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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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To Our Ancestors.

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Abstract

Every autumn, people from diverse walks of life gather for a four-day Harvest Gathering at the home of a Native American flute-maker and musician who is widely recognized as a tradition-bearer. Gathered from the wide social and cultural networks in which he travels, participants come together to share their diverse traditions and cultural perspectives while striving to construct mutual orientation through a variety of social and ceremonial activities. Many participants are strangers to each other and others do not share English as a primary language. While language certainly plays a role in their efforts to create common ground, most of the work is done in the realm of the non-verbal – the exchange of objects, sharing the day-to-day chores, dance, music, ritual forms and bodily sensations, silence and engagement of the physical landscape which is, in turn, a discourse materialized and infused with particular constellations of social and cosmologic values. In this paper, I consider the processes of material semiosis with which participants anchor themselves to the Gathering and to each other. I combine concepts of topology from Actor Network Theory with spatial indexicality from the anthropology of communication in order to analyze the processes by which participants create an indexically-anchored topology for mutual points of reference through exchanges of a multitude of circulating objects, cultural practices, and narratives from the distant times and places of their homes.

Chapter 1: Gathering

Figure 1: Meeting by the Central Fire

I'm standing in the field near the Central Fire pit, waiting somewhat impatiently for everyone else to gather and the ceremony to begin. My feet and back are so full of pain and fatigue that I'm a bit distracted by the thought of retreating to my tiny cabin to put my feet up. We've been working ten and twelve hours a day for almost two weeks to prepare the land, supplies, and living spaces, and the Harvest Gathering hasn't even officially started yet. Pathways to the Sweatlodge and Medicine Wheel are cleared of branches and leaves blown there by the winter wind and snow. Lisa and I found that most of the objects left in the Medicine Wheel at last year's Gathering are still there, although a couple seem to have been taken away by animals or the weather or who knows what. Yesterday, Susa and I repaired the prayer-ties around the Wheel and I raked the path to the Sweatlodge to encourage the ants in their ancient home under and around it to find other temporary entrances. My ceremonial preparations are almost completed…(Excerpted from personal field notes recorded at the Harvest Gathering, 2007 & 2008)

Figure 2: Looking toward the Central Fire from the barn

There are potted mums and root vegetables decorating the grounds around this Circle and the tables in the food tent just up the hill from here. We had to move to the higher from the lower field this year because the lower field is still too damp; beavers constructed a new home downstream, and the stream turned into a bit of a swamp until the neighbors took down the dam. What seemed at surface a ‘natural’ event has actually turned into a very meaningful move for the Gathering, bringing the Center Fire – and so most daily activities – physically closer to the camping and other ceremonial spaces. Sierra painted a different sacred symbol on each of the stones around the new fire pit, which are organized in the shape of a turtle along the edge of its opening. It’s quite lovely, and I’ve noticed several new comers standing and studying it. Buddhist prayer ties hanging near the path to the stream still slowly fade away as the wind and rain and snow break down the weave of their fabric, along with the prayers written on it by many of the folks who were at last year’s Gathering.

Over the past two days, a small village of tents has sprouted out of the carpet of pine needles that blankets the floor of the boreal forest immediately adjacent to the social and ceremonial landscapes of the Harvest Gathering. Cars pull in at all hours as people arrive and settled in for their four-day stay here. The voices of many different kinds of musical instruments, the laughter of children drifting out of the forest, the whispers of wind through birch, beech and cedar trees, and occasional rhythms beat out on African and Native American drums weave together into a sort of soundscape that I've come to associate with being at the Gathering. Lots of remarkable and interestingly unidentifiable foods are making an appearance on the food tables and in the big refrigerator. Sadly, I can’t have any until after the Sweatlodge tomorrow, since I’m fasting in preparation for being Fire-Keeper! (Excerpted from personal field notes recorded at the Harvest Gathering, 2007 & 2008)

Figure 3: Flag marking the East Door

The sun is hot and the air humid, but the moisture and heat carries the smell of ocean brine in the easterly breezes that blow the ribbons at the top of the four poles that mark the four cardinal directions standing around thirty feet away from the Central Fire. The smell of the sea is invigorating. Recent rains swell the year-round stream where many people like to hang out or get away for quiet time, and after being in the Sweatlodge. I can hear the stream from here, and wish I could go sit on the cool mossy boulders along its edges for awhile.

I've heard that people may be coming this year from lots of different places, maybe even from Tibet and Africa, although I don't know if they live in the U.S. now or not. I wonder if we'll have stressful conflicts again this year…or if some of those folks who were involved will return again. Still, in spite of – or perhaps because of? – the challenging dialogues surrounding those conflicts, the Giveaway last year literally erupted with startling and profound feelings of interconnection and mutual understanding… (Excerpted from personal field notes recorded at the Harvest Gathering, 2007 & 2008)

Figure 4: Prayer ties around the Medicine Wheel

People are finally gathering. Once we light the Central Fire, someone will have to attend to it at all times until we close the Gathering on Monday. Rain is forecasted tonight, and although I'm a bit ashamed to admit it, I'm glad I've not made the commitment to be up all night, in the rain, with the Fire. (Excerpted from personal field notes recorded at the Harvest Gathering, 2007 & 2008)

To Gather

"…come or bring together, amass, assemble (antonyms: disperse, distribute); be led to believe, infer (antonym: misunderstand); harvest, pick out (antonyms: grow, plant)…"[1]

Figure 5: Harvest Bounty

At times, we move within lifescapes whose contours are well known to us, tapestries woven with words and sounds, ways of moving, and particular sensations, physical shapes, colors and objects. Forms and uses of language and space are familiar. Interaction and communication are at least partially grounded in shared resources and contexts for building mutual orientation and understanding. Our experiences of these lifescapes are often easily interpreted, gathered and assembled for the weaving of our own stories – and for interpreting the stories of others.

At other times, the topographies in and through which we experience the world are extraordinarily different from those we typically inhabit. Linguistic,

cultural, social and physical spaces may be organized by coordinates very different from those with which we usually orient ourselves to the world and to each other. Interacting with others in these novel contexts may challenge taken-for-granted approaches to building mutual understanding. Yet, opportunities to gather new perspectives, resources and strategies for weaving our stories about ourselves and others may become available, albeit amidst waves of disorientation or miscommunication.

The latter scenario best describes the central organizing theme of the Harvest Gathering, an annual event designed as a social-ceremonial forum in which people from different social and cultural backgrounds can experience each other face-to-face. For four days, fifty to one-hundred friends and strangers travel from near and far to tent out together on the carpet of pine needles that blankets the wooded spaces immediately adjacent to the social and ceremonial landscapes of the Gathering. They share a wide range of individual, group, social and ceremonial activities as well as meals, cleaning and other chores, music, times of silence, and so on.

The Gathering takes place at the Maine seacoast family home of Hawk Henries, a Native American (Chaubunagungamaug band of Nipmuc[2]) flute-maker, performer, composer and orator. He is widely recognized by Native and non-Native people within and beyond New England as a cultural tradition-bearer and skilled arbiter of cross-cultural dialogue and engagement. For the past twenty years, Hawk, his wife Lisa, and their daughters Sierra and Sequan, have worked and traveled

together to places in the United States, Canada, Mexico and, most recently, England. Lisa and the girls assist in the myriad economic, material, organizational and communicative tasks that Hawk's work requires. They also often travel with him. Over the past few years, Sierra's increasing mastery of birch bark artwork has gained wide recognition as well.

As participants in geographically and cultural vast networks of people, places and organizations, the Henries meet many others with whom they feel a connection that is shaped by artistic, social, ideological, cultural, political, economic, affective and or/material practices and perspectives. It is within these variably temporary, partial and durable networks that they find most of the people who participate in the Harvest Gathering. As a result, participants' home worlds include places in North America, Europe, Australia, Africa and Asia. They describe themselves using one or many labels such as Native American, Indigenous, American Indian, tribal, African American, black, white, middle-class, urban, poor, Irish, Australian, Bantu, Tibetan, Christian, Witness, Buddhist, Jewish, Wiccan, and so on, indexing the myriad of national, ethnic, religious, social and racial categories with which participants identify.[3]

The Harvest Gathering was originally inspired by the Henries' desire to gather to their home this great diversity that they experience in their artistic work. Broadly rooted in their experiences of northeastern Algonquian social and ceremonial traditions, the Gathering always occurs near the time of the autumnal equinox. This is an important turning point on the calendrical cycle whose primary

cosmologic and symbolic importance celebrates and honors the abundance of life's harvest, particularly as it acknowledges the life-giving characteristics of diversity. The central value underlying this view of diversity is the belief that every aspect of Creation is a unique and equally important part of a greater Cosmic whole.

In particular, the Harvest Gathering is organized as a constantly emerging physical, conceptual and experiential space in which to challenge what the Henries see as a pervasive conflation of identity *difference* and social *divisiveness* within contemporary concepts about cultural diversity and, conversely, problematic notions of diversity that are used to justify the appropriation of others' cultural practices. Consonant with the practices of other northeastern Algonquian peoples in Maine and the Canadian Maritimes who live in a fully integrated, relational cosmos, power as a *horizontal* process, when rightly used; it is an exchange of experience, knowledge and self that disseminates through direct, embodied interaction and sharing that benefits all beings, human or otherwise (Duplisea 1996). This is in contrast to Euro-American notions of power as a force that moves vertically along hierarchical inequities which, from a cosmological perspective, is unnatural in that it obliterates or distorts the unique contributions of each aspect of creation upon which the health and well-being of the whole depend. These differences speak to the ideologies about self, community and belonging that the Henries wish to explore in their work within inter-cultural settings.

Building on these concepts, the central organizing principle for recreating the Harvest Gathering year after year is "to hold a space," as Lisa puts it, in which

people from different cultural and social backgrounds can simultaneously assert and maintain their unique identities while having the opportunity to embody, and thus instantiate, diverse cultural practices. “Everyone is invited to everything, and no one *has* to do anything,” Lisa often explains during the Gathering itself and in conversations with potential participants throughout the year.

For the most part, participants are invited to the Harvest Gathering by word-of-mouth, usually in the context of direct interaction. In recent years, however, the internet has become an increasingly important means by which potential participants are identified and invited, especially by Hawk who maintains a presence on various sites as a musician and flute-maker. Although most are invited by someone in the Henries family or those of us in the local community, some are invited by other participants, including newcomers. There are always people who met the Henries only once in some distant place and time, or are meeting the Henries for the first time. Many of the people who are invited do not commit to coming in advance; they arrive unannounced.

Therefore, the social constitution of the Gathering shifts from year to year, although some overall patterns are predictable. Every year, there are some participants who have never been to this particular gathering before, or to anything like it. Some have to travel great distances in order to attend, planning several months in advance to make the journey. Other brave souls arrive without knowing anyone else who is there, or having met the person who invited them only once before. In addition to many newcomers, there are always several people from the

local community, some of whom are active in the organization and preparations for the Gathering, as well as others who have attended for several years. There are always at least a few people whose command of English is limited, or skills for living out-of-doors nil. Very often, there is at least one person who has never met someone from another country face-to-face. They bring a sometimes startling diversity of musical instruments, foods, stories, life histories, dances, songs and jokes with them. Some people share their customs and traditions, others do not.

Figure 6: Welcoming

"Holding a space" in which people from different linguistic, cultural and social life-worlds can experience each other face-to-face is fraught with many challenges, to say the least. Over the many years of my attendance at the Gathering, first as a participant and in recent years as a researcher with ceremonial and organizational responsibilities, I have observed that the most persistent challenge – the one that requires the greatest attention, time, planning, patience, creativity and reflection – is related to the diversity of material and semiotic resources that participants bring to bear on their attempts to interact with each other, the

landscape, and various forms of engagement. Put simply, the enduring challenge is one of creating a viable space of mutual orientation that simultaneously centers activities and interactions while allowing for a flow of diverse forms of knowledge and practice.

One the one hand, the Harvest Gathering must be a space in which participants can build common *indexical* ground; that is, it must come to be organized by common points of reference with which participants can achieve mutual communicative orientation – else all efforts to interact dissolve into utter misunderstanding or insurmountable conflict (Keane 2006: 438). As such, it is a highly localized event that must be anchored and stabilized within a specific place, emerging from local social and cultural practices organized – materially and linguistically – by the Henries' particular values regarding difference and inclusion.

On the other hand, the Harvest Gathering must be a space in which participants can bring a multitude of circulating objects, social practices, narratives, and so on, to bear upon its presence as a place and form of engagement. These elements are lifted from contexts elsewhere in time and space, transported to and fro by the activities of its participants and interconnected via the broad social networks from which they come. Therefore, it must be fluid enough to respond to the actual flow of its performance – else all efforts to gather and assemble diverse perspectives into meaningful experience fail.

How, then, does the Harvest Gathering come to be such a space? What are the activities with which the Henries emplace those values such that they serve to

orient the ebb and flow of its unfolding in situ and as a node interconnected to a web of other activities, events and places throughout the year? By what processes do participants align themselves and their distinct ways of life to the Gathering and to each other? How do people with sometimes dramatically different ways of knowing coordinate different worlds of signification and bring distinctive semiotic resources to bear upon the experience? By what strategies are participants able to calibrate their orientation to distant times and places at the same time as they co-construct the mutuality of the Gathering's topological contours of place and participation?

Gathering Theoretical Perspectives

I have participated in the Gathering since its inception in 1994, several years before my decision to pursue anthropology as a vocation. At first I was a stranger who knew the Henries only in passing, as are many people when they first come to the Gathering. My role is now more complicated. Since moving to Maine I have become a part of the Henries' day-to-day life and one of the local community members with an organizing role in the Gathering. I have also taken on ceremonial responsibilities both during the Gathering event itself and at other ceremonial, social and planning activities throughout the year. Finally, of course, I participate as a researcher. My official fieldwork began in 2003.

In contemplating the question of how the Harvest Gathering ultimately instantiates both heterogeneity and coherence by virtue of assemblages of (sometimes wildly) heterogenous elements and semiotic resources, I observed that

the most innovative and effective semiotic work is being done through the participants' engagements with (and exchanges of) various material elements – objects, landscapes, the structure and flow of events, food, sensory experiences, bodily positions, and so on. I came to see that the Gathering's physicality is the primary site wherein participants negotiate the various transformations and translations of meaning through which the Gathering emerges as a cohesive, inclusive space of diversity each year.

This is not to say that narrative, spontaneous talk and other forms of verbal interaction are unimportant. I have observed, however, that spoken language seems more an adjunct to the active interweaving of material and meaning as a means to coordinate and create cohesion; at worst, language seems to confuse and obfuscate efforts to establish mutual understanding and personal self-expression. Thus, I chose to focus my study through two views of material semiosis – the co-constitutive processes of materiality and meaning – with a mind to discovering what lay at the heart of what is happening and how it happens at the Harvest Gathering.

In this paper, I join other researchers interested in the ways that material and conceptual worlds are woven together, moment-by-moment, across space and time, through the deployment of signs – *semiosis* in its broadest sense (Chandler 2003:2). A sign is "something which stands to somebody for something else in some respect or capacity (Peirce 1974, quoted in Mertz 2007: 338). Sign vehicles, the actual signal that communicates (Mertz 2007:228), can be in the form of language proper

but can also be embodied as gestures (Kendon 2008), bodily movements through space (Farnell 1999; Farnell 2001) and even particular forms of culturally shaped sensory experiences (Dejarlais 2003; Geurts 2002). Semiosis, writ large as the processes by which signs and the things or ideas that they signify, emphasizes the *relational* nature of all meanings and the forms that connect them.

In the case of the Harvest Gathering, material and meaning are interwoven in direct interaction at the event itself and via the widely circulating and mobile webs of interconnections linking it to distant times and places. There are two simultaneous and interlocking processes of social and material exchange (which are not, in any way, separate): the broader movements of various material and social entities whose elements are configured by cultural or personal values elsewhere and the situated negotiations by which these configurations are transformed as individuals interact through engagements with the land, objects, rituals, and each other. Methodologically, this active interplay of local and non-local creates several challenges to studying the Harvest Gathering: it is actively assembled and reassembled each year as a local place whose constituent parts are very often non-local elements on the move. To complicate things further, the Gathering promotes direct participation by a wide variety of individuals who assume a wide variety of roles.

In order to be able to "zoom in and zoom out" (Nicolini 2009:1391) to look at these two levels of material semiosis, I draw on some complementary ideas from two different bodies of scholarship: actor network theory (ANT) and indexicality,

particularly as it pertains to space. ANT focuses on broad, global, translocal scales of interconnection while indexicality focuses on the immediate, phenomenally-grounded interactions in which individuals negotiate meaning. Both focus on the relational nature of materiality and meaning. translation in terms of the movement to and fro of people and materials in the situation or interaction, and the processes that link the material to meaning. Thus, they both begin with the situation or interaction and trace "outward" to the webs of associations by and through which the invisible realms of concept and ideology precipitate into the visible realms of phenomenal being and, conversely, how the material arrangements of objects and spaces, for example, shape the negotiation of meaning.

Because of this focus on the visible, "given" situation as the starting point for investigation, both approaches emphasize a view of semiosis as emergent, through the performance of various activities. Scholars from each perspective explore the notion that places, landscapes and arrangements of material objects therein, as material embodiments of signification and meaning, have a direct and powerful impact on meaning-making. Therefore, both share an interest in unearthing the mediations, translations, and transformations that occur as a part of the process of material semiosis. Together, they provide a way to trace the webs of connections linking the breadth and depth of the object of study, resolving some of the critiques of each.

ANT

> …semiotic-orientated social ontologies…draw attention to the constitutive power of associations. They argue that social agency (both individual and collective) is constituted through assembling, aligning and stabilizing patterns of relationships so that any form of social order is in fact the outcome of observable instances of ordering. From this follows that the main task of social science is tracing the associations between human and non-human elements and studying the effects that the resulting arrangements make in the world. By emphasizing that any form of social order, no matter how seemingly 'macro' and durable, is the result of the active connection between local instances of ordering, semiotic-oriented social ontologies offer both a language and a method for studying organizational and institutional phenomena without having to revert to the idea of pre-existing levels of reality (Nicolini 2009:1394)

"To gather" implicates a concern for thinking about how disparate and sometimes highly mobile constituents of space and time come into the vast webs of interrelations that create the more or less organized assemblages – entities – that we *recognize* as "place", "object", and even "person" (Callon and Law 2004; Latour 2005). "To gather" also means to infer; how do we trace these processes by which we "gather all the elements (Latour 2005: 175)," connecting or disconnecting them from other places and times, and reassembling the 'social' in ways that "authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, or render possible (p.72)" more or less durable social collectivities and places?

Originally emerging from studies of globalization and its effects within science and technology (Johannesson 2005), scholars working with an actor network approach urge an avoidance of *a priori* assumptions about social structure or the existence of global and local elements in any given situation. Instead, Latour argues that the social is made "visible only by the traces it leaves when new

associations are made between elements (p. 8)." Specifically, local interactions and the places in which they occur are in fact assemblages of other local interactions and places distributed across time and space, transported and "brought to bear on the scene through relays of various non-human actors (p. 194)." Actors, actions and objects themselves *become* heterogeneous assemblages as they mobilize and circulate into new sets of relational associations, thus attaining more or less durability and stability across different contexts of their deployment.

Thus, actor network methodologies presume that local interactions – and the places in which they occur – are created by the actions of individuals who assemblage material and semiotic elements transported from *other* interactions and places (Latour 2005). If, then, the task is to trace these elements to those other interactions and places, the methodological approach must be to focus on studying individuals, small groups, and place-making activities in the (re)creation of new, multifaceted forms of praxis, co-action or particular concepts of identity (Escobar 2003)Schneider 2003: 215-216). Social actors' uses of language, objects, ideas, landscape, narratives, and so on, instantiates and makes visible relays of associations linking distant times and places of experience to the immediate time and place.

This idea that non-human objects and places can, and do, assert their own form of agency is a central tenant of ANT. In recent years, the agency of objects has received increasing attention, not as bounded, singular entities but as the nexus of multiple types of space and worlds of practice. As Law (2002) describes it,

"…objects are an effect of stable arrays or networks of relations (pg. 91)." Objects are also active mediators in all kinds of social, economic and semiotic exchanges because they are entangled in multiple worlds of meaning (Thomas 1991) within networks of relations (Law 2002:96). They facilitate the performance of the social (Pels, et al. 2002) as they traverse different social worlds, serving as important coordinates by which social worlds emerge (Harré 2002). Thus, graphic landscape representations can, when analyzed in terms of the networks of material and semiotic relations in which it moves, can itself be a traveling landscape-object that flows among different spaces, transforming and creating those spaces within partially novel sets of relations (della Dora 2009).

In a move to complicate notions of space derived exclusively from Euclidean concepts, Law and Mol (2001) describe four topological forms of space emerging from the ways that objects fix or shift the relations in which they are embedded: regional spaces, network spaces, fluid spaces and fire spaces. The nature of relations between objects and spaces is the relation between the coordinates that generate topologies – multidimensional spaces – with different capacities for mediating and translating complexity and heterogeneity into topological spaces organized by (dis)continuous, (in)coherent, or fractional connections (Law 1999; Moreira 2000). Law (2002:95) proposes that:

> "…spatiality and object continuity are settled together. Under what circumstances can an object be deformed (for instance moved through space in relation to other objects) without changing its shape? This is precisely what is at stake in topology, which is a mathematics that explores the possibilities and properties of different forms of continuous transformation – and the different spaces which express or allow these. So there is an

> indefinite number of ways of defining what will count as homeomorphism, of deforming objects whilst securing their continuity, just as there is an indefinite number of corresponding spaces."

Events themselves can unfold in multiple topologies at the same time. In an analysis of the events taking place in an operating room, Moreira (2004) observes that the activities of surgeons, nurses and other personnel during a surgical procedure demonstrate that "the operating room is an effect of the interferences between different types of special relations (pg. 53)." Region, network, fluid and fire topologies interact and the "interference between these four spaces is *generative*, not only of the surgical event but also of the *differences* between the topologies themselves (italics in the original)."

This co-creative interaction of person, place and material objects can be highly complex, even in mundane and everyday spaces and practices: material and meaning inseparable but the connections not always immediately visible. Think of the automobile, for example. It is not merely an "object" but a space that embodies a living chain of connections spread out across geographic, economic and social distance. Cultural geographer Sheller (2007) calls the car both a "movement-space" and "embodied car driver-road assemblage" (p. 175) that is organized by a complex and emergent set of interrelations between individual and social identities, phenomenally-grounded sensory experiences, technologies, material environments, landscapes, social temporalities, and corporeal, informational and corporate structures. Internal car industry concepts, marketing communications and commodification practices shape the assemblage of the car as a "form of mobility

and spatial inhabitation" as do the "wider set of co-constituted spaces of everyday life including streets and sidewalks, building and dwelling places, stations and parking spaces, cities and suburbs, rural areas and natural parks" (p. 176). The 'car' is a spatiality that actively shaped a never-ending feedback loop of networked relationships linking the body-person, bodily movements, place-making, subjective and social identity practices, objects, public discourse, informational infrastructures and a universe of elements flowing from, and among, distant persons, places, and political and economic infrastructures. Something to think about the next time you slide into your car.

Latour (2005) proposes that the work of social scientists is to trace the ways that social actors' actions create connections between and among the various sites of experience, creating webs of associations linking disparate times and places, and resulting in assemblages of social associations that in turn emerge as spatial dimensionalities. The challenge is to discover the processes by which social collectivities, places, cultural practices, and so on, are assembled though a transformation of the ways that both human and non-human (objects, narratives, spaces, etcetera) elements are connected and disconnected, reassembling the 'social' in ways that "authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, or render possible (p.72)" more or less durable social collectivities. Therefore, ANT is more of a methodological approach than a theory, per se (Law 1999); it is a way to discover the formative interconnections between here and there, this and that, material and meaning.

When I work as a hospice nurse, for example, everything I do as an individual flows from a multitude of other spaces, places, interactions, particular and specialized forms of knowledge and medical practice, economic and legal structures linked to medicine and death, and my own, personal network of relationships and experiences of loss – and so on. Many of these elements are not human – the homes where I visit my patients, the office where I go to get supplies and meet various responsibilities with my colleagues and managers, the specific ways that my "nursey" bag and boxes of supplies in my car have to be organized and accounted for – and these non-human elements virtually force me to act in certain ways or, at the very least, limit my options for action. The particular set of relations that taken together create the space of "medical practice" in a scientifically-based view of the body and its ills delimits the choices that I have as a practitioner. They may also have a powerful influence on my *perception* – what I "see" or apprehend about what is happening. Moreover, when I do all of the things associated with my practice as a hospice nurse, including the deployment of specialized forms of knowledge and resulting actions, I reconstitute the entire assemble of elements and make it "real" again.

Starting with any facet of this practice (specialized skills, particular pieces of equipment, medications), the activities of the various individuals involved (patient, family, physician, chaplain, social worker, etcetera), or the places where it occurs (home, clinic, hospital), I could trace the elements and forms of organization to the other places, practices and histories from which they flowed, the chain of

connections by which they were mobilized, and the nature of the transformations by which they were re-assembled as the practice that I embody when I work as a hospice nurse.

These complex networks and sets of relations and interconnections that constitute hospice as a western form of medical practice embodies multiple forms of performance and ontologic realities (Mol 1999) depending upon its particular performance by particular individuals. As such, it can be understood as a "*topological presupposition* (italics in the original)" which frames the performance of social similarity and difference (Mol and Law 1994: 642). Tracing the particular ways and means by which individuals, through their actions, embody these networks of connections linking human and non-human elements into cohesive aggregations of people, places and practices can illuminate the ways that meaning and materiality are in a constant state of co-creation, one always shaping the other. Subjective, social and material assemblages emerge as topologically contoured spatialities that may flow from one place to another with more or less fluidity, coherence, mutability or partiality.

Oppenheim (2007), building, in part, on these ideas and the concept of topological presupposition in ANT, suggests that anthropologists consider thinking in terms of "emergent dimensionality (pg.472)." This perspective highlights a concern for tracing the visible and invisible mediating processes by which circulating local and translocal forms (individuals, social collectives, objects, narratives and discourse, and places) come to be spatially articulated in

ontologically transformative and significant ways. These articulations continually emerge and reemerge as ontologically shaped phenomenal places and virtual spaces marked by shifting assemblages of interrelations between human and non-human actors which, in turn, shape ongoing experience. Place, locality and subjectivity are inextricably interwoven, their interrelations ontologically shaping – and shaped by – the "phenomenological situatedness of actor-nodes as mutually coordinated in terms of orientation and circumspective (rather than passive) 'aroundness' (p. 486)."

When participants arrive at the Harvest Gathering each year, they enter into a space that will, to a greater or lesser degree, have a direct impact upon their experience of themselves, and others, in that place. The place itself, as a topological embodiment of a particular web of relations anchored to multiple times, places and persons, will assert itself as an "actor" at the Gathering with just as much impact as the humans interacting there.

Indexicality

> A semiotic encounter is an encounter with signs. An interpersonal semiotic encounter is one in which persons encounter each other by encountering signs (utterances, gestures, textartifacts) that connect them to each other (or mediate their connection with each other) in some type of participation framework. Semiotic encounters are mass mediated when the signs that connect persons to each other connect many persons to each other within unified participation frameworks (through a common orientation to those signs)—though frequently at varying degrees of separation from each other by other criteria, such as criteria of physical co-presence, mutual awareness, and the like (Agha 2007)Agha 2007b: pp. 9–13).

Figure 7: Indexical Arrow Pointing Northeast

To gather" speaks to the constant processes by which we assemble and re-assemble aspects of our interactions with people, animals, language, sensory experiences, objects, dreams, belief systems, places, natural landscapes, and so on, into constellations of meaning. It implicates something about the ways that our being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962 [1927]) creates – and is created by – the particular way that our embodied experiences coalesce as a web of indexically connected associations. This ever-evolving web is continually emerging and transforming as we interact, generating the worlds of subjective and social signification by which material and meaning, visible and invisible are interwoven. Materiality and meaning are at the core of these processes; inseparable, co-creative, co-present (Keane 2003).

Indexicality, in the general sense that I will use it here, builds on a lineage of scholarship in linguistic anthropology descending from the work of Charles Peirce's semiotic theory, a perspective that posits meaning as a process emerging from a triadic relationship between a sign, the object that it stands for, and the interpretant, or the idea created in our minds through this connection of sign to its

object. There are three basic types of signs: icons, symbols and indexicals. Icons create a connection between an object and interpretant because of its physical resemblance, such as the image of a lion carved into the face of a ceramic pendant. Symbols create connections by virtue laws or conventions within semiotic systems; in the English language, for example, "chair" is a set of shapes organized by underlying conventions by which the word creates a connection to the comfortable object in which I sit while I write this paragraph.

Indexicals are the most context-dependent type of sign. They create connections between their objects and interpretants by *pointing* to various features of interactional context: *this* hat, *that* cat, *those* people, over *there*, back *here*, *when* will you go? Because of their role in creating links to contexts used in semiotic processes, they are often studied in terms of pragmatics – the totality of sign relations including not only language but the "socioculturally real world of sign tokens in use (Manning 2003:190)." Wearing clothing, using forks in a particular order at a formal dinner and using slang are examples of social indexicality because they *point* to particular socio-cultural, economic and historical worlds of meaning while simultaneously instantiating those worlds through their enactments. When I pick up the "proper" salad fork, as opposed to some other fork in the line up next to my plate, I literally point to the socio-economic class structures wherein I acquired an understanding of what this behavior means. My enactment of fork protocols also re-create, in the world, this aspect of social class. Thus, indexicals create powerful

existential and spatio-temporal connections that transport that to which they refer (point) into the here-and-now of their use.

Indexicals may be more or less creative (Silverstein 1976). Indexicals pointing to a referent that is already present or known – *that* chair, the one that you are sitting in now – are called presupposing, the efficacy of their meaning depending upon making a connection to a referent that is identifiable. The meaning of creative indexicals, or "shifters," is anchored entirely in the context in which they are used and calls their referent into being, within the context of use. We" is a simple example from English. When I say "we," I am creating a connection between myself and some other person, or group of people. I implicate that I share something in common with this group. Perhaps "we" are a group of anthropologists debating the pros and cons of using indexicality for studying the Harvest Gathering. Perhaps I am pointing to, and connecting myself with, spiritual entities living in invisible realms of existence. In this case, I draw these invisible beings into the "visible" realm of the interaction in which I invoke them by virtue of indexical relations. By aligning myself with a group, however construed, I also potentially disarticulate that group from other groups and in all cases, signify someone who is being left out – someone or some persons who are not included in my construction of "we." Indexicality thus has a dual function – pointing to included elements and, by virtue of this, also pointing indirectly to that which is left out (Kulick 2005).

When I use a highly creative indexical, I may need to provide more information in order for others to disambiguate possible meanings – for example, to

explain something about a particular cosmologic perspective in which these invisible beings live. Then again, the ambiguity may provide creative opportunities. Ochs (1993) finds that misunderstanding is critical to the process of language socialization wherein it becomes "an *opportunity space* (italics added) for instantiating local epistemology and for structuring social identities of interactants (p. 60, cited in Bailey 2006: 409)." Understanding, in this perspective, is not a condition wherein people share the same ideas or mental versions of reality but rather an ability to negotiate joint activities (Bailey 2006: 409). At the heart of understanding are indexical relationships linking "social identities, situations, social/linguistic acts, and affective and epistemic stances (Ochs 1996: 410, 431 cited Bailey 2006: 409).

The pointing function of indexicals is akin to drawing arrows which can be traced in whatever direction the arrow points: the person who is doing the indexing, the people in the actual interaction in which the indexical pointer is engaged, the immediate physical and social context of the engagement, the specific referent to which the index points, or on to the broad social, cultural and historic trajectories of meaning in which the referent is embedded. This process of tracing is very much akin to the tracings of elements in some applications of ANT.

Although much of the work done on indexicality in anthropology has been focused on its use in language, there has been a burgeoning of scholars working on the indexicality of space and embodiment. Thinking in terms of embodiment, indexicality helps to unravel some of the complex ways that sensory experience,

movement, action and particular forms of cultural and social practice are used as semiotic resources for constructing mutual orientation in interaction. Embodiment also creates the possibility of constructing a shared "sense" of space and intersubjective experience – a shared indexical grounding for bodily interaction and negotiation of meaning (Farnell 1999).

Still, embodiment as sensory experience is powerfully shaped by cultural and cosmologic practices and perspectives, indexing personal "sensory biographies (Dejarlais 2003)." The "same" feeling of shock or pain might index totally different meanings, social relationships, and cosmologic worlds – or may be a way of *connecting* to others' ways of bodily knowing (Geurts 2002). Space, in all cases infused with cultural meaning, orients bodies in particular ways that index those invisible worlds of meaning. The act of taking a bow – bending at the waist – can index entirely different realms of signification: Tai Chi Chuan, the Latin Mass or ballet. Each assemblage of movements – the nuance of leaps, gestures, turns, tilts, facial expressions, eye contacts, and so on – signs indexing the "action sign systems (Williams 1995) of which they are a part. The visibility of space and movement, and their interplay during human activity, are indexically connected to the invisible worlds from which they emerge (Urciuoli 1995).

The meanings of these movements make sense only within the metapragmatic scaffolding of culturally-specific ideologies and folk theories (Silverstein 2003; Siverstein 1993) about space, movement and person. In turn, folk interpretations of indexicals emerge as an indexically-coordinated topology

(Silverstein 2010) expressed as “a bow.” Hanks (2005) developed a consonant perspective in his work with Mayan communities. He builds, in part, on “a practice approach to language” because it “focuses precisely on the *relations* between verbal action, linguistic and other semiotic systems, and the commonsense ideas that speakers have about language and the social world of which it is a part (pg. 2).” Duranti’s (1992, 1997) work in Samoan communities living in Samoa and southern California demonstrate how the grounding of highly creative linguistic, bodily and spatial indexicals within “lived space” creates powerful connections with which children who have never lived in Samoa nonetheless inculcate key attitudes and understandings of social and cultural knowledge and practice.

Keane (2003) urges a semiotics of materiality that goes beyond linguistic analyses by equalizing attention to the role of objects, space and embodiment in semiotic processes. He proposes the notion of semiotic ideology as the “basic assumptions about what signs are and how they function in the world (pg. 418).” Wrapped up in the wide net of historical transformations and processes, even the potentials and possibilities for what constitutes a “sign,” who or what is capable of deploying signs, the situations in which signs are salient, and when and how to engage signs are shaped by political and economic ideas and ideals. Focusing on the transformation of material signs in semiotic processes, he defines semiotic ideology as a broad topology of “meta-semiosis” where “the social power of indexicals” might cohere “across discrete moments of intuition (pg. 419).”

Rouse (2004), building on Keane's notion of semiotic ideology, describes a situation in which parents of a dying child struggle to transform the medical professionals' view of what is happening by aligning themselves with "powerful moral signifiers (pg. 514)" that embody their religious ideologies regarding the meaning and value of their daughter's life. This struggle of power and agency played out through a process of what Rouse labels "embodiment-by-proxy," a form of phenomenal transcendence of difference that emerges by embodying signifiers linked to *another's* semiotic ideology. Summarizing this process as the parents struggled to resist the new-found agency that their daughter's body has acquired as the subject of medical science, Rouse says:

> For marginalized individuals whose presumed subjectivity is mired in tropes of inferiority, attempting to author semiotic ideologies for purposes of social agency is part of a communicative battle. The marshaling of external agents to claim a particular cultural and moral citizenship is necessary both to instantiate signs into material form and to validate or consolidate one's own subjectivity (pg. 515).

Speaking of material semiosis in religious practice, Keane (2008) posits that in order for embodied signs to be "recognizable as instances of something knowable, they must take semiotic form. They must, that is, have some material manifestation that makes them available to, interpretable by, and, in most cases, replicable by other people: bodily actions, speech, the treatment of objects, and so forth (pg. S114)." He goes on:

> Signs have forms and material properties. They are also repeatable, but there is nothing to guarantee that they will produce identical interpretations or experiences across time or between persons. Semiotic forms are public entities. That is, they are available as objects for the senses and not confined to inner or subjective experience. As such, they have distinctive temporal

> dimensions. Because they are repeatable, they have the potential to persist over time and across social contexts. One result is they can enter into projects that people work on. Semiotic forms accumulate new features over time, contributed by different people, with different projects, in different contexts (pg. S114-115).

Kiesling sums up the cumulative implication of articles in a 2010 special issue of *Pragmatics* by suggesting "the radical possibility that meaning is indexicality all the way down (2010: 42)." When I think about "all the way down" I imagine the Gathering, and everything to and from which it emerges, as a multidimensional "living" tapestry, its visible, surface colors and patterns created by the ongoing interactions of human activity with multiple warps and wefts, each capable of gathering, assembling and weaving together materials wrought from visible and invisible places and times. I imagine following the indexical traces and trajectories leading from its visible manifestations – including the activities and interactions from which it emerges – to its constitutional connections with elements embedded in other times, places or worlds of meaning. I imagine this based on the premise that the signifying effects of indexicality are mediated by ever-shifting relations between people, objects, times and spaces within the culturally shaped embodiments of spatial practices (Duranti 1992, 1997), deictic fields (Hanks 2005) and semiotic ideologies (Keane 2003) that give them functional significance and ground them in personal, historic and social worlds of meaning (Bakhtin 1984).

Topologies and Touchstones

I have come to see the Gathering as a place and form of engagement that embodies multiple types of material and semiotic topologies *at the same* time (Mol

1999; Law and Mol 2001). These multiple topologies articulate different forms of knowledge (Choy 2005) for different participants. It is in the overlap of these different worlds that the Gathering is woven each year – the particular nodes where participants' ways of knowing and experiences intersect through the shared experience of objects, features of the landscape, sensations, and so on. I think of these nodes of intersection by which individuals from different life-worlds make connections to each other and to the place, as material touchstones. I imagine these touchstones as points where the warp and weft of a multi-dimensional woven tapestry meet, threads trailing in all directions, some of them visible, some of them hidden from sight. By starting with a node – a touchstone – one might then trace the threads of which it is composed to its visible and invisible connections.

There are certain touchstones at the Gathering that seem to stand out as especially important nodes for connection and building mutual orientation. The people that I interviewed also mentioned the very same touchstones, either spontaneously or when I asked them if there was anything in particular that stood out about their experience at the Gathering in terms of feeling connected to it: the smell of sage and other smoking plants and resins, the fire, the circles, the role of objects in general, rocks and stones, the general landscape (including trees), dark/light/heat, music, sound and silence, and the sorts of connections that words cannot describe. Different participants' experience of the very "same" touchstone often creates a space of common experience while reinforcing individual differences.

My quest is to discover how the Gathering is simultaneously stable and fluid, local and trans-local, able to support the emplacement of diverse social practices and the particular forms of knowledge that they embody. I seek to understand how it acts as an effective metapragmatic () scaffolding within which participants can indexically align themselves and their positions relative to others. My goal is to unravel ways that the Harvest Gathering is simultaneously three kinds of space: a nexus of circulating people, objects and narratives anchored to here and there, then and now; a locality infused with locally and trans-locally constructed iconic and indexical coordinates for direct interaction and; a complex topography shaped by the emergence of novel confluences of the ways that people, place, narrative, and objects come to be spatially articulated such that participants may mobilize and transport their experiences to and fro.

Building on the concept of mutual orientation and shifting topologic coordinates proposed by Mol and Law's fluid space and implicated by as well as spatial indexicality I will suggest that the coordinates are best understood as indices and the topological contours of particular forms of practice (and "the" objects by which they are reified, transformed, translated and/or transported) best understood as *indexical* topographies. Bringing the general concept of indexicality to bear on their concept of topology can allow for a more nuanced understanding of how identities, landscapes, objects, and so on, can be simultaneously anchored in multiple times and spaces. Topological coordinates are indexical – an indexical

nexus that provides a more fine-grained method for tracking the anchors that link the situated performance to other times and places.

Gathering Our Stories: Indexing Distant Spaces, Tracing Mobile Materialities

"When we are young, the words are scattered all around us. As they are assembled by experience, so also are we, sentence by sentence, until the story takes shape." - Louise Erdrich

It seems that words are scattered all around us throughout our lives, in a never ending process of being gathered, amassed, assembled through our experiences in the world and then dispersed again as we pass those experiences on to others through our interactions with them. Yet, it is not only by assembling *words* that we create our life stories as individual and collective beings. Our experiences of places and objects, sensory perceptions, bodily movements, notions of personhood and diverse ways of being in the world are some of the other equally important resources with which we assemble ourselves as living and breathing stories. In a very real sense, "I" and "we," as physical, emotional and social beings, are constantly emerging not only as stories in the realm of spoken language, but also as embodied and spatialized stories whose contours give shape to, and are given shape by, our affective and sensory engagements of physical and social landscapes.

As with language, physical and social lifescapes are complex and constantly emerging assemblages of cultural and historical concepts and practices. When we drive a car, plant and tend a garden, dance, cook a meal, or choose which clothes to

wear to work, we are embodying the underlying cultural concepts and historical practices with which they are imbued.. As with language, their meanings and capacity for facilitating our own meaning-making efforts – processes of semiosis – are shaped and reshaped by the particular ways that we and others engage them. We enliven their contours by bringing to bear our own histories and experiences in ways that create, transform, challenge or give durability to their topographical dynamics. The material, social, spatial, and linguistic resources that we gather through the personal and collective experience of language, place and space – plucked out of their circulations through time and space – are at once utterly social in ways beyond our personal making and intensely subjective in terms of the way that we reassemble them into our own distinctive selves, places, and personal practices. All of the spaces – literal and conceptual – in and through which we live our lives are transformed by human interpretation and activity

I sit to write this account of my research in a house whose design and construction quite literally emerges from a confluence of centuries of local and global movements of people, ideas, objects, and ways of life. The particular ways that wood, glass, paint and other materials are gathered, coordinated and joisted together into the house and barn indexes the myriad ways that life in this small village on the coast of Maine is interconnected with global movements of cultural, economic, technological and political practices on a continuum of past to present. The fields, gardens, ponds and forest have morphed over time in ways that signify shifting interrelations of animals, climate, natural resources and human activity.

The stories about how different sections of the house were build over the first few decades of its existence index the nature of family, kin and community relationships in the late-eighteen hundreds, and their access to resources based on class and economic structures of the time.

Captain King and his wife, who were pivotal in the construction of the house as it now stands, were merchant sailors who traveled around the globe together in the late nineteenth century. She was ultimately renowned for her skill as a sailor, being credited at least once for guiding a ship nearly sunk in a storm to safety. Her husband was also known for his skill as was as a ship's captain. Their relationship and lives together are embodied in the way that this house, the photographs of its physical emergence and the people who lived here, the historical narratives about the place and the surrounding landscape are configured. This material discourse indexes not only locally constituted ideas about family, gender and marriage but also the broader trajectories and interconnections in which they are situated and shaped by the rapid expansion of western European global trade and commerce starting in the sixteenth century, the later emergence of modernity and the nation-state, and the powerful social and economic movements that shape the world today.

This material discourse is further elaborated by, for example: personal, local, and national identity narratives; relations between Native American European colonizers and their descendants; personal letters and photographs found hidden in the barn that illuminate the emergent contours of this space as source of sustenance

farming to a market commodity over the course of three centuries; local, regional and international public documents and publications that enrich the story of this space in relation to centuries of expanding colonial and national economic trade due to increasingly sophisticated ship-building and navigation technologies. Even the gravestones in the town graveyard are coordinates in the topographies of this space, telling stories of the sacrifices to distant seas made by young men looking for income when local economies in fishing collapsed. The increasing silt in the once deep and free flowing river entering the bay at the end of the point indexes particular cultural concepts about the relationship of humans with the natural world and the practices that they engendered over the course of several centuries: early colonial practices of stripping the forest of every living plant and animal; years of intense over-fishing in the local bay leading to the need to sail to more distant and dangerous waters to find food; the vibrant ship-building industries of the nineteenth century through which this small locale became intimately involved in global trade and conflict; contemporary struggles over ecological restoration and preservation versus public access to, and use of, ocean and shorefronts resources.

This space is also constituted by the particular ways that speech and discourse are woven together with its material features. When someone in town says to me, “Oh, you live in the old King place,” my local identity is simultaneously created and emplaced, situating me within a complex network of relationships linking here and there, then and now. I gather, arrange and narrate my own presence here as well, when I have dinner for friends and family or when I

embed my experiences in the narrative that I now write as a part of my research report. The book that the current owner researched and wrote about this house is a material narration that simultaneously delimits and makes transportable the interweaving of physical and linguisitic features of this place. The photographs of the previous versions of the house, and its expansion over the centuries, not only journals its life story but also actively assert its identity as a form of spatializing practice.

As with language, the physicality of space, movement and sensory experience are contoured with cultural beliefs, personal and political ideologies, multiple historical trajectories and shifting interconnections between the ongoing activities of its human participants and its non-human “actors”: natural landscapes, stones, trees, water, animals, ocean effects, climate patterns, and so on. The organization of its conceptual and physical contours signify its enmeshment within vast invisible networks of distant people, times and places in a way that makes these interconnections, to a greater or lesser degree, *present*. Therefore, my presence here situates me within these webs of interconnections of which the material, linguistic and social topographies of which this space is comprised. As I engage this space, I literally embody the echoes of others’ stories emplaced in its physicality and at least potentially use my experience within it for the assemblage of my-self as an embodied story. I also participate in its reproduction in ways that may transform or alter its local characteristics and interconnections with other places and people. Therefore, this ‘space’ in which I write is not a clearly bounded

container, nor is it static, passive, inert or mere background to human experience. It is a constantly emerging interweaving of material and meaning.

Cultural geographers, in general, and those deploying concepts from ANT, in particular, emphasize the embodied, sensory nature of the relationship between people and places. Landscapes, the arrangements of objects upon or in them, and particular physical configurations Considering the processes by which the various elements of any place or space have been assembled, it is possible to see how walking along the seashore is an embodied form of self-narration (Wylie 2005) and the act of gardening a performance of cultural worlds (Longhurst 2006). Private English gardens are, in fact, relational spaces linking sensory experience, networks of material and cultural relations embedded there, and a certain acquiescence to the needs of plants whose survival forces the gardener to water and feed them (Hitchings 2003). Living and moving in-place is a fundamental experience by which belonging and identity are mediated (Morley 2001), emotional affect and memory embodied (Millington 2005; Hoelscher and Alderman 2004) and the "sensibilities" of everyday, well, made sensible (Harrison 2000). The performance of space as a narrative and material embodiment of movement, is an assemblage of "knowledge, artifacts and human agents (Turnbull 2002:125)." The nexus of place and person, enacted through bodily movement, reveals how "knowledge is constructed as a spatialized narrative(s) of human actions and artifacts are a material form of those spatial narratives."

Given ongoing scholarly debates about the definition of "space" and "place," I will align my work with Munn's (2004) concept of place as "a meaningful, concrete locale with distinctive features and qualities, invested with different layers and kinds of identities…a stretch of habitable space within which persons (and other entities) can "be" or to and from which they can come and go." She emphasizes that places are not static and bounded, but rather "significant, meaningful forms in process" shaped by "people's actions, expectations, pasts and sense of their pasts," which are, of course, linked to particular cultural and social contexts of experience.

Gathering Diversity

My bag is full of flutes: some from Bolivia, Java, Hawaii, Africa, Japan Europe, Australia, and from Turtle Island. Which is your favorite, Which has the sweetest voice?
Some are long and dark, some wide, some mottled.
Still others have been broken, working differently than originally intended.
There are light colored, short, bristly voiced and smooth, high pitched ones.
Which is the most important…
Each brings an enriching quality that add Fullness to my flute bag[4].

Figure 8: Hawk's bag of flutes

Many participants are gathered up in ways consonant with my own story…traveling in cross-cutting currents of consonant spaces where differences are

also highlighted. Like some other participants, my role in the Harvest Gathering has transformed over the years, although my transformation has been somewhat more pronounced than for most. My initial desire to participate in the Harvest Gathering, and later decision to formally research it, grows out of my long-time interest in the communicative challenges and creative potentials inherent within direct interactions between strangers and/or people whose referential worlds are grounded in spaces of difference. I am especially interested in the ways that verbal and non-verbal forms of communicative practice are deployed and transformed when interactants share limited taken-for-granted options for communication.

I first met Hawk and his family several years before pursuing anthropology as a vocation. At the time, I worked as a registered nurse in inner-city, low income neighborhoods of Boston. I carried out my practice in the homes and community settings where my patients lived, most of whom lived just ‘over the hill’ from several world-renowned Harvard teaching hospitals and in the “projects” that filled the spaces lying between clusters of other world-renowned university teaching hospitals. Most lived in abject poverty and many in dire social conditions. Most of the people with whom I worked were of African American descent, and immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean, and, to a lesser extent, parts of Asia (primarily Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia).

Although a representative and practitioner of “Western” biomedical practices and perspectives, much of my work was geared toward cultural mediation between physicians and the sometimes starkly different perspectives that my

patients held of the body and its place within cultural beliefs and social organizations. This work presented a profound personal and communicative challenge, to say the least. I had to learn to meet the people with whom I worked on *their* ground, in *their* spaces – cultural, sensory and social landscapes that were profoundly different from those in which I had traveled most of my life. I had to be more than a 'visitor' by earning my place within their homes and on their streets, allowed to move among the social networks and family configurations in which they moved – despite being highly marked, by many, as someone not only different, but assumed to be a member of the racial and social classes which had caused the poverty and discrimination with which many of them struggled.

As the years went by, I experienced this endeavor as a two-sided effort – to acknowledge my place of difference while working toward building 'common ground'; that is, building mutual orientation and communicative spaces. I discovered that much of this work occurred in non-verbal ways, during direct engagement of people and their spaces. Bodily movements, gestures, the use of objects, sensory experiences, the ways that rooms and spaces organized our interactive stances, shared social practices, and so on, seemed to provide the most fertile tools for co-creating mutually acceptable endeavors. I started to seek out others who shared my deepening interest in these issues of human diversity and communicative experience, particularly as it emerges through direct interaction.

I grew up in a wealthy, primarily Euro-American town west of Boston whose homes, rivers, bridges, roads, and physical and discursive landscapes

literally embody a central narrative in English colonialism and the American Revolution. Needless to say, my experiences in Boston caused a deep shift in my view of colonial histories and their contemporary trajectories along racial, economic and political lines. It ultimately led to my view that colonialism has not, in fact, ended. Over time, I learned that many of my Native friends and colleagues share this view.

These experiences compelled my initial interest in pursuing invitations from Native people to participate in their intercultural events, some of whom were in the Boston area having moved from their home communities in Maine and the Canadian Maritimes. Others were individuals from the southeastern and western United States who I met rather serendipitously through other friends. I began traveling to Maine on a fairly regular basis, to participate in private home-based Gatherings of Native and non-Native people. As with the Henries' version of the Harvest Gathering, we camped out together for four days, sharing social, ceremonial and other activities. Unlike the Harvest Gathering, the broad purpose of most of these events was to raise awareness among non-Native people about Native history, culture and struggles through shared activities reflecting Native sensibilities and social forms. Specifically, many of them were organized as a way to promote dialogue about the ongoing difficulties faced by Native people in Maine and the Canadian Maritimes emerging from colonialism. Over the course of a few years, I crossed paths with the Henries at several of these Gatherings, as well as at other cultural events throughout New England.

For years, the Henries knew me only as the “carrot soup lady.” Years later, I learned that I had earned this title when I brought my (now famous and in high demand!) carrot soup as my usual form of contribution to the Gatherings we both attended. Even when they first invited me to their Harvest Gathering, they didn’t know my name but by then, of course, we had talked many times about issues related to cultural diversity, inequitable systems of power, cross-cultural communication and so on. The Carrot Soup lady arrived to the first Gathering at the Henries’ home unnamed but connected through common interests …as do many newcomers even to this day. Over time, other interests deepened and broadened our sense of common “ground” – music, certain aesthetics of space, views on social and family responsibility, and so on. These discoveries and experiences of each other laid the groundwork for the increasing breadth of my responsibilities at the Gathering.

Figure 9: Henries' home in 2004

The Henries' house was built by a Dutch immigrant in the 1960's and stands on what had been an early colonial cross-road where European colonists and local Native peoples met to socialize and trade. When this man told the Henries about his vision for building the home, they knew that they had found the place they had envisioned for themselves. He wanted to "create a space where people from various cultures and religions and ideologies and so forth and so on – things that, like boxes – often kept people away from each other…(he wanted to build a place) where peoples would come, share time, share space, ceremony...", reports Hawk (April 2011 interview). The home's physicality embodies particular values regarding cross-cultural relations, emplaced along a direct trajectory with the colonial history of this place, and the particular cultural worlds that it indexes.

In keeping with the Henries' feeling of personal and cultural connection to this historical practice, they make their home a year-round way-station and nexus for visitors and travelers from all over the world, many of whom arrive unannounced. Guests are treated with utmost respect and care; this value also organizes the way that the physical and social spaces of the Harvest Gathering ultimately emerge as dynamic topographies through which participants discover – or create – the resources with which to experience the stories of others whose life-worlds may be very different from their own.

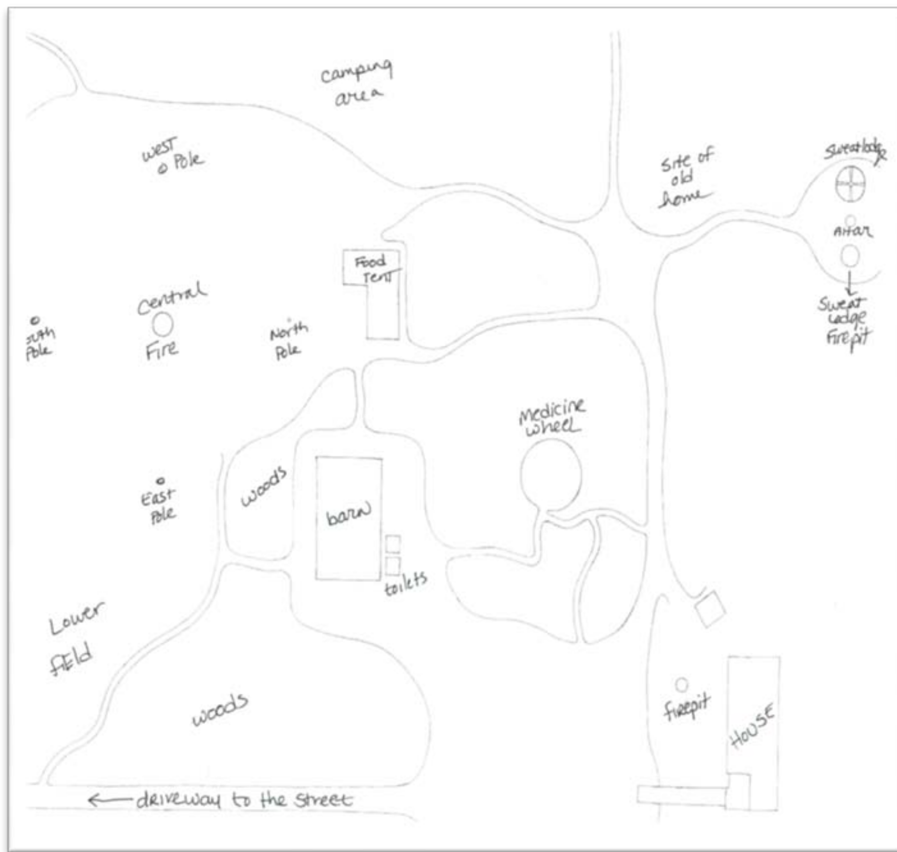

Figure 10: Map of Gathering grounds

The grounds of the Gathering span about five acres of boreal and temperate forest rising from the underlying boulders and bedrock carved by the retreat of glaciers millennia ago. Two prominent features of the landscape trace the Gathering's historical trajectory as a cultural crossroad: its pathways and circles. They situate individuals in reference to each other, the spaces of interaction, and the objects used in the conduct of social and ceremonial engagements. They create interconnections and coordinates for bodily movement, speech, and sensory experiences that emphasize the spatial embodiment of mutual care, respect for differences and group orientation.

Circles emplace individuals in reference to each other, the spaces of interaction, and the objects used in the conduct of social and ritual engagements, creating a literal orientation in which all individuals are to some degree face-to-face with all others during structured interactions. The general landscape situates bodies in circular relations even when individuals are not engaged directly in structured activities. Speech, song, and movement is shaped by circular motion; stories and narratives thus often take on thematic and literal circularity as individuals situated in circles share histories, concepts, and beliefs.

Figure 11: Pathway to the Sweatlodge

All ceremonial, social and living spaces are linked by the multiple pathways that also connect the fields, woods, and streams. Along these paths, throughout the year as well as during the Harvest Gathering each year, various activities and objects mark animal environments, ceremonial locations, or other areas requiring heightened care and respect. For example, a very old and large anthill at the foot of the main path to one of the ceremonial circles is circumscribed by short sticks placed in the ground and tied together with red yarn, preventing humans from

accidentally disturbing the ants. Ceremonial and social spaces are permanently marked by objects placed there by past participants, and so on.

There are three expressly ceremonial spaces: the Central Fire, the Sweatlodge and the Medicine Wheel. These spaces (all of which are tended to and may be used for various personal, small-group or calendrical ceremonies throughout the year) are each marked by a circular altar or fire pit at their centers, thereby incorporating the sites permanently within the landscape. The pit for the Central Fire, located at the center of the grounds and serving as the spiritual, energetic, and social center of the Gathering, is marked with stones lying in the shape of a turtle. The tops of the stones are flat and in 2005, for the first time, were painted with sacred symbols from cultures all around the world (an artistic and personal contribution from Sierra). Four birch poles about fifteen feet high and topped respectively with red, yellow, white, and black cloth are placed in each of the four cardinal directions, about 20 feet away from the Central Fire. They mark a circular space within which people gather to dance, socialize, contemplate, or play music. This is also the site of a daily Talking Circle. The cooking fire and Food Tent, a very large covered outdoor kitchen and food serving area, are about 35 feet from the Central Fire, up a small incline at the edge of the field and next to the barn.

Figure 12: Around the Central Fire, 2010

From the perspective of the Central Fire, the Medicine Wheel is just beyond the barn, and a bit further up the hill in the woods. Private or family ceremonials occur at this site several times throughout the year, as does a 'waking' ceremony at the spring equinox. Buddhist prayer flags hang over the entrance of the path leading from the Central Fire to the Wheel. The 'Wheel' is actually a small circular natural opening in the woods that has been demarcated at its borders with prayer ties (small pieces of cloth filled with tobacco) while making specific prayers. The center has been transformed into an altar on the ground surrounded by a small circular walkway along which ritual participants tread. Participants enter this Circle through two trees standing in the east-facing opening, walk sunwise around the altar, and depart via the eastern "door."

Figure 13: Looking through the East Door into the Medicine Wheel

Each person is encouraged to leave an object of personal significance on the altar, where they will stay until or if an animal, the weather or wind take them, or time wears them into the earth. At any given time, there is a menagerie of objects: plastic flip-flops, statues and carvings, works of art, stones and crystals, papers, air flight tickets, books, keys, toys, notes and symbols written on wood or paper.

The Sweatlodge inhabits the ceremonial space furthest from the Central Fire. Surrounded by high sandy cliffs and originally used a gravel pit, the circular space has been overtly resignified as a circle of meaning in which Lodge ceremonies take place. Entrance to the area is marked by interwoven beech and birch tree limbs with hanging colored ribbons overhanging the path like a doorway. Once 'inside,' one sees the women's changing area immediately to the right and the men's immediately to the left. The Lodge itself is a little past the changing areas, to the left, with a small dirt mound just in front of it, and the main fire pit is about ten feet further to the right, all in a straight line.

The Sweatlodge itself is a small half-dome structure built of intertwined birch saplings that looks rather like an upside down bowl. It is covered with canvas and cloth to create total darkness inside. A flap creates a door that faces east toward the fire pit where a small mountain of large rocks will be heated to red hot. The small dirt mound in front of the Lodge is actually an altar – like the Lodge itself, it is in the shape of a half-dome. Participants will place various objects there for the duration of the ceremony – objects that bless, and are blessed by, the energy generated while people are in the Lodge during the ceremony. The door, altar and fire pit create an energetic pathway that ‘feeds’ people who participate in the Sweatlodge ceremony; thus, the space between the lodge and altar is not to be crossed once the ceremony starts.

The Harvest Gathering Event

> Common humanity, when I think of it, doesn’t mean that we’re all the same. Our culture can limit how it is that we see ourselves, even when we’re physically out of its usual context. Whether it’s conscious or unconscious, it’s a safe place because it’s what we’re familiar with – we think we know it, so we’re comfortable with it. We might be physically in another space or place, but we carry that box with us. Common humanity allows us to see outside of that box. ~ Hawk

Each day, there are planned social and ceremonial activities in which attendees may choose to participate, or not. There is no pressure or sanction related to participation, nor are there any restrictions on who may participate. “Everyone is invited to everything and no one has to participate in anything,” says Lisa. There unstructured times meant to encourage rest, reflection, family time or pursuit of spontaneous social interactions, for example. People are encouraged to share

everyday activities like cooking, cleaning, carrying wood, and child care as a way to both experience each other directly and lend their own unique identity practices to the Gathering writ large. Although narrative, conversation, storytelling, sharing jokes, and other verbal activities are an important part of creating opportunities for interaction, non-verbal aspects of shared experience are also highlighted: the use and exchange of objects with multiple transient and durable meanings of objects; movement and the particular ways that individuals are positioned in space relative to each other and the physical landscape; music and sound; color and smell; activities that heighten particular kinds of sensory experience; silence; music; and so on. Activities are intentionally organized to vary between structured and spontaneous and to juxtapose verbal and non-verbal.

Still, there has been relative continuity over time. Talking Circles occur at the beginning and end of the Gathering as well as once each day. The Sweatlodge Ceremony occurs at sunrise of the second day, and the Medicine Wheel occurs that evening. On the third day we begin the days with Harvest Feast preparations. While the food is cooking we share the Giveaway Ceremony and end the day by sharing the Feast. Day four brings the final Talking Circle and "closing" of the Central Fire, ending of the formal communal structure of the Harvest Gathering. However, many people continue to socialize for the rest of the day and stay on for another day or two to help with clean-up.

Events are not strictly scheduled for particular times. A bell will be rung 15 minutes before the beginning of events and again just as they are start. The following is excerpted from the 2010 information flyer:

Friday

- Opening the Central Fire: afternoon
- Potluck Dinner: large entrée /dessert.
- <u>Sweatlodge Talking Circle</u>: Please join us even if you are not participating in the lodge.

Saturday

- <u>Sweatlodge Ceremony</u>: Others can take supportive roles or participate by gathering by the fire.
- Early morning prayer
- AM activities TBA
- Communal Lunch(fruit,finger foods, sandwiches, meats, salads, juices)
- Spaghetti Supper (bring spaghetti sauce and/or: hamburger, sausage, salad, bread, dessert, etc. Vegetarian sauce will also be available
- <u>Medicine Wheel Ceremony</u>

Sunday

- Communal Breakfast (bacon, sausage, eggs, biscuits, etc., & Lisa's famous oatmeal)
- <u>Harvest Feast</u> (communally prepared meal of corn chowder and vegetable soup. Please bring lots of fresh veggies, meat, breads, etc.)
- <u>Giveaway Ceremony</u>
- Sharing around the Central Fire

Monday

- Breakfast
- <u>Talking Circle</u>
- Closing prayer
- Clean up: We need and greatly appreciate your help cleaning up!! ☺

Figure 14: Food Tent and Red Spirit Chair

One major rite occurs each day; they are the most highly ‘marked’ of all shared activities, both sensorily and socially. The degree to which they are marked discursively, however, varies dramatically. For example, because there is a Talking Circles every day, they provide a broad structure to the overall event as well as an opportunity highlight discourse – in conjunction with body and space – as a way to try to create continuity of purpose and common understanding. On the other end of this continuum is the Sweatlodge ceremony, wherein silence, darkness, physical discomfort and non-linguistic sounds are the key features of the experiential topography.

While the Medicine Wheel and Sweatlodge rites are conducted in highly specialized places that are used only for related ceremonial purposes, the Harvest Feast and Giveaway occur in spaces that are also used for other types of ceremonies as well as everyday activities. This difference in the use of spaces indexes and embodies different semiotic goals, although together are meant to facilitate the emergence of common ground. The Feast and Giveaway ceremonies, for example, expressly seek to celebrate personal and cultural difference as the foundation for social wealth and well-being, while the Sweatlodge and Medicine Wheel are more directly focused on creating opportunities to experience commonalities of the human experience.

Although each year the specific order of both ritualized and unstructured events may shift a bit depending on the situational needs of the community, they generally follow a similar order from year to year. Event structures and sequences

are also changed at times for both short term and long term needs of the local community as well as attendees because of travel distances, illnesses, family crises, and so on. For example, the timing and structure of the Medicine Wheel was changed a couple of years ago. For several years, it took the form of an elaborated talking circle, each person taking a turn to tell the story of the object they had brought to place in the center of the Wheel. Due to what was initially seen as a practical decision, it was changed into a silent group ceremony in order to accommodate the large number of people who typically participate. This had a profound impact on the Gathering as a whole and the Giveaway ceremony in particular in ways unanticipated, seemingly arbitrary, but interpreted as deeply meaningful. I will elaborate more on this and other changes, in later chapters.

Changes in event structure are done by consensus, if at all possible, usually within what is called the “core” group – those of us most directly involved in organizing the Gathering. There is a formal talking circle a month or more in advance of the actual start of the event as well as another circle shortly after the event ends are where most of the changes, year to year, are decided upon. However, others are included whenever circumstance, desire, inspiration or need demands. In addition, there is a relatively informal talking circle held at the end of each year’s event shortly after the ceremonial closing of the Central Fire. Everyone who is still there at that point is invited to participate to discuss how the Gathering went that year, what needs improvement or change, and to share general feedback. Although it is rare that major changes in the structure of the Gathering are made during this

circle, suggestions do sometimes lead to major changes once the ideas have received more thought and discussion. Sometimes a potential change is discussed for many months or years; sometimes it is done on the fly. If the need for change emerges spontaneously during the Gathering itself, we make an effort to do so by consensus if at all possible. Along the same continuum, we make an effort to resist typical notions of "leader" or the "leadership" typical of hierarchical or exclusionary notions of social power that the Henries link to contemporary society here in the "West." One exception is when the safety of participants is prioritized and the skills of a seasoned "leaders" are central to creating a safe experience for novices (for example, in the Sweatlodge).

Many events throughout the year are seen as being a part of the Harvest Gathering. Material, symbolic, and social preparations shape its material and semiotic contours. The Gathering is linked to the Winter Solstice Gathering during which a Candle ceremony takes place in the Medicine Wheel. It also is linked to large social occasions as well as important celestial cycles or occurrences. People speak about it regularly throughout the year. The core group meets for supper cooked on the fire circle in front of the house to discuss what needs to be done and Detailed shopping and 'things-to-do' lists are updated and discussed in detail fully six weeks before the actual Gathering begins. Shopping tasks, requiring some long-distant travel, are shared by nearby community members, as are the substantial cleaning, laundering, and wood-hauling chores that need to be done.

Preparations for the Harvest Gathering reach a pitched intensity in the two weeks prior to the first day of the Gathering. At that time, a few participants who live far away and many local community members arrive to do the 'prep' work or to feed and water those who are doing the heavier labor. Participants clear and prepare paths and campsites, ready the bathing and washing areas by the stream, and carefully gather stones from the woods for use in the Sweatlodge ceremony. Others ensure that the houses and barns are cleaned thoroughly and erect the outside changing and showering areas as well as outdoor altars in various places throughout the landscape. Buckets of sheets, blankets and pillows must be laundered and organized, the communal outdoor kitchen and eating areas must be safely constructed, and any repairs – both expected and unexpected – to ceremonial structures must be completed. This year, the refrigerator was moved from the barn into the food tent, requiring a back-breaking journey of about a hundred feet down a heavily root-strewn path.

Some of the other tasks focus on preparing the ceremonial spaces. For example, the Sweatlodge is comprised of several 'areas' within the ceremonial space: the Lodge itself; the pathway from its East Door to the Altar about four feet away; a small pit in its center of the Lodge that holds the hot rocks for the ceremony itself; the fire pit in which the stones for the ceremony are heated; the small pathway outside and around the Lodge (so that people can always avoid crossing the pathways connecting the Lodge to the Altar during the ceremony); and women's and men's areas nearby for changing. Each area must be meticulously

cleaned of forest debris; the two pits must be completely cleared of pieces of stones from previous ceremonies; prayer ties must be repaired or replaced[5]; and the entire area must be raked – including the pathway connecting this area to the Central Fire. This is an important space to prepare, symbolically and intentionally, particularly for those who are newcomers to this type of ceremony. Newcomers are specifically acknowledged as having special importance because they bring vitality and new potential for building unique individual and social identifications. They are encouraged to ask questions of any kind, at any time, and are not infrequently invited to take the lead in some aspects of particular rites. While helping to prepare the Sweatlodge area, important spoken and embodied information is exchanged that, in profound ways, sets the tone for the entirety of the Gathering as an event.

During these preparations, participants are encouraged to discuss their understandings of the significance of these activities and their importance to the creation of a space that is welcoming and safe for the work of sharing and transformation. Conscious intention or reflexive consciousness (that is, maintaining clear attention to one's thoughts and feelings while conducting these activities) is considered to be an essential responsibility – a necessary component, in fact, of the general process of preparation. We have often heard discussions, for example, about transforming one's own bodily pain (often a consequence of the rigors of preparing the grounds) into an identification with others who suffer, both as a means of personal healing through social empathy and as a kind of proxy healing for the objects of this empathy. Of course, throughout the Gathering

personal narratives, life histories, jokes and laughter infuse conversations as people cook and eat, tackle a task together, or merely pass en route through the woods and converse. One hears voices and sees last year's prayer flags drifting with the breezes. The smell of pine and moss mixes with that of wood smoke or pipe tobacco near the barn or Sweatlodge. Individuals bring unusual rocks and other objects found in the woods to the attention of the group and, with an accompanying story about how and where the object was found, give purpose and meaning to the object for the Gathering itself.

Although not part of highly marked rites, these activities mark relations between the individuals, their bodies, and the spaces in which they interact. As individuals mark pathways and circles with stones, or 'unmark' them by cleaning away the branches that fell in a storm the previous winter while they were in their homes far away, they signal myriad temporal and spatial relations. When the rocks are gathered for the Sweatlodge and hauled to the appropriate fire pit or when incoming food contributions prompt the group to re-organize storage space to accommodate, participants are ritualizing – marking – social and spatial relations while simultaneously marking their part in place-making. Through these types of activities, participants contribute to, and become a part of, the locality in highly differential and yet communally oriented ways.

Thus, activities that take place within historical, social and natural landscapes throughout the year (and through the myriad physical worlds of participants) initiate a sort of anticipatory sense of locality that, in turn, becomes

contextualized first by those who participate in the preparatory activities as the Gathering nears and further still by the events of the Gathering itself. These interwoven contexts become phenomenally and materially extant as bodily selves interact with each other and the local landscapes, consistently creating an existential space from corporeal place (Weiner 2001). Preparation activities, embedded in the specific relational and contextual social formations linked to the local community and landscape, have a "complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity and the relativity of contexts," constituted in terms of particular forms of intentional activities carried out by a socially defined community (Appadurai 1995: 204, 208). Through their participation in these activities, individuals not only make potentially unique contributions to the reproduction of the locality but also become, to a greater or lesser degree, local subjects who embody and transport aspects of the social space of the Gathering to their distant homes.

Place-making occurs in territorially-embedded, historicized worlds, built of locally constituted sensory experiences and systems of meaning, all of which anchor the various markers of self- and community-identity in real events (Auge 1995; Olwig 2003; Feld 1996; Escobar 2003). Thus, place is especially important to understanding the "near-view of lived experience" (Gupta and Ferguson 2002: 70) and central to the processes by which global flows are localized and local knowledges and practices are disseminated spatially and temporally (Korff 2003;

Dirlik 2001). In addition, the emplacement of bodies and objects as well as the enactment of memories and stories upon landscapes tangibly marks one's belonging to and participation in the constitution of a place (Casey 1996: 24; Kahn 1996: 180). As the Gathering demonstrates, multi-focal place-identities may emerge as social actors travel to and experience various spatial practices during their time there, practices that are imbued with locally salient identity concepts, practices, signifiers, and resources (Peters 1997).

As the Gathering unfolds in real time, there are moments that erupt with sometime startling and profound feelings of individual or group connection. In virtually every in-depth interview that I conducted, participants identify the Gathering as a place where they felt welcomed and safe to "be myself." This, no doubt, helps to account for the sometimes startling and extraordinarily profound, personal exchanges between virtual strangers that can occur even in the most "public" – that is, out in the open of daylight – rituals. Although this kind of exchange is not the express goal of the Gathering, it does, when it occurs, create interconnections between people from different ways of life that might not otherwise occur.

Of course, there are also times of extreme fractional discomfort whose negotiation requires intense and reflexive effort. These negotiations are not always successful, as participants' differences sometimes create conflict, offense or misunderstanding. Various spontaneous and reflexive efforts are woven into the strategies that emerge in response both to times of consonance and dissonance.

Perhaps the most fundamental of these is the emphasis on welcoming diverse perspectives by making sure that there are ambiguous spaces wherein differing points of view can become a part of the experience of the Gathering. Hawk says of conflict:

> A part of what it is that I'm trying to understand is conflict and the nature of conflict, what that's about and what its job is. And, ya know…I used to be of the mindset that peace was the absence of conflict…when a seed is pushing its way through the ground, there's resistance from the ground, there's something that we could call conflict. When I look at birds, ya know, and all of their beauty and all of the incredible things that they do, um, I see conflict when a chickadee gets snatched by a hawk, or a different bird of prey. When water is bashing against rocks, ya know, I see resistance or what we could call conflict. So I'm trying to understand this idea of peace and conflict and how they're two different sides maybe of the side coin. What is the nature of conflict and how is it that we can, we can embrace it so that it becomes part of this concept of peace? So that we can feel it, so we can, our senses can feel it. ~ Hawk

Figure 15: North Atlantic Sea

One of the most important ways that the Henries endeavor to create ambiguity is through their emphatic refusal to identify the Gathering as a "Native" event. There are a few issues being embodied here. Its status as a "not Native" event distinguishes it from other kinds of events and practices that are

unequivocally an expression of cultural life of Native communities. Still, Hawk is Nipmuc and recognized publically in many Native communities and institutions of Native culture as being “Native.” There are, in fact, several features of the Gathering, most visibly that of the sweatlodge ceremony, that are clearly connected to Native life, as he and other Native and Indigenous peoples at the Gathering have recognized. Other Native participants have had varying reactions, positive and negative. In the earlier years especially, there were some Native participants who struggled with what they viewed as a “mix” of identity practices. Others have not experienced it as a “mix” but as a sharing of certain practices grounded in Native cultural histories and perspectives. One such person, a Penobscot-Maliseet man who is a ceremonial leader in his community, has become an important part of the Gathering as a participant and as someone who encourages other Wabanaki people to attend.

Some non-Native individuals have expressed disappointment, thinking that the Gathering was not “really” Native, although they realized they had not been told, when thinking about it retrospect, that this would be a “Native” gathering. I found it interesting that almost every person I interviewed spontaneously jumped into one sort of discourse or another about “Native” people or culture, either in direct relationship to the Gathering itself, or as a general topic. The question about the Gathering’s identity will, no doubt, continue to receive attention for some time to come although I have noticed that in the past few years, since 2010 in particular, more Native people from more groups attend and that they seem quite comfortable.

The reason that this is important is the same reason given for all participants – to create an ephemeral, in-situ community where people from different ways of life can feel welcomed and safe sharing time and interaction.

Sometimes, a serendipitous and completely spontaneous consonance in the diversity sometimes emerges, such as the "Buddhist" year, as we now call it, when many attendees happened to be practicing Buddhists from a variety of cultures and traditions. The literal and figurative landscapes of the Gathering that year shifted in particular and unique ways; a stronger than usual focus on meditative activities and the use of silence emerged, and mandala-shaped patterns of objects and colors marked many of the communal interactions in ways unique to that year, for example. Yet, even this broad consonance provoked some conflict over differences in the particulars of engagement. Lisa later observed:

> At one gathering here, a Native elder complained that there were people who walked into the Medicine Wheel with bare feet or who didn't have on skirts. But I knew that the people who walked in barefoot were Buddhist, and they took off their shoes before walking into a sacred space. We don't want to impose what traditions people might choose to follow. If your tradition is to take off your shoes and walk in, then that's your tradition. ~ Lisa, 2009 (referring to the 2006 Gathering)

Gathering Information

"Data, data, data, I cannot work without data." - Sherlock Holmes

The broad intent of the Harvest Gathering has remained the same throughout the course of its life: to create and hold a space that provides the tools with which people from different walks of life can share and ratify their differences through the construction of common ground. This is one sense of the community engendered at

the Gathering: constructed in situ, highly localized, ephemeral. Another sense of this community is built upon the network of interconnections through which individuals come to participate: social, economic and artistic chains of events; networks of transportation and communication technologies. It was extremely challenging to figure out how to research an episodic event that is somewhat consistent but also fundamentally re-constructed each year. Of course, this is the fundamental quandary for many social science researchers in today's world. Many communities and the spatial practices through which they create and exchange markers of their collective life are built by people living in geographically and culturally different places whose direct interaction is episodic or, in the case of online communities, non-existent.

The Henries and I, and other regular participants, could see and feel the intimacy that happens every year – but how does it happen? More importantly, how do I, as a participant researcher, go about collecting the right data from people who scatter to the four winds at the end of the event? I am fortunate to have had the Henries' approval and sincere interest in sharing my quest for a deeper understanding of the whys and wherefores of how the Gathering does what it does. We have been in a flow of conversation, reflection, questioning and brainstorming about my work as a researcher ever since the official opening of my role, as such, in 2003, when I received Internal Review Board approval for the project.

In addition to the challenge episodic events and long-distance travel, the Harvest Gathering presents some other challenges. First, putting my researcher hat

on *during* ceremonies is, with rare exceptions, verboten. Even during the less structured times and spaces, which are definitely treated as "public" and not restricted by any expectation of privacy, I felt the need to maintain a strict consideration for the integrity of the spirit of the Gathering itself. There are two fundamental issues here. The first is related to privacy and respect. The second flows from the first: paying full attention and listening to others is the definition of respect in this setting (and everywhere else, one could argue!). Of course, participants often tell me that it is during one ceremony of another when they experience the most powerful transformations in the kinds of interconnections that I am most interested in understanding! Writing field notes certainly helped make up the distance here, a bit, but even those have to be used with discretion lest I share information I have no right to share or expose individuals who are not directly involved in my research. It was virtually impossible to consent every single person every single time without seriously disrupting the comfort and safety that is of the utmost importance in the construction and flow of the Gathering. Thus, field notes are more of a way for me to remember details, the general feeling of how things went and, in a few cases, to provide some context for the in-depth interviews.

Second, along the same line, I am one of the two fire-keepers for the Sweatlodge, a role I have inhabited every year since 2005 after I moved to Maine following the completion of my coursework, and other obligations, on campus in Oklahoma. I have had many good laughs at myself, in this split capacity:

> My legs are singed with the heat of the Fire. It seems worse this year than usual, maybe a cosmic slap for nearly setting the forest on fire this morning

> by using too much pine and not making sure the hose was turned on before we did the lighting ceremony!! My attention is focused one-hundred percent on the safety and well-being of everyone inside. Susa is at the Door, doing the same work. There has been a lot of wailing and grieving inside this year, we have blown smoke on the lodge several times to try to give plenty of support and ground the occasionally extreme energy inside. Folks in the south struggling the most, I feel…not sure who ended up there, not really important. But, I had a good laugh at myself in the midst of all this! I realize that one-half of my brain is thinking, "dang, that would be great to put in the dissertation, a perfect example of what I'm interested in talking about," while the other half of my brain is saying, "HELL no. You know better than that! This information is going exactly nowhere except where it belongs – into the prayers!" Hahahaha! (Field notes, 2008)

In addition, with the exception of a small group of people who predictably attend every year, I had no way of knowing for certain if any given participant planned to return, making it nearly impossible to count on obtaining the broader perspectives and insights inevitable with multiple experiences – although, fortunately, this seemed to work out of its own accord. Thinking in terms of the broad networks from which many participants initially make contact with the Henries, I conducted the in-depth interviews at peoples' homes, whenever possible. I also collected audio recordings of several of the talking circles held at the Gathering each year after its official close on Monday, audio recordings of several pre- and post-Gathering meetings with the core group (including me), photographs taken by other participants to get their visual points of view, a video recording of one ceremony, and, of course, notes from my own participation.

I decided to obtain in-depth follow up interviews from people who appeared to have had an especially intense experience in the Giveaway or from people who were involved in the movement of an object whose story received marked reactions

from the group at large. I also made an effort to interview some newcomers and people who have been a part of the Gathering from the beginning, including a couple of people who literally grew up there. I also interviewed a few people for whom this *type* of experience was either totally novel or very similar to other experiences they have had. I did multiple interviews with a few people for whom the Gathering was life changing. Because I chose to travel to their homes to interview people face-to-face whenever possible, practical considerations also played a big role.

I did not make an effort to collect a "representative" sample based on self-declarations about race, gender, socio-economic class and so on. I did make an effort to interview people whose self-identification reflected the theme that emerged spontaneously each year – the Buddha, Death, Africa, Native, Newcomer years. In conducting the interviews, I worked very hard to create an open-ended approach except to start with a short explanation of my general focus and a request that they start with a short autobiography of their upbringing, education, work, and so forth. As interviews progressed, I sometimes asked specific questions or, in some cases, I asked specifically for their assessment of particular aspects of the Gathering. In one case, particularly, I chose to slip out of my "researcher" self and into my hospice-self in response to Colleen's emotional struggle with processing the intense violence she had witnessed in her work in Central America in 2007. When reviewing the interviews, as well as the transcripts of the Talking Circles and pre/post meetings, I began with a general read through with a mind to identifying

themes, if any. I returned to them again for a more detailed examination of their narrative styles, focus, and links to the material and spaces practices to which they referred and then again for the sections I chose to quote here.

The Henries and I both find most interesting the fact that every year, regardless of who comes or how many people are there, communal orientation does emerge and is generally most evident at the Giveaway, which is now held on Sunday. Even when the other ceremonies leading up to it are emotionally intense, it has a more stable *feel*. By that time, people have been together for a few days and have shared two other major ceremonies where intensely personally exchanges have already occurred. The group has become cohesive. We think that the feeling of stability is one of the key reasons that the Giveaway is sometimes the most emotionally open – literally and figuratively – of all of the ceremonies. It is held during the day, in a circle around the Central Fire which also serves as an informal social space as compared to the enclosed darkness of the Sweatlodge and nighttime occurrence of the Medicine Wheel.

Audio and visual data is really the only way to gather the detailed ways that the land, bodies, objects and narratives come together at the Giveaway such that the scaffolding of interconnection becomes so visible. Audio recording is not unheard-of but is used only occasionally and only for the music jams that usually occur on Saturday night by the Central Fire. Photography is perhaps the only technology that is not discouraged during the Gathering except, of course, during ceremonies when it is strictly not allowed. Still, putting photographs online, for example, is

discouraged. Video recording is typically not allowed. Cell phones are urgently discouraged except for emergencies. Also, no radios, IPods, television or computers allowed. This ban of technology receives a great deal of attention and explanation. Face-to-face, undistracted interaction is the point of *this* time and place. And here was I, needing to violate this most fundamental principle of practice!

Needless to say, the Henries and I had many, many conversations about the pros and cons of recording a ceremony. On the one hand, we share a commitment to working together in cross-cultural settings and we could see the potential of my dissertation as a vehicle, in this regard. On the other, of course, is the need to respect individual participants' needs and desires in regards to their experience of the Gathering. In 2007, we decided to approach the group at the Gathering about allowing me to video the Giveaway ceremony. We decided to bring it up right from the get-go and again at every Talking Circle until the Giveaway. When it came time to talk about it for the first time, I was viscerally nervous and even fantasized about skipping it altogether to avoid discomfort. The Henries introduced the idea and verbalized their support for my project and trust in my integrity. I explained my urgent desire to be respectful and willingness to abort the mission if the group decided against it. I apologized to those who might choose not to participate because of the recording. The group agreed to allow it. There were a handful of people who did not participate, most notably, perhaps, two Native people in attendance, although a few Native folks did stay in the circle.

We set up the camera well outside the circle and ran the cables to microphones hidden in the potted mums that sat near the Fire. My brother, Chuck, helped me set up and we had a lot of laughs about the potted mums since we had both done theatre and film and live performance work in Boston and "potted mums" is a gloss for trying to hide microphones to get people to relax and act normally around them. Other folks with musical production experience also helped out with set up. It really became a group project. After all that, much of the audio was not recorded by the camera which caused a great deal of time and grief for me to sync the film and audio tracts later. It was also very strange for me to be outside the circle and the Henries were uncomfortable with my absence, as well. Still, the recording was an overall success as participants appeared to settle right in without any obvious discomfort. Overall, throughout the years, participants responded well to my work and were willing to be a part of it.

In the next chapter, I tell the origin story of the Gathering itself.

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[1] Excerpted from the online thesaurus at http://thesaurus.com/browse/gathering

[2] The Nipmuc are indigenous to what is now central Massachusetts, northeastern Connecticut and northwestern Rhode Island. There are two small reservations currently in Massachusetts: the Chaubunagungamaug band in Webster and the Nipmuc Nation in Grafton. Neither were successful in their bid for federal recognition via the Bureau of Indian Affairs but Nipmuc people were given state recognition in 1976. There are present-day Nipmuc communities in Rhode Island and Connecticut although neither state officially recognizes them. They are also recognized by other Native communities in the New England region and elsewhere as bearing cultural and historical legitimacy. From http://www.nipmucnation.org/history/historical-timeline.html, accessed 8/1/12.

[3] Based on self-identifications in follow-up, in-depth interviews with participants.

[4] Lyrics from Hawk Henries' CD entitled, "Keeping the Fire" (1999)

[5] Prayer ties are made by folding a pinch of loose tobacco into a small piece of colored cloth, which are then tied together into long strings. While creating a prayer tie, one is supposed to be

concentrating on prayers. The tobacco becomes infused with the prayer which is disseminated to other realms via wind, steam, or the presence of others praying.

Chapter 2: Origins of the Gathering

In the following section, I begin the project of tracing the materialization of the Harvest Gathering from its history. My goal is to outline the settings in which the Henries were ultimately motivated to create their own version of a Harvest Gathering, a socio-ceremonial practice broadly rooted in Native New England life generally and Nipmuc/k community practices particularly. In other words, this is a sort of Origin Story of the Harvest Gathering.

Its Origin Story is important because participants interweave their own stories with it when they exchange objects, stories and songs, or share embodied experiences of food and labor, and so on, with the fabric of the Gathering as a bounded event *and* as a fluid entanglement in broad panoramas of time and place. More specifically, they engage the deeper histories and broader flows of the Henries' life-long experiences, ways of knowing, and specific engagements of social and cosmologic worlds from which the Gathering was, and is, conceived and constructed.

The Origin Story of the Gathering also illuminates how its contours echo – resonate with – the settings from which the Henries identified and rendered meaningful the social and cosmologic values with which it is organized, and the place-making processes by which these ways of knowing were (and are) emplaced into its landscapes and forms of participation (Weiner 2001). Its Origin Story contextualizes the Gathering as a world that is *inhabited*, its materialities and meanings "woven from the strands of their coming-into-being (Ingold 2009: 29)".

This, in turn, foreshadows its construct as an indexical ground in and through which participants' engagements with objects, narratives, dances, particular features of the landscape, social and ceremonial activities, and so on, simultaneously embody two processes: the first is one of topogenesis, the creation of the place itself, in which intimacy and sentiment play a strong role (Fox 1997) and the situated negotiation anchors to the situated bounds of the event as well as the dendritic connections (Weiner 2001) by which it is also situated.

How and why did the Henries initially create the Harvest Gathering? How and where did they gather its various elements and the constellations of values that organize its forms of engagement? How did these thematic orientations morph into the embodied practices of the Gathering? That is, how did the Henries' place-making activities semiotically (re)organize and spatialize values and practices they experienced in other contexts? Within the answers to the questions, I see the indexical topographies of the Gathering, the living coordinates which are an amalgamate of objects, spaces, bodies, sounds and silence, narrative, and phenomenological sensory and physical landscapes by, and through, which participants in the Gathering ground mutual orientation (or not).

Although I find it useful to loosely structure this essentially biographically-driven section in more or less chronological order, these four trajectories of experience are not separated in any real-world sense: music and sound practices are embedded in culturally significant sensory worlds that help to organize key aspects of social and ceremonial interactions; in Nipmuc/k communities, as well as the

Henries' lives, ceremonial and artistic practices are critical components in the (re)constitution of traditional values; notions of personal sovereignty, communal belonging and respect are grounded in bodies and places; place-worlds, objects, animals, musical instruments, colors, landscapes, and so on, are infused with various sorts of animacy that, in turn, signifies cosmologic perspectives denoting life, itself, as a ceremony; the Henries' personal, social and cultural self-identifications are inextricably enmeshed in their artistic and day-to-day lives, and so on.

The Henries' personal life stories are the starting point for tracing the emergence of the sets of values that organize Hawk's musical practice, the Henries' home and spaces of their day-to-day lives, and the Harvest Gathering. Take together, they are pathways by which a variety of local and circulating elements come together and come into being as the indexical ground of the Gathering (Silverstein 1992; Duranti 1992).

Born in the mid-1950's, Hawk's earlier life intersected in timely and formative ways with important changes among Native American communities throughout the United States in general and the Nipmuc communities of which he is a member, in particular. Civil rights events of the 1960's, increasing media attention to American Indian[6] struggles for treaty rights and sovereignty, and the Pan-Indian cultural movement of the 1970's spurred powerful cultural revitalization efforts among many Native communities, including the Nipmuc and

other northeastern Algonquian with whom the Nipmuc are, and have always been, intimately related.

Hawk and his older sister were born in Providence, Rhode Island. When he was a year old, his parents divorced. ; After the divorce, his Mom moved with the two children out of the city to a home where they had a yard with apple and pear trees and a grapevine he wasn't to see his biological father again until he was seventeen. As he got older, he spent a lot of time in the backyard. "I would sit under [the grapevine] and eat grapes, sit in the tree and eat apples," gradually realizing over time that he felt most at home when he was in his yard visiting with the plants and animals. The birds, insects and other animals that inhabited or traveled through that space were, at first, nervous about his intrusion. They fled, not to return until he moved indoors and out of sight. But after awhile…they got familiar and they would come back. They would come and do what they had to do while I was just sitting there watching them and hanging out. And I knew that [there was] this connection…like a string between us, or a bond, or a relationship – I couldn't express what it was, but I knew that it was more than just the tree we were [both] sitting in. I knew that it was more than just the air we were breathing or the fruit that we were eating." He was especially intrigued by the way that many birds eventually related to him. Over time, he developed a feeling of deep connection with them and came to view them as teachers, among other things.

Figure 16: Flute saddle in the image of a Hawk.

Hawk's deepening sense of interconnection and respect for each creature's unique contribution to life, through this experience of life unfolding in the his back yard where he grew up, marked the beginning of what he calls a life-long commitment to exploring these ideas about interconnection and respect for difference defined as the *unique* – and therefore equally important – contribution that different aspects of Creation (as he now labels it) make. He also attributes this experience as the one that led him to prefer personal experience, book-learning or social expectations, as the way to acquire knowledge: "…and, like a majority of things in my life, I had to come to it, to avail myself of it. I haven't had, or taken, the opportunity to spend time with a lot of people who were willing to teach me stuff…like the flute stuff – I didn't have a physical person to teach me that."

These experiences, and the feelings and perspectives that grew from them, later compelled his search for outer cultural and social forms that could reflect his internal sense of the world, forms that could be the "language of the behavior that I

was looking for." The seeds planted in that back yard would eventually find a strong consonance with social and ceremonial forms that Hawk experiences in the Nipmuc and other Native communities, although not at first.

When he was around six years old, Hawk's mother married a jazz musician who plays organ and saxophone and performed with a band throughout the rest of Hawk's childhood. Music became a big part of Hawk's life on several levels. "There was always some kind of music going on in the house," either when the band was there rehearsing or his step-father was practicing or playing records. Hawk hung out a lot with the band when they were at his home or other at places during rehearsals or performances, immersed in tacit auditory sound worlds of jazz. He recalls absorbing experiences of intercultural communication taking the form of musical improvisation and banter.

At one point, he was inspired to take a crack at learning to play organ but says he was bored by the practice required. He remembers being impressed by his step-father's emphasis on the importance of dedicated practice to developing a relationship with an instrument but at that point he just didn't have the discipline to stick to it. Drawing, creative writing and photography drew his interest and he did pretty well at them. Still, his experience of music as a form of discipline, channel of communication and space of social and cultural exchange made a particularly deep impact on him. When he rediscovers music in the form of Native flute, years later, his earlier experience profoundly shape his own musical practice.

In 1973, at seventeen, Hawk moved to Providence to live with his father, his second wife and several adolescent step-siblings. Father and son were really just meeting for the first time, having had no contact since Hawk was an infant. He does not recall, thinking back, anything in his father's demeanor or objects around the house that was recognizably Indian, "nothing in the house that signified being Nipmuc."

The urban experience did not initially go all that well, beyond having the chance to be with another part of his family. He was arrested twice, "for the color of my skin." The first time, he and his family had stayed up talking and hanging out on the front porch until nearly sunrise when he and a cousin to play some basketball. A police car drove slowly down the street and glided to a stop in front of their porch. The officers got out of their car, drew their guns and arrested Hawk and another family member for stealing a car that had gone missing during the night. They were forced to lay on the ground, were handcuffed and taken to jail. Of course, they had been at Crow's house all night and were released the next day. Telling this story, Hawk's vocal tone and intensity changes; he sounds uncharacteristically angry. I sense that it was not only the injustice of having been arrested, given the ultimate revelation that the officers had no evidence whatsoever to support their actions. I feel the shock and humiliation of it.

The second arrest came sometime later the same year. Hawk and a friend had literally just returned home from an evening visiting with friends at a nightclub in Boston. Again, the police stopped at the house, got out of the car, drew their

guns and arrested Hawk and his friend for having robbed a nearby convenience store earlier that evening. Again, Hawk protested and provided names and numbers of people who could confirm where they had been that night. The police insisted on taking them to the store where the robbery had occurred; they went along feeling certain that this would be the end of it when the store employee confirmed the truth. As expected, the clerk said, “No, these aren’t the ones,” to the police.

Hawk, his friend and one of the policemen went back outside where they chatted together, he and his friend thinking that everything had been cleared up. A few minutes later, the policeman inside the store called for them to come back in to give the clerk a chance to “take a second look.” The clerk said, “Oh ya, these are the guys who robbed me.” Hawk’s sense of the situation: the policeman wanted an arrest and had coerced the store employee into changing his statement. Hawk spent the night in jail. His friend spent months while a “terrible and tough trial” proceeded, ultimately vindicating his friend as well.

“I was in a state of rage after that. I had to get away. I just knew I was going to get into trouble. I was walking by the Navy recruitment place one day, saw my chance and signed up.” He spent the next three years on an air craft carrier sailing the Mediterranean and South Atlantic. By the time he returned to Providence in 1976, his father had become actively involved with accelerating transformations occurring in the Nipmuc and other southeastern New England Indian communities. Not coincidentally, this is the time that Hawk reports his first fully conscious awareness of his Native and Nipmuc heritage.

Hawk was not inclined, in those early years, to become directly involved with the social, ceremonial and political movements marking transformations in the Nipmuc community. Although not directly involved with these particular activities, Hawk recalls “soaking up a lot of the ideas and cultural perspectives” in which he was immersed through his relationships with his Dad and others in the local and regional Native communities. As the Nipmuc struggled toward a renewed sense of collective and externally visible identity, so, too, did Hawk take up an active search to find cultural, religious and social practices that resonated with his inner life and could perhaps facilitate his desire to deepen his understanding of the world writ-large.

Figure 17: Sign in Webster, Massachusetts, current location of the Chaubunagungamaug Tribal Council

At first, Rastafarianism seemed best able to help him articulate these goals.

> “Then I experienced Rastafarianism and it really touched my connection to nature – the nature beyond the nature we know, beyond the trees, beyond the birds and insects. Just the nature of life. And when I read about and listened to and hung out with Rasta people, I was, like, ya, this is it. This is that felling I had, that’s how I would label it. For example, one of the phrases they use is I and I, which basically means that I am not separated from I; I

> am not separated from God, the Creator. I am Ja, Ja is I, I and I. When Christ came manifest in a human form this human form was an extension of, or a part of, the Creator. I and I. There's not the separation that we feel we know."

Over the course of the next few years, Hawk revisited Christianity and learned about various forms of Buddhism. His experiences with people who practice modern forms of Wicca inspired him to reflect on what nature-based practices in pre-Roman Europe might have been like. Ultimately, none of these paths fully satisfied but he did discover a deeper sense of the personal values that drove his search and ways that different forms of spirituality and cultural cosmologies seemed to share something in common; or, at least, consonant.

At the heart of these and other practices that he explored, he was searching for a "label or language – things that helped me articulate this feeling I had" when, as a child in the backyard of his home, he felt intense personal, embodied connections with animals, air, birds, trees, and so forth, within a broader sense of cosmologic inclusivity. During the course of his search, he also unexpectedly discovered a high level of consonance among the seemingly different religious and cultural views. "In some place, in some form, they all talked about honoring the Self, the Self as we are, or I am, connected to, and can relate to, the outer Self or the other Selves or, in other words, Creation."

Still, Hawk says, the "Algonquian culture, or just Native culture from here, from North America, from Turtle Island" did not strike a resonance, at first. His earliest group experiences were at pow-wows in New England, which he started to

attend in response to his Dad's invitations. In retrospect, he remembers thinking that it seemed as if being Indian is "dancing around the fire wearing beads."

> And the first time I went to a pow-wow, ya know, I looked at native people dancing around the circle with feathers in their head and beads on and I saw a fire in the middle and, ya know, I didn't understand it. It was all foreign. It didn't make any sense to me. What it conjured up was images of the old cowboy and Indian movies when I watched television, ya know, as a young -- as a youngster. And interestingly enough, or maybe not so because it's not uncommon, I identified with the cowboys. I mean, the cowboys were articulate, they could speak. And the -- and the "umm, you -- you give me horsum for beadum." I didn't talk like that, you know…going to a pow-wow – it just kind of reminded me of some of the old images, the stereotypes that were rampant and still are, to some degree…Hawk

Viewing it as a bit of malarkey, he rejected it as lacking the depth of form and meaning he was seeking. But, he adds, he also realizes now that this judgment was, in part, due to his lack of experience with, and knowledge about, the forms that he was witnessing. "I didn't have a real understanding of, say, the importance of the Fire. If I knew then what I know now, I could have at least created a sense of connection through my relationship to the Fire." Although it is still extremely rare for him to participate in powwows,[7] this highlights another emergent life theme that gains momentum in his life and the life of the Gathering – knowledge as a critical tool for deepening insight into difference.

During the early years following his return from the Navy, Hawk also began his life in the quotidian world of employment and marriage. He started volunteering at Bradley Hospital[8] in Providence, the first neuropsychiatric hospital for children in the United States, where his mother worked. He was hired full-time after the

clinical staff recognized his talent and skill for working with troubled kids. Counseling would continue to be his primary employment for many years to come, eventually overlapping in critical ways with his later mantle as a tradition-bearer and musician recognized as being exceptionally skilled at navigating the sometimes conflict-ridden waters of intercultural relations.

Lisa, who graduated from high school in Acushnet, Massachusetts in 1980, began a two year field placement at Bradley Hospital not long after starting her college degree program in clinical child care. Lisa and Hawk met at the hospital in 1982; Hawk was twenty-six, Lisa twenty. He is still a little giddy recalling the first moment he saw her, walking down the hall toward him. "I was smitten. I thought, 'she's the one I'm going to marry!'" Indeed, not long after they were introduced they became a couple and three years later, were married.

During the fifteen years, or so, from the time they met until the first Harvest Gathering at their home in Sullivan, three general trajectories of experience most directly shaped the Henries' emerging views and practices regarding inter- and intra-cultural relations: the Nipmuc petition for federal recognition as an Indian tribe; participation in ceremonies within Native communities, most especially the Nipmuc Gatherings at Sterling Springs and those they attended at Burnt Church reserve in Canada; and Hawk's work as a musician in general, and with Native flute and other indigenous instruments, in particular.

Given the Harvest Gathering's design as a space whose goal is to explore inter- and intra-cultural relations, these three realms of experience are

metaphorically akin, in some ways, to an artist's three primary colors; constituent resources with which space is given visual and sensory depth of field, aesthetic presence, personal meaning and interpretive potential. Although they underlie this transformation of space, the spaces they produce cannot be reduced to their constituent parts.

In the first case, Hawk and Lisa were influenced profoundly by the various issues and conflicts raised about personal and cultural identity and sovereignty raised, in part, by the Nipmuc federal acknowledgement process. These issues were also playing out on several fronts because they were seen by some people as a "mixed" couple – Indian and non-Indian. Second, their frequency of their participation in ceremonies increased as did invitations to assume roles as leaders or facilitators in Maine, southern New England and Canada. Finally, Hawk's deepening commitment to Native flute and other Indigenous forms of music – and the cultural practices from which they emerge – brought him wide public recognition within increasingly diverse social and economic networks. In addition, his increasing involvement with Indian communities, particularly among the Wabanaki here in Maine, signified a shift toward his emerging role as a tradition-bearer with particular responsibilities to Eastern Algonquian traditions and communities.

Through grappling with sometimes challenging and distressing experiences, particular views about common humanity, diversity and difference, respect and relationship, intention and choice, and tradition and creativity, moved into central

importance and priority in the Henries' lives. Consequently, they decided to organize their quotidian, economic and ceremonial lives to embody these views. The assemblage and arrangements of objects in their home and across the adjacent landscapes, the sounds and words that constitute the soundscapes giving their lives auditory meaning, choices about what to do, when to do it, and with whom to do it, and so on, are the indexical signifying practices and spatializing activities by which the Henries' shape their relationships with, and communications to, others. The desire to create their own Harvest Gathering was a direct outcome of the desire to further explore these issues by creating a space that encourages dialogue and shared differences.

Both Hawk and Lisa now emphasize the extreme importance of their shared commitment to particular social values as the foundation on which they built their life together. Most important was a consonant notion of respect for self and others rooted in a broader concept of the interconnected nature of all life. Although they had come to this priority along independent paths, it quickly became the core value in their relationship to each other and the world; it shaped the contours of their family, home, work and community life and served as the glue with which they created the social networks in which they were – and are – situated.

Expressed in the early years through their shared devotion to caring for children, this notion of respect and interconnection nurtured the rapid evolution of a life-style from which the Harvest Gathering emerged years later. In the post-Gathering Talking Circle we have at the Henries' house each year, Lisa sums it up:

"…at the very foundation of everything that happens on this particular piece of land is [that] everyone is invited to everything and please be who you are."

Soon after becoming a couple, Hawk and Lisa started traveling to pursue their shared interest in the landscapes of the northeastern Atlantic coast and the animals living there, including a keen interest in birds. Their first long trip was to the Bay of Fundi in New Brunswick. I remember them telling the story of this trip fairly often during the early years or our relationship; I rarely hear it now. When I was talking to Lisa about it recently, I recalled the part of the story that stuck in my mind all these years, the part about the bull suddenly appearing from down the beach at low tide, the one that chased them up onto the rocks. She immediately by-passed that part of the story with a dismissal of "oh yes, that happened, too. But the important part, the part that tells how we ended up moving to Maine – that happened when we were on our way home."

They decided to make a side trip to Acadia National Park, a place they had each wanted to visit before they even met. The park is located in the Bar Harbor region of Mount Desert Island (MDI) which is on the Downeast coast of Maine. Lisa recounts the profound feeling they both had of "being home" as they sat on the cliffs watched the sun rise over the ocean at Thunder Hole, a place along the eastern-most edge of the park that makes a thundering sound as the tide rolls in. In that moment that the sun edged above the eastern horizon, they decided to move to Maine. Over the next few years they made regular trips to Maine, tapping in to the networks of Native and non-Native people linking southern to northeastern New

England and the Canadian Maritimes as a way to develop a community of contacts, friends and, ultimately, a place to live and work to do. Their home now is situated across Frenchman's Bay from Mount Desert Island where, from places along the short near their house, prominent features of Acadia National Park can be seen. Most notably, Cadillac Mountain seems to rise up out of the ocean, an important Wabanaki geo-cultural topography as well as one of the most visited sites within the United States National Park system.

Figure 18: Mt Cadillac is the highest peak to the right.

By the time they married in 1985, Hawk and Lisa were participating regularly in various Nipmuc and other Native activities in southern New England, immersing them in broad networks of people and cultural practices. Over the next decade or so, their participation at various events within these networks introduced them to many Nipmucs and others from southeast New England Algonquian communities with whom Hawk, his family and community share biological, linguistic, cultural and historical ties – Wampanoag, Pequot and Natick, for example. They also met folks from other Eastern Woodlands groups extending up

and down the east coast into Maine and Canada, as well as from tribal communities in other parts of North America, including Mexico. These contemporary networks, built upon word of mouth and travel of individuals among communities, embody long-standing traditional patterns of interaction among northeastern Indian groups, creating social, economic and intermarriage patterns linking broad kinship systems and cultural practices for millennia (Bragdon 1996; Doughton 1997, 1999; Murray 2000; Plane 2000).

Both Hawk and Lisa attribute particular importance to these networking experiences when reflecting on the progression of their thinking about culture and intergroup relations in terms of their desire to create and maintain the Harvest Gathering. Within New England, their participation at Nipmuc Gatherings, classes at the newly formed Algonquian Indian School in Providence, and lots of social time visiting with community Elders and Hawk's Dad stand out. Hawk's father, Little Crow Ron Henries, has been very involved in working with Nipmuc communities toward a variety of cultural and political ends, including bids for federal recognition and the development of activities and programs in which Nipmuc and others can learn about ideas and traditions passed on to him, and others, through family systems. This form of direct, face-to-face communication among family, local community and extended kinship networks is a long-standing traditional pathway for transmitting cultural practices, materials and objects, and worldviews within and among Nipmuc/k and other southeastern New England

Algonquian Indian communities (Bragdon 1996; Brooks 2008; Bruhac 2007; Doughton 1999).

As they immersed themselves further within family, kinship and community indigenous networks and events, the Henries were increasingly committed to their Algonquian relations and ways of life. Hawk decided it was time to make a change. He said to Lisa, one evening:

> I said, ya know, you're gonna -- you're gonna kill me for this, but I want you to take all these dreadlocks out of my hair. And I didn't want to cut them, ya know, because one of the -- one of the things about Rastafarianism is that you don't put scissors or any sharp implement to your head, ya know. And that comes directly from some chapter in the Bible, I think, like Leviticus or something like that … I don't remember all about it now, but -- so I -- I didn't want to cut them, ya know, but I wanted to braid my hair. So -- so Lisa struggled (laughing). It was more than 6 hours, but she did it, ya know. She combed them -- each one of them, combed them out … And that was kind of the beginning of the visible relationship to being Native, the visible one for me.

In addition to their attendance at these Gatherings, Hawk and Lisa started classes at the Algonquian Indian School, which opened in 1984 in Providence, Rhode Island. Hawk's father was one of the individuals involved in its creation and direction. They studied the culture and language of Nipmuc and Woodlands Indians of southeastern New England. Both speak highly of their experiences at the school, where they met even more people. Hawk, in particular, discovered something important. "I really didn't care for the language study. I realized that since English is my first language, the one I've spoken since I was born, I'll probably always think in English, even if I'm speaking Algonquian. So I decided to be as conscious

and mindful about words as you have to be to speak in an Algonquian language; I decided to learn to do it when I'm speaking English."

The potentials and pitfalls of language in cross-cultural settings is another nexus that makes a central contribution to the organization of the Harvest Gathering. The limitations of language as a tool of communication in general, and English in particular, is a central discourse in Hawk's public work and spontaneous conversations in all sorts of social settings. This perspective provides the metapragmatic grounding for the conversations that occur at the Gathering and about the Gathering throughout the year when evaluating the relative effectiveness of speech versus non-linguistic forms of engagement. The seed for the Henries' views, and values, regarding these issues was planted here, at the juncture of Hawk's experience of Algonquian language ideologies and his primary language, English.

> …the real Grail lies in the love handed down from generation to generation, the words spoken by father to son, mother to daughter. The truth lies all about us. In the stones, in the rocks, in the changing pattern of the mountain seasons. Through the shared stories of our past, we do not die.[9]

Lisa recalls spending a lot of time sitting around the kitchen table at Crow's house and visiting with other spiritual leaders and community members an important way that they learned about cultural perspectives, practices and histories. By many people within these communities, this is seen as a primary pathway of knowledge production by which long-standing traditional values and worldview has survived, via particular forms of interactional practice coursing through family systems and community relationship. Some argue that these approaches to

preserving culturally particular perspectives has been critical to the continued survival of Nipmuc and other southeastern New England Indian identities, through purposefully hidden and subtle home-based and economic activities (Mandell 1996, 1998, 2003; Baron et al 1996). Ironically, these very strategies of survival now make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for groups to officially claim their indigenous identities via, for example, the federal recognition process.

Although it is well beyond the scope of this paper to delve into these arguments in any depth, they are important to mention because these personal, familial, cultural and historical interrelationships constitute the broad multidimensional tapestry in and from which Hawk's work within Eastern Woodlands flute and music traditions – and the cosmologic, social and cultural constellations of meaning that they signify – ultimately emerged. The unfolding of various issues within Nipmuc communities, and the experiences that Hawk and his family had in relation to them, is an important thread in the story, especially during the fifteen or-so years prior to the start of the Harvest Gathering in 1996.

These issues aside, Hawk and Lisa not only gathered a tremendous amount of information and experience in home and other informal settings; they also met people who linked the Henries to the socio-ceremonial networks and particular activities that would later become the foundation for the Harvest Gathering. Two bear special mention. After hearing about him for some time, they finally met gkisedtanamoogk, Hawk's Wampanoag cousin (Crow's sister's son) who, by 1984, was living at Burnt Church Reserve in New Brunswick, the family home of his

Mi'kmaq wife, Miigam'agan. The relationship between the two families would play an important role for the next several years. Even today, their children visit fairly often, since they now live within an hour's drive of each other.

Figure 19: Southern New England tribal territories, circa 1600.[10]

In the early years of their relationship, Hawk and gkisedtanamoogk shared a love of Native flute and keen interest in spirituality, as well as involvement in movements within northeastern Native communities to reclaim cultural and legal sovereignty. These shared interests led to Hawk's first flute, gifted to him by gkisedtanamoogk sometime around 1989. In 1990, they journeyed together to Pipestone, Minnesota where, he had heard, Indian people from many different communities have traveled for centuries to gather special red stone from a quarry there, to make ceremonial pipes. This quarry is considered sacred ground; to be there is to be in ceremony. Differences between those who come to gather stone are put aside for the time they are there. Pipes created from this stone facilitate communication with spirit; as such, they are generally used for healing and peace-making (as its own form of healing), among other things.

This trip was extremely important to Hawk, a journey that quite literally narrates his commitment to the flute as a practice engaging issues of peace and conflict related, in particular, to the effects of colonialism, shaped by cosmologic perspectives of human identity. I go into more detail about his experience in the flute and music section, but for now I want to note that the flute and the pipe will eventually come to embody critical trajectories from which the topologies of the Gathering later emerge – and by which these topologies are indexically organized though their anchoring to Hawk's personal practices broad cultural and historic movements.

It was during this general time that the Henries started making trips to the Burnt Church Reserve in New Brunswick, where gkisedtanamoogk and his wife were living at the time, in order to help with various ceremonial activities. Included among these were several ceremonial events led by Huichol Grandmothers who had traveled from Mexico. The Grandmothers' travels to Burnt Church, as well as other Indigenous communities, were prompted by visions and dreams in which they were instructed to go to places in each of the four directions and share their ceremonies and traditional teachings. Part of their responsibility in sharing this ceremony, as Lisa recalls, was to build relationships between different people and communities within the context of cosmologic shifts signaling an important turning point for human existence on Earth. One of their goals was to create an experience of inclusion as a strategy for working toward increased understanding between Native and non-Native peoples. These ceremonies, and their underlying intentions,

had a profound effect upon the Henries and directly contributed to their ultimate vision of creating their own gathering.

In 1987, Sierra, the eldest of the Henries' two daughters, was born in Rhode Island. About six months later, her naming ceremony was held at the Hassanamesit Nipmuc Reserve in Grafton, Massachusetts[11]. Shortly thereafter, the family was given a donated tipi to use when they were in Maine. It was pitched in the yard behind LaRue's log cabin in West Tremont, a town on MDI. LaRue was an acquaintance of a Penobscot woman named Tomiki who used to keep her home and art shop in a small building on Route 3, the main road leading from the town of Ellsworth, on the mainland, to MDI. I eventually met Tomiki who became a pivotal person compelling me into a wider network of Native peoples in Maine and Canada.

In 1989, their youngest daughter, Sequan, was born in Maine and Lisa became a full-time mother and keeper of the home fire. Right from the beginning, they received Native visitors from the region and those travelling up and down the coast to and from Canada, for example. They also began their formal relationship with, and responsibilities to, the Wabanaki people of Maine, in whose territory they now reside; in particular, long-standing relationships emerged with the Penobscot (Indian Island) and Passamaquoddy (Indian Township) communities.

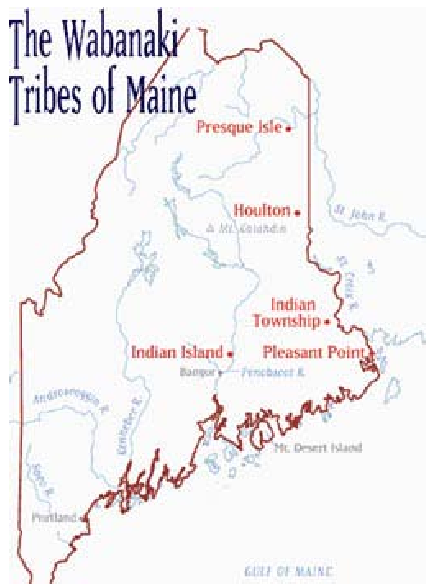

Figure 20: Contemporary Wabanaki communities in Maine. In alphabetical order: Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians; Aroostook Band of Micmacs (Presque Isle); Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indian Township; Passamaquoddy Tribe at Pleasant Point; Penobscot Nation (Indian Island).[12]

Not long after Sequan was born, Eagle Strong Sun Heart (Nipmuc), who had moved to New Mexico from southern New England with his wife and children, invited the Henries family to join his family there. The Henries lived with Sun Heart's family for about five months. It was a pivotal experience with impact on the eventual design of the Henries' personal lifestyle, professional work and Harvest Gathering. They participated in ceremonies, including different forms connected to cultures indigenous to that region as well as Mexico. Hawk, in particular, began to take a more active part in learning various leadership roles. New Mexico is also the place where Hawk first "fell in love," as he puts it, with Native flutes and flute music. The networks of people and practices in which they were moving extended geographically and culturally, including travelers from

different parts of western North America who visited to socialize, share music or participate in ceremony.

The work of John Rainer (Taos Pueblo/Creek)[13] was perhaps initially the most influential and continues to shape Hawk's musical and oratory practice even today. Through exposure to Rainer's work, particular themes and perspectives organized Hawk's intense focus and ultimate trajectory of his path to being considered a master at his craft and tradition-bearer. In particular, was Rainer's sense of – and commitment to – his relationship with the flute as a living entity with its *own* work to do in the world. Hawk was deeply inspired by Rainer's articulation of the commonly held belief that the flute's voice simultaneously articulates and creates intimate connections linking worlds of the living, the ancestors, natural sounds and landscapes, and the Creator.

As such, to make and play flutes is to be engaged in a sacred act, a ceremony – a prayer, in Hawk's current way of talking about it – that requires a high level of mindfulness and respect for the entire process, from gathering wood to putting the final touches on the finished flute. Although, of course, the local material, sonic, social and ceremonial forms that Indian American flute and related musical practices takes is extremely diverse (Alstrup 2004; Diamond et al 1994; Morrison 1997), Rainer's commitment to sharing his knowledge about the flute, as a way to work toward renewing the culturally diverse material, sonic, social and ceremonial forms that the flute and related musical practices take, was also an important factor in Hawk's commitment to share and teach. Certainly, many other

experiences and influences served to shape Hawk's practice over the years, including the work of several other elders of the Native flute-making community who adhered to traditional views of the flute and flute-maker. For example, the Henries also started hearing about Hollis Littlecreek, who was living in Arizona at the time, and his flute-making and related Anishinaabeg[14] traditions. Hollis' work will reinforce the contours of Hawk's approach to flute and musical practice in profound ways, a few years hence. In New Mexico, the direction and momentum of Hawk's work as a musician and educator took root.

After about five months with Eagle Sun and his family, the Henries were "called" home, as Hawk explains it. On a particularly hot afternoon, two people riding on mules from the east to west coast arrived. Hawk offered them some water from the well and invited them to stay, refresh themselves with a meal and visit for awhile, which they did. Eventually introductions and names were exchanged. To the Henries' shock, the couple knew about them, a very odd coincidence since Eagle's place in New Mexico was "way out in the middle of nowhere," in the far northeastern corner of the state. It turns out that this couple had been to Maine where folks were talking about needing the Henries to return home. The Henries took it as a sign and headed back east.

There was a bit of a wait before they could return to the tipi at LaRue's cabin on MDI, so they stayed with Hawk's father in Providence for a short while before going back to Maine. Lisa remembers that Hawk was consumed by the flute, spending hours and hours in the basement of Crow's house, trying to figure

out how to one of his own. He studied the flute-building and music techniques of John Rainer as well as the work and collections of Dr. Richard Payne, a non-Indian man trained as physician but whose personal and scholarly passion for Native flute is credited with having a profound impact on the resurgence of Native flute traditions beginning in the 1960's. During this intense engagement of learning, Hawk also listened to any Native flute music that he could find and put the word out that he wanted to find someone who knew how to build them, to give him guidance.

At that time, however, Hawk was not able to find anyone in the northeast making flutes by hand, except for David Sanipass' (Mi'kmaq) grandfather, way up north. He did eventually get to meet and talk with David and his father about flute-making, but there was no one nearby enough to directly help Hawk on a regular basis. So, he decided, he would just have to teach himself. He also decided that he wanted to pursue craft skills and techniques consistent with what he now calls Eastern Woodlands flute-making, as a way to honor his own Native identity and contribute to the renewal of traditional approaches to the flute indigenous to the northeast Algonquian region. Despite initial limited success with completing a fully satisfying flute, Hawk did gain substantial knowledge about different kinds of wood and developed basic skills in wood-working techniques. His ear for discerning subtle differences in the tone and pitch of a flute's voice deepened, in relationship to the fine differences in the shapes of its contours.

Figure 21: One of the first flutes that Hawk built. It is his oldest personal flute.

Building by hand is a critical aspect of refining and tuning the voices of Native flutes in the "old way," as Hawk puts it; a way that embodies intact the idea that a flute is an individual, unique entity with its own role to play in the cosmos. He contrasts this with flutes built based on Euro-American forms of music whose voices are standardized to the language of particular musical scales. He also contrasts this with the dramatic increase of Native flute-makers' decision to make flutes using machines, tuned, in many cases, to classical scale. These contrasting engagements of spatial and bodily practices linked to flute and music – and the broader contrasts in the cultural and social values from which they emerge – will, in later years, move to center stage in the Henries' ongoing process of discerning differences between *sharing* traditions and *appropriating* them. This issue, as I have mentioned earlier, is of central importance to the planning and performance of the Harvest Gathering, and one that I will address in a bit more depth when I talk more about Hawk's musical practice in the next section.

LaRue's place in Maine became the Henries' primary home-base. The tipi was filled with drying bunches and braids of sweetgrass and the intermittent smell of burning sage and cedar. There were herbs and berries for medicinal use and food that Lisa and friends gathered from the fields and gardens on MDI. There was a Central Fireplace with stones lining its circumference, stones carefully chosen primarily from the edges of rivers, streams and the sea whose shapes bore special meaning. I remember hearing stories about those rocks, each with its own tale of discovery, and purpose of meaning and presence there in that space of fire. Instruments, paintings and Indian objects gifted to the Henries clung to the walls or sat upon the small shelves scattered along the base of the walls.

Reflecting their desire to participate in the continuance of the social-ceremonial traditions they experienced with their home communities of southern New England, they began to host small, one-day full moon gatherings at LaRue's cabin as well as community-wide, multiple-day Gatherings at the home of a friend who owns a large parcel of land in Seal Cove, a nearby town. Right from the beginning of this period, Lisa and Hawk both recall, they longed for the time when they would have their own place for Gathering, so that they could avoid the inevitable compromises and contingencies related to having to depend upon the use of others' spaces and places.

The Henries also begin to make more regular trips to the Burnt Church reserve in Canada (Mi'kmaq) where they were asked to take on support roles for a series of traditional Peyote ceremonies conducted by four Huichol Grandmothers

from Mexico. Their experiences there dramatically deepen their sense of the potential for ceremony to facilitate cross-cultural relationships and reinforce their desire to figure out how to share traditions, including ceremony, without crossing the line into appropriation. Thus, their participation in these ceremonies has a profound impact on the Henries' choices about building the social and ceremonial networks with which they identify as well as how to approach organizing the Gatherings at their home.

Hawk took work at a long term residential treatment facility for adolescents in Ellsworth where the staff recognized his natural talents for counseling and encouraged his expanding role there, eventually becoming a clinical supervisor. He describes this as an important environment in which he continued to hone his skills for careful listening, articulating his own ideas and acting as an effective facilitator for working through emotionally charged conflict – critical to his work in cross-cultural settings.

Hawk's work on creating the foundation of his musical practice began in earnest, learning woodworking techniques, composing original music and gaining skill as a flutist. Perhaps most importantly, his musical presentations are driven by his desire to use music for relationship and healing – central to the traditional practices inspiring his work. He uses public engagements as an opportunity to talk about his own and other Indigenous traditions and identity struggles. He begins to emphasize the importance of improving relationships between "Native" and "non-

Native" peoples for the good of all future generations – particularly within the context of the ongoing effects of colonialism.

Articulating his views on the conflicted nature of current relations and hopes for a better future through dialogue and engagement in a gentle but direct way, his reputation as an orator grows. These foundational ideals – and the practical skills, musical and narrative practices, relationship networks, and material objects and places that they engendered – dovetailed directly with the kinds of skills and perspectives he was gaining through his work at the residential facility.

Hawk's reputation as an increasingly skilled artisan, musician and orator spread. As a result, so too did the Henries' network of connections to other individuals, institutions and venues whose interests echoed their own. During these early years, Hawk begins to receive invitations to present his work in a wide variety of settings, primarily by word of mouth: powwows and other settings where musicians and cultural artists displayed their work or shared their skills with a general public; secular and ceremonial community gatherings in Native and non-Native settings; personal and private events commemorating weddings, births, deaths, and so on; international Indigenous events; museums showcasing Indian and non-Indian arts, cultural practices and histories; educational settings including kindergarten to university settings; workshops and retreats organized for religious or cultural purposes; and so on.

This expanding network of people and places, during the early 1990's, created economic and artistic opportunities not only for Hawk but for the whole

family. Lisa made deer skin purses and medicine pouches; the girls made single-strand beaded bracelets. Sierra began to explore her own version of traditional double-curve designs, a signal art form of northeastern Algonquian groups (Speck 1914) and which appears regularly in her contemporary work.

Through his interactions with Indigenous people from outside New England, Hawk's knowledge base and technical capacities increased as he shared cultural and personal practices and perspectives with other flute-makers and musicians from North and South America, Africa and the Caribbean. Thus began the trajectory of considerable cultural-technical skill that he now has with Indigenous instruments and musical practices from a variety of other traditions. They are important tools for his public engagements, especially (although not exclusively) within cross-cultural settings. His enduring instrumental commitments are: the kora, a West African instrument which he rarely plays in public settings but that we call his girlfriend because of his intense relationship to, and time spent with, "her"; the didgeridoo (Australia), which he almost always plays now at public performances and workshops; and the traditions of the mbira from Zimbabwe in East Africa. The flute, didgeridoo and mbira emerged as especially important objects by which Hawk actively engages (reproduces, challenges, transforms) material, cultural, economic, technical, spiritual, social and musical spaces of global trade.

In 1994, the Henries began an earnest search for a house of their own. In part, practical considerations motivated the search. LaRue began plans to add on to

the back of her cabin, making her backyard space too small for the tipi. Equally important, the girls were getting older and the constant travel more difficult. They also wanted a place where they could have their own version of a four-day Gathering, inspired by the Nipmuc gatherings at Sterling Springs but with an even more inclusive set of guidelines for participation, particularly in ceremonies. They specifically wanted to create a space in which their values of inclusion and cross-cultural dialogue would be literally emplaced in their day-to-day lives, house, surrounding landscapes and work, quotidian and ceremonial activities.

1995 is an especially busy and transformative year in the Henries' lives. Their participation in social networks expands and new trajectories linking the Gathering to distant people, places and cultural practices emerge. In the spring, the family travels to Marksville, Louisiana to participate in the first annual Tunica-Biloxi Pow Wow after Hawk is recommended to their organization committee by a man who organized many of the New England powwows in which they participated. This southern connection bears long term consequences on several fronts, local and long-distance. My relationship with them deepens and becomes the nexus for new connections to people from the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming, when I invite their Sundance Chief to visit Maine that autumn. This visit, in turn, strengthens ties to local Native people and becomes the foundation for the emergence, a year later, of a new ceremonial space at the Henries' home.

In what is perhaps the most important event of the decade, and that has the most direct impact upon the Gathering then and now, is the Henries' purchase the

house in Sullivan toward the end of the year. A couple of months later, they host the first Winter Solstice Gathering in their new home that December. They begin work on the round bowl-shaped opening left by gravel pit work done years before, at the end of one of the old roads running up behind the house, in order to transform it into the Sweatlodge space. Lisa discovers the natural circular path in the woods, its circumference lined by trees, which becomes the Medicine Wheel and begins her work to prepare it for Ceremony.

In 1995, the man who organized many of the New England powwows in which the Henries participated recommended Hawk to the Tunica-Biloxi Pow Wow Committee who is organizing their first intertribal celebration, which takes place at their reservation just south of Marksville, Louisiana. Since then, the Henries have traveled to the south where they typically spend about a month. In addition to the Tunica powwow, the network of connections to other Indian communities and events grew over the years, including the Houma in southern Louisiana and several Indian groups along the mid-Atlantic. Additionally, connections with non-Indian settings and places emerged. For example, Hawk used the flute to support community healing efforts following the Katrina disaster. In the spring of 2012, they will make a stop in Tuscaloosa, where they usually stay each year during their southern tour. Hawk will be presenting two new flutes in a public ceremony and fund-raising event that were crafted from wood gathered shortly after the devastating tornadoes during April 2011. In addition, Hawk is participating in the Louisiana Folklife Village at the 2012 New Orleans Jazz and

Heritage Festival, a testament to his long-standing relationship with Indigenous communities there.

The southern connections also birthed and solidified a northern connection directly relevant to the Harvest Gathering. Robert (“Bert”) Polchies (Penobscot, Maliseet) has traveled from his home in Maine for many years to act as Head Drum Judge at the Tunica Powwow. Relationships between Bert, the Henries and Wabanaki people in Maine, in particular the Penobscot community at Indian Island and Passamaquoddy community at Indian Township grew and solidified in part because of this shared experience with the Tunica in Louisiana. A few years ago, several members of the Drum group that he founded, “Niweskom Eli Ckuwapok” (“Spirit Of the Dawn”) came to the Harvest Gathering. The following year, one of the Drum members led the first Snake Dance ever shared at the Harvest Gathering, around the Central Fire on Saturday evening when people are socializing, playing music and, in this case, dancing. Bert now participates every year and has taken on a ceremonial role in keeping with his responsibilities to Penobscot and other Wabanaki traditions. As such, his continued presence is reshaping structural fabric of its material and ceremonial topologies. For example, in 2011 he gifted the Medicine Wheel ceremony with a pipe prayer.

Figure 22: Hawk's mbira.

Figure 23: Hawk playing mbira at the 2011 Gathering while people wait for the beginning of a Talking Circle.

During this time, Hawk was invited to play at the Hudson Museum at the University of Maine in Orono, the first of many invitations to present his work in specifically Native American and Indigenous venues and settings. Since then, he has developed long-standing working relationships with, for example, the Abbe Museum (Bar Harbor, Maine), Cultural Survival (Cambridge, Massachusetts), the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center (Mashantucket, Connecticut),

Native Arts at the New England Foundation for the Arts (Boston, Massachusetts) and the Tunica-Biloxi tribe of Louisiana, through his participation in their annual powwow. Of course, Hawk also presents in many different non-Native settings.

In 1996, the first Harvest Gathering was held at the Henries' home.

Indigenous Geographies

> I think that the sweat actually begins as soon as the intention is expressed – 'let's have a Sweatlodge, can you help me do a Sweatlodge' – that group of people are already connected in some form or fashion, knowing that in a day or in a month they're going to be physically in the same space doing the same thing, getting hot. And when they come and the preparations are being made for the lodge, the gathering of the materials to build it, the gathering of the stones, or the time before the lodge, maybe the day before when people are gathered together and talking about the lodge, there's the thread that's connecting each other once the intention's [been] expressed. You don't have to be at the Sweatlodge to be a part of it; you don't have to be in it or near it to be a part of what's going on.
>
> I hear people when they're coming out of the lodge, talking about how powerful the connection they made with somebody in there; their neighbor, the whole of the place, *the whole of the place*; the ground that they were sitting on, the trees that made the lodge, the air that they breathed, everything that went into that, which is Creation. That's the bridge that I always hope can be strengthened when we do lodges. People come out and they talk about feeling that connection to the place, to the Source – *that's* what it's about. ~ Hawk

Figure 24: Photo of the Sweatlodge

Hawk's perspective of "the" Sweatlodge exemplifies the connection of the Harvest Gathering's origins to eastern Algonquian cosmology as the Henries experienced its expression in Native communities in southern New England, Maine and Canada. Its Origin Story, however, is not singularly *about* Algonquian cosmologies and Native space. As I mentioned earlier, the Henries make a point of refusing anyone's assertion that it is a "Native" event. Still, the Gathering and its story of Origin are highly congruent with cosmologic and cultural perspectives associated with Algonquian. life and history in New England. Therefore, indigenous geographies do contextualize and emplace many of the social and material coordinates giving shape to various forms of engagement at the Gathering. Many of its organizing themes emerged from the Henries' experiences of Native space and the indigenous cosmologies that define and give them meaning – as the Henries came to express them in their own particular way, in their own particular place.

Native geographies in the northeast manifest as networks of relations whose cosmologic, spatio-temporal and social coordinates are signified by *relational* markers (Brooks 2008:13). Within a cosmologic context whose general characteristics are shared by many central and eastern Algonquian speaking peoples (Bragdon 1996; Goddard 1978), language, objects, animals, land, food, houses, particular places, ceremonial and social practices and kinship are fully integrated and made meaningful by a constant flow of relationships between them and the three realms in which everything exists (Bragdon 1996).

Within this relational cosmos, the contours of lived spaces, future and past, and spirit and matter are fluid, shifting and flowing as relationships are negotiated and liminal thresholds crossed. Therefore, the elements that mark points of relational contact are highly context-dependent: a swirl of color in the wood of a flute embodies the flow of spirit, the hummingbird alighting atop the Sweatlodge signals that a gathering of spiritual forces has converged for the purpose of healing, an entire historical discourse is emplaced in a well-maintained hole in the ground at the side of a path (Bragdon 1996:127 citing Winslow 1910:352). An entire universe is made visible by a footprint in the sand (Tamisari 1998) or etched into stone by manitou (Simmons 1986), not merely as a symbolic representation but as a literal embodiment of the network of relations assembled there.

Figure 25: Cedar Flute

My purpose in providing a (*very* brief) overview of Nipmuc and southern Native New England cosmology glimpsed through the lens of the earliest years of regular contact with English settlers is related, in part, to my own surprise that the

social and cosmologic sets of values with which the Henries construct their lives, including the Gathering, are, well, remarkably consistent with seventeenth-century accounts of Native life in southern New England. Even now, after all of the time I have spent with Hawk and others discussing this subject, and research and scholarship I have read, I cannot account for it by virtue of being able to identify some sort of direct, uninterrupted path carved out through hundreds of years of colonization. Native peoples here have themselves been trying to do this, with varying measures of success, as have academics who take various positions on whether the Native peoples of southern New England are connected in any contiguous way with their distant cultural history, or if they are even "real Indians" or not.

Hawk is not a big fan of television and film, either although documentaries about music, indigenous cultures and nature capture his attention enough so that he stays awake until the end. He much prefers to spend whatever time he has when he is not building flutes on playing his instruments or socializing. Spending time with wood, tools and emerging flutes, as well as playing other instruments in the evenings, is time spent communicating with spirit and spirit-beings, the place where he goes to get an education, to acquire knowledge and to process his relationships human and otherwise. His relationship to the flutes, to music, and to the network of relationships embodied there is one of responsibility.

Hawk rarely read books, almost never academic ones. In truth, he is highly suspect of the academy, an institution that he experiences as one that relies more on

intellectual, language-based perception and reasoning than personal insight and direct experience (more in line with many indigenous worldviews). He does not presume that individual academics fully embrace this worldview, however. His life-long commitment to personal experience and self-reflection as the most important way to know, to gain knowledge, is an instinct that emerged in the form of personal revelation, as a child in his backyard. His belief that "everyone has access to this place, this origin, this knowledge that is given to us by Creation, a way to know our place in the universe as uniquely and equally important…to remember that we share the same spiritual origin and are in relationship with everything the universe." This spiritual knowledge and potential for everyone to access it, he believes, is part and parcel of human *being*.[15]

> In my life I've encountered opportunities -like the flute stuff-I didn't have a physical person to teach me that. So some of the conclusions I've come to with regards to how I think and how I live are conclusions that I've arrived at from observation, from experimentation. And only, I can say now, that some of that is very consistent with what you and I are calling Algonquin things -for now. ~ Hawk

The Henries live in a world where there is an animating force that connects everything in the cosmos. There are many beings, not just humans and those beings thought of as "animate" in Euro-American worldviews; rocks, landscapes, ceremonial spaces, fire, sweetgrass…The visible world is merely objectified spirit, embodying a life-presence that can act as agents in human life, and to which humans are responsible as interactants. Humans are in relationship with these and all aspects of the "visible" world, which is, in my words, merely a sensorily-

available form of spirit. Seen and unseen are really not in any way separate – the giant root system of an ancient stand of birch woven into the depths of earth and water, taking in sky and sun, chemicals and atoms in a constant state of circulation, crossing the threshold between form and non-form, giving and receiving, transforming and transmuting, and connecting with – if you follow the threads of interactions far enough – literally everything in the cosmos.

Their concerted effort to interact with people of many faiths and cultural paths from around the world embody the Henries' belief that this vital force needs to be in a state of constant circulation in order for the network of relationships in which we all live to be nourished and healthy – an obligation to live in a state of constant giving and receiving. This notion of reciprocity came into clear view, in large part, from his father, who received knowledge about their Native identities from his extended kin network, parents and grandmother. She was forcibly removed as a child to a school where, despite their best efforts, "educators" did not successfully civilize the Indianness out of her.[16]

Their personal and work lives emerged, over the course of time, to strongly index a constellation of perceptions and social values embedded in southeastern Native New England and Wabanaki cosmologies. Still, they argue that while these are views of the cosmos configured in locally particular ways indigenous to New England, there are features that are shared, in a *broad* sense, by many aboriginal and indigenous peoples – including the ancestors of those from Europe who colonized the Americas. Their artistic work reflects their commitment to a re-

creation of cosmologic and social values linked with Algonquian sensibilities which include, in their view, a responsibility to building healthy relationships with people holding different worldviews; art as a means to communicate, create connections and build a space of common ground without overwhelming (disrespecting) difference. This reflects a common approach to art in many Native communities here and elsewhere, a process that is aesthetic and socially transformative, and a liminal threshold wherein cosmologic connections intersect (Brooks 2008).

> I believe the foundation of culture lies in our relationship to and understanding of place. The life ways of any peoples are shaped by this understanding. We express our relationship of the land and water through song, language, story, making baskets and regalia, drum and flute… our arts are reflective of this Knowledge and serve to keep the connection with our Ancestors alive.~ Hawk

Do they believe that the relationship between Thunderbird (upper, sky world spirit being) and Serpent (underworld/water spirit being) forms the features of "the physical landscape and the appearance of animals and plants (Bragdon 1996: 195)?" No. Do they use the word "manitou" to describe a vital force that animates everything in the cosmos? No.

They do believe, however, that the landscape *is* spirit – not an abstract projection somehow separated or bounded from its cosmologic source. There are stone persons who carry the heat of their time in the fire into the Sweatlodge where they mediate the crossing to and fro of humans, ancestors, and other cosmologic connections across different realms of existence. They create the turtle being – the

Grandmother – that not only marks it as the focal point of relations between earth and spirit but literally embodies them, mandating particular responsibilities to its well-being and care. There are tree people who manifest half-global sphere of the lodge and tree people who sacrifice their lives to the three fires that sustain spirit and flesh. There are Little People who can be seen, sometimes, at the edge of the forest spaces surrounding the open fields where we gather around the fires.

The Henries' lives articulate – through conversation and their art, in their speech styles and gestures, arrangement of objects and spaces in their home and on the surrounding landscapes, hospitality to guests and travelers who might arrive at the home at any time of the day or night, in the structure of their family life, and so on – social and spiritual principles that resonate with some of those shaping the early seventeenth-century lives of Hawk's ancestors. Traces of these principles are visible in the contentious struggle for Nipmuc federal recognition, sometimes as the centerpiece of struggle over what it means to *be* Nipmuc. Although, as I said earlier, there are many threads with which the Harvest Gathering is weaved, and it is rightly judged not Native as an event, the cosmologic and social principles that provide the basic scaffolding of the Gathering do trace to broad historical trajectories.

Ninnimissinuok

The Nipmuc and their neighbors in southeastern New England have struggled for hundreds of years to resist obliteration as distinct cultural agents. Despite a nineteenth century obituary proclamation that the "last Nipmuc" was

dead[17], that the language is dead (Silverman 2000) and that contiguous markers of various cultural practices have not survived into the present, others argue that some of the very same social and material criteria used to declare their disappearance were, in fact, culturally meaningful strategies of creative adaptation and thus signify the opposite (Doughton 1993, 1997, 1999).

The Native peoples of seventeenth-century southern New England had much in common while still having distinct group identities and life-ways, which can be said of communities there today. They each made unique contributions to a regional economic system based on close ties between kin networks and trade. Speaking a multitude of distinct but closely related dialects of the eastern branch of Algonquian languages (Bragdon 1996; Goddard 1978)[18], indigenous peoples of this region also lived in a shared world of day-to-day practices shaped by very similar notions of the irreducible interweaving of spirit and matter and the utter interdependence of the network of relations in which humans lived – and to whom they were obliged for health and well-being (Bragdon 1996: 244).

As a way to understand their shared regional interdependence and close relationships as a context for acknowledging their group differences, Bragdon (1996) names them the *Ninnimissinuok*, an adaptation of a Narragansett word meaning "people" that connotes a concept of familiarity and shared identity, a term and perspective I will borrow here. In the following section on cosmology I rely heavily on Bragdon (1996) and Simmons (1986) both of whom did extensive research of primary materials of that period and who focused specifically on the

important relationship between cosmology and its impact on the life-ways of Native peoples.

The major groups of the Ninnimissinuok with whom the Nipmuc shared regional space lived in three distinct eco-social regions: coastal (Massachuset, Wampanoag, Narragansett, Pequot, Mohegan), riverine groups (Nipmuc and Pennacook) who were situated between the coastal plain and more westerly upland groups who lived in scattered villages and trading posts at important hunting and fishing territories along the Kwinitekw (Brooks 2008). The entire region was networked by a vast system of waterways and a well established network of trails that facilitated extensive trade, travel and social communication (Doughton 1993:1). These "networks of waterways, footpaths, marriages and kin relationships (Brooks 2008:3)" reached across the entire northern Atlantic region and beyond (Brooks 2008; Connole 2007), connecting the peoples of southern New England with trade centers as far away as Ohio, Florida, Nova Scotia and Central and South America (Bragdon 1996:121 citing Lavin 1988).

Subsistence, settlement and political organizations varied in relationship to the environments in which they lived. The primary form of political organization among Ninnimissinuok groups was a sachemship whose leader was known as a sachem. In general, they oversaw many of the day-to-day organizational needs of the group: conflict resolution and mediation of all sorts, sponsoring feasts and hosting guests, and managing access to and use of land (Simmons 1986:12 citing Mayhew 1694). The particulars of how sachemships actually worked varied

between groups, however, in tandem with their various modes of subsistence and settlement patterns. Coastal groups, more dependent upon Sobakw (Abenaki word for the sea, Brooks 2008) for the production of wampum goods for trade and seafood for sustenance (Simmons 1986), tended to be more sedentary with relatively marked social hierarchies linked to hereditary authority (Bragdon 1996:244; Simmons 1986:12-13). They also tended more toward aggression against their Native neighbors, a pattern that appears to have been in place long before English settlement.

The peoples of Nipmuc territory were, by comparison, quite mobile. Semi-nomadic communal bands of extended-kinship groups (Darnell….) moved to different homeland sites along fresh water rivers, lakes and ponds where hunting, fishing, access to potable water and land for their horticulture gardens was best (Connole 2007). The size of groups varied depending upon seasonal access to various food types and the actual availability of food at any given time. During the summer, traveling groups tended to be smaller. Some groups would move to the seashore to take advantage of ocean fish and shellfish. In late autumn, many people traveled to inland wilderness areas to hunt and in winter, larger groups set up villages to share resources and labor. Their dome-shaped wigwam – house structure – was easily packed up and transported; entire villages could disappear overnight, greatly unnerving their English neighbors for whom settlement in one place signified social, religious and economic civilization.

Nipmuc political and decision-making processes, while not egalitarian, were less structurally hierarchical than their coastal neighbors. Because of their relative mobility and need to be flexible in response to shifting resources, social cohesion emerged through the maintenance of ties with kin networks and intergroup alliances grounded in homeland places. Accordingly, social and political authority was not centralized (Bragdon 1996:244 citing E. S. Johnson 1993:256). Sachems were usually respected community members who were chosen by council vote. Although they had various organizational, mediation and decision-making responsibilities, their authority was limited to willing adherence and consent, especially in especially important matters that affected the group at large. Individuals were free to shift their allegiance to another sachem if displeased with their leadership or treatment of the people (Bragdon 1996:153 ; Simmons 1986:13; Connole 2008:16-17).

Peoples in Nipmuc territory maintained strong social, political, economic and kinship ties with the coastal groups, reinforced by political alliance, the trade of foods, wampum, fur and English goods (Connole 2008:45, 47). Intergroup conflicts were also common, resulting in shifting alliances among and between other Nipmuc groups, other Native groups in and beyond New England, and English colonists and missionaries. Because of their high degree of mobility and location in the middle ground between coastal groups, who produced wampum, and fur traders and hostile groups to the north and west, respectively, the Nipmuc were often in a position of mediation among Native groups and, eventually, the English

who participated in the fur trade as well the Pilgrim ministers who came to convert them.

Compared to coastal groups, the riverine peoples had limited contact with the English until the second or third decade of the 1600's (Bragdon 1996; Connole 2007). In a letter written by Roger Williams dated 1637, these groups in more westerly regions were called "Neepmucks," a name that derives from the word for fresh water: "fresh-water people" (Doughton 1997; Connole 2007:8)." The Nipmuc homeland, "Nipnet," covered a very large geographic territory including present-day Worchester County, parts of Middlesex, Hampden, Bristol and Franklin counties in Massachusetts, as well as parts of northeastern Connecticut and northwestern Rhode Island (Doughton 1997:220). Its hilly landscape was rich with a network of rivers and fresh water streams, lakes and ponds. Several major trailways intersected and traversed its terrain (Connole 2007) and their long-standing participation in the northeastern Atlantic fur trade the basis for the initial years of sustained contact with the English .

Homelands in Nipmuc territory typically extended for five-to-ten miles around favored fishing sites. Corn fields, ceremonial and council spaces, cemeteries and "memory piles"[19] marked the landscape (Connole 2007; Doughton 1993). Family and extended kin groups lived in seasonal village settlements, scattered hamlets or single family sites. As did many other Native groups in New England, they lived in wigwams or *wetu*, the Massachuset word for house (Bragdon 1996). *Wetu* were typically circular (or rounded) portable structures made of tree saplings

strapped in place by sinew, then covered with tree bark, hide or blankets (Doughton 1997). Its walls were typically covered with bulrush mats woven by women that carried powerful spiritual and social significance and with which individuals were frequently buried (Bragdon 1996). They had a central fire for heat and cooking, and an opening in the ceiling to allow smoke to exit. A raised platform built of wood around its circumference afforded sleeping space off the ground. Villages and hamlets were usually arranged in a circular shape, orienting the community to its center: circles within circles.

Figure 26: Structure of a Wigwam[20]

The peoples of Nipmuc territory grew a variety of crops, including maize, beans, squash, pumpkins and watermelons (Salwen 1978:160) which they harvested, dried and cached in underground storage pits called barnes (Connole 2007:16-18). Gardens were typically unfenced, multi-crop to minimize the need for tending, and planted near the edge of the woods where they created an environment

that attracted a wide variety of wildlife (Cronon 1983). Gardens were used regularly over the course of many years and people left materials behind in preparation for the next cycle of growing (Salwen 1978:163).

Geographic territories were associated with the particular kin and political groups who used them, the concept of usury. Sovereignty in these territories by was based on customary or proprietary rights passed by inheritance. The sachem was responsibility for jurisdictional management among the individuals and families in the group (Connole 2007:125). People from other places or groups were frequently given permission to stay on and use the land. Place-names typically spoke to the network of spiritual, human and other-than-human being relations embodied in the Native landscape (), and the kinds of resources that might be found there (Cronin 1982; Connole 2007).

In sum, community, place and mobility were tightly linked and mutually defining (Reiser 2010; Brooks 2008) among Native peoples in southern New England, and Nipmuc peoples in particular. Their ties to "place" were renegotiable in the sense that "place" emerged from the activities occurring within networks of kin, sustenance and community relationships. Their version of social order was tied to a notion of community less "tribal," in the sense of multi-village alliances, than that of multi-village networks (Darnell 1998:101). Further, the notion of tribe signifies something centrally organized or authoritative, which was not a feature of life in Nimpuc territory. As Reiser (2010:5) suggests, these patterns may signify a notion of "place" among Native peoples in this region as having incorporated a

diversity of spatial practices and corporate identity one of "communities-in-movement" versus communities-in-place.

Cosmologic Space

The tripartite Ninnimissinuok cosmos was composed of an upper, earth and lower world that were connected by a central opening or pathway called the Cosmic Axis (Bragdon 1996:185). Envisioned by many Algonquian-speaking peoples as a Cosmic Tree (pg. 212), trees were held sacred as objects and their environs as a liminal space where the sacred could be experienced (Bragdon 1996:219-220). Everything in the Ninnimissinuok cosmos was infused with an impersonal vital force called *manitou* (Bragdon 1996:185; Simmons 1986). Its presence imbued the natural world with power although some objects, animals, places and people were charged with more of it than others. The manitou "included gods of women, children, animals, the sun, moon, fire, water, sea, snow, earth, directions, seasons, winds, houses, the sky, corn and even colors (Simmons 1989: 38 citing Winslow [1624] 1910:342)." Beings having some sort of special "excellence (Bragdon 1996:186 quoting Williams 1936:126)" were recognized as especially powerful manitou, like the black fox (Bragdon 1996). Manitou were sometimes quite dangerous, capable of inflicting harm (Bragdon 1996:185; Simmons 1986:44) or being entreated by shamanic practitioners to cause harm (). Thus, a proper approach and deference were at the heart of gaining their cooperation and avoiding negative results.

Manitou were the mediators of the liminal thresholds between the three realms, "the crossing of which entails physical, spiritual and social transformation (Bragdon 1996:192 citing Hamell 1987)." The ability to cross the thresholds between the realms was critical to participation in the network of relations with beings living in all the realms, to make a direct connection with the "great community of persons (Preston 1996:274)" of which the Ninnimissinuok were a part. As such, manitou played and extremely important role in everyday and ritual activities. They acted as facilitators in the vast flow of reciprocal exchanges that nourished all life in the cosmos, mediating the transformations of spirit and flesh that conferred health and well-being to humans and all members of the great community. People sought them out, entreating them for help, guidance, spiritual and physical healing and communication with spirit beings and the ancestors.

Especially powerful manitous were associated with the upper and lower worlds. The upper world being was conceived as a thunderbird, depicted as a human with the head of a bird turned to the side. Thunderbird, common to many Algonquian cosmologies, was often seen as the enemy of the under (water) world Panther or (sometimes horned) Serpent. Their images appear on many objects including petroglyphs and amulets found throughout New England and the northeast well into the historic period (Bragdon 1996).

Thunderbird and Horned Serpent were embodied in mythic other-than-human-beings called Cautantouwit (upper world) and Abbomocho (under or water world, also called Hobbomok), oppositional parts of the same whole (Bradgon

1996:188 citing Vastokas and Vastokas 1973:91). Each was associated with particular powers, sacred directions, colors and elements (fire, water, air, earth) (pg. 188). Objects that bore their associated colors of white, blue-green, red and black (Bragdon 1996:199 citing Hammell 1987a:75) were endowed with the power of manitou as were their images when painted on the body or cloth, or carved onto shells, rocks and other media, including metal.

Both beings were linked with particular animals and could appear in a variety of places, most likely in a liminal space where earth and water or earth and sky meet. For example, birds were most often linked with Cautantouwit, the giver of life and guardian of the after-life, lived in the southwest (Bragdon 1996:191). Since his power was distant and essentially benign (pg 190), he was sought out for help with important matters and entreated with prayers, feasting and giving thanks (Bradgon 188-9 citing Winslow 1910). The Narragansett believed that a crow sent by Cautantouwit carried the first kernels of corn in its ear to the Ninnimissinuok, therefore crows were revered and never harmed and were linked to dreams, visions, death and children (Simmons 1970:62).

The underworld being, Hobbomok, was more ambivalent, potentially dangerous and directly accessible to at least some humans (Bragdon 1996:190; Simmons 39-40). Linked with the deceased (Simmons 1986), death, dark, and the northeast wind (Bragdon 1996), he sometimes evoked terror and fear. Yet, he was also endowed with the power of the life force, “regeneration, cunning and subtlety (Bragdon 1996:212-3)” and so was entreated to facilitate certain kinds of healing or

for personal spirit power and guidance through altered mental states induced by fasting, sleep avoidance, and purging (pg. 189). He manifested as snakes, eels (pg 189), salamanders, turtles, snakes, beaver, otter (pg. 192 citing Hamell) and other animals found where water and earth meet and was sometimes seen at night in the woods as Englishmen or Indians (Simmons 1986).

The cosmos was crowded with "persons" of all kinds and an abundance of diverse resources. The forests and dark waters were teaming with manitou in the form of animals and plants imbued with the power of spiritual and physical nourishment and, in some cases, healing. Therefore, hunting, gathering and consuming food was an enactment of the spiritual relationship between humans and the creatures they sacrificed who had their own powers. This form of "demand exchange (Bragdon 1996:195-6 citing R. Williams and Bird-David 1992)" was a direct interaction with the supernatural accompanied by various forms of appeasement and served to reinforce the enmeshment of humans in broader ties of obligation.

Wealth as Relationship, Value as Action

> The common pot is that which feeds and nourishes. It is the wigwam that feeds the family, the village that feeds the community, the networks that sustain the village. Women are the creators of these vessels; all people come from them, and with their hands and minds they transform the bodies of their animal and plant relatives into nourishment for their families. The pot is made from the flesh of birch trees or the clay of the earth. It can carry of hold; it can be carried or reconstructed; it can withstand fire and water, and, in fact, it uses these elements to transform that which it contains. Brooks 2004:4)

I begin here with this lengthy quote from Brooks' (2004:4) very insightful exploration of the nature of Native space in New England and its persistence over time within spaces of community, kin networks and various forms of verbal literacy, and their movements across familiar landscapes rich with the relational markers that ground its past, present and future. It beautifully summarizes the relational cosmos of the Ninnimissinuok which was (and is) held together by fluid movements of reciprocal exchange, the flow and transformation of resources across the flexible boundaries between humans and other beings, and the ties of obligation that it engendered. Exchange occurred in cycles of giving and receiving, sacrifice and abstinence, thanksgiving and celebration, anchored in and mirrored by seasonal transformation and cycles of life and death.

In this relational cosmos, forms of reciprocity based on an ethic of generosity and sharing – and the sacrifices and obligations they demanded – were most highly valued and assured future returns. Accordingly, a lack of generosity was considered "a heinous antisocial act (Bragdon 1996:131-2)" and "ingratitude seen as a double-robbery (citing Wood 1634)." Social, ceremonial and day-to-day life resonated with generosity, sharing, and ties of obligation embodying the understanding that "whatever was given from the larger network of inhabitants had to be shared within the human community (Brooks 2008:5)" and returned again to the common pot through sacrifice and sharing the gifts received (Bragdon 1996; Simmons 1986). This give and take – a process of appropriation, if you will – of the resources needed for human spiritual and material consumption through the

transformations of exchange, underpinned every aspect of Ninnimissinuok life. Wealth was tied directly to sacrifice and renewal which were mutually-dependent, woven into the fabric of time and space: the greater the sacrifice, the greater the personal and social return (Bragdon 1996:221, 229, 240).

These mandates of giving, receiving and obligation were not compelled by altruism or egalitarian sensibilities; they were a necessary component of survival (Brooks 2008:5). Nor were they reserved for humans – all inhabitants in the great community were afforded the same consideration and commitment. Therefore, *wealth* was tied to the health and well-being conferred through the exchange of objects and persons crossing the thresholds of relationship (Bragdon 1996 citing Hamell 1987a; Connole 2007) and thereby transforming into various forms of spiritual and material nourishment. The social and cosmologic *value* of persons, spaces and objects was *emergent* from their transformation via the activities required to cross liminal thresholds: to be in relationship (Greaber 2001). Everything was fully integrated, everything connected to, and thus affecting, everything else. Objects, for example, were not valuable in and of themselves, nor did they confer wealth, per se: its value was not seated within the thing itself but rather in the network of interrelationships that it embodied and created, and the health and well-being that these networks conferred.

Reciprocity based the exchange of one sort of good for another depended upon, and attained value through, the social gathering in which it occurred (Bragdon 1996:131 citing David-Bird 1992). Among the Ninnimissinuok, this

concept of exchange and value infused social interactions with values of courtesy, hospitality, respect and an awareness of the needs of others. Loyalty to friends, family and community was highly admired and a willingness to offer care, comfort and support a social mandate. Children were treated with extraordinary kindness and attention to their needs. Elders treated with respect and deference. Individuals of high rank were expected to act with dignity, generosity and wisdom, seeking consensus from others rather than to impose orders if at all possible (Bragdon 1996:174-5 citing Wood 1634 and R. Williams 1936; Simmons 1986:12-13). Travelers were welcomed at any time of the day or night (Bragdon 1996:131). Even when unannounced, visitors were entertained, and offered the hosts' best sleeping spaces and all of their food. The hosts made their tools and other resources available and assisted with travel or other needs.

Tobacco also played an important role in mediating relationships in daily life as well as social, political and ceremonial interactions. Ninnimissinuok peoples shared smoking tobacco with newcomers, guests, travelers, newcomers and in councils of all sorts (Bragdon 1996:220). Tobacco smoke was used to attract manitou who were thought to be addicted to it (Bragdon 1996:204) and was often linked with birds and pipes, common to many Native North Americans. Tobacco smoke and the act of sharing a pipe was both invocation and evocation of spiritual power within the network of relations and signified ties of reciprocal obligation and respect.

People could petition others more fortunate than themselves for gifts. On one level, this reinforced social differences, one person supplicating themselves to another; yet, it was also a source of joy for those able to provide for others and manifested the celebration of abundance available in a relational cosmos. Emerging from social inequality, this form of demand sharing helped to affect a certain degree of social leveling that supported a stable and healthy social group and reinforced community interdependence (Bragdon 1996:131-2 citing Bird-David 1992:31, Peterson 1993:869).

Relational interdependence is encoded in many Algonquian languages. In Whorf's (1956) sense that language and worldview are tightly interwoven, Algonquian languages in southeastern New England and elsewhere encode the high value placed on the power of transformation and the fluid and flexible nature of boundaries between spirit and matter that make it possible (Bragdon 1996:135). Natural and supernatural were not distinctly separated (pg.185).

In Abenaki, the word meaning *human nature* also means *birth* (Brooks 2008:2), embedding the notion that human "being" might better be conceived as human "becoming" and always in a state of "emergence and the active state of transformation that birth implies (pg 2)." This worldview emphasizes emergence – the value of action, activity, relationship, transformation, adaptability and mobility. Persons, objects and places are not bounded and fixed in a specific coordinate of time and space. Instead, they are constantly interacting, interwoven as an interdependent network of relations, a common pot. Material and social landscapes

are living topographies that are constantly emerging through the ongoing activities of the various beings who share the space. Living in this great community of persons mandated conscientiousness about human dependency upon, and obligation to, the other inhabitants of the universe with whom humans shared material and spiritual space.

Speaking of this common pot where (Abenaki) language, land and people are fully intertwined, Brooks (2008:251) writes:

> The language itself contains multiple intertwined understandings of land as the common pot of the village, inhabited by a particular people, whether it refers to the village of Ottowa, Odonak, or Kahnawaak: the common pot of the world, *kdakinna*, in which we are all interacting and affecting each other; the common pot of Abenaki space, *ndakinna*, Native land, which is inclusive of the concepts of indigeneity and sovereignty; and the common pot of Wabanaki, which can mean, interchangeably, Wabanaki land or Wabanaki people and suggests not merely the land itself, or even all of its inhabitants, but a particular way of seeing and being in the land that is the Wabanaki 'world'.

Early linguistic maps created by Wabanaki peoples traveling through Native space during the early years of their relationship with Europeans document not only the names of particular places but stories about those who lived there, and the oral traditions and histories of the place itself, creating a "conceptual map of the territory" of communal memory known to Wabanaki peoples event today (Brooks 2008:249-251). In southern New England, indigenous maps are likewise topologically organized by markers of social familiarity and political proximity (Bragdon 1996:127). Native space as a web of relationships-in-exchange was "mapped" in other ways, as well. Birch bark inscribed with pictographs mapped cultural information and histories, and intergroup communications that traveled

throughout the northeast and morphed into letters and petitions when Europeans entered Native space. The designs organizing the arrangement of wampum shells woven into wampum belts are materialized narratives that document mediations and agreements between particular peoples and mapped these interactions as geo-cultural topographies (Brooks 2008:8-9, 13). Pictographic art on boulders throughout the region was another form visual literacy (Bragdon 1996:210).

Human activities marking the enactments of reciprocity and generosity also contributed to the indigenous landscape. People walked along the vast network of pathways to visit, resettle in seasonal homes, hunt and fish at favored spots, trade, share information, or participate in political and ceremonial events. Remarkable events or meetings that occurred along the way were sometimes marked with holes in the ground. It was carefully maintained and used as a touchstone for spreading the story that it signified to all passers-by (Bragdon 1996:127), filling ones journey along the path with "many historical discourses (citing Winslow 1910) ."

Boundaries between human and other-than-human beings were fluid (Bragdon 1996:193; Simmons 1986). Similarly, person and place were intimately interconnected. These concepts are embedded in many Algonquian languages. *Wetu*, the Massachuset word for house, belongs to a class of nouns that establish close connections between house, kin terms and body parts (Bragdon 1996:136), concepts reinforced by other related terms signifying an intimate relationship between home, self and kin. Food, land and the concept of a human person were also intimately connected. The house, in the common pot of Native space,

nourished the family which is fed by the village and the "networks that sustain the village (Brooks 2008:4)."

The Massachuset[21] word for "body," for example, refers to the concept of *covering* (Bragdon 1996:193) and was quite permeable, allowing out-of-body travel. The Ninnimissinuok soul was dual in nature. Among the Narragansett, for example, the clear soul, associated with the heart, was seen as the animating life force (pg. 191). The dream soul, which was located in the head, could temporarily leave the body through dreams, visions (induced or spontaneous) and during illness. It roamed about during dreams and illness, and was sometimes seen as a light or flame (Bragdon 1996:191; Simmons 1986), a manifestation also present in Penobscot, Mohegan and Wampanoag stories into the twentieth-century (Simmons 1986).

Through soul travel, Ninnimissinuok interacted with various manitou and spirits, including souls of the dead, who sometimes imparted information regarding impending danger, granted protection and offered assistance or, in the case of certain shamanic practitioners and healers, conferred supernatural powers (Simmons 1986:40-41, 44-45). Given the extreme importance of one's ability to make these liminal crossings in order to attain spiritual power, this way of knowing and obtaining information was highly valued. Spirit spoke directly to individuals but the information was often meant for the entire group or community (Bragdon 1996; Simmons 1986:66-68).

Figure 27: Hawk at a Cultural Survival Event

Akin to the human soul, stones, animals, plants, shells and other "objects" in the natural world were not confined to – nor defined by – their physical parameters in time and space. They were fully entangled in cosmologic and social realms. As members of the great community of persons, they sometimes had the capacity to interact with humans and mediate social, political, kin and spiritual relationships. Some objects held special spiritual and mediating power – value – by virtue of their natural shape, surface imagery, unusual characteristics or location on the landscape. Others acquired special forms of wealth as they were transformed by human activity, mobilized and transformed through their interactions in a network of relationships (Bragdon 1996; Brooks 2008; Connole 2007; Simmons 1986). Shells, in general, were important sources of manitou, being the manifestation of under-water and water's-edge creatures. Wampum, a particular shell used in the northeast as a form of payment until well into the seventeenth century, served as a form of economic, cultural, social and spiritual exchange (Bragdon 1996:207;

Murray 2000). It continues today to be an important form of exchange among Native peoples in New England and elsewhere.

Stones were prominent persons and places in the Ninnimissinuok world. Among other things, they were important relational markers, not as inanimate objects but as rock-persons situated in spatial coordinates where history, cosmologic beings and human activities and kinship networks and oral traditions intersected in the landscape. In most, if not all, Algonquian languages, rocks and stones embody “stone-ness,” a form of overt animism (Wheeler and Buchner 1975:370). Boulders, very often at the edge of the sea or in liminal manitou places on the landscape, inscribed with pictographic art of shamanic motifs from Ontario to southern New England and Long Island document the likelihood that the Native groups living in these areas shared a generalized worldview that underpinned ritual practice (Bragdon 1996:208-212).Stones also played a prominent role in some origin stories. In the Narragansett Creation Myth, for example, Cautantouwit created the first man and women from stone then, unhappy with these, made a second and successful version of humanity out of wood who became the ancestors of contemporary humans (Simmons 1986).

Figure 28: Stone Turtle, Central Fire

Animals were also seen as important manitou, spirit beings whose presence or appearance was sometimes taken as a sign, a direct communication from spirit bringing guidance, insight, or forewarning (Bragdon 1996:184; Simmons 1986). Birds, especially crows and eagles, are important messengers and were often associated with shamanic transformations and soul flight (Bragdon 1996:204; Simmons 1986). They are also prominent in folklore, origin myths and stories about day-to-day life. Snakes, eels, turtles and other water-dwelling animals are also particularly important. Ninnimissinuok painted and tattooed images of birds and animals onto their bodies, and carved them onto wood, stone and tools; they painted and wove images of animals into clothing, mats, and headbands; and they created jewelry shapes as animals (Bragdon 1996:186; Simmons 1986). By using animal images in these and other ways, people appropriated the power of manitou, transforming it into the object and anchoring it in the network of relations within which the objects was used and exchanged.

> These (ritual) guidelines are in place for reasons, usually safety and also um, the fluidity of the ceremonies, OK. If you, ya know, because our responsibility when we conduct ceremonies is basically like a facilitator, you create an atmosphere that's comfortable for everyone to best open themselves up um, for that interaction between themselves and Creator, themselves and spirit world" ~ Bert 2/14/11

There were many ceremonial settings in which Ninnimissinuok people endeavored to directly engage, acknowledge, or entreat manitou to participate in the important events in their lives. Although there were local differences in the particularities of ceremonies among the various groups in southern New England, they shared some common features. Times of illness or war, death, birth, taking a new name, marriage and other major changes in relationships, hunting, gathering and preparing food for consumption, as well as times of seasonal change were often marked with communal ceremonial activities (Simmons 41986:6-49). Personal rituals, which could be spontaneous and relatively unstructured (Bragdon 1996:226) and shamanic ceremonies focused specifically on contacting and appropriating the spiritual power of manitou toward particular ends (Bradgon 229). Public and calendrical ceremonies, while less directly focused on achieving particular goals, channeled this spiritual power in a way that might benefit individuals, the whole of society and, indeed, the greater community of persons. Seasonal ceremonies were held annually and privately sponsored events occurred throughout the year; both had significant importance for social and spiritual purposes (Bragdon 1996:228-229).

Nikommo, or *feast*, ceremonies appear to have been common throughout Ninnimissinuok territories (Bragdon 1996:173, 228-229; Connole 2007; Simmons

1986:45 citing Williams 1935 and Winslow 1910:46-48). Seasonally, harvest feasts in the fall and winter-time feasts held sometime around the winter solstice were well documented by European visitors, as were a few references to spring and feasts (Bragdon 1996:110; Simmons 1986). They were sometimes held after a successful hunt or by prominent individuals who invited others to their homes (Bragdon 1996:227-228) and when someone acquired a new name, something that could occur several times in the course of a lifetime (Simmons 1986:46-47). Sacred gambling and sporting events were popular (Bragdon 1996:218, 222, 227). In another ceremony, participants rested under trees for solemn, public discussions (Bragdon 1996:226) which certainly signified the spiritual importance of this gathering since the ground in which trees were situated was a liminal threshold, and the tree itself a pathway linking the three realms (Bradgon 1996:220).

Dancing, feasting, fasting, Sweatlodge ceremonies, smoking tobacco and the use of medicinal herbs, prayer, and specialized speech styles and vocalizations that invoked particular moods and focus typified communal activities. Repetitive vocalizations and movements created intensified interactional space. A lengthy description of a Nipmuc ceremony during the seventeenth century reiterates the central importance of dance and singing in this process. Throughout the night, each man takes a turn to "give a way" all of his possession, one at a time, while he dances around the fire and everyone else sings (Bragdon 1996:218). Participation in these activities enacted cycles of sacrifice and renewal, and inspired a feeling of communal belonging, reconstituting cosmologic and social hierarchies while

reinforcing the power of generosity, sharing, sacrifice and obligation to bring all the resources needed for health and well-being (Bragdon 1996:53, 217, 229; Brooks 2008; V. Turner 1969; Simmons 1986).

Gift-giving was always a central feature of ceremonial and social gatherings. At times, high status individuals would give away enormous amounts of food and other goods. Among the Narragansett and Wampanoag, there were occasions during which a shaman or individual of high status would sacrificed everything they owned to the fire, which was seen as a way to honor the creator (Simmons 1986:46 citing Winslow 1910). Important personal possessions were buried with the dead, sacrificing sometimes extremely valuable objects by sending them to the realm of spirit, and giving the rest away (Bragdon 1996; Simmons 1986). Gift-giving included social and spiritual sacrifices, not just objects or food. Powwows (shamans) and healers sacrificed the gifts given them as "payment" for their services. Participants labored to meet the practical needs of the community during gatherings (Bragdon 1996; Simmons 1986:46-48).

Food and food practices were the focus of many Ninniminissuok gift-giving activities at ceremonies and other gatherings. At times, a carcass would be ceremonially butchered and split into proportional parts in preparation to share it with other families, groups or guests (Bragdon 1996;). Prayers and speeches of thanks acknowledging the sacrifice of the food itself and dependence upon spirit for the gift of nourishment (Brooks 2008) were typical markers of a broader practice of thanksgiving accompanying giving and receiving all kinds of gifts.

Fasting while others feasted was sometimes given as a gift by the host of ceremonies. These and other forms of relationship with food – fasting or feasting; hunting and gathering; planting and harvesting; preparations of the food itself; when, where and with whom these activities occur, and so on – were complex visceral enactments of the link between destruction and renewal, sacrifice and general well-being and health (Bragdon 1996).

Elaborate preparations and planning went into organizing ceremonial and social gatherings. Food, gifts, wood for the fires and other materials were gathered and organized. Messengers were sent out to sometimes distant villages with notices of the upcoming affair. Family, friends and invited guests sometimes traveled from great distances to camp or stay in the homes of those hosting the gathering. Individuals sometimes prepared special clothing and primped with body paints, hair styles, or signs of wealth such as with wampum (Bragdon 1996:173 citing Wood 1634 and R. Williams 1936). Ceremonial grounds were cleaned and organized. Sweatlodges, lodges for women who were menstruating, and, among the Narragansett at least, special arbors and large buildings for ritual, gambling and other activities were constructed (Bragdon 1996:219 citing R. Williams 1936).

Ceremonial grounds were typically circular, situating buildings and activities toward a common, central ground. Ceremonial structures and pits were typically circular, directing attention toward, and the flow of activities around, a center fire where the three realms converged and the threshold into mythic space and time could be crossed by humans and their other-than-human relations

(Bragdon 1996:185, 219). Narragansett feasts They were often situated in places inhabited by manitou, sacred places where powerful beings could be engaged (Bragdon 1996:218, 192 citing Hamell 1987:67-69): atop hills where earth and sky meet; in dug pits or caves of the underworld; near springs, lakesides or the edge of the sea where water and earth mingle together (Bragdon 1996:185). Fire played a critical role in virtually all ceremonial and social gatherings, from war preparations to ceremonial invocations of trance and soul journeys, to and was always at the center of human bodies and activities. Circles within circles around a fire, giveaways and the obligations they create: an embodied motif of socio-sacred spatialization of cosmos.

The land of the Ninnimissinuok was grounded by familiarity and marked by signifiers of social proximity, relationships and personal history. Its indexical field is anchored in a worldview that emerges into day-to-day life through ways that people, spirit beings, animals, rocks, trees, ceremonies, language, sound, bodily practices, kin and economic networks and the landscape are interconnected and woven into space-time. Health and well-being depended upon these interconnections between and among heterogenous elements. The wealth value of a thing was not the thing itself but in the means and manner of its connection to everything else. Inscribed objects and places complemented oral traditions, serving as touchstones for communal memories, valid mechanism for passing information re: cultural knowledge, social and personal interaction forward (Brooks 2008:xxi).

When Europeans arrived on the Algonquian coast of New England, they entered into Native space: a network of relations and waterways containing many different groups of people as well as animal, plant and rock beings that was sustained through the constant transformative "'being' of its inhabitants (Brooks 2008:3)." They became a part of Native space, new members of the network of relations who brought unique resources, tools and perspectives to the common pot. Tradition, in a relational cosmos, was not an isolated, finite, atomized moment or form of enactment; it was a range of practices that shifted with the advent of new relationships and networks. It was a process involving innovation and re-alignments by which social and cosmologic principles could be sustained (Bragdon 1996:160).

Consistent with traditional patterns of mobility, adaptability and cohesion organized through family ties, kin-networks and landscapes marked with familiar places and interactions, "old patterns of thought in new guises (Bragdon 1996:246)" emerged as adaptive mechanisms of survival. Native space is mnemonic, it has its own set of memories, and when the old people go out on the land it nudges or reminds them, and their memories are rekindled (Brooks 2008:228). Among southeastern New England Algonquian peoples, ritual was not static but a means for creating and recreating relationships always in various states of transformation, incorporation renewal (Bragdon 2008:230). Loose "political" structure is the way that they traditionally constructed intra- and intergroup relationships. Knowledge, and ways of knowing, lives in communal memory and

practice, and the Native landscape in the display of natural things (Brooks 2008:201). In northeastern Algonquian languages, the notion of "we" is complex and multilayered (Brooks 2008:202).

> …for me to gather a piece of knowledge today and apply it today doesn't mean that tomorrow those same pieces of information will work for tomorrow's condition. I think about tradition that way. I do think that it's a living, it's a living thing; or, at least, when its potential is realized or its greatest potential is realized, when it's kept alive. When it's not just a rote behavior, ya know, learned behavior and passed from one person to the next in the same form. I think what I'm hearing…when you speak of tradition, as I understand it, or I hear you, it's not something that's dead, like it's not this sort of really structured thing that doesn't change. It's like a living thing, tradition.
> Hawk

Into the Future

Akin to Hawk's notion of intention as an invisible thread that connects invisible and apparently non-present spaces, places and people within the Sweatlodge, Native cosmology generates a vast network of invisible, multidimensional threads – metasemiotic substances – that flow across time and space to create the networks of relations and manifest forms of engagement that organize and generate Native spaces in New England . Some of these threads snaked their way into the future to become some of the most important social and cosmologic anchors of the Harvest Gathering, writ large.

Rocks

In contemporary discourse, stone piles marking major cross-roads, burial grounds and past violent conflicts in southeastern New England continue to be places where Native people can still meet and communicate with their ancestors. Redemption Rock, for example, which sits at the intersection of ancient trailways at

the base of Mount Wachusett in Massachusetts, is an important marker of Nipmuc history and their evolving relationships with the land, each other, other Native peoples and those who come from other continents (Connole 2007:202). To this day, it is a living place where historical narratives, cultural stories and personal sensory experiences of its environs are anchored. The stone-people, transformed into memory piles by indigenous activities, validate the presence of Nipmuc and other southeastern Native peoples still living in their homelands and serve to focus community attention and cooperation through ongoing efforts to demand that these sacred markers be protected under state law.[22]

Alternately, rocks reduced to abstract objects are used to erase Native peoples and their spaces from the landscape, bemoaning the passing of the "last" noble Indian. Infused with the ambivalence by which living Native people are simultaneously recorded in written accounts and turned into ghosts who longer actually inhabit true "Indianness," these rocks – Sachem's Rock, Indian Rock, and so on – exist in a different cosmos. Town histories and historical practices throughout southern New England (for example, Doughton 1997, 1999), not infrequently used rocks marking Native space to re-anchor the past in the ambiguity used to justify the myth of Indian disappearance. During the 1859 bicentennial commemoration of the incorporation of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, for example, Sachem's Rock is cited as the very place where the town founders bought the land from their great friends the Pokanoket (Wampanoag), all of whom were by then "long gone." Sachem's Rock is "a physical landmark…invoked in

order to evoke a virtuous Bridgewater history of just property transactions, to replace one set of traditions with another, and to collapse a complex history of interaction and conflict into a 'short' time that culminated in a lamentable and unexplained story of Indian disappearance (O'Brien 2006).

Recognition

"We're not waiting for approval from someone. We're here; we're Nipmucs on Nipmuc soil, singing Nipmuc songs."[23]

The processes of indigenous recognition are riddled with groups whose historic and cultural practices of self-identification do not necessarily fit neatly into a nation-state's definition of what constitutes an authentic "tribe" or indigenous person. Recognition is cunning and its formalized processes rife with power inequities perpetuated by visions of national cohesion (Povinelli 2002).

For about ten years, from about the mid-1980's to the mid-1990's, Lisa and Hawk were fully immersed in the re-emergence of Nipmuc/k and other northeastern Indian communities from what Calloway calls the "Dark Ages" (1997). For centuries, images of the poetic, tragic northeastern Native imposed non-presence on people still living, rendering them restrained by a discourse of vanishing (Brooks 2008:199; Doughton 1993, 1997, 1999), and historical and literary erasure (Bruchac 2007; O'Brien 2006).

Building on Native concepts of community spatial practice and homeland – irreducibly weaving kin networks, mobility and place-making into a geography of movement (Reiser 2010) , Nipmuc and other Native families and communities in

southern New England used a variety of distinctly indigenous strategies to survive. Perhaps some chose to deal with stigmatization and racism by intentionally hiding visible expressions of culture while continuing to practice covertly, becoming invisible (McMullen 2004). Others argue that they camouflaged themselves by mimicking non-Native behavior (Mandell 1996) and thus blinding non-Natives' ability to "see" them; that is, Native cultural practices and identities were not invisible but "hiding in plain sight (Doughton 1997)," perhaps in way akin to the Pilgrims' inability to "see" the extensive changes in the landscape created by Native agricultural practices (Cronon 1983). Recent scholarship advocates for a more creative approach to the search for evidence of ongoing, albeit profoundly transformed, signs of Native life in New England (Mancini 2009).

As with all American Indian peoples, ethnohistoric and contemporary accounts of the Native New England must take into account the complex relationships and adaptations emerging from colonial contact (Darnell 2006: 11). Western European ideologies supporting the doctrine of discovery, with which colonial expansion and all of its strategies of dispossession were justified[24]continue to impact national and international laws affecting indigenous peoples everywhere. Romanticized images of what "real" Indians look like and others who appropriate Indian markers of identity by playing Indian (in feathers and tipi's perpetrate their absence in However, this is not because Indigenous cultures do not exist apart from European expansion in their own right (Bragdon 1996:7) or that they lack culturally distinct durable forms of remembering (Brooks 2008)[25]. Rather, it

speaks to the importance of recognizing that Native people continue to survive through their expression of kinship, community and historical consciousness (Darnell 2004:10 citing Fogelson 1989:139) while attending to the ways that Euro-American ideologies and cultural practices – and their underlying motivations and perspectives – may have been translated into Native spaces (d'Hauteserre 2010:109).

The Renaissance of New England Algonquian peoples embodies forms of indigeneity rooted in *this* place, and *their* particular ways of seeing, belonging, and being in the world (Doughton 1997, 1999) as well as cultural forms linked to their participation in Pan-Indian political in the early decades of the twentieth century (McMullen 1994, 2004). Akin to a process engaged by many other Native North Americans dealing with the fallout of colonization, contemporary cultural movements among the Nipmuc and other southern New England Natives draw upon this worldview to re-member and re-assemble Native space which is, by definition and practice, mnemonic (Brooks 2008).

Nipmuc peoples are finding their own mnemonic way. "We've found these threads, the canoes, the songs, the language. They are links to the past, but also a way to continue into the future," says Cheryl Stedtler (Nipmuc) in a Boston Globe (6 June 2009) article about the discovery of three Nipmuc canoes at the bottom of Lake Quinsigamond in Worchester, Massachusetts. For Little Crow, Mount Wachusett (in Worchester County, Massachusetts) is a sacred landscape that tells the story of Nipmuc history, the shift of power in colonial southern New England

from Native autonomy to forced removals, the cultural transformation of landscapes into English villages, and ultimate survival of Nipmuc peoples. It is a touchstone for the telling of cosmologic interconnections and responsibilities:

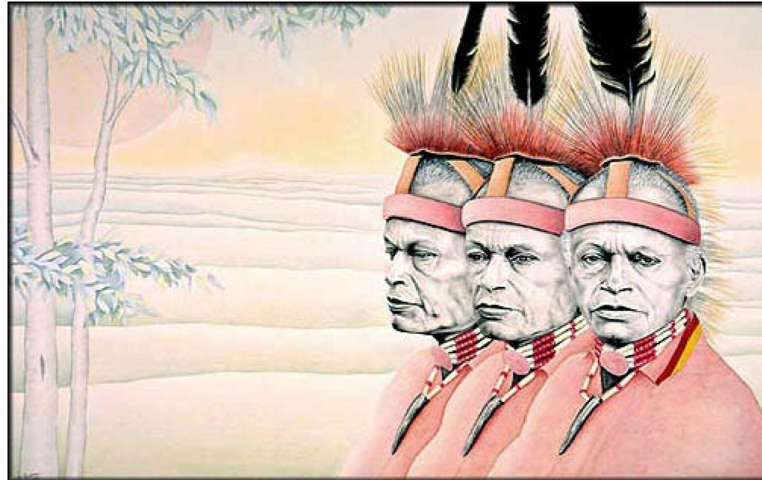

Figure 29: Little Crow and Mount Wachusett. Artist Gerry Biron. 1987

> I look at the circle a little differently than other people. To me it's a church. Before I enter the circle and dance on the grass, I ask for forgiveness. Everything has a spirit. I must respect that if I expect to receive respect in turn. So, before I do anything that might damage the spirit of living things, I ask for forgiveness. [26]

The Henries' engagement of this Renaissance and Hawk's active role in the revitalization of musical practices rooted in eastern Algonquian traditions signify their inculcation of an indigenous worldview and related sets of social and spiritual values and practices. Their home and surrounding landscapes, kin and community networks, work, and day-to-day and ceremonial lives, including the Gathering, are infused with these values. Their approach to gift-giving embodies values of generosity and sharing that trace to a form of reciprocity evident in some of the earliest accounts by the English in their relationships with Natives in southern New

England. This trajectory in their lives was inspired, refined, and rendered viable in the tumult and challenge of events surrounding the Nipmuc bid for federal recognition.

Within this context, the recovery of Native space in New England includes the reclamation of "traditional" practices, in the historic sense,[27] in tandem with the emergence of innovative social forms given their shape by virtue of their embeddedness in traditional concepts about the *relational* nature of the indigenous cosmos. An important part of recovering Nipmuc space was the reconstitution of socio-ceremonial community gatherings whose constituent elements, and material and semiotic forms, directly inspired the Harvest Gathering. Some of these Gatherings are described in the pages of Nipmucspohke, a newsletter published between 1994 and 2001 that was designed as an educational and outreach tool in support of the Nipmuc appeal for federal recognition. The earlier issues, in particular, focus on cultural practices, cosmology and worldview, perhaps reflecting a focus on education. I want to touch on just a few examples of the particular traces linking the Gathering to these activities.

One issue talks about the use of a Talking Stick used during talking circles. Only the holder is allowed to speak and the stick is passed from person to person, around the circle. This practice "has been used in Native circles for many centuries and recognizes the value of each speaker. Every member of the meeting must listen closely to the words being spoken (Autumn 1994: 5)" and is a way to embody the value of listening. The materials that can be used in their construction embody

particular meanings; cedar is used for cleansing, white pine to empower peace, blue to invoke intuition, for example.). These sticks are a form of personal medicine. Each one is unique. “The skins, hair or hides used in making a Talking Stick bring the abilities, talents, gifts and medicine or healing qualities of those Creature Beings to Council in a variety of ways.” For example, Snake skin may be used to transmute poisons causing an illness of heart, mind, spirit or body; the wood itself brings the qualities of the Standing Person (Tree) from which it is taken.

The stick, endowed with these qualities and the intentions of its maker endow the Stick with efficacy as an arbiter of interaction, which includes human and non-human persons. It acts as a mediator of a particular cultural ideology of interaction that emphasizes respect for each speaker’s point of view which, in turn, indexes notions about definitions of personhood and communication consistent with northeastern Algonquian cosmologies.

> The Talking Stick is the tool that teaches us to honor the Sacred Point of View of every living creature. In Council, if we listen to the wisdom and teachings of others, we can then broaden our understanding and relate in a new manner to others. It has been said that the Great Wheel of Life has many spokes and that each of us will stand on every spoke at one time or another (Winter, p. 3).

Other articles in various issues of Nipmucspohke focus on gathering as a social and spiritual concept, and as a particular form of practice. The Autumn 1994 headline reads, “Spiritual gathering harvests hope among Nipmucs;” the Winter headline reads, “Nipmucs gather to remember.” The purposes of gathering are reiterated in several places throughout the related articles: “The idea of the gathering is to bring us together, renew, teach, learn and share. There is something

for everyone;" "…anyone and everyone is welcome;" "…[for participants] not familiar with tribal traditions, this is a time to learn; if you walk the traditional path it is a time to share;" "...helpful to remember that everyone participates in his or her own way. When the talking stick is passed, you may do and say what is comfortable for you. If you prefer not to speak, that is respected and accepted."

Various activities at the gathering are briefly recounted, including the Sweatlodge and first light ceremonies and further described by saying that "…these are held in such a manner that those experiencing them for the first time are at ease and welcome." Planning for the upcoming harvest-time gathering, potential attendees are encouraged to "Bring the ideas and thoughts you've harvested through the year; now is the time for us to sit and talk." In another article describing gatherings in memory of ancestors who suffered deportment and death during the seventeenth century, participants stood in a circle by the waterfall where "…the words were solemn and softly spoken." Participants were encouraged to pick up a small stone and put it in the water. Each stone, as a symbol of enduring life," can represent a life that was given," explains Star Curliss (Nipmuc and Nipmuc Commissioner to the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, at that time). "Give a stone to the water to symbolize a life given and five it back (the life) – honor it."

Descriptions of winter (Popon) and fall gatherings emphasize the strong links between the season – cyclic change after the time of harvest, darkness, cold – and traditional values associated with the season – giving thanks, reflecting on the

nature of life as an ongoing cycle "within all beings and elements (pg. 4)." In the fall, people gather "to harvest the spiritual seeds that had been sown throughout the year." At the winter gathering, a time to give thanks, people participate in a Give-a-way ceremony and potluck meal during the "season for keeping the heart fires burning," says Eagle Sun Strong Heart, who is identified as Nipmuc spiritual leader. "The Northern medicine animal is Bear, and as Bear hibernates, we do similar things. Parts of us we put to sleep now, and we awaken our inner essence," he says. Popon is a season of silence and listening for inner "visionary guidance created especially for your uniqueness," which can inspire creativity and inspiration and self-actualization As time for renewal, forgiveness and refinement, he invites people who plan to attend to quietly gather sticks for people they would like to forgive, which will be "given to the Sacred Fire as Forgiveness offerings."

In the past, says Kitt Little Turtle, a Chaubunagungamaug Medicine Person, says in a separate article (pg. 4), that in times past, Nipmuc and other Native American peoples measured time by natural cycles and rhythms using the thirteen lunar months, which are sometimes represented by the thirteen segments of a snapping turtle shell. He emphasizes hibernation and taking self-inventory but adds an element of foreshadowing: "…we plant seeds of love, wisdom, health, growth and any personal areas where change of improvement is needed. We are 'in the dark.' Darkness is not a negative thing, for it represents the creativity of our inner self. In the absence of light, we are like germinating seeds waiting for the warmth

and moisture of the Spring Equinox (or, true 'new year') to rouse us from dormancy."

After making reference to what he sees as the obvious logic by which the "early Christian Church chose to move Christ's birthday from September to the time of the Winter Solstice," Little Turtle draws interesting correlations between Nikkomo, a benevolent Algonquian spirit, and the Euro-American Santa Claus. Available year-round, Nikkomo helps those who provide food for the people.

> Coinciding with Christmas festivities, Nikkomo is honored with dancing, feasting and the giving of gifts to the needy. The embodied spirit of provision and generosity makes his home among the evergreens, where young children are always hopeful of catching a glimpse of him as he makes his way through the forests. Even the wildlife are watched over and led to feeding grounds. Like Santa, the Native American gift-giver is not a god or idol, but a symbol of the Creator's concern for all living things.[28]

These are just some of the historic sources and personal experiences that, through the activities of the Henries family, were decontextualized, transported and to varying degrees re-organized, and re-assembled at the Harvest Gathering. For example: particular notions about the treatment of travelers and newcomers; manners of public speech and posture (especially by Hawk and a few others); the use of plants and herbs in particular settings and for particular purposes; bodies and activities organized in circles, turn-taking practices and the values that underlie them; gift giving, sharing food, and other forms of multi-layered exchange; the use of circles, stones, fire and other marks upon the landscape to designate important thresholds linking different realms of existence; the interpretation of an animal's presence and behavior, or the use of animal shapes to embody the presence of

cosmologic connections between human and other-than-human beings; activities along pathways and other place-making activities as embodied acts by which multiple levels of presence are summoned and grounded; overt acknowledgement of spatial coordinates that forms of social and ceremonial engagement constituted of elements that echo those with roots in the earliest years of Nipmuc contact with the English in southern New England.

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[6] I have decided to use the terms Native American and American Indian as interchangeable in this paper, making the effort not to favor one or the other. In my own experience here in the northeast as well as in other parts of the United States (as well as among people I have met from other countries and continents), self-labeling using these words varies from person to person, community to community, and region to region. Hawk has also shifted in his choice along these lines; when I first met him I believe that he used Native American, shifting later to Indigenous. Most recently, he identifies himself as Nipmuc as a way to avoid the over-generalizations of other labels. I should also note that the two bands of Nipmuc/k currently spell their names differently, Hawk chooses Nipmuc.

[7] One notable exception is the Tunica-Biloxi annual powwow in Louisiana, in which he has participated for over fourteen years.

[8] Bradley Hospital established 1931. http://www.lifespan.org/bradley/about/history/default.htm Accessed 1/24/2012.

[9] Mosse, Kate. Labyrinth. Pg. 507. Berkeley Books: New York.
[10] Wikicommon image. Accessed 2/11/12

[11] See an early history of the reserve written by historian Thomas Lewis Doughton (Nipmuc) at http://massasoit.0catch.com/grafton1.htm

[12] Copied from Abbe Museum website, accessed 2/12/12.

[13] Sadly, John Rainer died on June 14, 2011.

[14] I use the label Anishnaabe, per Hollis' request.

[15] I focus on Hawk here, because we have spent the most time talking with my recorder rolling. I should say that Lisa and Sierra articulate similar views. In a spirit of full disclosure, I also share a surprising similar worldview, surprising, perhaps, because I did not "get there" via Native America. Perhaps this supports Hawk's supposition that we, humans, have access to some sort of "common pot" of cosmic information, or are members of a common pot…Hmm.

[16] In 1879 the first students, a group of 84 Lakota children, arrived at the newly established United States Indian Training and Industrial School at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, a boarding school founded by former Indian-fighter Captain Richard Henry Pratt to remove young Indians from their native

culture and refashion them as members of mainstream American society. Over the next two decades, twenty-four more schools on the Carlisle model will be established outside the reservations, along with 81 boarding schools and nearly 150 day schools on the Indians' own land."
http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/imperialism/notes/nativeamericanchron.html

[17] March 1999 Worchester Telegraph article, last Nipmuc at Grafton in the obituaries on 3/28/20, 1/27/24 and 10/10/48

[18] Bragdon (pg. 29) identifies further shared features uniting Western Abenaki, Massachusett, Loup A, Loup B, Narragansett, Mohegan-Pequot and Quiripi-Unguqcho (Goddard 1978) into a southeastern New England subgroup

[19] Stones are piled in a particular spot that mark an important event, sacred space or meeting place. They sometimes grow for many years as people continue to narrate and memorialize the place and its importance. Common in Native New England, they are at the center of many current debates and conflicts regarding the identification of Native space and its use and development in southern New England.

[20] http://www.suttonmass.org/nipmuc/wigwam.html accessed 10.21.12

[21] Massachusett is one of the most well-known Algonquian languages of southeastern New England: Massachusett, Narragansett, Mohegan-Pequot-Montauk. Nipmuc may have been what is now identified as Loup A, based on records of French colonists who lived with Abenaki people to the west of Nipmuc territory

[22] Indian country news 2008, AP 7 June 2008 Ray Henry

[23] Larry (Spotted Crow) Mann (Nipmuc), quoted in the Boston Globe, June 6, 2009.

[24] Largely rooted in the political philosophies of Thomas Hobbes' (5 April 1588 – 4 December 1679) and John Locke (29 August 1632 – 28 October 170) whose ideas about nature as wild and uncontrolled stood in oppositional meaning to civilization as cultivation – land is to be brought under dominion by agriculture and society is to be brought under dominion through rule of law. American Indians were thus viewed as uncultivated peoples living on uncultivated lands, making them and their territories available for cultivation – civilization – by Europeans. Kelly (2009) elaborates these philosophies, and their devastating effects on Native Americans, as a worldview constructed with a notion of "emptiness," a lens through which Native lands were viewed as empty of human presence. Cronon (1983) eloquently describes "edge effect" of Native gardens, typically planted at the edge of the woods using multi-crop strategies to minimize the need to fertilize or weed. European settlers, he argues, lacked the conceptual skills needed to perceive these relatively unintrusive strategies and different system of cultural and social values embedded in them.

[25] Brooks points out that the non-linguistic inscriptions and designs used on wampum belts and birch bark scrolls are forms of cultural communication and documentation that not only serve as markers of Native space and interrelations of all sorts but also "exemplify a spatialized writing tradition (pg 12)."

[26] http://www.gerrybiron.com/pages/prints/09_little_crow.html.

[27] A thorough ethnohistoric evaluation would be very interesting, but is not my purpose since the Gathering is neither identified nor practiced as something *Native*. Moreover, there are already many wonderful ethnohistoric works focused on southern New England, thanks to a groundswell of

interest among scholars and Native communities engaged in their Renaissance during the past few decades.[27] The general trend of academic debates, in recent years, are focused on the question of the survival of southern New England Native cultures in terms of assimilation (or not, to what degree, does hybrid count as real, and so on), the creation of various forms of nationalism – Pan-Indian or otherwise (McMullen 2004) – positional identities situated in opposition to colonizer ideologies, cultural positioning relative to modernity (Deloria 2004), processes of acculturation (culture seen as static, bounded), and so on.

[28] Article first published by the Blackstone Valley Tribune, Wednesday, December 22, 1993; written by Kitt Little Turtle.

Chapter 3: The Spaces of the Gathering

"That dawn She came, riding the sun, humpback flute player heralding Her dawn the Corn, sweet maiden, riding the new day latest in a series of alternate paths time of colors rising (Allen 1980)."

Hawk's work as a musician and all that this entails, could easily fill the pages of another dissertation or book. In and of itself, it is not the central point in my discussion here. Yet, it is the central signifying practice lying at the heart of the swirl of activities drawing people to the Harvest Gathering. At the hub of ongoing reflexive discussions about what it means to actively engage people from a variety of social and cultural worlds, and how to go about it, his musical practice is directly aligned the practice of the Gathering.

Hawk's work as a musician, flute maker and speaker is the central signifying practice at the hub of the ever-shifting swirl of activities by and through which the Harvest Gathering emerges into semiotic materiality every autumn. He is arguably the most verbally articulate[29] among those of us centrally responsible for "holding" the space of the Gathering year-to-year. At the very least, he is by far the most visible – and thus, most available – to the widest variety of people and spaces of interaction. The Flute's material presence and capacity for influence emerges from the specific trajectories of individual human life pathways and the particular historic, cultural and social worlds to which these individuals align themselves.

> As a medium, music has the ability to effect the environment in which it is used. It is very useful for bringing people to a calm and open place, an inner place where deep listening and understanding can happen. Sometimes the depth of gratitude or love or sadness cannot be adequately expressed with

> words. Through the flute's voice these ideas and emotions can be articulated serving not only my need to express but also helping the listeners' be in touch with their own feelings. ~ Hawk

My goal in the following section is to provide a few key examples of how Hawk use music, ceremony, and notions of tradition as tools for exploring questions of cultural difference and common ground, and how these tools of exploration draw people to the Gathering. Given the years and tremendous variation of settings in which Hawk has worked, I cannot do more than what amounts to a sketch. I chose particular examples, among the many available, based on my observation that he has focused on these concepts for many years, in a constant state of re-evaluation through dialogue, direct experience and trial and error. For Hawk, and for the Harvest Gathering, ceremony, tradition, and music are irreducibly a part of the same relational space, and tools for exploring issues of difference, common ground, and exchange.

Figure 30: Hawk in his workshop, 2009.

> I think that this thing that we call spirit or energy or goddess or god, or whatever it is – this Great Mystery – has a great potential of moving through lots of different, um, objects, tools, things. I think honestly, Deb,

> that it's an important time for people to look beyond the exteriors of what we look like…to recognize [the] divineness that lives within each person. It's my intention, when I use the flute, to try to articulate that through the sound and through the vibration, and actually even through the physical building of the flute. That's kind of what my life is about. ~ Hawk

Hawk's workshop is the hub of the networks of people and places created by the flute. Sticks, branches, large and small sections of hard and soft woods are organized in shelves extending, in some places, from floor to ceiling. The heart of the place is the wood stove which warms the air in winter, heats the hand drill that cuts the center of the flutes and creates the spiritual threshold through which invisible agencies move from their realms of non-form into the body of the flute. Not surprisingly, there is a very large rock atop the stove, another non-human person lending energy to the process of the constant circle of relationships sustained by continual transformations: spirit to tree to wood to flute to sound and return to spirit again in as the voice of the flute vibrating the air.

Figure 31: Creating flutes

Making flutes is as much about creating a ceremonial space as it is about artistry and technique. Hawk's mindset is the determining factor in his decision to work on a flute. He does not make flutes when he is physically ill or unable, for any reason, to be centered and calm. He believes that this space flows to the places where he plays flutes for others; the flute itself, and the sound it creates, connects him to the Fire and home space where it was given form and morphs into the performance setting. It is the same space that flows to the Gathering.

> Because what I do with my flutes, I -- I could describe as prayer. Ya know, it's -- it's that -- it's that basic, that simple, ya know. I mean, I guess people perform prayers or perform ceremonies. But when I think of the word "performer", ya know, not that -- not to belittle the importance of entertainment, but I'm not really -- my intent is not really to entertain people. It's a -- it's a continuation of the -- of the gathering so to speak, ya know, the -- the effort to bring people together, the effort to invite them to remember their own importance or their own sacredness. That's what the Gathering's about and what I do outside of the Gathering is, ya know, the same. ~ Hawk

Hawk's view is that ceremony and flute-making and "tradition" are forms that embody certain kinds of knowledge that individuals can access through a direct experience with them. In his words, they are *tools* that "came to the people when there was a need for them." They are tools that can be used to explore difference and construct common ground, experiential pathways of examination, questioning, and engagement. "They are a way to re-member…flute practice and the Gathering are, in this way, on same continuum, part of the same space." He says that sometime during the early months of his relationship with the flute, "I became conscious of – no, more aware of the work that it [flute] would do with me and how we would work together."

Figure 32: First Peoples' Festival, Montreal, Canada 2009

> Music, I think, has a great potential for bridging gaps between cultures and between people. In my work with the general public, I use the flute to create a space where the difficulties created by colonialism – and its long-term consequences – can be explored. My prayer is that this shared exploration can help us to move forward together in a way that creates a healthier world for children in our own communities, and for all children. ~ Hawk

What Hawk does not articulate in this particular passage is that he always uses music for the purpose of relationship, regardless of the setting or circumstance, to "create a physical and social space of engagement with others ." By "others," he includes non-human persons, the wood and trees whose lives provide the body and voice of the flute, ancestors, and so on. That is, music and all of the activities it requires and spaces it engenders, is a ceremony, in every way that formal rites are ceremonies. The flute, in particular, calls the great community of persons into the moment, into present being.

> Flutes have a long history of articulating certain ideas [for which] words might not be adequate, that words may not adequately do…A [Native] friend, a person from the Plains area, and I were were talking about flutes one day. I was saying, 'there's gotta be more to the flutes than just for courting, you know, there's gotta be more to it'. And he

> smiled and said, 'Well, think about it'. He said, 'you know the courting aspect is just the courting aspect, a manifestation of the female and male. But it's that way throughout all of Creations, that relationship between the feminine and the masculine.' And he said, 'so, the flute in some way reminds us of that relationship'. And so, just in that mouthful, he helped me to hear and to understand a little more about his and their perspectives about using the flute. ~ Hawk

The physical construction of the flute itself indexes this cosmic interdependence of masculine, feminine and voice – vibration – as the source of all creation. Making and playing flutes is a ceremony, an actual enactment of this cosmic relationship and the creative force that it produces. Also, as Hawk frequently points out when discussing the flute and flute-making, the shapes, parts, the way that the parts of a flute fit together, and the sounds that are created when it is played literally embody – and thus index – human and cosmologic forms of connection, interrelatedness, and creative equality implicated by the relationship between masculine and feminine. This theme of embodiment and practice as indexical grounds of much broader realms of relational significance is one that creates strong continuities between his public work and the construction of the Gathering, which I will explore in much greater depth later. The flute as musical practice does not resting *upon* underlying principles; it is, as Mount Wachusett, a "manifest operation" of these principles.

Smith (2000) proposes that music not only creates spaces through sound but because it is "precariously positioned between the myth of silence and the threat of noise," it is a means to accessing the soundworld that it signifies. "The physicality involved in making and listening to music" and "through its embodiment in

performance works as a powerful way of knowing and being." Music as a performance and listening practice and form of knowledge produces economic, political and emotional spaces, spaces "shaped by senses other than sight (pg 615)."

The flute's voice calls to the Sacred in every person and aspect of Life, in ways that transcend words or normal consciousness. Hawk says, "I think of instruments as important tools that can open doors because I think that they're alive. They voice certain tones, and combinations of tones, that create vibrations that affect us physically. They create a space of openness or, at least, a willingness to be in that moment and be open. Together, they create a physical and social space where we can remember our connections to each other while exploring our differences as resources for new understanding and mutual awareness - instead of using them as weapons of divisiveness."[30]"

Many years ago, before the move to Sullivan, Lisa made sure that Hawk got his first flute. It was leaning against the base of their Christmas tree. She kept giving him hints that he was missing one of his presents, telling him over and over to look more carefully at the tree. When he finally saw it, he thought that maybe I was having a hallucination or a vision or whatever you want to call it. There was the flute and I was in love with it right away." Very possessive of it at first, because of its great importance, he would not let anyone else touch it. Wanting to make it sound more like a flute that Hollis Littlecreek (Anishinaabeg) had gifted to gkisedtanamoogk, he started to whittle and reshape it although he had no experience in woodcraft or flute-making. He broke it, killed its voice. Hawk was

heart-broken and in a panic because he had planned on taking that flute with him to Pipestone.

Taking the flute to Pipestone seemed vitally important, as a way to pray, to participate in this special place,

> Knowing that people would go there to this important space to gather this important stone, and no matter the animosity they would have for each other on the outside, that feeling would be left outside of this space…so that they could go and gather this stone that was important. I wanted to go and feel it, you know, to feel that kind of space. I don't know that consciously I had ever been physically in a space where people consciously left their animosity for each other outside of that space. I wanted to see and feel what it was like ~ Hawk

Hawk worked and worked on it but could not fix it in time for the trip. En route to Pipestone, they stopped at the home of a Native flute-maker, someone with renowned skills, in hopes that he would be able to fix the flute. Taking the flute into his workshop for several hours, Hawk says he felt like an expectant father, pacing and worrying in the man's kitchen, waiting for the rebirth of his flute. The flute-maker suddenly re-appeared and abruptly announced, "I can't fix your flute, just like that, kind of very abrupt, ya know, I can't fix YOUR flute. And, ya know, my first thought was, well, then you're not a flute maker, oh, you can't be a flute maker if you can't fix MY flute. And I never said that out loud cuz he's kind of a big guy and he probably would've pummeled me, so I said that to myself and left there with, ya know, all of my angst and upset about not having a flute and not, ya know, being able to do what I wanted to do with it at the, at Pipestone."

Hawk bought another wind instrument, a penny-whistle, he thinks, to "make noise with" as part of his prayer at Pipestone. This phrase, to "make noise," is one

that he still uses today when de-emphasizing the technical or "performance" aspects of playing in order to indirectly emphasize its spiritual purpose and effect.

> I like to use music, the instruments, the music itself to learn about people from other cultures, other parts of the world. And in part, what's behind that is my, on some levels, selfish desire to improve the relationships that we have with each other in the world. My hope is that when my daughter and our other daughter is my age, that the things that maybe have occurred in our lifetimes will diminish, the difficult things, the wars that we have with each other because of differences of color, or differences of ideology or religion, or whatever it is that those things are that cause us to hurt each other. So that's kind of at the root of what it is that I try to do with my music or with the noise that I make and the instruments that I make them on." (Hawk at the Abbe Museum 9/2011)

After returning to his home from Pipestone, Hawk began the real work of learning the craft of flute-making, determined to fix this flute and give it a beautiful voice. In the absence of anyone who could directly teach him, in the first phase of his education, he embraced the work as an opportunity to learn from the flute itself and the ancestors who still carry this knowledge – intuition, trial and error, prayer, dreams. In retrospect, this was the period when he realized the true nature of his life work with the flute and with music more generally. "More importantly for me, Deb, I was able to understand that it was through my own selfishness that I almost lost it. And, ya know, I really felt at that point that the flute…was an important tool and I knew that I couldn't own it anymore, ya know, I could be with it and it could be with me, but I couldn't own it. And I didn't have the authority to say who could or couldn't touch it or have it or hear it. So, ya know, I realized what my relationship [was] at that point, ya know, if I decided to engage in it, what it was

going to be like. And that was kind of the beginning of, of, um, ya know, somewhat of a conscious relationship with building and playing them."

Of course, he did learn from the living as well. As I mentioned earlier, the work of John Rainer, with whom he spent time and staying in touch with over the years, Dr. Richard Payne, and David Sanipass and his grandfather were a few of the key influences and sources of information. Relationships with other Indigenous musicians at various events and venues were also important opportunities to compare notes, techniques and knowledge. Perhaps most importantly, he received confirmation that somehow he had found his way to techniques and approaches consonant with some eastern Algonquian traditions. Hollis is one of those who provided this confirmation, having a profound effect upon Hawk's practice as a flute-maker, as someone using the flute for healing, and in terms of the Henries' home as a place to gather people from different cultural backgrounds.[31]

After hearing about each other for years, Hollis and the Henries finally met face-to-face at a powwow somewhere in New England, in the early years when the Henries were still attending northeastern powwows. It was rare that Hollis went to powwows; I learned later, through my own relationship with him, that he went when he felt "called" – as part of his mission to locate particular individuals who appeared in the visionary dream he had as a young child when he believes he died, briefly, due to illness. He explained that this vision impelled him to leave the Red Lake Reserve (in Minnesota), where he was raised and returned to die, when he was older. He was instructed to share flute traditions and, in some cases, pipes and

related prayer traditions, that had been passed down through several generations of his family.

When Hawk finally had the chance to show one of his flutes to Hollis, it turned out that the specifics of construction – the placement and techniques of the holes, the saddle, tuning and so on – were *precisely* those taught to Hollis. Hawk says that Hollis "mentioned that his family, for generations and generations, made flutes for healing and prayer. That was their job." Beyond his affirmation of the means by which Hawk was receiving instructions from the flute and ancestors, which is a recognized path to knowledge within the traditions passed to Hollis, the particular voicing – vibrations – created by these material techniques coordinated precisely with Hawk's intuitive use of this particular flute design as a tool for creating relational and healing spaces. Hawk explains:

> …music is just another form of vibration, like everything in creation, I think, is. Ya know, we all vibrate. Everything vibrates, emits some type of energy that's vibration. Sound is no more than just air moving, ya know, it's vibration. So I think, I think on one hand the vibration that's caused by the flute can help with things. It's possible that the things that we consider to be disease are imbalances in energy. It's possible that sound can cause those imbalances to help themselves to correct. ~Hawk

Hollis finally came to visit the Henries in Maine after years of invitations, because they finally had the house that he had seen in his vision all those years before. Hollis used this visit to share some teachings and had urged the Henries to invite some people who they thought might be interested. At their invitation, I drove up from Boston to stay for the weekend. It was bitterly cold. I curled up in my sleeping bag to listen to Hollis, that first night, thinking that many of the ideas

he talked about were strongly resonant with some of the western mystical traditions that I had been studying. For that matter, they gelled pretty nicely with ideas from quantum physics that had my attention at the time. Hollis and I talked about these ideas at length in later times.

In any event, Hollis recognized me as someone from his childhood vision, after I shared another unexplainable dream that I had had – something about a medicine bundle from Utah, I thought…bearing in mind that, at that time, I knew nothing at all about bundles and tribes and odd, upside down bowl shaped houses, and other things I saw in the dream. Hollis explained what I had seen, then made a sort of show of extending a personal invitation, in front of everyone, for me to attend a Sweatlodge the next weekend. Oh no, I thought, I'm back in the Twilight Zone – dreams that only someone from another culture can interpret! But, that is another story. My point: Hollis, Hawk, the flute and dreams were creating connections, coordinating people with similar interests by linking times and places not typically in contact.

Hawk's first original composition came to him while he sat at the edge of a roaring brook in Maine with his newly re-crafted flute. Lisa, the girls and gkisedtanamoogk were nearby in their own spots along the river, sitting quietly.

> I was sitting on top of this huge rock with my flute… I was just playing, ya know, I was thinking, well, I'd like to play a song for this time [of year], the water moving and the birds and the trees…I had this sense that I should kind of close my eyes and create a space, I'll say it that way. And as I did that, then a couple of things happened, one of which was the sound of the river, the sound of the river came through the flute into my mouth and back out of the flute. And then the wind that was blowing literally came through the top of my head and again swirled around through my mouth and out of the flute.

> Um, and the stone that I was sitting on, ya know, physically I could feel it, like the energy of it coming up through my butt (laughing). You, you recorded that didn't you? I was so enmeshed in what was going on that I couldn't discern the sounds of the birds or the river or the wind or whatever from the sounds of the flute. And so that, that was kind of the beginning of that, that kind of relationship with that, with that instrument. ~ Hawk

This song was different; his family was stunned by its sophistication and rich sound, saying that he had never played anything like that before. From that experience forward, Hawk consciously engaged playing and composing songs as a practice of creating this kind of space again, a space of being fully present in the moment in order to become an embodiment of the web of interrelationships that the flute's body manifests and voice calls. The floodgates opened; new songs emerged and words presented themselves. People started encouraging him to record his music but he was resistant to modern communication technologies in general because they diminished, in his view at the time, invaluable face-to-face interaction. He was also concerned that recording the voice of the flute reduced it to the status of a performance, instead of its true manifestation of prayer. He shared this view with someone who was a close friend of Hollis, at the time. She objected. "She says, 'When an object is charged, don't you think Creator can work through a cassette?"

In 1993, he recorded "First Light" and in 1999 "Keeping the Fire." Since then he has appeared in many audio recordings, film scores, and so on. What is important here, I think, is to note that certain objects are "charged" with more spiritual power than others – much like the concept of manitou – and that they play an especially significant role in the negotiation of relating and relationships.

> My songs have purpose – they convey prayer, thought or concept. The relationship between the words to describe the song and the song itself is one that cannot be separated. They create a way to share information in a manner that keeps people engaged. Using language consciously, with regard to rhythm, intonation and some silliness, for example, causes both the audience and me to feel the connection between us. ~ Hawk

Hawk began to "present" his music regularly in non-Native then Native settings. To this day, he resists the word performance as a label for what he does although occasionally allows it. He began his long-standing relationship with the Wabanaki peoples in Maine who, slowly over the years, have come to see him as a part of their cultural landscape. Currently, he has especially close ties with the Passamaquoddy community at Indian Township and the Penobscot community on Indian Island (Orono) with whom he has done a great deal of work over the years. The following testimony was written by Robert ("Bert") Polchies (Penobscot-Maliseet), someone whose participation in the Gathering has grown over the past few years:

> I met Hawk Henries in 1994. Prior to meeting him, I had already heard many good things about him, regarding his talents as a flutist and flute maker, from several members of various Wabanaki Nations. Since I met Hawk, I have personally witnessed several of his presentations, as he used his flute playing, along with stories and traditional teachings. Promoting positive life ways to people of all age groups. genders and various ethnic backgrounds. Hawk is a member ofthe Nipmuc People. One of the many nations ofthe Waponahkiyik (Wabanaki). He has remained actively involved in using his talents and wisdom to teach and share with our Native people. primarily the children, keeping our traditions and culture alive for future generations. Since he has lived in Maine, he has worked very intimately with the Passamaquoddy children at Indian Township School, as well as the Penobscot children at Indian Island School. During our annual Wabanaki Confederacy Conference, Hawk has performed his presentations and conducted workshops on flute making. Hawk is a wonderful

> representative of the Nipmuc People. More importantly, he is a wonderful representative of the Wabanaki People as a whole. ~ Bert

As Hawk's flute-craft and oratory skills improved, Hawk's reputation as a master artisan and musician spread. The label "tradition-bearer" emerged as his flutes and presentations became a regular feature at museums, cultural centers and Native communities throughout New England and beyond. Taking words and their power seriously, he searched for an appropriate name for the kind of "traditional" knowledge he "bears" and his increasing sense of responsibility toward these practices. He eventually chose "Eastern Woodlands musical traditions" after many dialogues with other Native flute-makers and elders. With this term, he hoped to avoid promoting a "microscopic view" of what he understands to be a set of concepts and material practices that are shared regionally, to a greater or lesser degree, by many "Algonquian people of the Northeast."

A major part of Hawk's responsibility to the flute flows from its presence as a ceremony. Because of this, Hawk responds to requests to play at important community events – funerals, weddings, trauma, milestones and celebrations – regardless of their ability to pay or his own inconvenience. Along this continuum of meaning, he shares his skills and knowledge with young people. Although he does not exclude non-Native people from learning general techniques, he does make a special effort to devote time to teaching Native youth flute-making and the broader cosmologic and cultural worlds in which it is embedded. This is a vital link in the re-invigoration of flute-making as a tradition that embodies Algonquian life here in the northeast.

Figure 33: Teaching Flute-Making

Responsibility to these traditions, he also realized, has to include non-Natives. Algonquian peoples are intimately linked to non-Natives, making it vitally important that they get to know each other better. The "difficult relationship" that Native peoples in the Americas have had with European colonizers and their descendents must, somehow, be transformed. He sees face-to-face relationship and experiential knowledge as key to the transformation. He encourages an audience at the Wabanaki Basketmaker's Festival and Market in 2006 to ask questions. He explains that:

> The more knowledge we have about each other, then the more we can learn to respect each other. And, I think, ya know, in our world that's filled with lots of disrespect – and that's putting it mildly – we can all benefit from learning to honor ourselves and each other. One way is to have knowledge…sometimes fear gets in the way. Sometimes fear causes us to do things that are hurtful to ourselves and to each other. So, again, I'd like to reiterate the invitation if you should have questions or comments, please feel free to ask them. And particularly questions that you might think are offensive or that I might get upset with, I won't use any of my sticks to, ya know, hit -- hit you with! But those questions usually have a lot of substance to them, so please, again, feel free to uh, to ask anything. ~ Hawk

Hawk was inspired to build a drone flute as a way to do this relationship work. While sharing a story about the Henries' trip to England in 2007, he tells about spending time with a borage farmer, out in the English countryside. They talk about the "long list of unpleasantries" – genocide, boarding schools, and so on – inflicted by the English upon the Native peoples of "New" England. Hawk explains to a small audience gathered around him at a Cultural Survival Bazaar in 2011:

> The farmer, he said, 'Before we came to your land and did those things to you, the people who came to our land did it to us.' He mentioned Romans and Normans and Celts. And we both, ya know, talked a little while and said what can we do to change that? What can we do to limit one people imposing their way on another people? And we didn't really have an answer other than sharing the way that we were. ~ Hawk

Figure 34: Drone Flute

> I wanted to make a song that honored the old European cultures and traditions whose way is no different than any other indigenous people on this earth. And if we look far enough back at all of the people of this earth, we had similar knowledge, we related to earth and sky in a similar kind of way. And I think that just in some time, some have forgotten. So to remember, to reconnect with that Old Way…that allows us to see the thread of commonality that, ya know, we're all connected with and help us to remember that we're not so different. So this song in the flute was inspired by the bagpipes. The flute was inspired by the bagpipes, the song

> wasn't, but the flute was. And it's called "Old Song" and it's just about those ideas. (Hawk at Cultural Survival 2011)

For Hawk, music and the instruments that give music its voice are beings who live as forms of exchange: spiritual and cultural energy flowing among and between people and places, creating spaces of mediation and relationship. In that spirit, he trades his flutes as often as he accepts money for them. He gives them away when it becomes clear to him that the flute wants to go with a particular person or that the person is in need of the flute.

"Some guys like race cars, some guys like boats…I like didgeridoos and flutes and harps and coras." Hawk's life is rich with music and instruments from other cultures, as well. For example, he is proficient in several instruments indigenous to Africa, including the mbira and cora, as well as the didgeridoo from Australia. He has a celtic harp and swoons when a friend of his shows up and plays it during the Winter Gathering. Several years ago, he discovered baroque music and classical flute and is now obsessed. He traveled to England in 2007 where he played a short original piece that he wrote for the occasion with the London Mozart Players. He listens to classical music while he is building Native flutes, feeling the relationships and healing which he hopes to facilitate in his work as a musician.

Instruments play a major role in the international network of relations converging on Hawk's musical practice, a convergence that reinforces his belief that they are, in fact, mediators of spiritual exchange, moved by unseen agencies. The story of one particular mbira illustrates the point. Sometime in 2010, he

contacted its owner who lived in Massachusetts at the time, but who is from Zimbabwe, the traditional home of this kind of instrument. The particulars of their construction and tuning are linked to particular families who pass the tradition from generation to generation. This particular mbira was made by a family well-known for their exceptional skill and use of mbira for ceremony. The owner sent the mbira to Hawk, telling him to play it for awhile before deciding if he wanted to keep it and saying that it had just been sitting in a box for a few years, anyway. If Hawk decided to keep it, they could work out the price then. A few months later, Hawk decided that he really wanted – needed – the mbira and started email negotiations by asking the owner for a suggested range of money.

Over the course of several more emails back and forth, Hawk resisted making an offer because he felt it would be disrespectful to put a price on someone else's tradition. Ultimately, the owner would not set a price and the deal fell through. Hawk sent it back but was uncomfortable with the unresolved conflict over money. He talked to his friend, Gray, who spend a lot of time in Africa and with whom he plays cora every Thursday evening. Gray assured Hawk that this kind of thing happens quite often, usually after someone moves to the United States; it seems more unusual when someone is still living in Zimbabwe.

About a year later, Hawk contacted an English-language professor living in Japan after seeing on an online flute group site that he had a base mbira made by the same family. He did not want to trade a flute for the mbira, saying that he already had many flutes. Hawk did not have the money to pay for it, so was not

able to get it. A couple of months later, the fellow emailed again from Japan saying that he changed his mind and did, after all, want to trade it for one of Hawk's flutes. He visited Hawk's website, read about Hawk's philosophy about the flute and relationship and realized that he wanted to have such a flute.

You guessed it – it was the same mbira that Hawk had returned to the fellow in Massachusetts over a year before. In the meantime, the mbira had passed hand several times, circumventing the globe and returning to Maine again.

Hawk approaches his relationship with "others" musical and instrument traditions with all the seriousness that typifies his relationship to Native flute. Just as he is deeply concerned with those who, in his opinion, appropriate Native flute traditions, he works to avoid doing this with the mbira, cora, and so on. "Maybe I'm just trying to justify my own interest in other people's instruments, but I think that it's possible to participate in other people's ways with the intention of having respect for the knowledge of their tradition and practicing in ways *consistent* with a tradition."

Flute & Tradition

Tradition itself, as a general concept and practice, receives considerable attention in Hawk's work and in regards to the Harvest Gathering. As a practice, tradition is positioned as a form of knowledge tied to the invisible spiritual and ancestral realms. Given a mindful and respectful approach, traditional practice as a particular assemblage of elements organized by sets of ideas and agencies, is potentially a pathway to *remembering* their origins, the ancestors' knowledge

embodied therein – even when the knowledge seems to have been "lost" in the manifest world. Hawk explains:

> Part of me thinks that there is…a pool of knowledge that is available; that if we're able to find the right key or whatever mechanism we need to unlock that knowledge, that we could access that knowledge and gather some of it and apply it to our traditions today, which I think is at the root of what we call tradition." Therefore, the enactment of traditional forms holds the potential to "access the non-ordinary or nonphysical aspect of that knowledge. ~ Hawk

The most important manifestation of this perspective in Hawk's work is embodied in his choice to continue to make most of his flutes using only hand tools and fire. It is only in this way, he believes, that he can engage in the kind of relationship that opens this pathway to ancestral knowledge about the flute and many other things. It is also the only way that he can mediate the emergence of each flute as a living, unique individual. He uses only his own ear to tune each flute during the process of drilling and sanding the holes and saddle. In this way, each flute tunes itself, for all intents and purposes. It is only in this way that he can honor the flute-makers who came before him, their knowledge of indigenous traditions and cultures, and the broader network of relationships that the flute embodies.

Staying with this tradition has required tremendous sacrifice financially; it was only a few years ago that he finally conceded to use a machine to create the bore-holes in some flutes (which he labels differently) which allowed him to sell some at a more affordable price. Yet, the preservation of the skills and cultural

perspectives manifested by constructing each flute as an individual is central to his responsibility to this tradition, as he sees it.

> I believe the foundation of culture lies in our relationship to and understanding of place. The life ways of any peoples are shaped by this understanding. We express our relationship of the land and water through song, language, story, making baskets and regalia drum and flute… our arts are reflective of this Knowledge and serve to keep the connection with our Ancestors alive.
>
> By working with indigenous and local wood my intent is to strengthen my knowledge of the complex and beautiful relationships that exist between tree, bird, moose, fish , human … the connection to Place that is Culture. As a Nipmuck or Passamaquoddy or Anishnabe… person this knowledge that we call culture is inherent though at times dormant or forgotten. I feel that this dormancy is, in part, causation for some of the ills and issues we face as indigenous Peoples. To rekindle this knowledge, to bring it back to the forefront of our living brings with it a sense of worth and pride.
>
> Making flutes is, if you will, one avenue to remembering or reconnecting to a Life Way that is ancient. By learning about the wood and its many uses we remember how our relatives used it. In gathering the wood we see, feel and hear the Relations that rely upon this wood there-by making stronger our knowledge of Place. Listening intuitively to which piece of wood will make the flute we learn to honor our self. (Hawk, 10/25/10 email, draft text for peoples award)

Tuning the flute by hand and by ear has created both financial challenges and cultural conflicts for two reasons. First, more and more people want to buy flutes with tuning based on *classical* scales. Second is the tremendous surge of interest in Native flutes over the past couple of decades. Hawk notes that when he first started his own relationship with the flute, there were only a handful of people making Native flutes and even today, there are very few who continue to make them by hand or as single pieces of wood. Now there are websites, events, blogs, Facebook groups and many, many people claiming to make Native flutes. Many are

non-Native. Others are Natives making classically tuned flutes by machine. These flutes meet market demand and are easier to sell.

Perhaps part of the difference between embracing and exploiting has something to do with falling in love, he reflects.

> Deb, I think that there are people who are attracted to, I'll say, art forms from someone else's culture. They really seek to understand it. Let's just say, they fall in love with it. And one of the byproducts of that is that they find out they can make a living or feed their family with that. I honestly don't have a problem with that. My problem comes where someone says, 'hey, the big craze is native flutes. I can make native flutes and make millions of dollars.' I think that…being hurtful purposefully to another groups of people for their own gain, I thank that that's the problem. But, you know, maybe this is just another way for me to justify the fact that I have a didgeridoo and a full celtic harp and an African cora. ~ Hawk

Hawk's claim as a maker of Native flutes briefly came into question due to changes in the Indian Arts and Crafts Act in 2010[32]. This Act, initially passed into federal law in 1935, is intended to prevent non-Indian peoples from taking financial advantage of what is a booming market for Native arts by misrepresenting their work by labeling it as Native.[33] Because the Nipmuc are not federally recognized, one of the criteria that some people use to identify an individual as a "real" Native who produces "real" Native American art or music, Hawk had to suspend his website and engage in a series of contentious and upsetting interactions with the Indian Arts and Crafts board – despite have nearly two decades of work behind him and being recognized by many Native communities as an important figure in the renaissance of traditional flute crafts and traditions.

These issues came to a head several years ago at a "Native" flute festival in Maryland. Most vendors were not Native, a fact that in and of itself did not (and

does not) bother him. Sharing traditions is a big part of Hawk's work, as long as certain responsibilities are met. What did bother was the label "Native flute" on the non-Native flutes. Again, in and of itself, Hawk does not have a problem with non-Native people making Native-style flutes. Labeling them as such, in order to make money is a problem, for a couple of reasons. First, they are usually machine made and tuned to classical scale, making it impossible for Hawk to sell his flutes which, by necessity, cannot directly compete. Hawk supports his family with his flute-work and to say that the Henries have been in a chronic state of money-deprivation would be an understatement. Second, he was heart-broken that people were not really hearing the living voice of unique, individually crafted flutes. To add salt to the wound, they did not even seem to want to learn about them.

I remember him coming home from this event. He was terribly upset. Lisa, the girls, Hawk and I – and others – had many conversations over the ensuing months as he tried to process his feelings and make a decision about how to respond. At the heart of the distress and dialogue was the question of the difference between *sharing* traditions and *appropriating* them, an issue also at the heart of the Harvest Gathering. On a deeper level, it speaks to the issue of exchange – what is being exchanged, under what circumstances and within what set of constraints or understandings?

His experience morphed into a parable that he tells in many different contexts. This is part of the rendition he shared at the Abbe Museum in 2011, in

response to a question from the audience asking, “what key is that flute in?” Again, I quote Hawk at length, feeling that he speaks better for himself than I do.

> ‘Do you have flute in the key of F?’ ‘Do you have a flute in the key of G? Or a flute in the key of this pitch or that pitch?’ And I would say to them, that’s such a new language for this instrument. This instrument knows an older language and I would love to talk to you in that older language about this instrument. I don’t think of my flutes in that respect, in that context. It’s only been here for a couple of hundred years. Well, no one was interested except a few people. And there during the whole weekend, there were a thousand, maybe fifteen hundred people who came through, only two people were curious. That left me initially angry. You know, that a new way was being imposed on this instrument. And then sad because people weren’t interested. And what would happen is that people would forget. So, my friend who was with me, my friend Jeff, he would ask, what are you going to do about it? ~ Hawk

Flashing back to the months following his experience in Maryland, Hawk considered what to do.

> [I] came to the conclusion that I couldn’t convince anyone else to think the way I do, or to approach flutes the way that I do. But what I could do would be to thank the old flute makers and the old flute players who understood where my teaching is. And so I began calling and emailing…some of the old flute makers. They weren’t all Native people, I should say that. There are two people in particular that without their contributions to this instrument, I wouldn’t be sitting here. And one man, his name is Richard Kane, he was a doctor who lived on the plains, in I think the 1930’s or ‘40’s or something like that, and collected a whole bunch of these instruments, so much so he had to build another house. And he shared his knowledge and he encouraged and inspired Native people that play the flute. Another person whose name is Michael Grant Allen. You might know him as Coyote Old Man and he began making this kind of flute back in the ‘70’s after Richard Kane introduced him to it. And so it wasn’t about race or ethnicity or any of that. It was about *thinking*. Anyway, one of the songs that I tried to learn how to learn how to play from Taos Pueblo, and one of the persons who was inspirational to me in my early days with the flute is a man whose name is John Rainer. John Rainer grew up at Taos Pueblo listening to the old songs that were either being sung or played on the flute, and he became a flute maker

> and a flute player as well. In addition he was a music professor at Brigham & Young. And he's now passed away; he just passed away a few months ago. But I learned one or two of his songs, so I'd like to play a short song from Taos Pueblo, which is my way of thanking him by remembering the old makers and players and the old way of thinking about this instrument. ~ Hawk

Therefore, the subtext to Hawk's ongoing exploration of what "tradition" is (or is not) is a discourse focused on the question of how to balance creativity and continuance, inclusion and difference. When I press him to try to define tradition, Hawk reluctantly says that it is "routines that have knowledge and importance." He does not, however, see it as static or unchanging, in contradiction to some folks' idea that "real" traditions are overtly recognizable forms that are traced to a distant past or rules that are rigidly applied to all circumstances and times. He rejects the idea of tradition as something that is "just a rote behavior, ya know, learned behavior and passed from one person to the next in the same form. It's not something that's dead, like it's not this sort of really structured thing that doesn't change. It's like a living thing, tradition."

Hawk and Lisa constantly use the word "intention" to gloss this idea that repetition and structure must be kept in a dynamic relationship via a conscious resistance to allowing them to become routine in the sense of being mundane; that is, lifeless by virtue of being severed from reflexive awareness and their spiritual origins. When engaged with intention, ritual and traditional forms and ways of doing things can open a threshold to the invisible agencies and forms of knowledge with which they are connected and which are, by their nature, linked to creativity, the life force.

Therefore, mundane and repetitive are not the same thing. Repetition is linked to the power of ritual and continuance of tradition as forms that hold and transmit important forms of knowledge and connections to past and place. Hawk's theory is that it can help distract from day-to-day concerns and thus create a space where a different consciousness and more open frame of mind can emerge.

> I could say for me, the repetition at times for me is refreshing and I don't mean refreshing like a shower would be refreshing, but it's a way to refresh and cause me to rethink the things that could very well become routine and mundane, maybe not mundane, routine. And for me I don't want any of this stuff that we might call ceremony or ritual to be routine, I don't, I don't want it to be just because it's the way I did it the last time. You know what I mean? ~ Hawk

Rather, traditions "need to be applicable to real lives and needs," and not engaged "*just* because it's been done that way for years."Hawk tells another one of his favorite parables about an important turning point in his thinking about tradition as something enlivened and enlivening. Many years ago, he was at a powwow during the autumn and the night was particularly cold. Several people approached the person responsible for tending the fire kept at the center of all the public activities. They hoped to be allowed to sit near the fire, for warmth. The fire-keeper refused to let them anywhere near, saying that the "fire is sacred and shouldn't be used for mundane purposes." Hawk took issue, pointing out that if fire is sacred, it is sacred of its own accord and that its power to provide warmth and sustenance are sacred at all times, not just in ceremony or under special circumstances. His appeal to allow people to warm themselves there was unsuccessful, but he uses this story to explain his view that it is important that traditions not become rigid and

disconnected from critical examination and the realities of day-to-day life. "Life itself is a ceremony," he points out. "Everything in life – everything in all of creation – is sacred. Every breath, word, action, thought. Washing dishes, going for a walk, cleaning the car; it's all a part of the same whole."

> If I'm just making flutes, I literally will walk through my workshop or, again, if I'm gathering woods and look, but I don't look with my eyes. I ask the wood who wants to be a flute today? And I try to pay attention to that. And then the whole process continues. I think if it, the whole thing, as being ceremonious, being a prayer. And in my thinking about prayer, I want it to be fresh and new and living, rather than routine. So within the context or the form of flute making, it's new. The routine is building flutes, but within that, it's new each time. So that includes paying attention to the wood and what it wants to be. I might have a piece of wood this long, but there's only a flute that big in it, so I listen, I listen to that. ~ Hawk

Hawk tends to use the phrase "Old Ways" to signify the values and concepts that underlie his views on tradition and ceremony as living entities. It seems connected, in part, to his construction of flute, ceremony and ritual as tools for engagement – inclusion.

> …the people [Elders] that I've had the opportunity to listen to, when they talk about their tradition, wherever it might be from, it speaks about…that time when all things were included. For example, one of my older friends, who has now crossed over, talked about…one of the Medicine societies of his people and this original Medicine society was all inclusive. All beings were, ya know, integral members of this Medicine society, including all the races of people. ~ Hawk

Bert also draws on this notion of Old Way to index a notion of tradition that simultaneously includes continuity and innovation. He describes his early impressions of Hawk, citing his observation that Hawk's work is in line with an Old Way – in new forms.

> …mostly music and, and listening to the things that he shared. He shared a lot of teachings, ya know, a lot of the stories, even the story, and they were done in such an Old Way, though they were new. And it was done in, in the old fashion, the way that they were always done and that intrigued me and that kind of drew me closer. And just listening and ya know, I developed a trust… ~ Bert 2011

This view of tradition as something that is alive in the same sense that flutes and music and trees and stones are alive extends to the idea of ritual. After many years of countless conversations with Hawk and Lisa exploring these ideas, I have come to think of it thus: if life and all of its constituent parts and arrangements is a ceremony, then ritual is akin to a wave on the ocean; it is in no way separate from the sea but rather a moment in space and time that is emergent, given shape by the swell of energy of elements converging at the surface of the water – more visible, perhaps, than that which is beyond the surface but not *separate*.

Rigid approaches to ceremony can be actively harmful if they reify a notion of difference that prevents remembering that humans are part of a web of relations.

> When I look at trees, when I look at insects, when I look at the birds and the other things, the stones, all these other things that we live with, they seem to be engaged in the activity that they're intended to be engaged in…the relationship that exists between those things on some level is known by those things [and there is a] respect for that relationship. That common thread, ya know, that life force, that exchange of energy that enables that life force to be perpetuated between those things, is respected, it's honored. I think that, on a particular level, on a certain level, we have just forgotten it.
>
> So but I think nowadays, um, with our traditions and the things that are very important, I think that they've, they've become so important and we want so badly for other people to feel how important they are and to see what their potential is…that sometimes we exclude others' way of seeing or doing or believing because ours is, ya know, because we know how important it is to ourselves. Then we don't avail ourselves to the importance that someone else's tradition may have for them or we, in some

> form or fashion, whether deliberately or not, say that ours is better than yours.
>
> And consequently, when we do that, we hurt people or peoples. We create chasms and big holes between our relationship with each other whether we are individuals or whether we're, ya know, nations or whatever. And, as you well know, when people hurt each other, then it seems as if those who are on the hurting end, the receiving end, want to do something to defend themselves which, in turn, perpetuates this hurtful cycle. So, um, so I think that tradition has a great potential for doing that, for dividing peoples, when those traditions are rigid. ~ Hawk

This is not to say that there is no place for a stable flow of practices bounding particular ceremonial traditions, any more than saying there is no meaningful reason to make flutes by hand and tuning them by ear. Ceremonies are forms of cultural and ancestral knowledge linked to people and places, just as flute traditions. Again, the issue is one of intention and respect, how an exchange will occur and what is being exchanged, sharing versus appropriating. The invitation to participate in someone else's ceremony as an act of sharing is something altogether different than claiming the authority to conduct or teach that ceremony – to appropriate it. Where is the line drawn? How to navigate this sometimes confusing liminal space?

The Henries' desire to explore these issues in their own Gathering arose primarily out of their participation in others' Gatherings, in particular the Nipmuc gatherings in Sterling (Massachusetts) and a series of peyote ceremonies conducted by Huichol Grandmothers whose visions led them to conduct these rituals in a Mi'kmaq community in New Brunswick.

> Lisa and the girls and I were invited to some ceremonies that they were a part of. And this was on a reservation up in New Brunswick. And one of the ladies from New Brunswick was asking, uh, these people were from Mexico, and she asked one of the Grandmothers, 'Well, do you let white people come to your ceremonies?' And she smiled, ya know, and through an interpreter, she said, 'Oh, we don't see those colors, we don't see those colors.' Ya know, she was like smiling and shaking her hand as if to say we don't allow the apparent differences in people to, we don't exclude people for what they look like, ya know, they all are important. ~ Lisa

During the Harvest Gathering in 2008 at the Henries' home, the question of inclusivity came up at the final Talking Circle, as it often does. Questions about the importance of keeping Native traditional forms intact were raised, as they often are. How does the Harvest Gathering fit in to any of this and, if so, to what degree? How to do this sharing thing without "mixing" traditions, which is something that is done only with great reticence, or sliding into appropriation or disrespect? How to balance continuance and innovation, how to be sure that differences remain markers of distinct identities and histories without causing wars?

Lisa jumped in and spoke of the Huichol Grandmothers who welcomed everyone that showed up and shared this traditional ritual which had been passed, without interruption, across many generations. She also spoke about the importance of events that are *not* inclusive – women's groups, men's Sweatlodges, Native-only gatherings. Even here at this Gathering, for example, the Sweatlodge is *not* open to more than small innovations, its form and function very much like Sweatlodges conducted in other tribal settings in this region. She talked about how important it is, as a visitor to someone else's homeland or gathering, to act respectfully by trying to adhere to the host's way of doing things. All of these are important. Then

she went on to explain how *their* Gathering came about, using the example of one of the Nipmuc Gatherings in Stirling:

> We had gone to a gathering in Massachusetts a long time ago. When we walked away from it, we were all talking about how we really, truly felt that…everyone was on a level playing field, everyone was respected equally. For our family, this experience is how we made the decision to do things the way we do them here. Everyone in invited to everything. Please be who you are. Even if someone comes who's drunk and irate, they can't stay but we'll try to help the person. We all have something to offer. There are other places and gatherings for women's circles, we understand that. But here, this is the place for everything to be for everybody, no lines to be drawn, no separating groups. ~ Lisa

"Life itself is a ceremony. Everything in life, everything in all of Creation, is sacred. Every breath, word, action, thought. Washing dishes, going for a walk, cleaning the car; it's all a part of the same whole."

The Henries' House

Heading Downeast from Ellsworth on Route 1, the highway skirts the North Atlantic all the way to the Canadian border. Sprinkled with islands, fishing boats and lobster buoys oscillating to the rhythm of the waves, the view east-southeast is, to understate it, spectacular when not obscured by fog. Tidal inlets, rivers and bays shape ocean's edge for miles inland in ways that sometimes make me think of fractals. Water reaches into the edge of earth where balsam and other evergreens anchor soil and stone with the weave of root systems that lie just beneath the surface. The smell is intoxicating.

At low tide, clammers are working hard to dig their quarry out of the muddy silt. They are the most visible of many who find their sustenance and make a living from the sea. As with many roads in New England, Route 1 along this stretch of the

Atlantic was paved directly atop a Native pathway that was likely used for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. It was likely an important part of the network of paths and rivers in this region by which the resources of land and sea were transported and exchanged. After the arrival of Europeans, it continued to be an important route for travel, trade and access to the resources of the sea, including networks of exchange including eastern seaboard and intercontinental places.

This is Passamaquoddy territory, people whose traditional homeland is marked by their use of several watershed areas in the United States and Canada.[34] Their neighbor to the north and west, the Maliseet are also split by the international border. Penobscot territory stretches to the south and west. Their other Wabanaki ally, the Abenaki, live in a homeland that resides, in part, in the western part of Maine. Also to the north is a small Mi'kmaq reserve, near the Canadian border. Historically in and out of conflict with the Wabanaki and other Algonquian groups further south in New England, most Mi'kmaq reserves are in Canada. As in times past, people from all of these groups are quite mobile, traveling to work and visit friends and family elsewhere. Many are also in urban diasporas throughout the northeastern United States, including a fairly large community in Boston. Route 1 continues to be an important pathway of this travel network.

Over the past several years, I have (over)heard many stories about the histories of Native and European peoples in this area. Many speak to conflicts over land, money, or access to natural resources. Some re-tell derogatory racial and

cultural stereotypes. I hear the romantic inflection, at times, the stories about how "spiritual and in touch with nature" the Indians are. I personally have never heard the one about "there aren't any Indian's here!" that is so typical of southern New England. Yet, there are some narratives of friendship, alliance, and shared work and place built through exchange or the kinds of shared hardship inherent in living through long winters and difficult terrains. One of these historical narratives is told by Hawk and Lisa about their house and the lands that is dwells within.

The manner in which the story was passed on to them and its re-telling of a positive exchange between Native people and European colonists reinforced their feeling of destiny when they first recognized the house that they had literally dreamed; that this particular house was *meant* for them to find.

> So, there was a group of Native people who were traveling back from the ocean area cuz this is an old trail that comes through here. And they were bringing their elder back because he was sick and he thought he was dying and he wanted to go to the lake, Tunk Lake, to die. And so when they came through here, the Thorns, and this is the family, took them in and she gave him quinine was what I remember and basically nursed him back to health. So in gratefulness and while he was recuperating, the people that were with him cleared the fields of all the stones. And so we have all those piles of stones that you've seen around. ~ Lisa 4/2011

The Tunk Lake Road leads north off Route 1, turning away from ocean's edge where Mount Cadillac is easily visible across Frenchman's Bay. After about a mile of twisting road through small groupings of houses and trailers (mobile homes), the Thorne Road veers left into rural Maine and thick woods. The hard top ends just past the Henries' driveway but continues on to Flander's Pond on dirt roads or pathways. Quite narrow and often in poor repair, the stories of near-death

experiences are many. The old bridge crossing the year-round stream that edges the Henries' property not far behind the pine tree area was torn out this year, scaring the eagles and turtles away, for now. Spawning fish may return sometime soon, though, because the crews are building a special run for them. This story, too, and observations about their progress is popular in general discourse.

Robyn, the man who built the house, told the Henries the story about the Thorne family and the Natives heading for Tunk Lake in response to their story about having both dreamt of this particular house and their vision for holding inter-cultural gatherings there. Robyn took this exchange of information as a sign that the Henries were *the* people meant to be in this house that he had built. Turns out that Robyn and his brother, who had stayed in Holland, also had a vision of creating homes where gatherings bringing people from different cultures could spend time and work toward better mutual understanding. The design and building process for the house was a key part of creating this kind of space, a way of building houses in the village where he came from in Holland.

Shortly after he arrived in the United States, the story goes, Robyn took up the task of finding the perfect place in the woods for his house. He had heard that Maine would be a good place to look, with weather and an environment somewhat akin to the one he left behind. Walking on the old path turned paper then gravel pit dirt road that is now the driveway, he had an "ah ha" reaction when he saw the land where the house now lives, a natural level area mid-way up an incline that rises sharply for another several hundred yards into the woods beyond. The path veered

a bit left at the base of the level area, leading to the rows of pine trees planted by a paper company. There the path forks, meandering past the planted trees over the year-round stream and eventually to Flander’s Pond.

The right fork turns up the hill and eventually leads to Tunk Lake. Just after the turn, the ruins of the foundation of a house create a rocky pit covered by moss. In its midst, a single large white pine tree grows. This was the old Thorne place, the family who owned a very large tract of land until, little by little over the course of several decades, it was subdivided and sold off. Not far beyond the ruins, a semi-circular shape was dug out of the hillside; an old gravel pit. Robyn was told that the gravel there could potentially be worth a great deal of money, should he decide to invest in getting it out. His desire to prevent that kind of damage to this place merely reinforced his almost immediate decision to buy the property. Today, the rows of planted pine shelter the camping area of the Harvest Gathering; the old gravel pit holds the Sweatlodge.

Robyn set about cutting and preparing trees for building; he is a carpenter by trade and had experience building these types of houses in Holland. The front field, including the open area near the pine camping area where the Harvest Gathering is now held, was cleared. He then built a small cabin to stay in while he worked on constructing the first section of the house, the current kitchen and second floor music room. The cabin was later fully insulated and used as home for his family’s chickens who furnished them with eggs. Nowadays, the cabin is used as a place where people who need a place to land can stay, either during the

Gathering or for longer periods of time. Once the timber was ready, Robyn continued constructing the house in an easterly direction, finishing a few years later with what is now the Henries' bedroom.

Figure 35: Henries' home

The physical construction and orientation of the building is important because it literally embodies several extremely important values and spatial practices linked to Robyn's cultural and spiritual traditions in Holland. Not coincidentally, as the Henries' see it; these values are highly consonant with their own. Energy efficiency is one of these values, not just from a practical standpoint but from a spiritual one as well: to live in a way that is mindful of the constant flow of exchanges and obligations created when the lives of animals or trees are taken, natural landscapes disrupted, or resources for human activities of daily living are consumed. The whole of the north side of the house is protected from the encroachment of the harsh winter weather by the hill; there are few, very small windows there and one small door for emergency exits that has, to my knowledge, never been opened. Alternately, the south-facing side is graced with many large glass windows allowing several hours of the southwestern movement of sunlight to

warm the air, life the spirit and support plant-life throughout the darkness of winter. The second floor is heated through a wooden vent constructed directly over the wood stove, and so forth.

On another level, the alignment and other features of construction concretize particular cosmologic concepts and related spiritual practices. The house is set on a direct east-west profile. At the top of the peak in the eastern-most end of the house, there is a small window facing sunrise, allowing first-light and what is sometimes referred to as “fresh start” energy in to the space. In the center of the south-facing wall of the primary communal space, there is a door that, by design, does not have any stairs leading to it. This is a spirit door, opened only during ceremonies related to major life-cycle shifts: marriage, birth, death. The door and spire at the top of the house reaching skyward directly over it are aligned with the sunrise at Summer Solstice. Traditionally, stairs are put in place only for these occasions but the Henries recently lost a bitter battle with the insurance company which insisted they install stairs. This door has never been opened by the Henries family. They decorate it with meaningful objects which are changed seasonally or for special occasions. Living plants nearly always adorn its borders or sit across its feet. Treated with a high degree of awareness, the Henries sometimes refer to the door almost as a sort of person or presence, “introducing” new guests and visitors to its important place in the household.

Figure 36: Spirit Door

Directly across from the spirit door, on the north-facing side of the house, is the chimney and wood stove – the Central Fire. It is also situated to align with the beams of sunlight first to crest the horizon on the summer solstice. The family hearth, source of all forms of warmth and nourishment, is also the focal point for social and ceremonial activities during the Winter Gathering, the other public, seasonal ceremony held at the Henries' home every year. There is a second chimney and site for a woodstove in the kitchen, the western-most room in the building. The Henries had a woodstove there for many years but when Sierra moved to her own space out in the barn, the woodstove went with her. Still, this second, smaller hearth was used for heating and cooking and its fiery presence inspired Hawk's decision to put his music room just over it, in the small room residing under the eaves on the second floor. His work shop is in the barn where there is room for wood and tools.

The music room is where his instruments live and the place to which he retreats every evening after making flutes all day in his barn workshop. He often plays his kora, didgeridoo or, more recently, classical flute until the wee hours of the morning. He does this after, that is, he is finished with friends on Facebook! It may seem incongruent, but these instruments from all over the world and the computer living together. There is a powerful link, however: music and the computer are both tools of communication, creating spaces, as Hawk puts it, where people from different walks of life can make contact. Granted, there are some profound ambiguities here and it was years of haggling and discussion to finally convince him that the internet can be a productive tool of communication, albeit not comparable to face-to-face interaction. The Henries' relationship with the computer is a relatively new development in their lives and deserves a little embellishment, which I will address a bit later.

The driveway to the house is very long, winding through the forest and across the stream to the sudden clearing that is their open field to the left and large open in front of the house. The barn is to the left just beyond the field, sitting at the edge of the area of woods in which the Medicine Wheel is situated. Before having time to park the car, it is easy to notice the care and attention paid to the land: low profile, small gardens filled with flowers, medicinal and edible plants that seem to complement the look of the forest rather than stand out against it; careful placements of stones and larger rocks in the wall of soil lining the raised plateau where the house sits; arrangements of stones atop a tree stump at the side of the

barn; plants, wooden carvings, feathers on the house and porch; the four birch saplings marking the four directions around the central fire pit of the Gathering ground; the pathways leading to the Medicine Wheel marked with small boulders or stone piles.

When entering the house through the heavy wood door into the living room, it is impossible not to immediately notice the extraordinary hand-crafted woodworking from which the house is built. An array of indigenous artwork and crafts adorn every wall, windowsill, shelf, and open space. The ever-present smell of wood smoke, sweetgrass and sage, with an occasional whiff of cedar and copal mixed in, is an olfactory greeting that lends to the general ambiance and feeling of having entered the Henries' life-space. Typically, the television is not visible, hidden away in a large wooden cabinet straight ahead. It is hidden, says Lisa, because "energetically you don't want to see it all the time." To the left is the spirit door. To the right is the woodstove which is always host to several hand-chosen stones, including the one with a natural bowl which Hawk uses to gather coal from the fire for smudging every evening before bed. In summer months, when there is no fire in the stove, he uses his Super Sacred Bic Lighter to light the smudge.

Figure 37: Woodstove

During wood-burning season, which usually starts around the time of the Gathering, cast iron trivets also rest on the stove, ready to heat water or soup or stew. Nearly year-round, large bunches of sweetgrass hang from the wooden beams and heating vent over the stove. Just beyond is the altar and, during winter, a wood box. The stairs to the second story of this part of the building, which is now Sequan's room, are also straight ahead. Like the other stairway leading to the music room in the further section of the house, the stairs are very narrow and extremely steep, limiting access to all but those with non-arthritic knees, good balance and a fair dose of agility. The current master bedroom is to the right, around the corner, and not directly visible from the entrance.

Figure 38: Sweetgrass

One October evening in 2011, I ask Lisa and Hawk to take me on a storied tour of the objects and spaces in their living room. As always, it is a bit awkward "interviewing" them, although over the years it has gotten a little easier. A long time before I decided to focus my dissertation on the Gathering, and many years before I realized that what intrigues me the most about the Gathering is the issue of building common communicative ground, the Henries and I discovered our common outlook that spoken language is simply insufficient for conveying or interpreting many aspects of experience and perspective. I suspect that we had come to this shared frame of reference along independent trajectories because, in part, we had all been committed to working in cross-cultural settings for the purpose of doing something to repair the damaging effects of racism and inequitable systems of power. Within that context, we also shared a similar approach: face-to-face and one-person-at-a-time.

All three of us grew up feeling out of place in our "given" life-circumstances which compelled a search, as young adults, to create a way of life that reflected something more authentic or meaningful than the one we had inherited. Remarkably, this very theme comes up again and again in interviews with Gathering participants. Finally, Hawk and I are both musicians, although we had traveled in very different genres, at first. I started training as a classical pianist when I was four years old and went on to classical voice, musical theatre, rock and pop, and so on. Hawk did not "discover" classical music until six of seven years ago and is now obsessed! I daresay he knows more about Baroque music than I ever did. But, that is another story…In any case, we came to our relationship as individuals who had both experienced music as a space of exchange utterly beyond language and even normal states of waking consciousness. Despite having led lives sharply divided by race, class, and gender.

During these early years of deep conversation and discussions about our observations of interaction, we reasoned that there are three fundamental problems with language. The first and most obvious reason, we agreed, is that spoken language without the non-verbal modes of exchange and spatial contexts of interaction creates a much smaller frame for negotiating meaning and a much bigger frame for misunderstanding. Then there is the problem of language itself, especially those as reliant on noun-based meanings and referents as is English. Finally, there are the invisible beings who affect interactions, all sorts of absent-presences that *no* language can sufficiently convey, although Algonquian languages

seem to do a better job of this than does English. Hawk was basing this on his exposure to Massachuset, I on my readings about the Mi'kmaq language, primarily because of my friendship with gkisedtanamoogk.

At some point during those years, Hawk and I developed a way of communication this deficiency of language at the same time that we acknowledge an exchange of information or point of view. He signals that he is finished with his narrative, at the end of what he feels he can express with spoken language by saying, "You know what I mean?" I say, "Yes, I do." He responds, "I know you do." When our relationship shifted to include my role as a researcher, this form of communication became a problem, especially when I wanted him to explain, when I wanted a transcript of our interaction. This is just one example of ways that we had to adjust our relationship and rely on the spoken word much more than we do under "normal" circumstances. Humor helped; we have been reduced to giggling and making fun of ourselves many times. Once we became accustomed to this new facet of our relationship, I noticed a return of our usual banter and rhetorical styles with the caveat of taking a little more care to re-state or re-phrase – clarify – for our invisible audiences, you, the reader.

In a constructive way, this change has also given us the opportunity to revisit the issue of language, challenging all of us to think twice about how something is said, or to re-phrase. "You know what I mean" is not taken so much for granted, keeping in mind that when I transfer words to this paper, people outside of our physical reach will be left to interpret and make meaning without the

benefit of direct interaction. That being said, Lisa and Hawk are both extremely articulate and for that reason I share sometimes extended sections of their talk. I also rely on many photographs to help narrate the following story about the house and grounds of the Harvest Gathering. Unfortunately, there seems no way to avoid reducing people, objects and spaces to word and images on paper, which I find particularly problematic when trying to explain experience – sensations of dance and music, or broad feelings of disconnect or inclusion expressed by participants, for example.

I start at the end of the interview:

> Lisa: "Now that we've actually stopped and looked at everything, almost everything in our house is found or it was a gift. There's hardly anything in this house that we've gone out and bought."
>
> Hawk: "Couch."
>
> Lisa: "That's the stuff we don't care about as much."
>
> Hawk: "I know."

As I mentioned earlier, their physical space is a three-dimensional painting, surfaces fully textured with objects of all colors, sizes and materials. Many are gifts from other vendors at Cultural Survival Bazaars, some of whom become friends and participants at the Gathering. When I review my photographs, my notes and the interview transcription in detail, particular themes emerge. There are material themes: sweetgrass and splint ash; oil and other paint mediums; bone and sinew; wood; plant materials and tobacco; feathers; stones; cloth.

There are also activity themes manifest in, and through, the objects: carving; painting; weaving; sewing; kneading; bending; burning; heating, gathering. Light is an element that receives considerable attention: unobtrusive curtains, if any; small holiday lights around the top of the room all year, white in winter to go with the seasonal and ceremonial emphasis on the time of darkness and return of the light and multi-colored during spring and summer when the forest and gardens are rich with growth and birds and animals; the long mirrors to either side of the wood stove draw sunlight in to the room and re-distributes it, giving objects and spaces more depth of vision, color and presence.

There are social and cosmologic themes organizing the space and the network of relations from which the objects made their way here: the Henries' practice of value and exchange built upon the primacy of relationship and connection; an aesthetic that merges practicality and meaning; humor as a key form of mediation; and the recognition of the capacity of objects to *assert* their agency through human mediation. There is a carved wooden statue who worked *with* Lisa in a small store run by close friends who spend several months each year in Africa, Chris and Gray. Gray studies kora with master musicians from Africa, which led not only to Hawk's intimate relationship with the kora but his opportunity to study with some of these musicians himself. In the store where Chris sold items from Africa to send money back to the artisans there, Lisa felt strongly that the statue took a guardianship role, wanting to be moved to different places depending on

where she was needed. When the store closed, the owner, Chris, gave it to Lisa because of the relationship that she had with the statue.

J.P. (Montagnais) and Isabelle (French) traveled from their home north of Quebec to join us for the Harvest Gathering in 2009. The Henries met them at a First Peoples' event in Montreal that summer where they discovered important shared interests and activities, beyond work as musicians and artisans. The couple had been working in various cross-cultural projects involving First Nations and non-indigenous people in Canada, committed to direct interaction as a way forward in mutual understanding – basically, the same work in a different setting. En route home after leaving the Gathering, Isabelle felt that her painting of four women had work to do at the Henries' home. Despite facing a very long trip home, they turned around in Ellsworth and headed back to the house to gift it not only to the Henries but to the Gathering – as a participant in creating the energy of peach through acknowledgement of difference and shared humanity.

Stone

There are stones everywhere, rocks all over the place. Big ones, small ones, smooth and rough, old stone tools and arrowheads. Literally every horizontal surface, except a couple of the window sills, holds a rock. "And, beware the rocks," says Lisa, waving her hand in a gesture that sweeps around the circumference of the space and poking a little fun at herself while leading our tour around the living room. By the end of our tour, she has told a well-elaborated story about nearly every stone: how it made its way into this room; the general environs in which it

was situated before it began its journey here; the humans involved in gathering it up and transporting it; what it means to her. Lisa gestures to each rock while talks about it, sometimes pointing but just as often she uses a gesture that suggests its inclusion as an active part of the story. In some cases, she gently picks it up to show me the details of its smooth surface or extraordinary shape. In many ways, her bodily engagement with the rocks is strikingly similar to the way she speaks about objects and spaces at the Gathering when she is explaining something to the group in a Talking Circle, or during her own Giveaway.

When I ask about the objects on top of the media cabinet, Lisa bursts into a wide smile and expression of sheer joy. She points to the perfectly spherical, dark stone serving as the base of the lamp. The pitch of her voice elevates; she gestures enthusiastically toward the lamp and she and Hawk enter an excited exchange.

> Lisa: That's one of my most favorite things in the whole house! Look at this stone! Look at that! (*She stands suddenly and stares at the lamp, gesturing to the stone*)
>
> Hawk: The whole stone/rock thing, yeah! (*He lifts his face in a sweeping gesture to point to Lisa, looks at me to be sure that I understood the reference of his gesture then smiles with satisfaction; he gave it her as a gift knowing that she most especially treasures round, ocean rocks)*
>
> Lisa: Finding that rock on the beach, I would have been, thought it was the best find of my life and now, look at it it's just, I just love it! (*she gestures to it again, refocusing her gaze upon it*)

I ask her to tell me why this particular stone is so special to her. In general, she answers, she is most drawn to stones and other objects from the ocean or ocean's edge. The lamp stone was gathering from a nearby beach by their friend,

Obie, whose artistic medium is stone. Lisa goes on: “Look at it. It’s, I, where would you ever find a rock like that? I mean we go to round rock beach and I’ve never seen a rock that perfect. It’s like – it’s like the moon without…being different colors.”

Stones, seagull feathers, shells, a photograph of her Grandmother who died years ago, and their arrangements in her work space can, for Lisa, *invoke* the ocean; “When I’m working I can *be* (her vocal emphasis) somewhere else – here and there.”

Sweetgrass

I would like to use sweetgrass as a sort of exemplar of the way that objects mediate and help to create material and social spaces by virtue of the cosmological views that organize their meaning and use. Many worlds and relations are woven into the sweetgrass braids that they make and gift to others. Sweetgrass is, perhaps, one of the most visible and highly integrated-integrating of the many objects that serve as examples of this. By visible, I mean to include a host of important associations created or re-created through their relationship with it and its sensory presence, role in the history and ongoing traditions of the Wabanaki and Nipmuc peoples, and so on.

When I ask Hawk and Lisa to tell me more about sweetgrass, there is a moment when it seems certain they will try to defer and tell me that I already know about sweetgrass. Thankfully the moment is brief. Once they begin, I barely speak another word as they talk for a long time about their relationship with sweetgrass,

feeding off each others' ideas, clarifying, embellishing, remembering together. Again, there are many gestures pointing me toward the sweetgrass that hangs over the stove or that seem intended to include the grass in the conversation. Most of this dialogue follows below. The words and phrases in bold, italicized case index the broader patterns and concepts that I discussed earlier and/or that flow directly to the Harvest Gathering.

> Lisa: And of course you know the sweet grass.
>
> Me: What do you use the sweet grass for? Why do you pick it?
> (*fairly long, awkward pause*)
>
> Hawk: We pick the sweet grass so we can have an excuse to go out and be in the marsh and enjoying the time of year when it's time to pick sweet grass, ya know, and then kind of visit everything that lives there and make, strengthen the relationship that we have with those things. And gathering the sweet grass, of course, if a byproduct of that, not really a byproduct, but one of the things that comes out of that relationship. And we use it, we use it for giving away. We use it for gifts.

Something hits the outside of a window. It is just after sunset and we speculate for a moment about what poor creature flew into the glass.

> Hawk continues: We use it to give away, we use it to remind ourselves of, ya know, sweet grass is used in conjunction, not always, but sometimes with cedar and cedar is used to cleanse a space or an object or a thing, kind of to neutralize the energy. And sweet grass is used as a way to remember the Creator. Some say to invite the Creator, the presence of the Creator, but I'm of the opinion that the Creator is always present. Ya know, maybe we just, um, lose touch with that, so the sweet grass helps us to remember. And how else do we use it?
>
> Lisa: Well we certainly, I mean, there's so many evenings or days where we just stand around craving sweet grass. And it's such a pleasant thing and it's been done forever and it feels good to continue that. Like it's a very bonding and connecting family time or whoever's here, and of course the connection again with the grass, you're touching it and smelling it; it's just

> everywhere, all over the floor. It's just wonderful and we've gone every single year since the girls were little, so and that feels really good to do it every year…

Lisa then laments this as the first year that Sequan has chosen not to go sweetgrass picking with the family. It marks a big change in their family practice. Although the girls are now in their twenties, both live there and they continue many annual outings that they have shared since the girls were old enough to walk. Sequan is the least overtly involved in the spiritual and ceremonial life of their family, perhaps making this decision to opt-out even more of a shift, although I only speculate.

> Lisa:…we don't do it cuz we have to do it. We wouldn't want to miss it. I mean it's like we look forward to that so much. It's a connection with the seasons, doing different things at different times of the year. It's just, it just feels like the right place to be and you, like, look forward to it and you need it and that stillness and that quiet because when we're picking, we're usually pretty quiet. We spend a lot of time in silence. Not that we never chat or giggle or whatever, say look at this, look at that, but there's just really that stillness and it's just you take it all in. It's wonderful.

Figure 39: Gathering sweetgrass

Hawk: All year we look forward to it and then there's a certain time of the year where we um, begin to really articulate our intentions to go gather it and that's usually sometime in June we start. And sometimes it's really silly because we might drive by a place where we get sweetgrass and we literally physically will wave to it, hello, we're coming to see you soon, you know, or sometimes we stop and just walk in the place and leave a gift or whatever or ya know. And we'll do that until it's time to pick and then usually a few weeks before we feel like it's time to pick, we just go to a few different areas and we might pick a few little pieces and really just kind of letting the things that live there know we're going to be coming soon, ya know, and we, we, I don't know, it's just like we don't want to surprise everything, so we just kind of let it know. And so we pick a little bit and you see little bundles around our house, like those little ones. I don't know if that's actually them or not, but those are oftentimes the things that we pick early, ya know. And ya know, I totally agree with what you're saying about being in silence. When we go and gather, we talk though, and usually we laugh and we have a good time doing it. Our conversations aren't, they're very seriously light, ya know. But then when there's not conversation, again I understand what you mean by silence, where we're not speaking. But by no stretch of the imagination is it silent, ya know. You hear the grass moving, the water moving, the birds singing, the insects buzzing, the spiders yelling at us cuz, ya know, there's these big orb weavers that live in the grass and they build these really magnificent webs, which sometimes you can't see until you've walked into them, see a big giant black and yellow spider sitting there. But they try to let you know, ya know, don't walk into my house. So it's not necessarily silent, silent as in the absence of sound, it's not that at all.
Lisa: No, it's just not talking so you can hear it.
Hawk: We just don't do a lot of talking, yeah, with each other. I mean we do. There will be, we might go out there and talk with each other for 10 or 15 minutes or whatever and then all of a sudden Lisa will go her way and I'll go my way and we'll just, ya know, every now and then something cool will happen and I'll hear her or I will yell, hey, babe, look at this or something like that, but other than that, ya know, it's just kind of being with the things that live there. It's really incredible. And it feels vitally important to do it. Ya know, it's one of those things, at least in our lives, that it's more than we just want to do it and we love doing it; feels more than that. Ya know, it feels –

Lisa: I think it's definitely some kind of connection with it's been done for so long by so many people over the generations and who knows how far back. And you can almost feel that. It's like when we walk the -- remember the, remember that first time we walked it in silence that night on the winter solstice and people were like oh my god. We totally felt connected to it.

(*I briefly check to be sure that they are now referencing the millennia of Native sweetgrass picking and its use in this region, they confirm)*

Hawk: Yeah and there's a responsibility to maintain it, ya know, to keep doing it. It's not just that we feel that. It's we also feel the responsibility to continue doing it, ya know.

Lisa: It's almost like the ancestors are giving you a big hug and saying good job, ya know. It just feels really, ya know, it feels really good.

Hawk: Yeah. And then it's just so wonderful, we give it away. Cuz 90% of what we pick, we give away. Ya know, we only, a braid or two that we might keep to use for ourselves, but the rest of it is just for giving away when people need it or even if they don't say they need it…

Lisa: And there's a lot of people who can't pick anymore and we usually get some for your Dad.

Hawk: I mean a lot of pickers today pick for baskets. Not, ya know, and they obviously still use it, too, but that's the main focus. So they go at a different time of year. They get the grass when it's in a different stage; it's more, it's, um, I mean we get it when it's green too, but for a lot of the pickers who use it for baskets, they need it to be all green. And we don't mind going out and picking it when it's got some brown on it, a little bit, or some yellow, ya know, cuz it gets just as sweet and it eventually turns brown and yellow anyway. So, ya know, yeah, anyway. It's good stuff.

I ask whether they are conscious of, or feeling connected to, the people who are here now, the present world, who pick sweetgrass. Lisa tries to answer but seems unsure, her gaze moving inward while she travels to one of their spots to be

there, to remember, it seems to me. She finally says, "You're not thinking and you're just present there, it's more of a connection with all of it that goes…it just goes beyond specifics. For me, anyway."

Hawk chimes in:

> I have, at times, the feeling that in other places in the world there are people doing the same thing. They might not be picking sweet grass, but they're harvesting something that's important for ceremony in their way, whatever their way might be. Ya know, I, sometimes when I'm standing in the middle, sometimes I just stand there like, like ga-ga, or ya know, just gone. And I just have these glimpses of or feelings of ya know, this is just like we're one bead on a string of beads and it's happening all over. People all over are doing something like that, ya know, gathering sweet grass or cedar or lavender or whatever it is that they might be gathering, ya know. Just making this stuff up, Maggie, cuz it sounds good.
>
> ME: Yeah. He's lying.

Hawk started to include Maggie in our recorded conversations quite some time ago. She is my transcriptionist. The Henries have yet to meet her and Hawk hopes that someday she will join us at the Gathering (so far, she and her family have not attended despite annual invitations). We incorporate Maggie as an invisible presence in our conversations whenever the Fostex recorder is rolling, much as we incorporate other invisible beings in ceremonies. She even commented at one point in the "notes" column of the form we use: "Talking about Maggie transcribing this. Debi - This is the most fun I get when transcribing. You guys sure have a good time!" Hawk also speaks to Maggie when he wants to lighten the mood or make fun of himself, like earlier in our conversation that evening: I know

what bird they [feathers] are. I don't know if they are Sierra's or we found them or, I don't know. Maggie, you're gonna hear a lot of that stuff, "I don't know."

From here to the end of our talk about sweetgrass, I am very involved because I learn something that I had not known before this, something that I find very distressing. They make a point of saying that they pick one, maybe two pieces of grass at a time, the way that I was taught to do it. Because they make a point of saying this, I ask if others do it another way.

> Hawk: Oh, yeah, oh, my, yeah, we've been with people who just, who just grab, like that, grab it and then just yank it, some of it's sweet grass and some of it's not.
>
> Lisa: There's been people who have used shovels. That's the whole thing about people not wanting to tell people where the places are. Because there's some places where there would be a lot of sweet grass and then we would go and it would be like you could tell large clumps were taken out and that's why he's like don't tell anybody, don't tell anybody. And then some people they take it to sell, which is okay if it's done respectfully done, ya know, and with care. But if they're doing it, taking seriously large amounts so that there's not gonna be enough to replenish itself next year and then it disappears, that's hard and that's why people really kind of hold it a little tight about who they tell or if they do tell somebody, please don't tell anybody else. And what if it's all gone?

Altar and Medicine Bundle: Themes in Place-making

The altar, as I mentioned earlier, is on the north wall adjacent to the woodstove. Lisa is its primary tender, changing its composition fairly regularly with the season or other meaningful events that should be marked. She speaks at length about it.

> "…when life is moving along in a certain way, we, I rotate the cloth every season, usually something that reflects, ya know, reflects the season with its color, patterns, or maybe there's a particular print on it.

> I try to…choose items that fit the time of year or the seasons and kind of – so we're thinking about it and focused on it and um, maybe try usually to honor the different elements, ya know, it's usually something on there with stone, fire, water, something, there's often a little vessel with water in it and candles.
>
> And sometimes - you know what happens on the altar!
> *(she turns to look at me with the same pleading facial expression she uses when she does not want to be the one who has to explain things at the Gathering; I smile and remain silent)*
>
> Like if we find out something's happened in the world or something is like when there was the tsunami or something of that nature, we'll light candles and that might stay lit all day until we go to bed. Or you know…one of our friends is needing some prayers or thoughts, that's where the candles get lit. Or, like Sierra's friend, ya know, they were, she had a hard birth and they were concerned about the baby and we created a whole alter around that baby and put all, every little animal thing we could find in the house around, we made little prayers on paper and put them in a duffel so it would be in front of the candle. And everything about the altar was all about that baby. That's the center, ya know, that's the focus."

In the final minutes of the tour, Lisa beckons me into the bedroom where there are still a few things that she feels "you," the reader, should know about; objects whose stories seem relevant to understanding their way of life and the home space in which it is centered. Lisa's talk continues to evidence increased reflexivity focused on how to try to convey their view of objects, space and relationships as fully integrated and organized by spiritual perspectives, her tone more insistent and intent. She points out the array of baskets, shakers, and rocks on the bookcase. Hawk chimes in from the other room about a basket with tobacco given to Hawk by his father and they talk about the eagle feather that goes with it and starts a mock argument, "which he gave me the eagle feathers and the thing of tobacco in that

basket, so let's get that straight, Maggie, Lisa took it from me!" I tell them to play nice and we all laugh. Of course, everything there is *theirs*.

The conversation redirects to direct statements about the presence of family by virtue of the many objects created by family – the basket and feathers from Crow, Sierra's two pieces hanging on the opposite wall almost alongside a painting by Lisa's Mom. Lisa: "You know that what's nice about these things, too, is – it's not just the item; it's the people that they're from, cuz all these people in our lives are very special to us, ya know." The summation is evolving.

I can see that Lisa is working on her summation; a shift of posture, more frequent eye contact with me, full-stops in her talk while she gazes inward to think about what to say. I see the increase in "thinking" in the transcript where her speech stalls and sentences stuttering in their construction. She continues to move around the room, explaining more and more details about the objects and what they mean: "And, did you notice the stick was a beaver stick? It was all chewed!" She apologizes again, as I continue to take photographs, for the relative mess that the space is in, not simply in terms of good housekeeping but because spaces and objects require tending in order for them to take their place as mediators of relationship and meaning.

> Lisa: "I think when things are set up, when we've actually been home and things are a little more tended-to than what they are today. It's like *that's* the altar (*pointing to the bookcase*)… like almost *everything* to be, to *feel*, like an altar. So everything is like –"
>
> Hawk, interrupting: "Well, the whole house is, really…like the house is a [medicine] bundle."

The arrangements of baskets and stones are a way to “honor those pieces,” adds Lisa, and way to create a space that “feels like those places where we go.” Their presence, and the way that they are arranged, facilitate a sort of transport beam to the places from which they came, and the experiences that the Henries’ associate with those places.

Lisa finishes their summation:

> “Yeah, I mean some people on a home decorating show would say, they’d buy all these things at a store and create a vignette. But these things are things that we’ve found or were gifted to us and they’re more like creating little alters. It’s just, that’s what feels good and that’s really fun to do that and see what wants to be in each place. Cuz you don’t always know. It’s like the altar is never planned out. It’s like you walk around the house, [asking] what wants to be there…”

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[29] This is a highly contested view and is an issue that provokes extended disagreements about how to organize our own roles and responsibilities at the Gathering.

[30] Cultural Survival Quarterly. Cambridge: Dec 2011. Vol. 35, Iss. 4; pg. 21, 1 pgs

[31] I mentioned to Hawk recently that someone heading up a museum program in Maine told me, years ago, that there are no flute traditions indigenous to New England. Donald Soctomah (Pass) – just heard from him recently re: flute tradition in NE thousand(s) of years old; sent Hawk website link re: Pass story of Owl Husband; Great Blue Heron leg flute at least 1000 yrs old, used for healing

[32] http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/New-Law-Promotes-Authentic-Indian-Arts-and-Crafts-Cracks-Down-on-Fraudulent-Art.cfm

[33] https://www.iacb.doi.gov/iaca35.html

[34] http://www.wabanaki.com/homeland1.htm access 11.8.12

Chapter 4: Continuity and Change at the Gathering - Events and Spaces

Akin to the notion of tradition as a living entity, a dynamic of continuity and creativity, the Gathering is under constant scrutiny by the Henries and those of us most intimately involved in its organization and execution and by many of the participants themselves, in talking circles at the Gathering and at other times of the year. The goal is to maintain its integrity as a form that engenders particular values and explorations while making certain that it does not lapse into empty, mundane form. In keeping with this goal, certain consistencies are maintained from year to year while other aspects transform and evolve. Akin to Hawk's musical and ceremonial practice, the Harvest Gathering instantiates processes of stability and change which are woven directly into its spatial and discursive practices.

I see the dynamic tension between these two positions – continuity and creativity – as the space wherein the Gathering does what it does: provide opportunities for individuals to weave their own stories into the Harvest Gathering. There are several key consistencies in the construct of the Harvest Gathering that have never changed. Group interactions are always conducted in circles and there is always a fire at the center of the circle; pathways are meticulously cleaned and prepared for round-the-clock use with a mind to maximizing safety and an easy flow of people; each formal ceremony is held in the same space every year; the food tent is placed on the grounds of the Central Fire and plays a central role in organizing most of the resources needed for the day-to-day flow of activities; the needs of wild animals and insects are taken into account, including marking

anthills, raking the path to the lodge to encourage ants to find new exits, and consideration of how to manage food and garbage a priority (to avoid an active invitation to bees, bears and bobcats to join the party); the whole of the grounds, including the pine tree camping area, are cleared of sticks and debris; the ceremonial spaces are also cleared of debris and raked out, prayer ties are made and restrung as needed, the archway to the Sweatlodge is spiffed and the lodge itself rebuilt if needed, and so on.

There are also several key considerations that have changed over the years and these tend to be related to the format of the ceremonies and structured social activities, and managing the mountain of resources needed to make the Gathering happen. Lest the practical considerations be seen as ephemeral, I hasten to point out that "practical" and "spiritual" are seen as two halves of the same whole, inseparable and irreducible. In fact, some of the changes having the most profound and enduring impact on what might be labeled the "spiritual" topographies of the Gathering were the result of what seemed at the time a practical need. For the Henries, and many other participants with a similar view of reality, these practical considerations were in fact a nexus of direct communication from spirit which compelled a necessary transformation in the spiritual and social landscape of the Gathering.

To write in detail about all of these changes over the past several years would require far more space than I have here. Instead, I describe the Harvest Gathering as a spatial practice the flows throughout the year by illustrating some of

the natural turning points on its calendrical cycle and its flow as discussing some examples of changes that have occurred. I include many quotes from interviewees and some of my own reflections on their experiences, and my own. I will elaborate the experiences of a few participants as case studies exploring the flow of people and the distant places from which they draw experience to and from the physical locality of the Gathering. Lastly, as a way to share some final thoughts, I talk a bit more about the ever-present discourse and shifting practices regarding the identity of the Gathering itself.

Calendrical Cycle

There really is no “beginning” point in the annual life of the Harvest Gathering although, like other calendrical cycles, there is a sort of “New Year” at the time of the Winter Solstice. Once upon a time, the Henries’ winter gathering was held on the actual day of the solstice, just as the Harvest Gathering was held on the days surrounding the autumnal equinox. For the past decade, or so, the winter gathering has been on the Saturday before Christmas to accommodate the time and travel needs of people living at a distance, just as the Harvest Gathering was shifted years before to Labor Day.

The winter gathering is just one evening. Like the Harvest Gathering, people are invited and asked to bring food as well as tealight or candle in a holder, which will be used in one of the two ceremonies. The household is a flurry of activity right up until people arrive late in the afternoon. The house is thoroughly cleaned, reorganized and smudged. The altar is re-dressed and the house covered

with arrangements of evergreens freshly collected from the forests around the Henries home. Chairs and other supplies used during the summer are gathered and brought up from their winter resting spots in the barn. The refrigerator is cleared to make way for incoming sweet treats and electric counter-top stoves pulled out of storage to help with keeping food warm. Pathways, steps, the lawn and porch are cleaned and repaired. Sand is scattered on icy spots and the parking area, if needed. Flashlights are collected and kept by the front door. Those of us living nearby usually take up roles as greeters, kitchen or parking organizers and valets, assistants to elders and children, and so on.

Fire is a key element in all the same ways that it is at the Harvest Gathering. The fire pit in the front lawn, which lives in line with the Spirit Door and woodstove inside the house, is cleaned and ceremonially lit just before sundown. It is tended throughout the gathering and then allowed to burn until it goes out. Many people spend considerable time outside with the fire even when it is extremely cold (I am not one of them!). The woodstove, as always, provides the spiritual center of the house and the Gathering. By this time of year it is typically going around the clock but the Henries always conduct a ceremonial lighting of the stove when they light the candles on the altar for the evening.

The winter gathering is a pot-luck affair and, as always, the food is a big deal. Who's going to bring what kind of yummy dish? Will so-and-so bring that fabulous casserole they brought last year? Did you get a piece of that amazing chocolate cake last year? The types of food are usually quite different than the

summer gathering, not surprisingly. Stews, casseroles and other hot foods are more abundant. There is almost always at least one dish, usually more, made from the flesh of wild animals that were killed during the fall hunt – deer, moose, bear.

Because it is often frigid, most activities take place indoors, although not all. As with the Harvest Gathering, we never know who is going to come until they arrive and people from all walks of life and faith (and no-faith) traditions may be there. Some people from the summer gathering usually come but there are also many who come only to the winter gathering, or who come once and we never see again. Some have been to this gathering from the beginning and we are now on the second generation of children growing up there, just like at the Harvest Gathering. We all look forward to catching up with people that we see only at this get together. Group activities begin an hour or two after dark, when it seems likely that most people planning to come have arrived. Lisa calls us into a multi-layered circle in the living room, which at this point is usually extremely crowded. The circle is left open on the side closest to the kitchen and she points out that this is a way to intentionally include the gift of the food we are about to eat in the circle of community. Someone says a prayer or statement of thanksgiving, usually someone that the Henries have asked to open this circle. There is always a long line waiting to file into the small kitchen jammed with tables and food, so this is a very social time.

As soon as it looks like everyone has had a chance to eat, Lisa again calls us into the living room. Because the space is small for the number of people that

usually attend, the relatively few chairs available are lined up against the walls and elders or people with physical difficulties standing for a long period, or getting down and back up again from the floor, are given priority. Hawk and Lisa take up their usual position on the floor directly in front of the wood stove. Some of us who are there every year sometimes stand to the back or side in the adjacent bedroom where we can be a part of the circle while allowing others who may be newer participants to be closer to the center of the circle. There, in the center, is a round piece of finished wood that is, perhaps, a bit under four feet in diameter. It has symbolic carvings and burnings in it and sits flat on the floor. Lisa lights a candle from the wood stove and places it at the center of this piece of wood. Starting with Lisa, who sits east of Hawk, each person takes a turn to speak, sing or remains silent while they light their own candle from the one that Lisa lit and place it somewhere on the round wood. She passes an eagle feather to the next person, who passes it on to the person sitting to their left – sunwise around the room – to signal that they have finished and we all sit in silence for a moment while they light their own candle and put it down. Because of the turn-taking and in-the-moment flow of what people ultimately share, this circle can take a very long time.

As with the Harvest Gathering, the emphasis is on facilitating rather than managing; instructions regarding what to do are kept to a minimum, just enough to create some sort of organization. Therefore, the person starting a circle is setting an example for people new to this kind of event as well as setting a tone. At the winter gathering, Lisa and I usually talk in advance about she is going to say. Although it

is always related, in some way, to the darkness and return of light associated with the solstice, we also want to speak to issues that we know are particularly important in the world at that time. As a dramatic example, she started the circle after "911" that year with her own feelings about not only the losses directly connected to the event but also her hopes that perhaps it could inspire a more attentive relationship between people of different faith traditions – how to come out of the darkness and back into the light. As during the summer, the content and focus of each person's contribution varies dramatically. There is always a great deal of humor and laughing interspersed with very serious and sometimes intense moments.

After this circle ends, the wood is taken outside where, to the degree possible, the candles that people put on it are allowed to continue to burn. Obviously, the weather has a lot to do with the success of this maneuver. The musicians generally pull out their instruments and the house begins to quiver with the sound of different sorts of flutes, celtic harp, violin and cello, drum, African percussion, human singing. Other folks head to the kitchen for dessert or more food and small groups of people socialize and mingle all over the house.

Several of us move outside for a silent candle ceremony at the Medicine Wheel. This format for the Wheel started several years ago with Lisa and I wanting to "walk the Wheel" at the time of the solstice, one of the four calendrical points when some sort of ceremony is done there. For the first few years, we could only entice women to go with us. We bundle up, grab a few flashlights to have on hand, although we do not use them if possible, and gather by the fire outside. Lisa usually

wrangles me into opening that circle. I talk about how the Wheel here came about and what it means to those of us who interact with it throughout the year. We light new candles, usually tealights that are embedded in a little sand inside a plastic cup, and walk in silence to the Wheel. It can be quite treacherous to walk through the woods in the dark and we make sure that someone who is comfortable doing this is next to those who are not. Once we arrive at the eastern "door" of the Wheel, we stop for a moment until everyone is in place, ready to enter. Once inside, we walk seven times around the Wheel and stop to face the center together for a few moments before we file out and stumble back to the warmth of the fire on the lawn. This ends the formal ceremonial aspect of the winter gathering and the socializing and music-making sometimes goes on until the wee hours.

The Gathering Preparations

The first serious planning discussions about the Harvest Gathering begin spontaneously sometime around the summer solstice and pick up apace by August. Lisa starts to rummage through the supplies in the barn to update various lists for shopping and chores that need to be done. The first official Talking Circle of the Gathering occurs in August. It is the energetic opening of the Gathering circle. At this meeting, we reflect again on how things went the year before and finalize plans for any changes that need to be made. Lists are finalized and everyone decides what they will be doing. The information flyer is tweaked, if needed, and printed out so that everyone has some handy to give to potential participants, especially newcomers. The issue of cash comes up, something that is discussed off and on all

year, since the initial output of money for supplies is considerable and coming up with enough of it a constant challenge. For several years, it was just the Henries and I at this meeting. For the past few years, others have been attending and getting involved earlier with the tremendous amount of work that needs to be done. Thank goodness.

Decisions at all levels affecting the Gathering, the flyer, and so on, are made by consensus, a process that can be equally uplifting and maddening. When the collective muse appears, inspired problem-solving and innovations precipitate out of thin air. When obsessive nit-picking and revision co-opt the process, well, I admit the intense urge to make a unilateral decision just to have it done and relegated to the past!

Lisa is really the central organizer, the go-to person for all things practical, the person who keeps everything moving forward. She says that her extraordinary contribution of time and energy in this role is a part of her giveaway and way that she participates in the Sweatlodge. During the three or four weeks leading up to the arrival of participants, Lisa is out on the land virtually every day. During the two weeks prior, everyone else in the Henries family and several people from the local community are on the land every day as well. Some years, people from away to arrive early to help out. The land is slowly transformed into its social and ceremonial identity as the Harvest Gathering, building upon its manifestations in years past.

There are critical turning points in the transformation: when the food tent is up; when the tables in the food tent are up and all of the supplies organized and tucked neatly into the places underneath; when the refrigerators are set up in the food tent and they both work; when the piles of sticks and leaves are finally all taken up and put in the middens scattered around the forest floor; when Hawk's workshop is cleaned and readied as a sleeping and gathering space; when the porta-potties arrive and again when large colored Christmas lights are in place so that they can be used around the clock; when the small white holiday lights are in place marking pathways connecting the barn, area around the Central Fire and the Medicine Wheel, whose circumference is also lit with "twinky" lights. Usually, these and other key events marking the construction of the Gathering are heralded with cries of delight or songs or whoops. You do not need to be right there to know that it has happened.

Other transformations happen more quietly. Lisa usually tends the Medicine Wheel, as she does all year. She cleans up the inner circle herself but enlists assistance from locals to get the four pathways leading to it cleared. A few years ago, she asked Susa and I to make new prayer ties and restring the Medicine Wheel. Susa and I spent the winter working on this together. She suggested that we do 1008 new ties, a number that she knew to be important in a Buddhist perspective. It was a way to honor the Buddhist people who have been at the Gathering and in the Wheel and embody the relationship in the protective circle created around the wheel by the string of ties. Once we took this very long string of

ties to hang them, we decided to keep one small section of the old string as a way to carry the past forward. Hawk suggested we ceremonially burn the old string of ties, which we did in the Central Fire pit a few days before it was lit as the opening of the Gathering. We talked quite a lot about the meaning of burning the old ties, the past experiences that these ties embodied, and more generally about life as a process, in part, of letting go. Perhaps not coincidentally, that Gathering turned out to be one of the Death years…more on this later.

Another quiet transformation occurs at the Sweatlodge and surrounding area. Hawk and Lisa typically spend some time there visiting, checking to see how the structure is holding up, seeing what trees need trimming or areas need cleaning and reminiscing about years past. Until 2012, Geoff, who was Hawk's partner at the door inside the lodge for many years, would arrive the Wednesday before the Gathering to help with bringing wood and collecting stones for the lodge fire and with any structural work that needed doing. Susa and I typically also start working on the lodge by raking, removing the stones from the two fire pits and placing them on the memory piles of lodge stones behind the lodge and preparing the pits for new stones. All of this preparation includes a lot of reminiscing about the year gone by since the last time we were here doing this as well as conversation about how we want to do things this year.

Most years, while we prepare the lodge, there is an extraordinary presence of some animal or another: eagles in 2008; hummingbirds in 2009, salamanders in 2010, snakes in 2011. These animals continued to show up during the ceremony

and, in some cases, in other spaces of the Gathering at other times. For Hawk and others, their presence was interpreted as a sign – beings whose participation signified meaningful connections to the themes that emerged during those particular Gatherings. Dragonflies, who Hawk and other Wabanaki people here call the Grandfathers, always make a startling appearance at some meaningful point during the Gathering, either during these preparations or in ceremony. 2012 is an exception; we did not have any extraordinary experiences with animals during our lodge preparations. But, 2012 was the Newcomer year.

The Day-to-Day life of the Gathering – Day One.

I usually move to stay at the Harvest Gathering sometime on Friday at the latest. I stay either in the cabin or somewhere inside the house so that we can share dog care. We hide the traditional huge bag of Hershey's Kisses in the kitchen, a special pick-me-up favorite of the Henries' family. Sierra and Sequan usually move out and stay in a tent. Lisa and Hawk will move out of their bedroom if needed or offer the music room to participants who need to be indoors. On occasion, people stay in the living on air mattresses. In recent years, those of us who are facilitating the Sweatlodge all stay in the house. A new tradition has developed. Lisa and I set our alarms for three AM. She wakes Hawk but stays in bed. The rest of us meet in the kitchen for a cup of strong coffee and we start our day together there. Not

always, but sometimes we get to cracking crazy jokes and howling with laughter – our favorite way to begin the lodge!

By midday, there are usually a couple of tents set up in the pine campground, housing the early arrivals from away. Throughout the day, final preparations are made in the food tent and house, and the ceremonial spaces and pathways. Laminated signs provide some guidance to incoming participants about where to store their food or find supplies, where to find water for drinking and washing, and those in the porta-pottie begging for people to keep the place clean and replace paper towels and toilet paper from the supply kept in big plastic water-proof bins immediately outside. At some point before too late in the day, we have a small ceremony to light the Central Fire so that it is well established before most people arrive. Hawk slips away to organize his ceremonial objects in anticipation of being too busy to do this once more people arrive.

Plans for managing cars and parking are reviewed and revised as we get a sense of how many people are coming in. This is a vexing issue every single year. The driveway to the Henries' home is very long and barely more than a widened dirt pathway. More than once, there has been a thorny traffic jam on the driveway when multiple cars going in opposite directions came face-to-face. One at the

house, people can drive up to the camping area to unload but there is very limited space for long-term parking. Keeping a clear passageway from the house to the road is a safety issue, of course, in the case of an emergency and some participants, elders and those with medical problems or small children in particular, are understandably reluctant to let us take their car to neighbors' homes or the end of Thorne Road where there is a fairly large area for parking.

Making arrangements for people who cannot comfortably or safely tent for days has also been a challenge over the years. Starting in 2008, the woman who owns the next house down from the Henries, the last house on Thorne Road, agreed to allow participants to stay in the house or two large camp buildings there. During the summer, she runs a camp for kids from urban areas where they learn to do organic gardening and cooking, and to care for the chickens that provide their eggs. The camp buildings have up to fourteen bunks each are although they do not have electricity or running water, the house does and also has a large kitchen. The primary conversation about deciding to take her offer was related to the shift in physical proximity – participants who would be spending time away from the main grounds. Ultimately the importance of safety and comfort outweighed this concern and it has turned out to be an extremely positive change, for the most part.

One exception is 2012 when a small number of newcomers treated their stay in the camp as a vacation, coming and going from the Gathering as if vacationers. The Henries urge people to come and stay if at all possible because of the coherence and flow of interaction that this form of consistency creates. It also minimizes the number of times that things have to be explained, which also promotes a better flow of social and ceremonial exchange. 2012 was dual themed, Newcomer and Africa. This was, in part, because 2012 was the first year that Facebook – yes, Facebook – played a role in communication. It was not a smooth transition, nor was the decision to use Facebook reached by the usual process of consensus among members of the core group. I will speak to this a bit more in my final reflections but for now, I will say that it was very disruptive to have people coming and going, only partially and intermittently engaged in the Gathering. Next year, several things will be approached differently because of it.

By late afternoon, the pine camp area is filling with tents and chairs. Headlines stream up the driveway and into the woods as people seek out their perfect temporary home. The sounds of laughter and frustration, clinking metal rods for the raising of tents from the dead and quiet dialogues about what to leave in the care or take to the tent waft down from the word. The food tent is buzzing

with activity as Lisa directs the movements of people and food into and out of refrigerators. Dinner is organized and set out on the tables with plates, bowls, and plastic eating utensils. Lisa is already instructing volunteers regarding various kitchen and food duties, directing traffic to and from the food tent to the house kitchen for last minute cleaning of pots and pans. This flurry of activity is always balanced by people in clearly contemplative pursuits: the few individuals who sit by the Central Fire, quietly staring into the light; others walk silently around the fields or at the edge of the wood, looking around and up at the sky, taking in their surroundings.

The first Circle is generally brief. Just before the food tent is opened for dinner, Lisa rings the bell – the one that is used throughout the Gathering to call people to the central ground for group activities – and instructs everyone to join hands in a circle that is open at the end of the food tent, to include the food in the circle. She and Hawk welcome everyone and explain that shortly after clean-up from dinner the Talking Circle to talk about the Sweatlodge will start around the Central Fire. They talk about their hope that participants will not use cell phones, computers, Ipods, etcetera, along with the philosophy behind it. There are no clocks or watches anywhere to be seen and we do not use them for any decision-making

about when events will happen (with the exception of setting an alarm to make sure we get up in time to go into the Sweatlodge by sunrise). This practice, too, is meant to emphasize the choice to rely on spiritual agencies to take the lead in the timing and, in some cases, nature of the events that unfold there.

Lisa also talks about the basic practical issues at hand. Most importantly, at that point, is the start of an ongoing discourse threaded throughout the Gathering about the importance of participation in the care and feeding and safety of everyone there. Volunteers for kitchen clean up are identified. As with all meals, she asks that children and elders be allowed to eat first and that everyone take modest portions, to start, and go back for seconds only after everyone else has had a chance to get their first serving. The feasting begins along with the ongoing conversations about food and food related issues that will permeate every space of the Gathering until beyond the last day when the food tent is finally dismantled.

The health and well-being of the group has received a great deal of our attention over the years. Food practices are central to this concern. We tried a variety of different approaches to washing dishes and pans, and storing food. Initially, the resistance to using paper and plastic led to several attempt to set up outdoor washing facilities but concern about food safety ultimately led to the

decision to use paper goods, especially some of the newer products that can be composted or that easily breakdown. Cleanliness and hygiene are also an issue, especially in terms of hand-washing before handling food, dishes, and so forth. This is no small thing when there can be fifty or a hundred people living together, outdoors, for days. The new porta-pottie vendor, the one that has given us the super-duper fancy ones usually used at weddings, began providing super-duper hand-washing stations in 2011, which now grace the landscape just outside the food tent.

They are now a focal point for many conversations about the link between cleanliness and mindfulness about each person's responsibility to the well-being of the group. In 2012, they were included in the ceremonial circle that opened the preparations for the Harvest Feast. A Bantu man who fled to the United States from Africa because of violence there led a hand-washing ceremony from his community. One of the women spoke about the element of water as having a sacred identity in many traditions, cleaning with it as a way to acknowledge its spiritual agency and turned, with a wave of her hand signaling the hand-washing stations, to invite people to think of the hand-washing stations as merely a modern version of the underlying links between water, spirit and community.

People continue to arrive throughout the evening so Lisa joins us only briefly to share practical information then returns to her post as the Queen of practical management. My brothers, Mark and Chuck, are usually busy managing the flow of incoming people and their need for help finding a spot and setting up camp after dark. Sierra and Sequan are typically busy locating friends, some of whom have been a part of the Gathering for most of their lives. I, too, look for the arrival of people who are an important part of the Gathering experience for me – a common practice among those of us who attend each year. Several participants mention this is their interviews, as well. as do many of us. Depending on when I moved in earlier in the day, I go to the house to make sure the dogs are fed and settled in, and to gather some warm clothes and blankets for an evening by the fire. Between us, the Henries and I now have five dogs, all of whom are a part of our families; they are an important part of our planning and shared responsibilities.

After dinner is finished and most of the clean-up is done, Lisa rings the bell three times to call people to the Friday night Talking Circle which is held around the Central Fire. When it is time to start, she rings the bell three times again. Susa and I, as the fire-keepers of this lodge, generally sit together in camp chairs with others sitting around the fire. Blankets and mats are set out nearest to the fire pit

where children and younger people tend to sit. Everyone else is sitting in circles around the fire, usually in at least two rows, with elders or people who need the most warmth sitting in the inner circle.

Until 2012 when Geoff, for the first time, did not attend, he and Hawk sat together as the two people running the lodge on the inside. Sometimes visiting Native American or Indigenous ceremonial leaders will sit with Hawk and take part in the discussions about how ceremony in general or the Sweatlodge in particular are conducted in their communities. Bert, who has been with us since 2008, is a ceremonial leader himself and he always chimes in. For the past three years, a Mayan ceremonial leader from Mexico has also been at the Gathering; he, too, always jumps in to share related ceremonial perspectives from his own tradition.

The main purpose of this circle, beyond the obvious goal of starting the process of helping people start to get to know each other, is to explain some of the practical and spiritual aspects of this particular Sweatlodge and to give newcomers to the Sweatlodge a sense of what to expect. Although we take turns explaining various aspects of the ceremony, people usually ask a lot of questions along the way, which Hawk, especially, continually encourages.

Typically, he starts off the conversation by saying that the Sweatlodge, in various but similar forms, is not only ancient but practiced by cultures all over the world. He describes a little bit about what it looks like and why this half-dome shaped weaving of tree saplings covered with blankets can facilitate a certain intensity of experience and sharing. Basics are discussed regarding this lodge – people wear clothes at least until inside; take a towel;, do not eat much or anything before you go in, it may or may feel very hot to you and what to do to care for yourself if you are; there will be cedar lining the floor of the lodge where you will sit; hints on how to enter and exit safely; if you feel you need to leave, which you can do at any time, ask for the door. There is a dirt altar outside, between the fire and the lodge opening. This is a place where objects can become infused with the energy of the ceremony. Some people bring someone else's object as a way to ground the other at the ceremony and carry the energy back to them. Another way to bring someone who is not physically present is to carry a prayer tie that they made inside and tie it to a branch at the roof of the lodge. This is also a way to leave oneself inside the lodge once the ceremony is over. The prayer ties stay there until the next ceremony and then are burned to send the energy of its being, and prayers therein, to the sky beings and the ancestors.

Then, the talking usually comes to me and Susa, to explain our role and purpose as the fire and door keepers, including the task of being sure that everyone is safe and that the lodge is protected. We explain the relationship of the fire outside, the Spirit Path to the lodge, through the altar, and the stones going into the lodge. Staying outside the lodge with the fire is encouraged as an alternative to going inside, a place where people often have equally intense experiences and are equally "present" in supporting roles. We all talk about the fact that even the people who are down at the Central Fire or preparing food or providing child care, and so on, are participating also. Physical presence is not the determining criteria for participation – *actual* presence.

A few years ago, Lisa facilitated a very successful way to embody this notion, in practice. It was wildly successful but because of the extra time and planning it takes, we have not done it again. She and Sierra collected a basket full of ocean-edge stones and put them by the Central Fire until it was time for us to go up to the lodge in the wee hours to ceremonially light the fire there. To light the Sweatlodge fire, I ask whoever is tending the Central Fire to get a coal for me. I carry it (in a shovel) up the path in the dark and we use it to light the matches with

which we light the four directions of the Sweatlodge fire, then I place the coal in the eastern door of the fire.

That year, Hawk took the basket of stones from the side of the Central Fire into the lodge with him, where they sat by the Sweatlodge stones throughout the ceremony. Meanwhile, Lisa brought a huge bundle of loose sweetgrass to the group of people staying down in the main field. They sat by the Central Fire braiding the sweetgrass, thinking of being “in” the lodge and of the people actually physically there, and of the connection between the two fires. After the Sweatlodge was over, people who had not been physically inside the lodge were invited to take a stone from the basket and people who had been inside the lodge were invited to take a sweetgrass braid. Really, it was quite, well, to wax un-researcher-like, magical. To this day, I hear people reminisce and many still have the stones they took.

Susa or I (usually me, after I get the look – you start!) usually start the conversation about menstruating women going into the Sweatlodge. It is inevitably an enlivened topic. Quite *unlike* many Sweatlodge traditions, at least in Native North America, menstruating women are allowed to go inside. Usually Susa and I start by sharing our own experiences with women’s lodges and explaining, from our own perspective, the underlying reasoning behind this prohibition. At its heart,

women have a monthly Sweatlodge, during their "moontime." When Susa and I first met, at a series of women's lodges at Donna Lee's place many years ago, there was a moonlodge to which women could retreat and fully engage the spiritual and physical doorways opened at that time. In some cultures, it is seen as a dangerous time when the opening can bring harmful energies to the living.

In any case, since this Gathering is expressly designed to allow everyone to participate in everything, we decided years ago that it would be inappropriate to create a "rule" disallowing their participation. Several Native women have spoken up over the years to elaborate their view of the kinds of powers associated with moontime and encourage women not to go in – it can be overwhelming – and to consider, too, that the intensity of the energy might create difficulties for others. Some non-Native women have been angry, feeling that women should be able to make their own decisions about whatever their "power" is as women. In 2011, the Mayan man talked about how women, in his community, have ceremonial celebrations of their moontime passages and their separation from day-to-day activities is facilitated so that they can use the power for the healing and well-being of the whole community. Ultimately, we end by re-stating that in this lodge, each individual must decide what to do, including the men who may choose not to

participate to avoid the possibility of being inside with a woman who is on her moontime.

During the Friday night Talking Circle, Hawk also leads an informational dialogue about the Central Fire. It requires care and attention around the clock, more so during rain and wind. Because fire is a central character in the unfolding of the Gathering, at every level, Hawk and sometimes others tend to take quite a bit of time at the Friday night circle talking about it and what is expected of anyone who volunteers to tend the Central Fire. He speaks of it as a Grandmother, an elder who deserves being treated with care and attention and respect. For example, the fire is not a place to put trash or cigarette butts or, for that matter, anything except tobacco for prayer. In some cases, people from different faith traditions will burn herbs used for their forms of prayer, which is also considered an appropriate interaction to have with the fire. Even placing the wood into the fire, ideally, is an act of thankfulness for the sacrifice of the wood, and so on.

This way of thinking about a fire is starkly different than the campfire many people associate with going off to the woods to camp-out for the weekend. In 2008 there were a lot of families with young children. Saturday night, when lots of folks are sitting by the Central Fire in conversation or playing and listening to music, a

few of the children came up to ask if they could make smores in the Central Fire. Well, the debate went on for hours! Hawk telling his parable about the fire at a powwow when the fire-keeper would not allow people near enough to be warm and the lesson that the fire is sacred regardless. But, then again, others pointed out, we are not supposed to toss trash in there either or anything apart from "prayer." Ah, then, but are smores actual food?

To Smore or Not to Smore: Paragraph from fieldnotes

Over the years, we have tried different approaches to identifying the people who took on the role of fire-keeper during the Gathering. Since this fire is the heart and soul of the whole thing, the place where the spiritual agencies supporting the Gathering abide, the person tending it is taking on responsibilities that go beyond the physical tasks of keeping the flame going. Usually, Hawk and Lisa decide together whether any given person who volunteers would be appropriate. Some years, 2011 comes to mind, for some reason, it took care of itself. Apparently, several of the long-time attendees who have had years of experience as fire-keepers, took it upon themselves to keep an eye on things and make sure that the fire was being properly tended. We were thrilled – it has been the hope, for many years, that the younger people will step up and start taking on more of a leadership role.

Gathering – Day Two

Sweatlodge

After meeting for really strong French roast coffee in the kitchen, all of us who are running the Sweatlodge gather our gear and walk in the dark from the house, up the pathway toward the campground, bear right up the hill and to the lodge. The fire pit is set with wood and kindling towering over the stones piled on top of four logs lying at the bottom of the pyre. We admire the night sky and chat. Pipes and tobacco prayers begin. There is more laughter and reminiscing about the year gone by since we did this last. One or two people planning to go in to the lodge usually show up for the fire lighting, wrapped in blankets, half-asleep. Last minute checks on the hose and huge bucket filled with water are made, the wood pile uncovered, the wood bucket and gourd for water-pouring inside the lodge set out.

It is time. I grab a shovel and walk down to the Central Fire to gather a coal. It is usually very quiet, just one or two people at the fire, sometimes a few others lying on the ground around the fire, completely covered by sleeping bags and blankets. Some snoring. The twinky lights keeping the food tent alight sparkle through the forest, casting interesting shadows on the leaves and branches. I greet the Fire-keeper and ask if they would be willing to gather a coal for me. I usually take one from the east and take a pinch of tobacco to offer to the fire in thanks. Walking up an uneven path through the woods at night with a shovel of ashes is pretty challenging! So far, I have not set myself or the woods on fire doing it.

Once I get back to the lodge, we each take up a position in one of the four directions. In each direction, we leave a triangular opening in the wood, the door for each direction to the fire. Starting in the east, each person says a little something (or not) and lights the door, the extra pile of wood shavings and kindling.

Not too long after the fire gets going, the rocks are hot and it is time to gather people who want to go into the lodge. Some years, people make it on their own, which is our preference. However, Hawk also tries to arrange for a musician to walk around the camping and parking areas (some people sleep in their trucks and vans) to wake people with flute, drum, singing. A couple of years ago, one of the Henries' oldest friends, Chuck, blew a conch shell. He works closely with Miquel (Maya) where the conch is a traditional tool for calling. It is also very loud. Susa stayed with the fire. I headed down the path from the lodge to go to get something from the house before the ceremony started. I left my flashlight and walked blind into the woods; the path is so familiar that I can safely walk it without light.

The conch howled from behind me, from somewhere up the hill. My heart nearly burst out of my chest as if in a race for some distant place. I had the visceral sensation of being transported on the waves of sound vibrating through my body to another planet or another world. It was very, very strange and wonderful. No one missed the alarm or slept through the lodge that year, needless to say. The conch was a very effective wake-up alarm but did not engender the sort of gentle calling

typical of this practice. Short on the heels of the third blow, the howling of frightened children rang out through the woods. I admit it – I could not stop laughing, to think of the startled dreams broken apart by this sound. Even as I write now, the giggles return for a moment then fade when I remember how the poor children suffered. Lisa said she was comforting babies and young kids for hours. So, we did not do this again.

I do not want to go into a lot of detail about the lodge itself, beyond the short description in the first chapter. Protecting the privacy of participants in the lodge, and their experiences, is a priority. I will share some experiences of people that I interviewed, edited with a mind to protecting others with whom they shared the lodge. And, I feel comfortable talking a bit about my own experience, from the perspective of a fire-keeper.

Once people have arrived and various items placed on the altar, Hawk goes inside by himself to start his work there. People line up outside the lodge. One by one, they are smudged with sage before they stoop down to the hands and knees to enter the lodge through the eastern door. They sunwise around the center pit, continuing all the way around until everyone is seated in circles around the center pit. Sometimes there are two rows of people there, depending on how many go in. When he and Geoff, or whomever is assisting him on the opposite side of the door entrance, are ready, Hawk asks for seven stones from the fire. I pick one stone at a time, lifting it with a long-handled tool and gently handing it inside until Hawk or Geoff take it from me. They place the rock in the center pit and send the tool back

out to me again. When they have seven, they ask for the door to be closed, which Susa does. It is completely black inside.

I stay with the fire, tending it and the stones. Susa stays by the door where she opens and closes the door, assists with sending various items in and out of the lodge at Hawk's request and assisting people who may need to come out during the ceremony. We are both responsible for paying attention to the entire ceremony and the status of people inside and outside, with a mind to providing safety and protection. I should mention that although women do sometimes act as fire-keepers at Sweatlodges in Wabanaki country here in Maine, it is usually because all of the men are inside. In the tradition that Susa was taught in Texas, women regularly take this role. I do not want to belabor this issue here, it is not directly relevant right now. I mention it because it was a bit of an adjustment for indigenous people coming from other traditions where gender roles are more strictly separated or defined.

There have also been some very difficult years at the lodge when ceremonial leaders from different indigenous traditions participated and perhaps pushed a little to assert their own ways of doing things. It is a difficult path to tread: how to invite people from different traditions to share their own practices while making sure that other participants are safe, especially newcomers? It has perhaps been most difficult to manage inside the lodge which is, by its nature, a very intense experience meant to be disruptive – to shake loose the day-to-day, habitual

senses of the world in which most of us live and create the kind of vulnerability needed, sometimes, for true transformation. It is a work-in-process.

For the most part, it does not get very hot inside, compared to my own experience or that of others who have a lot of experience in Sweatlodge ceremonies. This is despite the fact that the rocks I send inside are, for the most part, *red* hot. In keeping with one of the most important teachings of the lodge, as I understand, the lodge has its own work to do, its own agency in providing the experience that people inside need – something to which I am not, nor is anyone, privy. I mention this not only as a way to highlight the embodiment of concepts regarding the *agency* of practices and objects and spaces at the Gathering but also as a way to think about the how some participants describe their experience of the lodge, as well as other events and spaces at the Gathering.

Deb, our sometimes third fire-keeper at the lodge, describes her feeling of connection to the fire and keeping the fire.

> What I love about that ceremony is the intimacy of the fire. Uh, of all the things that you have to do around keeping that fire, keeping your energy centered, being of service to the people in the lodge and the pipe holders and the singers and ya know story tellers and um, and the fire itself and the connection of the fire, the connection between the fire and the ethereal and the connection of that fire and the path to the lodge, the fertilization of those prayers, using the stones, uh, is very much more complicated I think, uh, in the human mind than probably what it actually is. But there is a lot to it and symbolically for me anyway there is a lot to it. And uh, I love, I love the coffee, I love the laughter, sometimes it's laughter, sometimes it's not. I love the lack of control over it, I'm there completely in servitude cuz I have no control over how hot those rocks, all I can do is, I mean you've seen it. You can have the hottest damn fire in the lodge. ~ Deb

Paul, an ex-Christian Scientist, shares his disappointment with his lodge experience:

> It was a whole new experience and going into the lodge and this was kind of, I felt honored, really that I was allowed to participate in this and I wanted to know about it. I'm still you know like waiting to see something in this spiritual area of experience that I want to see something happen. I want to see something move or a lightening bolt, or I want to feel this huge thing going on in my soul. And I'm still looking for that. But, it was really a great experience. I didn't have that great moving thing. I've always nature anyway, so I felt very much at peace with honoring the creatures and being grateful for things in nature and for the food, so it all worked well. It was a very good experience but it wasn't a hugely transitional something that said you gotta said you gotta start practicing this way every day. ~ Paul

His wife, also an ex-Christian Scientist speaks about the lodge.

> So the night before we leave to go to the harvest gathering, I have a dream where I am standing outside my house and I see an owl fly into the trees and then I look on the roof and right up at the chimney is this little shape shifter guy who is like 3 feet tall and he is all dressed like an owl and sitting on my chimney, then I wake up, that was interesting, I wonder what that is about. So we go to the gathering, we get there at night, and the next morning is to be the Sweatlodge, which I had been fasting for and I'm ready to do this and there's not enough room for me. So I set outside and that guy Pempe? He starts chanting this Tibetan chant, which just was amazing, I'm just like in ecstasy, I'm blissing out. Eventually they invite me in because some people have left.So I go in the Sweatlodge and there is a woman there with her pipe. It was time to pass pipes and the woman says, "I have this pipe and it carries owl medicine." Ding. (laugh) OK, I need to talk to her. So after that was over and we were having lunch, I went up to her and said, "I have to talk with you. I don't know what we are to talk about but you have owl medicine and I had this dream about an owl and we need to talk." So we just talked. ~ Paul's wife

Penpa says:

> Yes, for me, I like it because this lodge, Sweatlodge, it's feeling of really, it's clean out my, all the, sweat a lot, inside I have the water that's coming out. Then I can drink new water … It's kind of selfish

> though, so … I will say it's healthy. I can do more work to benefit other people. So that is one thing. Water. That's healthy. And I didn't talk to anybody too much, like. So. My English not enough to share everything. ~ Penpa

During the third round, I send for someone to bring fruit for people coming out of the lodge. After fourth round is over, participants have a little fruit and water, perhaps cool off with a pot full of water from the big bucket and rest a bit. Some folks stay on for quite awhile visiting. Once certain that everyone is set, and my fire tending duties are over, I head to the house to change and then join everyone near the food tent. Saturday afternoon activities vary quite a bit from year to year.

Although I have never been a part of this, I know that during the lodge, Lisa organizes a group activity, for those who want to join it. During several recent years, people created a huge hoop decorated with yarns and other materials. It hangs in the trees for the rest of the weekend and people continue to add their own materials. In 2012, one of the women who has joined us for the past few years brought a small loom strung with yarn (warp) and a huge plastic container full of all sorts of materials for weaving (woof) – yarn, strings of all sorts, strips of cloth, beads. For the rest of the weekend, people would wander over one or two at a time and become totally engrossed in weaving. For the first time ever, I decided to participate in this type of activity. By the end of the Gathering, it was nearly fully woven and because so many different people contributed, it was quite unusual and extraordinary in texture and appearance.

Saturday Dinner

Saturday evening dinner goes much as it does on Friday. The bell rings. Everyone gathers in a circle open to the food on one end before the food tent is open for self-serve, someone who the Henries have asked to speak says a prayer or something about thanks for the food, the mantra reminding everyone about letting children and elders go first is intoned along with the plea for moderate portions until it is clear that there is enough food for everyone. Typically there is more than enough of a good mix of different kinds of food. In fact, food is typically the centerpiece for conversation and all of the activities related to food perhaps the most important meeting place for strangers and opportunity to actively participate in the ongoing needs of the community.

For the first time in memory, 2012 was barren in this regard. There was no obvious explanation but perhaps it was because there was a preponderance of newcomers. Several did say that they will bring more the next time, now that they have an idea of what to expect. In any case, there was not enough food, a problem that started in earnest on Saturday night and continued for the rest of the weekend. I know this from personal experience. I usually wait to eat until it the end as a way to do my part to be sure others get enough of what they want. In 2012, by the time I got to the food tables, there was no food left! There was hardly any salad at any point, a very strange occurrence because there are usually several vegetarians and farmers in attendance. I was reduced to eating peanut butter and fluff sandwiches. I never eat fluff! I told the Henries and Susa and others who might appreciate the

joke that I took it as a “sign” that the spirits were giving cosmic permission to eat something that is normally not allowed. This inspired Susa and others to join me in the consumption of peanut butter and fluff sandwiches. 2012, our fluffernutter Gathering.

While the food tent is being cleaned up after dinner, others are busy lighting tealights set into sand in the bottom of small plastic cups. The cups are set together on one of the picnic benches next to the food tent, at the edge of the pine tree area. Lisa makes a herculean effort to move things along so that we can be en route to the Wheel shortly after sunset, at the edge of dusk. When these chores are finished, the bell rings for the Medicine Wheel ceremony. Everyone gathers in a circle around the Central Fire to refocus as a group and to get some information about what comes next. From here, people who are planning to go into the Wheel move to the picnic table to take a candle and gather in a line behind Hawk and Lisa. Susa and I are at the end of the line, Sierra is often there with us. As always, there will be someone tending the Central Fire and usually a few people stay there instead of going to the Wheel. The people staying at the Fire are asked to think about “holding the energy” of the Wheel, connecting through the fire.

Medicine Wheel

From here on out, everything is done in silence, including whatever is happening at the Central Fire where the people staying there are charged with instructing any new people showing up to maintain silence. After everyone has a candle, Lisa leads the way to the Wheel, following the path toward the barn and

taking a left up the hill along a path lit with small white holiday lights in the trees and white holiday rope lighting on the ground. As always, walking through the woods at nightfall, even with the lights that we do not have for the winter gathering, there is always a bit of stumbling, hands reaching out to help stabilize others, twitters and giggles when people trip.

Single file, the group follows Lisa through the eastern door of the Wheel where someone stands beneath the towering oak that marks the southern side of the door and feathers everyone with sage smoke as they pass by. There are already four people standing in each of the four cardinal directions inside the Wheel, people with whom the Henries have spoken in advance about their participation. Starting in 2011, Bert also takes a place in the center of the Wheel with his ceremonial pipe. The circular space fills with people moving in a sunwise direction around the circumference of the space, using the string of prayer ties as a guide and stepping around the four peoples standing as sentinels in the four directions.

Lisa and Hawk stand on the north side of the eastern entrance, Susa and I on the south. There are several moments of just standing in place. Darkness settles in. The only sounds come from the occasional restless bird and rustling of leaves. Stars brighten. It is the first and only time during the Gathering that is totally devoid of the sound of human voices. Lisa turns around to face the east and like a flock of birds, the rest of us turn eastward. The person chosen to call to the east sings or plays or chants – whatever form of expression it is that is their talent and, in the verbiage of the Gathering, this is their gift to the Medicine Wheel and the rest of us

standing there. In silence, we all look eastward a little longer. Lisa turns southward and the flock wheels forty-five degrees sunwise. The south is called by a different person, followed by a period of silence. This pattern repeats as we “call” the west and the south. Whatever their means of making sound, each person calls the direction without using spoken language, with an occasional exception – certain Buddhist chants, for example. All the while, Bert is conducting a silent pipe ceremony, facing each direction with the rest of the group. The final turn is back to center again for another time of face-to-face, silent interaction. Lisa turns eastward and leads the group, in silence, back to the Central Fire. Bert continues until everyone is gone from the Wheel and is last to leave.

Saturday evening – Social Space

The rest of Saturday evening is spent as social and music time around the Central Fire. It is a particularly important segment of social time. If a large group is going to spontaneously coagulate, this is when it will happen. As such, it is especially interesting when I think about the role of unstructured space in the process of building mutual orientation and common ground. The same general consistencies in the general landscape and material topographies exist – people in circles, moving along pathways between living, ceremonial and social places, and so on. The activities, however, emerge spontaneously. It is the time when the Henries, and core group, want the lightest hand in what happens. Yet, Saturday night is where some of the most vexing challenges have emerged when we talk in our post-meeting circle and other times of the year about how to facilitate a social

place where different kinds of people can share their traditions or ways of doing things – without taking a more directive approach.

Music is almost always the focus of Saturday night. Sometimes the group quickly disperses leaving just a handful of folks hanging around the fire quietly talking or playing various instruments. Groups of children are often a prominent feature of this time and space, by now better acquainted with each other and small cliques forming. Sometimes a very sophisticated jam session emerges including an unusual array of instruments – didgeridoo, flutes of all kinds, guitars, cello or violin or viola, celtic and other fiddles, and so on. In 2009, several members of the Native drum founded by Bert decided to attend and, for the first time, traditional Wabanaki songs reverberated across the land. James led us in a snake dance and then some social dances. Every year since, Wabanaki drum and singing is a part of the Saturday night soundscape and on several occasions we got to dance again.

It has always been the Henries' hope that Saturday night would be a time when individuals could share something of their traditions – music, storytelling, jokes, dance. In reality, it rolls out in very different ways. In part, of course, this is because different people come every year. Some years, most folks head off to their camps while a few people stay by the fire talking or quietly playing music. Other years, the din of music and laughter is quite raucous, ebbing and flowing until well into the night. Weather plays a role, if it is fierce. Light rain and wind dampens music jams a bit, depending upon the instruments that people brought. Cold rarely has an impact on much of anything except, perhaps, for elders.

In 2012, I was already back at the house, shoes off, pajamas on, half asleep. I did not know that the dancing would happen until I heard the snake dance drumming. I pulled on clothes, made my apologies to my family at the house and flew back to the Central Fire. My feet were wracked with pain from standing all day but I did not care. We danced and danced and I learned two new social dances. I paid for it the next day with lots of extra pain, but it was worth it! We laughed at ourselves stumbling around when the really fast dances came. There is nothing better for feeling a part of something than laughter and dancing, in my opinion.

Humor

In 2010, the death throws of Hurricane Earl swept across coastal Maine, creating some special challenges and experiences at the Gathering. Keeping the Central Fire going throughout the event is a priority. In a manner reminiscent of the way that other important Fires in northeastern Algonquian life survived[35], we decided we could light a mobile form of fire – a long-burning candle – to keep on the altar inside the house which would be used to re-light the Central Fire pit once the danger to its survival passed. My brothers, Mark and Chuck, and Terri and Aaron, two other participants, decided they would stay with the Central Fire and try to keep it going. The candle was ready to go for plan B. We set up a canopy over the Fire and they collected chairs, wool blankets, food and water to have handy. Campers regrouped and moved to others' tents that were well covered, rode it out in their own tents, or moved to the indoor camps at "Robin's Nest" – the place next-door.

It howled and blew a gale that night. The house shook. The dogs were pacing. The rain hitting glass windows was so loud that it woke me up – twice. Thunder and lightening. In the morning, the woods were full of piles of sticks, leaves and pine needles; several large tree branches were snapped. As always, after the passing of a strong ocean storm, the air was crisp and clear and cool, flowing out of Canada on a northwest wind. Miraculously, the boys kept the Fire alive all night. Breakfast was enlivened with lots of laughter as they told their storm stories, including the part when they all suddenly realized that the canopies of the food tent were lifting en masse off the ground and heading skyward into the vortex of gale force winds above. Screaming through the maelstrom of noise and rain, they shot from the Central Fire to the food tent to grab the poles, now more than a couple of feet off the ground, stakes broken loose from the earth and flailing in the wind.

The narratives about the year when the "boys" saved the fire from the hurricane have been woven into the Gathering's story. Persistence, commitment, sacrifice and caring for the community are living values re-created by its telling. The Fire, as a living part of the Gathering, was treated as a part of the network of relations and assemblage of elements that not only reflects these values but constructs their reality in its ongoing practice.

Silence

Saturday night has not always gone so smoothly, however. There were about three years, from 2007 to 2009, when particular musical genres and instruments overwhelmed every minute of the evening. Drumming, drumming,

drumming with the same drums and rhythms went on and on. A fleet of guitar players took over and rolled out one old rock or blues tune after another. Space – times of quiet between songs – was totally filled. There was no room for others to take the floor, so to speak. Those whose musical talents produce quiet, subtle sound and storytellers, who might otherwise have taken part, did not. Others who are shy or less outgoing also did not take part. This problem spilled over into many of the other circles and activities during those years. There were a few particular individuals who consistently jumped in with guitars and songs and comments to fill any breath of quiet, during Talking Circles, at the start and finish of ceremonies, during meal times and social times. It was quite intrusive. The question of silence – how much to use it, when to deploy it – moved to center stage, as did a review of how much to impose upon the behavior of participants who are disruptive.

During the many conversations the Henries, me and others had about this problem, which had never occurred before and has not occurred since these individuals stopped coming, we all agreed that on a deeper level, the problem was one of respect. In order to facilitate opportunities for individuals to express difference, the space must also be one in which others' differences are not *imposed* upon them. To add to the problem, these particular folks brought "New Age" practices and perspectives to bear on the Gathering, something that the Henries have worked very hard to avoid. One expression of this was in the form of a song that is supposedly Wabanaki but is, in fact, so distorted that it no longer bears any meaningful link.

The Henries and I share a very similar concern, based on our individual experiences over the years, that the New Age movement is a particularly pernicious form of cultural appropriation, and one that, in particular, appropriates Native American spiritual practices. Lifting parts and pieces out of cultural context, remixing them with yet other distinctive practices to suit personal need, and in some cases going a step further by claiming authority to run ceremonies or, worse, to sell them, the fundamental of New Age-ism, from the perspective of the Gathering, is one of *dis*respect for difference.

Even without the addition of participants who are specifically embedded in New Age mixing-and-matching practices, it has been a long and hard won fight to get the word out to Wabanaki and other Native communities in New England that the Harvest Gathering is not, in fact, a New Age event. Most importantly, we wanted Native people to feel welcome and safe; an unlikely scenario if offensive appropriations of Native culture were allowed. The same years that the New Age issue came up, Wabanaki people started to attend, perhaps in part because Bert put out the word that the Gathering is not "New Age." Having more Native people show up, including an important Wabanaki elder, added to the feeling of urgency to come up with some way to steer away from the interruptions and New Age songs, and so forth.

Ultimately, after a lot of hemming and hawing and discussions about how to set some limits without violating the prime directive of respecting difference (even New Age difference!) and minimal interference, we did find ways to politely

discourage the constant barrage of interruptions made by particular individuals. At the group level, we spoke more about the importance of the power of silence as a form of respect, quiet as a way to invoke the muse and resisting the constant use of spoken language as a gateway to forms of innovation greater than the sum of our parts. Although these were, at surface, practical issues, they were traces of underlying, emergent transformations that had a profound impact on the Gathering's capacities for communal orientation and individual difference.

Some of the changes made in the order and enactment of ceremonies during the same three year period illustrate. In 2007, we reorganized the order and timing of the major ceremonies in order to accommodate long distant travelers. Prior to this, the Sweatlodge was on Saturday morning, as it is now. The Medicine Wheel and Harvest Feast were on Sunday and the Giveaway on Monday, which meant that many of the people who had to travel to get home for work or school on Tuesday missed the Giveaway. After months of the usual process of deciding by consensus, the decision was made to keep the Sweatlodge on Saturday morning and Harvest Feast on Sunday. The Medicine Wheel was moved to Saturday evening and Giveaway to Sunday right after Harvest Feast circle and food preparations. This is the current order of things. These changes did, as intended, allow more people to participate in all of the ceremonies. In addition, the changes also created an unforeseen dramatic increase in the continuity and flow of mutual orientation and public depth of sharing more common in the dark womb of Sweatlodge.

In 2009, again thinking of practical issues, we decided to turn the Medicine Wheel into a "silent" ceremony; that is, a space that does not incorporate spoken language or individual enactments. The Wheel's function is as a place for healing – medicine, literally. Prior to 2009, everyone lined up at one of the pathways leading to the eastern door instead of the Central Fire. The single-file line of participants followed Lisa or Hawk in, as we do now. Although people were urged to let go of chatter and walk mindfully by paying attention to their feet touching the ground, and so forth, it was not necessarily done in silence. Everyone was smudged individually before going inside. Each individual, going around the circle, took a turn at putting an object into the center and telling a story about the object – what it meant, how it related to healing, and so on. It was extremely time consuming, running late into the night. Standing in a single spot on uneven ground in the woods (or, worse yet, on a stone in the ground!) meant that many elders, small children and their parents, and others were not able to stay the whole time, if able to come at all. The changes – general instead of individual smudge at the door and a non-verbal ceremony inside – immediately and totally fixed the practical issues.

For some reason that seems beyond rational explanation, these "practical" changes magnified the intensity and depth of interaction another thousand-fold, a transformation ultimately most evident in the Giveaway. In 2011, a spontaneous shift reinforced it further. As we walked back down the path from the Medicine Wheel, past the barn and into the field, no one spoke. In silence, everyone drifted over to the Central Fire and gathered round. Still, no talk. This went on for fully ten

minutes, everyone standing in silence around the fire. The first musician to take up their instrument played very quietly, enhancing rather than disturbing the intense feeling of silent group connection. That evening, turn-taking and respectful times of quiet happened without any talk about it. In 2012, we intentionally incorporated these spontaneous changes with the same results – Saturday night the time when individuals have an opportunity to share loud, quiet, stark and subtle forms of art. Then – the laughter and dancing! In a synchronistic sense, it seems quite extraordinary that the struggles over silence and quiet space emerging in the day-to-day of the Gathering inhabited the same string of space-time wherein these changes in the Medicine Wheel – and its fashioning as a place focused on individual and collective healing – evolved. In a later chapter, I will touch on this in a bit more when I talk about the theme of death at the Gathering.

Gathering – Day Three

Sunday morning is very relaxed, relatively. Lisa is on the hook for making the best hot oatmeal on the planet. She has begged for two years to be excused, but the word is out and she cannot bring herself to disappoint. Sliced bacon, sausages, pancakes and maple syrup are usually on the menu. It is my first opportunity to be at the food tent early to gnash and socialize. The best storytellers seem to gravitate to the Central Fire on Sunday morning, also, for some reason not evident. There is also an evident shift in general comfort among participants – smiles, eye contact, broad gestures while talking about their lives, cameras clicking and comparing photographs, moving around to spend time with different people, greeting each

others' pets, reporting on the best food to eat. It is quiet but noticeably more animated.

Breakfast clean-up is done and the bell rings three times, then three times again, calling people to the Harvest Feast circle and food preparation activities. Kitchen volunteers have pulled out the fresh vegetables and corn that participants have brought to contribute to the Feast. Standing in a circle open on one end to the food tent, the usual prayer or song opens the ceremony and Lisa, Hawk and/or I talk about the practical and ceremonial aspects of what is to come. This ceremony is closely linked to the Giveaway, in form and substance. Food – the cycle of nourishment – is one of transformation, dependent upon and manifest through a cycle of giving and receiving, letting go and gathering, death and rebirth. Once questions have been answered, if any, everyone leaves the circle and takes some vegetables to the Feast blanket lying on the ground nearby. Every year, the arrangement is quite different and in some years, it bears an eerie resemblance to the character of the group that year. The Buddhist year looked like a mandala. The most culturally diverse group produced an image marked by interconnected, asymmetrical regions. Every year, more photographs are taken of this piece of vegetable art than any other single space at the Gathering.

Once the vegetables have all been arranged on the blanket, Allen picks out the ones that he wants to use. Allen is the person who makes the to-die-for corn chowder as well as vegetable and turkey stews every year, as his contribution to the Gathering. He is a tradition. The vegetables that he chooses make their way to the

picnic tables and mats on the ground where people cut and prepare them. Volunteers to assist Allen are identified and they head for the food tent. The rest of the vegetables are put in baskets and people are encouraged to take some home with them.

While the chowder and stews are being prepared, the rest of the group heads off to gather their objects and prepare for the Giveaway. In the meantime, others arrange chairs in a very wide circle around the Central Fire so that everyone is facing the middle without anyone in front of them. Lisa places the Giveaway blanket somewhere inside the circle of chairs and decorates it with plants or vegetables from the Feast, or both. After a short time, someone rings the bell three times to call people back to the Central Fire and again three times to signal the immanent start of the ceremony. Most years, Hawk and Lisa sit together and one or the other of them speaks a bit about the intention and format of the Giveaway.

Every year, in one way or another, the following key thoughts are addressed: we live in a universe where humans are but one form of life and we are utterly dependent upon all other forms of life, seen and unseen; we are dependent upon each other, as humans, and so the greater the flow of nourishment, material and otherwise, among and between, the healthier the whole and thus the healthier of everyone; these constructs of interdependence and exchange work in a way beyond human reckoning – somehow, letting things go to someone else who is more in need assures that everyone will receive what they need, when they need it. They typically suggest the potential life-transforming impact of sacrificing

something extremely important, perhaps even irreplaceable; something with which one is really finished, the lessons of the object learned – give it away and allow it to enter into the universal circulation of exchange where it can transformed into something of service to someone else. The well-being of humans, and the cosmos itself, depends upon this unhindered flow of exchange and transformation coursing through the network of relations.

Lisa usually takes the lead, as a way to give people an example of how to proceed without having to go into a lot of detailed explanations about the format. One by one, each person stands and enters the center of the circle, walking sunwise around the Central Fire while they tell the story of their giveaway. Following Lisa's lead, some, although not all, stop at the eastern side of the Fire to place a pinch of tobacco in the fire as a form of prayer or thanks. After placing the object on the giveaway blanket when they pass by it, each person then returns to their place. Most people give an object to give away although some just tell a story or sing a song. On occasion, skills or services are given away: massage; acupuncture treatment; child care; in once case, caring for life chores for a woman on her moontime. In almost all cases, people tell a story about what their giveaway, how it came into their life, what it means to them or what it came to mean, and why they are giving it away.

Of course, each person has very different reasons for what they put on the blanket, needless to say. For some participants, it is a very simple, unreflexive act

akin to giving something to the Salvation Army at Christmas time; maybe it will be helpful to someone else but there is no truly personal sharing or sacrifice.

Some participants decide at the last minute about what to put on the Giveaway blanket. They might be seen rummaging around their tents, bags, cars or trucks just before the ceremony. Other last minute decisions reflect a process of waiting for something to show itself, for an object, say, to indicate that it wants to be given away.

When everyone has taken their turn, Lisa encourages everyone to take something that is personally meaningful and to plan to touch base with the person who gave it. Then, it is time for everyone to get up together and head for the blanket to gather up the object they want, or to talk to the person who offered their skills. After gathering a giveaway, everyone goes back to their chair. If there are any objects left, there is another round of gathering and then the Giveaway as a focused activity is over.

Typically, the talk between givers and receivers goes on for quite some time as stories are elaborated and what started as an initial general connection to the broad brush of the stories told at the Giveaway become more personalized in face-to-face interaction. For some who felt an exceptionally strong connection to particular storied object of exchange, new relationships that continue far beyond the bounds of the Gathering are sometime formed. In other cases, an extraordinarily profound feeling of connection does not lead to a new relationship with another participant but to a transformation in personal and family life. And, of course, there

are those who take something just because it is pretty, or interesting, or – which I myself have done – because no one else picked it up and it felt wrong to leave it unclaimed.

After all of the giveaways have been claimed and people have had time to exchange stories, it is time for the Harvest Feast. The bell rings three times to call people to the food tent and rings again when dinner is served. Since there has already been a ceremonial circle for the Feast earlier in the day, there is only a brief reminder that elders and children be allowed to go first. During the past few years, the corn chowder has run out before everyone had a serving, and so there is usually a bit of begging for people to take moderate portions and wait for everyone else before going back for more. The corn chowder is perhaps one of the most widely known and popular foods at the Gathering.

The rest of Sunday afternoon and evening is spent cleaning up and visiting. The exchange of contact information visibly picks up in frequency as many people who live at a distance are packing up and heading for home. Families with children who have to be at school on Tuesday morning head out as do others who face re-entry into their jobs in Boston, New York and other distant places. Giveaway talk continues between individuals acknowledging their reactions to others' stories and objects, sharing sometimes similar life circumstances or challenges, or elaborating in greater detail something about what they gave or received. The small village of tents under the pine trees is noticeably smaller by sunset and others head for home off and on throughout the evening. By nightfall, music and laughter emanates from

the small circle of people sitting by the Central Fire. For the first time, my responsibilities ebb a bit and I get the chance to really relax and spend some time just visiting.

Gathering – Day Four

Monday morning comes and the number of participants is generally decreased by about half. Tents are in parts and pieces in the woods, automobiles make their way up the old paper road that passes by the front of the house to the pine camping area where people pack the cars for the trip home. By sunrise, there is a group of people relaxing around the Central Fire which is being allowed to die down. The big urn of coffee has been brewed. In my experience, this is the time when some of the funniest stories are told. Doug, who grew up locally and has been to every Gathering since it started, is a wonderful storyteller using the Downeaster accent and cadence. Sunday morning by the fire is when he can usually be convinced to tell some tall tales about seafaring and people from away.

Breakfast is a quiet, unstructured affair of leftovers, bagels and pop tarts. The bell rings three times to call people to the closing circle and then again three times not long after to signal the start of the circle. People join in a circle around the Central Fire. This is called the "hugging" circle. The intention of this circle and the basics of how it is done are briefly explained. Thanks-giving for everyone's presence and contributions, and a prayer that each person takes something meaningful back with them to their day-to-day lives is made. I do not know the particular history of the format for this circle. I suspect it is an extension of the

Henries' standard way of greeting everyone coming into their home with a hug, stranger or not. They have done this for as long as I have known them. These greetings are quiet moments ended by a physical withdrawal that includes a moment of direct eye contact – a face-to-face, personal connection and acknowledgement. Some people unaccustomed to this kind of close physical contact – the hug *and* the eye contact – seem to squirm a bit at first, myself included, once upon a time.

This final official circle of the Gathering before the Central Fire is closed, starts with Lisa. The Henries girls and I stand immediately to her left so that we can show people, by our example, how this circle is done. One-by-one, each person steps into the circle, turns left to move sunwise and stops to hug each person, in turn, as they progress around the circle. When each person finishes, we encourage them to stay nearby as a way to bear witness to the completion of the circle, which ends when everyone has hugged everyone else. The year after the Medicine Wheel went silent, so too did the closing circle. Like the Medicine Wheel, the initial motivation for turning it into a silent ceremony was practical: it simply took too long for everyone to stop and chat with everyone else en route around the circle.

This final circle is also used as an opportunity create the experience, one last time, of one of the most important concepts organizing the Gathering as an engagement space: spoken language is limited in the kinds of connections that it can create and forms of knowledge that it can generate and apprehend. As with all tools, it is limited. Non-verbal, shared experiences and common purpose sometimes

seem to serve as more effective tools for co-creating mutual orientation, common ground. Removing the kinds of habitual behaviors that may be connected to speech seems to clear the way for other kinds of connections to emerge, for some participants. Taken-for-granted channels for interacting are set aside, for a time, allowing a kind of ambivalence to emerge that maximizes creative potential and the opportunity for each individual to find their own way into the space of mutual orientation, in their own way.

Indeed, this circle, for some participants, generates intense emotional reactions and a heightened feeling of connection to each other and to the place. Of course, as with all the other facets of the Gathering, this is no so for everyone! Some of the younger folks, teenaged boys especially, complain that this is a circle of torture. Many participants do, however, comment on this circle or the Henries' particular practice of hugging as one way to create a moment of silent, sensorily-based connection. Perhaps it can be thought of as a form of connection assembled with sensory and affective glue.

The circle ends in another flurry of intense conversation and interaction, and more exchanging of contact information. For many people, myself included, this circle is the one and only time of direct contact with others who have been there all weekend. And, it seems to sort of create a seal, a form of binding that helps to close the Fire – the event, the exchanges, the direct interconnections – in a way that also reinforces its continuance. Here, language fails as a tool for description.

By the end of day four at the Gathering, the few of us who still remain have just enough energy to put the food away and secure the trash so as to discourage bears from visiting and making an unholy mess during the night. Those who stay on for another overnight generally join the Henries for leftovers and a movie. Hawk has taken to revisiting his instruments later in the evening. And so it "ends" or, more accurately, turns to a new phase of the calendrical cycle of the Harvest Gathering.

Post-Circle and Post-Gathering Meetings

There are two circles called "post" closing of the Central Fire. The first happens not long after the hugging circle as the Gathering is actually ending, and is a relatively new addition (started in 2008). The second occurs sometime during the week following the Gathering when the core group gathers at the Henries' for supper. We grill hot dogs and hamburgers in the fire pit on the lawn in front of the house to review how everything went, share our general and particular impressions, and identify things that worked or did not work, while the experiences are still fresh. Both are very important parts of the Gathering as the most intentionally reflexive and oriented toward brain-storming.

The newer addition, the post-circle at the Gathering, before everyone goes home, carries the same intention and purpose of evaluation but includes any participants who care to join in. It has become an extremely valuable addition to the overall conduct of the Gathering. Its location at the very edge of the pine camp area shifted from the area directly around the Central Fire because it was too hot

that year to have the elders out in the sun for any length of time. We do still sit in a circle but under the shade of the white pine trees. As with so many other transformations in the spaces and activities at the Gathering, this practically motivate change seemed to embody the movement of invisible agencies across the face of the Gathering's landscapes: white pine is traditionally recognized as the tree of peace by Wabanaki (and Iroquoian) peoples.

This circle is very informal. People come and go, at times, to get coffee or snacks. Some folks stay for as long as they can before the leave for home. It generally includes ten or fifteen people at most and can go on for quite some time, depending upon the kinds of subjects that come up. As with the Gathering itself, these circles tend to evidence the emergence of a theme or preponderance of attention to a particular issue or concern. Fortunately, I was allowed to do some audio recordings both of these kinds of "post" circles and will touch on them a bit more in the following section.

Fortunately, I was allowed to audio tape several of these post-circles and meetings. Doing my usual first run through read of the transcripts for the core group meetings since 2007, the following themes are recurrent: how much structure is needed for continuity and how much is too much?; what kinds of changes can be made in the structures of events that will better support the expression of diversity as a tool for building mutual orientation?; how do we provide enough guidance and direction to facilitate a flow of exchanges among and between people, activities and spaces without asserting "leadership," in the hierarchical sense, and constricting the

prime directive of non-interference?; how to coordinate our activities so as to promote more direct participation in the day-to-day needs of the Gathering?; what is an appropriate response to individuals who dramatically interrupt the flow of community life with overbearing or disrespectful behavior? Another issue that has come up time and again, across all settings within and without the actual event, is the question of how and when and under what circumstances to have people from different religious or spiritual traditions conduct a ceremony. The substance of the conversations regarding these questions varies year to year, depending upon the details of what happened that particular year. I expect that these questions will continue to be the focus of meetings and conversations for as long as the Gathering continues.

The conversations during post-circles at the Gathering, while engaging some or all of these issues to some degree or another, tend to vary more dramatically in their substantive content. This reflects the shift in participants and the immediacy of the experience. Unlike the core group post-meetings, which are specifically geared toward problem-solving and restructuring, this circle tends to be more open-ended. It tends to be an extension of the emergent themes and issues of that particular year. It is in this circle, more than any other, that participants and organizers get together to talk about cultural and religious conflict and the somewhat contested identity of the Gathering itself.

The Annual Faces of the Gathering

"Humans, they pray for own family – it's good, positive. Pray for their self – positive. Pray for their partners – positive. Pray for world peace – we need that. So it's beautiful, peaceful, yeah. That's kind of the gathering. Each have different, share the story …" ~ Penpa

An entire book could be devoted to an in-depth analysis of how and why the Gathering itself has changed over the past several years and well beyond the scope of this paper to address. I would like to briefly touch on these changes, however, to give some context to the next section in which I discuss a couple of examples of the conceptual themes that usually emerge at each Gathering. I think that these changes also help to illuminate how the processes of transformation and exchange – material and conceptual – evolve and make themselves available to participants as tools and positions from which to navigate or negotiate mutual orientation as well as to express individual differences. These transformations in the construct of the Gathering represent slightly tweaked aggregations of the same elements assembled in new ways which, in turn, provided different kinds of indexical and construction tools to the social processes available to participants.

In 2005, I moved back to Maine from campus in Oklahoma. It was the first time I was able to attend the Gathering in a few years. Since I lived only several miles from the Henries' place, I was able to jump right in again and help with preparations, organization, shopping, and so forth. This was the last year that the Gathering was held in the "lower" field, the field directly in front of the house,

immediately adjacent to the barn, parking areas and driveway. Beavers moved in upstream, damming the water and causing flooding of the land directly adjacent to the stream and creating a mushy, marshy effect in the field.

As now, the Gathering started on Friday and ended on Monday. The Central Fire pit was lined in stones in the shape of a turtle. The four directions were marked with birch saplings topped by colored cloth standing about twenty feet from the fire, creating a circle around the inner circle. The food tent, which was much smaller in those days, was situated between the central circle and the barn, as was the dish washing station that was being tried as a last-ditch effort to avoid the transition to paper.

The order and structure of some of the rituals were different than they are now: the Medicine Wheel and Harvest Feast were on Saturday and the Giveaway was held on Monday, just before the Central Fire was closed. The general structure of the Harvest Feast and Giveaway were about the same as they are now. The Medicine Wheel, however, was substantively different. It occurred during the day and was structurally quite different, although held in the same physical space which has not changed over the years. Everyone was called by the bell to line up at one of the four pathways to the eastern door, sometimes the entrance by the barn, sometimes the entrance near the parking area. In a single line, we walked to the Wheel and although participants were encouraged to move in silence, it was not a structural part of the event. There was an emphasis placed on being conscious of feeling the walk, each footstep on the earth during the procession, and to pay

attention to the smells, the air or wind, the presence of the trees, and so on, when the ritual was explained.

Once everyone was lined up inside the Wheel, the turn-taking sequence common to virtually all circular activities commenced, starting with whomever was standing to the south of the eastern door stepping forward and walking sunwise around the circle while narrating the story of the object they brought to leave on the alter in the center. Most people talked about the object but some people sang and others remained silent or, in a few cases, just sang or told a story without putting an object down. The general point, as always, was to focus on a particular need for healing: personal, social, political, spiritual – whatever.

2005 was the first year that a “traditional” Native elder attended. She did not seem at all comfortable and on several occasions asserted her feeling that things “should” be done differently, so as to make the Gathering a proper sort of event. One complaint about the Medicine Wheel has entered into the ongoing discourse of the Gathering, the issue taken up by Lisa as an example of how things at this Gathering *have* to be a bit different in order to allow individuals from different traditions to connect to its forms. The elder was quite upset about the fact that people went into the Wheel without shoes or shirts on, and that the women went in wearing pants and shorts instead of skirts. This is the version of Lisa’s narrative from the “post” fire circle at the 2008 Gathering:

> I think that that’s where the ceremonies that we’ve chosen allow the room for people to bring who they are, like someone in one medicine wheel, one of the elders who had come, who happened to be…concerned or - I don’t know how you’d you want to say it – that

> there people who walked into the medicine wheel barefoot or there were people who didn't have shirts on… they were Buddhist or something where you take your shoes off before you walk into a sacred place. And the idea is we don't want to impose how we, what traditions we might choose to follow, on to other people. If your tradition is to take your shoes off and walk in, your tradition has no concerns about what you're wearing to pray, then that's your tradition. If your tradition is to wear skirts and sleeves, wear a skirt. Um, so in, in the Sweatlodge and the medicine wheel, I think there's still room for it to take on another form such as those who had done that Celtic one, but it's still a medicine wheel, but yeah, it had a whole different face to it. ~ Lisa

For the moment, I want to call attention to the phrase, "whole different face to it." The "face of ceremony", which is a term that Hawk coined, is one that receives considerable attention. It is linked to the struggle to define and understand tradition, as it plays out at the Gathering and in the ways that it traces to other times and places, and to the ongoing dialogue about the identity of the Gathering as something specifically *non*-Native yet with Native features, in places. In the next section, I will explore this a bit more, but for now I want to point out that the particular way that "skirts" are combined with particular bodily and spatial practices is an example of the way that a "single" object can, in fact, be a multiple object, a loci of engagement that *simultaneously* creates and indexes very different worlds of meaning. The ambiguity therein – the indeterminate space in which it is embedded – can create opportunities for (re)negotiation and the construction, in-situ, of "common ground" or, put another way, common *space*.

Deb N. is a close friend of Susa's, another woman who I met years ago at Donna Lee's. She has had a great deal of experience with Sweatlodges in this region, sanctioned directly by several people in the Penobscot and other

communities. In particular, she feels that fire keeping is the particular form of service to the lodge to which she is called and she joins Susa and I in this task at the Harvest Gathering in the years that she is able to attend. The three of us were talking at length about our experiences with various Native traditions and ceremonies and comparing and contrasting various elements of these with how things go at the Gathering. As always, Deb N.'s presence assures a lot of laughter – howling, really – and we fell into a rolling to and fro of "do you remember this?" and "oh my gosh, wasn't that something!" Since proper attire based on gender is a very important feature of many of the ceremonies of which we have been a part, in different Native communities in the United States, the issue of clothing came up. Then, the issue of this elder's admonition about skirts came up.

> Deb: I tell ya, this Gathering, one of the things that I greatly appreciate is no grandmother elder telling me that my skirt is not long enough.
>
> Me: Or, that you have no skirt at all.
>
> Deb: But that did happen once. (referring to the elder grandmother at the 2006 Harvest Gathering)
>
> Me: Yes, it did.
>
> Deb: And that's just kind of an expression of the fact that, that you can bring what you, what your way is, you're not at a Penobscot meeting, so you don't have to follow the Penobscot protocol, which out of respect I will do, but you don't have to there, you can just be who you are. Of course I would never tend fire without a skirt on.

Susa and I agreed with Deb, we would never tend fire without a skirt on. But, this is a personal choice, a way for each of us to show respect for the communities in which we learned to tend fire at a lodge. We do wear a skirt at the

Henries' Gathering but do not suggest that anyone else needs to do it. For us, the value of the skirt is that it ties us, materially, spiritually, and culturally, to communities to whom we have pledged certain commitments. We put on our skirts (well, in my case a ribbon dress) and actualize those distant relationships and concepts and sets of practices at the Gathering.

2006: The Lion Pendant

In 2006, the Gathering moved to the upper field where, in the early years, Lisa had grown a food and flower garden. A remnant of the old garden remains, a circular patch of growth that edges the circumference of the outer circle created by the flags marking the four directions around the fire pit. A new Central Fire pit was dug and edged, as before, with stones in the shape of a turtle. The four-direction poles were moved, creating virtually the same space around the fire as they did in the lower field. The food tent was situated to the north of the central fire pit, as before, which, in its new position, placed it between the fire and the path to the Sweatlodge. No further changes of the physical locations of the Gathering upon the general landscape have been made since.

Although initiated in response to a practical problem, the move to the upper field reshaped the overall topography of the spaces where participants engage in various activities and with each other. In a nutshell, it moved the center focal point such that all of the grounds for the Gathering, with the exception of the house, are immediately adjacent to each other. The flow of people and objects and talk and music became much more consolidated. Even the path to the Sweatlodge, which is

still physically a bit removed, flows directly to and from the camping area and food tent, which directly abut the area around the Central Fire.

There were a couple of other interesting shifts in 2006. The “Birch Bark People” visited, perched variably at the circumference of the center circle and the Medicine Wheel. They were created by sspisis, a widely recognized Penobscot artist. After making a visit to get a feeling for the Henries’ place and the Gathering, her daughter, Pam, allowed them to visit for the weekend. In a way, they were a harbinger of the appearance of Bert the following year and attendance by Wabanaki people ever since. 2006 is also the one and only year that Lisa coordinated sweetgrass braiding during the Sweatlodge by people still down by the Central Fire, while a basket of stones was carried inside the lodge. After the lodge, people inside the lodge were encouraged to take a sweetgrass braid and people who did not go inside were encouraged to take a stone; both were kept by the Central Fire until the end of the Gathering. This is perhaps one of the most beloved forms of connection and material exchange related to the lodge but because of the amount of extra time and resources that it takes, it has never been done again. Every year, at least once in a pre- or post-Gathering meeting, someone voices the general desire to somehow do this again.

The 2006 group reflected an increasing diversity of participants. At least one native elder participated, a Navajo woman who happened to be traveling through eastern Canada and was planning to visit with another participant with whom she is well acquainted. She made an early journey to Maine and reportedly

was very happy with the way that the Gathering was being conducted. 2006 was a more international than the year before, primarily because there were more people there who know the Henries' from their participation in Cultural Survival events. Penpa, and Charles and Patty and their daughter made their first appearances that year. When Penpa was a seven year old Tibetan boy living in the eastern city of Chando, Chinese soldiers forced him to watch them stripped his father naked and hang him.

> So then I hug my father's foot, very cold, then he hung naked. Then they put the clothes on the rocks there. They put on top of the rocks. Then I'm looking for someone to come. Then one man comes, his name's – everybody there says he's crazy. Then he comes to front of me, "Hey boy! What you looking for?" I told him, "Could you help me?" "What do you need help?" And then, "My father still has physical body. He needs it clothed. The [strongs], the nature, he don't need clothes. So could you put these clothes for my dad?" Then he look at me, "You are not cry, you going to fight back again, do something?" I said, "No, I'm not doing fight anybody. I will pray for who's doing this, Chinese or Tibetan, or who killed my father. That person, anger, do not bring to kill other, my neighbors' children's father. I going to pray." Then he look at me, again, "You going to fight back someday!" I say, "No, I don't want to share the pain back and forth. I don't want to play with pain." ~ Penpa

A few months later, the Chinese put his grandfather in jail, where he was tortured. This same "crazy" man, having been deeply moved by the boy's promise not to take revenge, helped Penpa's mother get his grandfather out of jail; just before he died, not long after this, he gave Penpa his father's name. His mother died and the situation in Tibet became dire as the Chinese proceeded with a violent take-over of the country. In 1989, Penpa escaped by walking over the Himalayas into India after making a promise to a monk whose divination told of the need to meet his Holiness Dalai Lama. Penpa did eventually spend quite a long time in the

company of his Holiness and community in Dharamsala, receiving strong support for his musical and performance abilities. Even in India, he says, Tibetans were looked down-upon and sometimes violently beaten and harassed.

In 2002, he came to the United States to participate in fundraising for the Tibetan relief project and has lived in the Boston area ever since, working primarily as a musician. He says "it's much better" here where he does not have to worry about his safety and he feels that people do not look down on him, so much. "Everybody is like, peaceful people. I think I'm lucky." When I asked what struck him most when he first arrived in the United States, he said that it was the smells – the airport and then the subway, which had very different smells. After being here a year, he returned briefly to India where the smell of the pollution bothered him. He also says that food differences really got his attention.

> Then the food's new. The first time I ate a lot of salad here. In India never ate a salad there. Because like Tibetan we don't have salad. And sometimes we a joke, Tibetan men, if you go to a Western, then you eat grass, drink water, that is the food! Then I thought, so what means that, eats grass and drink water? That means salad. Yeah, green salad. That is it. It's true, it's grass…So then I say, oh, what kind of grass I can eat? ~ Penpa

Figure 40: Penpa

Penpa did not stay involved with the Tibetan community of people here, saying that many are too gossipy and selfish, creating division. Others, mostly those from western Tibet, are not interested in freeing their country from Chinese control because, in Penpa's view, they get a lot of Chinese money. While at the Gathering, he relished a little of every type of food offered, played a lot of music, provoked a lot of laughter and humbled the group with his story of violence and compassion. He attended again in 2007 and made a big impression on several of the participants who I later interviewed.

The Lion Pendant

Charles and Patty live in Boston and have attended the Gathering every year since 2006 with their daughter, Kata who has, for all intents and purposes, grown up at the Gathering. I interviewed them at their home in 2007 and again in 2010. Shortly after I arrived for our first visit, I noticed that they had a small bag of white sage on the mantle in their living room. I asked if they were using the sage and, if so, how it felt to use it. Charles said something to the effect that he had not burned it, thinking that some sort of special permission or training was needed. I told him that this is not so and encouraged him to go ahead and burn it. We talked briefly about sage and cedar and tobacco and burning herbs in general.

The impact of the Gathering on their lives has been extraordinary and, in turn, their presence is now a standard feature of the landscape. The Giveaway ceremony in 2006 was, for Charles directly and his family indirectly, literally a life-changing experience. A cycle of exchange, travel and transformation began when

he reached into his pocket and realized that the item he should give away was a stone with the image of the Lady of Guadalupe given to his by Patty's mother on the day that Kata was born, a medallion that he had carried with him every day since.

> And the gift, giving away, giving something that is dearest to you. Because both of us understand that, Patty and I, we never give up something that we'll not keep. We both have that tradition, if you give, you better give something that you really love. I had a couple of days of the climax of the gift, give something that would mean something to somebody…and I kept on going back and forth, I don't have anything…then I realized I have something with me that was always in my pocket. "AH! That's the thing!" I knew it from the beginning but I was struggling not to give it. ~ Charles

As he took his turn around the Central Fire to tell the story of this medallion, he broke down in tears, using it to gesture toward his daughter and his wife who also started to cry. It is hard to explain the power of this moment, not a bit maudlin but deeply heartfelt and genuine. It was quite moving and the circle of ritual participants were absolutely still, all eyes on Charles and his family. Now that we have gotten to know him, we realize that Charles' normal demeanor is quiet reserve, reinforcing the importance of this medallion to him. I asked him how it felt to give it away.

> Relieving. Change, it's almost you're saying, "this is the end of this life", you're turning over a page and beginning another life. That was the gift I get. I was holding onto it but I gave it, it turned my life around in a way. ~ Charles

In an interview with Colleen a couple of years later, she remembered this giveaway. Her narrative is typical of the stories people tell when I ask them to tell me about something that really struck them during their time at the Gathering.

> Ummm. One is definitely the giving circle. There were a number of people, there was one couple in particular, they had, and they put this, it was like a little pearl or a gem, um, they put it on the blanket and they said that this was something that they had saved and had held onto as like a good luck symbol or a memoir from when their first daughter was born. And it was just something that they held onto, it was very symbolic of their family, their unity and their hope and they wanted to pass it on to other people. And they had been through numerous trials, I don't know what they specifically were, but just getting through hard times they'd hold on to this little gem. ~ Colleen

When it was time take an object, Charles made a dash for the object that I had given away, a circular gold-colored pendant etched with the image of a mountain lion poised at the edge of a cliff. Just around the time that I got the pendant, I had started working full-time in a four-square block area of Roxbury, a "poor" section of Boston. As a homecare nurse, I was on the streets and wandering in and out of small homes and large "projects" for most of the day, much of that time on my own. I was still struggling with some fear for my own safety, still learning to trust my instincts and, inspired at the time by Gandhi's life and words, to call on the potential good present in every individual, despite outward appearances. Practically speaking, I was learning about how to know when big shipments of drugs or guns were coming through and how to handle myself when going into a potentially dangerous situation. I was also learning about the miracles and herculean courage and faith of so many of the people living in those communities. I wanted courage so that I could be of service while respecting others' choices and ways of life; that is, to *not* do what so many biomedical practitioners do when they enforce their own views of illness and healing on others.

At that time, my mother and I were browsing around in some little store in Cambridge and I was attracted to a pendant with a dog, or wolf, on it. I always have dogs in my life. She suggested that perhaps the lion was a more accurate reflection of what my life was really about, at that point. I never have cats in my life…but I trusted her insight and took the lion. That pendant was in my car or in my "nursey" bag for all of my years in Roxbury. It inspired a willingness to sacrifice my fears so that I could take the risk to do something that I believed in. It was also a part of the process of experience that led me to realize that total honesty and authenticity was the only way to gain trust from people who very often saw me as a threat (understandably). I did not want to let the pendant go; it was something that I thought I would keep forever. But, I was strongly compelled to let it go and decided to trust the instinct. What goes out comes back threefold, or so the saying goes. I told this story as I circled around, voicing my hope that someone else who was in need of an extra boost of courage could use it, offered tobacco to the fire, and laid it on the blanket.

The following April, because of his intense experience with the Gathering in general, and Giveaway, in particular, Charles returned to his home village in Africa for the first time in twelve years. He began the process of making amends with his ancestors whom he had neglected all those years. I order to trace how this pendant is transformed, as individuals with whom it interacts create new networks of indexical anchors to which it is attached, I need to take a moment to more thoroughly introduce Charles and Patty.

Charles works as a financial advisor for a large investment company and Patty is a musician and artist who works as a teacher. They both immigrated to the United States as young adults, Charles from Nairobi, Kenya and Patty from Caracas, Venezuela by way of England, to which she moved when she was eighteen. In their autobiographical narratives during the 2007 interview, both emphasize the intrusions of European colonialism on their home continents and various ways that this shaped the environments in which they grew up. Charles goes into some detail about the Dutch, the Zulu Wars and his disagreement with the widely accepted belief that his people were forced northward out of what is now South Africa into what is now Kenya. This disagreement is based on the information he received from his ancestors with whom he has a direct relationship, in keeping with traditional cosmologic beliefs.

Charles is a member of the Youla tribe, as he labels it, a Bantu kinship group of which he is a member. The prodigy of his grandfather's third wife, Charles and a few of his siblings were raised by an aunt and his Christianized father after his mother died when he was five. They grew up moving between their home in the city and his grandparents' home in the village where his extended kinship group lived and ancestors were buried. In the village, he learned the traditions of his people. Village life is very hierarchical and there is an extreme priority placed on maintaining a proper relationship with the ancestors.

> You have to communicate to them. The tradition….I never understood, when I was 2 or 3 years old…before you drink or do anything, you have to feed your ancestors. So the idea, you know, you'll see them, they'll pour

> the tea or the bread they give to the ancestors, before the wine, they'll splash it down as if they're filling the wine. But the whole thing….before you eat and drink you have to break bread for the ancestors, and drink. ~ Charles

> Communication with the ancestors can be, and often is, quite direct.

> Emotions, certain people break certain ways depending on relationship with them. Ah, those who deeply involved with, very strong emotion that overwhelms you when you're in their presence. And those whom you had very little or, you know, connection…it's like normal life, you're just here and the other side, it's like normal life, when you think about it. How you relate to them. You always have that. You can have a discussion, tell a joke, you can almost see person smiling. Power of the ancestors is much, much stronger than anything else that can come into you. That's what we call the blood.

> So the ancestors to me are very real, they almost, the funny thing, they walk me through everything, tightropes, they talk to you, it's very hard to explain, oh……….they move you, they're almost like, the ones who are closest to you, they've always been your caretaker. Um, when they're upset with you, you know it. When they're happy with you, you know it. Oh yes, my Dad had passed over in 1994. When he was upset with me, I knew it, he wouldn't even talk to me, you know. And when he was not upset with me I would see him. But at the same time, I would try to get a discussion going, he would talk but he would be removed and then I would know he was distant. When I wake up, I know, oh ya, he's from a different world. (he says laughing).

> Uh, if I'm going to run into a problem, my ancestors are right there, "Don't do it", they're like, sh sh (gesture, chilled) – you shutter, it's like, this freezing of your body, you don't know why you're freezing. Oh, no, oh, no. It just freezes you, you're like, 'oh no, I'm not gonna move there' Since it's froze, if you break that, it's almost like they talk to you, "don't do it" and when you do it, you're just like in trouble, you're like 'oh nooo!". ~ Charles

In 2006, there were several young ex-Jehovah's Witness people participating. Their novel perspectives and experiences brought a unique thread to the feeling to the Gathering, an effect that had an overt impact right through the

2008 Gathering. This group of young people, mostly in their late teens and early twenties, found their way to the Gathering via a broad network of friends and acquaintances that the Henries' girls had at the time. Seth, his brother Aaron and their cousin, Colleen, to whom I briefly referred earlier, were raised in the large "Witness" community situated in and around the Boston area. Seth and Colleen eventually became long-term members of the local community. Seth and Aaron both lived at the Henries' home at various times; Seth still lives in the area although he has lost touch with the Henries. Colleen is a permanent fixture on the current community of friends living in Sullivan and Boston, including my nephew, Jake, who comes to every Gathering. They visit regularly in person and on Facebook.

2007: The "Buddhist" Year.

In 2007, the order of the ceremonies was changed. The Medicine Wheel was moved to Saturday night and the Giveaway moved to Sunday after preparing for the Harvest Feast. Again, the motivation was practical – there were many, many people who really wanted to participate in the Giveaway but had to leave by Monday, its "traditional" day. After much discussion about the pros and cons of timing, the core group came to the conclusion that a Saturday evening Medicine Wheel actually created a more powerful and balanced connection between sunrise and sunset, light and dark, because of the sunrise Sweatlodge. The rest of the format was unchanged: not silent, one person at a time walking around the circle, narrating the object they ultimately placed in the center. As predicted, moving the Giveaway transformed it into a well-attended event.

We refer to 2007 as the "Buddhist" year. There were several practicing Buddhists from a variety of cultural backgrounds at the Gathering that year. Prayer flags dressed pathways and trees all over the grounds. Mantras were spoken. Penpa returned with his new girlfriend, Heidi. They stayed in the house over the kitchen in the music room; quiet Buddhist chants filled the house every morning starting at around sunrise. Both participated in the Sweatlodge ceremony then Penpa led a traditional Tibetan dance on Saturday afternoon and offered a chant to the Medicine Wheel that night. The large flag that Penpa brought that year hung in one of the white pine trees at the head of the path to the lodge and ruin of the old Thorne place.

> That is the, I brought from Nepal. I brought here. It's the [Taras] mantra on that. [] That is protect mantra. So I hang there, all the people passing, everybody look at it, everybody laugh. ~ Penpa

Once Penpa announced his intention to offer it to the blanket, several people turned to look at it in the trees and, based on follow up interviews and the post-Gathering meeting, there was a scramble by many to take it. Indeed, although I did not pay attention to the rush to get it, I did notice that it disappeared in what seemed like the blink of an eye. Hawk was sorely disappointed that he did not get it; he was hoping to make it a permanent feature on the face of the Gathering.

The Giveaway was full of Buddhist objects and stories, as well. Heidi, for example, put in a "[tsatsa], which I had hand-painted. And usually when I paint a [tsatsa], like you see here – we all have, I have lots of projects going on all the time – and as I paint I do the mantra for that deity the whole time I paint. So I put a lot

of good intentions in to it." She also gave a book that had a profound impact on her life, a book about dharma. Since I was busy with the recording, I asked Susa to put a small jade Buddha carving that I brought for the Giveaway, an object that found its way into my plans long before we learned that this would be the Buddhist year.

It is also the first year that Bert joined us. In a way, then, it was also the nascent "Native" year, although at the time it was not an *overt* shift. That would come in 2008. Bert has told me, since then, that he had thought about attending for a long time but was always too busy. In 2007, his schedule cleared at the last minute, making it possible to come. He wanted to find out for himself whether it was a "New Age" event where a disrespectful "mix" of practices was taking place. The reason that he decided to give the Gathering a try was because he had gained a lot of respect for Hawk during the previous several years at Wabanaki events and the Tunica Powwow in Louisiana.

The Central Fire became an overtly contested space for the first and last time. On Saturday night the air was crispy clear and a bit chilly. A large group of adults and children were bundled up in heavy sweaters and blankets sitting around the fire, some quietly playing music, others quietly talking. Geoff's son, Dakota, and a couple of the other kids (a delegation, I guess) came over to ask Hawk if they could roast marshmallows to make smores, over the central fire. Well, what a process this request initiated! Typically, nothing goes into the fire except wood and herbs, and such, for prayers. A very, very long conversation ensued to work toward creating consensus. Hawk, of course, brought up the story of the fire at the

powwow, years ago, that could not be used for warmth because it was "sacred," and his disagreement with this view.

Alex was very animated in his response to the idea, voicing his feeling that to roast marshmallows over the Central Fire was in direct violation of its purpose, its identity as a special space. Alex and his family live directly across the street from the Henries, where they have lived since a few years before the Henries arrived. He, his brother, Ethan, Sierra and Sequan were home schooled together, so their relationships to each other are as siblings. Alex's role at the Gathering had been evolving as he grew older and expressed an interest in taking on ceremonial roles. We were all thrilled that Alex was taking such an interest and in the Sweatlodge that morning, Hawk had given him a leadership role, instructing him what to do and how to do it. This was Alex's last Gathering before going to his first year of college. He told me in a later interview that it was, for him, a rite of passage.

To smore, or not to smore? By the time that we finally drew to a tentative consensus to allow the kids to roast marshmallows over the fire, most of them had fallen asleep. Truthfully, I was wishing I could just skip out, it went on for so long. Susa felt the same way but as fire-keepers, neither of us felt we should jump ship and abandon Hawk. It was, after all, the perfect opportunity to role-model decision-making by consensus. It is a lot harder than it looks. The final caveat, the ultimate compromise that brought the painful process to an end, was the agreement that in the coming years, there would always be a smaller fire or charcoal grill made

available not just for marshmallows but for personal cooking, in general. When it was finally over, my brother, Chuck, and I took our hunting knives and flashlights and rummaged in the dark for hardwood sticks to whittle as marshmallow spears. The few kids that were still awake took over the space immediately around the fire.

Charles, having returned to Africa in April to rekindle a proper relationship with his ancestors, passed the lion pendant back to the Giveaway blanket. He described the pendant's journey as he retraced the steps around the circle that he walked in 2006:

> Last year when I was here I gave away a very precious thing that I had [from when Kata] was born. It was a very difficult thing for me to do at the time. People told me after that I was fidgeting, wondering what did I do. But I gave it away anyway. And at the end, I picked up something else from the circle. When I grabbed it, it was hot, it was a mountain lion on a cliff, almost like this (he imitated it). It's scared to jump but also ready for attack. When I picked it up, it was very hot. So I grabbed it (slapping his hands) and I just felt a shock in my body. So I kept it with me, I know who put it there.
>
> So after, whether it was a lion, or it was any other different cat, she said it was a lion, so I kept it. So, I went on with my life. Not knowing that that gift that I gave away, came also through this. I was scared for many years to do certain things. But being here opened me to face my tradition in Africa. So in april, I planned to take a trip home and go pay the debt that I was scared of paying for such a long time. [Long pause, staring at the fire]. It was an emotional trip but in the end I came to realize, when I look at this pendant, it gave me the courage to face that. After that I came back and everything that I'd put in place, that I'd wanted to do, for such a long time – BOOM – I was able to accomplish that.
>
> So many things I'd planned for so many years, but meeting so many obstacles, in such a short time I obtained. And I think, the way I feel, it came from this pendant. I hope whoever picks it up will see the same energy of it. If you open the doors, there it was, back in Africa, visiting the headstones of my ancestors. Back. The gift I pick, it was a mountain lion hanging on a cliff. ~ Charles

Once the time came for everyone to take something from the blanket, Marie fairly flew across the grass and grabbed the lion pendant. She and her husband are neighbors of the Henries, by Maine standards, living about two miles west, as the crow flies. Marie has attended almost every Gathering since they moved here about ten years ago, although in recent years she visits just for the day on Sunday, because of her busy schedule. Marie was born and raised in New York. Unlike most of the people who move here from away, she had never visited Maine. She and her husband moved here from Florida, where she earned a degree in geology and completed coursework toward a master's degree in oceanographic research. They struck up a friendship with the Henries after being introduced by the town librarian.

Marie is a long-time, self-described "animal activist." By 2007, she was the animal officer for Sullivan and is now the animal officer for five towns in this area. Her attraction to, and indexical transformation of, the pendant reconstructs it within entirely different networks of meaning and experience.

> To me it was a totally different thing as to what it meant to me when I looked at it and what it meant to him, but we each have our own interpretations and meanings about why things are important to us. And his, as I remember, was that he [saw]… a lion on the edge of a cliff. And I remember him saying that it symbolized his being afraid of, ya know, going forward or taking the leap or in his own personal life, ya know, of doing certain things…And when I looked at it, it was totally different because of my animal orientation. And I saw the animal -- to me it was like a panther, um, and the Florida panther is, is an endangered species and to me that's what it represented the Florida panther. But it also represented other endangered species, other animals on the brink, in other words, that cliff -- that ledge that the panther was on was like the brink, and to me it was the brink of

> extinction. It just was -- was something that brought back to me every single time just how important it is to work for the future, ya know, of the -- of the generations of animals. ~ Marie

Marie told me that she keeps the pendant either in her truck or in a special spot at her home, where she will see it every day. She still has the pendant and has no intention of giving it away because of its importance to her work. She explains:

> It's just something that reminds me every time I put it on, ya know, and I feel more connected to it and it just kind of is a reinforcement to me to continue what I'm doing. It just -- it just helps me refocus, um, ya know, on the importance of the work that all of us have to do, those of us who are concerned about the future of the animal nations, the work that we have to do and just how critical it is. And it just reaffirms that we're on the right path doing that work. ~ Marie

It seems to me that the pendant created an interesting "full-circle" flow of interconnections linking its presence in my own life and work with somewhat similar yet utterly different circumstances in the lives of two other people. Even apart from the spoken words when it circled the Giveaway ceremony and found a place on the blanket, the image, its color, even the ragged edges chipped away from years of use caught our attention and provided tools with which to make meaning, each in our own way. In every case, including my own, our narratives explicate the feeling that the object has a sort of agency, an ability to motivate courage. Charles connected to a concept of courage that was embedded in cultural and spiritual landscapes half-a-world away and that required he face his fears about finding his way back to them again. Although the particulars are different, Marie is not infrequently required to step up and confront people whose feelings towards animals are not in sync with hers. In this part of the world, hunters, trappers, and

others who just do not see animals as having any importance, sometimes cause a lot of animal suffering. Marie must sometimes take the risk to go head-to-head with them in order to do what she feels is right, advocating for compassion and non-violence.

Charles experienced yet one more direct re-formulation of his relationship with his own indigenous traditions while participating in the 2007 Gathering. In response to my having told the Henries the story of Charles' reluctance to burn sage at home, Hawk invited him to participate in the Medicine Wheel by smudging everyone going inside and remaining there in the eastern door as its protector – which he did. To save some time, and because most participants have already been smudged by the time the Wheel takes, place, the decision was made to have Charles just keep the smudge smoke going at the doorway rather than to take the time to do each person individually. Charles recounts his story of the sage:

> OK, the sage story. When I got to finishing off the ceremony, I think I told Harvey, it's so funny ya know, I just wish that ya know I could get some of that sage. And then Hawk came and gave me the sage. And I asked Harvey, do you think he heard me? But I didn't feel like I deserved that…even now I still don't believe that I had the right to carry that, to be at the door. Well, I think, to me I felt like it was a very big responsibility at the door, of having to open the door for everybody else to come through. And spiritually I didn't think that I deserved that honor to be there because I felt like I was short of that responsibility. Even though I did it because I had been chosen to do it, I still agonized with the fact that I was chosen to do it. ~ Charles

I asked him if there was a similar role as protector/keeper of a door or gate, of this sort, in his tradition in Africa.

> Yeah, they have a very strong structure but most of my life I've been raised away from the tribe but whenever I'm back into the tribe, I

> noticed the similarities. Yeah, it's, it was different because the instructions were very clear, um, if you're chosen and you're the younger of the other people, it was almost creating a conflict, they can see, it's almost like a baby being anointed over his brothers, you understand that? So, that, that's the thing. So, when you go back into the tribal land, you're reminded who comes first, who's second and so forth. So when you're looking at a structure that exists throughout the cousins and all of that stuff and your father was the last born, so you know that your place is way, way, I mean like 20 people, 30 people have to die before you getting to the door of somebody's house um, normally I would stand where your car is, in order to be motioned in. That's as close as I can get. ~ Charles

During the 2007 post-Gathering meeting at the Henries, the core group talked about the change in how the smudge was done feelings about Charles taking that role. There was general agreement that it worked not to do each person individually. Hawk spoke to his reason for asking Charles to do it, reiterating the idea that at this particular Gathering, particular ideas about life as a ceremony are emphasized:

> …part of our intention with this gathering is to encourage people to know that it's the day to day ceremonies, the time in between the rituals that is equally as important in that any, any of the people who are there, you know can bring the intention of some of the rituals that we might engage in to their homes and to their lives everyday. So it doesn't have to be, one doesn't have to have an eagle fan or a hawk fan or whatever fan, you know you can light up one piece of sage and then breathe the intention that you have [into the smoke]. ~ Hawk

Death, as a theme, emerged as a permanent feature of the ebb and flow of the Gathering, in 2007. Perhaps not coincidentally, the Buddhists' ever present discourse about violence, compassion and healing through release dovetailed directly with grief narratives, giveaways and offerings to the Medicine Wheel. The ex-Witness family – Seth, Aaron and Colleen – had recently suffered the suicide of

a dear friend, a young man whose wife had just had a baby. She was in the Medicine Wheel and, because she had the baby with her and the one-at-a-time format guaranteed that it would be a long event, she was the first to take a turn. Her story, and her willingness to be totally open and honest, was breath-taking. Her courage in sharing something so profound inspired others to follow suit. Coincidentally, or by cosmic decree (as the Henries would interpret it) there were several other people there dealing with acute grief and loss, and the door on death blew wide open. Her example, especially as the first person to speak while holding a sleeping newborn in her arms, seemed to give others the signal that even very intense, dark stories would be accepted and respected.

Penpa describes his experience with the grieving friends and his own re-emergence from that lodge:

> …and I started to pray to wish to receive this mantra, because I'm living. Because the living we are, take this heat, how they benefit for purification. Not only me so I can represent it for others, to pray. That's the kind of thing I thought. Then I started to pray…everybody have different worriness. So after the Sweatlodge they think all the, clean out the worriness, they started beginning some new life. That's, I feel it… Yeah, they put it behind them…they leave all the, everything, suffering, sickness, left it behind. Then get out the tent and open the door and come out, try to feel some new happiness. That's received a blessing, I feel it. So I will get out the door, it's very cool and body share the nature, really, see things, everything is feeling different or something. So that's where, when nature or so heal us, we can enjoy the nature and outside, all share together, because I have on only the towel!…the air's temperature, the [], everything. Then after they get out the door…they see some fruit. And first after the Sweatlodge, the fruit, you get the fruit, it's really sweet and delicious after the thirsty. That fruit, it's a kind of like, big medicine. Then they're coming out, standing there, very light, walking different. So, I never had an experience like that Sweatlodge. Sweat, sweat, sweat, after the sweat then get out the tent. It feels

really light, body. Not feel, like, heavy. It's light. Then after, continue to first day, second day, third day – all same though. Very body, feel it, very comfortable. And I feel light. ~ Penpa

Carla tells the story of the object she took from the Giveaway that year.

…it was really incredible too. And I took it. It was this right here (gesturing for me to follow her to the sill over her kitchen sink). I actually haven't looked at it for a while. Um, I can't remember her name…Her daughter had died and she was really young like in her early 20's or something and she [wanted] to study marine biology and she was really, really into whales. Solomon [Carla's son], at that time, and he still is, was on this whole whale kick…we were going to go on a whale watch for his birthday. And Hawk and Lisa were really into the whales and everything. And um, whales just seemed to be brought up a lot and so, as soon as, and listening to her story too, ya know, like about her daughter that wanted to do something with the ocean and didn't get the opportunity. I felt like it would be a good thing to get this because I knew Solomon would be looking at it a lot, so that way it would still kind of keep that little bit of her interest alive, ya know, even though it's not her being interested anymore. It's just still being passed on. I think too, I just felt it on a really personal level of ya know a mother losing their child and I remember going up to her and talking to her and, not so much talking, I think I just, I gave her a hug and there was definitely some tears. Um, then I did talk to her after that, I remember talking to her more after the whole like emotional um, just the moment had sort of calmed down a little bit, then later on during the meal and stuff I remember talking to her more. I don't really remember talking to her before that and I can't even remember her name now. Um, but I can remember the feeling at the giveaway too, of um, ya know just so, not so much the, the things that were there, but like everything behind them. ~ Carla

2008: The Native (or not) Year

No changes in the format were made in 2008.

Death joined us again. When Hawk and I were working on preparing the Sweatlodge, he told me that one of the participants in the 2007 Gathering was killed in a motorbike crash. I felt as if someone had hit me in the chest. This man had gone through a visible transformation during his time with us, obviously blue

when he arrived and laughing and playing music and lighter in countenance by the time he left. During Talking Circles, The Man Who Died was invited to attend and sit in a chair that set in the circle of chairs and left uninhabited by the living, to make room for him. It was a simple red folding camp chair. News of his death spread and quiet conversations of remembrance could be heard in the food tent, at the Central Fire, in the camping area. The Chair was given a special place in all the common spaces and rituals, left open for him. A spirit plate was prepared for him at every meal and set by the Central Fire.

The young ex-Witness folks, who were dealing with the suicide of one of their friends the year before, at the Medicine Wheel, had also suffered more losses. Seth's mother was actively dying of cancer and one of their first cousins, a woman in her early twenties, had recently died in a car crash. Her family was Catholic and her funeral an uncomfortable mix of the Catholics, Witnesses and ex-Witnesses. Her death and impending funeral was the subject of many conversations at the Gathering. Carla, a friend from the local network of people who know the Henries and who attended the Gathering for many years, tells a funny story about how things went for Seth when he went to the funeral not long after the Gathering. He had taken the tarot cards from the Giveaway blanket.

Seth and I also talked about this. He knew I had grown up as a Catholic and he wanted to vent his feelings and ask questions before he went. First of all, he was uncomfortable with the strange and, in his opinion, weirdly ritualized Catholic ceremony. Secondly, he had no idea what to expect or what would be expected of

him. He knew something about communion, “a little wafer, or something” but not what to do about it. I explained that he did not have to do this and, in fact, probably should not. I explained that some people might genuflect before stepping into the pews and that there would be times of standing, sitting and possibly kneeling at various points – just follow the crowd, I advised.

When he got back to Maine, he visited Carla to tell the tale of the tarot at the Catholic funeral.

> So he said he wore every single piece of like spiritual bling he owned (laughing). Ya know, he was just decked out and they had to keep getting up and then getting down and getting up and getting down. And um, he said that like his sister had made some sort of, his sister accidentally went up and took the communion and then she turned around to the um, to the girl who died, her parents, and she’s like I guess this means I’m catholic now. (Laughing). Ya know, it just came out of her mouth, ya know like one of those things when you’re at a funeral. So, um, there was already like this weirdness with him and his immediate family, so he stands up and um, it was when he wasn’t supposed to stand up but the Catholics were, and everyone thought that he was gonna stand up and say something cuz I guess he looked angry. And so all these people went to grab him and (laughing) the tarot deck, he had it and it went spilling out all over the floor of the Catholic church. I guess he had forgotten that he had it in there. And ya know, everyone just was like looking over and I’m sure in the Catholic church the tarot is probably not [a good thing]. So, it made itself be known and that kind of made me happy. (laughing) In such an unlikely place, but ya know, like I think it was good too because it probably meant for him to have it there. And um ya know on a personal individual level, ya know, he probably had a different relationship with his cousin and she was pretty young and she like had a lot of energy, a lot of life and everything. Who knows? She could have been somebody that was into tarot but didn’t let her family know. ~ Seth

I first interviewed Colleen following the 2007 Gathering. Most of this interview was focused on her background, how she grew up, her struggles to extricate herself from the religion in which she was raised and the kinds of issues

and crises that this transition had provoked. Colleen grew up in Belmont, Massachusetts, a small bedroom community not far outside Boston and very close to Concord, where I grew up. Belmont is a bit more economically and culturally diverse than Concord, but not by a wide margin. She says that her family was not, like so many others there, wealthy. They lived in the poor section of town, in what she called the "projects." Her neighbors and friends were mostly multilingual immigrants from other countries and although they spent a lot of time together, she still felt like an outsider, having to explain why she was not allowed to participate in birthday parties and holidays, or say the pledge of allegiance, or stand for the flag at sports events. Her parents were, in fact, much more liberal than some others who did not allow children to have any "outside" friends.

> …when you are Jehovah's Witness it's not just your religion, it's your whole world, it's your whole frame of reference, it's the most important thing in your life. Easter, they would say Easter in a Christian sense is supposed to be about the life and death of Christ and the salvation that he brought to his people. So, that's what it's strictly about. But, they would says Easter, the way it is celebrated nowadays, it uses the name Easter, which comes from a Pagan God of fertility, Ester, and all the eggs and bunnies are all signs of, they are rooted in Pagan practices and former beliefs that's not true and it's all false religion and it's all Satan's influence trying to lead away God's sheep from its true organization. And that goes the same for Christmas, all the practices around Christmas they have to do with sun worship actually and renewal and all these things that to me I find beautiful. ~ Colleen

In high school, she embraced academic life and decided to go to college, which caused a serious rift with her Witness parents. In their view, college was a place designed for brainwashing. Still, she had seen the limited options available to her parents because they had not received an education and she saw college as a

way to broaden her possibilities. Because of the intensities of her studies, extracurricular sports and Witness activities, her neighborhood friends slipped away.

> All your loyalty is to God and that for me in a spiritual sense, is so important, maybe not to God so much, but just, I still don't do things like saluting a flag or singing national anthems just because I don't feel like that is where my loyalty lies, it's just a symbol, it's not for me what I believe is right. ~ Colleen

When she was around sixteen years old, she started to seriously question whether she would remain in the Witness life. Ironically, this intense questioning was rooted in an important tenant of her faith – that of conscience – brought into sharp focus when her sister left the Witness way of life after being severely reprimanded and shunned. When her sister was excommunicated, for lack of a better term, Colleen was expected to follow suit. This created a terrible moral dilemma for her, because her sister had decided, as a choice of conscience, that their way of life was wrong.

> I was also crunched on being told that if I want to save her, if I don't want her to be destroyed in the day of judgment, then I will, even if I don't understand, that I should follow God's commandments because He knows best and I'll keep my distance from her so that she gets a sense of urgency so that she understands how fierce her situation is and how much that she will be missing out on everlasting life unless she changes her ways and seeks forgiveness. So, me staying, by my staying away from her, keeping my distance, that, at least in my mind, that was my way of saving her and equally for my parents. But at the same time it was killing me and the thought of, well you know, I don't want to live in a new world or be saved by God if my sister can't be, and my sister's not a bad person and she doesn't deserve to be hurt. ~ Colleen

She could still see a lot of love and kindness in this way of life. At the same time, this treatment of her sister, and her agonizing complicity in causing her sister's suffering, brought the negative side into the full light of day, the "very paternalistic, demanding authority, authoritative, and those two sides definitely conflict in numerous ways. And my personal conscience kept telling me, this isn't the type of God that I believe in and I don't know if this is right, I don't know if God actually wants me to believe in destruction and damnation and not just in some afterlife sense, but in a very immediate day-to-day sense. It just didn't make sense to me and it was too painful to accept."

Colleen chose not to be baptized and left the faith, which broke her parents' hearts. She describes her initial reaction as one of terror, realizing how sheltered she had been, then one of increasing excitement and the desire to explore. She went to Boston College on a full scholarship and decided to spend her last year of school abroad, in Mexico and Guatemala. Once again, her experience as a Witness brought several values to bear on this decision and her reaction to what she witnessed there.

> One thing that remains with me is having a sense of urgency that the world is in a really bad shape and that as a human it's my own world obligation not to turn away but to try to confront that and to try to work toward something better, and to have hope for something better.
> ~ Colleen

Engaging people with views that conflict with the Witness way of life, and to bear witness to those differences, are two of the critical practices by which one

can save others' souls. It is not about imposing the Witness perspective, she explains.

> You're convinced that it's your responsibility to save other people's lives because their minds have been masked by like demonic influences by the world and that by entering into situations of conflict when you can possible witness to them or share your beliefs…that's opening a way for their minds to open up and…somehow you will be able to reach them and save them…it's almost done…in a very like loving sense and sympathetic sense. ~ Colleen

Although she now believes that this particular form of bearing witness is an imposition, she can also see the potential for using conflict as an opportunity for engagement. For example, she talks about her understanding of "prudish and secretive" behaviors of some of the more fundamentalist Muslim and Catholic students at college – having been there, in a way, herself.

When Colleen returned to the Gathering in 2008, she was consumed by a deep struggle to regain her emotional balance. In addition to the deaths (and imminent death) within her family, she was dealing with the fallout of having spent the intervening year in Mexico and Guatemala where she was exposed to the impacts of extreme violence on indigenous communities. Although her journey is worthy of its own separate story, I want to look at how certain organizing principles creating experiential connections linking her "self" as an ex-Jehovah's Witness, a witness to extreme structural violence and injustice, and a participant in the Gathering. She says herself, well into our second interview that somehow these experiences "wove together… I started linking a lot of things together that were very separate um, because within about let's say about um a year and a half we had

three people in our family die and I tied all of that together with everything that I had seen and learned about while I was in Mexico and Ecuador and Guatemala. And it all became this one kind of mass of pain and suffering and the world is a messed up horrible place."

She suffered from nightmares and "couldn't let go of things when I needed to. Um, and not being able to stop thinking about, in a very visual graphic way, um, the people I had met who had lived through a lot of horror." She was,

> …not being able to connect with spaces around me, um, feeling like very distant from actual like from people, from physical objects, um, and feeling lost…I was feeling at different points um, um…you, you can't feel that, it's the absence of connection, um, it's the absence of even feeling connected to yourself at times and that you're kind of floating in this surreal place and it's not a good surreal. There is a good surreal. But kind of floating and um, but you can never put your foot down um, you never stop floating and you start feeling dizzy, you feel motion sickness, you feel like you're falling and it's not that you're going to hit anything but that you just don't stop falling. And in those moments it's hard to remember anything else, it's hard to know that those moments will even end. ~ Colleen

Not surprisingly, she had also been struggling with intense anxiety which was causing some serious physical symptoms.[36] She decided she should go into the Medicine Wheel. This was, for her, the first time. Her goal was to put her medicine into the Wheel because she had learned to manage her anxiety. Putting this medicine down, letting it go, went far beyond its link to her physical anxiety.

> [It] represented at least to some degree, um, that um kind of accepting um my cousin's death and um just saying like OK, what happened is not OK, but having to let it go. I put the medicine out there, it was for my cousin and also um the other people that I mentioned…my, the people that I had met while in Latin America, specifically um, the people that I had met who had been affected by um war, genocide, deportation, um, and injustices of their countries or um in their lives

> and sending out my good will towards them for all that that's worth. ~ Colleen

She describes the smell of sage smoke, the sun setting, the line of people walking through the woods holding lit candles, and the knowledge that people are in this ceremony "because they want to be" as creating a different world, "almost like a fairytale world." This is a very common type of description by people who have been to the Medicine Wheel since it was moved to the night. She describes the feeling once she is inside:

> …people's eyes just kind of darting back and forth, back and forth across the circle and it's almost like you can see people's emotions or ideas, their thoughts, um, being transmitted across the circle and bouncing off one another and feeding off one another and um, in a way that it creates more of a group dynamic um. And um, I'm used to, especially in teaching or having been a college student we sit in rows. We don't face each other. We face one person, the instructor. Um, we don't see other people in relation to ourselves. We focus on one thing and how we get ourselves there. Um, with driving, with um, I don't know store checkout lines, everywhere it seems like we're going on this very linear path and when we're in a circle um, no one has a greater voice or a greater place than anyone else. Um, and you kind of lose um, the reference of you and one other point. All of a sudden it's, it's all other points.
>
> And, and I notice people, including myself, you start to feel a bit uncomfortable and that's not a bad thing but um, we're not used to it. We feel a bit awkward cuz now we have all of these eyes potentially on us and we're not exactly sure what to do um, so we end up waiting and um. It was my first time in the circle so it was looking to see what other people were doing, um, for how we do the ceremony. And um, it's also an emotional experience um, especially when you are hearing people really open up their hearts and tell you their innermost feelings that they typically wouldn't share with anyone else but maybe their best friend or their life partner, um, and to have them offer that out, their fears, um, their hopes, um, things they have to let go of, uh, the people they care about and miss, um, to have them also put that out into the circle and share that with everyone else, people they might not even know, um, that's very special. ~ Colleen

She put something of herself into the medicine bottle and "it was no longer just a medicine bottle, it was a medicine bottle and a part of me." The objects that people give away "take on an image or a life of their own, they're dead, symbols, objects, all those things, they're dead but we breathe life into them."

Her experience in the Sweatlodge did not go well. She had to leave early because the darkness made too much of an opening for the horrible images in her mind. Without the distraction of her day-to-day sense of embodiment, the horror took over and she scrambled to get back to the normal world.

"I wanted to put the pieces together um in almost I guess like a poetic sense." Colleen assembled the smell of sage, sitting in a circle and a fire pit, to bring the Gathering to another time and place. "I don't think I ever actually fully left the Gathering um, last summer because I kept wanting to come back. And I definitely had a sense of safety there. It's a place I could hold onto." The Gathering is "more of a process" one that can be "created in other places."

> I was out on South Padre Island, which is an island beach area, um, in South Texas, not too far from here, um, I brought sage and I was burning it and we had, we had a little pit fire and I was hanging out with new friends and we brought the dogs there and I was, I was burning sage and I was thinking about the Gathering and being up in Maine and being able to bring a part of that with me to wherever I go.
> ~ Colleen

Looking back, Colleen feels that the Medicine Wheel was helpful, not only for herself but for others. It was hard to give the "medicine" away but it did allow her to re-signify and start to disconnect the web of associations that had blurred

into one, big mass of horror and grief. I've learned a lot about how I associate things and how powerful that can be."

2008 is the year that the public debate – that is, beyond the debates going on for years among members of the core group – began in earnest regarding the degree to which the Gathering, or its constituent parts, is "Native American." Here, I want to highlight Bert's increasing voice in these discussions. His ceremonial presence at the Gathering has increased over the years and feels that it is, in fact, drawing from Native traditions, even though "it" is not a Native gathering taken in total. He spoke quite a lot, and with some urgency, at the 2008 final, informal talking circle. There were several people at this circle representing a fairly wide range of cultural backgrounds and home lands – Europe, Central and Southern America, other places in the United States. I also interviewed him at his home adjacent to the Passamaquoddy reservation in Presque Isle.

Bert was a central figure in the 2008 conversation and seemed to be struggling, at times, to articulate his own attempt to sort out when "mixing" crosses the line into appropriation of Native practices. The circle started off with Hawk talking about his desire for the Gathering.

> Hawk: One of the things that I personally would love to see would be ceremony, ritual, whatever we'll call it, that is clearly not Native American. I would love to have ceremony here that clearly comes from other spiritual, religious, whatever you want to call it, places.
>
> Hawk: I went to a gathering once. I was invited to help facilitate this conference and this conference for about 110 years was a fundamental Christian conference. Uh, but a couple of the women who were the matriarchs of this conference had always felt that it needed to be open and inclusive and inviting. So at one point they took it upon themselves to make

radical changes in it. Uh and they invited uh myself, a Buddhist nun, and a woman rabbi. And aside from my own fears about why I would be going to a fundamental Christian conference and what kind of sacrifice was I going to be (laughing), when, when we met and discussed the formal aspects of the conference, how that would be, it ended up that I was doing ceremony from what we could consider to be the Native perspective. The Buddhist nun was doing ceremony from Buddhist perspective. The rabbi was doing ceremony from Jewish perspective. And the priest was doing ceremony from Christian perspective. But we did it together and it became evident that though there were some very apparent differences in the doctrine, in the dogma, in the rhetoric, there were some really phenomenal similarities and so we kind of wove together those similarities through the rest of the week and it was magnificent what happened. It was phenomenal. You know, it was such a transformative experience for all of us who were there… we could go back to whatever our religious spiritual practice is with another perspective and another piece of information so that you know, our way truly becomes our way, rather than your way, your way and your way, and we're just gonna get together and share those things.

Bert: I mean that sounds really good, it's just the thing that goes through my mind is um, when we talk about ceremonies, you know and depending on where those ceremonies pretty much come from, it's important that those that are conducting those ceremonies actually know, have an understanding of every responsibility for those particular ceremonies. Like Hawk was saying he mentioned about you know the different, you know like Jewish or whatever, I work with the _____, the Apaches, the Sumacs, or whatever, you come together when somebody is here, we don't mix that, we each are praying, we are each doing ceremonies in our particular way according to our people and it's an awesome feeling to be able to sit there and watch this person go through the healing process. But I've also thought that we don't mix medicine such as my cousin, you know my cousin Tim, you know he practices um different ways of Native American church, which may use paodi. My other cousin on Indian Island and he practices sun dancing.

And so, um, coming around to doing ceremonies here during this gathering, you know say with a Sweatlodge, well we have used a very similar ceremony, salima (sp?), or very similar, they are very spiritual and it's ___ and some people still practice it. But, when we have a Sweatlodge, we know that this is a Sweatlodge, you know attending salima, not combing it all in one. That's something that I think we have to ensure doesn't happen because you know we um, there's reasons why we do things a certain way in the big room that you know we're not, our medicines, irregardless of where they come from, are not just for us… we have people who are Native and they have been brought up within our culture but they don't have a

responsibility to conduct these ceremonies… there is a big difference. Diversity is very good, but again mixing in the particular ceremonies it's kinda hard because sometimes it can become confusing… But one of the things that was brought up a lot of times is this what we call New Age movement and that has more of a tendency to take from a lot of different places and combine them into one and then put it out there and in a lot of cases it becomes confusing for people. But these are people still striving to do good, to live a better life with a better balance, and I don't see anything wrong with taking information you know, things from different cultures.

Hawk: To me we already mix medicines because you have a whole different (crash and asking if John OK). And every time there's a different mix of people there's a whole different medicine to the lodge. Every time there's a different herb and I think that if you did the same ceremony with 10 different healers or 10 different people that work with medicine, you'd have 10 different not sources but flavors to the medicine. And woman has different medicine than man but 10 different women have 10 different medicines. And to me those, the slightly uncomfortable spots are the not the most powerful but the most motivating

Bert: Though we may sit in a Native ceremony doesn't mean that everybody has to believe in that way, however the person that may be conducting that ceremony they conduct it in a way that they're shown, that there's that full connection and very deeply rooted, so we do it in a certain way and according to our teachings. Everyone there can share OK. Now in a sense we need to remember that this is a Native American ceremony, this particular ceremony that's taking place during this gathering. Everybody in the gathering is welcome to be there, you know we can do that, have a ceremony that predominantly are Native in origin, keep them within that realm, not trying to change it, to combine everybody else's beliefs but allow the teachings from that.

Woman: And there are Native American traditions that we were talking about yesterday, I am against, I mean there was a guy, you know a fellow that wanted to marry me yet, and I was like I don't believe in what you let him into the Native American thing, but I cannot go there, I can't go there, I can't be with someone that, what we were talking about, can't hug or kiss me because I'm on my moon. I'm sorry, I just I can't handle that."

Lisa: People call it native cuz they haven't been to many, don't know what.to call it"

Hawk: I know from West Africa when you go to their home, the first thing they do is take their sacred pipe out, they put tobacco and you share this

prayer pipe. This is in West Africa. Right. Even in, I don't know about the ball that swings with the smudge in the churches, but it's there, that's smudge, whatever you want to call that, it's incense right? Saunas are just saunas but in some traditions, it's not the Sweatlodge I'm talking about, it's a sacred ceremony that we might just know as sauna, but it's a sacred ceremony.

I think in bringing the faces of the different ceremonies together, we, we, um, we create an environment where we can honor their differences, recognize the similarities, exchange, incorporate, and we can, I think, I think where some of my thinking comes from has to do with we kill each other because your religion is different from mine.

Bert: That's how we are gonna learn to be able to live amongst one another, you know as far as, like you mention about kind of like about what we were talking about last night at the moon, there's more to that that I can't say because as I explained to Hawk last night I would rather, some of our grandmothers would be able to explain that more cuz there's a little more in-depth to that that I would, as a man, would want to go into. There are certain ways that I have adjusted even for myself in this modern day because you know, as far as the women coming around me, no problem, come around. We're in a modern day and you know, there is reason why those other lodges were in place, but we don't really have them anymore and that's OK because you know, I've even been able to adjust myself. Does it change who I am? Does it change the core of my teachings or where they came from? No it doesn't. But here you have a diverse culture in itself. This is a family. That's how I feel. This right here, everyone that has taken place here, I believe, has you know through the course of interaction, has become, you know intimate in a sense as a family, and that's why we sit here and talk about you know, how can we incorporate what should be incorporated or how can we get away from this or get away from that, or you know, yes the ceremonies can with particular individuals ceremonies can be from this particular culture and beliefs, but as a whole, the gathering in itself is a ceremony and it doesn't have to be considered as a Native American gathering. The way I look at, you know, it's a harvest gathering.

2009 The Death Year

Humor is always a big part of the Gathering, including the Sweatlodge. The jokes and storytelling starts during the Friday night talking circle – "remember that one when it was so hot…remember that time when the spider landed on my face?"

Humor is a part of healing and a part of creating connections. It diffuses tension and fear, and allows for a flow of day-to-day life into the fabric of the Gathering in a way that no other form of engagement can. The 2009 Sweatlodge was perhaps the most difficult of any, with several pipe carriers participating inside and Susa, Deb and I working overtime to keep things on an even keel outside. This being the Death year, emotions in general were running high and the grief rolled off the lodge in waves. Hummingbirds – lots of them – actually landed on top of the lodge, off and on, throughout the ceremony.

As it happens, this is the one and only year that we happened to put a humorous cover on the door to the lodge. At the time, the Henries were obsessed with the Sponge Bob Square Pants cartoon on television. Personally, I did not make the connection but they insisted that it was full of fun and important life lessons, well told. While we were preparing the lodge, the rest of us were entertained by word-for-word performances of their favorite passages from the show along with a running commentary about the deeper lessons being conveyed. Somehow, the Sponge Bob towel from their house made it up to the lodge and served as the outer cover of the door to the lodge.

Figure 41: Sponge Bob Lodge door cover, 2009

In 2009, Susa and I restrung the 1008 new prayer ties around the Medicine Wheel that we had made during the previous winter. The format of the Wheel was changed again, into its current, silent format that begins close to the Central Fire.

The giveaway ceremony that year was perhaps the most intense ever. We wondered if it was because the medicine wheel had gone silent, perhaps the stored up flow of unspoken stories and feelings. In any case, it was the last year that any major changes were made in the format of the Gathering.

A young urban man came that year, a painter and performer-poet. A true inner city "kid," he was very street wise and for the first time we heard swearing at the Gathering, although he did his best to curb his verbal habit of cursing. He got into the giveaway circle and laid down his gift:

> Them things they went through all the hard times with me actually. I mean, I think I put 'em on my sweatshirt when I was like 19 years old. I went out there last year and I was 31, so they had been with me since then, so all the stupid shit that I went through, all the, ya know with my grandma dying and everything that happened to me and they were there for it, ya know. I mean I gave away a rub stone on the giveaway thing and the reason why I gave a rub stone, I set it down…

He spoke at length about his grandmother, the only person who had ever made him feel really loved, and the troubles he had had in his life. He finished by breaking into tears, pacing around the circle and emphasizing that he had come expecting not to like any of us but had found a strong sense of connection and acceptance here, making friends and new family. He and his girlfriend moved to the camp next door the following winter, for a time, but the adjustment from inner city to rural Maine was too much for them.

The whole circle was much like this, broken up now and then by some of us who were not experiencing something traumatic at the time. Interestingly, one of the men who is a neighbor of the Henries, and who has attended for several years and takes a big role in helping in practical ways, feels disconnected from the Gathering because he does not feel so needy as he thinks others might be and is uncomfortable with the kinds of intimacies that sometimes emerge there.

Final Reflections

"…a question in need of an answer is to seek evidence in experience for something that, on the face of it, is not to be found there but somewhere else. (Keane 2008: S110)."

As I mentioned earlier, my primary interest in studying the Gathering goes to methodology, which is not to leave theorization out. It is just to say that I tend toward working toward a *grounded* theory. My relationship to the Harvest Gathering is an organic one, cobbled together over time through my own experience and life story. Starting with the early years of my entrance into some of

the same social networks in which the Henries traveled, our common interests – direct involvement in intercultural relationships (and the myriad of values, complications and conflicts that they can embody), the ongoing effects of colonialism, music – acted as a centripetal force, drawing us in ever tightening circles of interaction. My participation in the Gathering, and observation of others' interactions there, eventually peaked my interest in the role of materiality in the negotiations of difference and building common sites for sharing those differences, as well as, in some cases, at least, the emergence of a sense of community.

As with many other anthropologists and social scientists studying humanity in the globalized, highly mobile world today, I was faced with trying to figure out how to study a highly mobile, localized place and episodic event. I had been participating in the Gathering for many years prior to deciding that it would be the focus of my dissertation. I went through my graduate courses on cultural theory, economic anthropology, theories of identity, material culture, and so on. Perhaps because of my experience in Roxbury and many years of working in peoples' homes as a home care and hospice nurse, I resisted the idea of embracing any particular theoretical perspective as a starting point. My experience had taught me that the best approach, for me, at least, is to go in with as much focus and attention to the in-the-moment unfolding of the place, the people, and our interaction.

Of course, this is not to imply "objectivity," in the sense that science or pure empiricism promote. In fact, I had learned to maximize what I call my intuitive sense which relies more on my physical senses than my "mental" ones. It requires a

reflexive choice, and moment-to-moment choice to take a wait-and-see attitude. Empathy and affect are critical elements of being able to listen beyond the realm of language and sound. I also knew that I did not “know” and that the forms of knowledge and practice I had learned as a practitioner of western medicine would likely not be much help. It was the absence of “knowing,” and willingness to trust not knowing, that helped me to gain the trust of the people with whom I worked and to eventually build a form of knowledge and related skills that reflected an initiation to a world of meaning and being that was utterly foreign, at first.

These were, in fact, the most effective tools at my disposal when I first started working in Roxbury. The English that I spoke was certainly not the same English that many of the families I worked with used. This is not to say that language was utterly useless; it was just that its use as a tool was limited, at best, and added to the confusion, at worst. By confusion, I mean the times when another person and I were not able to create mutual orientation. It was a matter of degree. Partial understanding, which was always negotiated and hard won at times, was very often good enough for us to identify and agree upon a common goal and create a plan for achieving it. Eventually, I learned by trial and error that the arrangements of objects and spaces in their homes and neighborhoods, the ways that they held their bodies or moved through space, and the particular sensory world in which they lived was bursting with knowledge and information – far more than anything available to me via the words that they spoke. As my mother used to say: “Your actions speak louder than your words.”

All of these perspectives, sets of assumptions, skills and personal preference for prioritizing bodily ways of knowing shapes my experience of the Gathering, as a general participant and in my ceremonial responsibilities as fire-keeper. They were the mediating processes by which I navigated all of the unusual circumstances in which I found myself en route: dreams in the symbolism of others' cultures and trusting my instincts about when to tell someone, and who to tell; going to participate in a Sundance ceremony in Wyoming when I had never even heard of a Sundance; learning Sweatlodge and giveaway ceremonies on-the-fly through a series of events at Donna Lee's and elsewhere in Maine, and so forth. Unlike the way that the Sweatlodge ceremony is explained, in advance, at the Gathering, I had to learn by observation and just doing it. I used all the same tools I had learned in Roxbury, honing them further with each passage to a new place.

Therefore, my stance coming into my new role as a researcher, in the formal sense, was firmly rooted in my preference to start with what is "given" – the actual, material, in-the-moment situation or circumstance and the forms of interaction flowing from it. My experience was that it might take a little longer, but that all of the clues needed would become visible and could be traced to the less visible experiences and values and concepts that organized that which was immediately present. The fundamental issue, in my experience, was one of translation – how could I move into and out of different "worlds?" What processes could facilitate (or inhibit) my movement and the translations required to shift out of the worlds that I know – organized by a range of positions with which I can orient ourselves – and

into worlds that I do not know, by definition organized in ways that make orientation a challenge? Given my goal of working with people from different ways of life, the most important challenge was that of creating common ground, if not community.

These questions and the issues they raise are at the heart of several fundamental concerns to anthropologists. From Boas to the present, the challenge of cultural translation has been a key focus of attention in anthropology (Rubel and Rosman 2003), studies burgeoned in tandem with an increasing focus on processes and products of globalization (Ferguson 2002). "Culture" as a bounded or space or place or way of life could no longer be seen as something localized by communities living in a shared physical landscape (Fox and King 2002). Previous concepts about boundaries and borders shifted as diverse peoples, objects, and material and discursive practices moved into circulation within a "continuous world (Ingold 1993)." Instead of a bounded entity, culture became something cobbled together with partial connections (Strathern 1991) linking a hybrid mix of different sorts of parts and pieces (Copeman 2004) that sometimes clash violently (for example, Ewing 2006). Network is increasingly a way to think about and study human collectivities (Latour 2005), groups (Noyes 1995) and tourists (Johannessen 2005). Studies of science and medicine extended this further to include the role of objects and technologies in the emergence of human collectivities (Law and Mol 2001).

With these recalibrations of thinking about boundaries and (dis)continuities, anthropologists sought ways to shift their approach to ethnography as a method and

location (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). The stationary objects of anthropological study of times past were on the move, making it a challenge to locate the field (Coleman and Collins 2006) and sort out what actually constitutes evidence (Engelke 2008). The potentials and pitfalls of translating cultures in a highly fluid world riddled with flowing codes and semiotic forms are revisited, given a concept of translation as the "re-codification, a transfer of codes. Synonymy is not necessarily possible, but a form of translation can still take place (Rubel and Rosman 2003)." New ethnographic tools were needed (Maurer 2005), for ethnographers to, like the objects of their study, "'feel their way' *through* a world that is itself in motion, continually coming into being through the combined action of human and non-human agencies (Ingold 2000:155).

New trajectories in thinking about the challenges of studying transient phenomena (Malkki 1997) and traveling objects of study (Clifford 1997) were initiated. Multi-sited ethnography emerged and with it new engagements of transcript analyses (Agar 2005) and updated concepts of multi-sitedness and mobility proposed. Hage (2005) notes that many migrants, for example, live in a number of different locations that are more like a "single geographically discontinuous site (pg. 463)" than multiple, discontinuous sites. Furthermore, their form of mobility is not necessarily a physical move but rather an existential one, calling for the need to recognize different kinds of mobility (pg 470-1). Some researchers headed out on foot, walking, socializing and inculcating the "field"

through a focus on embodiment (Lee and Ingold 2006). Others sought out collaborative relationships with the subjects of study (Lassiter 2005).

Debates about diversity and commonality deepened as the problems of comparative study were complicated further by the maelstrom of decontextualized people, objects, and cultural practices (Gingrich and Fox 2002; Kuper 2003). Studies focused on the management of diversity traced the intersections of local places and globally circulating elements in the production of knowledge (Fardon 1995) and the particular strategies that peoples deploy in syncretizing (Palmie 1995) or using various forms of circulating knowledge in the construction of local communities, places and forms of political activism (Appadurai 1995; Escobar 2003). Various debates emerged about how a concept of "multiculturalism" might help illuminate these issues of diversity, or not (Armstrong-Fumero 2009; Eller 1997; Turner 1993).

Human diversity, in this new world of mobility, seems to doom us to discontinuity and disconnect. Where is there room for common ground or continuity? Ingold (1993) warns "that an excessive emphasis on cultural diversity may obscure the capacity that humans (like many other animals) have to respond to one another, on the level of basic emotions and feelings, simply by virtue of their common nature. But why should experiential continuity imply uniformity? And why, conversely, should an emphasis on difference imply discontinuity (1993:226)?"

Studies of heterogeneity in human groups building on phenomenological approaches, for example, propose a deflation of the continuity-discontinuity debates by thinking about shared inhabitation of space in a heterogenous life-world (Henkel 2007) and the role of embodiment in processes of socialization (Duranti 2009). Others point out that, for many people, the glue of a group – to belong – is, in fact, shaped by some concept of boundary, emplacement and *difference*, and that anthropologists ignore this at their own peril and the peril of those they study (Seligman 2003, 2004; Cattelino 2010).

Obviously, I cannot possibly recount the vast history of practices and discourses relevant to a deep investigation of these issues in anthropology. I will take a stab at pointing out some of the ways that bringing basic concepts from ANT and indexicality, especially as they relate to space and the bodies that move through it, can help to mitigate some of the fundamental vexations at hand. In the case of the Gathering, I would say that the primary vexation is because of the multiple, different ways of life from which participants come – whether we label those "ways of life" as (multi-hybrid) cultural. There simply is no way to get at what is happening, and how those ways of life are shaping what is happening, by starting with any preconceived notion about their culture. Still, as Fox and King (2002) point out, the word culture "still has work to do in underlining contrasts with competing approaches (pg. xix)" and, in my observation, still has work to do in the world of most of the people I know. The word still signifies something about common ground.

Traces of and at the Gathering

As a quick review, both ANT and indexicality, as a broad concept of signification, share certain foci relevant to my understanding of the Gathering: they both start with the interaction or situation at hand; they both seek to trace the (interconnections) from the visible situation to the invisible times and places from whence its constituent elements came to bear on the moment; they both look at how those elements are anchored to here and there, then and now; they both posit this trace of interconnection and anchoring as a key pathway to understanding the co-constitutive relationship of material and meaning. While my primary focus is on ANT, I find that spatial indexicality, in some cases, dovetails nicely and helps illuminate some of the ways that the Henries and Gathering participants use various materialities to translate and mediate meanings, and thus produce some form of mutual orientation through the lens of their differences. .

Chapter Two Review

In chapter two, Hawk's personal life story reveals the values and ways of knowing shaping the choices he makes in taking up the elements with which his way of life emerges. The extra-ordinary experience of connection to the invisible, relational cosmos through his embodied experience of the landscape, animals and trees in his backyard became a powerful geography of affect (Anderson 2005) in which he created and inculcated a constellation of values as a broad sensibility that he carried into the future. This inner life, his orientation to the invisible and desire to engage the visible in reference to it compelled his search for forms of social

practice that would allow him to create a way of life based on this orientation. His experience of unjust treatment because of "the color of his skin" tweaked that trajectory, creating an emphasis on particular values of inclusion and exclusion. The expanding social and ceremonial networks in which he and his family traveled gave them access to more material and conceptual resources, and particular forms of cultural practices and traditions from which they drew, creating connections and attachments based on the values around which their lives were increasingly organized.

Hawk's experience of Nipmuc and other Native cultures and places deepened his sense of alignment with them, and the particular configurations of elements increasingly shaped the topological contours of his family, home, and personal life. Taking out his dreadlocks, taking up a relationship with the flute and engaging it as his teacher, a lifestyle of travel among the homelands and communities of various Indian communities, and the arrangements of their space in the teepee at LaRue's in Maine are just some of the indexical nodes anchoring the emerging topological contours of a way of life. They were meaningful because they were anchored in – pointed to – the semiotic ideologies that built upon the orientations that came into focus during his earlier life. Keane (2003) defines semiotic ideologies as the set of basic assumptions one has about what signs are and how they work to connect us to the world, what kinds of agencies live in the world (spirit, animal, tree) and when, and how, indexical signs are linked to their objects.

This process of gathering various elements emerged into the social and cultural worlds of Hawk's life as his skills as a flute-maker grew, enhancing the emergence of his alignment with Nipmuc and northeastern Algonquian life. Regardless of the particular mechanisms by which certain elements moved through the centuries as distinctive forms of organization, specific forms took up material positioning in the Henries lives as they moved through the communal lives of Nipmuc activities related to federal recognition. Similar consonances brought particular ceremonial practices into the landscapes of their lives. The indexical expressions of Hawk's embrace of Native space grew, reinforcing his sensibility of a relational, animate universe. The Henries continued to gather the elements and organize them in meaningful ways: manitou, the living presence in people, places, and objects; rocks and stones emplaced in landscapes in particular ways; practices of give-away; ways of gathering people for calendrical celebrations; circular spaces and face-to-face interaction; protocols of respect.

Chapter Three Review

In chapter three, the spaces of the Gathering emerge into living topologies that flow as a fluid space (Law and Mol 2001) from Hawk's childhood backyard through his workshop, the skills he brings to bear on the flute, and the voice of the flute itself. Sonic geographies (Matless 2005) flow from the relationship between he and his flute, creating places where various identities can be explored and contested, new alliances can be forged and intercommunity topographies of emotion instantiated (Soloman 2006). Hawk's increasing skill in his relationship

with improvisation and discipline produced new and more durable forms (Barber 2007) indexing the sets of values giving meaning to his life and work. New soundscapes (Smith 2000) and sensibilities linking sound and place (Feld 1996) emerged affecting not only Hawk and his family, but many others who felt its acoustic vibrations moving through their bodies. Music became a primary geography of mediation for identity practices (Born 2011). Tradition became the signifying practice by which Hawk's music was oriented toward (and oriented others toward) the broader values of Native identity, common humanity and inclusion, and participation in intercultural relationship and healing – while orienting others toward these values through its assemblage as an indexical topography.

The flute became a fluid topology, an object that, unlike network spaces that depend upon all of its connections sticking together for it to function, has "no 'obligatory point of passage'; no place past which everything has to file; no panopticon; no centre of translation…(Mol and Law 2001)." The flute as an object entangled () in a vast array of meanings and flows of materials and peoples became a powerful material touchstone, a material nexus of visible and invisible topographies of affect, emotion, and spiritual agencies. Its fluidity and capacity for generating an embodied, sensory geography of participation (Saldanha 2005) provided a space in which values could be created and modified (Anderson 2005), gathering others to the Henries' lives.

This geography of engagement made yet more, novel elements from others ways of life available to the Henries family, adding new dimensions to the semiotic ideologies organizing person and place. When they bought their home in Sullivan, its materiality emerged as a complex topographic emplacement of their embrace of inclusion and spiritual agency in a relational cosmos. Material touchstones rose out of the floors and foundational structures, spatializing their social, ceremonial and musical networks and creating a domestic geography (Anderson 2005) whose elements have been ordered by their cosmologic, emotional and social lives such that all who enter literally move through their way of knowing (Millington 2005).

The arrangements of wood, rocks, sound and song, pathways and circles, vibration and purpose, prayer and wood carving, global exchanges of instruments and traditions are key material touchstones – indexical nodes signifying semiotic ideologies of inclusion, relationship, and an animate universe – marking the places and spaces of the Henries home and Gathering as a cultural landscape. Through their place-making activities when preparing for the Gathering, He Henries' theories of the relationship between land and spirit are emplaced (Myers 2002); all of the discourses and meetings, talking circles and conversations indexing the worlds of meaning by which all if its elements are gathered, transformed and re-contextualized as arrangements of space and place, these talks about space and what it means are literally materialized in the landscape (Schein 1997). There, in the material topologies, are the indexical nodes, the material touchstones that articulate the emergence of various forms of knowledge that were mobilized from

other times and places and articulated in the local landscape through the entanglement of the concrete and conceptual (Choy 2005). The forms and their arrangements of land and space – even the ways that plants are arranged in gardens (Hitchings 2003; Longhurst 2006) – emerge as geographies that signify the associations, interactions, relations and "chains of enrolement (Hitchings 2003:109)" by which they come into being. As forms that index invisible realms of meaning, they simultaneously limit options for human action and potentially make their forms of knowledge available to people who engage them.

Chapter Four Review

In my follow up interviews with participants, a few interesting themes emerge. The most prominent is the report of having felt like an outsider or out of place or "I didn't belong" to the social or cultural group in which they were raised. Like Hawk, they were seekers. Another is the frequent mention of the various material touchstones that contour the landscape, social and ceremonial spaces. Here is a brief list of the associations that different participants made to and with various touchstones:

1. Fire: two women and one man who identified themselves as white and middle-class recounted being part of scouting troups as children, they all developed a connection with nature through this experience and one said they played cowboys and Indians and that she wanted to be an Indian because it felt right to her; several mentioned time sitting around the fire talking or playing or listening to music as their favorite memory and three specifically associate sitting around the fire as a Native or Indian practice; another woman talked about being with the element of fire as important; a young man who came from the inner city and his girlfriend both felt that the fire fueled the musical creativity and feeling of connection to others there (he was extremely surprised, as a tough, street-wise guy who did not expect

to like any of us or anything about the Gathering – he came to see Hawk but ended up have a profoundly transformative experience); one man who self-identified as black had an intense bonding experience to the other fire-keeper of the central fire, and the fire itself in 2010 when they kept the fire going during the remnants of a hurricane. And, of course, fire is a central feature of talk by fire-keepers and at several pre-post meetings when discussing how to involve participants in fire –keeping.

2. Stones, rocks: Several people mention stones or rocks as having a special place and special meaning, two for ceremonial purposes; in all cases, they identify stones as mediators of various connections they made to other participants or particular ceremonies or places

3. Circle: several people called the giveaway ceremony a "giving circle," in all cases as a way to signify that ceremony as the most memorable for them; the young urban man and a "shy" woman were initially very uncomfortable in a circle around the fire where they felt too exposed to others; three identified "sitting around a circle" as a Native or Indian practice

I do not have the space here to go into a lot of detail but I did want to suggest that material touchstones, even if taken at simple "face" value in the context of interviews could be a starting point for tracing indexical connections and the distant web of associations by which they come to mean something to different people.

The Sweatlodge, medicine wheel and giveaway seem about equally important to different people. Those who identify the lodge as having been their most memorable experience fairly unanimously see it as provocative place where connections with the invisible world of spirit or a liminal passage of some sort was made.

> Woman: So the night before we leave to go to the harvest gathering, I have a dream where I am standing outside my house and I see an owl fly into the trees and then I look on the roof and right up at the chimney is this little shape shifter guy who is like 3 feet tall and he is

> all dressed like an owl and sitting on my chimney, then I wake up, that was interesting, I wonder what that is about. So we go to the gathering, we get there at night, and the next morning is to be the Sweatlodge, which I had been fasting for and I'm ready to do this and there's not enough room for me. So I set outside and that guy Penpe? He starts chanting this Tibetan chant, which just was amazing, I'm just like in ecstasy. Eventually they invite me in because some people have left So I go in the Sweatlodge and there is a woman there with her pipe. It was time to pass pipes and the woman says, "I have this pipe and it carries owl medicine." Ding. (laugh) OK, I need to talk to her. So after that was over and we were having lunch, I went up to her and said, "I have to talk with you. I don't know what we are to talk about but you have owl medicine and I had this dream about an owl and we need to talk." So we just talked.

This next woman had done a lot of ceremonial work out west where, she said, things were very rigid and she was shamed and embarrassed and ridiculed on many occasions as an outsider, although she was there by direct invitation of one of the elders of the community where she lived and worked. For her, the liminality of the lodge at the Gathering was its inclusiveness:

> And then the whole time we were just so thrilled that that ceremony, that 4 day ceremony was done in the dream that she's always had for it. That, yes, you do tradition but it isn't exclusive. That you can do that. You can, men can come up and gather for the Sweatlodge as well as the women. It's just, it was everybody together, everybody doing everything. It was so thrilling. It was just amazing. Um, so that's it, that's my story and that's all I got.

Again, without going into a lot more detail, tracing the indexical connections outward to the various spaces from which participants anchor themselves to the events, or the spaces of events, and related interactions would be another direction in which further research would be beneficial.

Lion Pendant

The journey of the lion pendant is a wonderful example of the potential of tracing the life-history of an object as a way to access broader networks and associations, and to dig into the translations and transformations negotiated as it passes from one person and place to another. From a small store in Cambridge, Massachusetts to the mobile place of my car, and the security drivers who often took me in to the doors of my patients, to a sparking light of warm gold drawing Charles to take up its courage and travel to Africa, back to Maine where it now motivates yet another person to work toward a greater good, the pendant had mediated multiple transformations and translations involving multiple cultural worlds of meaning and practice. Charles, for example, sends out indexical arrows linking the pendant to multiple material touchstone leading back in time, across the sea to Africa and across the invisible world of spirit. The lion linked to the wild cats under his grandmothers small home in the village, his elder's cow ceremony with fire at the center and dancing linked to the grounds and activities of the Gathering, the spirit plates for those who had crossed over created a strong association with his homeland traditions of pouring wine and breaking bread for the ancestors before drinking or eating. His experience of the physical electric shock associated with communication from his ancestors, and the intense warmth of the pendant when he picked it up, emplaced him in a culturally-particular sensorium, reinforcing his connections with his home half a planet away while still standing on the grounds of the Gathering. His distinct identity, orienting him simultaneously to

his own subjectivity and cultural traditions while turning his attention to me, the other people and the place of the Gathering. All of us co-constituted at the same time, through the fluid translations and semiotic mediations of that single pendant.

The pendant's return to Maine marked yet another passage into a different semiotic ideology – consonant in enough ways to make it possible, to stabilize certain aspects of its meaning – courage – yet ambivalent and fluid enough to move into another realm. Grounded in the common event and place of the Gathering – and binding the three of us in an ongoing relationship – and yet a nexus of utterly different people from totally different backgrounds. The pendant's meaning were variably stabilized and destabilized, as were the spaces that flowed from it, depending upon the particular web of associations in which it became anchored, or disconnected, and the nature of the associations themselves – sometimes partial, sometimes strong and immutable, sometimes rubbery and flexible. Then, one could take into account the immutable networks of intercontinental travel and my travel to Boston to interview them as a part of analyzing the broad linkages from which the pendant emerged and through which it moved.

Trauma

Colleen's experience with the medicine wheel is another rather extreme example of a similar process – multiple indexically-woven connections between her experience at the Gathering, traumatic and challenging circumstances and other ceremonies in indigenous geographies in Central America. Something physically and intentionally akin to the medicine wheel was a basis for comparison, based on

the similar and dissimilar placements of people and objects and the organization of the landscape. She was able to turn the Gathering into a fluid space, extending it to Texas by virtue of the particular way that she organized certain key elements: fire, friends, the smell of sage smoke. The embodied translation of a place-based sensorium allowed her to create a place re-placed (Smith 2003). A particular cultural landscape traveled across space and time on a beach over a thousand miles away.

The constellation of personal and social values that compelled her participation at the Gathering also compelled her desire to work in Central America and created the links that, in her case, became overwhelming – not enough disconnect in the sense that all of the pains of different times and places became one big wad of agony. At the same time, she felt disconnected from herself, feeling a sense of floating and not being able to get her feet on the ground. Further analysis of Colleen's story, and pursuit of its composition as a web of interconnected values, experiences, and material geographies of meaning, could be especially useful in thinking about ritual and ceremony in a world where participants are no longer, necessarily, members of a community situated in a particular place or within particular organized practices. It could also be instructive in terms of thinking about trauma and intercultural relationships, and building common ground.

Mixing Practices and Ambiguity

Finally, the ongoing dialogue about the identity of the Gathering itself as Native or not is instructive in terms of the imposed ambiguity of the Henries' emphatic refusal to call the Gathering "Native." Of course, in every sense that matters, it is not "a" Native gathering. It does, as Bert regularly argues, inhere some ceremonial forms – the lodge in particular – that most certain is aligned with Native practices and traditions. Moreover, he points out, it is a form of knowledge that must be utilized by individuals who are skilled and can conduct it in a safe manner.

Here, I think that thinking in terms of how various elements are brought into association with each other in particular places by particular people based on particular organizations of semiotic ideologies could be helpful way to dig deeper into thinking about "mix" not in terms of boundary or boundedness or static structure or fluid innovations. Instead, the question could be based on an a priori assumption that any feature of human ways of life is not either or any of these things but always *both*. Assume the mix, then trace the particulars of to what degree, with what elements, based on what kinds of associations, anchored to what times and places, and why and so on.

I do not dispute the reality of social and material forms of organization in human life that could be described as culture. I just find, from my own experience, that it is more helpful – for me, at least – to approach it as something to discover rather than as something to assume. People do build common ground and share, en masse, in particular organizations of materiality and meaning. The interesting

question is, to me, how does it emerge into the life-ways of human interaction and group-building?

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[35] Wabanaki and Anishinaabeg migration stories say that they were all one people in the past, living in what is now Maine and the Canadian Maritimes. When prophesies foretold of people coming from the east who would bring disaster, a large group moved west to keep the Eastern Fire – those who are now the Anishinaabeg. Bert spoke about this at length during our interview, relating this story to their documentation in bark scrolls.

[36] She describes what sounds, to me, more like PTSD, which is why, at a couple of points during the interview, I stopped asking questions and spoke to her as a friend and offered emotional support.

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