

MINORITY VOICES: Linking Personal Ethnic History and the Sociological Imagination

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CHAPTER

2

Dakota Woman, Mixed-Blood Man: American Indians from the Northern Plains

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A Personal History of Dominant-Minority Relations of Native America

JAMES V. FENELON, *o-midakuye oyasin*



Major James McLaughlin (center) with Sitting Bull (left) and Louis Primeau (right) posing at Standing Rock Reservation commemoration, with background Army officers mounted, Lakota & Dakota leaders seated, family and civilians standing.

When I return to Standing Rock (Sioux) Indian Reservation in the Dakotas, I have to prove myself to the Lakota and Dakota people who live there, since I am a mixed-blood man with many Anglo features, who grew up, was educated, works, and lives off the reservation. I am descendant of leaders who fought on both sides of major conflicts, such as the Little Big Horn battle, Sitting Bull's death, and massacre at Wounded Knee. Over the course of my life I have literally seen how both historians and social scientists, indeed Indian peoples themselves, changed how we describe these well-known events, and the very notion of being Indian as a "blood quantum" or a sociopolitical identity.¹ Therein lies a story. My story.

This chapter will describe my relatives and their participation as both American Indians and as "mixed-bloods" in the struggles between the Dakota and Lakota people with the United States of America, that ended up at Standing Rock Reservation. One hundred and fifty years of such relations, with constantly shifting notions of race identity, ethnicity, and national origin, will be presented with a main focus on two individuals: 1800s "Dakota woman" and my great-great-grandmother Marie Buisson McLaughlin, and twentieth-20th century "mixed-blood man" and close relative Pat "Wambli Tòpa" McLaughlin.² We will move chronologically through their story, advancing with the U.S. "frontier" America of Minnesota and Dakota Territory of the nineteenth century, through Indian Policy, treaties, and the reservation life of the twentieth century. Marie and Major James McLaughlin's children and grandchildren will marry and have families with "Indians" and non-Indians, many of them very famous in United States history and all of them instrumental in the formation of social life on Standing Rock. Shortly before and then after World War I, Fenelons from North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Ireland marry into the Standing Rock families and further diversify our bloodlines and histories.

Dakota "Frontier" of the 1800s

My family historical record starts the 1860s in Minnesota and Dakota Territory, although our oral history and cultural origins story begins centuries earlier. Two "Sioux" genealogical lines, Dakota and Lakota, were about to come in contact with two European ethnic lines, Scottish-Irish and Irish-American, to produce a century of mixed-blood offspring, resulting in my birth as a descendant of Native and Euro-American peoples. These interactions represent nearly every variation of the dominant "white" United States policies and practices towards the "minority" Indian peoples' resistance and survival, ranging from genocidal conquest to coercive assimilation and cultural ac-

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commodation. Ironically, they also represent the history of the American West, and creation of “Indians” that became the stereotype for all Native Americans.

Marie Buisson McLaughlin,³ granddaughter of *Ha-za-bo-ta-win* M’dewakanton Dakota and Scottish Highlander Captain Duncan Graham, was born in 1842 in Wabasha, Minnesota, Indian Country. Marie attended schools in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, finishing in St. Paul, a rarity for most women at the time, and certainly for an Indian woman. Fluent in *I-Santee* and cultural ways of the Dakota, the two worlds my great-grandmother walked in were in violent conflict during her youth, none more so than a Dakota Indian “uprising” in 1862 against the white militias and the U.S. regulars oppressing them. Treaties made before 1851 were broken on all fronts by corrupt government agents, encroaching immigrant “white” population, and territorial forces that were often stealing land and property, and attacking Dakota leaders and villagers resisting the invasion (Meyers, 1980). These conflicts culminated in a U.S. mass execution of Dakota men (Schultz, 1992); 38 were hung in public at Mankato, Minnesota, after Christmas day, 1862. This must have been traumatic for educated Indian women like Marie. Bloodlust high, families fled to surrounding states, or went into hiding, as the militias hunted them down, leading to slaughters, such as at Whitestone in the Dakotas. Nonetheless, Marie Buisson, ever a remarkable woman, met and married James McLaughlin,⁴ then pressed into the new Indian Service, in 1864. Marriages between Indians and whites were still rare, resisted by churches and missionaries busy “civilizing” them away from their “savage” lifestyles.

About the same time, with the end of the civil war, U.S. military excursions, accompanying well-armed immigrants traveling in wagon trains, invaded the Dakotas and Wyoming Territory, coming into conflict with the Lakota, or *Tetonwan* Sioux. Two years of warfare lead to the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, establishing the Great Sioux (Nation) Reservation encompassing the entire sacred Black Hills and a large area, including the western half of the Dakotas and parts of Wyoming, Montana, and Nebraska. Among the Lakota signatories were many *Oglalas* under the leadership of Red Cloud, and a few *Hunkpapa*, although the rising spiritual leader Sitting Bull refused to sign. Families encouraged marriage among the seven divisions of the Lakota, and some even tried to arrange marriages with other peoples, such as the Hidatasa/Mandan, or Cheyenne, which would smooth trade and diplomatic relations. One such intra-Lakota family gave birth to my great-grandmother *Howape Luta Win*, “Lawful Red Woman” (Respect the Law Red Woman),⁵ who married a mixed-blood trader named Goodreau, ending up on Standing Rock reservation.

During the 1850s and 1860s a great many poor Catholic Irish left Ireland during a so-called potato famine,⁶ forced by dominant English and Protestant Irish to immigrate to the United States. While many such Irish stayed in eastern cities like Boston or New York, others were lured westward to new cities like Chicago, or out on the Plains to homestead, and also to serve in the military in hopes of winning land for their service. Fitzpatricks made this journey, becoming pressed into the Union armies and then into Indian cavalry regiments. Fenelons also made the journey, almost directly to Wisconsin near the Minnesota territory. (Fenelon is a French name produced from an emissary sent to Catholic Ireland under the first Queen Mary by the archbishop François Salignac de Fenelon, and then going underground with the Protestant conversion and

oppression by Queen Elizabeth.) Later they would send their sons to the Dakotas to start businesses, and ultimately marry Indian women against their father's wishes, similar to the banned weddings in Ireland between English and Irish, or Protestant and Catholic Irish.

Thus the 1870s brought four lines of peoples together in the Dakota Territories. My great-grandparents Marie and James McLaughlin moved to the Devil's Lake Agency in northern Dakota territory in 1871, working for the government Indian service. The Great Sioux Reservation was being illegally partitioned into separate, and much smaller, reservations, leading to famous battles and splitting families that survived the conflicts, with the Oglalas ending at Pine Ridge agency and the Hunkpapa on Standing Rock, including my great-grandmother Lawful Red Woman. The Fenelons were starting up early trade networks and outposts in the northern plains. Under the banner of progress, Indian peoples were being shoved into smaller "reserved" lands, usually under military force and with alarming death rates. Incoming "white" Americans, supported by militaries and legal systems not available to Indians who were not citizens, constructed a society where they were the dominant groups and Natives were treated as inferior and later as "minority" groups, segregated and subordinated (Fenelon, 1997).

My grandparents the McLaughlins ran the Devil's Lake Agency out of Fort Totten, with a military garrison and later a boarding school. The Dakota people who lived in the area referred to the lake waters as *m'ne wakan*, or spiritually powerful waters, which U.S. missionaries and "explorers" translated as the "devil." Actually, many significant landmarks originally were given spiritual designations, including the famous Devil's Tower in Montana. Similarly, Indian peoples were often callously given names, either mistranslated or even English names such as Smith or Travis, with their indigenous names in the middle or eliminated. Perhaps more ominous, Indian forms of spirituality and religious observance were labeled "savage" and "uncivilized" by newly dominant Americans who suppressed the practices, sometimes making them illegal, such as the Dakota and Lakota community Sun Dance. Catholic converts such as Marie McLaughlin were coerced into this supremacist system, with well-meaning agents like her husband, Major James, codifying it into law. While the case can easily be made that these "assimilated" leaders were in fact the best, or at least the most benign of all administrators for Indians, the social policies they managed destroyed indigenous culture (Fenelon, 1998).

The 1870s were a time of great treachery by the United States, of resistance or submission by Indian Nations in the Great Plains, and "progress" by extending a railroad across the country while decimating the great herds of American bison. U.S. military and civilian leaders wanted the 1868 treaty lands containing the mineral-rich Black Hills, especially the gold, and had promised individual tracts and homesteads to soldiers who fought in the "Indian wars" that the United States started. The Fitzpatricks were Irish "volunteers" fighting Indians, in this case the Lakota and Cheyenne. A Civil War colonel, George Armstrong Custer, offered to lead such immigrant groups, under the Seventh Cavalry, into the Black Hills, flagrantly breaking the treaties. The region erupted into armed conflict again, with U.S. officials determined to "whip the Sioux" and take the land once and for all. My family were forced into life-and-death decisions, perhaps deciding to stay on the reservation, perhaps risking security to join those who

refused to submit yet stayed on treaty lands. They would be called “hostiles.” My Irish ancestors making similar decisions decades earlier now were among soldiers going forth to conquer and take away lands.

Although Red Cloud and a great many Lakota leaders had smoked the sacred pipe, promising not to go to war, many other Lakota and Cheyenne leaders had not smoked, stating that they did not trust the “forked tongue” of the whites and their government. Sitting Bull, a *Hunkpapa* spiritual/civic leader who had grown to prominence by resisting white American encroachment, and Crazy Horse, an *Oglala/Sicangu* war leader who had become famous during the “Sioux War” of the late 1860s, were two leaders who refused to negotiate, and indeed they led a great many lodges and *akitchita* warriors. The United States wanted to pacify armed resistance, and put three armies in the field to destroy them. Custer, ever the braggart and showman, tried to catch up with General Crook’s troops, playing “Gary Owen” for his mostly Irish troops as they rode out of Fort Lincoln in June 1876. Not realizing that General Crook had been soundly defeated ten days earlier, Custer launched a forced march and “surprise” attack on an encampment of many lodges along the Little Big Horn, and was killed with most of his command (Lazarus, 1991).

Many years later, my father, as a little boy hanging around outside the lodges pitched at Little Eagle, overheard a discussion by elders about that battle, with arguments over how many Lakota died that day, until finally all grew silent. Kills Pretty Enemy, now an old man but then a teenager eager to fight with honor and to defend his family, stood up in the back of the lodge, and said in Lakota, “I know how many died that day.” Everyone was silent, since his age and presence were respected. He looked around. “One! . . . He looked out to see how many bluecoats who came to kill us, had themselves been wiped out, and his heart burst with joy!” Lakota humor, like much Native American culture and joking, points inward with appreciation for a turn of a phrase in the language, in contrast to mainstream America that jokes about other people. Irony is ever present, similar to other cultures, with the Little Big Horn victory one of the greatest of ironies, since the United States had attempted to militarily destroy their resistance.

In fact, the Lakota were very worried about their victory, even though Custer had come to kill them and their families, and so they split into smaller, more mobile groups that could evade all the military forces seeking them out. Some made their way back to an agency, while others stayed on the fringes of reservation areas, or in the mountains. Crazy Horse took his relatives and a small force including many families, disappearing into the forested hills and mountains. The military pursued him relentlessly, destroying livestock and burning lodges and food stores, until the next year he came in under truce. Shortly after coming in, he was assassinated. Sitting Bull and Gall, a great war and civic leader of the *Hunkpapa*, left for Canada, knowing the international boundary. Some of my relatives returned to agency life, while others went to Canada. Most left Canada within a few years, as arguments arose among the leadership and people about whether it was better to return and give in to reservation life, or stay as armed refugees with honor.

The McLaughlins, Marie and Major James and their newborn, had settled in well at the Devils Lake Agency as all the warring had occurred, establishing the Indian police, local justice systems, and reservation distribution systems run by the government.

Rations, dictated by treaty law and congressional statute, were always short, and often were stolen by corrupt officials or tradesmen. Nonetheless, the agency was exceptionally well run, as Marie spoke the language fluently, and Major James was learning it too. Standing Rock agency was being established at Fort Yates, to hold and contain Lakota, including Sitting Bull, who was just coming in from Canada. Major James was then asked if he would head up the agency. He agreed, partly since the old agent at Fort Totten would not retire and Indian Affairs would not appoint Major James as agent, in part because he was married to an “Indian” woman, still quite rare in the nineteenth century.

Reservation Life, 1880 to 1940

In 1881, Major James and Marie McLaughlin left for the newly formed Standing Rock agency in Dakota territory, to become the Indian Affairs “agent in charge.” Goodreau with Lawful Red Woman had located there, with most *Hunkpapa* and *Sibasapa* Lakota, along with “removed” *Illabanktowanna* Dakota (Yanktonai). As reservations were formed, the government often forced different ethnic groups together, and then gave them a collective political identity entirely based on the agency rolls. Of course, marriages and socioeconomic relationships had been sustained for generations between Dakota and Lakota people, but their recent histories were sharply different. Interethnic mixing was another sign of the government’s callous use of power and its authority over identity formation, sometimes causing deep divisions that are unresolved to this day. Another example of this would occur in the 1980s, when I was an administrator for Standing Rock College in Fort Yates on the reservation. The college president polled Indian employees about a name change, favoring Sitting Bull College, which years later it indeed has been named, increasing visibility to the outside world. However, descendants of the Indian police sent to arrest Sitting Bull when he was killed, many of them dying, along with descendants of the great *Itancan* (Chief) Gall, who split with the Sitting Bull faction in Canada and led the last of the major warrior groups out to try and live with “whites” rather than resist them, vociferously rejected the name change. Divisions engendered by United States Indian policy still cause fractious conflicts today.

The period of 1881 to 1941 proved to be very problematic for Lakota and Dakota people on Standing Rock, especially my relatives. The two new states of North and South Dakota were agitating for further suppression if not outright elimination of Indian people on the reservations, which were a constant reminder that they had ignominiously stolen the land from my indigenous forebears. The United States was attempting to consolidate the “lower 48” states into a continental, mythical, and continuous empire (Drinnon, 1997), pretty much at the expense of the Indian tribes or nations that were in the way. Many non-Indians were extremely resentful of strong-hearted people like Lakota who resisted conquest and domination, and to some extent feared they would resurrect their historical treaty claims to the land. Major James McLaughlin, as the Standing Rock Indian agent, oversaw all relations on the reservation, mandated by the U.S. government and patrolled by the U.S. Army. The Lakota who had fled to Canada after the Little Big Horn victory gradually started returning.

Sitting Bull was the last of the major leaders to surrender his party who were “placed” along the remote Grand River country, while he was remanded into military control in Nebraska for two years. The civic and war leader Gall had come in half a year before, making considerable adjustments in order to get along with “white” government leaders, including supporting the formation of Indian police and tribal courts. Nonetheless, life on the Lakota reservations was extremely harsh (Pfaller, 1978).

During the early 1880s the United States government, working through its Indian agents like Major McLaughlin on Standing Rock, began to implement a series of laws, police actions, and social programs meant to force tribal culture and traditional lifestyles toward a partial assimilation into “white” American society. Instituting the tribal police, courts, and justice systems so that American Indians from the particular culture would have primary contact and responsibility for these laws was the main strategy, which I have identified as a kind of “culturicide” toward the indigenous culture. For instance, Agent McLaughlin compelled the breakup of traditional family systems, through a focus on monogamous marriage and male head of household economic distribution. Both of these policies began to subordinate women and children in ways that the previous system did not, as it emphasized responsibilities toward and acknowledgment of one’s relatives, which were viewed within larger extended systems called *tiyospaye* that further extended kinship relations to the *onspaye* (village or community level) and *oyate* (national) levels. American culture was extremely patriarchal at the time, not even extending full citizen rights to its own women, who inherited property rights through their husbands or fathers. Thus the more egalitarian Lakota and Dakota family systems were destroyed.

One story from my family about this concerns when Major McLaughlin was then negotiating these changes with Chief Gall, then head of the newly founded tribal courts. When the agent suggested Gall should only have one wife as a model to other Indians, Gall responded he could not separate with either one. McLaughlin suggested that he give up his younger wife, who stood a better chance of getting remarried. Gall said he could not because “she made his heart sing” when they went to round dances where all her relatives would acknowledge him as a civic leader. So the agent said he should get rid of his older wife, to which Gall said, “I never could do that, because her family and relatives now have had too many give-aways honoring our children. Besides, she does great quill and beadwork prized among the people.” McLaughlin said he would have to choose if he wanted to stay tribal judge. Gall responded, saying, “I have a way, that just might work. You choose!” McLaughlin fully understood that whatever woman and her family were sent away would be extremely angry, so he let Gall keep his wives and family relations.

Social systems of education, property relations, and justice were all undergoing forced change, or outright elimination. When McLaughlin asked for Gall’s sons to go to boarding schools, he responded, “When Indian boy grows up, he knows all he needs to be good among the people. When he comes back from the white man’s school, his head is all messed up and he is a damn fool.” Besides having traditional knowledge and wisdom, Gall was concerned with economic distribution and notions of justice. The Lakota were known to honor generosity in all things, and practiced distributive and restorative justice. Leaders specifically mentioned these social systems within the 1868

Fort Laramie Treaty. However, a famous case on the Lakota reservation Rosebud to the south, where Crow Dog ended up killing government leader Spotted Tail over a dispute on family, women, and property, was about to change everything. After Spotted Tail's death, elder councils determined that Crow Dog should make payment and cultural obligations to the Spotted Tail family in order to restore good relations. United States marshals arrested him, putting him under trial in Rapid City for murder, with a guaranteed guilty verdict. When the marshal allowed Crow Dog to return home to take care of familial responsibilities, solely on his word after smoking a sacred pipe, national headlines mocked the marshal. Even with a winter storm headed in, Crow Dog made it back to the trial and his presumed execution. Federal courts found that treaty law was supreme in conflict between Lakotas, releasing Crow Dog, again making national headlines over an honorable word and justice with the people who had defeated General Crook and Colonel Custer. The U.S. Congress was outraged and passed the Major Crimes Act of 1885, stripping traditional justice systems from Indian peoples, specifically the Lakota and leaders like Crow Dog and Gall, and putting them under the inequality and oppressive jury system that would not allow Indian people to serve, since they were not technically citizens (Pommersheim, 1997).

Other oppressive laws and policies were instituted against Lakota traditional life, such as Indian offences by the Department of the Interior in 1882 and Congress in 1883, literally naming the Sun Dance as a "savage" practice to be outlawed. Among ceremonies the Sun Dance was perhaps the most important on the community level, where leaders were recognized and made sacrifices, and were sometimes given "visions" that guided them and their people through difficulty. Thus Agent McLaughlin, my great-grandfather, instituted suppression of religious ceremony and social justice by the Lakota leadership, affecting the relations between all people on the reservation, perhaps especially my great grandmother *Howape Luta Win*, "Lawful Red Woman." Combine this with the "civilization" effect of subordinating her to her "mixed" husband, and one can more readily appreciate how knowledge of her traditional ways and even her name's meaning is repressed and almost lost to posterity. These policies were not unique to Standing Rock, or even the Lakota, but were applied to all Indian peoples with cultural devastation on a massive scale. Loss of food and economic resources such as the bison, policies requiring "permission" to spend or even have money, or to buy and sell property, were also having negative effects on the people on Standing Rock.

By the later 1880s, cultural suppression and widespread starvation, along with anti-Indian violence and perpetual land theft around the six reservations, put my Lakota relatives and indeed all the people in grave danger. Indian agents like McLaughlin had to fend off corrupt traders and government deficiencies, while attempting to coordinate the often destructive social policies being administered out of Washington. Many of them also filled their own pockets when distributing meager treaty rations. Into this maelstrom came a new religious practice called the Ghost Dance, which offered hope and restoration of previously happy lives. Desperate Lakota leaders reached out to a new quasi-Christian practice and were rebuffed by missionaries, government leaders, and local townspeople. New state governments in North and South Dakota exaggerated Ghost Dance influence, and the U.S. Army pressured the White House for a military resolution. More responsible agents such as McLaughlin sent urgent messages to

Washington stating all could be kept under control, but it was to no avail. Even though McLaughlin traveled alone to a Ghost Dance at Sitting Bull's encampment, as did several army officers on other reservations, anti-Lakota vitriol in the press and local towns won out. By the fall of 1890, President Harrison ordered the arrest of the religious leaders, kept rations from being distributed, and transferred authority from the civilian to the military arm, removing Indian agents from decision making and specifically attacking Sitting Bull and other Lakota leaders.

McLaughlin tried to preempt the military strike to arrest Sitting Bull and Ghost Dancers on the Grand River by sending the Indian police. On December 15, 1890, Indian police killed Sitting Bull as he apparently resisted arrest, taking equal casualties on both sides until the army showed up and opened fire on everyone. The Lakota families fled the area down to Cheyenne River to the south, where they hooked up with their relatives. Their respected leader Big Foot led his people and the Standing Rock refugees away from the reservation as they were threatened by a young U.S. cavalry officer demanding "unconditional surrender" on the spot. Traveling with many lodges of women, children, elders, and wounded through a Dakota winter, Big Foot's people were intercepted by U.S. troops, who immediately removed the now surrendered Lakota to Wounded Knee creek, Pine Ridge reservation. The next morning, after disarming nearly all the men and lightly harassing the women around the tents, the U.S. armed forces opened fire on the Lakota, killing over three hundred people and hunting down survivors up to three miles away. Seventh Cavalry troops, Custer's old unit, buried the bodies in a mass grave and left as a fierce winter storm blew in, covering the slaughter site (Thornton, 1987).

Word of the killings at Sitting Bull's camp and Wounded Knee spread through Indian Country, producing a deadening despair at Standing Rock, Rosebud, Pine Ridge, and elsewhere. Major McLaughlin and Indian police kept a semblance of law and order on Standing Rock, as military and government officials on the other Lakota reservations demanded "sacred pipes" to be destroyed and even "spirit keeping" ceremonies to end. Suppression of traditional lifeways was maximized for the next two decades, "full-blood" Lakota were called "incompetent" and Indian agents were expected to lecture them all about "civilization" even though they were still not citizens of the country that wanted to "assimilate" them and eliminate the special "trust" status on the treaty-made reservations. Enrollment by blood quantum was codified into law, and preference was given to mixed-blood Indians in all social sectors, including education, property rights, and legal systems. Both my family lines on Standing Rock, McLaughlin's and Goodreau's, were favored with the Indian Agency economy, but also shared, such as Marie McLaughlin adopting Crow King's daughter.⁷ Local histories, replete with famous names such as Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, Sitting Bull, and Gall, were told and retold in newspapers and short books, as Major McLaughlin was asked to lead the U.S. Wanamaker Expedition, traveling throughout Indian Country making agreements to protect Indian people from southern California to Oregon. Nearly everyone thought Indians were "the vanishing race" even as local communities were struggling to survive on rural reservations like Standing Rock, and a few government administrators tried to put in place systems to run the reservations, which were really a legacy of one hundred years of conquest and domination.

Shortly after 1910, the United States “opened up” a number of rural reservations, Standing Rock included, to “homesteaders” and “immigrants,” often getting their lands from the big railroad partitions, or as results of the Dawes Allotment Act that divided Indian lands according to male-headed households and considered the rest as “surplus.” While a few well-placed mixed-blood Indians did profit to some degree from this change, most enrolled members lost land, as the number of whites increased dramatically. Some of my relatives were living around the town of McLaughlin at this time, including my grandmother Etta, daughter to one of the McLaughlin sons.

My grandfather Vincent E. Fenelon, mostly of Irish descent, moved down from Devil’s Lake in North Dakota at this time, to take over and run a farmstead outside McLaughlin. He was greatly enamored of some of the Indian women in the area, and planned to set up farming or ranching, when the United States entered into World War I against Germany. Local draft boards went after newcomers and immigrants in those days, and so he was among the first to get selected. The boards also tried to get American Indians to sign up, although they could not force them since they were still not officially American citizens. Nonetheless, as in past and future wars, lots of Indians in the Dakotas enlisted to fight. Cavalry units were disbanded since the advent of the machine gun, but select mounted troops who were unlikely to fade in the heat of battle were needed to be soldier-police, known as the *akichita* to the Lakota, who volunteered. Thus my grandfather Vincent E. Fenelon served with the last of the mounted troops in World War I, as sergeant for an all-Indian M.P. force that took prisoners of war and kept the regimental lines from retreating. My grandfather told me many stories, including the tale of when a rolling barrage knocked off quite a few of the riders from their horses, and he held such warriors as American Horse, Eagle Man, and War-Bonnet as they died. He was gassed at the battle of Verdun, after numerous close calls, and came back a decorated veteran.

My grandfather Vincent Fenelon returned home and went directly to Standing Rock, where he married Etta McLaughlin, starting a working farm and small ranch near the town and off the main rail line. Grandmother Etta told me many stories of her youth growing up on the plains, especially when old *Ina* (Lakota for mother or grandmother) would drive her buckboard over the hill, coming to visit the family and her favorite child. One childless family wanted to adopt (in the Indian way, *bunkacipi*)⁸ my grandmother since they liked her and she spoke their language so well. These people would take little Etta down to the river where they would pick chokecherries, wild turnips, and buffalo berry. Sometimes they would sneak off to a ceremonial dance, since her parents forbade her from going to those “pagan” activities, just as they would not allow her to be Lakota adopted. There were sharp divisions in reservation life in those days, with many still fearing that the government would crack down on the “old ways” or Lakota traditional life. At this time rodeos and pow-wows, sometimes accompanied by barn dances, were the social life. My grandfather got a job as a government peace officer, sometimes having to track down criminals and other times busting up some hootch makers. They had four children over the years, including my father, Vince Junior.

Vince and Etta Fenelon’s farm and ranch outside McLaughlin became a central location for both Indians and whites to gather and plan their activities, including political involvements with the Democratic Party. Their oldest son, my uncle James M.

Fenelon, helped run a small pony herd with his close cousin, Pat McLaughlin, about the same age. Later my father would trail behind them as they rode broncs, walked reservation lands, played hookey from school, and started a small business of giving pony rides at the local fairs and gatherings. Sometimes the old Indians would gather and tell stories about their exploits and lifestyles before reservation life, including fighting off Custer at the Little Big Horn and the death of Sitting Bull. Other times they would hear of ceremonies that only the “traditionalists” would go to, still held in secret after all those years. The 1920s were very good to the Fenelons and McLaughlins, and most of their relatives as well. Most of the Goodreas lived near Porcupine, on the far northwestern end of the reserve, near where Major McLaughlin and friends used to keep a hunting cabin. Other relatives kept households in Fort Yates, where the Agency and Bureau of Indian Affairs office was run with some of the better jobs. Only thirty years earlier this was the road that Buffalo Bill was drunkenly sent down to keep him rambling around while the Indian police went to arrest Sitting Bull. Now mostly the Dakota descent people lived on the northern end, while Lakota lived south and along the creek beds and forested areas of the Grand River. James Fenelon and Pat McLaughlin, sometimes accompanied by younger brother Vince, my father, often rode the plains and river valleys, learning history and stories of the land.

Then the Great Depression and northern dustbowl of the 1930s hit the region. People barely had enough to eat, and shared what little they did have. My grandmother said that no worker was ever turned away, Indian or white or one of a few blacks around, though sometimes they could only feed them, putting a little in their pack as they left. Sometimes the government or tribal council would buy up some cattle that was starved, letting locals butcher them and feed their families. Standing Rock was a notch above Pine Ridge, which has always been the poorest county in the United States, and yet the people always took care of one another, survivors they were. During the 1920s some white power groups like the Klan would show up, but they ran them off when they burned crosses. Lots of Catholics had moved in as the homesteaders, and they got along tolerably well with the Indians, intermarrying and producing more mixed-blood offspring. Conditions worsened during the '30s and the white population tended to keep to themselves, often buying up the meager resources of impoverished Indians. Gangsters from midwestern cities would sometimes travel through, but the area had been so thoroughly soaked with violence that their scare tactics did not work. Actually, my grandfather was so respected by then that the state government had him go down to Kansas City to pick up some big-time gangsters under indictment in South Dakota. Even so, when his older uncle passed away in Devil's Lake, he took his whole family up to North Dakota, just north of Fort Totten where Major James McLaughlin first served with the Indian Service in Dakota Territory, to take over the family business.

Thus my direct lineage returned to the inappropriately named Devil's Lake area, now truly a mixed-blood family, with Henrietta (Etta) from McLaughlins and Goodreas, Vincent from the Fenelons, and their three children, my uncle James Fenelon; my father Vincent Fenelon, Jr.; and the youngest, my aunt Mary Fenelon, since the number two son, William “Billy,” had died of late childhood disease (as my father nearly did from polio). Grandmother Etta often spoke of her adjustments these years living in the “white man's” town though near Fort Totten, and her loss of Billy. She said

losing only one out of four actually was a blessing, and the hard years were worse for many on the reservations. With the country headed into a war, cities and towns of rural American began to waken, and young men were again pressed into military service. Most of our Indian relatives were also once again joining or being called up into war, except now they were citizens, both of Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, albeit run by 1934 Indian Reorganization Act council government, and of the United States of America, still segregating blacks but not Indians.

Twentieth-Century Sioux, 1940 to 2002

World War II, first with the Japanese after Pearl Harbor and then with Germans from the Nazi expansion, galvanized all Americans, including Indians on reservations. All of my relatives would be drawn into global military conflicts, and similar to blacks, they would demand new civil rights when they returned home to a country mobilized for growth and capitalistic democracy. For Native Americans, high levels of participation in combat troops of the United States armed forces would lead to continued integration, reify existing attempts to maintain traditional culture, especially on Lakota reservations and among Navajo people, and would once again cause structural and cultural changes that would perpetuate “veteran” status in the “two worlds” that they walked. My great-uncle WWII veteran Pat *Wambli Topa* McLaughlin perfectly exemplifies these tensions, as do my uncle and namesake James Fenelon, and my father, Vincent E. Fenelon, Jr.

Pat McLaughlin, dancing on the cusp of being underage but chomping at the bit at going to war, enlisted in the army directly after Pearl Harbor. Pat had completely avoided going to high school, which is one reason he could speak the Lakota language and knew the more isolated Standing Rock reservation areas so well. With his first major leave, Pat swept home and married a woman who would be his wife for sixty years, Virginia “Good Voice Elk” of the Good Elks who ran cattle on some riverine land in a community called *Mabto* (bear) not too far from the all-Indian town of Wakpala, where they had churches, schools, and a few small markets. The larger town of McLaughlin was becoming increasingly dominated by the white farmers and businessmen, although lots of Indian folks still lived there. Whites and Indians, perhaps for the first time having equal status in their own country, enlisted and prepared to fight in what would become a two-front, two-ocean war. The Dakotas would pay their share of lost lives in conducting war, losing blood that was both Indian and white and always red.

While Pat came back to his training in mountain, desert, and beachfront fighting, his pony-riding boyhood companion on Standing Rock, Jim Fenelon, was joining U.S. enlisted and draftee citizen-soldiers from North Dakota who would become the 164th, ultimately part of the American division sent to the Pacific Island of Guadalcanal to shore up the Marine division undergoing constant assault by Japanese forces. During this fight, which took an incredible toll in lives and more than once meant waves of *Bansai* attacks, Jim Fenelon would be fighting fairly close to one of the original Navajo Code-talkers, William Dean Wilson, translating Marine and army orders and intelligence into ancient, indecipherable words that had survived and thrived under culturicidal attacks to wipe out indigenous languages. Years later, Dean Wilson would marry Mary Louise Defender, who used to visit McLaughlin relatives and Fene-

lons as a young Standing Rock woman. Mary Louise Defender-Wilson would adopt me and my children as a traditional elder of the people, bringing the circle back to our family in ways unique to Native peoples. Veterans, whether defending traditional peoples and Native Nations, or enlisting to fight the common defense of a country that only took them in begrudgingly as full citizens, have always been recognized and even revered through ceremony and social prestige by American Indians, right through to Vietnam. That is why nearly all pow-wows and most public events start with a flag song and a round to honor all veterans, now even including social activists from the American Indian Movement and the Trail of Broken Treaties. Even as the American society has tortured itself since the 1960s, veterans were accepted and fully integrated back into Native societies.

When Pat McLaughlin fought in the Ardennes Forest and the Battle of the Bulge, he was wounded and taken prisoner. During the last gasp of the Nazi S.S. Army, they took a large number of American P.O.W.s out into a field near Malmedy and began shooting them in a mass execution. Pat tells of one who fell as if shot dead, with fellow soldiers falling on him, bleeding conspicuously. He heard German soldiers and officers moving through the fallen bodies, executing the wounded and probably taking souvenirs. Although he was well covered, at the last minute he realized he would be executed next. Suddenly, he jumped up and “ran like the entire U.S. cavalry was chasing me at the Little Big Horn.” He said he had heard how warriors used to run sideways while moving up and down as they left the battlefield, and so he got away unscathed, though already wounded. After a few days of moving through forested areas, one time having to kill two German sentries with his bayonet, he broke through to American forces, but was hit twice more by “friendly fire” on the way back. There were still a lot of casualties coming in so medics were practicing triage, with one pile for those they thought were going to die. That is where he was placed. He lay there for three days, remembering how Lakota paratroopers would yell “Sitting Bull” rather than “Geronimo” and wondering whether he had been white they would have patched him up, and how his friend American Horse had been shot next to him with his brains spewing over him in the foxhole, and all the crazy thoughts soldiers have if they believe they may die. He didn’t, of course, and was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart for bravery and being wounded in combat.

American Indian veterans returned from World War II to face a series of what the government called “emancipation bills” that once again, as in 1883, 1890, 1910, 1924, and 1934, tried to end the “trust status” of Indians and their reservation tribal councils. Many veterans felt ambiguous about such policies, as they were still loyal to the country, but saw such actions as attempts to deny rights their people had fought for, some of them treaty rights that had never been surrendered. When Pat returned, he rejoined the service, the Air Force this time, to go into the Korean War. The emancipation bills were turned down and the Lakota reservations, like the rest of the country, got around to the business of rebuilding and making life a little better. During the Korean War, the Eisenhower administration made a last attempt to eliminate politically separate Indian reservations, through a set of policies called “Termination,” with an especially ominous program called “Relocation,” which would move the mostly rural Indian people to distant urban areas. Nearly every reservation resisted these policies, as did Standing Rock and all the Lakota. While only smaller reservations or “tribes”

were “terminated,” such as the Menominee, quite a few Dakota and Lakota were swept up in the urban relocation program, ending up in distant cities such as Cleveland, Los Angeles, or with luck Chicago (Fixico, 1986).

None of my relatives still living on the reservation participated in these suspect programs, and my mixed-blood relatives living off the reservation were already well integrated into socioeconomic life of the American mainstream. My grandfather Vince Fenelon moved to Bismarck in 1941 and started work for the government, allowing Etta greater mobility in the Democratic Party and making their home a major contact point for Standing Rock people related to them, such as Pat McLaughlin, who faithfully came by when in the North Dakota capitol. Pat started working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, largest employer on the reservation, in which he continued for over twenty years. Uncle Jim Fenelon became a lawyer, working out of Minneapolis, though many of his cases were both for and about Indians, and ultimately he retired a BIA superintendent himself. My father went to NDSU and UND, and became an accounting professional for Chrysler, and later ran his own car dealerships. His younger sister, Mary, never knew reservation life well and married a Bismarck dentist and moved to Minneapolis. These directions were not uncommon for mixed-blood families that had developed some cultural capital with good education and networks. Pat McLaughlin, the Goodreaus, and most “full-bloods” either didn’t have these advantages or simply preferred reservation life, where the culture was strong and Lakota speakers could reinforce their value systems. Whereas ceremonial life such as the *Oimikaga* (purification sweat lodge) and *Wawayang Wacipi* (Sun Dance) were only practiced secretly underground, social events such as pow-wows, give-aways, naming and honoring ceremonies that were relocated to schools and community centers, and sundry political gatherings, often to represent the tribal council and treaty rights, were fulfilling to the people on Standing Rock. Also, there was still a lot of prejudice, discrimination, and animosity toward Indian people off the reservation, especially along the border towns. So most Lakota and Dakota people preferred their lives on Standing Rock even though there was a lot of poverty and some social strife, because it was a life they knew among their relatives and a culture rich with history and tradition.

However, looming on the horizon was the social upheaval of the 1960s, Vietnam, the Civil Rights movement, Red Power, and the American Indian movement. Their world was about to change dramatically, and in some very surprising ways. The United States was experiencing vast upheaval and social change as veterans of the world war settled down to make their own families, or in some cases return to those they had, but with a profound sense that their country would stand up for justice and democracy everywhere. After all, this was the compelling reason to go to war, in addition to defending country, and a way of life. Pat’s life in some respects resembled other soldiers of racial minority background who returned to the highly stratified and segregated worlds they left behind. Black, Latino, and Indian veterans believed they had earned the right to have a seat at the table and a piece of the American pie, and other citizens were no longer going to deny them these rights, or at least would not do so easily.

While the United States of America experienced its great economic boom, social and political change caught up with rural Indian reservations such as at Standing Rock. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) employees like Pat McLaughlin quietly proposed many

changes in everyday governmental life on the reservation, as others agitated for a more direct and timely set of changes. Tribal councils were elected, sometimes with as few as a handful of voters, but were gathering power and influence away from the BIA offices. Younger members were attending colleges and universities, and in many cases coming into contact with social movement leaders from black and Latino communities that were themselves in the midst of an upheaval of the old social order, especially the Jim Crow south and discriminatory laws against racial minorities. Moreover, many Indian veterans were returning from experiences in Vietnam, where they achieved the status of the old ways but recognized they were often fighting peoples that resembled them in many ways. When these veterans stood up to bureaucratic obstacles and societal injustices, not only did the Indian offices have to listen, but non-Indians as well. The outside society was in many instances rejecting the honoring of military service, further calling into question the values of traditional and modern life on the reservation (Biolsi, 1992).

Many of my cousins were caught up in the movements at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s that pushed social change and justice issues to the forefront of Indian and “white” systems of justice and government. My brother and I made one epic trip back to Standing Rock in 1971, just as these conflicts came to a head. One of our close cousins was working for the tribe then, along with Pat, who was getting close to a first retirement. Many nonreservation or “urban” Indian descent people were going back and forth into and out of these areas, with some getting hooked up to the American Indian Movement (AIM) groundswell. Traditional lifeways such as the sweat lodge, long hair for cultural reasons, restoration of the language and culture, and a retelling of Sioux Nation history were all coming to the surface, and usually colliding with mainstream and conservative accounts shared by non-Indians and many Indian people as well. Our cousin, who we shall call “B,” was college-educated and representative of those challenging a status quo. After a couple of weeks getting radicalized into reservation conflicts, my brother and I returned to our family’s home in California. Although we had grown our hair long and tried to grasp many of the sociopolitical perspectives we had experienced, old-fashioned family forces pushed first my brother and then me into the military. We were then following what had become a tradition of sorts: As the nature of citizenship and justice was coming to a head for young men, they entered into the “common defense” of people who had been historically suppressed by the very militaries they now served.

Pat and the generation that experienced the Great Depression as children and WWII as adults were elected to tribal councils when the next generation was coming to its own. Reservation-based young leaders like B were trying to reduce or even eliminate the deep dependency on the BIA and government, at the same time that some of the “full-bloods” were learning languages and culture from their grandparents, and some “mixed-bloods” like my brother and cousins were returning for brief and even longer stays, or hooking up with activist groups on college campuses or in the cities that other Indian people had been relocated to years earlier. Some tribal councils, such as the one on Pine Ridge, resisted these changes and, in collusion with the federal forces of marshals and FBI agents, came into sharp conflict with the new coalition of “traditionalists” and “activists” such as AIM. The social ingredients were explosive, leading to the reoccupation of Wounded Knee II, and years after that the killing of two

FBI agents who were tracking the AIM operatives. During these sharp and usually violent conflicts on Lakota reservations just to the south, Pat McLaughlin, as chairman of the Council at Standing Rock, personally sponsored such support activities as the International Treaty Council, which had grown out of the infamous Trail of Broken Treaties that led to the occupation of the Department of the Interior building in Washington, D.C. This quiet leadership, allowing coalition-building among older “traditional” generations and younger leaders from both activist and college ranks, probably did more toward the sovereignty movements to follow than violent agitation. Many civilian and governmental leaders threatened both Pat and Standing Rock council members who supported the meetings on the south end of the reservation near Mobridge, much of it at the Chief Gall Inn, named for one of the great resistance leaders of the past. Similar to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, great social change accompanying great social unrest was achieved by a combination of groups entering into direct conflict, groups attempting slower change over laws and social policies, and the quiet leadership supporting change through constructive dialogue (Young Bear & Theisz, 1994). My relatives, just as in the Battle of the Little Big Horn and the killings associated with Wounded Knee, were on all sides of that struggle.

Self-determination and sovereignty became rallying cries over the next decades, when Pat McLaughlin was either on the tribal council or reelected as the tribal chairman. When I returned to the reservation in the summer of 1976 and for a longer period in 1980, conflicts had settled down into day-to-day activities that might include ranching, farming, teaching in the schools, or working for the governmental offices including Indian Health. Many people were unemployed, with rates often exceeding 50 percent. Discrimination in Bismarck and Mobridge, always salient for the darker-skinned “full-bloods” as well as activists and those with an address from Standing Rock, created tensions with the whites. Some Indian men, including war veterans, took to the comfort of alcohol and other drugs, gradually spreading these dysfunctional behaviors to the women and their own children. Most families experienced some of their relatives falling victim to the modern social ills, causing deep psychological trauma. The dominant society controlled the school systems, worsening people’s self-esteem and their sense of failure by painting a picture of Indians as drunks, savage warriors without a purpose, and as unmotivated and living off welfare. Traditionally minded leaders and activists alike challenged these stereotypes, especially when reproduced in the curriculum of reservation schools, and a locus of struggle moved from submerged and sometimes violent conflict over sociopolitical control over Indian reservations into the ambiguous world of ethnic histories and cultural expressions over legitimacy and justice. Schools became battlegrounds over bilingual/bicultural education, and tribal colleges were formed to maintain knowledge and respect for traditional ways, as well as preparing the reservation workforce for a modern world. Younger people were interested in learning the language even as many of their parents had lost the knowledge. Ancient and renewed social practices such as the sweat lodge and the Sun Dance were opening new vistas over the struggle for cultural dominance, and the future of the people.

A set of events that originally occurred back in the 1860s was about to make full circle. Marie McLaughlin took Mary Louise Defender’s great-grandfather as a “relative” and always referred to him as “cousin” thereafter, similar to how Sakajawea re-

ferred to the Shoshone man she met in the mountains as “brother” and put a blanket on him. These traditions of “making relatives” were held in high regard and were part of an oral history. Mary Louise had known and interacted with many of my relatives, noted above in places. In my birth year, 1954, Mary Louise Defender was “crowned” as “Miss Indian America” and passed on that very high honor in 1955 to Rita Ann McLaughlin (DeHaas), younger sister to Pat McLaughlin and the later very famous Robert Sundance (McLaughlin), who helped to change discriminatory treatment toward alcoholics in Los Angeles and other cities. Rita Ann had many children and grandchildren who kept the cultural history alive. When I returned to Bismarck and then the Standing Rock reservation in the late 1980s, Mary Louise Defender, my relative in many Indian ways, asked me to assist some elders with a project later entitled “The Taken Land,” which documented the Missouri River Oahe Dam massive destruction of the riverine environment and the unjust takings of land held by traditional families along the Grand River and Cannonball areas. During that time Rita Ann passed away, in the winter of 1987. By then I was running instructional projects at Standing Rock college, where the Lakota and Dakota languages were being taught, stressing cultural underpinnings of the people, including a ubiquitous *mitakuye oyasin*, showing respect for one’s relatives in an interwoven circle of relationships.

The making of relatives continued down to when we were in an “old Indian truck” on a sacred mission to Bear Butte along the Black Hills. After Rita Ann’s passing, along with other significant events, including regular purification (sweat lodge) ceremonies, sometimes held outside the reconstituted Sun Dance grounds over the hill of Little Eagle, South Dakota, Mary Louise Defender arranged for many of her relatives, including the Black Clouds, me, and of course her Navajo relatives from Mary Louise’s husband, William Dean Wilson, who was there at critical times for myself on numerous occasions, to travel to Bear Butte for prayer purposes. As we investigated sites for a Centennial Curriculum project, my car began to overheat and break down outside Sturgis, so we took it in to a mechanic, who begrudgingly lent us an old, beat-up pickup with an oily engine in the back, to go on our journey during the repair time. The ball joints were giving out on the pickup, so we were weaving down the road leading to Bear Butte with the Black Clouds (Lakota and Yaqui), Mary Louise (Dakota and Hidatsa), and her relatives (Navajo) sitting along the back railings, and the young mother and her children up front with me. We noticed that there was a long line of cars keeping well back of us as we approached Bear Butte, and later surmised that they must have thought (and probably said) that they had been following a truckload of drunken Indians! Sometimes I reflect on that one trip, when we offered prayers and tobacco in a spiritual way to those who fasted and prayed, some of them coming down off “the hill” from *hambleyecha*, or “crying out for a vision,” and how easily even matters of philosophy, spirituality, and a making of relatives cultural practice gets distorted and misunderstood by members of dominant groups who prefer to hang on to easier-to-grasp stereotypes and prejudices (Mihesuah, 1996).

Later, I would have to bring suit against the state of North Dakota, which refused to recognize cultural sovereignty in educational and social matters within Indian Education. William Dean Wilson, who had been a Navajo court judge and an original Codetalker, gave me support as a relative, once saying, “In all my days in Indian courts, I have never seen such ‘wild’ proceedings as they do here.” After I left for Chicago but

kept up my involvement with a newly found spiritual life and with all my relatives on Standing Rock, Mary Louise Defender, Dean Wilson, and I went to the Sun Dance held on Green Grass, Cheyenne River reservation, where they were warmly welcomed as the traditional elders who had supported ceremonial life in so many ways. Mary Louise was giving radio talk shows out of Little Eagle, even as my other relatives were getting back on tribal council, and sitting on the board of trustees for Standing Rock, now called Sitting Bull College. Clearly, the traditional concept of making relatives, as well as honoring all those related to oneself and one's family and people, was strong and renewed in the Dakotas.

When I returned to Standing Rock in the mid-1990s, along with my wife-to-be, Sandra Luz, Pat and Virginia McLaughlin welcomed us, noting my wife's resemblance to Pat's passed-away younger sister, Miss Indian America III, Rita Ann. They took us to the new and smaller casino still under construction just south of Grand River, where we ate, gambled a little, and told stories of the years between. Pat was happier with Grand River casino because more locals and Indians were employed, and the development money was nearly all from the "tribe" and profits from the much larger Prairie Knights casino south of Cannonball, visited by lots of Bismarck folks. Where there was once great difficulty with Indian people finding good restaurants, decent lodging, or any place to cash checks, now all of that along with stores, gasoline stations, and even decent jobs had come along with Indian gaming. Non-Indians seemed more satisfied as well, since they too competed for jobs in a troubled economic environment, with farms foreclosing and cattle prices at rock-bottom. Later we stopped at Prairie Knights, and although the building was much more impressive, some people were disrespectful to my wife, mistaking her for an Indian from Standing Rock. Already, we could see how some "whites" had imported prejudices from off the reservation into an environment that allowed them to be on Indian lands but somehow still members of the dominant group. Indian gaming as a capitalist intensive economic enterprise is rather amazing that way.

The very divisive issue of "blood quantum" enrollment on Standing Rock Nation (Sioux tribe, reservation, tribal sovereignty, now a "Nation") underscores the tensions with capitalist profiteering among a people who distributed "wealth" with social harmony uppermost as a value system, and who were (and to an extent still are) among the poorest Americans in the United States. The antiquated domination and "coercive assimilation" policies of the United States had produced one of the most racist systems of recognition imaginable in contemporary society, with exacting fractionation of genealogical "blood" traced back over many generations to determine whether an individual member qualified for enrollment; this currently sits at one-quarter for the Lakota reservations, although it was low as one-eighth at Standing Rock before 1960. My direct family qualified for full enrollment, although some of my mixed-blood relatives did not, and my own children will not be enrolled at Standing Rock. There are some individuals who are actually more than the one-quarter quantum, but who for various reasons cannot document it. They are not allowed enrollment. None of the tribes or nations in the northern Plains recognizes "Indian" blood from any other, although for racial identification on the U.S. census people may put their "race" affiliation down. Even though this has gotten crazier and crazier, extending out over two hundred years of oppressive policies toward "mixed" and "full" blood descendants, there is no viable alternative. For most of my adult life enrollment did not make

much difference, except for a small payment every now and then, such as the infamous “pony-payment” in the 1970s,⁹ and perhaps whether one could go back to our reservation as a recognized member, or to qualify for the rare scholarship program. Now, however, there are arguments about “per capita” payments from the casinos that only go to enrolled members based on the blood-quantum. On some reservations with profitable gaming, such as Dakota Prairie Island in Minnesota or the Shakopee Mystic Lake Sioux, this has caused horrible fights over monies and inheritance that once would have been considered the bane of the white man’s existence. Such is progress.

The twenty-first century opened with myself as a professor of Sociology teaching about American Indians from a first-hand perspective. I represented my distant relatives from Spirit Lake Nation (once the “Devil’s Lake Sioux”) against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who wanted to place huge pumping stations on the reservation in order to get the somewhat tainted water going into the overflowing Devil’s Lake pumped on into the Cheyenne River, which flows into the Red River, which flooded out Grand Forks, Fargo, and parts of Canada. I have written a book that uses my experience of participating in the mostly Lakota Sun Dance at Green Grass, and of helping to initiate the Prairie Island Sun Dance among the Dakota people, to describe how my relatives have survived and so thrived in the latter half of the twentieth century. I have consulted with Indian education school systems on the Rosebud and in North Dakota, helping to build curriculum that will honor and respect the traditional ways that my country spent so much time and trouble trying to eliminate. My work on racist iconography supports the struggle against Indian stereotypes and imagery across the nation, poignantly illustrated in the attempts at UND to keep their name “Fighting Sioux” and the imagery that is at times disrespectful and at times deeply denigrated by competitive colleges in the “good fun” of university sports. All across the United States I see both resurgence of Native American cultural practices and discriminatory treatment around the stronger Indian reservations. And, interestingly, I see my relatives, both those who are close and those who are distant, struggling with making meaning of their histories and their identity as Lakota, as Dakota, and as Americans.

Pat “Wambli Topa” McLaughlin passed away at over 80 years of age, shortly after Christmas day, 2002, after being reelected to the tribal council he had served so long and so often. I went to his funeral on Standing Rock Indian Reservation, where he lived his entire life when not in the military serving his country and people. My Indian mother, Mary Louise Defender, met me at the airport at Bismarck. Senator Byron Dorgan was also there and apologized for not making the services planned for that same day at Fort Yates. Reservation leaders and relatives from around the country came to the “laying-in-state” services that the tribal council ordered for a man who had served four terms as chairman, and a lifetime of service to the people of Standing Rock and the United States. Veterans’ organizations played a special role in the service, recounting his military decorations, exploits, and experiences. Councilmen recounted his work for the Standing Rock council, with Allen White Lightning remembering his strong support and dedication to helping the budding sovereignty movement. The next day we attended his funeral at a Catholic church in Wakpala, a traditional Lakota community near the confluence of the Missouri and Grand Rivers. There was not enough room for everyone in the small church replete with Lakota ceremonial imagery as well as the Crucifix and icons of saints and Apostles. Relatives I had not seen for

many years were in attendance. Near the end of that service, Vietnam Veterans announced that he was the last to participate in the War Bonnet ceremony, taking the part of the Wounded Warrior making sacrifices for the defense of the people. One of the longest lines of vehicles I could imagine trailed out of Wakpala past the old Rattlesnake Buttes toward the rolling ridge overlooking the creek-bed below the village Mahto nearby the Good Elk ranch where Pat had still ran a small herd of wild ponies saved from the government slaughter. A riderless horse stepped along the hearse, where four veterans' groups stood in formation. After volleys in honor of his service, everyone got in line to shake the hands of the family members and offer condolences. The winter skies had given way to a stunning blue that strode colors off the creek-bed valley and the hills filled with two centuries of struggle and survival. After all the flags were lowered to half mast the family returned to Wakpala, where a community feeding was held and quilts were distributed as a preliminary give-away, traditionally done after one year had passed.

That evening, I returned with Mary Louise Defender to see where her house has been burned to the ground in the tiny town of Shields, just across the river from a Standing Rock community called Porcupine, North Dakota. The carefully reconstructed log cabin from the 1890s—where Major McLaughlin's sons used to stay on hunting trips and, it is rumored, where the likes of Annie Oakley and Buffalo Bill made short stays—had also burned away in its entirety. Since great fires in Colorado and among the White Mountain Apache captured the headlines at the same time, hardly a notice went out at a 20,000-acre prairie fire that harked back to a pioneer past and Lakota villages who found ways to fight off the destruction. The next day I agreed to drive Mary Louise up and across all of North Dakota to visit and pray at the Stone Woman site just south of Valley City. We got stuck in a snow drift, and went to a local farmer, who had given similar assists to the Indian people who came there to honor their past, which included death and destruction. Today most residents of the state have a sincere interest in understanding Native history. When we drove back that night, with a setting sun to the west, Devil's Lake to the north, Dakota roots to the east, and Lakota relatives to the south, we reflected on those years of struggle and progress. After we came into Bismarck, where I would fly out early the next morning, I remembered my years living there, working at the capitol like my grandfather decades before, discovering my own roots in long conversations with my grandmother, who spent her final years receiving her aging relatives, keeping track of the younger ones, and remembering her youth on Standing Rock.

One of my last memories of my Grandmother Etta is at her bedside in a senior "nursing" home in Bismarck, North Dakota, where she spent her last years. I taped some of her stories and responses to my questions, which at that time often revolved around research I was preparing on Indian education for work I was doing at Harvard and later with the Rosebud schools. Of course, the subject of her schooling came up, including her time at Haskell when it was one of the infamous boarding schools, and her experiences with Catholic and day schools at Fort Yates. As she talked about Haskell, clearly reliving some of her times there and the "school socials" she attended, it came out that she had feelings for a young Kiowa male student she had met at one round dance, and wanted to marry him. When word got back to her father and mother, they were upset that she

would make such a hasty decision, not to mention someone from another “tribe” and a full-blood. They put an end to that relationship and brought her back home, where she met her future husband and bore and brought up a pretty amazing family, with absolutely no regrets. Even so, one could see that brief ember of a flame, a moment lost to all the petty feelings and racialized constructs of a turn-of-the-century American life for most Native peoples, that virtually everyone thought was vanishing away.¹⁰

“All My Relatives” is a phrase (in Lakota, *o-Mitakuye Oyasin*) used during Dakota winters, a time of telling oral tradition histories and for our culturally instructive stories, that causes me to reflect on my life as one with a Native American heritage.

Indigenous Family and Social History: Conclusions

Indigenous societies experienced remarkably similar relationships with incoming European and later American dominance, ranging from genocidal destruction to coercive cultural assimilation. The Dakota people, living in villages and townships interwoven with sociopolitical networks extending over what is now Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, Wisconsin, and parts of Canada, had first “contact” in the 1700s. However, through trade networks extending eastward over the Great Lakes region, Dakota leaders had heard of the *wasicun*, or “whites,” of Euro-American societies decades earlier, and tried to accommodate their militaristic invasions through treaty making and agreements. United States emissaries and later territorial governors broke these treaties, and brutally suppressed any resistance or quieted claims of injustice. By the 1862 uprising, Dakota people were a “minority” in their own land, and after experiencing the diaspora of losing warfare, they went underground or rebuilt remnants in reservations that resembled imprisonment on less desirable lands.

The Lakota, closely affiliated with the Dakota in a sociopolitical network called *oceti sakowin* (seven council fires), observed these relationships and were determined to oppose similar treatment. Although their initial diplomatic relationship with the United States was with the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1804, and they “negotiated” various treaties and multinational compacts through 1865, they had lost little and would fight for much in the years to come. The constant battles leading to the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 indicated how strongly they would hold on to their traditional societies, and their territorial integrity, since the treaty encompassed the entire sacred Black Hills and virtually every major point desired by the leadership, including a striking of removal clauses the United States kept trying to insert.

Every treaty made with the United States by both the Dakota and Lakota leaders was intentionally broken by American representatives, once they achieved demographic and military dominance. Although individuals at times broke laws and treaty agreements, Lakota leaders never broke the “trust” relationship, even during Wounded Knee in 1890. Therefore, Dakota and Lakota peoples, like American Indians throughout the United States, remember and reproduce an oral and social history remarkably different than that which the rest of America grows up with and learns in schools. Consider how Lakota remember Little Big Horn and George Custer, or the Ghost Dance of

1890 and the Wounded Knee massacre. While the rest of America and indeed the world goes to the Black Hills—once held sacred by the Lakota—to view icons of the “Founding Fathers” at Mount Rushmore, many Indian people consider the same mountainous carvings as “The Four Thieves,” recognizing a violent taking of their lands and destruction of their cultures.

My ancestors were on virtually every side of these conflicts, Dakota and Lakota, attempting to accommodate the intrusive new dominant Americans, fighting them, resisting through maintaining traditions, and being part of the neocolonial governments running Indian reservations throughout the twentieth century. Even as my Irish ancestors negotiated the ethnic discrimination that carried over from England to the United States, increasingly viewed as “white” Americans and less Irish, my American Indian relatives were increasingly viewed less as specifically of a Lakota and Dakota nation or culture, and more as “Indians” who were expected to vanish as a distinct people into the history, mythical and real, of the United States of America.

Dakota and Lakota people survived and even thrived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, very well exemplified in my great-great-grandmother, the Dakota woman Marie Buisson married in 1864 to Major James McLaughlin, Indian agent at Devil’s Lake and Standing Rock reservations, and later one of their grandsons, Pat “Wambli Topa” McLaughlin, who fought in World War II and provided his leadership as a “mixed-blood” chairman of the “tribe” for many years. Culturicidal and even genocidal policies by U.S. agencies were ultimately not successful, although all of my relatives went through quite tortuous identity issues because of attempted social destruction and cultural domination. My Irish ancestors at first intermarried with Indians in a rather courageous fashion, but later used their mixed-blood appearance to their advantage, which was not available to most full-blood Indians at the time, either legally or in social treatment. I had relatives on all sides of every conflict in the history of the Dakota and Lakota people, ranging from the 1862 Sioux Uprising in Minnesota and 1876 Battle of the Little Big Horn in Lakota country over the Black Hills as noted in the 1868 Treaty, through 1890 Wounded Knee, two World Wars, the Civil Rights and American Indian movement struggles, and into the sovereignty movements that ended the twentieth century. Recognition through my father and grandmother allowed me to be enrolled on Standing Rock Sioux Indian reservation, which would later get “nation” status because of tribal sovereignty laws making their way through the courts and judiciaries of the United States.

Sociopolitical and pseudo-scientific constructs from earlier centuries of racism, conquest, and cultural domination, such as blood-quantum racial identity or citizenship exclusion laws, continued into modern day Indian reservations as tribal enrollment codes, sovereignty struggles, and personal identity issues. My own position is indicative of how powerfully these social constructions still formulate and influence cultural and political identity. While I have been much involved in reservation politics and in all my relatives’ lives over the years, the entity of Standing Rock (Sioux) Indian Reservation as a nation, both separate and part of the greater American social scene, has come to mean something much more than simple enrollment or federal recognition. As people related to this place, this culture, this historically located society, reconstruct their sense of self, we need to examine how our relationships adapt to these new circumstances, and how important or unimportant our cultural and geographical locations are to these involve-

ments. Perhaps my sons will be able to construct connections to Lakota and Dakota people, perhaps not. Whatever occurs, some sense that they are related to American Indian societies, histories, and cultures will remain. Whether we see that as evolving issues of race and ethnicity, sovereignty or nationhood, or knowledge and appreciation of a way of life over the years, indigenous identity is an important part of the American experience for myself and all my relatives, with respect and honor.¹¹

Chronology of Relatives and Major Events

Relatives of James V. Fenelon mentioned in this article:

Marie Buisson McLaughlin: Great-great-grandmother (1842–1933)
 Major James McLaughlin: Great-great-grandfather (1842–1923)
 (Annie) *Howape Luta Win* Goodreau: Great-great-grandmother
 Vincent Eugene Fenelon, Sr.: Grandfather (1896–1992)
 HenriEtta McLaughlin Fenelon: Grandmother (1902–1994)
 Pat “*Wambli Topa*” McLaughlin: “Indian uncle” or cousin (1921–2002)
 James (McLaughlin) Fenelon: Uncle (born 1922)
 Vincent E. Fenelon, Jr.: Father (born 1928)
 Mary Louise Defender-Wilson: “Indian mother” (born 1932)

Chronology of Major Events mentioned in this article:

1862: Dakota Uprising; Marie Buisson meets James McLaughlin
 1868: Fort Laramie Treaty; Dakota Territory forms with Indian agencies
 1876: Custer is defeated; blacks Hills become Taken Land; reservations begin
 1890: Sitting Bull killed on Standing Rock; Lakota totally dominated
 1918: V. E. Fenelon returns from WWI, marries Etta McLaughlin
 1945: Pat McLaughlin returns from WWII, later becomes chairman
 1974: International Indian Treaty Council meets at Standing Rock
 1989: North Dakota Centennial; Native American chair is M. L. Defender
 2002: Pat McLaughlin dies, funeral held “in state” to respect sovereignty

NOTES

1. For how these relations work in the Dakotas, see “From Peripheral Domination to Internal Colonialism: Socio-Political Change of the Lakota to the Standing Rock ‘Sioux.’” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 3 (Summer 1997): 259–320; <http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr/archive/vol3/v3n2a3.htm> (Fenelon, 1997).

2. Pat “Wambli Topa” McLaughlin would be my great-cousin the American way and my great-uncle the Indian way and so I refer to him as my close relative, since I knew him both ways. Wambli Topa means Four Eagles in the Dakota and Lakota language.

3. Marie L. McLaughlin wrote the book *Myths and Legends of the Sioux* (Bismarck, ND: Bismarck Tribune Co., 1916), now published by Bison Books (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). Although originally written and translated “for posterity,” this work has proven to be an important source for anthropological analysis.

4. Major James McLaughlin wrote the book *My Friend the Indian* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), which became an instant classic, although now it is critically analyzed as biased autobiography. This book

describes most of the major events of the Lakota Sioux on Standing Rock and the other reservations, mostly from a first-hand account, and incredible descriptions of McLaughlin's negotiations and travels as (the chief) inspector for Indian Affairs in the early twentieth century.

5. *Howape Luta Win* can be translated various ways, although Luta Win would always mean "Red" Woman encompassing spiritual qualities. Some translators have suggested *Howa* can mean "fish" or fin, as others stress derivations of "Law" from *wape*. Mary Louise Defender reports that *Howape* is a very complicated concept that incorporates respect for the law of the Lakota people with a spiritual reference as well. Problems like this were very common because of the disrespect given to Indian names and languages.

6. The Potato Famine is "so-called" because during these years in Ireland, some higher-end foods were actually exported to London and other markets. The Catholic Irish had been restricted to the imported (American Indian) crop of potatoes, which had become the poor man's food. Many Irish scholars now refer to this period as one of "genocide-like" conditions, meant to "push" the Catholics off to America.

7. Emma (Mrs. Paul) Cournoyer Crow King died in April 1908, buried at Pleasant Ridge Cemetery near

Armour, Douglas County. Emma was the daughter of Hunkpapa Sioux chief Crow King, who died near Fort Yates, ND, in 1884. Emma was later adopted by James and Marie McLaughlin of Fort Yates.

8. This was Tom Fly and his wife. In the Lakota way, *hunkacipi* or simply stating publicly at traditional activities was respected as strong as direct blood ties.

9. The "pony-payment" words are my father's, used by most of our relatives as well. Essentially, in one of its quasi-genocidal campaigns, the U.S. military killed off or sold a large number of horses of our relatives, which brought a claim a hundred years later for payment. The irony is that the United States will not even consider any reparation for the large number of Dakota and Lakota lives that were taken, since that is not a pecuniary figure.

10. David Richards's *Masks of Difference: Cultural Misrepresentations and Re-presentations* addresses artistic representations of "others" in the Americas as well as the Celts and others.

11. Probable citation: "Dakota Woman, Mixed-Blood Man: American Indians from the Northern Plains," in *Minority Voices: Linking Personal History and the Sociological Imagination* by John Myers (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003).

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The sociological imagination is a method of thinking about the world. As you may have guessed, it's part of the field of sociology, which studies human society. When you put "sociological" "studying society" and "imagination" "the concept of forming new ideas, often creatively" together, you get a pretty good definition of the concept: a method of thinking about both individuals and society by considering a variety of sociological contexts. You can trace this kind of thinking backward and consider your personal history, your family history, and the surrounding cultural context (not all cultures celebrate Christmas, of course!) to understand how something that feels "normal" got to that state.