agricultural production and pastoralism. Only when related families’ allotments were separated to discourage cooperation and “enforce the concept of individuality”, the traditional function of the *tiospaye* as (military and) economic unit was disrupted (Sanstead 1992: 22). This had a devastating effect on the social organization in *tiospayes* as it had been intended by allotment policy, as Gagnon explains: “Scattering individuals around the reservation on separate parcels of land broke up the extended families and made itancan [the head of family] almost superfluous” (Gagnon 2012: 50). Polygyny was discouraged and finally stopped among younger generation, being also bereft of its economic function and discouraged by Indian agents (Feest 2009h: 125; Hassrick 1992: 334).

However, land allotment did not successfully make farmers out of the Sioux either. Eager to maintain family ties and participate at cultural festivities and ceremonies people left their farms for days, weeks, sometimes even months (when visiting and living with their relatives), causing

neglected produce and animals to die off during their absence (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 21, 28, 32). Furthermore, plots often turned out as being too small to successfully ranch or cultivate crops on them and “few Sioux had the capital to buy the extra land, plows, seed, and draft animals necessary to make farming productive, and government appropriations were insufficient to meet this need” (Gibbon 2003: 136). Consequently, many families either leased or later sold their land to large-scale commercial cattle or farming operations, moved into housing projects often only to become hired as workers on their own fields later on, due to a lack of viable/feasible economic alternatives (Stromberg 2010: 37).

Because of inheritance patterns, allotments are collectively owned by multiple, sometimes up to hundred heirs or more today, all claiming a tiny parcel of the allotted land, thus often neither able to agree on what to do with it, nor live off of it (Gibbon 2003: 136). Tribal governments, like the Standing Rock Sioux Nation’s have started so-called “buyback programs” to transfer the land again into communal tribal ownership. As a member explained:

“If you knew you owned land then they would send you a paper back and say well, you own an acre here, an acre there, half an acre over here, quarter acre here, they would have it all listed, then give you a total value, then they would buy that from you. So that land then would go back into tribal land. [...T]hen that’ll alleviate the problem of so many land owners, you know” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017).

Until today there is many resentment among tribal members feeling “robbed” or “screwed over” by the US government, which they hold responsible for having pushed them to cede their lands time and again throughout history (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017). An elder explained the situation, which he regards as continuously reproducing itself, since mostly Whites are leasing or owning the land for commercial farming and cattle-raising on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, thus profiting the most from tribal lands:

“It’s like we got squeezed. You have to buy land and get a home and try to make ends meet if you got a family. You sell a little bit of land and it just went on and on like that, so your family has a better life. So, they had to sell their land. You can see there is no jobs, no nothing here. They had to do it. That’s what they had to do to try to survive. [...Y]ou had these homesteaders coming in, killing you. They took your land away from you. Like again, you kill them, you’re the one that’s gonna be killed, even though you’re in the right. It still goes on like that today” (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017).

When allotment was stopped in 1934 with the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act, putting a preliminary end to governmental attempt to disperse of the reservation system, up to two thirds of all Indian land had been lost to White ownership, with reservations like Standing

Rock<sup>61</sup> and Pine Ridge<sup>62</sup> losing approximately half of their territory to externals, including the most valuable and suitable lands for farming (Gagnon 2012: 50). Between 1887 and 1934 the total land base under Sioux ownership had shrunk from 138 million to 48 million acres (Biegert/Hassrick 1992: 345).

### 2.3.3.2 *Lake Oahe*

“We grew up along the Missouri River, so we, we had plenty of stuff and we got lots of game, and we love fishing, catfishing all the time” (Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017).

The flooding of the Missouri River valley to form the Lake Oahe reservoir presented probably the most devastating blow to the traditional way of life of Sioux people settling along its shores in the ecologically rich river valley on the Standing Rock, Cheyenne River and Lower Brule reservations after the destruction of bison herds had brought an end to their nomadic existence on the open Plains. Producing the largest hydroelectric power plant and the second largest dam in the United States, indented to supply electricity to the Missouri River Basin, almost up to 50 thousand acres in Standing Rock and 104 thousand acres of reservation land in Cheyenne River were inundated in 1962 (Lawson 1976: 206). Although financially compensated for their loss, affected tribes were not consulted and thus did not provide their consent for the construction of the dam, although article twelve of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, which had been reaffirmed by the congressional Acts of 1877 and 1889, would have demanded that any further seizure of Sioux lands required a majority of three fourths of Lakota men to agree to such an undertaking (Lawson 1976: 208, 218; Bolz 1986: 67). As summarized by Lawson in his 1976 case study about the dam’s impact on reservation life on Standing Rock,

“[a]t least 190 Indian families, representing about one-third of the resident population, had to be removed from what was considered the best homesites on the reservation. Their most valuable cattle range and ranch land, most of their gardens and cultivated farm tracts, and nearly all of their timber, wild fruit, and wildlife resources were destroyed” (Lawson 1976: 208).

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<sup>61</sup> Reduced from 2.3 to one million acres (Lawson 1976: 205). Today, over 60 % in Indian Land ownership again of which two thirds are in members’, one third in the tribes’ hands (Sprague 2009: 183).

<sup>62</sup> Numbers illustrate the staggering amount of lands lost: Between 1904 and 1916, Pine Ridge reservation, originally 2,721,597 acres large, was split into 8,275 plots which together totaled 2,380,195 acres. The remaining land was either assigned to the tribe as a whole (about 147,000 acres) or bought by the federal government. More than half of the land in allotments was eventually sold or leased to non-Indians (Gagnon 2012: 137).

The fact that only 22 percent of the lands were effectively used by Indians at the time as a result from allotment policy (Lawson 1976: 215), made the loss of the precious country along the river even the more tragic, nearly diminishing the reservation economy's primary industrial sector. Although the dam was said to be a measure to prevent and manage fluctuating water levels and bank erosion, both reportedly worsened exerting additional pressure on land owners working the lands now closest to the lake (Lawson 1976: 227).

In contrast to most scholars (Gagnon 2012: 168; Gibbon 2003: 62), who only emphasize the loss of fertile farm and ranch lands, Lawson also points at the devastating effects the flooding had on the remnant hunter-gather activities pursued by people, delivering a vital food source for over half of the families living in the river valley (Lawson 1976: 209). A lot of hunters I talked to in 2017 repeatedly complained (voicing their ongoing grief) about the severe loss of game and plant resources caused by the flooding: "A lot of our foods were down by the river. Our medicines, all taken" (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017). Various types of animals, especially wild birds like turkeys and pheasants but also an abundance of plant species had found an ideal habitat in the dense timber woods at the river banks, delivering shelter and nutrition prior to the flooding (Lawson 1976: 209). Although Lawson remarks that the people at Standing Rock apparently "never learned to exploit" fish as a complementary food source, historical sources about Yanktonai and Lakota historic lifeways (see page 23) as well as the following account of an elder at Standing Rock suggest otherwise:

"One of my biggest things when growing up, I was always at the river. After school I would always be at the river and a lot of things, a lot of trees down there. When I get hungry I could find wild strawberries or grapes and when I'm fishing I'd catch fish. My dad showed me how to get certain parts of it. Put that stook together and make my fire. Gaul them up, put them in the fire to whatever hungry I'd put that many in, cook 'em and eat it. [...] And I'd have to cook for myself all summer down by the river. I go out to my auntie, uncle, sometime my cousin, you know always at the river, catching fish, put them on a string, go home. My mother would cook them up. They'd be all happy too, cause we didn't have food done there, we didn't have commodities like they have now. We had to live off the land, the water, the wild, enjoy the fish, you know, cause that's all we have. Then they came back all happy, when we had fish. That was the biggest thing" (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

As becomes apparent from this narrative, families still very much depended on the natural resources the lands had offered for survival at the time. But not only the Standing Rock Sioux's major source of self-sufficiency had been eliminated by the flooding, also extended families' members that had lived next to each other and cooperated with one another in mutual support and reciprocal exchange of goods and labor, now had to settle in artificially built towns

interdicting such behavior, thus weakening traditional kinship ties within the traditional unit of social organization, the *tiospaye* (Sprague 2009i: 180).

As illuminated by Lawson (1976), the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and other Sioux Reservations along the Missouri had suffered far more than they gained for the welfare of its communities and people through the installation of Lake Oahe. Neither wage labor jobs in the process of its construction, nor electricity after its implementation have been granted to profit the tribe by the Army Corps of Engineers. Even the vast amounts of trees had been interdicted to be cut by the tribe for resale to its members<sup>63</sup> before the area was put under water, although the wood would have been greatly needed in efforts to rebuild houses, after people have had to evacuate their old homes. Until today dead trees surfacing from the water along the shorelines of Lake Oahe deliver a constant reminder of that history, still outraging many residents when talking and reporting about it to outsiders (see f. i. Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017).

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<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, some families harvested as much as they could before in an effort to save at least some of it to use for their ends, before it all went to waste with the area's flooding (Lawson 1976: 221).



### **3 SOCIO-CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF HUNTING AND GATHERING IN THE WAKE OF GLOBAL INDIGENOUS CULTURAL REVIVIFICATION AND SELF-EMPOWERMENT**

Although hunting and gathering is not the main means of economic subsistence in Lakota communities anymore today, the practice as such never ceased or was abandoned completely throughout Lakota history, as I have shown above: The economic transition from nomadic hunting (and gathering) to an emphasis on horticulturalism, cattle ranching and wage labor impacted and inherently changed Lakota cultural lifestyles, but hunting and gathering continued to serve as a complementary way of supplementing and sustaining traditional Lakota diets in delivering a vital food source in times of resource scarcity. For some Lakota, hunting and gathering remains an important means of food provision even today.

Although the official percentage of active subsistence hunters (and gatherers) is relatively low in Sioux reservations today, with only a handful of people officially registered as such at the Standing Rock Sioux reservation according to Game and Fish director Jeff Kelly (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017), and thus seemingly negligible in terms of economic output (Bolz 1986: 126), it remains a subject of political relevance today within the tribe itself and its external self-representation.

Only recently the symbolic, cultural but also economic significance of hunting, gathering and fishing has been stressed by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in the legal dispute against the implementation of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which has been built in the close proximity of the reservation. As the Indigenous activists, environmental networks and organizations have repeatedly pointed out in solidarity and support of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation during protests at the site of construction between April 2016 and the end of February 2017 as well as continuing afterwards through global campaigning (f. i. “Defund DAPL”<sup>64</sup>) physically on the streets, in front of governmental buildings and digitally via social media and press, the likely event of an oil spill or leakage of the pipeline presents a major threat for the tribe’s drinking water and other (Indigenous) communities sourcing their water from the Missouri River and its tributaries farther downstream. *Mni Wiconi*, a Lakota/Dakota phrase meaning “water of life”<sup>65</sup>,

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<sup>64</sup> For more information go to URL 12.

<sup>65</sup> Often it has been mistranslated as “water is life” by various media, as has been stated by Lakota language teacher Tasha Hoff and Lakota practitioner/speaker Nancy Rae Clark (Hoff, Tasha Formal Interview 10/10/2017; Clark, Nancy Rae Formal Interview 10/4/2017).

became the headline of the so-called NoDAPL Movement, which attracted international attention. After the tribe's attempts to stop the pipeline by suing the US Army Corps of Engineers for its illegitimate approval of the pipeline's construction in violating the tribe's rights granted, first, under the National Historic Preservation Act and second, under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act were rejected in court, the tribe (re-)appealed on grounds of the National Environmental Policy Act. The judge agreed that the US Army Corps of Engineers, "did not adequately consider the impacts of an oil spill on fishing rights, hunting rights, or environmental justice, or the degree to which the pipeline's effects are likely to be highly controversial" (Civil Action No. 16-1534, 2017: 2). The rights to hunt and fish on these lands were already guaranteed to the Lakota Sioux in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 (Civil Action No. 16-1534 JEB, 2017: 36). As held in the case paper, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe argued that the "[e]cological impacts to fish and game habitat and populations present one dimension" of the effects a potential oil spill would have, but the

"impact to Tribal members of losing the right to fish and hunt, which provides both much-needed subsistence food to people facing extensive poverty as well as a connection to cultural practices that Tribal members have engaged in since time immemorial, is a separate issue" (Civil Action No. 16-1534, 2017: 37).

During my research in Standing Rock, I attended an open meeting at the Standing Rock Sioux tribal council on October 11<sup>th</sup> 2017, where the tribe's law team reported to the then just newly elected council and chairman Michael Faith about recent court decisions and expressed the need to collect evidence/testimonies from active hunters and elders supporting the argument that some members partially depend on hunting and fishing for subsistence, to craft tools and pursue various (animal-based) cultural practices<sup>66</sup> (Fieldnotes 10/11/2017).

Inspired by its contemporary relevance, the following analysis is dedicated to investigating hunting and gathering infrastructures and practices on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation today, what it means to practitioners (as a way of life) and how it maintains to be of symbolic importance in Lakota child-socialization and education (in teaching values) thus impacting ethical standards set in the economic development and political representation of the tribe.

Thus, in the first part of this section I will specifically focus on the present-day situation of hunting, fishing and gathering practices on Sioux and other Plains tribes' reservations (or reserves), predominantly however at the example of the Standing Rock Sioux. My intent is to illuminate how environmental changes and US (colonial) policies have impacted opportunity-

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<sup>66</sup> In particular I am referring here to the hunting of game or fetching of medicinal plants for cultural religious ceremonies or artisan work for personal use or sale (see f. i. Stonechild, Elvie Formal Interview 07/10/2017).

structures (and continue to do so) in presenting barriers, limitations or restrictions to tribal members' hunting and gathering practices on reservations today.

The second part will be dedicated to the ideational realm, revealing the cultural significance of a hunter-gatherer ethos for the (re-)construction, reproduction and representation of Lakota, Indian, and Indigenous identity on economic and political micro and macro scales. Here, I will extend my analytical locus of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe onto other Sioux as well as Plains Indian reservations/reserves and other Amerindian and Indigenous peoples around the world in general, wherever possible and necessary, to solidify my arguments and to pinpoint parallels and interdependencies of phenomena.

### **3.1 Contemporary Subsistence Hunting and Gathering Practices on Plains Indian Reservations and Reserves**

Today, hunting and gathering plays a rather minor role in Lakota reservations' economies of the Northern Great Plains (Bolz 1986: 124). As explained above, bison hunting has become replaced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by farming and ranching on individual plots of land, owned by tribes, its members or other (mostly White) private landowners. In the absence of a vibrant private sector, the biggest employer on Lakota reservations is the tribe (or tribal government, which funds most programs) (Gagnon 2012: 100 f.), but as the populations on reservations are increasing in contrast to the rest of rural areas on the Prairies (Braun 2007: 196), jobs in commerce and service industries as well as seasonal work in agriculture are becoming scarce. Most families in Standing Rock depend on government subsidies to sustain themselves and live on the verge of existence, the majority's annual income being below the federal poverty line (Sprague 2009: 183).

Thus, hunting and gathering still presents a complementary and vital food source, especially in winter, as stated by BJ Kidder, a local elder and active hunter living in Sioux Village<sup>67</sup> (Fort Yates) on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation:

“We have poor people here. They are poor, they need that wild game to live on. [... They have] to provide for themselves, cause what they're getting on is subsidies from the government. You have to do spurs and you can't travel because of that, so they [he refers to the local supermarkets] adjust your prices up. Three or four times higher than in Bismarck or in Mobridge and they know that. That don't last too long to eat so most families depend on the wild. Lot of the old people hunt, get things here around that they need and they get it, go hunt or whatever. Prairie chicken, turkeys, all of that” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

Similarly, Maskwacis-Cree resident Kacey Yellowbird explained when interviewed about his hunting-education project, how hunting still plays a substantial part in granting food security and sovereignty to his nation in Alberta Canada, which reveals that the issue is shared also by other Indigenous reservation and reserve communities spread across the Northern Great Plains:

“Hunger just won't go away. It, it'll never end, you know. We need to find ways, you know, that will be sustainable, uh, for food but at the same time cost efficient. Here, we go hunting. The deer that we just cut up here today will roughly give about a hundred pounds of meat to, to our surrounding community and our families in our community” (Yellowbird, Kacey Formal Interview 07/06/2017).

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<sup>67</sup> That's what the town site below the historically fortified hill's peak (where the town's water tower stands today) is called among many of Fort Yates residents.

Against the background of poverty, hunting and gathering remains a vital means to supplement diets, especially for those who own or can afford a gun or bow and were taught by family members how to do it when growing up (Ostler 2001: 125).

Apart from self-sustenance, there is a huge cultural component to hunting and gathering (O'Brien 1989: 285). Many associate it with the "glorious past" of nomadic bison hunting ancestors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inauguration of the Tribal Chairman 10/11/2017), a time of economic prosperity and political potency of Plains tribes, especially the Lakota (as shown in chapter 2). Although today migratory wild bison herds cannot be found on the Plains anymore, other "traditional" practices stemming from the lifestyle as hunter-gatherers could be and continued to be maintained such as picking different types of berries "chokecherries, 'n plums, 'n currants, 'n buffalo berries" (Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017), digging up turnips, fetching plant medicines (Stonechild, Elvie Formal Interview 07/10/2017; Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017) and of course hunting different species of game, among them wild turkey, pheasants, waterfowls and geese, but above all deer, antelope and if available elk (these being generally the preferred prey of reservation-hunters today). While in times of resource scarcity everything was hunted to sustain a living under the harsh economic conditions in reservations, deer, antelope and elk, due to their historically long-standing roles in complementing traditionally mainly bison-based diets<sup>68</sup> are the preferred game of hunters until this day.

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<sup>68</sup> Hassrick (1992: 183 f.) reports that deer and elk were even more desired than buffalo meat among Plains tribes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, because of the meat's and hide's special properties in terms of tenderness, taste and weight (for clothing).

### 3.1.1 Methods, Techniques and Cultural Approaches to Hunting and Gathering among “Modern”<sup>69</sup> Plains Peoples

Today, few if any Plains-Indian reserve/reservation-hunters still hunt on horseback. But, also historically, only bison were really hunted mounted according to Hassrick (1992: 187), who highlights that all other game was predominantly stalked on foot, hunters often camouflaging in wolf, deer or elk-skins. Desired prey – be it single animals or herds – was either quietly approached until a safe shot with the bow was possible or surprised from ambush, rapidly firing a series of arrows at them (Hassrick 1992: 187). Horses were only used to get hunters closer to animals’ ranges before the hunt and (then parked at a certain spot) to transport/carry the kill in the hunt’s aftermath. Instead of using horses, most contemporary Native hunters drive around in some sort of off-road compatible vehicles, mostly pick-ups, either shooting desired wildlife directly from their car’s cockpits, if they are “lucky”<sup>70</sup> (Zorthian, Dale Informal Interview 09/27/2017) to spot any in close range or, as in the old days, jump out at a given place and continue walking, sometimes tracking an animal if they find spurs and other traces to follow up, lying in ambush or sitting on a tree-stand waiting for game to pass by or show up. As remarked by other authors reporting about contemporary Indigenous hunting techniques, such as Whyte and Reo, who argue that

“hunters value subsistence efficiency, and occasionally adopted new technologies that can improve their ability to meet subsistence objectives. This result parallels findings in other tribal communities (e.g., Condon et al. 1995). Just as chainsaws cut wood better than crosscut saws, and steel works better for axe heads than stone, rifle hunting is a more efficient technique than bow hunting. Bow hunting involves a greater amount of

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<sup>69</sup> The use of the term “modern” here shall implicate that Indigenous peoples on reservations/reserves today are living in what is promoted in popular westernized cultures as modern world, a teleological notion rooted in evolutionist hierarchizing. In this sense, modernity is misunderstood as the highest state of human evolution, seen as culturally and technologically most developed. This ideologically based judgement inherent already in the very word “modern” has been foundational to justify feelings of socio-cultural superiority and thus provided the key argument, which was imagined to serve as legitimation for the exertion of physical and cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples around the world in the name of “civilization” and “progress” and sadly continues to do so in the present. Indigenous peoples in North America today are co-constructing their own version of modernity, carving out their space to co-exist as sovereign nations in this world, adapting to the environment but maintaining their cultural integrity as they have done already prior to colonization. Instead of regarding themselves as farther advanced than their ancestors, many Indigenous leaders of today hold their way of life of in honor and inform or base their contemporary socio-environmental adaption, including also the adoption of externally introduced innovations of course, on ideas and principles present in the worldviews and customs of their forefathers, as will be shown in more detail in chapter 3.3.

<sup>70</sup> The conception of “luck” had a spiritual connotation for Dale, especially apparent in the context of hunting for it is perceived as determining success or failure. Dale tried to explain it as a guiding force, which, if one is successful in internally befriending, aligning or harmonizing with it, will get you what you need, which sometimes may coincide with what you want. Faith reconfirmed by appreciative prayers – not wishing but thanking for what one is given, seeing a causality or reason in everything – can be seen as key in the process of doing so, letting go, becoming free and flowing (Zorthian, Dale Informal Interview 09/27/2017).

preparation and is a still-hunting technique where hunters typically wait in one spot for passing deer. Rifle hunting for LDF Ojibwe, in contrast, is a mobile process where hunters either push deer to shooters via deer drives or road hunt from vehicles (motor vehicles represent another adopted hunting technology that increases subsistence efficiency). These rifle-oriented techniques produce more deer in a shorter amount of time” (Whyte/Reo 2011: 23).

While the majority of reservation/reserve hunters prefer rifles, hunting with bow and arrow recently (re-)gained popularity among many Indigenous hunters on Lakota/Dakota reservations and Plains-Cree reserves according to many of my interlocutors, especially hunters talked to or interviewed (Fieldnotes 07/27/2017). As proclaimed by Jeff Kelly, director of the Standing Rock Game and Fish Department,

“archery’s coming back, where you have to stalk, have to wait, you know. That’s gaining popularity again with our members, which is awesome. Ahm, and a lot of the members are starting to, you know, get out and walk, as opposed to driving and chasing the deer, then shooting it” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017).

Archery as alternative means of hunting animals on reservations is further encouraged by seasonal regulations, enabling archers to hunt before rifle/gun hunters.

However, in all the Plains reservations and reserves I have visited, I have not seen anyone hunt with a self-made bow, but all archers I met had either purchased recurve or compound bows, which makes it a rather “expensive hobby”, as pointed out by one of my interlocutors in Pine Ridge, Darrell Hunter. Furthermore, Darrell like many other hunters emphasized that archery demands a higher level of skill (to shoot and stalk the animal) than handling a rifle:

“I like the challenge so that’s why I am a bow hunter more than I am a rifle hunter. It’s an expensive hobby. For a bow like that you pay about 600 dollars. But that’s not all. For all the arrows you waste in a year you gotta put another 100 dollars on top of that. For six arrows, 100 dollars. And they the heads you buy for them are around 40, 60 bucks. Like this one I got for like 40 bucks. Muzzy razor blades. They’ll just go right through and kill them right there” (Hunter, Darrell Informal Interview 10/15/2017).

To many hunting is also a culturally determined spiritual endeavor, defining of a specific mindset towards and relationship with the environment, including animals and other beings, which is also determining one’s success in the hunt. As explained by Kacey Yellowbird, a local hunter in of the Maskwacis Cree Reserve:

“When we go hunting, what typically happens is that when we shoot an animal, we offer tobacco cause of thanks. Giving thanks to the animal and thanking the God too for allowing us to being able to kill this animal, cause not too many people can, ah, you know, get to see this process or get to see it happen but, ahm, and I believe that when you offer your tobacco you get blessed again when you go hunting again cause I know

a lot of guys who go hunting who never get nothing and it's not, it's not cause they are not good hunters. It's because I believe that, you know, you know you need to offer that respect. You gotta be able to respect your animal" (Yellowbird, Kacey Formal Interview 07/06/2017).

As a matter of fact, I observed this procedure frequently among hunters. Offering tobacco or something else is a gesture of reciprocity, of giving something back for the thing taken by oneself, be it the life of an animal or sometimes even an object like a stone or other item found in the woods or grasslands<sup>71</sup> (Zorthian, Dale Informal Interview 09/27/2017). As expressed by Kacey and multiple other hunters the key virtue in this exchange is respect, respect for creation, stemming from the concept of interrelatedness of all things present in many Indigenous philosophies of North American Peoples<sup>72</sup> (Whyte/Reo 2011: 23; Bolz 1986: 55 f.). One hunter in Standing Rock, although sensitive about sharing the spiritual intimacies of his culture and thus hesitant to talk about the ceremonial conduct of the hunt, told me, that he (in accordance with traditional Lakota worldview) believed that everything would be imbued with a spirit called *Nagi*<sup>73</sup>, which can be understood as the essence relating humans and all other beings to one another (Fieldnotes 07/27/2017).

Hunters either go out on their own or with family members, mostly in twos, as it used to be customary during *Tate* hunts among the Lakota (where two family-members rode or went out together) (Hassrick 1992: 185), but sometimes also in larger groups, often taking their children along to teach them and let them learn by observing and doing it at the example of their relatives and elders. BJ's cousin, also a Standing Rock Lakota, explained:

"[In Lakota culture t]hey have that big brother, big sister aspect when they are on their way growing up. That's supposed to be the Indian way. Teaching the young ones how to hunt, track, you know, anything that has survival skills in it" (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017).

One of the hunters I met in Standing Rock also reported that he'd be part of a hunting society, an organization designed to collectively hunt and share the labor of post processing the animals (Fieldnotes 07/27/2017). Meat, hide and bones would be distributed among the members' extended families for food and providing tools for cultural crafts. For instance, shinbones were much appreciated by elders to make ceremonial objects, such as the needles used for pinning at

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<sup>71</sup> For instance, the tail is cut off and left as „an actual offering for the deer, for the deer family. For them to come back for feeding us to survive”, as expressed by a Plains Cree elder, one of Kacey's uncles present at his butcher workshop, which was offered at a Youth Conference in Maskwacis. A similar thing is done with the moose nose in other communities further up north as Kacey explained (Maskwacis Cree Reserve, Youth Conference, Butcher Workshop 07/06/2017).

<sup>72</sup> For further treatment go to chapter 3.2.4.

<sup>73</sup> For the concept's embeddedness and meaning in traditional Lakota worldview read chapter 3.2.4.4.



the Sundance. This way almost all parts of the animal could be utilized to meet or serve a specific purpose (Fieldnotes 07/27/2017). Similarly, Plains-Cree hunters in Maskwacis, Alberta, had a project called “community freezer”, where they would collect killed animals to be distributed within the reserve community, one of their members explaining that

“few of us young men in the community will do what warriors do and go out hunting for the, for the community members, typically those community members are elders, the weak and, today, those who financially just can’t afford it. So what we try do is, we try hunt for those people” (Yellowbird, Kacey Formal Interview 07/06/2017).

Moreover, they had a hide tanning project in which community members involved would prepare hides to be used for making drums and other leather based ceremonial or cultural artefacts (Yellowbird, Kacey Formal Interview 07/06/2017). As it was done in the old days, the animals’ brains are sometimes still being used to tan the hide (Fieldnotes 09/28/2017). However, often hunters send their hides to large centralized industrial tanneries because of the intense labor involved in preparing the hides (arguably deemed as being too time-consuming and exhausting), where they are being worked for them and returned within about six months (Hunter, Darrell Informal Interview 10/15/2017).

### **3.1.2 Wildlife Management versus Traditional Ways: Findings from an Ethnographic Case Study at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation**

#### **3.1.2.1 *The Establishment of Tribal Game and Fish Departments***

Being of central cultural and nutritional importance to most Native American communities until today, the right to hunt and gather on reservation lands in the US is guaranteed in the reserved rights doctrine. Some treaties and historical agreements extend some tribes’ hunting rights even beyond reservation borders to explicitly defined territories. A longstanding area of contestation has been the question whether hunting and fishing be regulated by state or tribal authorities. While states often argued that longer seasons and higher limits for Native subsistence and ceremonial hunting would pose a threat to conservation interests, tribes emphasized the cultural and economic importance of being able to regulate hunting and gathering on their lands themselves, which presents a fundamental component of their right to self-government and sovereignty as Native nations. Although the plenary power of the federal government legally authorizes it to regulate all hunting, fishing and gathering on and off reservations, tribes are

entitled to regulate these activities for members and non-members alike on their lands, as long as there is no federal legislation in place dictating otherwise (O'Brien 1989: 223 f.).

However, if no regulatory authority has been put in place by the tribe, states were permitted by courts to regulate on-reservation hunting and fishing, which was justified as a means to preserve wildlife and natural resources. As argued by O'Brien, in order not to "lose portions of their sovereignty to the states" (1989: 224) tribes were and are eager to exercise their privilege to regulate hunting and fishing on their lands. This resulted in the establishment of Tribal Game and Fish Departments, which are in the above explained legal context more or less expected if not to say obliged to make conservation of wildlife one of their primary concerns. Against this background, it becomes apparent that the establishment of tribal Game and Fish Departments was rather a reaction of tribes to maintain sovereign tribal powers and prevent state encroachment into the intimate sphere of tribal hunting and fishing dictated by the legislative context, than a deliberate decision or development initiated by tribes.

As reported by Jeff Kelly, head of the Standing Rock Game and Fish Department, jurisdictional disputes over authority between State and Tribal Game and Fish Departments occurred since their initial implementation and it continued to be an area of contestation throughout his term in office, although recently tensions have supposedly eased and more collaborative approaches are being embraced on both sides:

"When I started, they were like, they were trying to, you know, get a little bit of jurisdiction into the reservation, so we, we opposed that, you know, and they didn't recognize our deer tag. So, say a member or non-member would hunt a deer and he needed to, he needed to have it processed, he would – there's no meat markets here - so he would have to take it to the off-reservation meat market. So that's another key thing that we had to tag for. So, he'd put the tag on his deer and he'd take it to the meat market. Meantime, the State was saying: 'If they come off the reservation with that deer tag, we're gonna stop them and take them into state court'. So that was the fight that was going on. And then it lasted like two years and eventually we won the fight and the state now recognizes our tribal tags. [...N]owadays it evolved [to a more cooperative relationship] like with the elk for instance. They do roam on fee land, which is private land<sup>74</sup>. So, we did, you know, we kinda worked out a little deal between the states, whereas before we wouldn't have worked together. This year we're taking 16, [...] the State is taking seven. [...] It was a good deal based on the fact that we get 16, they get seven. Cause they came to the table and they said 'well, you could have seven elk and we'll have seven elk'. You know, telling us. No, we don't work like that. We're gonna

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<sup>74</sup> The 1982 supreme court ruling in the case of *Montana versus U.S.*, states were given the authority over regulating non-Indian hunting on privately owned lands of non-Indians within reservation borders (O'Brien 1989: 225). It is thus in both, the Tribal and State Game and Fish Department's best interest to work together to achieve common goals in matters of wildlife management and conservation.

take what we need and then you can have a few” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017).

As mentioned above, the demand for wildlife conservation and related professional management was the main driver for Game and Fish Departments to become established as regulatory institutions. Logically, the introduction of professional wildlife management also meant the implementation of mechanisms to control activities previously unregulated: Conservation codes adjusted to management plans were implemented by tribal Game and Fish Departments (see f. i. Standing Rock Conservation Code Title IX, URL 13), defining when and how many of a particular species were to be hunted in what ways, thus presenting restrictions and limitations to hunting and gathering community members’ agency. While some Indigenous hunters have accepted newly imposed regulations, others feeling their way of life attacked under such jurisdiction, severely oppose and protest tribal game management legislation. According to Darell Hunter, a Lakota hunter and resident of Pine Ridge, “a lot of people say it’s our treaty right and they go hunt anyway” (Hunter, Darrell Informal Interview 10/15/2017), even when it’s off season and they are officially prohibited to do so. Many Lakota hunters, who feel entitled to hunting on their reservation by treaty<sup>75</sup> (referring to the Fort Laramie treaties of 1851 and 1868), regard the Tribal Game and Fish Department as an offence against their rights as Indigenous people of the land and in that sense as colonial institution.

As expressed by a Standing Rock hunter, BJ Kidder, “[t]hey took our hunting rights away, our fishing rights away. [...] The only way you have a little bit of right is if you buy the fishing license or hunting license” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017). For men like BJ, who had already been told this by his father, reservations were lands that had been set aside for Natives to sustain themselves, as he repeatedly pointed out during multiple interview sessions: “They put us here so we could hunt and fish, provide for ourselves” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017). According to BJ, who grew up hunting on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, the Game and Fish Department is not really contributing anything useful to preserve or protect wildlife populations in regulating hunting, fishing trapping and gathering activities, but rather regards it as an immoral way of tribal officials to make money:

“There was always balance. We never had too much of things. Now you see, since Game and Fish is here, now we have too many one species. There is too much white tail, not enough mule deer. Too much white tail because they have too much of it. Now they hunt too many turkey and pheasants, same thing. There is not enough pheasants so it’s really unbalanced what they are doing to our wildlife. Long time ago we all hunted,

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<sup>75</sup> Mainly referring to their hunting rights mentioned in the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868.

there was always plenty. This place is so big you can't hunt all of it, you know. You never gonna hunt all of it. Not like they see it; they are gonna run out. That's not the way I see it. A lot of the people sitting in these positions don't even hunt, they don't even fish. They don't know what we do as traditional people living off the land and respecting it. That's our culture. They don't even know their own culture. All because of money again, that's all they see, how to make money [...] We're losing our way, our honor (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017)

As can be seen, wildlife depletion due to overhunting seems unimaginable for BJ, who was raised living off the lands' bounty of natural resources in Standing Rock – wild plants, fish and animals. However, regulation also guarantees and secures that hunts conducted by external parties coming from outside of the reservation are also limited and will not exceed reproductive capacities of local wildlife as it has been the case with the Plains bison in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were greatly decimated due to market demands and sport-hunters' recreational pleasure, as I have shown in previous chapters<sup>76</sup>. This might be an aspect overlooked by BJ in this regard. As wildlife migrations do not stop at invisible reservation borders, management plans of external (state) institutions naturally effect wildlife populations in reservations as well. The Standing Rock Game and Fish Department can thus be seen as an outcome of a (somewhat politically forced) adaptation to larger social contexts, in which the tribe and its reservation lands are embedded geographically and politically.

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<sup>76</sup> See chapters 2.3.2. to 2.3.3.

### 3.1.2.2 Seasonal Restrictions of Hunting and Gathering Practices

Seasonal restrictions on hunting for the sake of conservation disrupted longstanding traditional hunting patterns and customs of food production and preparation, although it is explicitly stated in the Game and Fish Department's code of conservation that "it shall be responsibility and policy of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council, Commission and Department to preserve the unique social, cultural and religious values of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe" (Standing Rock Conservation Code Title IX, URL 13). As BJ remarks:

We hunted in August and [... the Game and Fish] said you're not supposed to hunt then. Why? You know, this is our traditional way. We hunt in August, because it's warm and hot and it's windy and this is how they make their dry meat at this time of the month, because it's windy and hot you had to take care of your deer right away, cut it up thin, they call it '*bapa*', it's dried. That time of the month is August, is when they do that. Now you can't do those things" (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

Hunters frequently complain about having to pay for licenses, tags and fees put up for hunting, gathering and fishing activities that they regard as fundamental to their "traditional" Lakota way of life. Many hunters I have talked to in Standing Rock confirmed that there is still quite a large number of people dependent on supplementing their diets with wild meat for survival. Although it is listed as a priority in the Standing Rock Sioux's code of conservation "to protect the treaty right of all members to hunt and fish for subsistence purposes" (Standing Rock Tribal Conservation Code Title IX, URL), a permit to do so must be obtained from the Game and Fish Department, following a written request first presented to the tribal chairman and then to the director of the Game and Fish thus complicating the issue. Only with such a subsistence tag, members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe are allowed to hunt and fish all year round for free, as it used to be the case before the establishment of the Game and Fish Department for all unconditionally. However, for people who depend on such a permit to sustain their families, the effort and publicity of the procedure may seem embarrassing and consequently discouraging. But, as outlined by BJ, the more serious problem of this regulation is rooted in the fact that in a majority of cases, if they even have a car, it is hardly affordable for poor members (the ones that really depend on subsistence hunting) to drive up to Fort Yates in the northern part of the 3,625 square mile large reservation (URL 14), where the office of the Game and Fish Department is located, merely to obtain a subsistence permit there, the only place where this is possible. According the Standing Rock Game and Fish Departments' director Jeff Kelly only about 20 members request a subsistence permit each year, but he also notes that

basically the approximately 750 members<sup>77</sup> hunting with tags hunt for subsistence as well, in the sense that they supplement their diets with the meat obtained through hunting or fishing (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017). BJ Kidder regards the whole affair, of what he sees as an outrageously incomprehensible and unjustified overprized overregulation of hunting and fishing, with drastic seriousness, considering the poverty present on his reservation:

“Our people are suffering. A lot of us don’t have money like the tribal office, the people that work there. They don’t see the poorness out there. They don’t wanna look or something. People just barely make it day to day and some probably just eat once a day. That’s sad. They’d let them hunt and fish they’d be, we’d be pretty good cause they can provide for themselves. Now they can’t, they have to pay for a permit or a fishing license, now it’s a hunting license. [...] We didn’t need nothing like this. Now they come up with all of this because of money. And they’re hurting all of our poor people, which we have a lot of poor people. They don’t have enough gas money to come up here and buy tags, and for them to buy their shells. They can’t do that. They barely have enough to go hunting, now they have to do it on the sneak when it used to be free” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

From such a viewpoint, it seems as if people following their way of life were criminalized through Game and Fish Department’s legislation for doing just that. Tag prices for members may not seem much for outsiders, since for instance for deer they are only at five dollars whereas for non-member residents and tribal affiliates they cost 195\$ and 495\$ for non-residential non-members (URL 15). But with an average family income of roughly 3,000\$ per month on the reservation (Sprague 2009: 183), literally every dollar counts. According to BJ the Game and Fish Department repeatedly moved prizes up: While it used to be sufficient to purchase one fur bearer license a couple of years back with which one could hunt as much as one wanted to, now for every individual animal shot, a tag must be bought (Kidder, BJ/ Kidder, Wilma 10/12/2017).

The intensified regulation of hunting, fishing and gathering on reservations, poses a serious challenge to traditional ways of life based on foraging, that have been pursued by people since the beginning of the reservation era as survival strategies, as I have shown above in chapter 3.4. BJ has recognized these changes throughout his lifetime. To him, the Game and Fish Department has taken away the freedom of his people to sustain themselves through living off the land, the central aspect constitutive of the traditional Lakota way of life in economy and related worldviews:

“This is what really bothers me is Game and Fish, they took that. They took our hunting and fishing away. You’re supposed to hunt and fish as long as the sun shines and the

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<sup>77</sup> 4,153 residential tribal enrollees were recorded by the 2010 census (URL 14).

water flows [according to the treaties]. And now we can't do that, because we have to pay for fishing licenses and that's supposed to be free. You know hunting, everything is money. We have poor people here. They are poor, they need that wild game to live on. Now they tell me that they feel bad cause they respect the law. They feel like they have to steal or sneak to do that, which is their right to have in the first place. To enjoy that. But that's taken away from them. They feel that, you know and I'm really feeling that. I feel now there's no more feelings of enjoying what we brought up as a treasure in life. Now a lot of older people feel that too. We can't enjoy that no more. Like we had to be, like you know show them, that the Game and Fish coming, because they can't afford that. That's wrong. [caughs] For a lot of the older people, our freedom's gone. The wildlife that they love to eat. [...] There's so much behind it, hunting and fishing that a lot of people forget. They don't look at what it means to traditional people, the honor not to be on the way to nowhere, of enjoying the scenery, enjoying the wildlife, being together as a family. Hunting, picking berries, my mothers and sisters used to do that while we hunted" (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

As becomes apparent from BJ's statement, the whole idea of managing wildlife to achieve maximum carrying capacity of land to sustainably conserve wildlife seems strange and foreign to cultural descendants socialized in the ways of nomadic Plains peoples, who have completely divergent conceptions and ways of interrelating with their environment.

Attest to the "western" cultural background that Game and Fish Departments stem from as institutions managing wildlife populations, are even inherently delivered by the etymology of their denomination, defining wild animals from the outset officially as "game", which clearly derives from the western elitist conception of hunting as a form of recreation and sport.

In the light of this, I would argue that the (forced) establishment of Tribal Game and Fish Departments can be seen as a way of colonializing the economic and cultural realm of Native Peoples' hunting and gathering practices and ways of managing wildlife populations on reservations. Game and Fish legislation follows a western idea and structure of controlling, which had been previously pushing Native people to abandon their own ecological practices (accompanied by a loss of ecological knowledge) replaced by a top down management approach of what is legitimized as supposedly being a neutral, unbiased and trustworthy (professional) institution.

Rather than having everything separately managed in a complex societal matrix, BJ represents the system way of thinking found in traditional Lakota social organization where "[a]ll this is combined, our people being out, our religion. This is what we do all our life and the understanding of our ways", as BJ puts it, adding that with bringing in Game and Fish Legislation, the "White people",

“are slowly taking it [referring to their way of living with and off the land, away] and that’s what they have planned for our people; taking all that. They will never understand us Native people. This is what we do” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

### 3.1.2.3 Limited Access: Prohibitions of Hunting on Leased Lands – A Legal Grey Zone?

Another issue restricting hunting and gathering practices on Lakota reservations is the fact that the land is cut up between tribally owned, tribally allotted, leased lands and lands in private ownership by non-members. While hunting on private lands owned by non-tribal members falls under the jurisdiction of the states confirmed by the Supreme court decision of *Montana v. U.S.* in 1982, leased lands are subjugated to tribal Game and Fish laws (O’Brien 1989: 225). Hunting on these lands should be theoretically allowed for tribal members. As stated by a Standing Rock hunter (BJ’s anonymous Cousin):

“By right, we should be able to hunt this whole thing. Regardless, you know: It’s within the boundaries of the Standing Rock Sioux reservation. But we can’t do it. You know, if they are leasing tribal land, we should have, they should make a deal where, ‘hey you gotta lease that land and have cattle on there, our boys should have a right to hunt on your land’” (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017).

Practically, however, many land leasers herding cattle on reservation lands interdict hunting and gathering on these lands, locking gates on access driveways and illegally putting up “warning signs” promising violent punishment in case of trespassing to scare away or intimidate hunters, who consequently feel uncertain about their rights. Signs carry messages such as: “No Trespassing, hunting or fishing under the penalty of law”, “NO TRESPASSING! Due to price increase on Ammo, do not expect a warning shot”, or even “[p]rayer is the safest way to heaven, trespassing the fastest” (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017).

Multiple hunters have already complained about these illegal prohibitions of mostly White land leasers, limiting local Native hunters’ ability to hunt on their tribal reservation lands: “these are our rights to go hunt and we can’t, because of the threats they have on their gates” (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017), as stated by BJ. In the light of this, BJ predicted that eventually “one of these days somebody is really gonna get mad and then they’re gonna shoot somebody in here. And guess who’s gonna lose [ironic laugh]: The Indian” (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017). Since his return to the reservation four years ago, BJ has become a fierce opponent of the Game and Fish Departments’ regulatory policies. He criticizes them and the tribal government for



illegitimately taking away Lakota residents' rights to hunt and fish on their own reservation lands, thus fostering dynamics contributing to further loss of lands and rights. Although him and others had repeatedly reported the aggressive statements on signs put up by land leasers to the Game and Fish Department, (at the time of my research at Standing Rock during the summer and fall of 2017) nothing had been done so far to stop land leasers from blocking access to hunters. BJ suspects that land leasers are paying the tribe to stay inactive:

“How we see it is they are doing it for money too, having their own people go in, like non-natives. Cause it's good hunting. I hunted in that area when I was younger with my dad. I haven't been in it for a long time. A lot of this is just unreal what they are doing to our people, leasing it and doing that. We should have the right to be hunting on that [land]” (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017).

On the Tribal Game and Fish website it states on multiple occasions that courtesy demands that hunting on leased lands should only be conducted upon approval by land leasers and property owners<sup>78</sup>. As the statements are framed rather as recommendations than as explicit rule, it can be assumed that no regulatory scheme exists here clearly dictating if hunting, fishing or gathering activities need or need not be allowed by land leasers or property owners.

At this point it remains unclear why the tribal Game and Fish Department is tolerant of such behavior. Further investigation of these affairs would be necessary to illuminate complexities at play and collect evidence. From my observations I can only conclude that local land leasers and Native hunters are disputing over access rights to lands, the first demanding exclusive use, the latter claiming their historic right to hunt, fish and gather on their ancestrally inherited lands. Whether leased lands are open to hunting or not seems to be a legal uncertainty to this day. It can only be suggested that the matter should receive proper assessment by tribes and that clear regulations will be negotiated as soon as possible, to prevent future conflicts, create transparency and reduce risks for its members.

Another issue BJ brought up in the context of intransparent/illegitimate activities of White land leasers was that some of them are subleasing their leased lands to large scale cattle ranching enterprises coming from as far south as Texas to capitalize off of the land instead of herding their own animals. To elaborate on the issue in more depth I do not only lack substantial evidence but also space in here as it would greatly extend the scope of this thesis. However, the last word on the matter shall be nevertheless given to BJ, who observed that

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<sup>78</sup> On the website it states that “all permit holders will be expected as a matter of courtesy, to request permission to hunt from all trust and allotted land, fee patent landowners” (URL 16).

“[t]hey bring cattle from different, Oklahoma, different places, three, four thousand head. They put it on that land and they are making between 20 and 30 bucks a head, a month. So, they are making well over, with that amount of cattle, well over a million dollars and they are not supposed to be doing that: subleasing. If they wanna do that, they should pay the [Native] owners of that land that amount of money, see what they will do and they are doing the same thing, leasing that land, not letting us hunt in there again and that’s our right to hunt. [...] They are making millions off of the Native people, while they just give them pennies for a year. You know, a couple hundred for a year and they are making millions off not even their land, the people of the land. They should give it to the individual people, if they are gonna do that” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

Again, it becomes apparent from BJ’s statement, that the traditional (nomadic) way and worldview of hunting and gathering as it has been historically practiced by Plains Peoples is simply incompatible with the western concept of clearly demarcated individual land ownership. The concept of landscapes being cut up into individual parcels defined as productive and unproductive have no rootedness in Lakota culture, but are a product of western European societies, their historical evolution, structural systematics and related philosophies.

### **3.1.3 Hunting and Gathering in Contemporary Tribal Economic Development**

#### *3.1.3.1 Subsistence Hunting vs. Recreational Hunting, Trophy Hunting and Eco-Tourism: Guiding as viable economic Pathway to maintain a Hunter-Gatherer Existence?*

On the Standing Rock Game and Fish Department’s website it is stated that,

“[t]he primary objective of this [the Standing Rock Game and Fish Department’s management] plan is to maintain fish, wildlife and non-game species in sufficient numbers and variety, to meet the present and future economic, recreational and aesthetic needs of Tribal members now and in the future. Once Tribal member consumptive needs are met, additional consumptive and/or non-consumptive recreational opportunities by other parties can be offered if appropriate and approved” (URL 17).

As it presents a vital source of income to the tribal Game and Fish Department and thus the tribe itself, every season a certain number of tags varying between the different types of animal species are being made available for sale to tribal affiliates, non-member Standing Rock residents and non-residential non-members, the latter category paying the most for their tags in the vast majority of cases. Exception to this rule is a so-called deer/antelope combo license, which costs the same for all parties (1,895\$ for the 2018 season). Twenty of these tags are being handed out every season through a lottery system. Winners in this process have the opportunity to hunt “One Any Buck [and] One Antelope Buck” approximately one month ahead of time

before the hunting season for deer starts for rifle hunters. As already mentioned in chapter 3.2.1, archers are allowed to hunt earlier in the season, starting for deer and antelope in late August. However, success rates are far lower than for rifle hunters due to high skill needed in getting closer to desired wildlife and in handling the weapon.

Since the vast majority of tribal members could hardly afford the expensive combo-ticket, it is mostly White hunters from outside the reservation buying them, which led to some tribal residents complaining about “White guys” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017), who would get to hunt before them. As clarified by Jeff Kelly, Standing Rock Game and Fish director, “the reason we had to have it a little sooner is because the antelope, [...] they drop their antlers in early October [and] they’re after the antler in their hunt, in their trophy hunt basically” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017).

The combo-ticket can thus be regarded as a measure to stimulate hunting tourism on the reservation, which according to director Jeff Kelly generates the necessary revenue for the Game and Fish Department to cover its operational costs, thus presenting an important contribution to the tribe’s economy. As Jeff explains:

“We have 500 non-member tags, so these 500 people come from all over, you know? And they have to stay here, they have to spend money here. So, they spend 500\$ to buy a deer tag here. They probably spend 700 coming here; gas, eating, lodging, all here. So, it’s a boost for the economy. So, it’s based on tourism. And not just deer, we have Prairie dogs that shooters come from all across America to shoot, or pheasant, grouse. So, we generate money to sustain us often but them coming here also stimulates the economy” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017).

Since fur trapping has also almost completely lost its viability nowadays due to the sharp deflux in the market demand resulting in lower prices paid for furs and increased prizes for tags and licenses put up by Game and Fish Departments at the same time (Fieldnotes 07/29/2017), also commercial Lakota hunters and trappers have felt urged to look for alternative ways of income, if they intended to continue aspects of their accustomed lifestyle and economic activities. Registering as hunting guide seemed to deliver a fitting option for many (Fieldnotes 07/29/2017; Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017; Stonechild, Elvie Formal Interview 07/10/2017).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century context, with a rising interest in survivalist knowledge and an increased recreational market demand for professional hunts of wild animals, which are yet globally shrinking in numbers at a rapid pace, guided hunts in so-called game reserves, parks and other intact wildlife habitats, including rural reservation lands, have become inherent part of an expanding hunting and eco-tourism industry, which according to case studies conducted by the

International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), can indeed work in favor of conservation and benefit local community development as well (URL 18).

Jonathan Anderson, the Business Program director at the Sitting Bull College, pointed out that North Dakota and specifically also Standing Rock has built up a good reputation amongst hunters from across the country: “[There is] word-of-mouth amongst the hunters in places like Illinois and Missouri. They’ll come up here and they’ll hunt in North Dakota”, because of the abundance wildlife found in the state (Anderson, Jonathan Formal Interview 07/27/2017).

Especially trophy hunting of iconic animals such as antlered Pronghorn Antelopes, white tail, mule deer and sometimes elk, is what attracts most outsiders to come hunt on the reservation as Jeff Kelly confirmed (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017).

In contrast, to most Indigenous hunters, the trophy is merely regraded as a byproduct of the hunt. Instead of hunting for antlers or horns as symbols of individualistic prestige, potency and success, the meat (and other components of the animals’ bodies, especially the hides, which are used as materials for cultural products) remains to be the main objective of the hunt of many Native hunters living in Standing Rock, to be often distributed or shared among family and community members in an act of individual generosity for the common good (Fieldnotes 07/27/2017). This points at the different cultural background and socialization, Indigenous hunters are coming from than recreational hunters, which has been recognized and highlighted (particularly at the example of the subsistence hunting culture and practices of the Yakama of the Northwestern US) by senior wildlife research biologist Scott M. McCorquodale (1997). It is thus not surprising that the fascination of tourist hunters with trophies is hard to comprehend for many Indigenous hunters, since antlers, horns or taxidermied animal heads and bodies do not have any similar connotation or special symbolic significance in their culture (Hunter, Darrell Informal Interview 10/15/2017).

Critical voices among traditionalist tribal members pity the fact that White trophy hunting is a phenomenon of rising popularity on the reservation due to its potential to confuse and distract also Indigenous youth from the Indigenous understanding and purpose of hunting (Fieldnotes 07/27/2017).

The high demand of external parties (wanting) to hunt on Standing Rock and other reservations is demonstrated by the rapid pace (at which the, in contrast to tribal tags highly expensive) non-member tags were sold in 2016: As reported by Jeff Kelly the 500 deer tags for non-members were sold online in less than five minutes that year. He thus jokingly stated in the interview

that: “it’s a hotter ticket than a Justin Bieber ticket, you know” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017), causing Kelly to prompt the issuance of future tags for non-members only through a lottery system, selling up to five chances per person for 20 dollars each. Kelly, in his position as director of the Standing Rock Game and Fish Department self-proclaimed that he would be “constantly looking for new ways to generate money for the tribe” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017). One of his major concerns would also be getting “more of our members to guide” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017), to have them benefit directly from tourism.

Another viable way to capitalize on native wildlife in this regard would be through eco-tourism: According to a study conducted by Hearne and Tuscherer (2008), Standing Rock locals would welcome tourism initiatives on the reservation, though aware of potential negative side-effects such as potential intrusion into private spaces, if it would bring substantial and recognizable benefits to the tribe’s economy. Since the tourism department of Standing Rock closed down due to lack of available funds, management of ecotourism development was handed over to the Standing Rock Game and Fish Department. Jeff Kelly is currently collaborating with as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)<sup>79</sup> to install an infrastructure aimed at attracting eco-tourists to the reservation: Initial ideas to be worked on are fenced in walkways on bison pastures and safari type drives to have people observe deer, antelope, Prairie dogs and other native species. Here certified hunting guides could run eco-tours, spotting and pointing out “game” to tourists that would want to shoot photos, instead of guns.

However, as of today becoming a guide is not only a matter of skill and knowledge: In order to become a hunting guide in Standing Rock, a tribal guiding license<sup>80</sup> is required which costs 1,000\$, to be purchased only at the Standing Rock Game and Fish Department’s office. This surely presents a real barrier for many to take up that profession, since statistically few members have any savings or inherited money available to them as wealth is not something commonly accumulated and passed to next generations, as Jonathan Anderson pointed out in an interview (Anderson, Jonathan Formal Interview 07/27/2017).

In any case, to give an answer this subchapter’s headline’s question, guiding alone/by itself will not present an efficient means to maintain or preserve a traditional hunting and gathering way of life. Although knowledge and worldviews can be shared with tourists taken into the field, this way of hunting is not in accordance with the traditional meaning and activity of the original

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<sup>79</sup> For more information go to URL 19.

<sup>80</sup> To request a guiding license, a number of legal qualifications must be met. However, a specific certification of one’s outdoor or hunting skills and knowledge is not required (URL 20).

Lakota hunter-gatherer way of life, which needs to be understood primarily as a way of interacting with the natural environment in the quest of edible plant or animal foods to be shared with family and fellow tribal members. However, as means to make money hunting guides, who enjoyed a traditional upbringing as hunters by their peers and family will most certainly be highly demanded as culture-bearers and educators in the growing hunting and eco-tourism industrial sector of reservation economies.

### 3.1.3.2 *Bringing back the Buffalo: Tribal and Private Bison Ranching on Lakota Reservations*

As indicted in previous chapters, the almost complete destruction of bison herds had brought an end to the nomadic equestrian way of life of Plains peoples. Few small herds left scattered on the Northern Plains, not numbering more than a couple hundred animals were wiped out in the wake of brucellosis epidemics by state-led campaigns during the 1930s and 1970s. Meantime, the population of bison in north America has recovered to over half a million animals. However, more than ninety percent of those are either ranched on private lands or US public lands for commerce in the light of a growing market demand for the healthy properties of bison meat, higher in nutrients and much leaner than beef. Furthermore, those buffalo ranched are without exception, though to a differing extent, mixed with European cattle, thus also referred to as “beefalo” or “cattalo”. This is owed to attempts by Euroamerican ranchers in the early 1900s to breed hybrids from buffalo and beef with the intent to create a super-species of domesticated buffalo, with the genetic adaptability to the North American weather and natural environment of wild bison, but the tameness of European livestock. Thus, only an estimated 10,000 buffalo living in and around National Parks in the US and Canada are still genetically pure, wild and migratory *Plains bison*, the herds in Yellowstone being the only ones which have not been reintroduced by conservationist initiatives, as it has been propagated and done first and foremost by the American Bison Association, most prominently supported by President Theodore Roosevelt in the late 1900s and early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>81</sup>.

The last genetically unaltered herds of buffalo that reportedly have never been forcibly removed from their native lands are found today only in the Yellowstone National Park and migrating

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<sup>81</sup> For a detailed scientifically sourced account of that history look up the “Petition to List the Yellowstone Bison as Threatened or Endangered Under the Endangered Species Act” handed in in a concerted effort by the Buffalo Field Campaign and the Western Watersheds Project at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of Interior on November 13, 2014 under URL 21.

into bordering areas, numbering in total between 3,000 and 5,000 animals, after having repopulated from a historical low of approximately 25 animals in 1902 according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (URL 22). These last bison had to be guarded by US troops in order to stay protected from bison hunters desperately searching for kill as the buffalo had almost become extinct on the Plains by 1900 (URL 23).

Since the 1970s many Plains tribes had started to reintroduce buffalo on commonly owned tracts of reservation lands (Braun 2007: 192). The Intertribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) formed in 1990 assists tribes in restoring and maintaining herds on their lands in order “to preserve our historical, cultural, traditional and spiritual relationship for future generations”, as stated in the organization’s mission statement (ITBC Teacher Resource, URL 24). Also, the Standing Rock Sioux Game and Fish Department, managing the bison herds on their reservation collaborates with the ITBC, which continuously coordinates the distribution of surplus animals of National Parks to Native nations to grow their herds (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017).

In his article anthropologist Sebastian F. Braun (2007) argues against cultural absolutes in showing that although tribal Buffalo Programs initially were mainly targeted at restoring cultural and ecological environments, the focus of the tribal buffalo initiative *Pte Hca Ka* at the Cheyenne River Sioux reservation had shifted to making economic profits with herds through meat sale, eco- and hunting tourism. In contrast to journalists like Graham (2002 cited in Braun 2007: 205), who depicted the tribal bison management of the Cheyenne River Sioux in romanticized terms, framing Indians as the only “group that over all these years has remembered these are animals that should be respected, and allowed to roam wild and free, Braun rejects and counters this essentialist notion with ethnographic evidence. He reports that buffalo are herded today on buffalo pastures, specially fenced in areas, restricting their ability to “roam wild and free”, and that Indigenous locals rather prefer beef for consumption (Braun 2007: 201). He attributes this change in attitudes to the fact that “traditional ecological knowledge of the buffalo and the grasslands has largely been replaced with the ecological knowledge of the cattle culture and the professional knowledge of biologists and economists” (Braun 2007: 204).

Growing buffalo herds on reservations demanding larger pastures for grazing presented a conflict of interests with tribal cattle ranchers, who often would regard buffalo as competitors for space and as uneconomical animals preventing vital revenues to be made from leasing reservation lands to outside cattle enterprises, a major source of income in the reservations’ economy and of individual land owners. Consequently, the economic aspect of buffalo herding on reservations became more extensively embraced by tribal decision makers on Cheyenne

River, also as means to achieve an influx in capital and resources considering the dire economic conditions on Plains reservations. As explained to Braun by Fred DuBray, one of the original founders of the *Pte Hca Ka* project on Cheyenne River, this orientation however would not mean that cultural and educational dimensions were being substituted, but that now that the “herd has reached about twenty-five hundred animals it is equally important to focus on business development” (Braun 2007: 204). Although Braun concludes that in contrast to “traditionalistically” orientated tribal administrations, more “progressive” ones see “buffalo programs that emphasize more traditional values and work for self-sufficiency and cultural revival [...] as a hindrance to achieving the full economic potential of the reservation” (Braun 2007: 202), most Lakota reservations seem to pursue a balanced approach between achieving economic and cultural benefits from bison herding.

Particularly on Lakota/Dakota reservations, hunts and butcher workshops are held for educational purposes to teach about the cultural and historical significance of these animals, foster nutritional awareness and promote healthy diets based on traditional (bison based) dishes or meals, especially in the light of exceptionally high diabetes rates on these reservations (Woodard 2017; Yellowbird, Kacey Formal Interview 07/06/2017, Hunter, Darrell Informal Interview 10/15/2017).

In both Standing Rock and Cheyenne River on each annual Sundance a bison is donated by the tribe, whereas according to Stefani Kim (2016), in Pine Ridge an average of 25 bison from the tribe’s herds are sold to Sundances. According to Darrell Hunter, the Oglala Lakota Park Service, the authority managing the tribal bison herd in the southern section of the South Dakota Badlands located on the reservation (Eilperin 2013), also “give it out for funeral, for weddings and stuff like that so people can make use of it” (Hunter, Darrell Informal Interview 10/15/2017).

Braun writes that buffalo used to be also given away for free to powwows in Cheyenne River but meat was often embezzled, sometimes even sold in exchange for beef (Braun 2007: 203), so this practice was terminated again. Also Jeff Kelly reported that at Standing Rock powwows bison “meat was wasted, or it was, you know, not cooked right or whatever, you know, so we [the Game and Fish Department] kind of shied away from that” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017).

In Standing Rock the four community owned buffalo herds are only around 400 head strong and thus relatively few in comparison to other reservation’s tribal herds (Woodard 2017). But also in Standing Rock many members have their own private herds, primarily ranched in the



fashion of cattle within fenced areas where, as Braun stresses, free range bison would not be tolerated by neighboring Indian and non-Indian cattle ranchers. In building their own buffalo farm on their land, which they had reacquired after leasing it out for decades, Henry Red Cloud's *tiospaye* is living the dream of many (Bauer 2011): According to Stromberg, a great number of his interlocutors expressed that they would wish to move onto their own lands<sup>82</sup> and preferably ranch bison there (Stromberg 2010: 60). This demonstrates once more the continuing spiritual and cultural significance bison still have to many Lakota today. The Indigenous NGO Village Earth supports *tiospayes* to settle land issues and to retain their properties from White farmers and ranchers to whom it has often been leased out for as little as 50 cents to three dollars per acre (Bauer 2011).

On the economic side, the Tanka Fund, founded in Pine Ridge as well, "will be looking to support entrepreneurs looking to engage in the [bison ranching] market", as reported by Orme (2014), adding that the "company recently teamed up with Indian Land Tenure Foundation, a national organization that restores Native control of reservation lands that have fallen out of tribal ownership" (Orme 2014). Another project currently under way is the construction of a meat processing facility by a Pine Ridge based tribal charity called One Spirit, to bring jobs to the reservation and "put a Lakota-branded meat on the market," as stated by Jeri Baker, One Spirit executive director (Brewer 2018; Baker cited in Kim 2016).

All of the above-mentioned Lakota tribes also offer buffalo hunts on the reservation to both members and non-members alike. Although Jeff Kelly said in an interview held in early August 2017, that buffalo hunts were not being offered to non-members anymore, since it had been frowned upon by some members, this apparently changed according to the Standing Rock Game and Fish's website, where buffalo hunts for all parties were announced for sale through lottery in February 2018<sup>83</sup>. However, tribes usually charge non-members double the prize of members or even more than that for shooting buffalo, possibly also to justify the sale to externals within their own ranks. Still, with a minimum of 1,000\$ per bull, bison are not easily afforded by most of the roughly 8,300 tribal inhabitants of the reservation (URL 25). As Jeff Kelly declared, "[a] member can purchase a buffalo at a discount rate. Buffalo meat is really expensive nowadays, it's just like, so, I mean we do have to charge [...] So we'll sell it to them

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<sup>82</sup> According to surveys conducted by the University of Colorado, 71% of all tribal residents in Pine Ridge would want to return and live on their allotted lands (Bauer 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Potentially the hunt was reopened to non-members to compensate or equalize some of the high financial losses of the tribally owned Prairie Knights Casino, which were suffered during protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016 and early 2017 (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inauguration of the Tribal Chairman 10/11/2017).

and then they can take it to the meat market themselves” (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017).

In conclusion, tribal buffalo programs can be seen as a means serving not just one but multiple goals: Reintroducing buffalo on tribal trust land helps to restore ecological landscapes and cultural traditions of peoples in the Northern Great Plains, providing food security and nutritional education to locals, and stimulating economic development on reservations and adjacent regions. Thus, in meeting cultural, educational and economic needs buffalo programs present a holistic approach to foster cultural revitalization and adaptation, health and well-being of individuals and political sovereignty of tribes, as I will also discuss in more detail in the following chapter.

## **3.2 A Changing Economy of Sharing and its Effects on Social Life in Lakota Reservations**

### **3.2.1 Subsistence Hunting and Gathering as Determinant for Modes of Social Organization, Worldview and Related Value-Systems**

In societies organized and living in bands and extended families (as the smallest socio-economic unit) throughout most of the year such as the historic Lakota, the general economic rationale is one of sharing. In the Horse Days of nomadic hunting and gathering of Plains peoples, a hunter's success was measured by one's ability to provide food for the community. Meat attained through hunts was rarely acquired just to feed one's family, but distributed through various mechanisms among community members to profit the whole group and sustain the collective<sup>84</sup>. Although the concept of individual property existed among the historic Lakota as well for horses, various household items and some other goods (resulting in intensified social stratification), food was always shared without exception (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 34). Even in times of food scarcity and starvation during the 1930s, food was equally distributed among tribal members of the Oglala as emphasized by Bolz (1986: 85). Ontologically, the concept of sharing was promoted through the idea of interrelatedness and a spiritual obligation to maintain good relations expressed by exercising cardinal virtues of generosity, hospitality and humility. In addition, the more one humbled him or herself, gave away goods or materially as well as immaterially contributed to the collective, the more prestige and social recognition one was able to receive/acquire from the group (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 15).

Social status among bands was thus determined by one's capabilities to acquire goods or serve and protect the whole community, the collective well-being, not only the individual and his closest relatives. As such, the virtue of generosity encouraged the reproduction of a social organization based on sharing to achieve social cohesion. In this hunter-gatherer social matrix, personal accomplishments were thus directly incorporated for the greater good of the collective, simultaneously honoring the individual through the transferal of social capital<sup>85</sup>. Traditionally, leaders were chosen in regard to their capability to be generous: Given this they had to be successful in battle and hunting game, so they could give away their acquisitions to the community, distributing everything to its last bit among the extended families, the *tiospayes*.

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<sup>84</sup> For more detailed elaborations on historical procedures of food distribution go to chapter 2.1.2.2.

<sup>85</sup> In using this terminology, I refer to Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual work, who distinguishes between different forms of capital, which (depending on the type of capital and context) are more or less likely to be transformed and transferred (Bourdieu 1983).

Thus, the lifestyle as warring hunters and gatherers actively perpetuated the ideology and social dynamic of sharing, reconstituting community as form of bonding in forging social ties through mutual appreciation of everyone's contribution to the collective survival and cultural wealth gained beyond subsistence means. After all, hunting and warring were both greatly collective endeavors, success being dependent on effective cooperation and coordination. Probably the most prominent example in regard to collective hunting strategies was the cliff drive, where whole herds of bison were chased and directed towards a cliff, where they would fall into death, thus providing meat for the whole tribe. Although this method was less frequently used by peoples of the Plains once the spread of horses enabled and gave way to new (more individualized) hunting techniques, it perfectly illustrates the vitality of perfectly coordinated collaboration in bigger hunts (as explained in more detail in chapter 3.1.2.2).

While intertribal warfare as an economic driver and catalyst for wealth ceased with the forced adaption to sedentary lifestyles on reservations, hunting and gathering practices remained intact mainly as a necessary survival strategy to supplement diets under conditions of extreme poverty. The need to work together in the hunt may have been lessened and eventually become obsolete by the introduction of new tools and technologies, first of course with the arrival of horses on the Plains and later more extensively due to cars and ATVs becoming commonly used at reservation hunts, but the virtue of generosity in sharing the meat acquired persisted until today as confirmed by many of my interlocutors (Yellowbird, Kacey Formal Interview 07/06/2017; Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

However, as members of *tiospayes* and bands are now not living together in camps anymore but are scattered across the reservation<sup>86</sup>, living in different villages or distant plots of land, relationships are often harder to be maintained and thus sometimes also disintegrate (Gibbon 2003: 136). Nevertheless, socio-economic networks of commensality<sup>87</sup> are still maintained especially among extended family members living in the same village community. Although hunting and gathering was the original economy laying the foundation for structures of social organization that have survived in more loose forms among Lakota until today, it is not the main economic activity of communities and people living on and off reservations anymore, who instead engage in wage-labor, have small enterprises or, if unemployed, depend on various social programs funded by the tribal government, which again are mostly financed through treaty obligations from the federal government (Gagnon 2012: 99 f.). Consequently, it is now

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<sup>86</sup> This was a result of allotment policy settling related families far away from each other to crush collaborative social structures and encourage individualistic economics, as I have demonstrated in chapter 2.1.2.2.

<sup>87</sup> Sharing and/or eating food together (Wynne 2015: 380; Barnard/Spencer 2002: 896).

not only meat and other foods that are shared among family members (mostly at feasts at different types of festivities, social and religious gatherings) but often other available resources, in this context, above all, money. This, however, often leads to tensions among family members, when the intended exchange is more often than not only happening one way, or in other words if there is no reciprocal or balanced giving and taking. In extreme cases this leads to severe mistrust and frictions within extended families. At the same time generosity remains a key quality elevating one's social status among kins and within the community, which is why this virtue persisted into contemporary times, although largely bereft from its foundational element for social organization found in economic collaboration.

As anthropologist Karl Polanyi already pointed out in his "Great Transformation" ([1944] 2007), communities are economically disembedded and disintegrated by its members' engagement in complex economic entanglements of national or global market economy industries that have replaced local collaborative networks: "Instead of the economic system being embedded in social relationships, these relationships are now embedded in the economic system" (Polanyi [1947] 1971: 70 cited in Swedberg 2003: 28). In that way colonially induced "modernity" bereft formerly self-sufficient communities from their ability to reconstitute themselves on a shared economic basis, which they control and coordinate themselves.

Still, among the Lakota, historical cultural kinship structures of the social organization developed through their hunter-gatherer existence persist, not at last because of poverty demanding from people to share resources and continuously work together (for survival) by utilizing established/remnant social networks which have not become replaced yet by a functioning and affluent market economy (Gagnon 2012: 101).

However, "traditional" kinship structures and related values also can present a barrier to entrepreneurial/small business development on reservations (Bolz 1986: 84; Satterlee/Malan 1975: 19) as also Lauryl Vermillion, president of the Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates (Standing Rock) explained to me in an informal interview in July 2017: Practicing traditional values like generosity and humility would often get in conflict with operating or running a business. Families in need would often demand financial support from their relatives, which entrepreneurs in the family often being wealthier (as a result of their economic activity) would feel obligated to give to them (in living up to their ideal of being generous), often leading to the bankruptcy of their businesses. According to Vermillion, only few would manage to find a balance between economic and social interests. Lauryl herself had tried to run a grocery store in Kennel, SD with her husband but failed to sustain the business, although they had tried really hard to get things going there. Even though they had said from the very beginning that they

would not give anything away for free and also tried to make that very clear to everyone, sooner or later relatives in need, be it cousins, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, of close or distant relation would come into their store and ask for stuff to be put on credit and then not return to pay it anymore. So, after a while, they had to eventually close the store down (Fieldnotes 07/26/2017). A similar story has been recited by Bolz (1986: 84), who reports of a small business man in Pine Ridge, who prioritized to stay loyal to his peoples' principles of hospitality and generosity and gave away too much of his goods to relatives in demand of them for free.

Since the onset of sedentary life on reservation the persistence of patterns of traditional interpersonal relationship building and customary ways of social interaction continuously reproduced the value-system among many members: As multiple authors (Bolz 1986: 72, 84; Ostler 2001: 121) report, in the early 1900s cattle were slaughtered by Lakota ranchers for festivities, be it dances, religious ceremonies, funerals or other types of cultural and communal celebrations for free, often ignorant of the economic losses it caused. To suppress and punish such economically irrational or irresponsible behavior and foster the adaption of a profit-maximizing market ideology among the Lakota, Indian agents on reservations sanctioned the slaughter of cattle for social events with imprisonment (Stromberg 2010: 82; Ostler 2001: 121). Eventually, as Ostler pointed out,

„[t]he opportunities and pressures of colonialism encouraged some Sioux to contest 'customary' notions of proper behavior [based on enacting cultural values of generosity and hospitality] and to begin to move in the direction of individual acquisitiveness. Those who moved this way, however, were subject to community discipline. '[O]ut of spite or revenge,' the Pine Ridge agent reported, 'evil-disposed Indians have . . . maimed or killed their neighbor's cattle'", (Ostler 2001: 121).

Although emphasizing that “[m]any of the Dakotas accepted the material and superficial aspects of White culture, but rejected the beliefs, attitudes, and values of the dominant society”, also Satterlee and Malan concluded that, “[s]ome individuals completely reformed their beliefs to their new knowledge, while other individuals refused to accept anything but the traditional knowledge of the tribal group” (Satterlee/Malan 1975: 19).

Resulting from these two extreme approaches to deal with changing external circumstances, the conservative one, resisting and rejecting new power dynamics and structures became known and referred to by scholars as “traditionalist”, while the rather liberal one, which included the willingness to adapt and sacrifice customary ways was termed “progressivist” (Gibbon 2003: 197). This categorization should, however, not distort the fact that many Lakota, especially today, tend to position themselves somewhere between these two extremes, also depending on

the issue, which every individual decides for him or herself, whether it be judged or tackled from a more progressivist or traditionalist perspective/stance (Gagnon 2012: 144).

On top of the ideational split between “traditionalists”, “progressivists” and varying degrees of “moderates” (Bolz 1986: 101), the latter being anywhere along the continuum in-between the first two extremes, many authors highlight racial dimensions underlying affiliations with one of these parties: While so-called full bloods are said to be generally more traditionalist, mixed-bloods or so-called *Ieskas*<sup>88</sup> (Gagnon 2012: 165) supposedly lean more towards adapting values of the Euroamerican market economy and are thus labelled as “progressivist” by tendency. This presumption is rooted in Lakota economic history in which mixed bloods, being of mixed Lakota and US-American decent (often a Lakota mother and a *wasicu* father), were often favored by governmental officials in charge of policy and decision-making on reservations: Numerous accounts prove that due to their racial distinctiveness (often also resulting in their exclusion from full blood circles) and consequent willingness to assimilate, they were often given more lands, cattle, jobs and goods through their interpersonal connections and racial relatedness to White agents than full bloods (Stromberg 2010: 18 f., Pickering 2000: 85). As a matter of fact, most officials in the tribal government, positions in businesses and people with jobs on Lakota reservations were historically and are until this day of mixed blood decent (Bolz 1986: 142; Stromberg 2010: 19; Gagnon 2012: 101). But as American Indians have one of the highest rates of marriage outside of their ethnic group (as compared to all other American ethnic groups) as Gagnon remarks (2012: 145), mixed bloods have been rising exponentially in numbers since the establishment of reservations. However, as Bolz (1986: 143) and Gibbon (2003: 197) emphasize, it is not so much a question of genetic descent but of attitude whether one is acknowledged as mixed blood or full blood, since through the *hunka* ceremony (Gagnon 2012: 79) one can be adopted by a full blood family and thus becomes not only a member of the *tiospaye*, but also a recognized full blood through the adoption into a full blood family. In contrast, “blood quantum” is a category that had been established by the US government to

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<sup>88</sup> As Stromberg elaborated:

“*Iyeskas* were often the children of White traders, trappers, and soldiers who had settled in the area and married Oglala women; because of their bilingual capabilities, they were used as middlemen in negotiations between the tribe and the U.S. government (Powers 1986, 129-130). Shortly after the establishment of the reservation, the rate of White settlement increased, in part due to the ability of White men to qualify for an allotment after marrying Native women (Reinhardt 2007, 31). After the creation of the Pine Ridge Agency in 1879, the OIA [Oglala Indian Agency] used ethnicity as a tool in creating a hierarchical colonial structure, reinforcing differences between the two groups (Robertson 2002, 247). Preferential hiring for *Iyeskas* and Whites married to Natives was instituted at all levels of government” (Stromberg 2010: 18).

Thus, US policy fostered intermixing supposedly intended to cause splits in Lakota society (through different hierarchical treatment of “races”) and weaken affiliations with traditional Lakota culture.

measure the percentage of Indian blood to mark racial belonging (Muckle 2013: 11 f.; Gagnon 2012: 145 f.). However, one's blood quantum does not inform about one's Indian identity which is based on self-identification and ascription rather than genetics. So the label full blood informs first and foremost about a political orientation towards traditional ways and values, while mixed bloods are associated to having a more open approach towards adapting their traditions and ways to that of the dominant (colonial) culture.

DeMaille sees a direct correlation between the full bloods' persistent kinship system based on sharing and caring for one another, their consequent negation of capitalist profit making ideology and the higher poverty rates among them than among mixed bloods who fully embrace the American market economy and ideology (DeMaille 1978: 299 in Bolz 1986: 143).

Like Almadon Swansen, an intern at the Crazy Horse memorial had mentioned to me during my visit there, Lauryl Vermillion pointed at the problematic of people sometimes feeling torn apart between holding onto their traditional ways and adjusting to the what is perceived as colonially imposed system (Fieldnotes 07/20/2017 and 07/27/2017).

The so-called "crab-in-a-bucket" syndrome was an often-cited phrase used by many of my interlocutors (Stonechild, Elvie Formal Interview 07/10/2017, Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017; Robinson, Jordan Formal Interview 09/14/2017; Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017) to express the social dynamic of lateral oppression on reservations ultimately prohibiting individuals' economic success. At the root lies the culturally determined damnation of individual success and enrichment, inhibiting the transferal of material wealth to all members of a community. As Chris Estes described it:

"And if you're trying to get out of the bucket, then there's another crab just trying to pull you back into the bucket, it's like that. So, you know, some people fall for it, some people just fall right back into the bucket, you know? It's, it's pretty hard cause it's not much jobs or anything – not much to do down here [on the reservation], and you've got to have money to go out" (Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017).

Lauryl Vermillion also stated that there was so much potential among her people, so much artistic talent, but many just would not want to make money with their talents for reasons given. Also, Jonathan Anderson mentioned the difficulty with relatives and friends coming, getting stuff on credit and then not returning anymore to pay it off. His proposed solution to the issue was to set a limit of ten percent of one's enterprise's total income to give away and to put the rest aside for oneself to grow the business (Fieldnotes 07/27/2017). The value of generosity could ultimately only be practiced fully when there was an economic source behind it enabling someone to be generous:



“While generosity is a virtue, I’ve said this too, if you’re going to try to be generous, and I think it’s a good thing to be generous, you need to have a successful business as a source of your generosity. [...] And I think, a person might say ‘well, we can give up to a certain level’ and say ‘well, ok, let’s go ten per cent of our net profit we can do for some charitable activities and once that’s gone we have to stop our charitable activities here because we don’t have the means to do it’” (Anderson, Jonathan Formal Interview 07/27/2017).

Pickering emphasized that, as it was characteristic for the Lakota’s nomadic hunter-gathering ancestors, it remains

“common for people to fill the short-term needs of the entire extended family rather than to accumulate long-term assets for themselves or their nuclear families. To the extent savings are accumulated, they are used for community ‘give-aways’ or public displays of generosity, not for direct future personal consumption” (Pickering 2000: 7).

Anderson also noted that wealth rarely was passed down between generations and that reservation Lakota hardly had any savings (Anderson, Jonathan Formal Interview 07/27/2017). Historically giveaways marked the end of a year of mourning after the death of a deceased loved one, when a family would present all their belongings to the rest of the community in a symbolic act of self-sacrifice (see chapter 2.1.3.4). Today, giveaways are also conducted on other occasions, such as marriages, powwows, graduations and instead of all possessions, only a symbolic accumulation of gifts is handed out to community members. However, the purpose of the ritual stayed the same: It strengthens relationships, creates bonds and is an expression of affection among peers (Pickering 2000: 7; Gibbon 2003: 194).

Ultimately, the motive behind every generous act in a social dynamic of reciprocal exchange is the establishment or reinforcement of social ties within a certain community or other dimensions of social relationships that act as a network of mutual support, which prove vital in times of resource scarcity and economic hardship.

Being rooted in a recent past of a mobile community life as nomadic hunter-gatherers on the Plains, the virtue of generosity has survived in a variety of ways into modern times: partially because of the persistence of traditions, partially due to a rejection of capitalist market ideology and partially due to poverty and as consequent economic necessity for survival.

As such it continues to affect not only social relationships but also shapes and recreates a certain way of looking at the world and defining oneself within larger social and political contexts, as I will show in the following two chapters.

### 3.2.2 Deducting Lakota Environmental Ethics from a Worldview of Correlation

Lakota ethics shape, regulate and are reflected in everyday behaviors and various rituals. Even elaborate ceremonies are in their ideational essence always orientated to sustain a harmonic relationship of the individual and group with and within the universe, meaning to smoothly integrate into the totality of existence (Müller 1970: 316 f.).

Traditionally, the importance which was given to the idea of maintaining good ties with and within *Wakan Tanka* were expressed in a person's life first through the naming and the *hunka* Ceremony. Only through the naming of a child, a newborn was believed to be granted a secure place within the unity of the cosmic alliance. Every child's birthday was simultaneously celebrated as a renewal of the world (Müller 1970: 286 f.). Similarly, in the *hunka* ceremony originally<sup>89</sup> bonds of friendship between elderly and young people were strengthened – it was a ritual adoption valued higher in meaning than kinship through blood (Bolz 2009: 73; Gagnon 2012: 79). This act was also symbolically interpreted as “a reaffirmation of the relationship of humans and the creation” (LaDuke 2005: 12) and, as famous Lakota holy man Black Elk explained, intended to bring about a threefold peace between individuals, between nations and first and foremost to bring peace to “the souls of men when they realize their relationship, their oneness with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells *Wakan Tanka*, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us” (Black Elk 1965 cited in Brown/Cousins 2001: 93).

Medicine (1985: 24 f.) correctly emphasizes that a society's ideational realm and value system determine behaviors and are being supported through myths and folklore which play a dominant role in child socialization by setting standards for personality in teaching about cultural expectations. In the context of traditional Lakota society, she refers to Luther Standing Bear as an example, who apparently pledged that “kindness was salient in parents' treatment of children for they wanted to develop a reciprocal love in the hearts of their sons and daughters” (Medicine 1985: 25). This presents again a reflection of the conception of the mutual partnership between humans, non-humans and non-human supernatural beings (Siems 1998: 177; Müller 1970: 316; Forbes-Boyte 1996: 103).

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century (and until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) the Lakota were a nomadic hunting and warring society, which was divided up into several bands only rejoining in summer for

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<sup>89</sup> Today the *hunka* ritual has received a new meaning as a rite de passage for young boys and girls to confirm their membership in the Lakota community. It thus functions also partly as substitute for the non-revitalized *esh-na-ti*, a puberty ritual solely for girls (Bolz 2009: 73; Medicine 1985: 27).

main events such as ceremonies, celebrations and big hunts (Richter 1998: 10 f.). Socially, the various bands were organized as *tiospaye*, an “extended family” with kinship being reckoned “bilaterally with a tendency towards patrilocal residence” (Medicine 1985: 24 f.). Cardinal virtues, upheld through associations established upon those ideals, which were also reflected in adults’ social and economic roles, were among women: industry, hospitality, kindness and chastity, for unmarried women fidelity and fecundity, and among men bravery, fortitude, generosity and wisdom. Living up to these virtues provided prestige and recognition to the individual and thus affected one’s social status. Conformance to behavioral standards was taught through play (with toys and games), face-to-face relationships and guaranteed through supernatural sanctions voiced in myths and beliefs<sup>90</sup> (Medicine 1985: 25).

As religion, also social life was based on a worldview of correspondence – about the care of relations. Consequently, the division of labor was cooperatively designed, where every sex was encouraged to act according to one’s abilities and talents<sup>91</sup> on the basis of mutual responsibility and respect. Personal enrichment and gain were seen as morally reprehensible, since the bands’ wealth depended on communal sharing of acquired resources (especially from hunting) (Richter 1998: 15). Generosity and reciprocity were also imagined as vital for the continuity of good relations and cooperation of the “two legged” humans with the “stone-persons, four-legged persons, winged-persons, crawling person, standing-persons (plants), and fish persons”, with whom they share the world (Forbes-Boyte 2004: 103).

Unsurprisingly, Lakota environmental ethics are also rooted in the concept of interrelatedness detectable in cardinal virtues such as respect and appreciation for all elements and life in the universe.

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<sup>90</sup> The importance of myths as a means for education also becomes apparent in regard to sustainable ways of living and the maintenance of life quality within a community in a certain area, when Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996: 88) writes: “There can be no doubt that many Indian thinkers know quite well that magical threats, in the sphere of hunting and gathering, are more effective than biological reasoning”. Consequently, it is rather unsurprising that the breakdown of the native belief systems brought about by (neo-)colonial development led to the abandonment or ignorance of traditional ecological sanctions which previously (sustainably) managed the rate, way, time and place of the extraction of natural resources, as Grünberg (2003) demonstrated elsewhere in the context of Amazonian forest peoples. Also Andrej (2012: 37) concludes, “wo und unter welchen Umständen jemand wann und mit welchem Weltbild lebt, hat entscheidenden Einfluss auf sein Verhältnis zur Natur, da [...] Naturkonzeptionen in Weltbildern verankert und damit keineswegs universell gültig sind”, which translates into: where and under which circumstances one lives with a certain type of worldview, has a decisive effect on one’s perception of the environment, since conceptions about nature are (culturally) rooted in worldviews and thus not universal.

<sup>91</sup> However, as Medicine points out, there were allowances for gender preferences in traditional Lakota society: The *berdache* was a culturally sanctioned and institutionalized female role for men, “who could not function in the stringent role of a warrior or who had homosexual tendencies. [Similarly d]reaming allowed a Lakota female to reject her role as a wife and mother and to become a *witkowin* (literally ‘crazy woman’ or whore)” (Medicine 1985: 25).

There was a sense of moral responsibility for the world and all the beings thriving on and off it, as convincingly argued by Kari Forbes-Boyte, professor of geography at the Emporia State University in Kansas, who highlighted in one of her papers that this stewardship of the land was “centered on the belief in sacred places [... since] certain locales were used in rituals to bring one closer to the spirit world” (1996: 104). This profound religious significance of certain places, perceived as fundamentally differing from other locations in the environment was based on a mythological assessment of the land in

“Lakota oral tradition, in which mythic events are recounted as the order of first things, from which the Lakota derive precedents for their customs and beliefs, and which make a connection between these events and the land in which the Lakota dwell” (Martinez 2004: 80).

The Black Hills or *He Sapa* form the mythological center of the Lakota universe. They are representational for the Rock *Inyan*, who sacrificed its body to create the earth (*Maka*)<sup>92</sup>, which was fertilized though the blood or water running out of its open veins, thereby shrinking in size and becoming hard and weak (Bierhorst 1993: 163 f.). Another myth tells the story of how the Black Hills became the Lakota’s homeland: After a huge flood<sup>93</sup> caused by the *wakan* being *Unktehi* – a mythological creature mixing features of deer (antlers) and bison (body) - only a lone girl of the Lakota people or *Ikce Oyate* (literally translating as “the common people”), who are told to originally descend from the *Pte Oyate*, the Buffalo People, survived thanks to being rescued by an eagle, most likely a *Wakinyan* or thunderbird, which in Lakota mythology were winged-persons with lightning coming out of their eyes and a voice sounding like thunder, who were in constant warfare with the *Unktehi*, the latter representing the ground/soil (earth) and the other the cosmic up (heaven, skies). Together the eagle and the girl generated a new people, the eagle nation (Müller 1970: 244; Martinez 2004: 84 f.).

From these examples one can see how profoundly Lakota mythology was built on places which contain “the memories and knowledge of long ago experiences”<sup>94</sup>, as Martinez (2004: 85)

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<sup>92</sup> Bierhorst goes on telling that *Skán*, the source of energy came to earth and created *Wohpe*, the White Buffalo Calf Woman, who from then on functioned as intermediary Goddess between humans and supernaturals. However, the originality of this myth is at best disputed from today’s standpoint. Bolz states that there is no such thing as a “myth of creation” of the Lakota, whereas Bierhorst, although voicing doubts about its authenticity due to Walker’s predetermination to detect parallels between Lakota and Greek mythology, presents Walker’s theory, which he extracted from multiple Lakota myths (Bolz 2009: 70; Bierhorst 1993: 162 f.).

<sup>93</sup> A popular Lakota myth recounts a buffalo, which is standing in the north of the world, losing one hair each day. It is said that when he would lose all of his hair, the world would be flooded (Bierhorst 1993: 166).

<sup>94</sup> In primordial times the Black Hills are also believed to have been the venue of the above mentioned “Great Race” between species, which was held there between two-legged, four-legged and winged persons to determine

pointedly put it. Ultimately sacred sites are unfolding their religious importance on narrational grounds in the orally recorded history of the Lakota people in myths and can be thus considered as constituting “homelands”. Although having once been the dominant force in the area, the Lakota concept of homeland as stressed by Martinez,

“was based on the amount of care they put into this land. Care is different from labor, which is the Lockean criterion for ownership. Care is an expression of love, a concern for another, as opposed to a desire for exploitation, which only facilitates personal gain” (Martinez 2004: 86).

He further argues that the Lakota care for the land by honoring the local spirits in all beings and maintain and pray for the land’s as well as their own revivification through the religious practice of the vision quest. The practical expression of “geopiety” or the “love of the land” through rituals is very central to pertain Lakota religious beliefs (Forbes-Boyte 1996: 99 f.). Their enactment at sacred sites is, as I have shown - due to their immense load of mythological and thus socially relevant references ascribed to them - extremely meaningful and important for the vitality and upholding of the religious system and its concomitant values, which is why Lakota activists, advocates, religious practitioners and as the Lakota as a people represented through tribal governments vouch until today for maximum exclusivity of access to these places. However, in most cases the US government apparently does not sufficiently respect the religious integrity and freedom of the Lakota (often because these sites are also demarcated inside national state parks and officials argue that these areas are meant to serve all US citizens and visitors for “recreational” purposes) for their claims are rarely met<sup>95</sup>.

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who was to eat whom. Today one can still see the traces of the racing strip can still be seen from above, leading around the base of the Black Hills (Brown/Cousins 2001: 91).

<sup>95</sup> For more on the pan-Amerindian struggle for land rights in North America read especially LaDuke 2005, and, for a particular Lakota example, Forbes Boyte 1996. Cadena argues that the rising popularity of Amerindian ontologies are a result of what he calls “Indigenous Cosmopolitics”: In one of his papers he brings up the example of Peruvian and neighboring countries’ Indigenous communities, where trees, rivers and mountains are traditionally perceived as anthropomorphic beings in *ayllu*, the dynamic space in which all beings coexist. Indigenous activists argue on basis of their Amerindian cosmologies that the harmony of good relationships through capitalistic enterprises such as mining is being disturbed and thus these harmful projects must be opposed to prevent offending the spirits of the land (Cadena 2010). Similarly, the Standing Rock Sioux protested the Dakota Access Pipeline for being built through their sacred homelands (and historic grave sites).

### 3.2.3 Discussing Ecological Sustainability of Native Americans: Navigating Between Ideals and Social Realities

“I hunt, I fish, I do all of that. So, taking care of the earth is one, number one. [...] we're connected to Mother Earth and we – that's where we come from and that's what we tend to take care of so our children's children can continue on to hunt and fish on this earth and keep our traditional ways alive, and our roots and our plants – and erm, that's medicine, and you walk around out here, there's food everywhere, you walk around everywhere there's fruits, berries, I don't know, there's plants, turnips, everything – all kinds of stuff you can eat” (Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017).

“[W]e actually have a spiritual relationship with mother earth that we need to nurture, because without Mother Earth we don't exist, without Mother Earth allowing us to have clean air or clean water, we don't exist. So we need to be very, not only respectful, but mindful that we take care of Mother Earth and that's a loving relationship that we all have, that we need to exercise more and more especially today, with the challenges that we have with, whether it's climate change or [other globally shared concerns of humanity,] because one or the other elements of Indigenous existence and life is that we have a responsibility to environmental stewardship, that's a responsibility that we have, our elders teach us that we have a responsibility to take care of Mother Earth in a nurturing or loving way, so that it takes care of us as well” (Littlechild, Wilton Formal Interview 07/09/2017).

As becomes apparent from the quotes above, many Indigenous people today recite a special relationship to the land they live and thrive on, if not to say to “Mother Earth”<sup>96</sup> in general. Although the generally shared perception of the earth as mother and acknowledgement that we as humans are living on a globe are rather recent outcomes resulting from hybridization of different cultural knowledge systems, the core concept of interrelationship is philosophically rooted in a past of living off the land – in the case of 19<sup>th</sup> century Lakota as equestrian hunter-gatherers on the Northern Great Plains.

But far more than just living off the natural resources of the land, these peoples perceived themselves as being in interaction with all phenomena encountered within their natural environment – be it plants, animals, human beings and non-human beings – taking care of them in a mutually nurturing way as they felt to be looked after by all life-forms around them, with the goal of maintaining good relations, to secure a fruitful reciprocal exchange also in the future. Without a doubt, as many anthropologists studying hunter-gatherers' ontologies have shown before (Bird-David 1990; Ingold 2000; Lewis 2014; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996; De Castro 1998; Descola 2005), the environment was perceived as an extension of the social world and was thus included in the dynamic of sharing in the reproduction of generalized reciprocal relations of

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<sup>96</sup> Called *Unci Maca* in Lakota (Darin 2017).

giving and taking. In this dynamic of gift-exchange it was undefined when a favor was received or returned. As Anishinabe holy man Jimmy O'Chiese told me repeatedly: "You never know when you might need it" (Fieldnotes 09/14/2017), referring to a partnership with spirits, understood as holding special supernatural powers transcending the logics and capacities of human thought.

Although people grow up with inputs from multiple knowledge systems, tribal members were and many still are sharing certain key concepts based on similar notions of interrelating with the environment. These, although varying in detail, are generally widely spread among Indigenous populations of the Americas (Gagnon 2012: 77). I find that animistic cosmologies as the Lakota's are rooted in a way of life as hunters and gatherers. In living off the land people engage in an interaction with their natural environment, constantly learning from and about it, embedding and giving it meaning within their culturally self-constructed order of things. As Charlton Thomas, a Cree outreach coordinator at Enoch reserve put it:

"We followed the buffalo, we followed, we followed the animals and we utilized everything Mother Earth had to offer, you know? Our medicines, we had our own medicines, you know? And those medicines and those plants, they were our teachers too, right? You know? And they're, they're resilient, you know? And how they, how they survive and how they give us life too and that connection we have to Mother Earth" (Thomas, Charlton Formal Interview 09/21/2017).

So-called traditional ecological knowledge (TEK)<sup>97</sup> is the product of peoples' close interaction with and observation of their natural environment. As Brown remarked for the Oglala: "Interrelated with this knowledge, however, was the individual's inner world of belief and values, which gave cohesion and direction to Oglala society" (Brown 1990: 11). Furthermore, knowledge of the environment can also encourage sustainable hunting practices, as demonstrated by Standing Rock Lakota hunter BJ Kidder, who shared the lesson subsistence hunting taught him in an interview:

"Just feeling free, praying, living this way of life, it's a good feeling. [...] I learned a lot about myself and why you have to respect things, not to take advantage of it. You don't need it, let it go, the fish go or whatever. You don't just shoot deer either, you know.

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<sup>97</sup> I align here with McGregor's (2000 cited in Smithers 2015: 99) understanding and simultaneous critique of this heavily discussed term (Andrej 2015), who

"has acknowledged that Native environmental knowledge, often referred to as TEK, is itself a construct of Western intellectual discourses. Concepts like environmental and ecological constitute reductionist terms of analysis common in Western scientific thought. As McGregor points out, Native people often perceive the separation of human beings and environment into discrete conceptual categories as anathema to 'the rest of everyday living'. Thus, McGregor notes that TEK does not constitute a homogeneous body of thought; rather it is a fragmented body of knowledge "derived from the framework of the dominant society" as Smithers (2015: 98 f.) summarized it.

You just take certain ones and you respect your food” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

Multiple Native hunters in Alberta mentioned to me that they would rarely shoot does to secure the reproductive capacities of deer populations on their hunting grounds (Zorthian, Dale Informal Interview 09/27/2017; Krupa, Joe Informal Interview 09/23/2017) and also in Standing Rock, BJ expressed his concern about hunting does, independently from the tribal Game and Fish Department’s regulations allowing him to do so during some seasons: “We respect the ones that are bringing the deer” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017). Also, seasonal restraints seem to have existed and continue to do so among hunters without the Game and Fish Department’s regulatory intervention; “Spring time we have respect. The deer are having the little ones” (BJ Kidder Interview), as BJ stated in the context of reporting that his family had been illegitimately accused of hunting outside of the official hunting season by tribal Game and Fish officers one time, although they had only dried some of their game meat (called *bapa*) outside, which they had stored in their freezer.<sup>98</sup>

As can be seen, there seems to be an environmental awareness and certain ethic at least among some Indigenous hunters in going about the hunt. However, conservationist ethics are also partially at least a result of Plains peoples’ forced adaption to a sedentary lifestyle in secluded areas, since when people freely roamed on the Plains as nomads, they did not have to mind about managing wildlife populations since they could just move on to new areas where they encountered a new abundance of animals and plants as Flores (2007: 162) pointed out<sup>99</sup>. Simultaneously, however, this allowed abandoned spaces to ecologically recover from human utilization, as Hassrick (1992: 182) explains in his renowned book on the Sioux, which still remains one of the most extensive ethnographic accounts on the Lakota’s historic way of life during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Forbes-Boyte (1996) suggested that Lakota nomads indeed had conservationist agendas based on their ecological awareness gained through living off the land. In drawing upon primary historical sources, she argues that sacred places like the Black Hills were intentionally conserved for hunting and gathering in times of resource scarcity: By setting aside demarcated areas labelled as sacred, the Lakota indeed practiced conservation. The motivation of holy men

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<sup>98</sup> Merely based on the assumption that BJ’s family had been illegally hunting out of season although lacking any evidence that this had been the case aside from the fact that the Kidders had dried their meat outside of the regular hunting season in August, the game wardens confiscated the meat from BJ’s family and issued a fine. BJ complained about the precedence by reporting it to the tribal council. The tribal chairmen, at that time David Archambault II, consequently ordered the dismissal of the two game wardens (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

<sup>99</sup> Discussed in more detail in chapter 2.1.2.



to declare these spaces sacred was most likely first and foremost utilitarian in nature – namely to preserve and secure a food source, instead of it simply being an act of caretaking and the maintenance of good relations with the spirit world, as also Reichel-Dolmatoff (1996: 88) suggests in the context of Amazonian hunter-gatherers that he had studied and lived with: He recognized that shamans or religious leaders (in holding an unofficial role as cultural ecologists) used their influence to manage resource extraction of their peers in order to guarantee the survival of the group in certain areas for long periods at a time. In putting up sanctions recounted through myths and storytelling, they consciously tended to the ecological re-productivity in certain locales – to secure the availability of natural resource for the future. However, as Grünberg (2003) shows, shamans lost power over managing resource use, when the knowledge system within which they were operating, and their authority was based upon, was being questioned or declared invalid by encroaching and competing systems of knowledge production introduced by colonizing cultural outsiders.

In any case, ecological knowledge of Indigenous hunters could certainly still inform appropriate wildlife management strategies of Game and Fish Departments today and related ontological notions could still be of use to culturally legitimize conservation by setting aside certain spaces for animals to have as refuges to be declared “sacred places” instead of or complementary to National Parks, allowing religious practices or ceremonies in such areas but none or little tribally external resource exploitation and tourism. As renowned Indigenous environmental activist Winona LaDuke explains:

“Traditional ecological knowledge is the culturally and spiritually based way in which indigenous peoples relate to their ecosystems. This knowledge is founded on spiritual-cultural instructions from ‘time immemorial’ and on generations of careful observation within an ecosystem of continuous residence” (LaDuke in Smithers 2015: 101).

Consequently, she concludes: “I believe that this knowledge represents the clearest empirically based system for resource management and ecosystem protection in North America” (LaDuke in Smithers 2015: 101).

In an interview, Indigenous environmental activist Jordan Robinson, a former tribal biologist from Cold Lake First Nation in Alberta, Canada presented his vision for Indigenous leadership in wildlife habitat and park management:

“True reconciliation to me [would mean that] we would give up co-management of parks. We [the Indigenous] would own the parks. We would own nature corridors; we would bring back buffalo. [...] We would have nature corridors and have a demand for wild meat hunted by Indians for everybody else, because this country was built on the fur trade anyway. And they turned off a switch, turned off that we can sell our own meat.

Now we get arrested and charged like poachers” (Robinson, Jordan Formal Interview 09/14/2017).<sup>100</sup>

As I remarked already in the introductory elaborations of this chapter (3.2.), an environmental ethic can be deducted from the concept of interrelatedness, present in many Indigenous philosophical traditions, as also Brian Calliou, director of the Indigenous Leadership Program at the Banff Centre pointed out to me in an interview:

“[A] lot of the notions in our Indigenous philosophies is about ‘we’re all related’. It’s a systems-thinking kind of frame of mind that what you do is going to affect nature as well so I have to be respectful of that – my decision making on how I use those resources on that land matters. So, these cultural values and practices and, erm, principles can apply in a modern world. And as a matter of fact, you know, with climate change and, and, you know some of the ethics, questions in business or government decision making, perhaps some of these philosophies can actually influence the bigger world out there - our business world, management world as well, that, you know, this kind of steward relationship, this idea of taking care of the planet as well as taking care of each other. I think that Indigenous principles and values can also inform that world. So, it’s not that these old knowledges should be swept aside, like assimilation policies tried to do, you know, and learn the new global system. The global system needs these wise knowledges, this wisdom, to help us adapt into, and save the planet and save each other. So, yeah, we need our, our, our wise knowledges” (Calliou, Brian Formal Interview 09/8/2017).

Indeed, Calliou’s approach here is shared by many Indigenous nations and activist organizations, pushing for ecological, social and economic sustainability, self-representing themselves as ethical elite in national and international political arenas. Some authors (e.g. Cadena 2010; Niezen 2009) argue that this is predominantly a result of global political dynamics where “identity politics” have proven to be politically viable strategies for marginalized groups to achieve benefits in terms of finances and rights, above all increased political sovereignty and power. Without a doubt, the self-identification as stewards of the land and repeated unreflected ascription of this ideal through juridical negotiation processes and their fixation in internationally recognized and ratified human rights declarations and conventions, coined ethnic formalization by Niezen (2009: 10), has led to a reinforcement of the ideal of the noble savage on a global level and even among the ranks of the title’s bearers as well. Authors like Bolz (1986: 58) and Gagnon (2012: 86) stressed that the religious elite of the Lakota also shifted its ethical emphasis from preaching traditional values encouraging

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<sup>100</sup> Conservation that labels indigenous foragers, previously living off a certain land base on hunting and gathering its resources, as poachers (and interdicts their subsistence activities) is sadly a global phenomenon, especially in areas where people do not have a voice to due to language barriers and a lack of political elites able to stand up for them in international arenas and courts. Often, all support they can hope for comes from NGOs, who collaborate with tribal peoples but also follow their own line of interests (see Lewis 2016; Laudati 2010; Marijnen 2017).

aggression and bravery for expansionist warfare to values such as humility, generosity, respect fostering peaceful relations after their people's confinement onto reservations. The ideal of striving for a harmonic human-nature symbiosis with ecosystems enabling long lasting self-sufficiency of also future generations in meeting people's basic needs, above all clean water, air and also edible animal or plant species or fertile grounds for cultivation, certainly presents a harsh contrast to large scale corporate resource extraction for supposed economic progress in a complex market economy context. One may interpret that this exploitative capitalist way of appropriating nature is promoted by the bible, where it reads in the prominent passage of Genesis 1:28: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (King James Bible, URL 26), which delivers philosophical justification for exploitation of the natural environment, hierarchizing the status of humans above those of other organisms/beings on the planet.<sup>101</sup>

Promoting a harmonic and respectful relationship with all beings (which although depending on the ontological system of the diverse Indigenous peoples are also not always regarded as equal<sup>102</sup>), delivers a fundamental difference to the European originated Christian tradition of short-gain orientated economics based on profit maximizing resource exploitation, reluctant of environmental effects, the environment being popularly perceived as separate from humans, instead of humans being a part of nature (Descola 2005; Satterlee/Malan 1975: 15). As such conceptual differences in worldviews present also a political means for Indigenous peoples today to set themselves apart from other groups or so-called dominant culture, creating and maintaining cultural boundaries of distinction for the reproduction and reestablishment of themselves as political groups (Barth [1969] 1998). Emphasizing and reproducing the belief in these ontological differences can be seen as a form of "strategic essentialism", as Spivak ([1985] 1996) first termed it, in so-called "politics of recognition" (Coulthard 2014), where group rights are claimed by actors or parties in taking up politically defined and legally fixed and in this way stigmatized ethnic identities, a compromise they make to temporarily achieve

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<sup>101</sup> Although many of the religious leaders I met would often agree with Christian teachings in principle (also confirmed by Gagnon's (2012: 80 f.) findings), sometimes even drawing philosophical parallels between their teachings and the statements found in the bible (Kills Pretty Enemy Sr., Michael Formal Interview 10/10/2017), many were startled by the concept of the all forgiving God in Christianity. For them it made no sense that an "immoral" action would not be met with a similarly destructive reaction, a sort of punishment by higher beings or the powers permeating all existence (Robinson, Jordan Formal Interview 09/14/2017; Cowan, Cynthia Formal Interview 09/15/2017).

<sup>102</sup> See f. i. Halbmayer 2012 for distinctions in beliefs between various Amazonian groups, each hierarchizing beings in a different order. Sahlins (2014: 283) in response to Descola's categorizations distinguishes between Animism or "communal animism", Totemism or "segmentary animism" and Analogism "hierarchical animism" amongst animist ontologies.

political goals. Most recently Indigenous activists protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was built right next to the border of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation threatening the quality of the tribe's main drinking water source, the Missouri River, self-proclaimed themselves as "Water Protectors" and thus perfectly utilized the romantic image of Indigenous stewardship of the earth to peacefully oppose the pipeline.

However, probably the most predominant concept currently recounted across Indigenous North America promoting Indigenous peoples' leadership role in questions revolving around ecological sustainability is the idea of "Seven Generations" (Kirmayer et al. 2011; Lavallee et. al. 2009). Kevin Hart, Regional Chief for Manitoba of the Assembly of First Nations, who was the key speaker at the Climate Change Conference at Canada's National Gathering of Elders perfectly explained it in one of his appeals:

"We're in in a critical time. Now that we're in the seventh generation we have to think about the next seven generations to come, to ensure that there is a future here for them. To ensure that there is a Mother Earth for them. Because what we're seeing right now is that there's so much global effects occurring, and I've stated this at the United Nations level time and time again and I said this again this morning that for us as Indigenous people we contribute the least to climate change and yet our people feel the full effects of climate change. We just have to look into our remote communities" (Edmonton, National Gathering of Elders, Climate Change Conference 09/13/2017).

According to that logic one must think seven generations ahead to have a positive impact on the future (Lavallee 2009: 273): In the context of preventing climate change, resource conservational and environmental sustainability this means using the best science and knowledge available to recognize, study and consider all potential effects and environmental implications on the well-being and health of the seventh generation (from today's standpoint) that may result from any development happening in the present.

However, the positive stereotyping and ennoblement of Indigenous peoples as responsible ecologists, conservationists and sustainability experts "by nature", although maybe helpful in claiming and securing certain rights at times, bears the danger of any ideal, namely the loss of reputation and public outrage upon the event of said people's violation of not meeting the imagined ideal when behaving contrary to the idealized expected (Niezen 2009: 161 ff.; Smithers 2015: 92; URL 27). The reality on the reservations reveals that sustainable behavior of Indigenous individuals, although idealized by many residents themselves, is rarely encountered. However, it must be admitted that this is to a great extent surely owed to severe conditions of poverty and a lack of knowledge about ecologically sustainable practices among

the vast majority of reservation populaces. Stigmatizing Indians as noble savages ultimately prevents meaningful discourse as Smithers showcased in her paper:

“A common feature of the trope of the ecological Indian remains the idea that authentic Indians live in harmony with nature and have an environmentally neutral impact on local ecologies. In contrast, Native American people and communities that do not behave according to prescribed racial stereotypes are too easily dismissed as inauthentic and environmentally destructive” (Smithers 2015: 92).

Indigenous ecological knowledge holders’ (including active Indigenous hunters’ and gatherers’), activists’, leaders’ proposed plans, actions and solutions based on (traditional) ecological knowledge and related ethics tackling and treating ecological problems of our time, may thus be easily discredited by recounted historical and contemporary examples disapproving of the ideal of the noble savage, thus prohibiting a fruitful exchange between or fusion of insights from traditional Indigenous knowledge, related ethics and scientific research.

As already pointed out by Smithers (2015), a static conception of authenticity, fixing cultural identities in time, denying them any dynamic development, adaption or mixing in changing social contexts with cultural others (through processes of hybridization<sup>103</sup>), paints a certain essentialized picture of Indians in the collective imagination of people, who are mostly informed through sources from popular culture such as Hollywood movies, romantic novels and other mainstream media, thus distorting reality by reproducing and reciting common stereotypical associations of Indians in general, that very category already being a constructed essentialism itself. But, as Smithers stresses, Indigenous traditions are not “static, unchanging cultures; instead, Native knowledge systems are dynamic, innovative, and adaptable” (Smithers 2015: 102). However, as I have just pointed out before, stereotypical notions of authenticity are even being idolized by Indigenous populations as well, who have taken up these often *anthropologically* constructed cultural identities one can read of in books written in the ethnographic present about their descendants’ way of life. This also supported the romanticizing of certain historical periods among Indigenous populations, depicted as times of cultural and economic wealth without looking at downsides/arguably negative aspects (when contrasting complex historical realities against contemporary humanitarian ethics). In many emic narratives of Indigenous peoples, modernity and its effects, having led to the weakening of cultural traits above all language and customs, is often depicted as destructive force held responsible for cultural loss, corruption, present states of misery and poverty in Indigenous communities, while

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<sup>103</sup> For Bhaba (2000), who defined the term, hybridization opens up a so-called third space inbetween unfixed identity categories, which are themselves products of a previous hybridization.

the past is glorified (McMillan/Yellowhorn 2004: 316). In regard to ecological sustainability, the general opinion among many Indigenous people seems to fit the noble savage ideal that before European colonization, they had lived in harmony with nature, as exemplified in the following quote by self-proclaimed Indigenous wilderness activist Nancy Rae Clark:

“[B]efore these governments came, we were all stewarding our areas, and that's what I hope people remember, is that we come from this earth, and this earth is not just a rock floating in space. It is the center of where we as human beings walk, and that we should walk in gratitude and with humbleness and love, and respect to all life” (Clark, Nancy Rae Formal Interview 10/04/2017).

That this did not always hold true has been shown by multiple scholars, most famously Shepard Krech III (1999; 2005). Also, I have shown in chapter 2.2.2. at the example of Plains tribes, that Indigenous peoples have pursued unsustainable hunting practices in the past as well. Nevertheless, environmental ethics, even if rather recently developed, framed or expressed as such among Indigenous peoples in modern contexts, could be regarded as an attempted adaption of tribes to contemporary political geographies in a globalized world facing a long list of destructive effects of human societies' impacts on the environment. Traditional ecological knowledge, related worldviews and deduced ethical standards could potentially offer conceptual impulses, pathways or solutions on various levels in climate change politics aiming to achieve ecological sustainability.

### **3.3 Reviving a Mode of Production or a Mode of Thought? The Multidimensional Role of a Hunter-Gatherer Heritage in Indigenous Peoples' Reclamation of Sovereignty and Self-Determined Cultural Development**

A hunter-gatherer way of life is not only defined by a subsistence economy based on plant and animal foraging but has also concrete implications for a society's social organization and consequently affects certain values and concepts shared by the collective. This latter ideational level can be categorized as making up a culture-specific worldview.

As I have shown already in previous chapters, the economic form necessarily determines a society's form of grouping, order and the approximate range of population size, which through interaction with its environment produces a widely shared worldview made up of concepts and virtues defining of, not only one's basic understanding of the world but also ascribing place, a sense of belonging and other affiliations to members of a community. This communally, silently widely shared and consented conceptual cosmological self-embeddedness thus defines a specific code of conduct or a general morale, that regulates internal and external ways of interrelating with others.

In short, the worldview and the various interpretations defining more specified values and concepts are an essential bonding feature needed as ideational stabilizers to maintain and reinforce a society's social structure. It secures a grounding of mutual understanding enabling effective communication on common grounds of comprehension. As such it very much influences humans' behavior and ways of interacting. Through socialization, the process of growing up, being educated or taught in the ways of surviving and being in a specific cultural context, the worldview is becoming reproduced but in a simultaneous dynamic adaption (or reinterpretation) to the pressures of time and place a society as ever changing social organism is exposed to constantly. Social behavior is thus learned and adopted by members of a society for them to fit in and fulfill a role within the social system, reconstituted or reconfirmed by a community's ideational realm, its worldview(s) and related/derived values and concepts.

As the practice, related traditional knowledge and social purpose of hunting and gathering still exists among some Indigenous peoples in North America, their "postcolonial" nations and communities sometimes territorially based on explicit reserves in Canada or reservations in the US, as I have shown in more detail at the example of the Standing Rock Oyate (or the people of Standing Rock) and other contemporary Lakota and Northern Plains tribes, precolonial social structures and worldviews persisted in Indigenous communities parallel to or partly infused or

mixed with colonially introduced concepts (such as the nuclear family) and market-values of the dominant Euroamerican cultural complex.

As with many Indigenous peoples in North America and worldwide, the colonizers' influence on the restructuring of Lakota society was largely a result of military subjugation and forced assimilation policies (see chapter 2.3). While some authors (Bolz 1986; Spicer 1980; Castile 1981) argue that cultural preservation and resistance to so-called acculturation is a sort of natural response of formally thriving societies drawn into economic misery and poverty by exploitation and domination of a subjugating power, others, like Barth ([1969] 1998) emphasize the interactive aspect. According to the latter, societies develop and change through the process of social interaction on a macro level, which depending on the political dynamic and power relations leads them to adopt some ideas, social habits and materials from one another while objecting others to create and maintain ethnic and cultural boundaries between them. In the first place this serves to foster a groups' social coherence and keep traditional or established elites in power.

However, apart from the political level, culture plays a major part in shaping individuals' sense of identity and belonging, delivering to them a social and historical grounding or footing. While hunting and gathering practices certainly used and partly very much continued to be an activity of economic necessity throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as it even has economic relevance to many Native American families today, the fact that it is still forming a major component in some Indigenous people's economic lives is rooted in cultural traditions (of knowledge production). From my observations, I identified that the lifestyle of hunting and gathering, the related social roles within families and communities and the value-system (which is in accordance to popular Lakota ontological conceptions of the world) that it reproduces, which people cling onto as their cultural heritage and chosen way of life in the quest for meaning, takes over the central stage as driving factor for the continuing pursuit of hunting and gathering practices today.

In the context of tribal efforts for cultural revitalization, the reintroduction and tuition/schooling of hunting, gathering and butchering skills to Indigenous youth on reservations is not only an effort to foster members' self-sufficiency and thus tribal food sovereignty in general, but also a pedagogic means to maintain the spiritual connection and pass on traditional ecological knowledge about the land and wildlife as well as to teach about specific historic cultural lifeways and reinstitute or emphasize traditional values in contemporary Indigenous societies and communities. In this sense hunting and gathering continues to fulfill one of its traditional social purposes in society, by it becoming once again an educational instrument ascribing social



roles granting knowledge and value-based orientation for Indigenous individuals' self-(re-)discovery and (re-)construction of facets of their identities labelled as "traditional", as I intend to reveal throughout this chapter.

### **3.3.1 What is lost and what is left? The Legacy of Assimilation Policies and the Cultural Heritage of Hunter-Gatherers**

In the face of infrastructural development to meet demands of growing global markets of industrialized societies, Indigenous peoples were often either pushed to adapt, perish or resettle. As Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) skillfully illustrated in her "Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States", since the advent of Europeans' arrival in North America, Indigenous societies were continuously bereft of their originally inhabited homelands, exterminated or forced to move west through genocidal politics of military subjugation and slaughter accompanied by settler-colonial land acquisition<sup>104</sup>. This caused a sort of chain reaction among Native peoples to penetrate deeper into continental North America, often resulting in intertribal conflict and competition for hunting grounds, which fostered an economy of war, structurally benefitting European traders who granted tribes a constant supply with advanced weaponry, above all guns as well as other tools and goods. In chapter 2.1, I have shown how this also instituted the emergence of equestrian Plains nomadism, leading Sioux tribes like the Lakota and Yankton to culturally adapt to a lifestyle as warring hunter-gatherers predominantly thriving on the consumption of and trade with bison-based products.

Throughout the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century most Native North American tribes had surrendered to Euroamerican political dominance either through a pacifying treaty-making process or due to unbeatable and unbearable military and economic pressure exerted by the expanding US American nation state or the Canadian Dominion.

However, few groups or bands managed to resist, escape and abstain European subjugation, consequent assimilation and cultural disintegration for a couple more decades through geographical isolation. Like some groups of Indigenous hunter-gatherers in the Amazonian or Malaysian Forest continue to do so until this day, these few bands in North America deliberately chose to run away from modernity's encroachment and absorption of their way of life, moving into remote and scarcely populated regions of the continent, only maintaining very limited or reduced contact with externals and almost entirely depending on and living off the resources

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<sup>104</sup> For more on settler-colonialism as a form of colonialism read Barker 2012 or Veracini 2010.

found in their immediate natural environments. In the Bighorn Mountains a camp of free Oglala Lakota had reportedly been hiding out until 1884 (Hassrick 1992).

In Canada a group of former Plains-Ojibwe or Anishinabek (as they refer to themselves) that called themselves the *Runners*, settling in the Foothills of the Rocky Mountains in an area presently part of Jasper National Park, managed to preserve much of its traditional lifeways. Jimmy O'Chiese, descendant of famed chief Jim O'Chiese and elder of this group, was educated in the hunting and gathering tradition of his people, since him and fellow children were hidden by their parents to prevent them from being put into governmentally imposed residential schools aimed at culturally assimilating Aboriginals:

“We used to be told [by our parents], ‘I’ll never see you, if you get taken away. Even though if we see you, you’re not gonna be the same, you’re going to be different.’ [...] That’s why we ran, because we wanted to make sure that we protect our education, our culture, our language, our spirituality, our ceremonies, our way of life. And how we’ve been working with a natural organization, how we’re connected to all that natural organization, because we’re all part of that organization (O’Chiese, Jimmy Formal Interview 09/18/2017).

Today, Jimmy, who has established himself as distinguished professor at Yellowhead College, appears also as guest teacher in Native American Studies programs at various Canadian universities to share his unique history, insight, knowledge and “understanding of medicines, ceremonies, the location and meaning of sacred sites, animal migration patterns, the land, the water, and the cosmos” (URL 28). Growing up in the “bush”, as Jimmy called it,

“[y]ou just had to worry about getting food. So, you prepared food ahead of time. You go hunting ahead of time, you dry the meat. A lot about drying meat. You smoke it and then you dry it, so it stays. It stays. And you can make that meat, and you can make soup. You can make different things out of it. It’s dry, and it’s ...you can keep it, like, months. Not only days, weeks - months. Ahead of time you start picking different kinds of berries - strawberries, raspberries, cherry, there’s all kind of berries out there. You pick those ahead of time – blueberries – so you prepare for the winter. [...] And, at the same time, running, hiding. You had to hide because we started to hear that kids are being taken away” (O’Chiese, Jimmy Formal Interview 09/18/2017).

Living off the land is not a viable option for O'Chiese and his fellow band members anymore. Hunting and gathering in Jasper National Park had been outlawed already in 1907, but O'Chiese managed to retrieve rights to gather plants for medical and ceremonial purposes for his people inside the Park (URL 28).

Similar developments can be recognized worldwide. While as it has been the case in Europe already in the late middle ages, hunting and gathering often remains only a privilege of certain elites, instead of serving as a societies' food source, it has increasingly developed into a means

of recreation and sport for trophies (Orsini und Rosenberg 2018: 50). Indigenous populations across the world that have previously hunted wildlife for subsistence now often find themselves labelled as poachers, if they continue to live according to their ancestral ways (Steinhart 2006; Lewis 2016; Bergthaler 2016b: 12 ff.). Following the colonial model of “fortress conservation”<sup>105</sup>, people were and are often expelled and indicted to revisit their former homelands for foraging (Miller 2011) and/or forced to live in areas where a hunter-gatherer existence is next to impossible due to lack of game and edible plants. Alternatively, people can either survive as pastoralists or farmers, but due to locally often unfavorable conditions for agriculture or pastoralism and resulting poverty, development funds, wage labor in extractive industries (Seidl/Saxinger 2016; O’Faircheallaigh, 2010) and (eco- or cultural heritage oriented) tourism sometimes (Laudati 2010), if at all, remain the only opportunity to prevent starvation. Facing cultural extermination as a people, Jimmy repeatedly stressed that

“our people [the Anishinabek Runners] ran all the way from Michigan. They call it Michigan now, and came up to what they call Ontario today. [...] This now where the black robes came getting people to destroy their ceremonial objects and, in other words, their church objects. And again, my people ran, and it took them 27 years to get to where we were, which is in the mountains, running. To protect their spirituality, their identity,

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<sup>105</sup> Towards the end of the 20th century, the dominant conservational concept aimed at excluding people from demarcated areas for the protection of “pristine wilderness”. This concept, prominently referred to as “fortress conservation”, became increasingly contested by critical scholarship. Critics emphasized the constructedness of seemingly uninhabited “wild” places by pointing out that Indigenous and local communities had been deliberately expelled from many areas which had then been set aside for conservation (Bergthaler 2016b: 20 ff.). In scholarly debate, the so-called “Yellowstone model” was scrutinized under aspects of effectiveness and social justification. Based on the weight of evidence provided in various studies, the view prevailed that the framing of landscapes as natural or cultural and “productive” or “consumptive” rests on a dualistic worldview which ignores of the fact that environments have been historically shaped by people for millennia. As a consequence, increasing international pressure was put on nations and conservation agencies to shift to more participatory, human-centered approaches. (Adams 2003: 34; Agrawal/Gibson 1999: 632; Sudnes 2013: 6, 19; Hughes/Beinart 2007: 303; Nustad/Sudnes 2013: 495)

The IUCN World National Parks Congress in Bali already addressed in 1982 that “people are part of nature” (Turner 2014: 294). In 1992, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), a legally binding treaty which declares “1) the conservation of biological diversity, 2) the sustainable use of components of biological diversity; and 3) the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources” (Reimerson 2013: 999) as its main objectives, was signed by 193 States at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (Crane et al. 2009: 144); its preamble explicitly recognizes “the close and traditional dependence of many Indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles on biological resources, and the desirability of sharing equitably benefits arising from the use of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices relevant to the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of its components” (URL 29). Although Hardin’s renowned theory about the “Tragedy of the Commons” (Hardin 1968) has been discredited by critical scholarship (see f. i. Ostrom 1990) which prove that communities, having developed systems for mutual monitoring and certain institutions to set up and adjust norms and sanctions, are indeed capable of coordinating themselves in a way to sustainably manage common resources; some conservationists nevertheless still argue today for the necessity of “fortress conservation”, thus negating local environmental knowledge and alleging that communities are unable to accomplish an ecologically sustainable management of resources, as exemplified by John Oates, who argues “wherever people have had the tools, techniques, and opportunities to exploit natural systems, they have done so” (Oates 1999, 55 cited by Turner 2014: 299).

their education, their health care system, their belief system, their way of life, the way they've always been living" (O'Chiese, Jimmy Formal Interview 09/18/2017).

Jimmy's generation was one of the last of his people to be brought up being taught to live off the land and lead a hunting and gathering based existence in an attempt to escape the culturally devastating Canadian residential school system and preserve Indigenous cultural heritage. Nowadays, as tribes and bands increasingly strive towards cultural revitalization, which can be regarded as a counter-movement to people's exposure to decade long assimilation policies of US and Canadian governments, above all the boarding and residential school systems, Jimmy holds a key role in communicating and sharing his knowledge and spiritual connection about the land:

"When you talk about revitalization, it goes back to Cypress Hills because that's where everything was began, life began, right? Language, way of life, the spirituality, how you related to this land, how you related to everything. It's about relationships, it's about organization. [...] for me, I wanna hang on my culture, my language, my identity, my spirituality, and my ceremonies. Because that's the beginning of everything. Without that, you cannot connect yourself. You can understand it, but there are gonna be so many things that are missing. [...] There's so many things, there are so many things that you need to put together. It's a structure (O'Chiese, Jimmy Formal Interview 09/18/2017).

With "structure", Jimmy refers to a worldview and way of life that are holistically interlinked. Repeatedly, traditionalists like Reinhart Roan in Mountain Cree Camp and BJ Kidder in Standing Rock would tell me that for them, all aspects of social life are "all one": Taking up a macro perspective of society, they argue that religion, economics and social organization cannot be looked at or attended to as separate but need to be seen as entangled in forming a social union, giving shape to a social organism one could say, that functions according to its own logic, its own order of things and thus produces a unique worldview and culture-specific way of life in merging/synchronizing with its larger environment (O'Chiese, Jimmy Formal Interview 09/18/2017; Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017; Fieldnotes 09/27/2017).

As I have shown at the example of the Lakota, aspects of that traditional (self-determined culturally evolved) structure have survived into contemporary times, but, as Jimmy outlined, some essential parts are missing, have been altered or replaced or are simply interdicted or impossible to exist within contemporary socio-economic contexts, which prohibits a collective reorganization of hunting-gathering peoples simply living off the land, that would be able to fully revitalize that way of life, strengthen that spiritual connection with the land again and reinstitute that structure. In the light of this, cultural revitalization in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context, instead of trying to restore or revert back to precolonial lifeways, is much rather an attempt to

smoothly reintegrate and apply cultural knowledge as active heritage to build upon and inform decision-making for self-determined cultural development in the present, as will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Unfortunately, Spivak's ([1985] 1996) prediction that the only real time the subaltern have a voice is when they are "dead" holds true for Indigenous peoples in the Americas in so far as to the fact that only after having suffered from an immense loss in numbers, land, rights, social structure and cultural knowledge fundamental to their ways of life<sup>106</sup>, surviving descendants have entered into the process of ongoing recovering made possible in the context of a globally increasing humanitarian, libertarian political environment, where they can protest and lobby for their political recognition, rehabilitation and maximization of their agency and right to self-determination.

In the past Indigenous peoples did not have a say when being overrun by the socio-economic impacts of a previously unknown workings of the industrialized culture-complex often termed "modernity". Nowadays, politically potent Native "nations" in the US and Canada often dealing with structurally reproducing conditions of poverty and starvation, resulting in drug abuse, domestic violence and communities' cultural and social disintegration on their reserves and reservations as a consequence of the ongoing traumatic effects of that past, are instrumentalizing the historical narrative of genocidal and exploitative politics committed against them by colonist nation states in so-called "politics of embarrassment", to denounce their past and (neocolonial) present treatment as crimes against humanity in international legal arenas, demanding reparation and acknowledgement of their promised or inherited lands and land use rights.

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<sup>106</sup> Indigenous peoples of the Americas had to endure decade long genocide, exterminating some peoples completely and wiping out over 90 percent of the continents' original population (according to estimates) (. Survivors were often deprived of lands, their (self-determined) way of life, including their unrestricted rights to hunt, fish and gather, and brutally forced to adopt Euroamerican standards of economic production, education and cultural socialization. For more detailed accounts on the particularities of genocide read Dunbar-Ortiz 2014 and for a discussion of genocide in the context of North America see Ostler 2015.

### 3.3.2 Mountain Cree Camp: A Success Story of Cultural Preservation through Isolation

“Our forefathers made good deals with the Whites. [...] The hunting and trapping was not bought off them, just land for farming. They weren’t asked for that. I often hear that the old people were making good living and could see better times ahead. All the game would remain theirs to live on. That’s what they lived on, all the wild game” (Smallboy, Robert Interview Transcript 1975).

In the quest to escape the destructive environments of their reserve, which had been a result of confinement and decade long exposure to assimilation policies, Smallboy, then chief of the Ermineskin Cree band, and a few elders decided in 1968 to emigrate with about 140 fellow band members from his reserve then called Hobbema, located in the Plains of Alberta, into forested lands of the Canadian Rockies’ foothills (the Kootenay Plains). Entitled by treaty guaranteeing them the right to hunt and gather on Crown Lands, they attempted to resort “back to the Indian way” (Botting 2005: 9) in achieving self-sufficiency, resembling that of their ancestors’ (Botting 2005: 3). However, as already mentioned by Hugh Dempsey in the Foreword of Gray Botting’s biography<sup>107</sup> on Chief Smallboy, “[t]hey had no intention of reverting back to the role of nomadic Plainsmen, but sought isolation, while at the same time providing an acceptable level of education for their children and taking government contracts to clear areas for roads and dams” (Botting 2005: XI). Settling close to the mountains in the forest, they started calling themselves the Mountain Cree (Rattlesnake, Elmer Formal Interview 09/28/2017; Fieldnotes 09/26/2017). Thanks to restless efforts of Chief Smallboy and other advocates, public media appearances, legal battles, the camp was able to withstand attempts to close it down and continues to exist until today. Like Jimmy’s Runners, their main intent was to save and reinforce the performances of ceremonies, songs and spiritual teachings rooted in their connection to the land. Elmer Rattlesnake, a Cree language teacher at the Kisiko Awasis Kiskinhamawin School, reports that the elders leading their people to this place,

“wanted their children, great-grandchildren to live a simple life and live in harmony with nature. Like what we’re doing right now living out here – it’s awesome. We’re close to nature, we hear nature, we see nature and we talk about it now because that’s what we were trained to do. We were trained to acknowledge the sun, the wind and Mother Earth and of course all of the living entities like, ah, the Thunderbird, the eagle and the bear. We acknowledge all of these in our prayer. And of course, we gotta believe that they have something to offer. And that’s pretty much all we need is, if we ask and if we offer they give us, they bless us back or give us something that we need from them. And I believe that’s why we’re still here ‘cause our... I’ve seen our elders pray. Pray in tears, tears of joy, tears of happiness and we, we’ve seen all that and now, after 49 years

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<sup>107</sup> Botting had become friends with Smallboy in the 1970s. Already with the intent to write about his life, Botting visited and interviewed the chief multiple times at camp in the years before his death in 1984 (Botting 2005: XVI).

we realize why, we realize why they had tears. And we see the grandchildren here, great-grandchildren still running around. Healthy. They're pretty fine children and descendants of the elders. [...] As First nations, as Cree People we always ask for life. Extended life. They've asked for White hair, they've asked for grandchildren, they've asked for great-grandchildren and it's the same for us. It's now our turn to ask for grandchildren, great-grandchildren and teach them, so they can acknowledge the God the same way" (Rattlesnake, Elmer Formal Interview 09/28/2017).

Although Smallboy had initially insisted that "those who chose to join him would have to give up modern influences, such as television, drugs, and alcohol" (Botting 2005: 3), many households in Mountain Cree Camp are now equipped with TVs and some also have internet, surely causing the youth to become more fond of and affected by advertised and displayed lifestyles, the often-propagated capitalist American Dream ideology and many commodities of industrialized societies meeting artificially created desires, instead of essential needs. However, alcohol remains strictly forbidden, traditional ceremonies<sup>108</sup> are still regularly held and the Cree language and syllabics are taught at the local school (Rattlesnake, Elmer Formal Interview 09/28/2017).

Far from being an artificial reconstruction of a somewhat construed or historically frozen idea of "authentic Indian life" in tipis, residents at Mountain Cree Camp have embraced and adapted many technologies of the times. As elder Reinhart Roan and others emphasized many times, the cultural authenticity of Mountain Cree Camp cannot be judged by the looks of it – technologies change – but becomes apparent through deeper ideational structures that are only to be found behind the surface, meaning the immaterial cultural interpretation and application of material things are defining and decisive for the Indian way of life, not the other way around. Also, Bolz in alignment with Feest concludes from his experience in studying Native American livelihoods that outer appearance does not reveal the deeper cultural meanings and structures of Indian life and thought (Bolz 1986: 13, 25 f.).

People at Mountain Cree Camp are living in modern-day housing facilities with electricity, drive cars and pick-up trucks, and some even hunt with the latest precision rifles available on

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<sup>108</sup> "When I described to local elder Reinhart Roan, who was in a sense recognized as the current chief of Mountain Cree camp in his role as highly respected spiritual leader, the execution of one of Jimmy's ceremonies that I had participated in, he noticed an irregularity, stating that it was not traditional to do it such a way, also saying that Jimmy should have known better" (Fieldnotes 09/27/2017). This demonstrates that ideal-typical notions of authenticity in regard to ceremonies, their conduct and tradition in general exist also among Native American practitioners themselves. However, as already pointed out multiple times in this thesis, the multiplicity of perspectives, approaches and the inherently fluid character of cultural forms remains unnoticed or ignored by such fundamentalist essentialization.

the market. Although they have not yet installed a septic system<sup>109</sup>, heat only with wood and collect their drinking water from a local streamlet they do not seem to have any desire or intent to change that, and, on the contrary, are proud to be able to get and drink their water directly from the river and cut the trees needed for heating themselves. According to my informants, populations are fluctuating: People moving there in search of a different lifestyle often discover that the encountered reality at camp does not fit their ideals or they were poorly prepared to endure the harsh winters encountered in the highly elevated terrain. However, some (extended) families seem to have never left this place: Members that have grown up and been socialized at camp often returned after occasional leaves to work or after having tried themselves in a different social context (cities or reserves) only to discover that life in camp is of a special quality to them (Zorthian, Dale/ Roan, Riell 09/27/2017).

As becomes apparent from Elmer's quote, as in the case of the Lakota, the maintenance and care for good relations with other beings is at the core of Cree cosmology. When I went fishing with Dale Zorthian, a local resident, living with his wife and children in camp, he emphasized to me that one needs to give something back, when taking from the earth, when I picked up a stone in the woods close to camp to take with me. Although he told me that he would not do it himself all the time, he invited me to offer some tobacco as a gift as the elders taught him to do, which I did (Zorthian, Dale Informal Interview 09/27/2017). Practicing reciprocal relations with an anthropomorphized forest (spirit) or Mother Earth, certainly proved to be an effective way to procure socially required values such as generosity, humility and respect to children as well. As a matter of fact, gift-giving and mutual support are not only key in maintaining good relations amongst camp residents but also remain vital for the survival of the group. People in Mountain Cree Camp collaborate and share resources, although cars, goods and food is mostly individually owned and consumed. Whenever I was invited into a local's house for food or shelter, I was expected to offer something or give something away, as I was told by my friend and assistant Steven Morin and our primary host Charlie Favel as well as other locals. If nothing else, packs of cigarettes were the main gift to be handed out in exchange for information, food or accommodation (Fieldnotes 09/26/2017).

Dale still hunted for his family, mainly because his wife demands a merely venison and vegetable based diet, since she was used to it from growing up on it at camp. However, he

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<sup>109</sup> This may be owed to their official status as camp, not village, possibly interdicting the installation of all too permanent structures and its location in a protected area.



would only go out hunting when he needed to, as he told me, not just for the fun of it or commercial sale. For him, hunting purely was a subsistence activity, a necessity to supplement his family's diet. As far as I could evaluate, no trapping or hunting for commercial sale was done or intended by anyone in the community. Hunting and gathering was merely to supplement diets. Some people, like my host Charlie Favel, would not even really go hunting, simply because they did not own a rifle. Instead, Charlie made his living with dancing at powwows and manufacturing different types of regalia, traditional clothing worn at dances and other festivities. Other than that people work at the school, or since jobs are limited there, "if you have to, you can go get a job at the mines, be a driver of a big truck", as Dale stated, adding:

"If you have to go somewhere else there is people that work at camps around here. Like some of the ladies they go work at the camps as cooks, other stuff, cleaners. I mean the mining camps, the logging camps. I mean if you go out hunting and looking for it, you'll find it. If you're serious about wanting to work and have income, then yeah. Other than that a lot of people just survive off their family allowance" (Zorthian, Dale Informal Interview 09/27/2017)

Some people however feel reluctant to work at mines and logging camps in the vicinity of the camp since it contradicts their ethics (Zorthian, Dale Informal Interview 09/27/2017). Also hunting becomes increasingly difficult, since as economic activities increase in the area, wildlife populations retreat.

Smallboy's Camp, as Mountain Cree Camp is still frequently referred to by (mostly) non-residents and in articles today, is an exceptional example of an attempt to continue living a self-determined way of life according to "traditional" ways. Although the camp's future is uncertain as extractive industries including mining, oil and gas have repeatedly shown interest in the area and youngsters often seem to aspire to living a life in the city, instead of being interested in continuing or wanting to hunt, fish and gather natural resources in the region, Mountain Cree Camp still attracts a multitude of Indigenous "escapists" with all kinds of (mixed) ethnic backgrounds and walks of life.

Until today, the camp has succeeded in meeting its goal in preserving Cree spiritual and cultural traditions and thus ultimately serves as an inspiration to Native communities to do the same.

### 3.3.3 Cultural Revitalization? What it Means to Indigenous Advocates

“Culture matters to us, our language, our practices. As a matter of fact, there is a revitalization, a rejuvenation of cultural practices and knowledge. [...] It’s a modern global world. We’re in a technological age, and so on, but culture still matters. And it isn’t that we’re going to go back and live, you know, some form that we did five hundred years ago – that’s not really what it’s all about. Cause cultures adapt. Right? Indigenous people have always adapted. So, it’s more about ‘what are those values we live by, those principles we live by?’ Our Indigenous knowledges, our Elders’ stories and the way they pass that knowledge on is all about ‘how do I live as a human being? How do I get along with other humans? How do I get along with Nature? With the animals? How do I respect that environment that I’m in relationship with?’” (Calliou, Brian Formal Interview 09/08/2017).

In this chapter (and its two subchapters) I intend to discuss Indigenous perspectives on cultural revitalization, what revitalization entails and means to Native advocates, be it scholars, teachers or politicians, what emphasis they put in the process and last but not least what role hunting and gathering as economic, cultural and educational practice can play in that context.

As Calliou pointed out, revitalization is not an attempt to resort back to precolonial lifestyles: It is an effort to adapt to larger, national and global, social, political and economic environments in a self-determined way, oriented along self-defined Indigenous values or principles informed by their ancestors’ historical ways of life and worldviews. As Tasha Hoff, Lakota language teacher at the Sitting Bull College, explained, cultural revitalization can be seen as a specific approach to decolonization:

“It would be impossible, and I don’t think it would necessarily be important, nor would it be wanted, to like go back to living the way my ancestors did 300 years ago. I don’t think that that’s what undoing settler-colonialism means. I think decolonization means us having the freedom, and not being coerced in any way, to make decisions for ourselves. We haven’t had that in a very long time” (Hoff, Tasha Formal Interview 10/10/2017).

Inherent in this argumentation is the acknowledgement of a history of repression, genocide and forced assimilation which resulted from expanding colonial nation states. By having outlawed traditional practices and policing/dictating the alteration of Indigenous peoples’ societal organization and governance – in the name of civilization and development – Indigenous societies and their descendants were and still are interdicted to make political decisions concerning their present and future for themselves. The settler-colonial logic of conquest and the paternalistic treatment of the symptoms of impoverishment and political disintegration of Native communities (through agencies such as the US and Canadian Bureaus of Indian Affairs) continues to exist in multiple ways until today (as shown for instance by Wolfe 2011). Instead

of supporting Indigenous communities to reorganize themselves through revitalization, which eventually would enable them to exit or rid themselves of the devilish circle of paternalism, structural poverty and economic stagnation through self-determined political action, present structures continue to be enforced on the side of the government.

Cultural revitalization is an essential means (making up one key component in the puzzle) to foster the maximization of political sovereignty and agency within contemporary political contexts, enabling a self-determined Indigenous nationhood formation encompassing all aspects of society including self-governance, social organization and economics. Self-determined here means that all members and parties of these newly developing nations participate in the process of shaping or choosing their system of leadership, their social and economic way of life. This can only be achieved through constant and repeated negotiations set on achieving the common goal of effective community re-building, ruling out or minimizing factionalisms by seeking a middle ground in breaking with extreme positions held by both, progressivists and traditionalists.

According to most experts the presently pursued self-determined restructuring of society needs to be informed by their own orally passed on teachings rooted in or derived from emic ways of knowledge production, which are then adapted or reinterpreted to fit or solve problems in contemporary contexts. To help Indigenous nations in Canada and also other parts of the world enhance their sovereignty and be successful in a self-determined way in the modern world, the Banff Centre's Indigenous Leadership Program, directed by Brian Calliou, has created an "Indigenous" pendant to the economic concept of "best practices" in community development, used in the "Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development" (Henson 2008), which they termed "wise practices" (Voyageur et al 2015: 31 ff.). In an interview conducted in September 2017, Brian Calliou explained this Indigenous approach to community development based on wise practices, which he presents also in his co-authored volume "Restorying Indigenous Leadership" (Voyageur et al. 2015):

"I need to understand that I have wisdom in my own community – that I have strengths and gifts based on our traditional principles and values. So, we're trying to get our Indigenous leaders to just sort of change the frame of mind again. Again, it's that much, that idea about 'we have much in our control that we can, we can do about, so why not build from our long history of great knowledge? Let's learn from the experiences we had here as well'. And then 'let's learn from another wise practice, from another story of wisdom and how they achieved success'. So, that's sort of the notion of wise practices that there's wisdom there, there's wisdom in our own communities, so we shouldn't always be looking somewhere else for the answer. Much of the answer is here. Much of

the answer can grow from our own community. We might be inspired by one another, there might even be some ideas to adopt there. But you never just adopt it – you have to adapt it too, right? ‘Cause even if that community is Cree over there, their situation is different than my Cree community. So, even if I borrow those Cree ideas, I still have to adapt them, to make them fit in my community. And now my community owns it. Now it’s legitimate to us. There’s a cultural match now. So that’s the notion of wise practices. And it’s resonating really well with community leaders, Indigenous community leaders around the world. [...] I’m really pleased that it resonates ‘cause all the time I want our Indigenous community leaders to think about ‘we gotta be successful, we need these tools and models and ideas to get along in a modern world and be successful there, but we also need to base it on our traditional values and knowledge, our traditional principles’. That basis, that foundation is so important. And a lot of that was lost over the years because of colonization. But again, like I was saying, it’s being revitalized and we wanna play a little effort in that” (Calliou, Brian Formal Interview 09/08/2017).

As Indigenous languages have developed during its speakers’ self-determined societal state, social order, logics and worldviews of ancestral lifeways are still reflected through the terminology and grammar of these languages (Hain-Jamall 2013: 13 ff.). Preserving and speaking the language thus becomes a central goal in cultural revitalization, since it is key to understanding the modes of thought of hunting and gathering ancestors and potentially deprive ethical principles from their teachings, which can then be reinterpreted for their application in contemporary contexts. Language scholar Tasha Hoff highlighted:

“That’s why I think that language is so important. There will be a time when we do need to make decisions for ourselves and solve problems for ourselves. We will need to call upon our ancestral worldview to think through an issue. But without our culture we’re not going to have anything to draw upon, we’re just going to have what’s been taught to us by the colonizers. That doesn’t mean that we still couldn’t make better decisions for ourselves, but we’re denying all of these good ways of looking at the world if we don’t try to take our languages with us” (Hoff, Tasha Formal Interview 10/10/2017).

Furthermore, cultural revitalization is a vital measure to ensure the survival of Native nations as distinct social units or groups. By reemphasizing cultural differences in language, worldviews and values, Native nations and Indigenous peoples worldwide strive for the continuous acknowledgement and advancing recognition of their sovereign rights and exclusive ownership and/or access to lands and natural resources. Without their groups’ unique status and cultural distinguishability based on cultural difference, it will be hard to legitimize the reception of any benefits thereof and to uphold their political sovereignty.

Meeting stereotypical notions of “Indigeneity” sometimes becomes a necessity in upholding rights claims: As Gagnon already stressed, Indians not behaving according to stereotypical notions of them present in popular culture may have it increasingly harder claiming sovereign rights. So-called reflective ethnicity is thus a means of self-representation aimed at meeting

externals' expectations to receive political support when claiming rights, resources or social benefits.

However, cultural revitalization does not only have political impacts but also affects Indigenous individuals' self-perception and identity: Being taught their native language, practicing ancestral religious ceremonies, participating in cultural dance performances and other traditionalistic events re-creates and reproduces a sense of cultural belonging and fastens Indigenous people's intra- and inter-ethnic as well as (categorically rooted) transnational social ties and relationships. Idealtypical notions of an Indian, Cree or Lakota identity among insiders and outsiders can however sometimes also overshadow interethnic mixing and polyethnicities within an Indigenous nation or group. Still cultural revitalization can have positive effects on one's sense of self, deliver a complementary role, a perceived sense of security through one's affiliation with a community in life and strengthen one's, even though sometimes only artificially re-constructed, re-imagined and re-enacted cultural rootedness and integrity.

#### 3.3.3.1 *Hunting and Gathering in Socialization and Pedagogy: A Means to Strengthen Cultural Integrity*

In the above described highly politicized context, learning about hunting and gathering practices today can be an approach for Indigenous individuals today to understand, reconnect and revitalize ideas and worldviews that stem from a historical lifeway of their ancestors. As Elvie Stonechild, a so-called elder in the making<sup>110</sup>, exclaimed in an interview, “we still hunt, we still gather, we still go picking berries, we still go for walks and that's part of maintaining who we are as culture, as part of our culture”, thus emphasizing the key function this activity has in defining her understanding of indigeneity:

“My daughter's picked a lot of sage through her years. She's eighteen now. And she would know how to go pick it. She could probably teach your friends. You know. And I gave her all the women's teachings. And I have boys, they're all grown up now, they're on their own. So I mean, uhm, my seeds have planted [...] we pass those things on. Or I have passed them on, to my children. So that in the next generations they'll know who they are as *Nehiyaw* [Cree], as Indian people, and who we are and how we're connected to the land (Stonechild, Elvie Formal Interview 07/10/2017).

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<sup>110</sup> She currently receives special schooling in the ancestrally and culturally inherited teachings of her people by her elders in order to enable her to pass it on herself to the next generation when time comes (Stonechild, Elvie Formal Interview 07/10/2017).

Due to decreasing numbers of active hunters and gatherers among Indigenous populations, traditional ecological knowledge about local flora and fauna seem to rapidly diminish among younger populations on reservations and reserves. As Standing Rock elder and hunter BJ Kidder stated:

“You know living, like hunting, you know where you can look at the area. You can see where it is a spring, you can drink water. Nowadays people don’t know things like that. You know how to look at the landscape. You know where there’s water for you to drink. Now nobody knows these things no more” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

The reasons for this development are manifold: On the Lakota’s and many other Plains Indian reservations and reserves, young people growing up in an environment of structural poverty, domestic violence are neither interested in or even capable of going out hunting and gathering the way elder generations used to. Video games, other media consumption and substance abuse are named most frequently by locals I talked to about the issue as a reason for youngsters’ dismissal of following up hunting and gathering practices. Chris Estes, a Lakota hunter from the Lower Brule Reservation, recognizing the increasing disinterest and unawareness among youth, points out that elders, fond of traditional practices and methods are “passing day by day” (Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017). Like many Native children on reservations or reserves, Estes grew up with his grandparents: “They took me out and they showed me all of these berries and all these things I could eat from the land” (Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017). Similarly, BJ was introduced to hunting by his father:

“I learned a lot from my dad, how to find the deer. [...] You know they are never gonna go downhill if they head back, if you follow them. They are smart, they jump way off on the side and my dad said once they jump way over on the side, they are gonna lay down so be ready. A lot of those things I learned from my dad, from wildlife. And he said never give up. You want the deer, you’ll find him or you do your best. Have respect for them. And that’s what we do. A lot of times it never turns up. You gotta want a deer, we’ve been lucky finding them all the time. Sometimes it would take a couple days but we’d find them. Yeah, we have respect for the animals, their honesty, their traditional way” (Kidder, BJ Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

In contrast to traditionalists’ customary norms, many parents do not take their children out hunting, fishing or gathering anymore: Some cannot afford proper equipment, including guns, others have not been taught themselves and again some simply do not show any concern in following up that activity (Fielnotes 07/27/2017; Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017).

According to the Standing Rock Game and Fish Department's director Jeff Kelly, one of the goals of so-called hunting safety courses offered by the department is to get young people interested in hunting again, as he also declared in an interview with me his very personal interest in wanting to see more young people take up hunting (Kelly, Jeff Formal Interview 07/28/2017). Although the Standing Rock Game and Fish Department apparently advertise this opportunity at powwows and other public events, so far it has not received much attention or resonance among the local youth just yet, as it seems. For BJ, instead of regarding it as the noble cause it is marketed and promoted by Standing Rock's Game and Fish Department, he sees the obligatory hunting safety course as yet another way for the Game and Fish Department to make money, which he finds is illegitimate, since some tribal residents are even unable to afford the costs of that training, due to lack of financial means. Jeff Kelly admits himself that hunting safety courses are not taught in a culturally rooted way and are purely functional in nature. That way the course fails to seize its potential contribution to revitalize cultural practices, related worldviews and value systems.

However, many Indigenous nations including the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and the Maskwacis Cree offer educational show hunts of buffalo and butcher workshops to the youth (Woodard 2017; Maskwacis Cree Reserve, Youth Conference, Butcher Workshop 07/06/2017). This serves multiple goals in the context of cultural revitalization: On the one hand, these workshops are aiming to teach children about traditional values: Respect is taught through making an offering to an animal's spirit for taking its life and thus the idea of maintaining good relations with them and all beings/the totality of existence is perpetuated (Woodard 2017; Krupa, Joe Informal Interview 09/23/2017). Also, the value of sharing is stressed through the communal labor of processing the buffalo and then again by collectively harvesting the fruits of it, the meat and materials, which are being distributed among tribal members. As Kacey Yellowhead, one of the local hunters running the butcher workshops in Maskwacis stated in an interview:

“We need to bring back those values and I think it's important for youth to understand that sharing is a value that we don't have or that's been lost in our community and we try to bring that back where we can, you know, grow our gardens or go hunting and then share with our community members. When I was just a little boy I remember when somebody would go hunting and they would kill an animal, all the families would gather in the house. They put the animal in the middle of the house and everybody would just do their part in cutting. And cutting and you know, that gathering was, was usually filled with laughter, you know, camaraderie. And, uh, tea and coffee and everybody just shared stories and they just laughed, and I remember that as a little boy and that's my vision of trying to bring that back to our community before it's lost” (Yellowbird, Kacey Formal Interview 07/06/2017).

Furthermore, in the light of high diabetes rates on reservations and reserves, hunting and butcher workshops are used to create awareness about historical and present-day nutrition of Indigenous peoples and deliver a platform to provide guidelines for healthy diets. Both the buffalo and the gardening programs of Plains Indian reserves and reservations, as the one in Maskwacis and in Standing Rock, are ideationally based on historical hunting and gathering and horticultural economies of their ancestors. As I have repeatedly mentioned throughout chapter 3.1 at the example of the Lakota, many of the nomadic Plains tribes, previously taking up a mainly buffalo centered diet on the open Plains and Prairies, have lived in woodlands where they cultivated wild rice and other crops to sustain themselves. Even in times of resource scarcity people resorted back to gardening, as some Yankton groups did when settling next to the Arikaras along the Missouri for some time in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (White 1978: 324).

At the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River reservation people had resorted to a predominantly horticultural way of life in the Missouri river valleys, once the buffalo herds travelling through their country had been exterminated. As elder Philip Lane had reported to journalist Stephany Woodard in 2000, “community members planted household gardens, gathered food and medicine plants, raised livestock and used driftwood and fallen timber for heating, cooking and building. [...] Villagers supplemented those foods by fishing and by hunting deer and other game” (Woodard 2017). With the construction of hydroelectric power plants and in the Missouri River and the consequent flooding of most fertile farmlands (see chapter 2.3.3.2) in the 1950s, people that had previously resided in the valleys found themselves homeless and dependent on commodity foods provided by the US government. Bereft of their ability to grow food for themselves, people were forced to take up high-starch based diets and the temporarily simultaneous expansion of fast food chains in the US supported the increased consumption of low-nutrient foods. As Kimberlin Cameron, a graduate engineering student from Standing Rock explained:

“When my grandmother was born here on the reservation and lived here, she had, she was diabetic. She had lots of health issues and it was because of the food. You know all they had as commodities was government grade, government issued food. That was high in fat, high in sodium, so that’s just high in sugar, something that as a Native people, mind you. The 1800s, you know late 1800s you know, our people were still living off the land. And to take them off of that land and put them onto reservations and force them to eat something that is essentially made to help them survive in the long haul, but is not natural, is not really necessarily what Native people were used to. A lot of the health issues occurred, because their bodies couldn’t adapt to that. And so my grandma dealt with and she was the double empathy and so both of her legs have been cut off because of her health issues” (Cameron, Kimberlin Formal Interview 10/13/2017).



With promoting hunting, gathering and gardening on reservations again, instigators hope to foster healthier diets among the reservation populace. As Chris Estes, another advocate of self-sufficient land-based diets said:

“I like to show all the kids that there’s stuff out there you can eat, like berries, and then gather your own food instead of depending on all these chemically unbalanced foods you get from the grocery store, you know? These are natural foods that come from Mother Earth. And it’s there” (Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017).

Simultaneously to becoming more conscious about diets, youngsters participating in these initiatives can learn about and engage with their ancestors’ subsistence strategies and sensitize their relationship with the natural landscape and resources of the Plains environment. That way, nutritional and ecological knowledge is being imparted through its localization and interrelation within cultural histories. As Yellowbird perfectly summarized, “whether you go hunting or whether you create your own garden [...] it’s healthier. But at the same time, I think it’s important for youth to understand how our ancestors lived before” (Yellowbird, Kacey Formal Interview 07/06/2017).

### 3.3.3.2 *Education as the New Buffalo: Self-Empowerment through Cultural Self-discovery*

Learning about their peoples’ historical lifeways enables youth to relate to and compare their contemporary life experiences with those of their ancestors, which potentially encourages them to recognize and draw parallels that can help them in their own journey of personal self-discovery when searching for their role in life as an individual and as part of a historically rooted collective. It is only through the other that we, as human beings, can recognize ourselves: knowing one’s history can provide guidance in the task of finding one’s individual passions and the process of getting to acknowledge one’s potential contribution to the communal well-being as well. One example of such a frequently made and commonly recited parallel would be the perspective of regarding education as the new buffalo. Towards the end of the interview with Chris Estes, he also appealed to the youth: “Get your education. Get your education, leave the reservation. It’s always going to be there, your family’s always going to be there. Go out and get your education and then come back to help your people. That’s my message for the younger people” (Estes, Chris Formal Interview 07/21/2017).

Also, educator and professional flute-player Whitney Rencountre regards education as the only way out of governmental dependency and the reclamation or reestablishment of tribal

sovereignty. Like many authors (Hassrick 1992: 333; Feest 2009h: 125; Gagnon 2012: 48; Gibbon 2003: 198), he finds that the politics of paternalism present an obstacle to people's motivation to get up and do something about the future survival of the Lakota as a people. As he explains, fighting for the recognition of treaty rights and reminding the US government of their duty to fulfill their promises is one thing, but simultaneously, the tribe and each and every one of its individual members needs to take responsibility for themselves. He explains:

“I think a lot of the focus of our Tribal Leaders is holding the government accountable for the agreement to pay for the Treaties, to pay for the land that they are renting, or leasing. It's like we teach people that the government, literally, made our ancestors the landlords of this land. They said that they were gonna take this land from you, we are gonna rent this land and pay you with food, shelter, and education, healthcare and that's the rent payment to you. Now, the problem with that is that the United States politics and government is usually persuaded by lobbyists, by people that want their great companies to be in power. And so, they really lobby with the powers that be. That creates a lack of responsibility by the government in terms of their relationship with our people being dependent on that payment, being dependent on healthcare and education. It creates this, it's almost like we're sitting back and waiting for someone to come and make things right for us. And that takes away our spirit because our Ancestors didn't wait for the buffalo to come to us and lay down and feed us. We had to work hard, we had to prepare, we had to be alert, we had to take time to work hard. Everything we had - our grandmothers to build the Tipis, they had to work all day long and they would teach their children. And it was a great self-esteem building process. Our ancestors were proud, our grandchildren loved spending that time with their mothers and grandmothers. Also, with the young boys, they loved learning how to hunt. It was exciting for them to learn how to go hunt the buffalo, bring them back and feed the community. It was like our spirit was strong, we were very happy to be able to do those things, but now in the state of our people, we're waiting for the government to take care of us. And that may never happen. But we don't know if that's ever going to happen so it's up to us to encourage our youth to use education and the tools that they have to don't wait for anybody else to make things better for you. Use your own spirit, work hard like our ancestors used to work. Do the work because that's the way our ancestors used to. Even though we are doing it in a different way, but it's the idea of creating that positive energy” (Rencountre, Jessie/ Rencountre, Whitney Formal Interview 10/09/2017).

The idea is to get young people motivated to find what their passions are in life, study them, become professional and then bring that knowledge, skill and talent back to their communities to bring about socio-economic change, alleviate poverty and create wealth. Ideally, the resulting prosperity would ultimately present the basis for tribal self-empowerment, enabling newly-founded Native nations to break out of chronic government-dependency and paternalism and lead their way in a self-determined manner towards an envisioned future of fully regained sovereignty. To achieve that aim education fulfills the key role as engineering student Kimberlin Cameron pointed out:

“I think as the Native people, especially our youth, education is very important, it is very vital to ensuring that we have a future. It is very vital in terms of bringing back our sustainability as people. You can’t, in my mind you can’t progress a nation in a world you don’t understand. At the end of the day, there is always going to be a need to continue to learn because it’s part of survival. And so, I guess you know for me my passion is in wanting to make this place better. You know how can I do that? I look at every angle, I look at every action. I understand that not everyone is gonna be an engineer and that’s ok. Somebody might be a politician one day, someone is gonna leave the tribe, somebody is going to become a doctor. You know somebody could open up a program here for you know others to be able to come for, maybe treatment, because they are wanting to change their ways in terms of substance abuse. Eventually one day I think you know we’re all gonna come together and there is going to be a point where we are going to finally decide [that] we want change, we are wanting this to be a better place here. And it’s gonna take time, it’s not gonna happen tomorrow, it’s not gonna happen in five years. It will take my lifetime, maybe another lifetime. But I think that, if we just believe in a better tomorrow, each and every day and we all work together to do that, we can really help solidify our position in this world for future generations to come. So, I guess my whole thing on all this is, you know, don’t give up to fight, you know fight for what you believe in. You’re gonna come across many many barriers, many challenges, obstacles, failures, but you’re also gonna find a lot of successes as well. And for whatever reason as the Native people we have so many challenges, so many setbacks to the point where, yeah, maybe we should have died off and we didn’t. And there is a reason for that. And as the Native people we are very, very special. And there is not a lot of us in that world of 7.6 billion people. I mean realistically there is what? Just in the US alone, little over 5 million Native Americans. That’s a very small fraction, so ahm, you know, we’re very special and my hope is that as a Native people we see that. And that all really will help us push forward” (Cameron, Kimberlin Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

Cultural Educator and Traditional Dance Instructor Jessie Rencountre supports the notion of adaption in regard to pursuing a higher education in order to survive as an Indigenous person and Native nation in contemporary North America. She clearly recognizes the conflict of interest, when pointing at the challenge every Indigenous person loyal to his or her cultural heritage has to face today, when trying to navigate between what they hold as their traditional inherited cultural values and the reality of being structurally embedded within a market-economic nation state, which promotes entirely different values. As a solution, she offers an often-recited anecdote about one of famed chief Sitting Bull’s teachings, which he had apparently given to his people upon the advent of having to surrender to US rule and resort to a lifestyle on the reservation:

“Our chief Sitting Bull, when they were first placed on the reservations, he told our people, you know, he said a different culture, different type of culture is coming, a White Man’s culture, he said. You know there are some good things that they are bringing, but there is also some not so good things that they are bringing. So take the good things from that culture and leave out the bad. And I think that that holds true too today, you know, with education, being able to help our people to be educated to be able to survive

in this modern-day world. Because what we go through is we live in two worlds today. We live as Lakota-Dakota people today, that's who we are first. But also, we are living in a White-Man-Society so we have to balance these two worlds the best way we can. So, when we can balance being a Lakota-Dakota-Nakota person in today's White-Man-Society I think that's gonna be helpful to our people. So yes, we take the good like education, being able to get educated and helping our people whether it's being a doctor, whether it's being a teacher, whatever that may, be but also leaving out that bad, whether it is alcohol or whatever that might be. Also, being able to have that strong identity, being able to know our language, being able to participate in our culture, as far as to all the different ceremonies that we've been blessed with, to be able to know those and continue to have them, we can pass them down to future generations. Living in two worlds and having that balance, I think, it is vital for us to be able to move forward and be strong and be successful in today's world" (Rencountre, Jessie/ Rencountre, Whitney Formal Interview 10/09/2017).

Kimberlyn also emphasized how the engagement with her Lakota cultural heritage helped her find peace within herself and fasten bonds with her place of origin, her community and its cultural roots. Eventually, this also determined her mission in life, as she realized what her part could be in helping her people and change their livelihoods and living conditions on the reservation for the better. Throughout the course of her studies, her originally vague idea of: "wanting to build houses as a freshman", turned into "I wanna create a systemic solution for sustainable housing, economic development, food sovereignty as well as renewable energy resource development, that could coexist with the traditional culture and values of a tribal nation" (Cameron, Kimberlin Formal Interview 10/13/2017). Kimberlin had found her mission in life through recognizing a need/demand of her people that she could see herself tackling by believing and investing in her talents to develop the skills necessary to do so. Looking back at her own experiences when growing up she deeply acknowledged the role of culture in the process of finding herself in concluding that:

"growing up here on the reservation, you know, I was very much a bit lost growing up. It was almost like I was having an identity crisis as a kid. My mom was going through impulsive alcoholism. I was having to deal with that. I was having to grow up at a young age and then I entered into working with horses. My adopted dad Naga, he really kind of took me in. And I was an anger kid, I didn't know how to control it, I needed some structure and how I found that, was by working with the horse. Horses are very sacred to you, as a Native people up here in Lakota country. And I don't know what it was, you know as angry as I was at times, you know when you have this other being right there and you are connecting with it. It just kind of changes your perspective, because there's such a purity and innocence in a horse, that, for me, I sort of found myself again a little bit with that, because I went on cultural horse rides. I partook in sweats, I partook in many of the ceremonies. Sometimes I'd have my setbacks, when I was still dealing with, you know, things, you know, going on in my life, you know, as a young child my understanding what was going on in my home, a broken home at that and my younger brother Amy, you know, there were times when I'd be so upset and he'd go like: 'Hey,

let's go for a horse ride'. And it was that kind of, almost like horse therapy that I needed to get to that next step. I don't know where I would be if I didn't work with horses. I probably would be still living in Wakpala and I sure would not be an engineer, I would not be trying come back here, trying to make a difference. And you know finding myself at that point, growing up over these things, made me realize that as the Native people maybe this lost feeling of people having that hopelessness, maybe it's just because they haven't found themselves yet. And I believe that it's because of the fact, that they haven't really found that point of how they can connect and become one with our culture, with our way of life. So, give it an opportunity just be able to learn about your culture, where you come from, who your family is, you know and go from there, because I think that there is such a beauty in really truly finding who you are and you're gonna find this happiness. And I hope that that day comes, I really do. So, I think that's the biggest thing in terms of culture. If you can be accepting of your culture, of who you are and really step up and learn more about yourself and really ingrain yourself in it, you're gonna find yourself and be a lot happier" (Cameron, Kimberlin Formal Interview 10/13/2017).

In regarding the engagement with one's cultural heritage, one's history as a vital means to understand oneself better and find one's role in life, Kimberlin is not alone: Many, including the Lakota educators and married couple Jessie and Whitney Rencountre, teachers at the *Ateyapi* program of the Oglala Sioux in Pine Ridge, strongly believe in the power of knowledge about one's history and how it positively affects the development of one's self-confidence as a person. They both struggled with finding themselves simultaneously growing up on reservations, but also having to undergo the US-school system. Both found confidence through learning, accepting, reconnecting and identifying with their culture, which helped them in the process of self-discovery and the unfolding of their full potential. Having experienced culturally inspired empowerment themselves, Whitney and Jessie have become strong advocates of acknowledging and using culture as a key tool to foster individual self-discovery. Through the recognition of their creative power individuals can contribute to the rebuilding of their Native communities, which to Whitney and Jessie ultimately presents the only really efficient pathway to tribal self-empowerment:

"I think the answer for our people or for us, like I said, is to regenerate ourselves and to understand that we have the power and we don't need to wait for the government to become more understanding of our people. We have the power and we can take initiatives on our own and that's what we see going on with my wife and I, and the organizations that we work for. That's what we are doing. We are giving our students tools to understand how to make their own lives better" (Rencountre, Jessie/Rencountre, Whitney Formal Interview 10/09/2017),

said Whitney as a final note in his interview, which his wife Jessie endorsed by stating that:

“I think it is gonna come up, come down to having our young people realize it might not change because it has not changed for hundreds of years. The broken treaties, and we don’t know if those treaties will ever be honored again. And so, what we have to do is to be able to empower our young people, this next generation coming up to realize that they’re the ones that hold the power to make this change to be better advocates of our culture, to be able to continue our ceremonies and such, and to be able to empower our people” (Rencountre, Jessie/ Rencountre, Whitney Formal Interview 10/09/2017).

To summarize the insight of the argumentation above in a concluding sentence, it can be stated that, cultural revitalization bears the potential for individual and collective self-rediscovery and its accompanying empowering effect, which are the prerequisite for a self-determined way of life and the continuance and enhancement of tribal sovereignty.

## 4 CONCLUSION

The practice and ethos of hunting and gathering have survived, although altered in emphases, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century of Plains Indians of North America, approximately half of which are living on reservations and reserves today. To prove this argument and elaborate on the complexities behind it, much of this thesis has been dedicated to a detailed historical analysis of changes in the Lakota's socio-cultural system effected by or effecting foraging activities throughout colonial times, encompassing a timespan lasting from the onset of Euroamerican colonization to the present. Resulting from this deep grained investigation of historical processes and developments I have identified a number of key driving factors for social change in Lakota society over the past 300 years, particularly in regard to shifts in subsistence economic practices, all of which are causally rooted in environmental changes conditioned by Europeans' arrival and spatial expansion in North America.

First and foremost, Euroamericans' steadily increasing economic and settler-colonial penetration, accompanied by their seizure of lands to the west, did not only effect local peoples in their vicinity, but ultimately caused a chain reaction of territorial conflicts between Indigenous groups extending far into the continental interior.

European markets also heavily influenced and altered Native American economies. Production for exchange in the fur and hide trade weakened the emphasis on self-subsistence as the main incentive for hunting and gathering. Guns proved vital in intertribal disputes over hunting grounds needed to meet new market demands of growing industries to the east and overseas.

The woodland ancestors of the Lakota, like many other tribes, drawn into this intensified dynamic of market-based warfare with immediate neighbors already felt the effects of Euroamerican colonialization long before actual physical encounters with any of the colonizing powers. Pushed out of their original homelands due to ever-increasing military pressure exerted by groups to their east and in pursuit of wildlife, Lakota bands started migrating onto the Prairies and Plains around the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. By that time, horticultural practices such as the harvest of wild rice had been practically abandoned and replaced by a fully hunting and gathering based existence for subsistence and trade in desired animal products dictated by Euroamerican markets, initially focusing on beaver furs, then bison hides.

Through the adoption of horses, which by then had spread across and vastly populated the Plains, also having become an object of trade between tribes and symbol of power and prestige amongst the same, the Lakota partook in the arisal of the equestrian Plains-nomadic cultural complex based on migrating with and hunting bison all year round.

For roughly the following 100 years, ending only with the near extinction of the formerly millions of Plains-bison populating the area, Plains cultures flourished in abundance and wealth resulting from the hunt, raids and trade. The Lakota emerged as lucky winners in the struggle or fight for power on the Northern Great Plains due to a number of favorable geo-political conditions as well as their strategic effort to take advantage of them in the intertribal contest of conquest.

At the time of increased Euroamerican migration through, into and settlement of the northern section of the Plains following and also co-conditioning the Lakota tribes' success campaign of taking over quasi undivided dominance of the same, the Lakota socio-cultural system previous to colonization had undergone recent and drastic transformations. New hunting methods on horseback, the growing importance of ownership for acquiring/attaining social recognition and increased interaction with external parties in trade all severely affected the production of new forms of political representation, governance, social organization and kinship relations, fostering individualism, also stimulating or instituting the emergence of social phenomena such as polygyny and the concentration of chieftainship.

Ironically, this short time of equestrian Plains nomadism also-called the horse-days of Plains Indians, would shape the popular imagination of American Indians worldwide, forever fixed through literary accounts and depictions by tourists, travelers, painters, scientists, missionaries, explorers and traders and other chronicists visiting, moving through or settling in the area encountering this way of life and culture upon first contact.

These often either positively or negatively essentializing and exoticizing reports and the effect of pictures and paintings to artificially exaggerate reality (only showing fractions of social life of mostly exceptional, thrilling or exciting moments and features in material culture and customs of a people) aided in the production and reinforcement of idealizing notions of authenticity, freezing cultures in time and space.

Also, Plains Indians of today like to romanticize and build pride upon their famous past as mounted hunters of buffalo. On reservations and reserves, hunting has retained economic relevance in the face of extreme poverty, lack or scarcity of occupational alternatives and thus money and means to get food. However, hunting and gathering are more than just acts of necessity to many contemporary practitioners. Recognizing it as internal part of their ancestral culture and identity, hunting and gathering food is seen as essential aspect of and for who they are as Native Americans. I have shown that foraged foods and goods (the material rewards from hunting and gathering) have been and still are fundamental to customs of commensality, reinforcing traditions of communal/collective sharing among extended families and the



community, thus maintaining pre-colonially established forms of social interaction and organization. Culturally inherited and revitalized religious ceremonies stemming from a past of extensive hunting and gathering were inherently informed by those practices, since they were the foundation of a way of life in characterizing and shaping the mode of interaction with and dependence on a specific natural environment.

The high rate of culturally performed appreciation and ritualized reciprocal care towards all natural life encountered and taken during hunting and gathering points at the Lakota's conception of the environment as anthropomorphically perceived living entities, humans can identify with on an equal footing of sharing a common spiritual essence, permeating all existence. This culturally conditioned worldview of universal or cosmic interrelatedness perpetuates the ideal of maintaining good relations with natural, spiritual, animal and human beings surrounding oneself. Ideationally, this serves to strengthen ideas and feelings of collective wellbeing as being pre-conditional for one's own, thus fostering a sense of collective belonging and place in the world. Hunting and gathering, in delivering the material foundation for the establishment of spiritual thought, is thus also vital in maintaining that connection and perception of a people of their environment. But not only worldview and ethics are rooted in foraging activities, but also what has been termed traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) (Andrej 2015) is a result of century long knowledge attainment through trial and error (much like scientific experimentation) about natural plant and animal-based sources of nutrition, foods and medicines (as multiple scholars, for instance Krech 2005, have demonstrated according to a vast recount of ethnographic examples).

In an effort to demystify the romantic image of the ecologically noble savage perpetuated by the writings of early explorer Lescobart (Ellingson 2001), and later philosophers such as Rousseau (1998) and Thoreau (1971), a number of environmental historians and anthropologists, most famously Shrepard Krech III (1999) have devoted their attention to answering the question whether Native Americans really were "natural" conservationists. A side-branch of this type of scholarship (such as Flores 2007, Dobak 1996 and Isenberg 1996) even particularly evaluated the ecological sustainability of Plains cultures. While all of them essentially came to the conclusion that Native Americans were not considerably more or less ecologically responsible in their behaviors than members of other societies, when measured against factual realities, emphasizing the shared human condition of people to exploit environments according to the best of their abilities, technologies, only limited to the opportunities and restraints of their socio-cultural system and ecological embeddedness, some accounts blame Native Americans for having actively or consciously and ignorantly

participated in the destruction of their life-sustaining environments. On the other hand, more fundamentalist cultural materialists denounce such argumentation as irrelevant from a macro perspective, pointing at the strong and guiding force of cultural and environmental determinations individuals are exposed to as inherent particles of their societies, which from this perspective need to be understood as independent social organisms following their own laws of nature (Harris 1980). Although I theoretically agree with the latter, I find that both approaches fail to recognize or grasp the political side of the matter.

Today, many Native American tribes claim their inherited connection and ecological responsibility as “stewards of their homelands”. Whether they have acted always according to that logic in the past does not matter in regard to their political commitment today, where tribes have recognized a potential politico-economic niche in the contemporary world to brand, market and fulfill themselves as environmental protectors. They arguably do so based on ethical teachings about interrelating with the land and informed by TEK passed on to them by their forefathers since time immemorial. Even Krech (2005) acknowledges that Indigenous peoples around the world have a vast knowledge about local plant and animal life based on their historical dependence on subsistence hunting and gathering as a way of life and survival. Although many Indigenous societies have suffered from severe cultural loss, economic disembeddedness (Polanyi 2007) and disconnection as a consequence of genocide, assimilation and the ongoing effects of intergenerational trauma, I regard the attempt of tribal leaders to focus on eco-social development as a viable opportunity to carve out space for Indigenous societies to regain a respected position in global politics. As far as I can conclude from my personal experiences, tribes seem well-equipped with the basic toolset to pursue the noble and urgent cause of leading the way in environmental protection: Preserving and revitalizing traditional ecological knowledge can aid in securing healthy ecosystems, next to creating environmental awareness and deliver people with the necessary means and knowledge to manage and profit from the land in an ecologically responsible way (f. i. through ecotourism and the right and sensitive harvest of plant and animal species found on the land). Furthermore, concepts from traditional worldviews bear great potential for the deduction of an environmental ethic encouraging ecological sustainability, as Native American environmentalists (e. g. LaDuke 2005; Smithers 2016) have repeatedly emphasized time and again.

However, providing people with necessary education on traditional and scientific knowledge about their environments remains key for the success of synergetic and non-exploitative interaction with the environment. I have tried to demonstrate and point out in this thesis that the continuance of traditional hunting and gathering practices plays a vital role when it comes

to passing on that knowledge in Native American communities. Tribal Game and Fish Departments in charge of the sustainable management of animal species and other natural resources in regulating hunting and gathering activities on US Indian reservations would be well-advised in collaborating with or including local hunters, especially elders in supporting tribal biologists in the effective supervision of local wildlife through the provision of culture and experienced based knowledge. Concluding from my own first-hand experiences and observations made at reservation and reserve communities in the Northern Great Plains, Native hunters having received their knowledge about the land from their grandfathers and grandmothers are suited best to introduce and train Indigenous youth in hunting and gathering practices. This would stand in alignment with traditional pedagogic approaches or, to use the words of one of my interlocutors, would be the “the Indian way” (Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017) to do it. In both, Lakota and Plains-Cree reservations/reserves, butcher workshops offered to local youth already represent first steps in communicating hunting related cultural knowledge and morale.

Still there is great potential for tribal Game and Fish Departments to profit in the achievement of their goals from experienced reservation/reserve-hunters not only in the promotion of hunting and gathering but also from the related traditional ecological knowledge, worldview and environmental ethic that still exists among keepers of that wisdom. Instead of the main methodological appliance of top-down regulatory disciplining following a westernized model of nature conservation and management, equal participation of local hunters in decision making processes concerning hunting and gathering on reservation lands could herald decolonization. Enabling hunters to share and discuss their locally highly valid traditional knowledge as well as in turn providing them with transparent information on updates about scientific insights concerning larger ecological dynamics extending/transcending far beyond reservation borders, would not only present a win-win situation for both parties, but also set a leading example for a return to culturally based ways of interest or conflict management through the encouragement of (bottom up) community based collective – so-called wise practice based (Voyager et al. 2015) – pathways to governance.

According to my interpretation and understanding of the term, this is exactly what it comes down to in efforts towards cultural revitalization. As advocates stressed, cultural revitalization is not the attempt to revert back to an imagined “authentic” state of being or way of life preceding colonization or colonial dominance, but rather a culture informed pathway to future development. This means that ancestral teachings, worldviews and values are reinterpreted to inform decision making in the present to secure self-determined cultural development, thus

representing a vital feature in defining indigeneity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the maintenance and extension of sovereign rights, essential for independent and self-empowered nation-building of newly established Native nations.

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## **5.3 Empirical Data and other Primary Sources**

All empirical data referenced below are kept by and can only be requested directly from the author. Insights will only be granted under conditions in accordance with research ethics.

### **5.3.1 Fieldnotes**

**Titled:** FIELDTRIP LOGBOOK. A Chronological Collection of Fieldnotes taken during Ethnographic Fieldwork at Indigenous Cree and Lakota Communities in North America's Northern Great Plains and Beyond between the End of June and Late October 2017.

### **5.3.2 Transcripts**

#### **5.3.2.1 Formal Interviews**

Anderson, Jonathan 07/27/2017, 58:36

Calliou, Brian 09/08/2017, 55:23

Cameron, Kimberlin 10/13/2017, 34:40

Clark, Nancy Rae 10/04/2017, 01:49:09

Cowan, Cynthia 09/15/2017, 01:08:46

Estes, Chris 07/21/2017, 38:31

Hoff, Tasha 10/10/2017, 01:11:47

Kelly, Jeff 07/28/2017, 01:26:02

Kidder, BJ 10/13/2017, 52:51

Kills Pretty Enemy Sr., Michael 10/10/2017, 22:33

Littlechild, Wilton 07/09/2017, 22:56

Little Thunder, Karen 10/14/2017, 45:27

O'Chiese, Jimmy 09/18/2017, 01:45:09

Rattlesnake, Elmer 09/28/2017, 09:39

Rencountre, Jessie/ Rencountre, Whitney 10/09/2017, 34:28

Robinson, Jordan 09/14/2017, 36:25

Stonechild, Elvie 07/10/2017, 01:59:40

Thomas, Charlton 09/21/2017, 21:30

Yellowbird, Kacey 07/06/2017, 06:01

### **5.3.2.2 *Informal Interviews***

Hunter, Darrell 10/15/2017, 12:25

Kidder, BJ/ Kidder, Wilma 10/12/2017, 52:28

Krupa, Joe 09/23/2017, 01:29:20

Zorthian, Dale 09/27/2017, 36:31

Zorthian, Dale/ Roan, Riell 09/27/2017, 31:12

### **5.3.2.3 *Recorded Events***

Maskwacis Cree Reserve, Youth Conference, Butcher Workshop 07/06/2017, 30:00

Edmonton, National Gathering of Elders, Climate Change Conference 09/13/2017, 03:43:03

Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inauguration of the Tribal Chairman 10/11/2017, 01:12:43

Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Inspection of Hunting Grounds 10/12/2017, 01:23:02

### **5.3.3 *Legal Documents***

Civil Action No. 16-1534 (JEB), UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: STANDING ROCK SIOUX TRIBE, et al., Plaintiffs, v. U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, et al., Defendants. Case 1:16-cv-01534-JEB Document 239 Filed 06/14/17.

Letter From The Secretary of The Interior, Submitting: An Amendment to Indian Appropriation bill asking an appropriation to extinguish rights to hunt, under treaty of April 29, 1868 with Sioux Indians. February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1875.

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## 6 APPENDIX

### 6.1 Abstract/ Zusammenfassung

#### English:

In this thesis I contrast historical and contemporary forms of hunting and gathering among Lakota people currently living in village-communities on reservations in the states of North and South Dakota (USA). In particular, the focus and main locus of analysis is laid on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, while examples from other Lakota reservations as well as Plains Cree reserves in Alberta, Canada, are only brought up as a means for making transnational or cross-tribal/cultural comparisons among Plains peoples yet regionally limited to the Northern Great Plains.

I show that although social organization, economic relevance of hunting and type of animals predominantly hunted by the Lakota have changed throughout history in processes of adaption responding to larger infrastructural shifts, specific aspects of a worldview related to hunting, which was strongly shaped by the nomadic way of life of these peoples on the Northern Plains during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have persisted and still ideationally permeate many spheres of social life. I argue that shared communal values and emic perceptions about human-nature relationships among Lakota and other Plains peoples are to a great extent ontologically rooted in a cosmology that was an outcome of a historical lifestyle as hunter(-gatherers) of buffalo. Despite socio-economic changes leading to the demise of that very foundational subsistence-based nomadic existence, elements of this lifestyle have nevertheless survived into modern day by their sustained relevance, adaption and application in social, economic, political, healthcare and educational contexts (to serve individuals' quests for self-discovery and to support political aims for self-determined development of Native nations).

Hunting and gathering are analyzed along two dimensions - as a practice and as a constitutive basis of a worldview and values. While, when looking at historical processes, it can be seen that the practice has changed in many ways due to technological, political and socio-economic shifts, its pursuit remains an economic necessity for some and it is still regarded by many as a continuation of a traditional way of life reflecting certain values, serving also as a source or marker of cultural identity.

Furthermore, I argue that these cultural values, which originally fulfilled particular social functions (and to some extent still do today) in a nomadic hunter-gatherer societal structure and its contemporary remnants (for instance by regulating the distribution of food, encouraging commensality and defining social hierarchies), have been adapted in political contexts by tribal agents; They are either emphasized, silenced or reinterpreted to foster conditions of social, economic and political well-being on reservations or reserves and thus aiding nation-building processes embedded within larger institutional contexts of (inter-)national politics in a global market economy.

### **Deutsch:**

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit ist dem sozialen Wandel von Jagd- und Sammelpraktiken der Lakota gewidmet, welche heute in Siedlungsgemeinschaften auf Reservationen in den US Bundesstaaten Nord- und Süddakota leben.

Obwohl der Hauptfokus auf die speziellen Verhältnisse am Standing Rock Sioux Reservat gelegt ist, führe ich auch Beispiele von anderen Sioux Reservationen in den USA und Plains Cree Reservaten in Kanada an, um überregionale Vergleiche ziehen zu können in Bezug auf sogenannte Prärie-Indianer der nördlichen Großen Prärien.

Kernziel der Arbeit ist es zu zeigen, dass sich zwar die ökonomische Relevanz der Jagd gemäßigt hat und nun andere Tierarten gejagt werden, sich aber die kulturelle Bedeutung des Jagens und Sammelns – wenn auch auf anderen Ebenen – durchaus erhalten hat. Diese Entwicklung ist das Resultat von historischem Wandel und Adaptionsprozessen, welche als Reaktionen auf strukturelle Veränderungen der sozio-kulturellen, politischen und sozialen Umwelt zu verstehen sind. Im Ergebnis konnten sich viele der auf Jäger- und Sammlerpraktiken basierenden und im 19. Jahrhundert im Zuge dieser Tätigkeiten entwickelten Aspekte im Weltbild der Lakota erhalten und beeinflussen daher noch immer soziale Interaktionsformen und Lebensweisen gegenwärtig lebender Kulturerben.

Die zugrundeliegende Aussage meiner Argumentation ist, dass sich kommunale Werte der Lakota im Weltbild von Auffassungen der Natur ableiten, welche sich im Zuge einer auf Jagd von Bison und anderen Wildtieren basierenden nomadischen Lebensweise entwickelt haben.

Trotz der sozio-ökonomischen und politischen Veränderungen, welche die Aufgabe dieser Lebensweise bedingten, blieben manche gesellschaftliche Institutionen und strukturelle Elemente dieser Lebensweise bis heute von Relevanz.

Dies gilt vor allem in ihrem (teils uminterpretierten) Einsatz in Sozialem, Ökonomie, Politik, Erziehung, Gesundheit und Vorsorge (unter anderem als Marker kultureller Identität, als Hilfe zur individuellen Selbstfindung und als Mittel der Unterstützung politischer Bestrebungen zur selbstbestimmten Entwicklung Indigener Nationen).

Zum einen untersuche ich also Jagen und Sammeln als Praxis untersuchen, zum anderen analysiere ich deren konstitutive Rolle in der Produktion für das Weltbild und davon abgeleitete Werte. Indem ich Kausalzusammenhänge in historischen Entwicklungsprozessen herausarbeite, biete ich eine Erklärung, warum und wie sich die Praxis des Jagen- und Sammelns verändert hat. Dies bestätigt die fortdauernde Aktualität des Jagens und Sammelns zur überlebensnotwendigen Selbstversorgung der am Reservat lebenden Stammesmitglieder bis zum heutigen Tag. Außerdem werde ich erklären, dass die Fortführung dieser Praktiken von kulturkonstitutiver Bedeutung ist in Bezug auf das Selbstverständnis indigener Jäger- und Sammler. Von Praxis und Weltbild des Jagen und Sammelns abgeleiteten Werte haben soziale Verhältnisse unter den bisonjagenden Vorfahren der gegenwärtig auf Reservationen lebenden Lakota geregelt und tun dies in vielerlei Hinsicht bis heute, wie sich zum Beispiel an der Aufteilung von erbeuteter Nahrung und damit verbundenen Idealen (welche soziale Ordnung und individuelles Ansehen bestimmen) zeigt. Dies stelle ich in meiner Arbeit anhand von persönlichen Erfahrungen und ethnographischen Berichten anderer Anthropologen dar.

Ein weiteres Anliegen ist es mir aufzeigen, dass Geschichte und Werte in gegenwärtigen politischen Kontexten auch oft uminterpretiert werden, um gewisse Zielsetzungen zu erfüllen, sei es zur Förderung besserer Lebensqualität auf Reservationen/Reservaten oder zur Belebung lokaler Ökonomien, welche dem Ausbau von Souveränitätsbestrebungen Indigener Nationen im Rahmen der internationalen Politik und globalen Marktökonomie dienen.

## 6.2 Resume/ Curriculum Vitae



### CURRICULUM VITAE

#### **Georg Bergthaler, BA**

born on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1992

Nationality: Austria (born in Linz)

Parents: Dr. Wilhelm Bergthaler (lawyer), Mag. Sabine Bergthaler (teacher)

Siblings: Lukas (8/29/1995), Leon (8/22/2001)

Marital status: single

Address:

Kalvarienberggasse 13/D/58

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#### **School Education**

09/2002 – 05/2010 **BG8 Piaristengymnasium Vienna** (humanistic gymnasium);

Graduated with *excellence*

01/2008 – 08/2008 **Lyman High School, Presho, South Dakota**

USA exchange semester, *sophomore*

#### **Academic Career**

03/2010 – 06/2015 **University of Vienna:** Bachelor in Social and Cultural Anthropology

**Title of the empirical bachelor thesis:** Community Relationships in Naßwald.

Reciprocal Structures and Social Change in an Alpine Village.

Grade: **A+**

**Title of the theoretical bachelor thesis:** *The Sharing Economy – a Pathway to Socio-Economic Transformation? A Theoretical Analysis of the Social and Economic Potential of Common Property.*

Grade: **A+**

10/2015 – present **University of Vienna:** CREOLE Master in Social and Cultural Anthropology

#### **Areas of study and fields of interest:**

- History and Present of Indigenous cultures in North America
- Indigenous cultural identities and cultural resistance
- Religions, ontologies, worldviews of Amerindians
- Human-nature, human-animal relationships
- Nature conservation and management
- Social Change and historical processes
- Hunting and Gathering Societies

**Topic of the Master's thesis:** *Continuity and Change of Lakota Hunting and Gathering Practices and their Cultural Implications throughout Colonial Times.*



### **Papers written in thematic preparation for the Master's thesis:**

Bergthaler, Georg 2017, *Fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline. What It Means to Be a Lakota Warrior*. SE Paper, University of Vienna.

Bergthaler, Georg 2016, *Ontological Investigations of Lakota Beliefs and Rituals*. SE Paper, University of Vienna.

### **Professional Experience and Community Work**

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 10/2010 – 06/2011  | Paramedic during obligatory Austrian community service<br><b>Arbeitersamariterbund (ASBÖ), Vienna</b>   |
| 2010 – 2014/summer | Seasonal worker at a steel factory<br><b>VOEST ALPINE AG, Linz</b>  |
| 09/2011 – 06/2012  | Bouncer, private security<br><b>Club - Bar Cantinas, Vienna</b>   |
| 03/2013 – 03/2014  | Bouncer, private security<br><b>Club - Café Leopold, Vienna</b>   |
| 05/2013 – present  | Member and voluntary worker<br><b>Opt20 – A platform to strengthen civil society, Vienna</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Planning and realizing art and culture-projects in public spaces</li></ul>   |
| 05/2014 – present  | Business executive of a Viennese transportation company<br><b>ARGE Wiener Studentenboten, Vienna</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Logistical coordination and management</li><li>▪ Voluntary work for refugee-projects</li></ul>   |
| 09/2016 – present  | Voluntary worker, activist, videographer, journalist<br><b>Arbeitskreis Indianer Noradmerikas (AKIN), Vienna</b><br><b>Working Circle for Indigenous Peoples in North America</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Organization of rallies, protests, cultural and other events</li><li>▪ Networking for the support of Indigenous Peoples in North America</li><li>▪ Administration of social media pages</li><li>▪ Publication of articles in magazines</li><li>▪ Pubic appearance on TV</li></ul> |
| 10/2016 – heute    | Hosting international guests in a private room via Airbnb<br><b>Private Lodging Establishment, 1170 Vienna</b>  |
| 08/2017            | Survival/wilderness camp trainer<br><b>Sportverein Marswiese</b>  |
| 09/2018            | Mountain guide, alpine crossing from Garmisch-Partenkirchen to Meran<br><b>Alpineschool Garmisch-Partenkirchen</b>  |

### **Commitments and Projects**

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| 09/2005 – 06/2011 | Actor, various plays at the theatre “Dschungel Vienna”<br><b>Drama Group Muisches Zentrum Vienna</b>                             |
| 08/2008           | Voluntary conservation work at Leopoldschlag, Upper Austria<br><b>European Green Belt Project</b>                                |
| 05/2009           | Starring “Danny” in the high-school musical “Grease”<br><b>BG8 Piaristengymnasium Vienna</b>                                     |
| 11/2011 - 03/2012 | Direction and production of the film project “Der Einsame”,<br>broadcasted on 3/7/2012<br><b>CU television - OKTO TV, Vienna</b> |

- 10/2014 – 01/2015 Empirical research at Naßwald, Lower Austria  
**Bachelor Social and Cultural Anthropology, Vienna**
- Exploring social, economic and political networks and institutions
  - Studying local livelihoods, ways of life and social structures
- 05/2016 – 06/2016 Field practice at the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa  
**CREOLE Master in Social and Cultural Anthropology, Vienna**
- Exploring local communities' involvement in nature conservation
  - Studying local livelihoods, ways of life and social structures
- To be published:** Bergthaler, Georg 2017, *Exploring Local People's Agency in Community-Based Nature Conservation: Lessons Learned at the iSimangaliso Wetland Park*. Field practice Paper, University of Vienna.
- 09/12/2017 Invited discussant of the film: *Awake, a Dream from Standing Rock*  
**This Human World Filmfestival, Schikaneder Vienna**
- 06/2018 Project Manager, Information campaign in Austria and Germany  
**Buffalo Field Campaign, Montana USA**

### **Professional Training**

- 08/2009 Communication skills course in the USA  
**Berkeley University, California**
- 07/2016 – 09/2016 Training as certified wilderness guide in France, Sweden and Germany  
**Outside e. V., Freiburg**
- 10/2016 – present Training as Tyrolean hiking guide in Tyrol, Austria  
**Tiroler Bergsportführerverband, Tyrol**
- 03/2017 – present Training as professional hunter in Vienna and Lower Austria  
**NÖ Landesjagdverband**

### **Further Qualifications and Skills**

- Language skills: German (native)  
 English (proficient)  
 French (basics)  
 Spanish (basics)
- Driver's Licence Austrian class B, international
- Sports experience Sailing (international A-licence, German catamaran licence),  
 horse riding, alpine climbing and hiking,  
 swimming, underwater rugby,  
 canoeing and kayaking – white-water class 3+,  
 wrestling, strength training, cross-fit  
 skiing, cycling, trek-running



## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Georg Bergthaler, BA

3. Mai 1992

Nationalität: Österreich (geb. in Linz)

Eltern: Dr. Wilhelm Bergthaler (Anwalt), Mag. Sabine Bergthaler (Lehrerin)

Geschwister: Lukas (29. August 1995), Leon (22. August 2001)

Familienstand: ledig

Adresse:

Kalvarienberggasse 13/D/58

1170 Wien

E: georg.bergthaler@gmx.at

T: +43 (0) 680 5516463

### Schulausbildung

09/2002 – 05/2010 **BG8 Piaristengymnasium Wien** (humanistisches Gymnasium);  
Matura mit *ausgezeichnetem Erfolg* bestanden

01/2008 – 08/2008 **Lyman High School, Presho, South Dakota**  
USA Auslandssemester, *Sophomore*-Klasse

### Studium

03/2010 – 06/2015 **Universität Wien**: Bachelorstudium Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie

**Titel der empirischen Bachelorarbeit:** *Gemeinschaftsbeziehungen in Naßwald. Reziproke Strukturen und sozialer Wandel dörflicher Lebenswelten am Beispiel einer abwanderungsgefährdeten Ortschaft.*

**Titel der theoretischen Bachelorarbeit:** *Die Sharing Economy – Hebel zur sozio-ökonomischen Transformation? Eine theoretische Abhandlung über das gesellschaftliche und ökologische Potential gemeinnütziger Organisationsstrukturen.*

10/2015 – heute **Universität Wien**: CREOLE Masterstudium Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie

#### Forschungsschwerpunkte:

- Geschichte und Gegenwart Indigener Kulturen Nordamerikas
- Ontologie, Weltbild, Rituale Indigener Nordamerikas
- Kulturelle Identitäten, kultureller Widerstand
- Naturschutz- und Naturraummanagement
- Mensch-Natur, Mensch-Tier Beziehungen
- Gesellschaftliche Entwicklung und Wandel
- Jäger- und Sammler Gesellschaften

**Thema der Masterforschung:** *Kontinuität und Veränderung von Lakota Jagd- und Sammelpraktiken und deren kulturelle Auswirkungen im Zuge der Kolonialisierungsprozessen.*

#### Geleistete wissenschaftliche Vorarbeiten zum Masterarbeitsthema:

Bergthaler, Georg 2017, *Fighting the Dakota Access Pipeline. What it Means to be a Lakota Warrior*. SE Paper, Universität Wien.

Bergthaler, Georg 2016, *Ontological Investigations of Lakota Beliefs and Rituals*. SE Paper, Universität Wien.

## Berufliche Erfahrung

10/2010 – 06/2011	Rettungs-Sanitäter, Zivildienst <b>Arbeitersamariterbund (ASBÖ), Wien</b>
2010 – 2014/Sommer	Saisonal-/Ferialarbeitskraft, Werkstudent <b>VOEST ALPINE AG, Linz</b>
09/2011 – 06/2012	Türsteher, Privat-Security <b>Club - Bar Cantinas, Wien</b>
03/2013 – 03/2014	Türsteher, Privat-Security <b>Club - Café Leopold, Wien</b>
05/2013 – heute	Vereinsmitgliedschaft und freiwillige Mitarbeit <b>Opt20 - Verein zur Stärkung der Zivilgesellschaft, Wien</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisation, Aufbau und Betreuung von diversen Kunst- und Kulturprojekten im öffentlichen Raum</li> </ul>
05/2014 – heute	Unternehmensgründer, Geschäftsführer <b>ARGE Wiener Studentenboten, Wien</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Logistische Koordination und Management des täglichen Transportgeschäfts</li> <li>Kostenfreie Leistungen und Projektorganisation in der Flüchtlingshilfe</li> </ul>
09/2016 – heute	Freiwilliger Mitarbeiter, Aktivist, Videograph, Journalist <b>Arbeitskreis Indianer Nordamerikas (AKIN), Wien</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisation von Kundgebungen, Demonstrationen, Kultur-, Literatur- und Informationsveranstaltungen</li> <li>Internationale Zusammenarbeit mit Native Nations und europäischen Unterstützungsgruppen Indigener Nordamerikas</li> <li>Öffentliche Auftritte im Fernsehen und anderen Medien</li> <li>Erstellen von Social Media Beiträgen, Artikeln, Filmen</li> </ul>
10/2016 – heute	Gastwirtschaftlichen Privatzimmervermietung auf Airbnb <b>Privater Beherbergungsbetrieb, 1170 Wien</b>
08/2017	Survival/Wildnis Camp Trainer <b>Sportverein Marswiese</b>
09/2018	Bergwanderführer, Alpenüberquerung von Garmisch-Partenkirchen nach Meran <b>Alpenschule Garmisch-Partenkirchen</b>

## Engagement und Projekte

09/2005 – 06/2011	Schauspieler, Aufführungen im Theater Dschungel Wien <b>Theatergruppe Musisches Zentrum Wien</b>
08/2008	Naturschutz-Voluntariat Leopoldschlag, Oberösterreich <b>Europaprojekt Grünes Band</b>
05/2009	Hauptrolle „Danny“, High-School Musical <i>Grease</i> <b>BG8 Piaristengymnasium Wien</b>
11/2011 - 03/2012	Idee, Regie und Schnitt; Filmprojekt <i>Der Einsame</i> , ausgestrahlt am 7.3.2012 <b>CU television - OKTO TV, Wien</b>

- 10/2014 – 01/2015      Empirische Feldforschung in Naßwald, Niederösterreich  
**Bachelorstudium Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie, Wien**
- Untersuchung von sozio-ökonomischen und politischen Netzwerken
  - Erforschung von lokalen Lebenswelten und Gemeinschaftsstrukturen
- 05/2016 – 06/2016      Feldpraktikum im *iSimangaliso Wetland Park*, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Südafrika  
**CREOLE Masterstudium Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie, Wien**
- Untersuchung der Beteiligung lokaler Gemeinschaften am Naturschutz
  - Erforschung von lokalen Lebenswelten und Gemeinschaftsstrukturen
- Freigegeben zur Publikation:** Bergthaler, Georg 2017, *Exploring Local People's Agency in Community-Based Nature Conservation: Lessons Learned at the iSimangaliso Wetland Park*. Fieldpractice Paper, Universität Wien.
- 09/12/2017              Eingeladener Diskutant des Films: *Awake, a Dream from Standing Rock*  
**This Human World Filmfestival, Schikaneder Vienna**
- 06/2018                  Projektleiter, Informationskampagne in Österreich und Deutschland  
**Buffalo Field Campaign, Montana USA**

### Weitere Ausbildungen

- 08/2009                  Communication Skills Intensivkurs  
**Berkeley University, Kalifornien USA**
- 07/2016 – 09/2016      Ausbildung zum zertifizierten Wildnisführer in Deutschland, Frankreich, Schweden  
**Outside e. V., Freiburg**
- 10/2016 – 06/2017      Ausbildung zum Tiroler Bergwanderführer in Tirol  
**Tiroler Bergsportführerverband**
- 03/2018 – heute        Ausbildung zum Jäger in Wien und Niederösterreich  
**NÖ Landesjagdverband**

### Sonstige Qualifikationen und Skills

- Sprachkenntnisse:      Deutsch (Muttersprache)  
 Englisch (verhandlungssicher)  
 Französisch (Grundkenntnisse)  
 Spanisch (Grundkenntnisse)
- Führerschein            Klasse B
- Sporterfahrung        Segeln (internationaler A-Segelschein und deutscher Katamaran-Segelschein),  
 Reiten, Alpinklettern, Bergsteigen, Weitwandern,  
 Schwimmen, Unterwasserrugby,  
 Kanufahren und Kajaken in Wildwässern bis Stufe 3+,  
 Ringen, Krafttraining, Cross-Fit,  
 Skifahren, Radfahren, Laufen.

### **6.3 Informed Consent Form**

Appended hereafter.



# universität wien

## Informed Consent Form for \_\_\_\_\_

This Informed Consent Form is for participants in my Master's research and film project titled "Contemporary Indigenous Livelihoods in North America on reservations or reserves".

**Principle Investigator:** Georg Bergthaler, BA  
**Organization:** University of Vienna  
**Project:** Master's Research / Filming

### This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- I. Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)
- II. Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)

### I.) Certificate of Consent:

I have read the appended Information Sheet, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

**Print name of participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ (Month / Day / Year)

### Statement by the researcher / person taking consent:

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands that filming will be conducted.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the film project, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

The participant has been provided with a copy of this Informed Consent Form.

**Print name of researcher/person taking the consent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of researcher /person taking the consent** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ (Month / Day / Year)

## **II.) Information Sheet**

### **Type of Research Intervention**

Filming/Interviewing

### **Introduction**

I am Georg Bergthaler, a graduate student at the university of Vienna conducting ethnographic field research about indigenous livelihoods in the US and Canada for my Master's thesis and to produce a documentary film. I am interested in the everyday social, economic and political life of indigenous people and communities in the US and Canada.

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have any questions, feel free to ask at any time.

### **Purpose of the research**

The aim of this research is to examine indigenous people's livelihoods at various reservations and reserves across the United States and Canada. I want to look at local infrastructures, economic opportunities, social networks, cultural activities as well as political, educational and spiritual institutions in order to get a sense of how every day (individual and community) life is experienced by indigenous residents on the ground today.

This way I want to contrast contemporary indigenous societies and their cultural expressions with past structures of the same prior to and during colonization of the Americas, before these peoples were forced to adapt and assimilate to Euroamerican or Canadian standards.

At the backdrop of the past development which culminated in the current status quo of indigenous peoples of Canada and the US in the present I want to identify possible future (strategies for) developments on basis of scientific data and people's prospects.

### **Participant Selection**

I have chosen you for research because I want to learn more about your experienced daily life, lifestyle, economic opportunities, social networks, political engagement and ideas, perceived historical changes and expected or potential prospects on the future development of native nations and communities. Also I would like to learn from you what it means to you to be Indigenous, if this applies to you or if you self-identify as such.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. Your choice will have no bearing on your job or on any work-related evaluations or reports. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

### **Procedures**

The filming will start with me to make sure that you are comfortable. We can also answer questions about the research that you might have. Then I will ask you questions.

No one else but the people who take part in the filming and myself will be present during filming. The recordings will be stored on a secure electronic device owned by myself. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else except the participants or myself will have access to the videos and the transcripts of them.



## **Duration**

This study will take place between July 1<sup>st</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2017. Each interview or filming session will approximately last from 30 minutes up to two hours, but can be ended by the researcher or participants at any time.

## **Risks**

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics inquired about. However, I do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in a discussion if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you feel uncomfortable.

## **Benefits**

The resulting Master's thesis and documentary film(s) are intended to shed light and insight onto indigenous peoples' livelihoods in the US and Canada and thus create public awareness about local histories, past, contemporary and possible future developments of community and individual life in a few exemplary Native American societies.

## **Reimbursements**

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the project.

## **Confidentiality**

My filming activities may draw attention and if you participate you may be asked questions by other people living in your vicinity or within your community. I will not be sharing information about you with anyone else without your free prior informed consent.

## **Sharing the Results**

Nothing that you tell me today will be shared with anybody outside the research team, and nothing will be attributed to you by name, except if you personally agree to do so. The knowledge that I get from this research will be shared with you and your community before it is made available to a broader public. Each participant will receive a link to the thesis/film. You will get the chance to modify or delete certain sections/aspects/arguments of recorded statements or appearances up until a specific date, which will be announced. Only this revised version of the movie/thesis will be made available to the public.

## **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

You do not have to take part in this project if you do not wish to do so. You may stop participating during filming/interviewing at any time. I will give you an opportunity to review your statements and appearances on camera by sending you my finished products in which you may appear, and you can decide whether you want to have any modified, removed or not.

## **Contact:**

**Email:** georg.bergthaler@gmail.com

**US tel. no:** 701 214 7052

**CAN tel. no:** 1 780 237 4342

**AUT tel. no:** +43 680 5516463