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SINGING REDFACE: THE MISAPPROPRIATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN
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SINGING REDFACE: THE MISAPPROPRIATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURE IN
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A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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This document is dedicated to all the incredible social justice warriors who have fought to have our culture begin to acknowledge and heal the damage that post-colonial thinking and artistic output has placed on our society.

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Abstract

This project examines the role of cultural appropriation in the creation of Native American stereotypes that are present in Western popular music in post-colonial America through the completion of an in-progress book. Similar to how minstrel blackface performances developed racial archetypes by “displaying blackness,” singing redface occurs when a non-Native person takes on the racial archetype of a Native American character through song. This research not only analyzes the use of singing redface in popular music, but also examines how these songs lead to cultural confusion, cultural misappropriation, racial antipathy, and idealized sympathy towards Native Americans and their culture.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Western world has had a long infatuation with Native American culture. The first displays of American Indians at the World's Fair in 1851 sparked an even greater entertainment-driven Western fascination with American Indian and Aboriginal culture that continued in radio storytelling, dime novels, classical and popular music, stage performances, fashion, and cinema. Our infatuation with re-creating and staging Western contact and expansion in the "New World" has contributed to a worldwide epidemic of "playing Indian." On the playground children mock-kill each other as "Cowboys and Indians," at Halloween "Indian warrior" and "sexy Indian" costumes are ubiquitous, in arenas sports teams use "Indian" mascots, elementary schools reimagine and reenact the "first Thanksgiving," and concertgoers might wear feathers, headdresses, and "Indian" face paint. Others have tried to capture the "ways" of Native Americans by creating games such as finding your "Indian" spirit guide, recognizing your "Indian" name, and finding your "Indian" tribe. In fact, playing "Indian" has been done so often that it can practically be considered an integral part of American culture, and we don't have to look very far back to see where this pastime came from.

Some of my earliest experiences seeing and hearing about Native culture were through cartoon music. Music has always been an integral part of cartoons, where "mickey-mousing" orchestras act as both emotional backdrop and sound effect artists.¹ In the style of parallel scoring common to cartoons, music is synchronized with visual cues in order to sonically mimic the action on-screen. Cartoon music directs the audience, acts as the bridge between scene changes, creates a sense of place, and uses

¹ Dika Newlin, "Music for the Flickering Image: American Film Scores", *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 1. (Sep., 1977): 25.

leitmotifs (character themes) to give the audience a quick overview of any new character to appear on screen. The audience might not always focus on the music when watching something on a screen, but classic cartoons knew how to control the audience's perception of the action through musical cues. I remember watching Betty Boop, Popeye, and Bugs Bunny cartoons in which the main characters sang songs about Native Americans, dressed up as "Indians," and interacted with musically represented "Indian" characters. Modern cartoons also continue to use many of these same tropes. In 2007, the cartoon *Dougie in Disguise* included main character Dougie dressing up and pretending to be "Indian" in the episode "Dougie American Indian Scout." But, more than any cartoon before or after, it was the 1995 Walt Disney feature animation *Pocahontas* that informed my childhood knowledge and understanding of "Indian" culture.

The songs of *Pocahontas*, including "Colors of the Wind," "Steady as a Beating Drum," and "Listen with your Heart," projected themes of being connected to the earth, highlighted the importance of the drum, and showcased the peaceful nature of Native American culture. The movie transported its audience back into a mythical reimagining of 1607 as an exotic world where Pocahontas talked to trees, communed with nature, and befriended animals.² The pre-colonial "Indian," exemplified by Pocahontas, became a New Age Adam and Eve in the aftermath of the counterculture movement of the 1960s, uncorrupted by industry, progress, and offering redemption for those who

² Leigh H. Edwards, "The United Colors of "Pocahontas": Synthetic Miscegenation and Disney's Multiculturalism," *Narrative*, Vol. 7, No. 2, *Multiculturalism and Narrative* (May, 1999): 156.

wanted to escape from Western ideals.³ In 1971 the *Keep American Beautiful* campaign featured the “crying Indian,” but with *Pocahontas*, this hippie view of the “Magic Indian” finally went mainstream. Girls wanted to become Pocahontas and they wanted to embrace Native American culture.

The popularity of *Pocahontas* was not the only inspiration that led to “playing Indian.” Each year, schools across the United States put on plays and sing songs about the first Thanksgiving. Children dress up as pilgrims and Indians; they pick corn together, some prepare a kind of Thanksgiving meal, and give thanks for the Indians’ generosity and for the food that is before them. Songs about Thanksgiving use the melodies of known children’s songs and change the words and mime-like hand motions to fit the Thanksgiving theme. “Little Pilgrim” is sung to the melody of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” “Indians and Pilgrims” uses the melody of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” and “I’m a Little Indian” is performed to the melody of “I’m a Little Teapot.”⁴ Mainstream American culture has created opportunities for children to dress up as Indians, to sing songs about being “Indian,” and learn “Indian” dances.⁵

This fascination with Native American culture and “playing Indian” has, despite its laudatory contemporary goal of raising awareness and empathy for Native peoples, actually furthered inauthentic “Indianism.” Rather than being taught about different Native American nations and understanding their different cultures, children are exposed to music and roleplaying that promotes the stereotyped notion of a singular Native identity. With centuries of misinformation and the perpetualization of Native

³ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, 1998), 154–165.

⁴ “Music and Songs: Holidays—Thanksgiving,” *Preschool Education.com*. Accessed at www.preschooleducation.com/sthanksgiving.shtml

⁵ *Ibid.*

stereotyping and homogenization, the world has become inundated with inauthentic renderings of these imaginary Native tropes. While the National Congress of American Indians currently recognizes 562 ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse nations, non-Native Americans are often taught to think of “Indians” as one group of people who lived in North America before European arrival.⁶

And yet, Americans love “playing Indian.” Our first experiences in this “game” are integrated into our educational system, children’s entertainment, games, performing arts, children’s songs, cartoons, Thanksgiving plays, and Disney movies. School and sports mascots, from professional franchises to elementary schools, use the “Indian,” “Redskin,” or “Savage,” to continue this role-play into adulthood and teach it to a new generation. “Indian” mascots dress up, dance, pantomime “Indian” movements, and sing “Indian chants.”

Most commonly seen representations of Native Americans in American media are actually derived from racist stereotypes and are “performed” by whites. Even a cursory glance at Native-themed musical performances in the past century reveals a history of Western performance rife with what I call “singing redface.” Just as minstrel blackface performances developed racial archetypes by “displaying blackness,”⁷ singing redface occurs when a non-Native person takes on the racial archetype of a Native American character through song. Singing redface artists have promoted racial slurs, mock Indian languages, and inauthentic Native American music. In order to “become

⁶ National Congress of American Indians, “An Introduction to Indian Nations in the United States.” Accessed at www.ncai.org/about-tribes/indians_101.pdf

⁷ Eric Lott. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 38.

Native” artists literally and figuratively dress up as “Indians” in live performance, music videos, album covers, and song lyrics.

In this thesis I examine the use of singing redface in popular music. In discussing the artists and works that employ “redface,” I am not in any way trying to accuse these performers or their performances of purposeful racism, nor am I saying that this music should be censored, avoided, or boycotted. Rather, I will attempt to reveal a pattern of performance and learned behavior that occurs when non-Native Americans “play Indian” through music—one that has led to cultural misappropriations, racial antipathy, idealized sympathy, and cultural confusion about Native Americans and their culture.

Is It Ever “Just a Song”?

All performance is, at its core, about playing dress up. No matter how intimately tied to the performer’s sense of identity, every performance and piece of art involves some amount of cultural appropriation. So why, when it comes to Western European art and its colonial child American popular entertainment, do we feel so uncomfortable with the idea of white performers pretending to be a minority ethnicity? What is it about racial impersonations that so strongly rings the alarm of racism that most twenty-first-century citizens have been trained to listen for?

The answer can be found in the difference between character and caricature, a south-Atlanta accent and Ebonics, Taiwanese and Oriental, and Chickasaw and Indian. Racist impersonations do not come from simple mimicry or character acting, but from the performance of racist stereotypes. In order to understand why the act of singing redface is simultaneously so offensive to many Native Americans and so wildly popular

in Western music, it is important to understand the often-hushed history of blackface minstrelsy and its powerful influence on American popular music.

One of the first truly original forms of American entertainment, minstrel shows not only shaped the entertainment industry but also served as an influential force in the formation of African American performance and identity. As Americans started to separate themselves from their European ties, audiences started to favor entertainment that showcased the American democratic “white man” rather than the European aristocratic “gentleman.”⁸ Constructed from live variety acts, comedic sketches, dances, and musical numbers, minstrel shows were the first uniquely American form of theater that provided urban audiences with a taste of home and the ability to identify with characters that were representative of the audience. While early minstrel performances did not include a large amount of audience interaction, popular minstrel shows in Northeastern cities soon began to see audiences praising good performances by throwing money on stage and excitedly cheering for encores.⁹ The agency of the audience to act was equally true if showgoers disliked a performance, hissing, sneering, violently chucking rocks and nails on stage, and even mobbing performance troupes that were accused of cheating the audience out of a good show. Thralls to a microcosm of the great and terrible democratic mob, minstrel companies could either shape their performances to fit the audience’s tastes or be replaced by a troupe that was willing to do so.¹⁰ Unlike other forms of staged performances, minstrelsy evolved to adapt to audiences’ desires through a modular form where each skit, song, dance, or joke was

⁸ Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12–13.

self-contained without needing to adhere to a specific script, musical score, or plot.¹¹ As stock black characters began to become a larger part of these variety shows, minstrelsy also became a way for white Northerners to explore their curiosity about African Americans in a time when slavery was a national topic.¹² Due to the democratic and symbiotic relationship between a minstrel show and the audience, records and reviews of minstrel shows offer a revealing look into the psyche of the United States up to, during, and after the Civil War.

Minstrel shows also provided their white audiences with a safe, unthreatening, and mostly imaginary glimpse into African American culture. By the late 1820s white performers in blackface were performing so-called Negro songs and dances between theater acts. These early songs were actually more similar to Irish and Scottish folksong melodies than any African American music, but in 1828 Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice, often credited as the father of minstrelsy, transformed an African American song into the incredibly popular “Jump Jim Crow.” Rice transformed himself by using burnt cork to darken his face and interwove his performances with references to African American culture through stylized mannerisms, an exaggerated regional accent, musical gestures, and most importantly, dance. Rice was not the first person to use these elements in minstrelsy, but the popularity of his act created the stock black character Jim Crow.

While there would not be any argument today that blackface stereotyped African Americans, marginalized their culture, depicted them as inferior to white Americans, mocked their language, trivialized their music and dance, and created stories that

¹¹ Ibid., 33–34.

¹² Ibid., 34.

glorified slavery, it was one of the most popular forms of entertainment ever to be performed in the United States. Stephen Foster's "Camptown Races," "Oh! Susanna," and "My Old Kentucky Home" continue to be heard by modern generations and "I Wish I Was in Dixie's Land," usually credited to Daniel Emmett, was not only the Confederacy's unofficial anthem during the Civil War (and quite popular with the Union army), but it continues to be a song of pride for the American South.¹³ Similar to stereotypes that were promoted during minstrel performances, singing redface essentially makes a mockery of Native American culture through music.

"I'm an Indian Too"

Blackface is often directly tied to music and dance, but blackface itself is the act of "becoming black" by "acting" and "looking" black. Like blackface, redface is a general term associated with actions taken by a non-Native in order to be perceived as a Native American. Throughout this thesis, because I am specifically analyzing music's ability to create redface performances, I will refer to the act of "becoming Native" in musical performance as "singing redface." Popular entertainment, especially popular entertainment that makes money, has often been used as a populist shield to justify culturally insensitive and racist acts. To prevent the continuation of redface we need to understand how music and music performance can act as racially insensitive qualifiers.

Early cartoons from the golden age of animation are a rich source for some of the most simplistic renditions of blackface and redface. Production companies created easily recognized characters that used the same gags, jokes, and musical tropes that

¹³ Steven H. Cornelius, *Music of the Civil War Era* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 30.

were seen in vaudeville variety acts and blackface minstrelsy.¹⁴ The popularity of Stephen Foster's "Negro" and "southern" minstrel songs carried over into silent films, sound films, and cartoons. Foster's music came to represent the American South, and animated characters continued the blackface tradition. By 1968 eleven of these racially insensitive cartoons, known now as the "Censored Eleven," were banned from television play by United Artists.¹⁵ While their censorship was not always for the altruistic reasons that we would expect today (for example, one cartoon was censored because it portrayed black characters as angels), blackface is now so strongly associated with racism that these cartoons seem hopelessly and almost impossibly racist to a contemporary audience.

The same animated companies that used blackface and stereotyped caricatures of African Americans also created racially suggestive caricatures of other ethnicities. The banned cartoons from the "Censored Eleven" primarily featured insensitive depictions of African Americans and Asians, but these same companies didn't ban equally insensitive animations depicting Native Americans and Latinos. While both African Americans and Asian Americans were viewed as rising social powers with at least some agency and voice in the twentieth century, the idea of the "Indian" remained an anachronistic figure more akin to a mythical barbarian or caveman, a relic of the American Manifest Destiny Myth that could be used without fear of social upset. Many of the archetypal character traits typically tied to minstrelsy blacks, like wildness,

¹⁴ Nicholas Sammond. "Space Apart: Animation and the Spatial Politics of Conversion." *Film History*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Beyond Vitaphone: The Early Sound Short (2011): 268–69.

¹⁵ Joanna R. Smolko. "Southern Fried Foster: Representing Race and Place through Music in Looney Tunes Cartoons." *American Music*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Fall 2012): 345.

ignorant happiness, and broken speech patterns, found a home in Indian characters after blackface became taboo.

Yet while redface characters sometimes serve as stand-ins for minstrel caricatures, the “Indian” also has its own set of character tropes. More than any other social performance that involves pretending to be another race, the idea of “playing Indian” is reinforced by the incredibly popular theme of “becoming Indian.” In countless popular American stories white boys, white girls, white men, white women, and very, very occasionally people of different colors are not only accepted into an Indian tribe, not only become a citizen of an Indian nation, but actually, magically, become Indian.¹⁶ Being an Indian is so easy, these stories say, that anyone can do it.

Disney’s 1953 cartoon feature film *Peter Pan* is a representative example of this practice. Scottish author J. M. Barrie wrote the play *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn’t Grow Up*, in 1904 and by 1911 had adopted the stage production into the novel *Peter and Wendy* that was used as the basis for Disney’s retelling of the story. The popularity of *Peter Pan* led the story to be reinterpreted in books and comics, video games, on the stage, on the silver and television screens, and on radio. Not only has the story been retold in these different formats, but spin-offs, sequels, and prequels have continued Peter Pan’s adventures. The Darling children, Wendy, John, and Michael, personified the Neverland experience and serve as obvious stand-ins for the audience as they are taken on a magical vacation by their tour guide, Peter Pan. After Peter Pan, Wendy, John, and Michael Darling fly off to Neverland Island with the help of Tinkerbell and her pixie dust, the true adventure begins when they meet the Lost Boys,

¹⁶ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 128–153.

who have been mistakenly captured by the Piccaninny Tribe¹⁷ in the belief that the Lost Boys were responsible for taking their Chief Great Big Little Panther's daughter Tiger Lily.

(The Piccaninny Tribe's name was an interesting choice as the term "piccaninny" was actually a derogatory term for black children, much like the word papoose was used for Native children. The Piccaninny character trope, a particularly disturbing one, is often seen as the little black boy whose pants keep falling down, or the little black girl with an exposed behind. Another example of the relationship between caricatures of Natives Americans and African Americans in cartoons and children's television can be seen in the 1937 short *Little Hiawatha*, whose lead character is a cherubic Native American whose pants keep falling down.)

In *Peter Pan*, saving Tiger Lily from Hook, Smee, and the Pirates allows the children to "become Indian." Their heroic act gains the trust of Great Big Little Panther and the rest of the members of the Piccaninny Tribe. In a show of acceptance and thankfulness, the Piccaninnys perform a warrior's ceremony, presenting Peter Pan with an Indian name and a feather headdress. The ceremony continues into the song "What Makes the Red Man Red," which serves as a great lesson on what racist stereotypes are needed in order to perform in redface.

Disney's *Peter Pan* was created in a more culturally insensitive time and if this animation were made today, these racist representations would hopefully not have been included. It's easy to find racist moments like these, but the importance of making these

¹⁷ In Disney's 1953 animated feature film, the tribe name Piccaninny is never used in dialogue, but since the film is based on J. M. Barrie's previous work it is believed that the name of the tribe is the same.

comparisons to minstrelsy is to draw attention to how Native stereotyping has not, until recently, been subject to the same scrutiny that other racial stereotypes have drawn. In part, Native American stereotyping is often overlooked because our propensity to “play Indian” has caused racist stereotypes of Native Americans to become, as Sundstrom and Kim put it, part of our collective “Nationalized narratives of racism [that] make nations color-blind to racist incidents that fall beyond the scope of their public conceptions of racism.”¹⁸ The false stereotype of the Native American is so ingrained in American myth that in order to avoid singing redface we actually need to lose, or at least change, some of what we have used to define our identities as Americans. It is for this reason that I again stress that the intent of this thesis, and the process of showcasing redface and singing redface, is not to create a situation in which people feel they are being attacked, but instead to highlight how its previously ignored racially insensitive attributes have helped to create and perpetuate Native American stereotyping, just as blackface minstrelsy created and perpetuated African American stereotypes.

During their colonial expansions into North America, European nations established their presence by acquiring land and by building unequal relations through force with Native American nations and African slaves. Cultural homogenization was integral in creating the unequal balance. In *Peter Pan*, Disney’s animators created a sense of homogenization by drawing Native Americans as they were presented in American Westerns—segregated to a remote part of Neverland Island. The tribe’s camp

¹⁸ Ronald R. Sundstrom and David Haekwon Kim, “Xenophobia and Racism” *Critical Philosophy of Race*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (2014): 22.

displays tipis next to totem poles. The blending of Plains tipis decorated with Southwestern decorative emblems alongside Northwest Coast totem poles highlights the homogenization of Native American cultures.

The scene continues with Peter Pan's initiation into the Piccaninny Tribe for saving Tiger Lily. He is given the "Indian" name "Little Flying Eagle," and a warbonnet is placed on his head prompting Peter Pan to fly above the tribe. After Peter Pan lands, everyone forms a circle and sits on the ground "Indian style," as a "peace pipe" is passed around the circle. The Lost Boys and Wendy, John, and Michael are at the initiation dressed as "Indians" wearing face paint, headbands, and feathers. The youngest Darling, Michael, has removed his shirt and painted his stomach. Great Big Little Panther, the chief of the Piccaninny tribe, is presented as a tall, barrel-chested, stern man with red skin, wearing a headdress, face paint, and buckskin shirt, pants, and gloves. The other male members of the tribe are shirtless, wearing buckskin pants, loincloths, armbands, necklaces, headbands, feathers, and moccasins, playing drums without drum mallets and dancing in a circle. The women of the Piccaninny Tribe are either presented as sexual and flirtatious or as older unattractive women, preparing food and collecting firewood. All tribal members have long hair with two braids and red skin with the exception of Tiger Lily, who has been given light brown skin. When Tiger Lily stands next to her father, Great Big Little Panther, she mimics his gestures, keeping her arms crossed with her head held high, and a stern facial expression. After the song starts Tiger Lily starts to flirtatiously dance for Peter Pan on a powwow-style drum while he watches. Next Tiger Lily approaches Peter Pan and gives him an "Eskimo kiss," which turns his skin red in a blush, referencing the lyrics:

Let's go back a million years
To the very first Injun prince
He kissed a maid and starts to blush
And we've all been blushin' since

The Piccaninny men's demeanor ranges from serious to buffoonish to happy-go-lucky; they sit cross-legged with their arms folded across their chests, and they raise their right hand when they say "how." Their wide-open mouths quiver while they sing, they have huge humped noses and strong angular chins, and exaggerated facial expressions. Throughout the entire song, everyone makes mock "war calls" and when they are not playing drums they dance with weapons in their hands. Traditional Native American music and dance hold an important part in Native American cultural life, so it is inevitable that entertainers like Disney would seize upon these elements.

The initiation into becoming Native American while being accepted into Native culture is often what justifies singing redface. Another good example of "becoming Indian" is seen in Irving Berlin's musical *Annie Get Your Gun*. Annie Oakley goes through an "Indian" ritual in order to become Indian. During the ritual she repeats back phrases in Hollywood Injun English, is given a feather, and then starts dancing as the music transitions into the song "I'm an Indian Too."

Long before Peter Pan invaded the silver screen Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows introduced some of the first "Indian" dances seen by the Western world. Whites were intrigued by Native American culture, but traditional Native American dancing didn't necessarily make for a good show. In order to meet the demands of the audience, Native performers started to create a more energetic style of dancing while promoting it as a traditional Native American dance. These "Show Indians" reenacted battles, raided stagecoaches, showcased their equestrian and archery skills, and performed these

stylized dances. In 1894 footage was taken of Native American dances and labeled as Buffalo and Ghost Dances. According to the Edison film historian C. Musser, these images were actually of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show Indians¹⁹—not actual depictions of Native American dances, but rather staged versions that catered to white Americans. Yet, these were and are still frequently presented as and believed to be traditional Native American dances.

Mock “Indian” languages are also used throughout *Peter Pan*'s “What Makes the Red Man Red” scene. At the beginning, John Darling credits Chief Great Big Little Panther as giving an oration in sign language. The chief is displayed as saying something “serious” through made-up sign language. John translates the oration, which is then delivered in what Barbra A. Meek labeled Hollywood Injun English which “draws on a range of nonstandard features similar to those found in “foreigner talk” and “baby talk,” as well a formalized, ornate variety of English; all these features are used to project or evoke certain characteristics historically associated with “the White Man's Indian.”²⁰ Another form of mock “Indian” language is seen in the made-up, then translated words within the song, which tells the tale of how the first “Indian” became “red” and the reasons for the use of “how” and “ugh.”

Why does he ask you, “How?”
Why does he ask you, “How?”
Once the Injun didn't know
All the things that he know now
But the Injun, he sure learn a lot
And it's all from asking, “How?”

¹⁹ “Sioux Ghost Dance” film, Edison Manufacturing Co., 1894, on Library of Congress website. Accessed at www.loc.gov/item/00694139/

²⁰ Barbra A. Meek, “And the Injun Goes “How!”: Representations of American Indian English in White Public Space,” *Language in Society*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Feb., 2006): 93.

Hana Mana Ganda
Hana Mana Ganda
We translate for you
Hana means what mana means
And ganda means that too

When did he first say, “Ugh!”
When did he first say, “Ugh!”
In the Injun book it say
When the first brave married squaw
He gave out with a big ugh
When he saw his Mother-in-Law

What made the red man red?
What made the red man red?
Let’s go back a million years
To the very first Injun prince
He kissed a maid and start to blush
And we’ve all been blushin’ since

You’ve got it from the headman
The real true story of the red man
No matter what’s been written or said
Now you know why the red man’s red

Before discussing the use of racial slurs and stereotyping in the lyrics themselves I want to highlight the lyrics:

Hana Mana Ganda
Hana Mana Ganda
We translate for you
Hana means what mana means
And ganda means that too

Continuing the use of made-up, mock “Indian” languages the words “Hana,” “Mana,” and “Ganda” are also supposed to reference words spoken in “Indian,” similar to the uses of “Ugh” and “How.” The song suggests that “Hana,” “Mana,” and “Ganda” all have the same definition, which the first “Injun” learned from asking “How.” We are not given a definition of these words, but the suggestion that “Indian” languages lack

sophistication is clear. “Hana,” “Mana,” and “Ganda” are also used throughout the song as the “chant” melody. While traditional Native American songs can typically use vocables, “Hana,” “Mana,” and “Ganda” are not found in any traditional Native American music.

Since *Peter Pan* is a Disney movie whose intended audience was not Native Americans, it’s understandable that its music is not authentic. However, not only is the music not authentic, musical elements heard in its songs are still used today and thought of as “Indian” music. For example, the most frequently used musical attribute associated as “Indian” music, the drumbeat ONE two three four, is also one of the most inauthentic. The accented beat ONE followed by softer beats two, three, and four is not found in any traditional Native American music.^{21 22 23} Not only is this drumbeat played throughout the scene, the inaccurate drumbeat is used as the transition material to change from the oration into the song itself. Traditional Native American music across North America does use drums in varying sizing and made from different materials. In many movies and cartoons “Indians” are seen playing drums with their hands, but traditionally they would use a drum mallet with the types of drums most often seen.

As I mentioned before, Disney’s 1953 “What Makes the Red Man Red” does not hold up to our current standards. While I am not condoning the stereotyping portrayed in the movie, it is good to understand the history of race relations in the United States

²¹ Christina Giacona. “A Tribe Called Red Remixes Sonic Stereotypes,” *Sounding Out!* (2014): Accessed at <http://soundstudiesblog.com/2014/02/13/a-tribe-called-red-remixes-sonic-stereotypes/>

²² Alison Owings. *Indian Voices: Listening to Native Americans*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011., xviii

²³ David William Samuels. *Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity on the San Carlos Apache Reservation*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004., 259–60 and 294–94.

and how they have shifted seismically in just a single lifetime. In 1953 “separate but equal” was still the law of the land; it wasn’t until the next year that *Brown v. Board of Education* would end school segregation. Only after another ten years had passed would Martin Luther King, Jr., deliver his “I Have a Dream” speech, in 1963. The landmark Civil Rights Act wasn’t passed until 1964, and the American Indian Movement wasn’t founded until 1968. With this thesis I am hoping to shed light on how cultural inauthenticity has led to the stereotyping of Native Americans. Knowing that people are more accepting today and the entertainment industry has drastically improved its portrayal of Native Americans, would it be fair to compare music such as “What Makes the Red Man Red” to music since 1953? Not only will the music discussed in the rest of this book share attributes with blackface minstrelsy music, but some music that continues to be performed today can only be categorized as singing redface.

Chapter 2: Racial Antipathy

When it comes to Native American history, even the most trusted sources often present Westernized ideologies that have been told so often over the past few centuries that they are considered fact. With so much inauthentic and misrepresented information in circulation regarding Native Americans, how are we supposed to know what is true? Misunderstanding and cultural confusion seem unavoidable when the perpetuation of Native culture has been heavily influenced by a cultural hegemony imparted by the entertainment industry, governmental affairs, and the continual use of misinformation.

In order to examine a few examples of this cultural confusion about Native Americans still prevalent in American society, picture an American Indian person and describe what he or she looks like. Describe his or her clothing, hair, posture, body movements, gestures, and facial expressions. What does it sound like when he or she talks? What activities would he or she perform? Lastly, imagine a soundtrack to these activities: what does this background music sound like? For anyone who has ever played “Cowboys and Indians,” performed in a live production of *Peter Pan*, participated in a re-creation of the “first Thanksgiving,” or watched a western, these questions should have conjured up some powerful imagery.

If you pictured a male Native American, your responses may have gone something like this: You saw a stoic, stern man with long, dark hair in two braids, maybe even on a horse, wearing a feather headdress and set against an outdoor landscape. His serious expression reveals little emotion, but he is generally peaceful or maybe even spiritual. This brave warrior not only protects his people, but also his land. His clothing is limited, exposing most of his body. The light brown or tan buckskin

chaps or breechcloth he wears might be adorned with fringe. You might have also pictured him wearing “war paint,” a beaded breastplate, or feathers. Or perhaps you imagined more of a “savage” Native American rather than this “brave warrior.” The “savage” stereotype was heavily used in the old westerns featuring John Wayne, in which Native Americans stood in the way of land and resources that should have been available for the “true Americans.” The “savage” stereotype presented Native Americans as a group of unsophisticated, barbarous raiders who attacked stagecoaches on horseback as travelers passed by. This presentation exploits the racist agenda that claims the average Native American is a lawless villain who should be stopped. The attitude behind the famous words often credited to Philip Henry Sheridan (1831–1888)—“The only good Indian is a dead Indian”—fueled the violence of the American Indian Wars and sums up the manifest destiny–driven biases against Native Americans found in many westerns in the 1940s and ’50s.

These archetypal racial stereotypes, along with those mentioned in the previous chapter, became the bases for the stock characterizations used in singing redface. The stock ethnic character can also be seen in the blackface characters “Jim Crow” and “Zip Coon” of minstrel shows. In the nineteenth century, minstrelsy was not just a form of popular entertainment, but also a political and cultural force. The popularity of minstrel songs commonly known as “coon songs” utilized American infatuation with African American culture to further a privileged agenda of white superiority. The song “Jump Jim Crow,” the building block of early minstrelsy, created the first minstrel stock character loosely based off the mythical West African trickster

figure Jim Crow.²⁴ More importantly, however, Jim Crow increasingly became the image of black culture for white audiences. In fact, Jim Crow became such a cultural force that segregation laws, laws that were specifically created to draw a distinction between people of white skin and people of black skin, came to be called Jim Crow laws. In the 19th century Jim Crow had come to be a pejorative term that could be applied to any black person, like “coon” or “darky”, and it is telling that a stereotype created to redefine a race of people would then be used as a word applied to both people and laws that also attempted the same distinction.

As discussed in the previous chapter, stereotypes are more than just lazy storytelling. When a racial, gender, class, or any other group stereotype is performed through art the performance acquires the illusion of speaking for all members of that group. Just as Jim Crow songs were used for more than a hundred years to define how white Americans thought of black Americans, stereotypes of Native Americans in film, literature, art, and music have shaped how non-Natives imagine their Native American neighbors in contemporary America. Racial stereotyping and both playing and singing redface attempt and sadly often succeed at being false ambassadors for entire groups of people with rich and varied cultures and personalities. In this chapter we will examine how terms like “Indian giver” and stereotypes like the “drunken Indian” and “Hollywood Injun” do more than just act as cultural tropes; every performance of negatively stereotyped Native American characters acts as another cultural smear

²⁴ Johnson, Stephen. "Introduction: The Persistence of Blackface and the Minstrel Tradition." In *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012., 5–6.

campaign and works against Native Americans being considered as individuals with unique cultures, personalities, and interactions with society.

Indian Giver

Linguist John Russell Bartlett's *Dictionary of Americanisms* (1849–1877) defines an “Indian giver” as “when an Indian gives anything, he expects an equivalent in return, or that the same thing may be given back to him. This term is applied by children in New York and the vicinity to a child who, after having given away a thing, wishes to have it back again.”²⁵ I have strong memories of elementary school when this same situation took place. In grade school it usually only pertained to items such as crayons and markers, but nonetheless I remember the accusations that my less-than-giving classmate was an “Indian giver.” An “Indian giver” was the opposite of charitable—worse, in fact, than someone who would not give anything to others at all. The term was a defamation of character—if you became known as an “Indian giver,” your peers would distrust you.

We all use words and phrases on a daily basis without considering their origin, but in the case of the saying “Indian giver,” the perpetuation of a cultural misconception first written about in the journals of Lewis and Clark has shaped the way we view Native American culture.²⁶ Lewis and Clark, members of a society that practically worshipped the idea of trade and economy, misunderstood a series of financial

²⁵ John Russell Bartlett, *Dictionary of Americanisms*, reproduced on the “Voices from 19th–Century America” website, copyright 1999–2015 by Pat Pflieger. Accessed at <http://www.merrycoz.org/voices/bartlett/AMER08.HTM#i>

²⁶ Lakshmi Gandhi, “The History Behind The Phrase ‘Don’t Be An Indian Giver,’” *National Public Radio*, September 02, 2013. Accessed at <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/09/02/217295339/the-history-behind-the-phrase-dont-be-an-indian-giver>

transactions with Native Americans and assumed that they were being given gifts. Their surprise at being asked to give something in return resulted in the negative connotation—and rather petulant tone—associated with the phrase “Indian giver.” In Western society, where a promise can be established with a simple handshake, the act of going back on a promise speaks loudly about one’s character. It’s hypocritical as a society today to have such a great knowledge of etymology—to the point that we avoid all semblance of racism, whenever possible—and yet there are words with express negative connotations about specific classes of people that we have yet to purge from our lexicon. These are usually the words that over time define the very way we interact and view entire groups of people.

In the 1990s, when I was attending high school in Los Angeles, students referred to anything disliked or “lame” as “gay.” When a teacher assigned homework over the weekend, it was considered “gay.” If a person did something that was viewed as disgraceful, then he or she, as a person, was “gay.” “That’s gay” might have been the most popular phrase at the time for my age group used to define anything frustrating, annoying, or unwanted. This concept of “gay” as a general derogatory term derived its meaning from the idea that any action that might be viewed as homosexual endangered the ability to act as a privileged class for members of our society.

Today, the phrase “that’s gay” has not left the schoolyard lexicon through luck or time, but by means of thousands upon thousands of awkward conversations in which the offended party, gay or not, explained why this phrase is hurtful. While it’s extremely easy to pick up a term like “that’s gay” without understanding the underlying social meanings of the term, refusing to use an offensive term after having learned it

requires some understanding and empathy with the offended class of people. Popular media plays a role in teaching these concepts and has been as heavily influential in removing racist terminology as it was in solidifying it. The same understanding of the racist underpinnings of the term “Indian giver” is currently occurring in our society.

One of my favorite examples of popular media drawing attention to the racist nature of the term “Indian giver” comes from episode six of the fourth season of the TV show *Psych*, first aired in 2009. In “Bollywood Homicide” the main character, Shawn, is speaking to a colleague at a Hindu Indian Festival of Colors about a truce that is broken moments after it is created.

Lassiter: Truce over.

Shawn: You can’t take back a truce, Lassie!

Lassiter: You coming with me or not?

Shawn: No, Raj wouldn’t cheat on his taxes, much less his girlfriend.

Lassiter: I’ll take that as a no.

Shawn: Gus, tell him, you can’t take back a truce. Indian giver! Ohhhh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no—I meant to insult an entirely different group of Indians. Sorry about that.²⁷

As Shawn yells the accusation of “Indian giver,” dozens of shocked Indian guests turn to look at him in surprise, and he is forced to explain that he meant to use a racially charged term that was actually not associated with them but with an entirely different group of people. This small addition to the script quickly and efficiently showcases the blatant racism of the term by both putting it in a context in which it

²⁷ Steve Franks and Anupam Nigam, “Bollywood Homicide,” *Psych*. Season 4, Episode 6, September 18, 2009.

would be unacceptable to use it and then further drawing attention to the way in which Shawn attempts to qualify his use of the term by implying that since the Indians around him are not the subject of his racist term, they should not be offended.

So, even though one might imply that when someone is referred to as an “Indian giver” they are not in any way referring to Native American history or culture, it becomes clear that it is impossible to take the Indian out of the phrase “Indian giver.” In fact, the word Indian is where the negative meaning comes from— the word “giver” is itself a primarily positive term. Therefore, it is the stereotyped view of Indian untrustworthiness that actually gives the term its meaning. Despite the clearly racist underpinnings of the term, many songs that incorporate the phrase “Indian giver” actually draw attention to the association of the saying with Native Americans rather than try to hide it. A handful of these songs are examined here to help define the idea of “singing redface”; the sentiment of each song is similar—they refer to something that was given and then unfairly taken away.

Annette Funicello

The former Mouseketeer, actress, and singer Annette Funicello (usually referred to by just her first name) was discovered by Walt Disney at the young age of twelve. Annette was beloved by fans and families as parents watched her grow up along with their children. She was an American sweetheart, known for providing wholesome entertainment for the entire family. Much like Hannah Montana today, Annette was a girl-next-door teen idol with an honest smile and a sincere demeanor. In 1961 Buena Vista Records (Walt Disney’s record label) released a single by Annette with the Up

Beats. The single included the songs “Indian Giver” and “Mama Rosa (Where’s the Spumoni)” on the A and B sides respectively.

“Indian Giver” is about a girl who was “given” the heart of a man, who later took his heart back (presumably he did not love her anymore). The extremely catchy song is characteristic of early 1960s pop songs. It is upbeat, in common time, accentuates beats two and four but highlights important information on beat one, includes supporting singers often heard in early Motown records, and features a backup band with brass, piano, electric guitar, bass guitar, drums, and percussion. This song is particularly distinctive for its use of text highlighting through instrumental cues, silences, musical cadences, and different voice and language use. To fully explore the use of “singing redface” in Annette’s “Indian Giver” I analyze not only the song’s lyrics, but also its performer’s persona, record label, musical genre, album artwork, instrumental music, text, text setting, and vocals. The text style of the lyrics printed below indicate important elements: text in *italic* type is accentuated by a musical cue, text that is underlined is highlighted by silence in the accompaniment, and text in **boldface** refers to Native Americans or Native American culture.

Song: “Indian Giver”

Year: 1961

Label: Buena Vista Records

Artist: Annette with the Up Beats

Composers: Schroeder, Weil, and Gold

Indian giver

Indian giver

You’re just an Indian giver, Indian giver

That’s what you are.

You said I’d be your **pretty little squaw**

And in my arms you’d stay.

You gave me all your sweet sweet kissin'
Then you took your lips *away*.

You're just an Indian giver
And you think it's smart [**honest injun**].
Hey Mr. Indian Giver, Indian Giver
Give me back your heart.

Hey Mr. Indian Giver, Indian Giver
Give me back your heart.

You're just an Indian Giver, Indian Giver, Indian Giver
You *gave* me lots of trinkets
To *you* it's all a game
Your promise to be faithful—
What heap big smoke [heap big]—*no flame*

Indian giver
Indian giver

You're just an Indian giver
And you think it's *smart*.
Hey Mr. Indian Giver, Indian Giver
Give me back your heart.
[Indian giver, Indian giver]

I'm on the **warpath**
Betcha that I am
But when the moon is bright
Just tiptoe to my little tipi
I'll be there at nine *tonight*

Don't be an Indian giver
Say we'll never part [**honest injun**].
Hey Mr. Indian Giver, Indian Giver
Give me back your heart.
Hey Mr. *Indian Giver*
Give me back your heart
Hey Mr. *Indian Giver*
Give me back your heart
Hey Mr. *Indian Giver*
Give me back your heart

Accents, Sounds, and Silences

A songwriter or composer can draw attention to a specific section of music in several different ways. Some of the most commonly used techniques are the addition of a new instrument or instruments, the placement of important text elements in combination with a cadence or on the downbeat of the measure, a change in rhythm or of the dynamic level, the variation of melodic register, the upward or downward leading of melodic material, and the elimination of sound. In this song, text is most often highlighted by the elimination of the background music, placing extra importance on the text while at the same time creating musical interest.

Popular songs are usually composed of three melodic sections: a verse, a chorus, and a bridge or break. The melodies of the verse and chorus often repeat several times throughout the song, with the text of the verse changing. The verse is where the story is told and action unfolds. It is where we are introduced to the situation, find out what happens, and discover specifics. While listening we become interested to find out what has happened and if this situation has ever pertained to us—it is for this reason that clarity of understanding, or verbocentricity, is especially important in the verse.²⁸ The chorus explains the feeling portrayed by the artist and acts as an encapsulation of the theme of the entire song. Repeated multiple times, each time the meaning of the chorus is clarified further by the information given in the preceding verse.

The beginning of Annette's "Indian Giver" starts out by highlighting the name of the song and the source of the song's conflict with the use of the female backup singers and a Chinese-style tam-tam or gong-like instrument. Directly before the words

²⁸ Michel Chion and Claudia Gorbman. *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. 6

“Indian giver” are sung, the gong is struck and the backup singers change their sound from “oooo” (sung before the text) to “ahhh” directly at the same time that the sound “In” at the beginning of the phrase “Indian giver” is heard. This vocal and instrumental combination is used twice in the entire song—once at the beginning and once when the song modulates. After the highlighted use of the phrase “Indian giver” is sung twice, Annette places blame on the man she is referring to as an “Indian giver” by boldly singing “That’s what you are.” This statement is emphasized by the lack of instrumental accompaniment on the phrase.

Accompanimental silence is employed not only to help define an “Indian giver,” but also to help explain why the man in this story is being accused of “being one.” In the first verse Annette sings, “You said I’d be your **pretty little squaw** and in my arms you’d stay. You gave me all your sweet sweet kissin’ then you took your lips *away*.” The underlined words in this verse are all highlighted by the lack of accompaniment and the words “gave,” “sweet sweet kissin’,” and “took” showcase what was given to Annette, and then taken away. The word *away* is highlighted in a different manner; the singer stretches out the word for almost the entire measure with the *way* portion of the word *away* being placed directly on a downbeat. The other verses employ similar accompanimental silence that directs our understanding of the narrative. What is important to note is that the musically accentuated words define, provide examples of, and support the singer’s claims of the antagonist being an “Indian giver” and reinforce how those claims are intertwined with Native American culture. The use of a fictional Native American variety of English—otherwise known as “Hollywood Injun English” or “Tonto Speak”—in the song represents a non-Native person’s envisioning of

American Indian English. “Most Americans can readily produce such phrases as “Me smoke-um peacepipe” and “How!” accompanied by a raised hand, or more figurative phrases such as “many moons” and “happy hunting ground.””²⁹

In the song, the female vocal is contrasted with a male vocal in Hollywood Injun English that refers to the male singer as an “honest Injun.” The male voice part is sung as if speaking: low and stern while ploddingly stretching out the words. If spoken, the exaggerated words would be produced even more slowly, but the same effect is achieved. The “honest Injun” only sings a few lines: the phrases “honest Injun,” “heap big,” and “Indian giver.” Each phrase is a two-word noun phrase lacking a tensed verb. The female vocal “What heap big smoke” precedes the male vocal phrase “heap big.” Here the words are moved out of standard English order, indicating an unsophisticated, “foreigner” syntax, but the meaning is still clear. By replacing the subject pronoun with an object pronoun Hollywood Injun English mimics the characteristics of English spoken by young children.³⁰ Like other forms of mock languages, Hollywood Injun English depicts the speaker (in this case, the male singer) as ignorant, immature, and uncivilized. Even though he only sings a few lines, those lines highlight elements in Indian culture—as imagined by white onlookers—as justification for racial antipathy. The fact that the male singer calls himself an “honest Injun” suggests one of two things: that the male singer is lying, or that even an “honest Injun” can’t help but be an “Indian giver” due to his ignorant, uncivilized nature.

²⁹ Barbra A. Meek, “And the Injun Goes “How!”: Representations of American Indian English in White Public Space,” *Language in Society*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Feb., 2006), 96.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 104.

Like many singing-redface songs, racial slurs are used to racially reference the characters in the story. I am not suggesting that the songwriters or performers viewed terms like “Indian giver,” “Injun,” and “squaw” as slurs, but it is important to understand that language changes meaning and that many of these pejoratives have been protested against for generations. While the main defense of phrases that negatively portray societal groups—such as “that’s gay” and “Indian giver”—is that the racial or societal association is no longer present in the meaning of the word, this is refuted by the fact that in many songs that use the term “Indian giver,” the Indian giver is clearly portrayed in both musical composition and lyric storytelling as a stereotyped Indian character.

In the United States before the Civil War whites frequently used racial slurs to distinguish between races. Those slurs were not viewed as racial slurs but rather as distinguishing terminology since other ethnicities were viewed as secondary human beings. However, after the Civil War America began a cultural conversation that changed the way people viewed and discussed race.³¹ In our current society one overarching viewpoint is that “true” racism is a thing of the past. In her book *The Everyday Language of White Racism*, anthropologist and linguist Jane H. Hill looks into how speech acts have continued to promote racist ideologies even in our contemporary “color-blind” society. In an era in which being called a “racist” is one of the most harmful and painful verbal attacks possible, people mask their racism with such qualifiers as, “I’m not racist, but . . .,” “Bless his or her heart,” and “With no

³¹ Eduardo Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003. 54–55.

disrespect, . . .” An example of this can be seen in the 2003 and 2004 debates over the name of and the possible renaming of an Arizona mountain called Squaw Peak; this issue became the focus of Hill’s research into how ordinary people use and react to slurs and racist comments.³²

Native American activists have led protests against the use of the word “squaw” since the late 1960s. Arguments have been made that “squaw” is derived from the Algonquian language family to refer to a young woman while others believe that “squaw” referred to female genitalia.³³ Hill proposes that the word “squaw” actually derived from the pseudo-scientific language developed by white Europeans to categorize Native American genders and age groups in terms of “animal species.” Words such as “buck,” “squaw,” and “papoose” were used to label Native American men, women, and children.³⁴ Over time these terms developed negative connotations that continue the demotion of Native American women as “less than”—the equivalence, basically, of calling someone a “bitch.”³⁵ By the 1850s the word “squaw” was already considered a racial slur. With this in mind, changing the word in the name of Arizona’s Squaw Peak seems as if it would not have received a substantial amount of backlash, but in fact many people either didn’t see the need for a name change or didn’t understand how the word could be offensive. Others saw the movement to change the name as an act by the Arizona government to draw more Native American votes during

³² Jane H. Hill, *The Everyday Language of White Racism* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 58.

³³ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

an election year, while still others expressed blatantly distrust of Native Americans and minorities and thought the name change should be stopped.

From April 2003 to January 2004 the *Arizona Republic* ran an online message board for public discussion of the topic. From the January 2004 message board Hill collected 123 messages that responded to the editor's posted question, "Should Squaw Peak be renamed in honor of fallen soldier Lori Piestewa? Should the name 'Piestewa' go away entirely?"³⁶ Generally the signed letters in response to this question were in favor of the name change (fifty-six in favor and thirty-six against), but the anonymous message board posts revealed a different story. For every person who agreed with the name change, three people disagreed. Hill found that the anonymity of the message board not only provided a platform through which people proudly disagreed, but also felt free to express racist viewpoints.³⁷ On April 16, 2003, at 9:33 p.m., an anonymous writer posted:

If Indians feel that they need politicians to kiss their ass, then they should find another country to live in. Renaming Squaw Peak "Piestewa Peak" is a slap at all the non-Indian men and women who served. And the Indians should take the Hispanics with them. They should all go to Mexico and stay there.³⁸

While this is not the sentiment of everyone who posted, some messages did negatively scold posters who supported the name change by saying those posters were "overly sensitive white-hating racist[s]."³⁹ The anonymity of the Internet allowed people to express thoughts that would be characterized as racist in person—posters were able to make these comments without having to use the qualifiers that are usually used in face-

³⁶ Ibid., 61.

³⁷ Ibid., 62.

³⁸ Ibid., 66.

³⁹ Ibid., 67.

to-face conversation. As people have learned to allow and accept racial slurs when presented with these “acceptable” qualifiers, stereotyping has become one of the main justifications for discrimination.

Squaws on the Warpath

Just as the phrase “Indian giver” has found its way into popular American music, so too has the word “squaw.” Loretta Lynn’s 1968 LP *Your Squaw Is on the Warpath* on Decca records, and its title track of the same name, doesn’t utilize the stereotypically native-esque sounds found in “Indian Giver,” but through the album’s lyrics and especially its artwork Lynn is definitely “singing redface.” Allmusic reviewer Chris Woodstra describes Lynn’s album cover as a “one of the classical politically incorrect album covers—which depicts Loretta as a sexy, tomahawk wielding Native American.”⁴⁰ Lynn’s album reached third place in the United States on Billboard’s Country Singles chart in 1968 and second for Country Albums in 1969. In the lyrics listed below, the words that reference Native American culture are in **boldface**; words that are musically accentuated are in *italic* type.

Song: “Your Squaw Is on the Warpath”

Year: 1968

Label: Decca Records

Artist: Loretta Lynn

Composer: Loretta Lynn

Well your pet name for me is **Squaw**
When you come home a-drinkin’ and can barely crawl
And all that lovin’ on me won’t make things right

Well you’re leavin’ me at home to keep the **tipi** clean
A-six **papooses** to break and wean

⁴⁰ Chris Woodstra, “Review” *AllMusic*. Accessed at <http://www.allmusic.com/album/your-squaw-is-on-the-warpath-mw0000864145>

Well, your *squaw* is on the *warpath* tonight

Well I found out, a-**big brave chief**
The game you were huntin' for ain't beef
Get offa my huntin' grounds and get outta my sight

This-a **war dance** I'm doin' means I'm fightin' mad
You don't need no more of what you've already had
Your *squaw* is on the *warpath* tonight

Well-a that **fire water** that a you've been drinkin'
Makes you feel bigger but **chief** you're shrinkin'
Since you've been on that love makin' diet

Now don't hand me that old **peace pipe**
There ain't no *pipe* can settle this *fight*
Your *squaw* is on the *warpath* tonight

Well I found out a-**big brave chief**
The game you're a hunting for ain't beef
Get offa my huntin' grounds and get outta my sight

This-a **war dance** I'm doin' means I'm fightin' mad
You don't need no more of what you've already had
Your *squaw* is on the *warpath* tonight

Yeah, your *squaw* is on the *warpath* tonight

The song “Your Squaw Is on the Warpath,” an obvious metaphor for the universals of bad relationships, is, if taken literally, about a drunken Indian who comes home barely able to crawl after trying to pick up women. Feeling resentful and frustrated, his wife, whom he lovingly calls “Squaw,” is left at home to clean the “tipi” and raise their “six papooses.” She becomes uncontrollable with rage and “goes on the warpath.” Throughout the song other references to peace pipes, war dances, and “big brave chief” create a storyline interwoven with stereotypical aspects of Native American culture. The song not only creates racial antipathy toward the drunken, cheating, and disrespectful chief that Loretta belittles by sarcastically calling him a “big

brave chief,” but also paints the female “squaw” as an uncontrollable, hysterical Native woman able to go on the “warpath” at any moment.

Why would the lyricist choose to paint a scene of uncivilized, uncontrolled behavior and associate it with Native Americans? The two characters, a drunken, lecherous, weak-willed “chief” and a cuckolded, vengeful Native mother with six “papooses,” draw strongly from country music’s other low-class stereotype: “white trash.” But, more importantly, the threatened violence and savage, uncontrollable anger present in these two characters suggests that the idea of the “savage Indian” is intrinsic to setting the scene of domestic instability and uncivilized behavior. The “big chief” and his relationship with his “squaw” fulfill a character role similar to Stephen Johnson’s description of the blackface clown: “out of control, angrily inept, and unable to fit into a “white” society.”⁴¹

The dysfunctional relationship theme of “Your Squaw Is on the Warpath” also appears in Funicello’s “Indian Giver.” However, instead of “going on the warpath” because of the Indian giver’s actions, the female vocalist in “Indian Giver” suggests she will stop being “warlike” after the moon is full; she intimates that the Indian giver should then sneak into her tipi—thus pairing another low-class stereotype, the “easy woman” with the allure of exoticism’s sexual exploitation.

⁴¹ Stephen Johnson, "Introduction: The Persistence of Blackface and the Minstrel Tradition." In *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012., 7

“Indian Giver” in 2014

It would be unfair to critique American society today as if it had produced Annette Funicello’s 1961 “Indian Giver” or Loretta Lynn’s 1968 “Your Squaw Is on the Warpath.” While Annette had a successful Hollywood career, “Indian Giver” didn’t reach a top Billboard ranking in the United States, and Disney never rereleased the song in a digital format. The phrase “Indian giver” could be viewed as just a racial slur of the past. But is it? In the summer of 2014 I was driving from Norman, Oklahoma, to Ada, Oklahoma. The hour-and-a-half, sixty-three-mile drive usually went by pretty quickly as I listened to the radio. One station I frequently landed on was “’60s on 6.” I grew up obsessed with the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Simon and Garfunkel, Janis Joplin, the Doors, and Jimi Hendrix, and the station continually played songs I knew and loved, squeezed between other songs from the ’60s that never made it to my computer playlists. As I was driving to Ada a song by 1910 Fruitgum Company came on the radio. I had never heard this song before, and am not sure if I had ever heard of 1910 Fruitgum Company before then. The 1969 song incorporated all the sounds of popular bubble gum music in the sixties—the drums and the bass kept the music driving; the electric guitar smoothly transitioned from section to section with a simple, yet interesting two-note riff; the electric keyboard added interest; and the melody was catchy. The song was about a man reminiscing about a former love and the beautiful things she used to say to and promise him. Halfway through the song I was surprised that I hadn’t heard it before. Then the music softened and the instrumentalists started strumming and playing a steady eight-note pattern drawing me into the chorus . . .

Indian giver
Indian giver
You took your love away from me

Indian giver
Indian giver
Took back the love you gave to me

I was shocked! I was driving down Interstate 35 and without even knowing it I had taken my foot off the gas pedal and was slowing down drastically. Cars behind me in the fast lane were honking and swerving around me. There is nothing more I could say than I was stunned.

As soon as I got home I looked up the band and the song. “Indian Giver” by 1910 Fruitgum Company had been a hit! The song was written by Bobby Bloom, Ritchie Cordell, and Bo Gentry and in 1969 reached the number five spot on the Billboard Hot 100 songs; it stayed on the chart for thirteen weeks. The song also ranked in other countries—number three in Canada, number four in Australia, and even number one in South Africa. I even found a video of the band playing the song live in 2012 at B.B. King’s Blues Club & Grill in NYC, and in 2001 Buddha Records released it on a remastered best of 1910 Fruitgum Company album. The song seemed to be everywhere.

As I read through the lyrics, the song seemed to be nothing more than the story of a begrudgingly quixotic man trying to place blame for a relationship gone wrong—a story line that has been told over and over again. Other than the use of the phrase “Indian giver,” there seemed to be no reference to Native Americans or Native culture. Nothing in the song suggested singing redface. While offense can be taken from the use of the phrase “Indian giver” in the chorus, the band didn’t seem to be taking on Native personas until I saw the cover of the album. There the entire band appears costumed as “Indians”—smoking cigars, wearing headdresses or headbands, and dressed in buckskin. In the center of the cover, a sexy female “Indian” in a dress with a high skirt

line shows most of her leg. While the music and lyrics of the song might not have seemed to depict Native culture in any way, the 1910 Fruitgum Company album cover strongly suggests that the band and its promoters were aware that the phrase “Indian giver” *is* reflective of Native culture.

Just as with Funicello’s “Indian Giver,” 1910 Fruitgum Company’s song was released in the 1960s; the phrase “Indian giver” in many respects has since then mercifully gone out of fashion. How many people today have even heard this song? That said, in 1988 the Ramones released a cover of the 1910 Fruitgum Company song as a bonus track to their *Ramones Mania* album; in 1993 Joan Jett released her own version of the song; and in 1997 Spencer Davis covered the same exact song on his *Keep on Running* album. “Indian Giver” seemed to have taken on a life of its own—and so had the saying; these covers of the 1910 Fruitgum Company song aren’t the only ones to use the phrase.

In 1957 Tony Perkins recorded a song titled “Indian Giver” that doesn’t obviously reference Native culture in the lyrics, but the song starts and ends with melodic material stereotypical of supposed Native American music. In 1961 Bobby Curtola also recorded a song titled “Indian Giver,” recounting the same old broken-heart scenario, but Curtola’s song starts with an angular plodding violin melody followed by vaguely “Indian”-sounding singing that is supported by drums beating in a stereotypically Hollywood “Indian” drum pattern: ONE two three four, ONE two three four. Furthermore, the lyrics of the chorus are:

(It was so right) You Indian giver
(It was so right) You Indian giver
(Just wait and see) You’d be alone and so lonely
In your little heartbreak tipi

The parallel drawn between the phrase “Indian giver” and Native culture is glaring, not only by the use of fake “Indian”-sounding music, but also by drawing a connection between an “Indian giver” and that person being stuck in a “heartbreak tipi.”

In researching music for this chapter I came across a number of songs that either were titled “Indian Giver” or that used the phrase within the song. While a good majority of these songs do not necessarily use elements of singing redface, cultural confusion is still clearly visible in them. On December 28, 2014, I used the phrase “Indian Giver” in the iTunes search engine to see what songs would come up in my search. My search revealed 142 different songs that matched the search phrase. I found songs titled “Indian Giver” in genres ranging from country, hip-hop, jazz, blues, rock, pop, electronica, and instrumental, to metal. These pieces had been released between the 1950s and 2014. I also found albums titled “Indian Giver” and even a band with the name “The Indian Givers.” In 2011 another band by the name “IndianGiver” entered the indie music scene in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The majority of these songs dealt with the theme of a failed relationship like the song “Indian Giver” from the 2014 album *I’m Okay* recorded by the Shoe (Jena Malone), while some were about gifts that had been taken back, such as the 1998 Squirrel Nut Zippers’s Christmas song. Many of the songs available in iTunes were published in the 1950s and 1960s at a time when the world was infatuated with Native culture and also generally more culturally insensitive, but this term has continued to remain in our cultural lexicon long past its expiration date.

From Singing Redface to Playing Cowboys and Indians

Many of our daily life experiences we cast in light of what is good or bad, or right or wrong. When we watch movies we identify who was the hero and understand the qualities that make a villain. Even though we don't want a movie to be predictable, we believe the hero should always prevail. When we play games we declare one person or one team to be the winner. In order to make these distinctions we re-create the narrative of the good guy versus the bad guy. The childhood role-playing game "Cowboys and Indians" creates this same dichotomy, as the "Cowboys" who are protecting Americans from the "Indians" are the heroes who defeat their savage enemies. When I was growing up, everyone wanted to be a Cowboy, not an Indian. Young boys acted out scenes from their favorite westerns as they chased, shot, and captured the "Indians." Is it any surprise that the negative term "Indian giver" has remained in our lexicon considering the villainous roles that Indians are stereotyped into in our childhood games and Western films?

While role-playing games allow for the development of imagination and teach children how to be creative, the game "Cowboys and Indians" teaches children about white superiority and that Native Americans are villains. It is the continuation of a post-colonialist United States idea that justified the forced removal of Native Americans from the southeastern United States to west of the Mississippi River on the Trail of Tears, the deportation of the Navajo people at gunpoint from their land in Arizona to eastern New Mexico on the Long Walk, and the enslavement and genocide of Native Americans from California missions. John Wayne showed his viewership that people should hate "Indians." His audience saw him as a "true American" and categorized his opposition—Native Americans—as the other. Native Americans were the ones who

stopped the “true cowboy Americans” from exploring their lands and settling their own country.⁴²

In the documentary *Reel Injun*, Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond explores misunderstandings of Native American culture presented in cinema. He interviews several important directors, activists, actors, and writers about the creation of the “Hollywood Injun” and how these presentations of Native Americans formed a popular image of “Native” culture. Jesse Wentz, an Ojibway film critic for CBC radio, is quoted as saying, “When you’re kids and you’re trying to play Cowboys and Indians, and if you’re an Indian kid—well, doesn’t that mean you’re going to lose all the time?” Oglala Lakota activist Russell Means commented in the documentary that as a child he knew that every Saturday he was going to get into a fight, because he was the “Indian” for the “Cowboys” to attack.⁴³

Perhaps you think “Cowboys and Indians” is an outdated game that is no longer played, but “Cowboys and Indians” has become a popular theme of parties for toddlers through college students. When I searched the Internet for “cowboys and Indians parties,” the second, third, and fourth links were to “Cowboys and Indians party ideas on Pinterest.” Featuring 178 different pins, the website offered ideas for constructing headdresses, bows and arrows, tipis, buckskin-like dresses, Indian-themed party favors, and party snacks that were cowboy- and Indian- inspired. The fifth search link directed me to Party City’s website and their “Cowboy and Indian Costumes.” There was a huge selection of both cowboy and Indian costumes available for women and men. The

⁴² Neil Diamond, director, *Reel Injun: On the Trail of the Hollywood Indian* (Montreal, Canada: Rezolution Pictures, 2009).

⁴³ Ibid.

website included many supposedly Native accessories labeled as “Native American Peace Pipe,” “Native American Beaded Chest Piece,” “Native American Choker,” “Native American Beaded Armband,” “Native American Headband,” “Dreamcatcher Feather Headband,” “Native American Headdress,” and “Native American Warrior Wig.” These same types of items are easily found on Amazon.com, as well.

For white Americans, it can seem overwhelming to continually be told certain ideologies are racist and certain words are now considered racial slurs. Things like “dressing up” as “Indians” is suggested as a way of “learning” about Native American cultures, just as creating “Indian music” by re-creating traditional songs has become an excuse to continue singing redface. Just as with blackface, where many of its most fervent audiences were located in the northern parts of the United States and against slavery, people who enjoy singing redface are often seemingly understanding people who want to learn about Native culture. I have heard people argue that as a society we are becoming too “politically correct” and too “obsessed” with calling people out as racists, and that this actually hinders any ability to have discussions pertaining to race.

Even though American society now claims to be “color-blind,” or “post-racial,” white Americans have a long history of using racial slurs and stereotypes as qualifiers. The use of racial slurs echoes the pre-Civil War mentality of viewing other ethnicities as second-class citizens. The mindset of “if I don’t find it offensive, then it must not be” helps perpetuate the same view racial inequalities of the past. By continuing to use racial slurs such as “squaw,” “redskin,” and “Indian giver,” a speaker shows that, in his or her view, not all people are equal and some of the pre-Civil War racist ideologies are insidiously harbored in our modern, supposedly color-blind society.

Conclusion

Despite continued attempts to justify the use of terms such as “Indian giver,” the practice of playing and singing redface, and other white misappropriations of Native American culture, something that cannot be denied is this: the only negative part of the term Indian giver is the word “Indian.” Without it, a giver is a purely positive word associated with generosity and goodwill. There is no negative connotation associated with the usual use of the term “giver.” Therefore, it is apparent that the negative connotation of the term “Indian giver” is based on the assumption that to be an Indian is a bad thing; it is to be someone not to be trusted, someone who cannot function within the realms of civilized society. The use of terms like “Indian giver” and stock characters like the sad drunken chief and the hysterical and animal-like squaw are not just relics of a bucolic American pastime of children playing “Cowboys and Indians” in the front lawn (though that still happens). Rather, it is an insidious weapon of cultural defamation left over from the culture wars that took place during the height of manifest destiny. Like the phrase “that’s gay,” these pejoratives are not dulled by time, a change of scenery, or an explanation of unmeant harm.

It is a foregone conclusion that artists will continue to use these stereotypes, if only because of their unbelievable popularity in American culture for the past two hundred years. However, any artist who, wittingly or unwittingly, uses these words and mischaracterizations today will be met with conversations ranging from empathetic with Native perspectives to accusatory and discriminatory. In the years to come it is my hope that the currently antagonistic tone of these conversations will settle—like so many conversations about race, gender, class, and self-expression before them—into a public

perspective that empathizes with Native peoples and attempts to understand cultural exchange and difference rather than to exploit it.

Chapter 3: Idealized Sympathy

This chapter revolves around the idea of subject appropriation and how it has applied to Native Americans in the realm of popular music. James O. Young and Susan Haley define subject appropriation in “‘Nothing Comes from Nowhere’ Reflections on Cultural Appropriation as the Representation of Other Cultures” by stating that:

Subject appropriation occurs when members of one culture (call them outsiders for the sake of brevity) represent members of other cultures (insiders for the sake of convenience) or aspects of insiders’ culture. (Subject appropriation has sometimes been called voice appropriation, particularly when outsiders represent the lives of insiders in the first person).⁴⁴

Young and Haley also recognize the difficulty in generalizing subject appropriation as morally good or bad without discussing individual cases. Using this case-by-case approach, many previously mentioned acts of subject or voice appropriation mentioned in this book fall squarely into the morally suspect realm. Blackface, Hollywood “Injuns,” cowboys and Indians, and the plethora of “Indian Giver” songs discussed in Chapter Two are all obvious examples of voice appropriation that claim authenticity through the propagation of negative racial stereotypes.

In *Playing Indian*, Philip J. Deloria highlights America’s appetite for Native voice appropriation by drawing attention to the history of playing Indian that the counterculture movement drew upon:

Whenever white Americans have confronted crises of identity, some of them have inevitably turned to Indians. [...] It should come as no surprise that the young men and women of the 1960s and 1970s [...] followed their cultural

⁴⁴ James O. Young and Susan Haley, “‘Nothing Comes from Nowhere’” Reflections on Cultural Appropriation as the Representation of Other Cultures,” in *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation*, ed. James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk (Chichester U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 268.

ancestors in playing Indian to find reassuring identities in a world seemingly out of control.⁴⁵

It is important to understand from Deloria that singing redface has remained an element of American culture from the beginning of colonization. Yet, while musical examples of voice appropriation that misrepresent Native Americans in a negative manner are easy to lambast, the problems present in the counterculture movement's voice appropriation of Native American identity were hidden beneath an overly sympathetic tone.

Compared to earlier instances of singing redface, these suddenly sympathetic songs come across as a quantum leap forward in race relations. However, as Young and Haley state, "It is conceivable that even sympathetic portrayals of a minority culture could be harmful. [...] such works can convey and perpetuate stereotypes of the noble savage that are, in the long run, of no benefit to Indigenous peoples."⁴⁶ It is in songs that feature "idealized sympathy," or sympathy for an imaginary Native American caricature, that the issues of voice appropriation and misrepresentation become clearly visible.

This chapter will analyze popular songs that are examples of voice appropriation: one that is transformed from an empathetic but strangely caricatured example of singing redface to an example of idealized sympathy and then finally to a re-appropriated, pan-Indian anthem, and others that attempt to both empathize and humanize specific character studies. The first song is best known as "Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian)" and was made famous by the band Paul Revere & The Raiders. John D. Loudermilk's "Indian Reservation" is often

⁴⁵ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, 1998), 157–58.

⁴⁶ Young and Haley, "Nothing Comes from Nowhere," 274.

viewed as an anthemic song expressing Cherokee pride, but the first rendition by Marvin Rainwater under the title “The Pale Faced Indian” showcases a different message.

The Transformation of “The Pale Faced Indian” to “Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian)”

While not a household name, Cherokee descendant and singer-songwriter John D. Loudermilk has had his songs recorded by musicians such as Eddie Cochran, the Everly Brothers, Chet Atkins, Linda Ronstadt, Marianne Faithful, Jewel, and Johnny Cash.⁴⁷ His 1959 composition “The Pale Faced Indian,” originally recorded by Marvin Rainwater, is a story about the plight of the Cherokee and the effects of assimilation. Unlike other songs at this time, the storyline did not depict its Native American subjects as “braves” or “warriors,” but as a nation that had lost its identity through forced assimilation into the image of the modern-day, “white”-faced Indian (referring to those who have become culturally “white”). While the lyrics project a strong message, the Native-inspired accompaniment most likely sounds comical to contemporary listeners. Rainwater’s audience was as confused by his persona, stage presence, and songwriting as we are today because he was an Indian who, much like African American minstrel troupes in the aftermath of the Civil War, appropriated the white man’s racist stereotype of his people and acted as a singing redface musician.

Rainwater used his Cherokee heritage to set himself apart from other recording artists while trying to break into the country scene during the 1950s. His full-regalia

⁴⁷ Deborah L. Duvall, *Tahlequah and The Cherokee Nation*, (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 24.

stage costume and performance of songs like “Half-Breed” reminded audiences of the Native Americans they had seen in Hollywood films—a disconnect from the white country-rockabilly singer they were expecting on stage.⁴⁸ Rainwater’s unique appearance allowed him to become one of the first successful crossover artists, piquing the interests of rock-’n’-roll audiences who (at least outwardly) sympathized with the plight of Native Americans. “The Pale Faced Indian” did not garner the same success as Rainwater’s other songs until it was covered in 1968 by the English pop singer Don Fardon, who gave it a new title: “(The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian) Indian Reservation.” Fardon’s recording sold more than a million copies. Eager to ride the momentum of “Indian Reservation,” Fardon quickly recorded other Native-themed songs including “Running Bear (Loves Little White Dove),” “Cheyene,” and “Follow Your Drum.” Fardon’s cover not only popularized the song, but the changes he made in his version of “Indian Reservation” altered the meaning of the song and influenced all future renditions of the composition.

⁴⁸ Kurt Wolff and Orla Duane, *Country Music: The Rough Guide* (London: Rough Guides, 2000), 141–42.

Figure 2. Comparison of "Indian Reservation" Lyrics

Marvin Rainwater "The Pale Faced Indian"	Don Fardon "(The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian) Indian Reservation"	Paul Revere & The Raiders "Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian)"	Buddy Red Bow "Indian Reservation"
They took away the whole Cherokee nation And put us on this reservation	They took the whole Cherokee Nation Put us on this reservation	They took the whole Cherokee Nation Put us on this reservation	They took the whole Cherokee Nation Put us on a reservation
Hum hiya hum hiya hum hiya, (yip yip) Hum hiya, hum hiya ho	Took away our way of life – Tomahawk and the bow and knife	Took away our ways of life – The tomahawk and the bow and knife	Took away our way of life The tomahawk and the bow n' knife
They took away our way of life, our tomahawk and the huntin' knife	They took away our native tongue – Taught their English to our young	They took away our native tongue, And taught their English to our young	Took away our native tongue //Taught their English to our young
And the old teepee we all loved so, they're using now just for a show	And all our beads we made by hand – Are nowadays made in Japan	And all our beads we made by hand – Are nowadays made in Japan	And all the beads we made by hand //Well you can buy them from Japan
They put our papoose in a crib, and took the buck skin from our rib	Cherokee people, Cherokee tribe So proud you lived, so proud you died	Cherokee people, Cherokee tribe So proud to live, so proud to die	Cherokee people, Cherokee tribe So proud to live, so proud to die
And they took away our native tongue, and taught their English to our young	They took the whole Indian Nation Put us on this reservation	They took the whole Indian Nation // Locked us on this reservation	They took the whole Lakota Nation //Locked us on this reservation
Hiya, hiya, ho! Hiya, hiya, ho! Hiya, hiya, Hiya ho!	Big built houses by the score Won't need teepees anymore	Though I wear a shirt and tie I'm still part red man deep inside	But I can't wear no shirt n' tie Cuz I'm a red man deep inside
Hum hiya hum.. (2x)	Although they've changed our ways of old They'll never change our heart and souls	Cherokee people, Cherokee tribe So proud to live, so proud to die	Lakota people, Lakota tribe So proud to live, so proud to die
Although they changed our ways of old, They'll never change our heart and soul	And someday, when the world has learned Cherokee Injun will return	But maybe someday when they've learned The Cherokee Nation will return	But maybe someday when they learn All the Nations will return
And though I wear a white man's tie, I'll be a red man till I die	Will return, will return, will return, will return, will return	Will return, will return, will return, will return	Cherokee people, Cherokee tribe //So proud to live, so proud to die
Hiya, hiya, ho...			Lakota people... Mohawk people... Navajo people... Indian people...
Hum hiya hum... (2x)			
All the beads we made by hand, are nowadays made in Japan			
Hiya, hiya, ho...			
hum hiya him... (2x)			

In 1971 the American rock band Paul Revere & the Raiders, inspired by Fardon's cover of "(The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian) Indian Reservation," used similar orchestration to create their own interpretation of Loudermilk's song. While the Raiders replaced the horn section with electric keyboard, their version keeps the same anthemic rock feel of Fardon's rendition. The Raiders' single, "Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian)," reached No. 1 on the U.S. charts and eventually became a certified platinum record. The American civil rights movement and unrest about the Vietnam War laid the foundation for the Raiders' single to appeal to a suddenly empathetic public.

Interestingly, each rendition of the song not only changes the arrangement but also introduces changes to the lyrics. Marvin Rainwater's original version told the story of the Cherokee and their dealings with broken treaties, the Trail of Tears, and assimilation. Just as Bert Williams did for African Americans through his incredibly popular blackface career, Rainwater appropriated redface in order to gain agency and to begin to control the message being spoken by Native characters on stage. Rainwater avoided popular and clichéd one-dimensional characters like the "chief" or "noble brave." While he recorded "The Pale Faced Indian" using traditional redface musical stylings, the words he sings are about actual Cherokee cultural elements. Rainwater's version is about the struggles of a people who were forced to "become white." Despite the fact that the Cherokee Nation abided by the rules of assimilation, in the song Rainwater defiantly states that he will remain "a red man till I die." Rather than relying on generic redface stereotypes, Rainwater's version includes references to specific Cherokee cultural practices. In the line "They put our papoose in a crib, and took the

buckskin from our rib,” Rainwater references how Cherokee children, prior to assimilation, slept and were carried in cradleboards. The phrase “And they took away our native tongue, and taught their English to our young” highlights the banning of Native cultural practices when Native children were forced to attend boarding schools where they were only taught English and “American” ways of life. Regardless of the seemingly racist and heavy-handed nature of Rainwater’s music, dress, and mannerisms, “The Pale Faced Indian” is a song about Cherokee pride and identity in contemporary America.

Fardon’s cover of the song, however, takes the focus on post-assimilation contemporary Native identity found in “The Pale Faced Indian” and changes it to a lament for an extinct and lost people. In Rainwater’s original rendition the Cherokee Nation has been moved, had its language and cultural heritage stolen, and been dressed in the apparel of the white man, yet Rainwater still proudly states that his heart and soul remain Cherokee. Rainwater’s statement that he will remain a red man until he dies emphasizes the idea that while the Cherokee Nation as an entity may have been destroyed, the Cherokee people continue to live within white society. The added chorus in Fardon’s cover, however, implies the complete opposite: “Cherokee people / Cherokee tribe / So proud you lived / So proud you died.” The later line “Cherokee Injun will return” further implies that both the Cherokee Nation and the Cherokee people are dead. The use of past tense and inclusion of the phrase “Cherokee people” actually serve to completely shift the song’s focus from contemporary Native identity and turn it into a fantasy-drama focused on the mythical reimagining of the Cherokee

Nation as a dead race of noble savages that will only return when “the world has learned” and become worthy.

In his performance, Fardon, a white artist, also confusingly becomes both the “Indian” he is singing about and the sympathetic white who mourns the Indian’s demise. Even though Fardon keeps the first-person narrative of the lyrics the same in the verses, he creates a distinction between “us whites” and “you Indians” in the chorus “Cherokee people / Cherokee tribe / So proud you lived / So proud you died.” Obviously influenced by the tropes of other singing redface songs, Fardon changes his speech pattern near the end of the song to become more “Indian.” Fardon sings the line “Big built houses by the score, won’t need tipis anymore” only once, obviously drawing upon “Tonto Speak” or Hollywood Injun English. Instead of saying “*We built big* houses by the score, *so we* won’t need *our* tipis anymore,” the song turns to caricature that is almost impossible to imagine as anything but a white person impersonating an Indian. To add insult to injury, Fardon even changes the last lyrical line of the song to “Cherokee *Injun*” rather than “Cherokee *Indian*” or Cherokee *Nation*” in keeping with the stylized speech patterns of Hollywood Injun English.

Rainwater and Fardon’s versions of the same song provide an incredible example of the difference between a Native performer and a white performer singing redface. Every element that specifically references Cherokee culture is removed in Fardon’s rendition and replaced with racist stereotypes. The line “They put our papoose in a crib / And took the buckskin from our rib” is completely removed (probably due to confusion about what it meant). The phrase “And the old tipi we loved so / they’re using now just for a show,” which references both Rainwater’s longing for the tipi and

the fact that Indians are used for display in white culture, is replaced with the “Tonto speak” of “Big built houses by the score / won’t need tipis anymore.” The lyric “They took away our way of life, our tomahawk, and the hunting knife” is replaced with “They took away our way of life—tomahawk and the bow and knife,” adding in reference to a bow (necessary for any recognizable Indian stereotype) and removing the word “our” before “tomahawk.” This is a subtle change, but in Fardon’s version the Indian way of life *is* the tomahawk, bow, and knife, while in Rainwater’s original version, the Indian way of life is a separate item that was stolen in addition to the tomahawk and knife. The changes in the lyrics simplify Native culture to one of savagery and primitivism.

The interesting thing is that these changes were obviously not part of a calculated attempt to create a racist caricature, but were likely a series of small and probably thoughtless edits; they showcase exactly how Native American culture is trimmed and repackaged into the racist stereotypes we so often see and hear in music. Those responsible for these edits were probably trying to make the song more marketable and to remove any lyrics which seemed confusing or off-message. Seemingly small changes, such as the inclusion of the phrase “Cherokee Injun will return” and the removal of the image of the Indian wearing a white-man’s tie, drastically change the story being told. The best example of this is the removal of the words “and” and “away” from the first stanza. Rainwater’s original version, “They took away the whole Cherokee Nation / and put us on this reservation,” implies that the entire Cherokee Nation was destroyed, and that the remnants of its people were later placed on a reservation. In Fardon’s rendition, “They took the whole Cherokee Nation / put us on this reservation,” the emphasis on the destruction of a society has disappeared

and been replaced merely with relocation. These changes don't seem dramatic in isolation, but put together they showcase how ingrained Native stereotypes have been in white performances of singing redface.

Paul Revere & the Raiders' version is based off of Fardon's cover, but it doesn't fall prey to the same stereotyped "Indian" image featured in Fardon's lyric changes. Paul Revere & the Raiders still sing the lyrics in first person and keep the added "Cherokee people" chorus, but the band changes the lyrics slightly. Instead of saying "Cherokee people / Cherokee tribe / So proud *you lived* / So proud *you died*," the chorus states "Cherokee people / Cherokee tribe / So proud *to live* / So proud *to die*." This simple twist changes the spirit of the song to better match Rainwater's version. Influenced by Fardon's cover and re-titling of the song, the Raiders' "Indian Reservation" is a sympathetic lament rather than an empathetic story. This is highlighted near the end of the song when the Raiders eliminate nearly all accompanimental musical lines and draw attention to the sympathetically sung, "But maybe someday when, they've learned." The rock band sound is replaced with sad-sounding strings; the song then picks up in feel, culminating with the line "The Cherokee Nation will return."

While changes to the lyrics and music suggest the Raiders intended to use their cover of the song to show empathy for Native Americans, their album cover depicts much the same message as Don Fardon's. The cover features a grassy landscape at sunset with a cross, covered in hanging feathers; the cross is meant as a metaphor for a tombstone. While there are no obvious features that identify the scene as in a cemetery, the cross suggests this meaning, thus referencing the Cherokee Nation as extinct.

Interestingly enough, what Paul Revere & the Raiders have done acts as a great metaphor for the insidious nature of internalized racist stereotypes. Even though the majority of Paul Revere and the Raiders' changes to "Indian Reservation's" lyrics make them less racist (taking out Tonto Speak, taking out the second-person narrative, replacing "Injun" with "Nation", etc.), the elements that made the song specific to the Cherokee Nation and drew attention to the severity of the Native American genocide still remain missing in the transition from Marvin Rainwater's version, highlighting the difference between *empathy* and *idealized sympathy*. In the case of Paul Revere & the Raiders, creating a sympathetic lament to the Cherokee Nation through the use of Fardon's stereotyped revision of an earlier empathetic song by John D. Loudermilk still retains elements of racist structure. Despite their best intentions, the Raiders' version of the song still assumes the Cherokee Nation is only to be found on the reservation, emphasizes native savagery, states that Cherokees are only "part" Indian deep inside, and still misses out on the specific elements of Cherokee culture taken out by Don Fardon.

Don Fardon and Paul Revere and the Raiders are not the only groups to cover Marvin Rainwater under the titles of "Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian)" or "Indian Reservation." The English punk band 999 and the Canadian First Nations group Billy ThunderKloud & the Chieftones each recorded their own versions. The success of Paul Revere and the Raiders spread the influence of this song past English-speaking borders, showcased by Slovenian industrial, dark wave band Laibach's version in 1994 titled "National Reservation," which appeared on their album *NATO*. By changing "Cherokee Nation" to "Eastern Nation," Laibach was able to use

an understood Western metaphor about the plight of Native Americans and compare it to their own hardships in Slovenia.

In 1979, after representing Germany in the Eurovision Song Contest, the German space disco group Orlando Riva Sound released “Indian Reservation,” which became their biggest hit. To help promote the single, ORS made a promotional video similar to a music video that included their dancer/singer Sophia Reaney dressed in a shimmering bikini, mukluk-styled boots, and a headdress. Throughout the majority of the video she dances what is essentially a strip tease until midway through the song when she loosely emulates a Hollywood-style Native American dance and then mimics using a bow and arrow to late ‘70s synthesized laser sounds while the rest of the band members form a drum circle. As in the Raiders’ version, the song ends with a sorrowful lament that builds in intensity while footage of a cemetery is shown in the background. Like Paul Revere & the Raiders, Orlando Riva Sound essentially mourns the Cherokee Nation by propagating the dangerous myth that it is extinct.

These covers, and the cultural voice they provided, allowed the Oglala Lakota actor, musician, and activist Buddy Red Bow to release his own cover titled “Indian Reservation” on his first self-titled album. This ’80s country-inspired version took the power and strength of Don Fardon’s chorus and used its theme as an anthem for all Native Americans. Instead of a song of remembrance to the Cherokee Nation, Buddy Red Bow’s cover draws attention to the similarities in the struggles faced by all native nations. In the song, the Trail of Tears, the removal of the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Muscogee-Creek nations to Indian Territory, becomes a metaphor and a remembrance of how westward expansion affected all native nations.

Buddy Red Bow turns Fardon's removal of all specifics of Cherokee culture and turns it into a positive, as the stereotypical nature of his song allows it to be an anthem for any Native who has experienced Western oppression.

Buddy Red Bow based his lyrics off Paul Revere & the Raiders' version; his main alteration is in the chorus, where he refers to a different Nation with each rendition. The first time he sings "Cherokee people, Cherokee tribe," but the second time he changes the lyrics to "Lakota people, Lakota tribe." To increase the energy of the message and music, the chorus is repeated five times, with each repetition invoking a new nation's name. To unite the message the last chorus is sung with the lyrics "Indian people, Indian tribe." The stereotypical nature of the song, due to its reference only to pan-Indian attributes and avoidance of lyrics specific to the experiences of the Cherokee Nation, becomes its strength as an anthem for a pan-Indian unity.

It is an interesting historical arc for this song—from empathetic to sympathetic to anthemic. While most versions of the song still do not deal with Native Americans in a contemporary tone, all of them, from Marvin Rainwater and Buddy Redbow to Don Fardon and Paul Revere & the Raiders to even Orlando Riva Sound, were an important part of bringing Native American issues to the forefront. While Rainwater's is by far the most "redface" version of the song (with its stylized Native vocables and chants), it also has by far the most culturally specific information and Native agency of any of these. Don Fardon's, while perhaps the most reprehensible, introduced the chorus that allowed the song to become a hit and brought it to a wider audience. Paul Revere & the Raiders, while hopelessly sentimental toward a misunderstood fantasy of the Cherokee Nation, essentially did the job of making Fardon's somewhat racist rendition into a truly

sympathetic work. And Orlando Riva Sound, despite its almost satirically on point depiction of Native “enthusiasts,” helped bring Cherokee issues to a forefront on an international stage. Finally, Buddy Red Bow’s cover, while leaving the stereotypical and generic nature of the “Indian Nation” present in the lyrics alone, used the very nature of the song as its strength to create an anthem for all oppressed Native peoples.

Johnny Cash and the impact of *Bitter Tears: Ballads of the American Indian*

After the success of his song “I Walk the Line,” Johnny Cash believed his 1964 protest album *Bitter Tears: Ballads of the American Indian* would have similar success. The single “The Ballad of Ira Hayes,” written by folk singer Peter La Farge, began its life with poor promotion, a lack of radio play, and little press. Cash, angry at the reception of *Bitter Tears*, blamed both the radio DJs who declined to play the work and Columbia for not promoting the record strongly enough. But, as Antonino D’Ambrosio, the author of *A Heartbeat and a Guitar: Johnny Cash and the Making of Bitter Tears*, wrote, “controversy arose because La Farge’s songs didn’t whitewash history. Cash wanted to tell the “Indians’s side of the story” and present the “Indians’ viewpoint.”⁴⁹ Cash believed that Columbia’s lackluster promotion of his 1963 single “Busted” allowed Ray Charles’s cover of the same song to become a top 10 hit just a few months later. Worried about the place of his newest album, Cash was determined to not let Columbia overlook “The Ballad of Ira Hayes.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Antonino Ambrosio, *A Heartbeat and a Guitar: Johnny Cash and the Making of Bitter Tears* (New York: Nation Books, 2009), 172.

⁵⁰ Robert Hilburn, *Johnny Cash: The Life* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2013), 265.

With the help of his manager Saul Israel Holiff, Johnny Cash pressed Columbia for information related to the lack of radio promotion and spins for “Ira Hayes.” The promotion staff at Columbia told Cash that the song was too long for programming, claiming that most DJs prefer songs between two and three minutes whereas “Ira Hayes” is a little over four minutes long. However, it was the content of the song, based on the life of Ira Hayes, that was the root of the problem. A character piece about a Pima Indian suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder while being paraded around as an American hero for raising the American flag on Iwo Jima, “The Ballad of Ira Hayes” ends with its young hero, Ira Hayes, becoming an alcoholic and dying at the young age of thirty-two. Country music DJ Hugh Cherry, who wrote the liner notes for *Bitter Tears*, said the Columbia promotion staff members “were gutless” and “missing in action.”⁵¹ Cherry said, “They found a lot of resentment from country DJs over the subject matter; they feared their conservative listeners would tune out, so they buried the record, and Columbia just rolled over. They could have pressured them in all sorts of ways, but ultimately they decided against it because they didn’t want to alienate the program directors.”⁵²

Determined to have “Ira Hayes” heard, Cash himself contacted the radio promotion company Great Western Associates to resend the single that included personally signed promotional packets including a picture of the raising of the U.S. flag on Iwo Jima. In the August 22, 1964 issue of *Billboard* magazine, Cash took out a full page ad criticizing DJs for shying away from the record’s message in the light of current events relating to Native American rights by stating that ““The Ballad of Ira

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., 265–6

Hayes' is strong medicine, so is Rochester—Harlem, Birmingham, Vietnam.”⁵³ “Ira Hayes” eventually rose to No. 3 in the *Billboard* charts, but *Bitter Tears* as a whole was only given a one-sentence mention and Cash’s own label ran an ad in the same *Billboard* issue without even mentioning the album. Columbia decided to bring focus on Cash’s cover of Bob Dylan’s “It Ain’t Me, Babe.”⁵⁴ By the end of the year, after alienating DJs and bruising egos in Nashville, Cash’s *Bitter Tears* had only mediocre success before the album withered away to obscurity.

Johnny Cash’s 1964 *Bitter Tears: Ballads of the American Indian* was not just another protest folk album or another white record focused on playing Indian. *Bitter Tears* has an authenticity and humanizing approach to Native protest that ties it closely to authentic Native culture’s struggle to find a hold in the American consciousness. The eight-song concept album contained only “Indian protest songs,” using five songs written by Native songwriter Peter La Farge. Johnny Cash “insisted that he was a descendant of the Cherokee (and sometimes in a drug haze even claimed to be “full-blood”).”⁵⁵ However, he knew that having Native blood could not be enough to understand the hardships that Native Americans endured for centuries.⁵⁶ Cash empathized with the plight of the Native American and he knew his frustration over their mistreatment, paired with La Farge’s music, would make a powerful album.

La Farge, who is listed in *The Encyclopedia of Native Music: More Than a Century of Recordings from Wax Cylinder to the Internet* by Brian Wright-McLeod as

⁵³ Ibid., 266

⁵⁴ Ibid., 268

⁵⁵ Ambrosio, *A Heartbeat and a Guitar: Johnny Cash and the Making of Bitter Tears*. 165.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Narragansett, grew up with an understanding of Native culture and politics due in part to his father Oliver La Farge. An anthropologist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, Oliver La Farge spent most of his adult life as an advocate for Native American rights, writing both fictional and non-fictional stories invoking Native American culture. After returning home from fighting in Korea in the U.S. Navy, Peter La Farge became immersed in the Greenwich Village folk scene, often joining the stage with Bob Dylan, Pete Seeger, and Dave Van Ronk. Peter La Farge made a lasting impression on Johnny Cash; his music had a powerful message and Cash was in the right place in his career to act as an influential mouthpiece and proponent for change.

Johnny Cash did exactly what he set out to do; he recorded a folk Native American-themed protest album that empathized with the past while allowing for the idea of a better future. While the album title *Bitter Tears (Ballads of the American Indian)* expressed Cash's grief and unhappiness about the United States' mistreatment of Native Americans, the songs themselves are ballads that are narrative and sentimental in nature. *Bitter Tears* was one of a kind—Cash successfully recorded a popular, westernized album about Native Americans that didn't stereotype, employs songs by a Native artist, and attempts to empathize through the narration of historical and personal events that actually occurred. The first song on the album, written by Cash and La Farge, "As Long as the Grass Shall Grow," speaks of broken treaties and the mistreatment of the Seneca Nation, and how this same message holds true for all Native nations—that shattered promises, forced removal, and massacres were not isolated instances, but are instead expected pieces of the all-too-familiar pattern of how Western nations chose to interact with Native Americans. "Apache Tears," the song inspired by

the gift of an obsidian jewel given to Cash by Nancy Hayes, Ira Hayes's mother, is one of two songs on the album written solely by Cash himself.⁵⁷ While the majority of the songs are based on historical events, "Apache Tears" is based on the myth that obsidian jewels were formed from the tears of Apaches who mourned for their murdered families. Yet the song also draws attention to the reality of the slaughtered Mescalero Apaches, another story that was not much known to a white audience. *Bitter Tears* also included La Farge's "Drums" which is a salute to Native American culture, "Custer," a song about how American history books claim George Armstrong Custer is a hero despite his role in murdering both Sioux and Cheyenne at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, and "White Girl," a song about how prejudice against Native Americans and Anglos has prevented a relationship.⁵⁸

The civil rights movement was a time of great change, but Native American protests were not readily featured on TV and in newspapers. Cash's approach to his album was not to sympathize for a "dying race" but to empathize with and draw attention to contemporary Native American issues. Yet it took years of audience demand for the album to be re-released by Sony Music in 2010. For all intents and purposes *Bitter Tears* had been ignored and forgotten. While these songs are not readily known by white America, the songs of *Bitter Tears* have resonated strongly with many Native Americans. Native activist Dennis Banks said, "To me, Cash's album is one of the earliest and most significant statements on behalf of Native people and our issues."⁵⁹ In 2009 Native American folk artists Joanne Shenandoah and Michael Bucher recorded

⁵⁷ Hilburn, *Johnny Cash: The Life*, 264.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ambrosio. *A Heartbeat and a Guitar: Johnny Cash and the Making of Bitter Tears*. 171.

the album *Bitter Tears—Sacred Ground*. In a promotional video recorded by Hondo Mesa Records, Shenandoah and Bucher stated that they grew up listening to the songs on *Bitter Tears*, along with millions of fellow Native Americans from across the Country.⁶⁰ Their thirteen-song album is an homage to the work of Johnny Cash, Peter La Farge, and Floyd Red Crow Westerman, who has also honored Johnny Cash's work in his album *A Tribute to Johnny Cash*. The powerful songs from *Bitter Tears* have created their own legacy throughout Indian Country. *Bitter Tears—Sacred Ground* was recorded to honor music and musicians, but also to continue that legacy and bring those songs to the next generation.

Fifty years after the release of Johnny Cash's *Bitter Tears*, Sony Music Masterworks released *Look Again to the Wind: Johnny Cash's Bitter Tears Revisited*. Famous country, Americana, and folk stars such as Kris Kristofferson, Steve Earle, Milk Carton Kids, Gillian Welch, David Rawlings, Nancy Blake, Norman Blake, Rhiannon Giddens, Emmylou Harris, and Bill Miller gathered to revisit these important songs. There is no doubt that this album tribute was meant as an altruistic attempt to draw attention to Cash's original vision, but the fact that Bill Miller is the only Native artist featured on the album reveals a troubling continuation of white sympathy at the expense of Native agency. Sony revealed that, in a similar act to Paul Revere & the Raiders' reinterpretation of "Indian Reservation," white sympathy continues the idea of mute and disempowered Native peoples who must be protected, rather than becoming vibrant members of a contemporary society with the ability to speak for themselves and be listened to. While it is important for white artists with cultural clout to continue to

⁶⁰ "Shenandoah and Bucher Making *Bitter Tears—Sacred Ground*," YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tmij0O-T7JU>

advocate for Native interests, it is even more important that Native artists be given platforms on which they can speak for themselves. In the final two chapters I will examine how contemporary artists are taking the hard-won cultural agency given to them by the work of Native artists like Shenandoah and Butcher, Buddy Red Bow, Peter La Farge, and John D. Loudermilk and are beginning to shape a new Native voice in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 4: Cultural Misappropriations

Artists are constantly being influenced by the people and art around them.

Writers read books written by others, artists look for inspiration in the work of other artists, and composers listen to disparate music in search of new artistic pathways to explore. It is therefore inevitable that cultural appropriations develop in the creation of all new art forms. In fact, it could be argued that Western art is actually about cultural appropriation and transformation at its core—after all, what else is inspiration but the transformation of one idea into another?

Modern society still thrives off of new cultural imports—this is evident in the popularity of ethnic food “fusions,” in wildly varying fashion trends, and even at more traditional home décor stores such as Pier One Imports. And, with the Internet at our fingertips, we can connect (shallowly) to vast and distant cultural experiences with an ease that would have been unbelievable just thirty years ago. In the past, cultural appropriation was often traced in an artist’s work through travel: Debussy listening to a gamelan ensemble for the first time, Mozart hearing a “Turkish” orchestra, the Beatles studying with Ravi Shankar. For artists living with a post-colonial heritage, and knowing that outside cultural elements form some of the primary bedrock of artistic inspiration, when does cultural appropriation become unacceptable?

First, what does cultural appropriation actually entail? James O. Young defines cultural appropriation as “[the] use of something developed in one cultural context by someone who belongs to another culture.”⁶¹ By this definition, the term is neither positive nor negative. In fact, any cultural exchange that yields something of use to

⁶¹ James O. Young, *Cultural Appropriation and the Arts* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 5.

either culture becomes an act of cultural appropriation, from ideas like mathematics, women's rights, and personal freedom to musical compositions, poems, and stories, to easily recognized object appropriations of sculptures, jewelry, clothing, and other physical artifacts that have been moved from their original setting.⁶² However, this broad and ethically neutral definition is not the way that the term cultural appropriation is usually employed. A lack of clarity for the term is a large part of why there is so much confusion and frustration on both sides of the cultural appropriation argument over the use and representation of Native American regalia in American popular music.

This is because the idea of culturally appropriating elements of Native American culture does not seem to have an inherently negative connotation. After all, being inspired by someone else is usually considered a form of flattery—composers are not insulted when their students mimic them, artists are not derided for being influenced by the art of different cultures, and fashion designers can steal at will as long as what they borrow is transformed into their own vision. So why is re-creating the appearance, music, fashion, body language, gestures, religion, and language of a Native American group within staged cultural scenarios so distasteful? I would argue that it is because American popular media has been propagating the idea of fantastical, racist stereotypes of an imagined “Indian” who never existed anywhere but in Western European culture—in its books, its movies, and its songs. This is not cultural appropriation, as we have been calling it, but cultural *misappropriation*.

I define cultural misappropriation as the intentional theft of tangible or nontangible cultural commodities by an outsider with the intent to be used for economic

⁶² Ibid., 6.

gain or to intentionally create a stereotype. For example, the Tomahawk Chop that originated at Florida State University involves the entire audience in “singing” like, “acting” like, and “pretending” to be like a “savage Indian warrior” going into battle with tomahawks flying through the air.⁶³ To the normal fan, performing the Tomahawk Chop is about team spirit and showing team pride rather than cultural appropriation. But the owners of the Atlanta Braves, who also use the Tomahawk Chop, and the manufacturers of the foam tomahawks are profiting from the racist stereotype of the Native “savage.” At this point, despite any reservations they may have about the use of the Tomahawk Chop, the owners and businesses that revolve around the Atlanta Braves are financially invested in the Tomahawk Chop. Protests have occurred over the use of the Tomahawk Chop, and the American Indian Movement (AIM) has urged against the use of Native American symbols as sports mascots and in sports fandom. The protestation of that these are innocent uses becomes less tenable due to the fact that AIM has clearly and repeatedly stated that the use of stereotyped Native American images and other cultural appropriations is extremely inappropriate.⁶⁴ The Tomahawk Chop fits the definition of cultural misappropriation like a glove: the “Chop” utilizes a racist stereotype that comes from a period of extreme racial antipathy, its propagators are financially profiting from its use, and it has been repeatedly denounced as inappropriate. This is just one example of Native American cultural misappropriation that has seemingly defined Western interaction with Native Americans since first

⁶³ Devon A. Mihesuah. *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities* (Atlanta: Clarity, 1996). 51.

⁶⁴ Russ Jamieson, “Native Americans Plan Protests at World Series,” CNN Interactive, October 21, 1995. Accessed at www.cnn.com/US/9510/mascot_protest/

contact. North America has had its Native peoples, resources, land, and religions all misappropriated all in the name of profit.

It is therefore important to explore how cultural misappropriation of Native culture and music has become almost an expected element of much American popular music. While music, as an aural experience that occurs in real-time, is something intangible, the appropriation of Native culture in Western music includes tangible elements used artistically—these include regalia, constructed art pieces, and architectural designs. The act of singing redface, like black minstrelsy before it, is the act of culturally appropriating entire ethnicities in order to homogenize them into new Native American stereotypes that fit within the narrative of unfettered manifest destiny.

From Sea to Shining Sea: First Contact's First Stereotypes

In historian Howard Zinn's book *A People's History of the United States* the opening section covers Columbus's first arrival in the Bahama [*sic*] Islands where he encountered the Arawak people. In Columbus's log of events he notes that the Arawak would make fine servants as the people are "well-built, with good bodies and handsome features."⁶⁵ Columbus's first thoughts are not of wonder, or curiosity, or friendship, but of conquest and slavery: "With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want."⁶⁶ After Columbus returned back to Spain he reported, "[These Indians] are so naive and so free with their possessions that no one who has not witnessed them would believe it. When you ask for something they have, they never say

⁶⁵ Howard Zinn, "A People's History of the United States: 1492 to Present," on the "History Is a Weapon" website (May 1, 2014). Accessed at www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/zinncol1.html

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*,

no. To the contrary, they offer to share with anyone.”⁶⁷ Columbus’s singular focus on the subjugation of these so-called Indians showcases why continued colonialist ideals are so hard to fold into a contemporary narrative that deals with (ostensibly) the pursuit of world peace and generosity. Columbus did not view Native Americans as fellow people, but as objects he could culturally misappropriate and enslave. Columbus was not the only explorer to have these same ideals; the list includes Bartolomé de Las Casas, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, Hernando Cortés, Juan de Oñate y Salazar, and Hernando De Soto.

Yet the proliferation of Native American cultural misappropriation is no Renaissance-era relic, but remains a reality of our everyday life in North America today. Cultural misappropriations as entertainment have homogenized Native American nations, developed the idea of “the Indian” stereotype, and are on blatant display every time the Cleveland Indians or Washington Redskins play.

Created as justification for the American Indian Wars and westward expansion, stereotypes about Native Americans encourage the continued idealization of manifest destiny as inescapable. Coined by John L. O’Sullivan in an article published in the July–August 1845 edition of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, “manifest destiny” is the idea that the United States should stretch from sea to sea and American expansion must be continued at any cost. This idea allowed for and encouraged Indian Removal, war with Mexico, individual economic growth through

⁶⁷ Ibid.

land grabs, and the securing of the Oregon Territory.⁶⁸ Manifest destiny is sometimes viewed as a relic of westward expansion, but the truth is that the ideas of manifest destiny are still involved in policy decisions to this day. One example of this is evident in the popular computer game *Oregon Trail*. Through educational partnerships with Apple in the mid-1980s, many American classrooms were given Apple II computers that provided teachers with new educational tools. Video games in particular became a novel teaching platform that gave students a newfound ability to interact with subject matter.⁶⁹ The game *Oregon Trail* encouraged students to complete a journey across the continent based on historic western migrations on the Oregon Trail. Students learned about manifest destiny by actively participating as a westward-bound protagonist in a simulated version of westward expansion. Recreating the 1840s and 1850s experience of crossing the Great Plains across Native American land and into the Oregon Territory with the hope of a prosperous future presented the player with many choices including when to hunt, rest, or travel, whether to use horses, oxen, or mules, and even with whom to talk.⁷⁰

The creators of *Oregon Trail* respectfully referred to Native American tribes as named nations and did their best to not have the player view them as “enemies.”⁷¹ The *Oregon Trail* guidebook even states that the immigrant fear of Indians is an overly exaggerated concept, but that the ideology of the game is to protect yourself and your

⁶⁸ “Manifest Destiny,” History.com, A&E Television Networks, 2015. Accessed at www.history.com/topics/manifest-destiny

⁶⁹ Brad M. Maguth, Jonathan S. List, and Matthew Wunderle, “Teaching Social Studies with Video Games,” *Social Studies* 106(1): 32–36.

⁷⁰ Bill Bigelow, “On the Road to Cultural Bias: A Critique of The Oregon Trail CD-ROM,” *Language Arts*, Vol. 74, No. 2, Things Electronic and Language Arts Education (February 1997), 84–85.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

traveling companions. The guidebook warns that overhunting might incur the wrath of the Indian people and that overstaying might lead to hostile reactions by Natives.⁷² *Oregon Trail* acts as an interesting lesson in how hard it is to take something that is based on racially motivated conquest, in this case manifest destiny, and to apply it to a contemporary narrative that attempts to avoid creating racial mistrust. In this case this problem was handled by relegating Native nations—who obviously had to have been forcibly and recently removed from the territories that were suddenly open for business—to passive characters to whom the protagonists should be polite and, in general, avoid. According to the tenets of manifest destiny, alternate endings to *Oregon Trail* such as settling with a Native nation and learning its customs would be heresy: you either reach the coast or you die trying.

The Wild West

Oregon Trail is only one of a long list of nostalgic looks at manifest destiny. Indeed, many modern Native American stereotypes were actually codified by the creation of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Michelle Delaney, author of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Warriors*, credits Native American historian L. G. Moses with noting that the Wild West shows used and indeed helped to create Native American stereotypes including the noble savage, the reservation idler, the war-bonneted equestrian raider, and the rapacious killer to reenact dramatized versions of the battles, raids, and massacres that had recently occurred in the

⁷² Ibid., 87.

American Indian Wars.⁷³ In addition to the stereotypes presented in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows, Native American caricatures were also promoted in American minstrel shows and have continued to be used in advertising, media, and cinema.⁷⁴ Constantly barraged with the same handful of Native tropes, contemporary society often treats the stereotypical Native American princess, chief, and savage as historical truths. As our society begins to understand the ramifications of consistently using stereotypical imagery, we have to ask ourselves how we can begin to change the mindset of a society influenced by generations of stereotyping.

Christina Welch, senior lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Winchester, has explored how the World's Fairs (1851–1904) and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows (1884–1904) led to the stereotyping of Native Americans. Both contexts represented Native Americans as primitive savages who, unlike civilized, Christian Westerners, could be “saved” only through assimilation.⁷⁵ European culture's long history of fascination with primitivism, exoticism, and Native Americans was showcased in the World's Fairs, where Westerners could get a glimpse into the “unknown” from the safety of “civilized” cities. The first World's Fair, held in 1851 in London, England, attracted more than six million visitors during its six-month run (May 1–October 15). Here the British celebrated consumerist colonialism, and the popularity

⁷³ Michelle Delaney, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Warriors: A Photographic History by Gertrude Käsebier* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 26.

⁷⁴ A short list of recent examples includes American Spirit cigarettes, Land O Lakes Butter, the Kansas City Chiefs, Atlanta Braves, Washington Redskins, and Johnny Depp's Tonto in the Long Ranger

⁷⁵ Christina Welch, “Savagery on Show: The Popular Visual Representation of Native American Peoples and Their Lifeways at the World's Fairs (1851–1904) and in Buffalo Bill's Wild West (1884–1904),” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 9(4), 337.

of the fair fostered the development of ethnic stereotypes we still see popular culture.⁷⁶ At the fair visitors would see (often for the first time) representations of and actual caged people of different races and ethnicities. Exhibits featuring colonial ideologies such as Christianity being used to “save the savage,” manifest destiny, social Darwinism, the conquest of the Native American, and biogenetic theories painted the Indian as an uncivilized beast to be examined and bested by European ingenuity and social control.⁷⁷

As the popularity of the World’s Fairs grew, their exhibits created the idea of “the Indian” as one culture to which all Native American nations belonged in the eyes of the world. The concept of different nations or tribes was not applied as a distinguishing or descriptive tool to Native Americans. The 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, which featured many Native American artifacts and replicas, including totem poles, tipis, and regalia, did not specify from which tribes the artifacts were taken. Its displays did not draw attention to the complexity and variety of tribes and tribal lifestyles, choosing instead to reinforce the contemporary stereotype of Native Americans as a single, primitive race that was static and undifferentiated in its customs.⁷⁸ While attempts have been made to change the public’s view of the Native American as a dangerous and barbaric savage, most studies still portrayed cultural assimilation as the only acceptable path to peaceful coexistence. Ethnologist Alice C. Fletcher’s famous studies in the 1880s characterized the Omaha people as noble savages

⁷⁶ Ibid., 338

⁷⁷ Ibid., 338–39.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

who were ready to be civilized by domesticity and Christianity.⁷⁹ The fact that it took until the 1880s for Native Americans to even be considered possible candidates for American Christianity and Westernization shows how strongly Indian “otherness” is embedded in Westernized American culture.

As the Western world continued in its fascination with Native Americans into the twentieth century, a Cowboys and Indians narrative began to take center stage in America’s mythological retelling of how the West was won. Action-packed, Americana dime novels often referred to as Blood and Thunders were an important side development in the popularization of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Shows,⁸⁰ and authors like Prentiss Ingraham found success writing stories based on his experiences working with Buffalo Bill Cody. These stories told tales of brave (white) heroes fulfilling their manifest destiny and helping to claim the “Wild West” from the Indians.⁸¹

The Wild West shows reenacted famous battles such as the Battle of the Little Bighorn and also created fictional battles such as the attack on the Deadwood Stagecoach, in which a driver and passengers were attacked by Native Americans on horseback who would circle the stagecoach, intent on stealing and scalping. The combination of dime novels, exciting live theater, and oral storytelling combined to create the narrative of the “Wild West.” Continuing the development of such stereotypical themes as the noble savage, postcards available for purchase at this time

⁷⁹ Ibid., 340

⁸⁰ Amanda Norman, “Dime Novels: The Rise of the American Hero,” *The Texas Collection* (May 4, 2014). Accessed at <http://blogs.baylor.edu/texascollection/2013/08/13/dime-novels-the-rise-of-the-american-hero/>

⁸¹ Ibid.

included pictures such as “Chief Iron Tail, Indian Squaws and Papooses at Buffalo Bill’s Wild West.”

After the development of the motion picture, movie Westerns began fueling the public’s fascination with these stories. The same stereotypes, scenes, and imaginary battles continued into cinematic form. Yet while Buffalo Bill’s Wild West shows at least featured Native American actors, the film industry preferred to cast non-Native actors in Native American roles. During the silent film era some films featured Native American actors in Native roles, but as the movie industry became increasingly infatuated with the American Western, Native Americans were often considered hard to find (though one wonders how hard directors looked) and the practice of non-Natives playing Natives was born. The depiction of Native Americans in film has had a long-lasting and powerful effect on our understanding of Native cultures. Movie costume designer Richard La Motte was interviewed in the documentary *Reel Injun* about costume designs that would have been used in film. He said:

If you look at the movies in the ’30s Native Americans, I wanna say much like African Americans, were sort of props, rather than try and make them look regional, everybody was identifiable. So they weren’t interested in explaining the tribes, they said, well, they’re Indian.⁸²

Most “Indians” in the movies are white actors playing easily identified Indian roles—for example, the Plains Indian who wears a headdress, buckskin, and headband, often seen on horseback. In the 1950s this practice became especially common. Jody Lawrance played Pocahontas in the 1953 film *Captain John Smith and Pocahontas*, and Burt Lancaster played Massai in the 1954 film *Apache*. In the 1960s and 1970s A-list

⁸² Neil Diamond, director, *Reel Injun: On the Trail of the Hollywood Indian* (Montreal, Canada: Rezolution Pictures, 2009).

actors like Anthony Quinn, Audrey Hepburn, Chuck Connors, and Dustin Hoffman took on Native roles. A contemporary example of inauthentic Indianism can be seen in Johnny Depp's non-Native-artist-inspired portrayal of Tonto in *The Lone Ranger*. *Indian Country Today* published a story in 2012 about the painting that inspired Depp's character design, revealing that "Kirby Sattler is a non-Native artist who, in a statement on his website, says that his paintings are meant to 'satisfy my audience's sensibilities of the subject without the constraints of having to adhere to historical accuracy.'"⁸³ Neither is this the first Native American role Johnny Depp has played. In the 1997 movie *The Brave* Depp plays the role of a modern-day Native American who above all else wants to provide for his family and agrees to be killed to do so. Depp has claimed to have some Native American ancestry, but does not know from what nation. He has reached out to the Comanche Nation of Oklahoma, who made him an honorary member. Depp has also been rumored to be looking into purchasing Wounded Knee in hopes the land can be returned to its rightful owners. In the case of *The Lone Ranger*, it can be seen that even though Johnny Depp and the film go to extraordinary lengths in an attempt to avoid the accusation of racism, the structural underpinnings of Westerns, the setup of the original *Lone Ranger*, and the very idea of non-Natives performing in Hollywood blockbusters makes it almost impossible for this particular film to avoid finding itself in an unenviable position.

⁸³ ICTMN Staff, "Johnny Depp's Explanation of Tonto Costume Both Clarifies and Muddles," *Indian Country Today Media Network* (April 25, 2012). Accessed at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/article/johnny-depps-explanation-of-tonto-costume-both-clarifies-and-muddles-110002>

Sacheen Littlefeather and Marlon Brando's Oscar

The 1970s brought much-needed change in Native American representation in film and during the decade much public attention was brought upon social justice and civil rights violations. Native college students occupied Alcatraz Island off the coast of San Francisco from November 20, 1969, until June 11, 1971; the Bureau of Indian Affairs building in Washington, D.C., was taken over by Native Americans in association with AIM from November 3 to November 9, 1972; and from February 27, 1973, until May 8, 1973, Oglala Lakota and followers of AIM seized and occupied Wounded Knee, South Dakota. In 1973, actor and longtime activist Marlon Brando was nominated for best actor by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for his work in *The Godfather*. Brando, who criticized Hollywood and the movie industry for their treatment and portrayal of Native Americans in film, refused to attend the 45th Academy Awards ceremony and sent Native American civil rights activist Sacheen Littlefeather (born Marie Louise Cruz) to represent him. On March 5, 1973, during the Academy Awards ceremony, Marlon Brando was announced the Best Actor winner and Littlefeather walked on stage dressed in full regalia, declined to take the Oscar statuette, and announced that due to time she would not be able to read the lengthy speech explaining the reasons why Brando was declining the Academy Award. This statement met with a few boos from the audience, which were quickly taken over by approving applause. In the time allowed Littlefeather said:

Hello. My name is Sacheen Littlefeather. I'm Apache and I am president of the National Native American Affirmative Image Committee. I'm representing Marlon Brando this evening and he has asked me to tell you in a very long speech, which I cannot share with you presently because of time but I will be glad to share with the press afterwards, that he very regretfully cannot accept this very generous award. And the reasons for this being are the treatment of American Indians today by the film industry—excuse me—and on television in

movie reruns, and also with recent happenings at Wounded Knee. I beg at this time that I have not intruded upon this evening and that we will in the future, our hearts and our understandings will meet with love and generosity. Thank you on behalf of Marlon Brando.⁸⁴

Littlefeather was confronted after exiting the Oscars stage; she mentioned that “John Wayne was backstage, and he became very upset at my speech, and it took four to six men to restrain him from coming to drag me off stage.”⁸⁵ Littlefeather also received death threats, had her name tarnished by false accusations, and believes she was blacklisted in Hollywood.⁸⁶ Since that speech Littlefeather has gone on help educate Native communities about healthcare-related issues and has produced several Native American films.

In the early twentieth century, as the entertainment industry continued its use of Indian stereotypes, professional sports teams began forming mascots and team names inspired by Western adventures, including the Washington Redskins, Kansas City Chiefs, Atlanta Braves, and Cleveland Indians. Amateur, college, and high school teams have also used stereotyped images of Native Americans such as the Eskimos, Mohawks, Savages, Brownies, Redmen, Warriors, and Reds. On February 7, 2013, the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian presented a symposium titled “Racist Stereotypes and Cultural Appropriation in American Sports” held in Washington, D.C. The symposium featured a panel of sports writers, scholars, and

⁸⁴ “Academy Awards Acceptance Speech Database,” Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 2014. Accessed at <http://aaspeechesdb.oscars.org/link/045-1/>

⁸⁵ Dina Gilio-Whitaker, “A Recent TV Slur Revives Debate about Sacheen Littlefeather and Her Role in Marlon Brando's Oscar Refusal,” *Indian Country Today* Media Network.com (November 24, 2012). Accessed at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2012/11/24/recent-tv-slur-revives-debate-about-sacheen-littlefeather-and-her-role-marlon-brandos>

⁸⁶ Ibid.

authors who were paired with representatives from Indian nations and the NCAA.⁸⁷ The panel explored several topics including identity theft through stereotypes and the historical attributes that led to using such images as sports mascots.⁸⁸ Peter Pattakos, an attorney in northeast Ohio and blogger who publishes a website called “Cleveland Frowns,” has posted several times about inappropriate sports mascots and featured the panel discussion held at the symposium. Attendee N. Bruce Duthu, a member of the United Houma Nation of Louisiana and chair of the Native American Studies department at Dartmouth, said: “Limiting American Indian depictions to warlike caricatures has had ramifications that go beyond cultural stereotypes. Indian savagery has long been used as an excuse to take away Indian property. Actual court cases have stated that Indians couldn’t retain certain lands because they were too uncivilized, too savage, to be entrusted with those lands. In other words, the whole ‘battlefield warrior’ caricature does more harm than good.” Duthu later said at the symposium that “it’s part of viewing Indians as a dead culture, as a plaything that’s essentially become part of the public domain. Because if something is dead, you can use it however you want.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ “Native American Mascot Controversy Takes Center Stage at the National Museum of the American Indian,” *Newsdesk: Newsroom of the Smithsonian* (January 24, 2012). Accessed at <http://newsdesk.si.edu/releases/native-american-mascot-controversy-takes-center-stage-national-museum-american-indian>

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Cleveland Frowns, “Native Americans Speak on Imagery at Smithsonian Symposium on ‘Racist Stereotypes and Cultural Appropriation in American Sports’” (February 14, 2013). Accessed at www.clevelandfrowns.com/2013/02/native-americans-speak-on-sports-imagery-at-smithsonian-symposium-on-racist-stereotypes-and-cultural-appropriation-in-american-sports/

A Tribe Called Red Drops the Tomahawk Chop

Knowing that it would be impossible to simply erase hundreds of years of stereotyping, the all-Native DJ collective from Ottawa, Canada, named A Tribe Called Red has started using racist images as symbols for Native empowerment. Through their music, music videos, live performances, and individual personas, Dee Jay NDN, Bear Witness, DJ Shub, and newest member Zoolman have started to change the way societies interact with Native American imagery. A Tribe Called Red attempts to change these Native American stereotypes through the cultural re-appropriation of racist images found in staged performances, mascots, television, cinema, advertising, and music in an effort to change the meaning of the color “red.”

In 2008, DJs NDN and Bear Witness formed the DJ collective A Tribe Called Red. At the time they were not trying to form a group of political activists—they said they just wanted to throw a great party. In an interview with *Now Magazine*'s Benjamin Boles, A Tribe Called Red, or ATCR, talked about their music and their mission. DJ NDN told Boles that in Ottawa, Canada, he was noticing people were going to club nights that were ethnically specific and he started discussions with Bear Witness about how the two of them were urban First Nations DJs.⁹⁰ From this idea the two DJs started a monthly club night in Ottawa that they called Electric Powwow. Bear Witness stated that “[the Electric Powwow] was also about creating a space for our [First Nations or Native American] community within the club environment—creating a space that our people would be comfortable to come out to, the same thing these other culturally

⁹⁰ Benjamin Boles, “A Tribe Called Red,” *NOW Magazine* 32(23) (February 7, 2013). Accessed at www.nowtoronto.com/news/story.cfm?content=191133

specific parties were doing for their own communities.”⁹¹ ATCR were still curating the Electric Powwow in 2015 with a performance the second Saturday of every month.

In 2009, hip-hop DJ and turntable champ DJ Shub was invited to an Electric Powwow. After continued appearances he was asked to join A Tribe Called Red in 2010.⁹² At this time their music started to become more than just a reason to showcase aboriginal talent; it became a way to reclaim the stereotypes and imagery of Native American and aboriginal people and in doing so empower the Native community. The group spent the next two years evolving the sound of the Electric Powwow into a mash-up of powwow and First Nations music with contemporary club sounds including hip-hop, dubstep, and dance hall.

Much like Fela Kuti’s popularization of Afrobeat in the 1970s, made up of a combination of traditional Nigerian Yoruba polyrhythms with a blend of Western jazz and funk, and Reggaeton’s fusion of Caribbean rhythms with the aesthetics of American hip-hop in the 1990s, the Electric Powwow merges a historically traditional and non-syncretic music with popular and cosmopolitan music in a way that both honors a cultural heritage and makes it relevant to a new generation. The Electric Powwow events are not just about the creation of a new genre of music, but also serve as a place where ATCR can speak out about aboriginal issues and be a face for the urban Native youth resistance.⁹³

In 2012, ATCR’s release of their self-titled debut album garnered them global fame and awards. Not only was the album self-released and not backed by a record

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² “A Tribe Called Red,” *A Tribe Called Red*. Accessed at <http://atribecalledred.com/bio/>

⁹³ Ibid.

label, but the entire album can still be downloaded for free directly from their website.⁹⁴ In the interview with Boles for *Now Magazine*, Bear Witness mentioned that he was raised in a very politically driven, pro-activist environment due in part to his mother's involvement with the American Indian Movement in the 1970s.⁹⁵ By the time Bear Witness was a teenager he felt burned out from constant activism, perceiving that little progress was being made. Bear said, "I felt like I was banging my head against a wall. Forget this, I just want to party and forget about all this stuff I've had to deal with my whole life." His party life was where he became a DJ, but his activist roots resurfaced as the music, video imagery, reclamation of aboriginal imagery, and negative focus on cultural appropriation he encountered became the fundamental ingredients for his own artistic protest.

While their music may not showcase the same explicit activism and transparent rhetoric of the politically driven music of punk and folk rock, the combination of music and video imagery within the club speaks directly to a modern era. Instead of railing against the use of racist symbols in popular culture, ATCR uses these symbols on their stage clothes, donning baseball caps and jerseys of Native-themed sports teams like the Chicago Blackhawks, Cleveland Indians, and Atlanta Braves. Their music videos and live-show projections extensively sample racist imagery from movies and cartoons including old Westerns, *Back to the Future III*, Bugs Bunny, and Disney's *Peter Pan*. By taking symbols that depict racist stereotypes out of their cultural context, ATCR draws attention to both the specific racism of each individual image and the ubiquity of racist stereotypes in our society.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

While the Cleveland American Indian Movement has taken a protest approach to public awareness, A Tribe Called Red is using their music as a vehicle to help promote racial consciousness in their audience. In their track “Braves,” A Tribe Called Red takes on the Atlanta Braves baseball organization by remixing the Atlanta Braves’s Tomahawk Chop anthem that was adopted from Florida State University. Their version transforms the fairly innocuous-sounding chant by showcasing its core as a Hollywood-esque stereotype of Native American song. By taking the anthem out of its current cultural context, “Braves” not only reveals the racist soundscape and origin of the anthem, but changes listeners’ interpretation of its place in sports culture into a racist pageantry of “savage violence.” The association of the “war chant,” the motion of the tomahawk chop, and the fact that these actions call for one team to attack and defeat another team all make it clear that Native culture is being subjugated for use as an example of the savagery and uncivilized behavior acceptable only in sports fandom. On A Tribe Called Red’s SoundCloud page, their description of “Braves” reads, “We wanted to make a song for all the racist and culturally inappropriate sports teams that are still used today!”⁹⁶

ATCR’s “Braves” accomplishes this by presenting the anthem in its entirety as a marching band arrangement featuring brass and drums with an accompanying fan chant. By beginning with a contemporary electronic drumbeat and motive based on two notes of the anthem, the sudden appearance of the marching band arrangement of the Tomahawk Chop is noticeable because of the sudden cultural disconnect between the

⁹⁶ A Tribe Called Red, “A Tribe Called Red—Braves,” *SoundCloud*, December 2012. Accessed at <https://soundcloud.com/a-tribe-called-red/01-a-tribe-called-red-braves>

performers and the music they are performing. The subsequent addition of the Tomahawk Chop chant, comprised of a descending melody of vocables with no text, further highlights how this is an anthem that specifically stereotypes Native culture. Most anthems contain at least some use of text—from “Ole, Ole, Ole” and “We Will Rock You” to “let’s go, *insert sports team name here*, let’s go!” The Chop is one of the few sports anthems that forgoes the use of a language-based text entirely and instead chooses to use vocables that cannot be attributed to any particular Native nation, ceremony, or meaning. It becomes a “they” sound like “this” situation, which results in a demeaning and diminishing of Native cultures by the popular culture in which this anthem takes place.

The wub,⁹⁷ or wobble bass, and hi-hat cymbal act as an opposing force to the sampled marching band and vocalizing fans in “Braves,” commenting on and eventually overtaking the sampled material. The “tribe drop” marks the turning point in “Braves,” but the “tribe drop” is actually a fake drop because a low-pass filter immediately emasculates the Tomahawk Chop sample that follows before the “true drop” occurs. At that point the wub and hi-hat appear for the first time without the sample band or vocalizations. After the “tribe drop,” the samples of the Tomahawk Chop are either dominated by the wub or swallowed up by low-pass filters and fades. Written as a protest against racist sports organizations to help convince them to stop using characterized ceremonies and mascots, “Braves” contains that struggle within the composition itself: dubstep, represented by the wub and hi-hat, eventually renders the

⁹⁷ The “wub” is a slang term for bassline of a dubstep song. The melodic and prominent nature of the “wub” is often thought of as one of the defining features of American dubstep or “brostep.”

Tomahawk Chop weak and powerless.

This triumph is important because the Tomahawk Chop is not just an innocuous song that asks for audience participation, but is instead a powerful chant that has been growing in popularity despite disturbing racial undertones. While Florida State University may be the originator of “the Chop,” it has now grown beyond the confines of a school chant and continues to gather steam. When former Florida State player Deion Sanders began playing for the Atlanta Braves in 1991 fans started performing the song. We are now seeing associations with “the Chop” on tomahawknation.com, an online posting website for FSU fans, as the Kansas City Chiefs anthem, and “the Chop” is performed by a forty-foot Chick-Fil-A cow constructed at the Atlanta Braves stadium. Musicians have also been addicted to the song itself. In both Tim McGraw’s song “Indian Outlaw” and Nelly’s “Shake Ya Tailfeather” (featuring P. Diddy and Murphy Lee) “the Chop” is referenced. Atlanta-based band the Black Lips wrote the song “Tomahawk Chop | Esperanza ATL” and in 2012 a video surfaced of Senator Scott Brown’s staffers taunting his opponent Elizabeth Warren with the Tomahawk Chop and war chants. As Justin Burton states in “Tomahawk Chopped and Screwed: The Indeterminacy of Listening,” “cultures as steeped in indigenous stereotypes as the United States and Canada have conditioned their ears to hear ATCR through whiteness, through colonialism, making it difficult to perceive the subversive nature of ‘Braves.’”⁹⁸ It remains to be seen whether over the next decade the Tomahawk Chop will act as a

⁹⁸ Justin Burton “Tomahawk Chopped and Screwed: The Indeterminacy of Listening,” *Sounding Out!* February 20, 2014. Accessed at <http://soundstudiesblog.com/2014/02/20/tomahawk-chopped-and-screwed-the-indeterminacy-of-listening/>

lightning rod for discussion and draw attention to Native misappropriation, or be a divisive reminder of how far we have to go.

Passing the Bechdel Test

In A Tribe Called Red's first directed music video, "Sisters," ATCR continues to break down the stereotypical image of the Native American by showcasing that Natives are just as much a part of contemporary culture as any other urban ethnicity. The stereotypical idea that Native Americans must be a) living in some sort of anachronistic, primitive landscape; b) living in unbelievable poverty, unable to survive in a modern society; or c) extinct, and therefore relegating all non-a) and non-b) Natives to non-Native status is not only ridiculous, but also extremely damaging to Native Americans attempting to both articulate and define what it is like to be Native American in twenty-first century America. In contrast to this stereotyped view are Sarain Carson-Fox, Kawennáhere Devery Jacobs, and Aria Evan (all indigenous) who play the three "sisters" in the music video. They are not dressed in anything that resembles a Native American princess or the popular Halloween "sexy Pocahontas" costume, they are not wearing any feathers, they are not staged in an "Indian" scene, they are not contacting anyone via "smoke signals," and they are definitely not driving a "rez car." They are just three Native women road-trippin' to attend an Electric Powwow.

These "sisters" are confident, empowered, well-dressed, club-going women who are ready to have a great night out. In a report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights posted on December 21, 2014, First Nations women and girls in Canada have either been murdered or gone missing at a rate four times higher than their rate of

representation (4.3 percent) in Canada's population.⁹⁹ As of March 31, 2010, with information collected by the nonprofit organization Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had discovered 582 cases of missing or murdered indigenous women and girls across Canada in the past thirty years, but speculated the number could be closer to one thousand.¹⁰⁰ Amnesty International Canada's website features a headline stating "No More Stolen Sisters: Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women of Canada" that showcases protestors holding signs decorated with the phrases "We Demand Justice Now" and "Aboriginal Women are Loved and Valued."¹⁰¹ With media continually promoting women's intentions as centered around getting or keeping a man,¹⁰² the music video for "Sisters" not only debunks Native American women's stereotypes, but also attacks female stereotypes in general by allowing women to exist in a story in which their life can be fulfilled without being in orbit around a man. The music video also passes what is called the Bechdel Test, sometimes referred to the Mo Movie or Bechdel Rule. In order to pass the test a movie must meet the following three criteria: there must be at least two [named] women, they must talk directly to each other, and it must be about something besides a man for one full scene.¹⁰³ Created in 1985 by Alison Bechdel in her comic strip "Dykes to Watch Out For," the Bechdel Test is important because it

⁹⁹ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in British Columbia, Canada," 2014, p. 11. Accessed at www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/Indigenous-Women-BC-Canada-en.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Amnesty International Canada, "No More Stolen Sisters." Accessed at www.amnesty.ca/our-work/issues/indigenous-peoples/no-more-stolen-sisters

¹⁰² Rodnitzky, Jerome L. *Feminist Phoenix: The Rise and Fall of a Feminist Counterculture*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999. 112-13.

¹⁰³ "Bechdeltest Movie List." Accessed at <http://bechdeltest.com>

highlights how women are typically depicted within the structure of movie storylines. In an NPR radio interview on *All Things Considered* Neda Ulaby qualifies the importance of the test by saying that “[the Bechdel] test articulates something often missing in popular culture; not the number of women we see on screen, but the depth of their stories, and the range of their concerns.”¹⁰⁴ These same concerns have been frequently brought up in regards to nonwhite characters, so Native women get a double dose of the two-dimensional, man-obsessed, objectified character writing so often forced on nonwhite actors and actresses. In the past, Native American women in particular have been portrayed as exotic. This exoticism is not showcased by an interest in a woman’s unknown culture, but instead codifies the colonial male gaze intent on both social and sexual conquest. The promotion of gender equality and Native urbanity is revealed in ATCR’s music video as the “sisters” use iPhones, drive a Scion, and take a pit stop at a convenience store. These “common place” actions are anathema to sexual exoticism because they break the illusion of innocence from Western culture associated with sexual exoticism.

The use of designer, Northwest Coast–inspired mukluks, leggings, and sweaters paired with flashing shutter shades, metallic leggings, colored vests, studded leather, and fashionable hoodies promote the idea that Natives are not just stuck on the reservation, but are cosmopolitan. An article published in the *New York Times* on April 13, 2013, reported that while Native Americans are widely associated with rural life, 70 percent of all Indians and Alaska Natives currently live in a metropolitan area. This percentage has drastically increased from 45 percent in 1970 and 8 percent in 1940. The

¹⁰⁴ Neda Ulaby, “The ‘Bechdel Rule,’ Defining Pop-Culture Character,” *All Things Considered* (National Public Radio), September 2, 2008.

idea of the “urban Native” goes against the influential social work of founder and former superintendent of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School,¹⁰⁵ Captain Richard H. Pratt, whose educational philosophy of “Kill the Indian, and Save the Man” continually promoted segregation while simultaneously stripping Natives of their identity.¹⁰⁶ Director Jon Riera’s flying of the Mohawk flag surrounded by colored smoke, the Native-inspired clothing, and references made to Native culture seen in the background, shows that while the “sisters” could be perceived as just club-goers, they also continue to show their Native pride. The healthiest image of a co-existing and thriving Native American in contemporary urban America is not a Native American who has forgotten his heritage, but Native women who are free to flaunt their heritage and explore their identities.

The fact that A Tribe Called Red’s “Sisters” features female vocals from the Northern powwow group Northern Voice also promotes female empowerment. ATCR, Sarain Carson-Fox, Kawennáhere Devery Jacobs, Aria Evan, Jon Riera, Landon Ramirez, and the Field have made an inspirational video that reveals how many urban Natives live in cosmopolitan societies. As we continue to see hipsters wearing headdresses, fans cheering on racist mascots, and entertainment propagating Native

¹⁰⁵ “The goal of schools like Carlisle, Hampton Institute and the Phoenix Indian School was to make Natives dress, speak and act like whites. According to Peter Farb in his book, *Man’s Rise to Civilization: The Cultural Ascent of the Indians of North America*, ‘The children usually were kept at boarding school for eight years, during which time they were not permitted to see their parents, relatives, or friends. Anything Indian—dress, language, religious practices, even outlook on life... was uncompromisingly prohibited.’”
<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2012/01/30/bias-impact-indian-education-education-bad-education-75083>

¹⁰⁶ Nobles, Gregory H. *American Frontiers: Cultural Encounters and Continental Conquest*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1997. 236-37.

stereotypes, “Sisters” is a breath of fresh air in a cultural climate struggling with the plurality of contemporary North American cities.

Chapter Five: Cultural Confusion

When it comes to subject and voice appropriation of minority cultures, one of the most difficult issues to deal with in contemporary America is that, for many Americans, misrepresentation may be the only form of Native American representation they have ever known. Because every American is exposed to countless examples of Native misrepresentation by an early age (only the beginnings of which are analyzed in this thesis), contemporary Native American identity is forced to constantly struggle with a five-hundred-year-old smear campaign that has utilized books, stories, movies, paintings, photography, music, and every other conceivable means of entertainment and propaganda to promote the idea of the uncivilized Indian. It is not a lack of knowledge about Native Americans that causes such cultural confusion about what is authentic information, but the deluge of false information that has spread like a centuries-old virus throughout our stories, our entertainment, and our culture. Our penchant for playing Indian has created a seemingly unbreakable image of the Native savage: whether a noble savage in the case of the idealized sympathy that caught fire in the 1970s, the bloodthirsty or drunken savages that the racial antipathy of Westerns taught us to fear (which still persists in alarming amounts today), or the cultural misappropriation of imaginary Indianness seen in the Tomahawk chop, sports mascots, and television characters.

Cultural misrepresentation of this magnitude and age becomes like a run-away train, monumentally difficult to stop due to the momentum it has slowly gathered over the years. In fact, some of the most fervent defenders and propagators of singing redface are those who truly believe that playing Indian is an accurate representation of Native

authenticity or at the very least is harmless character acting. It is therefore only by chipping away at the momentum of Native American misrepresentation, by calling attention to racist modifiers and the history of redface, that we can slowly start to correct our cultural confusion and, as Young and Haley put it, “make the attempt to cross those barriers and try to understand each other.”¹⁰⁷

“Indian Outlaw”

In 1994, burgeoning country music star Tim McGraw released the first single from his sophomore album. “Indian Outlaw” rose to No. 8 on the country single and No. 15 on the Billboard Hot 100 charts despite heavy criticism from Native American communities, who lambasted its patronizing and stereotypical tone. McGraw’s hit was an acted performance of a character that non-Natives loved to hate. McGraw takes on the persona of a half-Cherokee, half-Choctaw “outlaw” who is considered an outcast by his society. The persona of the outlaw, bad-boy country singer has become so popular that “outlaw country” is now considered a genre of its own. This genre draws from a long lineage of bad-boy (and girl) rock and country stars like Johnny Cash, David Allan Coe, Willie Nelson, Jessi Colter, Merle Haggard, Tanya Tucker, Leon Russell, and Steve Earle, who have used the idea of anti-authoritarian authenticity to connect with their audiences. In 1994, Steve Hockman penned an article in the *Los Angeles Times* that discusses the controversy of McGraw’s song:

The song, ostensibly a light-hearted character study, utilizes a laundry list of media-created stereotypes about Native Americans and the kind of pseudo-tribal

¹⁰⁷ James O. Young and Susan Haley, ““Nothing Comes from Nowhere” Reflections on Cultural Appropriation as the Representation of Other Cultures,” in *The Ethics of Cultural Appropriation*, ed. James O. Young and Conrad G. Brunk (Chichester U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 267.

beat and melodies associated with old movie Westerns. It contains such lines as “You can find me in my wigwam/I’ll be beating on my tom-tom,” and also incorporates the chorus of “Indian Reservation,” a 1971 pop hit written by John D. Loudermilk and recorded by Paul Revere & the Raiders (that song’s subtitle, ironically, is “The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian”).¹⁰⁸

At the time of its release a few radio stations refused to play “Indian Outlaw” after receiving complaints about the lyrics being offensive, though others stated that, while they would be sympathetic to any complaints, they had not personally dealt with any issues surrounding the song (despite, obviously, being asked if they had received complaints about the song).¹⁰⁹ John Brown, the vice president of promotion for Curb Records in Nashville, has stated reception of the song was mixed. While he did receive protest letters from WaBun Inini (president of the Minneapolis-based National Coalition of Racism in Sports and the Media and a national representative for the American Indian Movement) and Wilma Mankiller (principal chief of the Oklahoma Cherokee), he also received a letter in support of the song from Gerard Parker (vice chief of the North Carolina–based Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.)¹¹⁰ Whether in spite of or because of these complaints and controversies, “Indian Outlaw” was a hit.

Producer James Stroud was originally against recording the song due to the novelty-act nature of the song and asked McGraw not to record it, but McGraw insisted and Stroud was surprised and pleased with its success.¹¹¹ McGraw paired the country outlaw persona with the heartland’s seeming love for cowboys and Indians. The music

¹⁰⁸ Steve Hochman, “Country Hit ‘Indian Outlaw’ Hits a Nerve,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1994. Accessed at http://articles.latimes.com/1994-03-24/entertainment/ca-38103_1_native-americans

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ “GAC Time Machine: Tim McGraw’s Indian Outlaw,” *Great American Country News and Notes*, August 17, 2011. Accessed at <http://blog.gactv.com/blog/2011/08/17/gac-time-machine-tim-mcgraws-indian-outlaw/>

video features two stories with Tim McGraw as the protagonist in both. The first story casts Tim McGraw as the titular Indian outlaw in the song who drives his “Indian” motorcycle with his “Chippewa Baby.” The second storyline casts McGraw as himself, a country musician performing the song “Indian Outlaw” on stage surrounded by country dancers. The music video cuts back and forth from these two scenes, making us associate Tim McGraw, country singer, with Tim McGraw, Indian outlaw. Unlike the artists in other songs discussed in this thesis, McGraw never dresses up as an “Indian” in the music video or in other promotional materials, but he does make reference to Native culture in every verse and chorus of the song. One of the main controversial elements of the song is that McGraw is not creating a storyline revolving around a glorified outlaw, but instead spends most of his time describing himself as part of a stereotyped, homogenized “Indian” culture. In fact, the vast majority of the song is simply a description of what Tim McGraw, “Indian Outlaw,” is: half-Cherokee, half Choctaw, his girlfriend is a Chippewa, his friends call him Bear Claw, the Village “Chieftain” is his paw-paw, he lives in a wigwam, beats on his tom-tom, smokes a peace pipe (with obvious, hey-pass-it-around reference to marijuana), gets in trouble with the medicine man, kills deer and buffalo, has a hickory bow, also has a tipi (in addition to his wigwam—perhaps it is his summer home?), and wears buffalo briefs.

“Indian Outlaw” starts with a Native-esque drumbeat, followed by the chorus of the song, which establishes that Tim McGraw is an Indian outlaw who is half Cherokee and Choctaw. This allows the listener to understand the setting, associate cultural characteristics, and justify the cultural appropriations since McGraw has stated he’s “Native.” In fact, the proof that this is a song that is performed in cultural redface is

clear from the use of the simple theatrical conceit of using the declarative “I’m an Indian” in order to magically make it so for the duration of the song. In the first verse listeners hear that McGraw’s friends call him Bear Claw and that his father is the village chieftain, but that his mother is really the one in charge. The nickname “Bear Claw” was chosen no doubt because it rhymes with paw-paw and maw-maw, but it also seems to be mocking Native American clan systems by the association of the term “bear claw” with a particularly popular type of doughnut. While each Native American nation has its own rules and number of divisions, many clan systems are derived from matrilineal societies whose families are represented by animal (land), bird (air), and fish (water). To those Native Americans who subscribe to this belief system, clan is an integral part of defining one’s identity. Off-handedly mocking this system with the moniker “Bear Claw” makes it clear that this song does not truly subscribe to an authentic representation of what an Indian outlaw would be.

As with other styles of stereotyping songs, in “Indian Outlaw” the performer is placed within the “appropriate” background, typecast to fit the backdrop of the scene. In different verses, McGraw sings about being found in his “wigwam” (and, later, in his “tipi”) either making music on his “tom-tom” or scantily dressed in just his “buffalo briefs.” Other references are made to him wearing a headband. This reference to a “tom-tom” only highlights the fact that the composers did no research into actual Native American culture since the “tom-tom” is not a Native American drum, but a label placed on Native American drums by non-Natives. Keeping with the traditional “extinct” Indian stereotype it is mentioned that the “Indian outlaw” can get all the food he needs by killing deer and buffalo with just his bow and arrow, which, the song says,

he does all the time. The anachronistic placement of the nearly extinct American bison and the outlaw's use of bow and arrow rather than a gun in our modern society showcases him as part of an "Indian" race that remains permanently placed as part of an imagined historical past.

Lyrics, however, aren't the only part of McGraw's song to use stereotypes to create faux Indianism. The melodic material of the song references Native culture by using Native-esque drumbeats and sampling the Atlanta Braves' "Tomahawk Chop" melody (which was then also being protested against). Near the end of the song its feel changes as a church organ's sound is added, and the musicians transition into the song "Indian Reservation (The Lament of the Cherokee Reservation Indian)" which was made popular by Paul Revere & the Raiders. The music video then focuses on Tim McGraw (the country musician) as he stretches his arms out into a crucifixion-like pose, tilts his head back, and sings the words "so proud to die." The catchy, well-produced song "Indian Outlaw," just like Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows and Hollywood's Westerns, gives people a glimpse into an exotic unknown. This song draws upon the "outlaw" experience to justify cultural inaccuracies to an audience unaware that it is learning misinformed stereotypes. Entertainment based on racial exoticism is and has long been rampant in post-colonial Western music and art: the primitivism of Gauguin and Picasso which influenced Stravinsky and Bartok; American minstrelsy and the blackface of *Aida* and *Otello*; the orientalist yellowface of nineteenth-century operas like the *Mikado*, *Turandot*, and *Madame Butterfly*; and the incredible, bash-the-audience-over-the-head racial stereotyping of early cartoons like Betty Boop's "Making Stars" are just a tiny sampling. All of these acts of entertainment hold one thing in

common: as long as the popularity of the performance (and the money coming in) overpowers the outcries caused by racial sensitivity, the stereotypes keep getting used. As the popularity of “Indian Outlaw” grew, McGraw did meet with protesters at a concert in Tulsa, but he declined their request to stop performing “Indian Outlaw.” Why wouldn’t he? It had made him famous.¹¹²

Song: “Indian Outlaw”

Year: 1994

Label: Curb Records

Artist: Tim McGraw

Composers: Tommy Barnes and Gene Simmons

Producer: James Stroud

Music Video Director: Sherman Halsey

I’m an Indian Outlaw
Half Cherokee and Choctaw
My baby she’s a Chippewa
She’s a one of a kind

All my friends call me Bear Claw
The Village Chieftain is my paw-paw
He gets his orders from my maw-maw
She makes him walk the line

You can find me in my wigwam
I’ll be beatin’ on my tom-tom
Pull out the pipe and smoke you some
Hey and pass it around

’Cause I’m an Indian Outlaw
Half Cherokee and Choctaw
My baby she’s a Chippewa
She’s a one of a kind

I ain’t lookin’ for trouble
We can ride my pony double
Make your little heart bubble
Lord, like a glass of wine

¹¹² Steve Hochman, “Country Hit ‘Indian Outlaw’ Hits a Nerve,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1994. Accessed at http://articles.latimes.com/1994-03-24/entertainment/ca-38103_1_native-americans

I remember the medicine man
He caught runnin' water in my hands
Drug me around by my headband
Said I wasn't her kind

'Cause I'm an Indian Outlaw
Half Cherokee and Choctaw
My baby she's a Chippewa
She's a one of a kind

I can kill a deer or buffalo
With just my arrow and my hickory bow
From a hundred yard don't you know
I do it all the time

They all gather 'round my tipi
Late at night tryin' to catch a peek at me
In nothin' but my buffalo briefs
I got 'em standin' in line

'Cause I'm an Indian Outlaw
Half Cherokee and Choctaw
My baby she's a Chippewa
She's a one of a kind

Cherokee people
Cherokee tribe
So proud to live
So proud to die

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the cultural impact of this sort of anachronistic depiction of a society sometimes reveals itself best in comparisons. Imagine if it were still acceptable to depict African Americans in blackface, in the manner of minstrelsy, as nineteenth century slaves and freedmen, as if African Americans are not, like all American peoples, part of an ever-changing, complex set of societies and traditions that are living and interacting every day with modern society. Bad enough that Natives, like African Americans, women, and any other group with minority-control over popular

media, are often only allowed stereotypical roles. But for Natives, most of their typecasting doesn't even allow them to exist within the present century. While there are certainly many strains of structural and cultural racism remaining in our media output, the level of disconnect between modern society and an imagined primitivist past in how Natives are constantly depicted is striking even when compared to how other minorities are treated.

Half-Breed

One of the most commonly seen uses of Native American cultural appropriations is the use of the Indian headdress or warbonnet. Some of the first images many young Americans see of Native Americans are depictions of Plains Indians, riding on horseback and wearing headdresses. Characters in comic books, cartoons, movies, greeting cards, painting, and theatre have all “played Indian” and the fashion industry, models, musicians, and concertgoers have all been inspired by Native American headdresses, artistic designs, war paint, music, and dance.¹¹³ Children are taught songs about “Indians” such as “I’m a Little Indian” sung to the melody of “I’m a Little Teapot” performed with hand motions and “Indians and Pilgrims” sung to the tune of “Row, Row, Row your Boat.” Sports teams donning references to Native Americans such as the Warriors, Indians, Raiders, Braves, Chiefs, and Redskins have dedicated fans who dress up as Indians in headdresses and war paint. In school children perform in Thanksgiving plays and star in the musical *Peter Pan*, play “Cowboys and Indians,”

¹¹³ Dorian Lynskey, “This means war: why the fashion headdress must be stopped,” *The Guardian*, July 30, 2014. Accessed at <http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2014/jul/30/why-the-fashion-headdress-must-be-stopped>

and attend theme parties with the same premise: is it any surprise that most non-Native American children don't understand why wearing a headdress is inappropriate? One of the primary national pastimes of children in America was dressing up as an Indian—whether through Thanksgiving pageants, playing Cowboys and Indians, school performances, musicals, dances, or just watching TV, performing redface was one of the few universals of American childhood throughout the twentieth century. The continuation of inaccurate Native American stereotypes is a sign of mass cultural confusion, not purposeful racism.

The cultural and musical misrepresentation of Native Americans as seen in sports fandom isn't the only form of unwanted cultural appropriation that the previously mentioned Native DJ collective A Tribe Called Red has taken on. As the popularity of A Tribe Called Red grows, the DJ collective increasingly speaks out about the use of traditional native regalia as fashion accessories. In an interview with Guillaume Decouflet, the members of A Tribe Called Red expressed their dislike of a recent trend they refer to as “hipsters wearing headdresses.”¹¹⁴ While the use of headdresses has been seen in many situations, music has recently turned the headdress into the epicenter of pop culture fashion. Musicians such as Ke\$ha, Steven Tyler, Jamiroquai, Pharrell, Ted Nugent, Lana del Ray, and Gwen Stefani have all recently sported the look. The popularity of music festivals in the United States paired with the cultural confusion most Americans have with regard to Native American culture has exploded the use of headdress fashion. However, believing that people are wearing headdresses out of ignorance rather than hate, ATCR has attempted to use their art to make people draw

¹¹⁴ Guillaume Decouflet, “MicroFilm: A Tribe Called Red,” *Vimeo*. Accessed at <http://vimeo.com/23970949>

their own conclusions about how this is offensive.¹¹⁵ In an interview with Benjamin Boles for *Now Magazine*, Bear Witness stated, “Last year [2012] in Toronto, a few non-aboriginal kids showed up to our gig in war paint. Nothing really happened that night, but when the photos were posted later on Facebook, everyone freaked out. In the end, though, what came out of the incident was some real understanding. We explained to them that this isn’t honouring us and it isn’t a celebration of our culture, that we actually find it inappropriate.”¹¹⁶

Headdresses have a long history of being used in popular music. On July 23, 1973, Cher released the single “Half-Breed,” which went on to sell over one million copies. The song is about a young woman, whose persona Cher adopts, who is half white and half Cherokee. The song describes how as a “half-breed” she is an outsider, not accepted into either Native American or white society: “My mother’s people were ashamed of me / The Indian said that I was white by law / The white man always called me Indian Squaw.” The end of each chorus loudly states, “Both sides were against me since the day I was born.” As an activist who does claim Cherokee ancestry, Cher describes a situation that could be based in reality. Before the song was released she didn’t really highlight her Native heritage, so “Half-Breed” could be seen in part as a reflection of her own struggles. The young girl in the story is persecuted for being a “half-breed” and at the age of nineteen left home trying to run away from her horrible situation, but as she bounces from “man to man” she becomes aware that she “can’t run away from what I am.”

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Boles, *A Tribe Called Red*.

Song: "Half-Breed"
Year: 1973
Label: MCA
Artist: Cher
Composers: Al Capps and Mary Dean
Producer: Snuff Garrett

My father married a pure Cherokee
My mother's people were ashamed of me
The Indian said that I was white by law
The white man always called me Indian Squaw

Half-Breed
That's all I ever heard
Half-breed
How I learned to hate the word
Half-breed
She's no good they warned
Both sides were against me since the day I was born

We never settled, went from town to town
When you're not welcome you don't hang around
The other children always laughed at me "Give her a father, she's a Cherokee"

Half-Breed
That's all I ever heard
Half-breed
How I learned to hate the word
Half-breed
She's no good they warned
Both sides were against me since the day I was born

We weren't accepted and I felt ashamed
Nineteen I left them, tell me who's to blame
My life since then has been from man to man
But I can't run away from what I am

Half-Breed
That's all I ever heard
Half-breed
How I learned to hate the word
Half-breed
She's no good they warned
Both sides were against me since the day I was born

While Cher's message is strong, cultural confusion abounds in this song in the combination of Native-esque sounding music and Cher's performance on *The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour*, which now acts as the music video that is prominently featured on video channels like YouTube and Vimeo. While Cher may be able to claim Native ancestry, it is obvious that directorial decisions were made in the creation of "Half-Breed" that draw more from the tradition of singing redface than from any actual Native performance practices. The song starts with a ONE two, ONE two drumbeat that is paired with sleigh bells that might be heard on a Native American powwow Fancy Dancer. The backing strings take big leaps up and down supported by plodding guitar riffs that sound Native-esque in interval placement. When Cher starts singing the faux-sounding Native American music is taken over by a 1970s-style rock hit, but at the chorus male backup vocals chant with non-Native made-up vocables "ha ya hey ya," similar to the Hollywood Injun English used in Annette Funicello's "Indian Giver." The song's message is accompanied by stereotyped Native American images. In the video Cher rides bareback and barefoot on a horse while dressed in a skimpy, white, breechcloth-inspired bottom similar to a bikini bottom; armbands and a stylized breastplate that exposes her stomach; and a white headdress with yellow, pink, and orange highlighted feathers. While Cher is singing about a half-breed Cherokee woman, the video features a totem pole that would have been synonymous with Northwest Coast nations, but is completely foreign to the Cherokee. This "wrong Indian" stereotyping is one of inauthentic Indianism's main problems. The idea that all Indians are the same, or pan-Indianism, which, as stated earlier, has been rampant in Western interaction with

Native American societies, only continues to increase American and worldwide cultural confusion when trying to understand Native American culture.

Hipsters Wearing Headdresses

In March 2014, Christina Fallin, the daughter of Oklahoma governor Mary Fallin and front woman for the indie rock band Pink Pony, posted a band promotional picture on Facebook and Instagram of herself wearing a red warbonnet. Soon after the picture was posted an uproar of criticism flooded social media and on March 6, 2014, Christina Fallin, Steven Battles (her boyfriend and bandmate), and Pink Pony (also under the alias Chrome Pony) posted a press release on their Facebook page not apologizing for the picture, but rather stating that a “woman in a headdress can be a very beautiful thing” and that it should not be taken offensively.¹¹⁷ Their press release also explained that as people who grew up in Oklahoma they have an appreciation for Native American culture and that is what they are trying to reflect.

The press release read in part:

Growing up in Oklahoma, we have come into contact with Native American culture institutionally our whole lives—something we are eternally grateful for. With age, we feel a deeper and deeper connection to the Native American culture that has surrounded us. Through it may not have been our own, this aesthetic has affected us emotionally in a very real and very meaningful way. Please forgive us if we innocently adorn ourselves in your beautiful things. We do so with the deepest respect. We hold a sincere reverence for and genuine spiritual connection to Native American values.¹¹⁸

On April 26, 2014, the day of Pink Pony’s performance at the Norman Music Festival,

¹¹⁷ Christina Fallin, *Press Release Regarding Headdress*. Accessed at <http://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanhatsthis/daughter-of-governor-of-oklahoma-causes-an-uproar-after-she>

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

the band posted on their Facebook page, “I heard Pink Pony was wearing full regalia tonight.”¹¹⁹ In an interview with Wilhelm Murg from *Indian Country Today* Christina Fallin said that the band heard a rumor that they were going to wear full regalia and the Facebook post was intended as a joke. Fallin goes on to say that at the time she didn’t know what regalia meant. After looking up the definition she found that the one definition of regalia is “the emblems or insignia of royalty, especially the crown, scepter, and other ornaments used at a coronation.”¹²⁰ Fallin claims that this rumor in no way was thought of as something to do with Native American regalia, like it implied to the protesters who came to their show at the Norman Music Festival later that night on April 26.¹²¹

At the Pink Pony performance protesters holding signs with messages like “Not a Fashion Accessory,” “Culture is not a Costume,” and “Don’t Trend on Me” stood next to the stage. Concert attendees have reported that Fallin wore a Native American shawl with the word “sheep” which, they believed, was aimed at the protesters who Pink Pony claimed were blindly protesting without knowledge.¹²² In the *Indian Country Today* interview Fallin said that the shawl was in fact a cape that could be belted. The word “sheep” was not used to reflect specifically on the protesters, but rather commented on anyone who will “accept lies without proof.”¹²³ In the interview she also addresses the claim that she was “war dancing” to a Native American drumbeat, stating that rather she

¹¹⁹ Wilhelm Murg, “Christina Fallin, in Her Own Words: ‘I’m Tired of the Misinformation’,” *Indian Country Today Media Network* (May 3, 2014). Accessed at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2014/05/02/christina-fallin-her-own-words-im-tired-misinformation-154690>

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

was just dancing how she normally dances and that she was dancing to one of the band's original songs.¹²⁴

Both Governor Mary Fallin and Norman Music Festival chair Gene Bertman released statements shortly after the Pink Pony performance that they in no way supported the actions of Pink Pony and Christina Fallin. Governor Fallin said she believed her daughter's performance at the Norman Music Festival to be inappropriate and that she does not approve of her or her band's behavior. She added that she has communicated this sentiment to her daughter.¹²⁵ Bertman's statement acknowledged that the misuse of Native American symbols and artifacts could promote religious discrimination, cultural discrimination, and racism and that the Norman Music Festival does not support these actions. One of the Norman Music Festival's missions, he said, is to bring people together rather than to divide them.¹²⁶

It is obvious that Christina Fallin's use of the headdress, and indeed the entire hipsters in headdresses movement, is not the same targeted racial stereotyping of minstrelsy, the stereotyped character acting of "Indian Outlaw," or even the caricatured sonic appropriation present in the work of contemporary hip-hop artists like Iggy Azalea who attempt to emulate the phonetics of Southern African American speech patterns. Hipsters in headdresses are playing dress-up, just as they have been taught to since childhood. When acts of cultural confusion are denounced as acts of malicious racism those accused will predictably respond with protestations of innocence,

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ K. Querry and Sarah Stewart, "Christina Fallin at Center of Norman Music Festival Protests, Festival Apologizes for Pink Pony Performance," *NewsChannel 4* (May 3, 2014). Accessed at <http://kfor.com/2014/04/28/christina-fallin-at-center-of-norman-music-festival-protests-festival-apologizes-for-pink-pony-performance/>

¹²⁶ Ibid.

confusion, and resentment. This is because the racism inherent in this sort of cultural appropriation of a minority's cultural artifacts is not deliberately present in the impetus of the act, but lies buried, inherent in the very idea of playing Indian, deep in our collective cultural unconsciousness.

For many non-Native Americans, the idea of wearing a headdress and war paint occupies much of the same place in American cultural ideology as toga parties, Halloween costumes, historical television series, and fantasy novels. Yet, for Native Americans, the use of Native clothing is more akin to someone dressing in full, faux U.S. Army regalia with a fake Purple Heart for Halloween and then being shocked when an army officer at the party is offended. In the vast majority of these cases an apology and a statement of newfound empathy are more than enough to satisfy protesters. A moment of accidental offense can actually become a moment of cultural exchange and a chance for cultural empathy, to relearn what we were taught as children, gain knowledge of another culture, and return agency of voice to a culture that has been victimized by centuries of censorship and genocide.

Indeed, the aftermath of the cultural confusion surrounding headdresses has actually included some positive movements, starting a trend of music festivals trying to educate their audiences on cultural appropriation and the negative effects of wearing Native American headdresses out of context. In May 2014, after being approached by members of the Chumash Nation, the annual "Lightning in a Bottle" music festival in Bradley, California, decided to educate their audience on the ramifications of wearing headdresses. "The Do LaB," which runs the "Lightning in a Bottle" music festival, sent an email to concertgoers and also included a page on their website about how taking off

the headdress is the true show of respect for Native Americans and their culture, not the other way around.

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION—APPRECIATION OR DISRESPECT?

If a Native person sees you in that headdress, will you feel awkward? Do you feel you are simply borrowing from a culture's style because you think it's awesome or that it's a harmless case of flattery?

Sporting that headdress or other imitation accessories that were not received through cultural rights or permission and the understanding that comes with it, means being a walking representative of 500+ years of colonialism and racism.

We embrace raw, creative, and authentic self-expression. But by embracing the current tribal trends you aren't asserting yourself as an individual, you are situating yourself comfortably amongst a culture of power that continues to oppress Native peoples.

TAKING OFF THE HEADDRESS IS ABOUT RESPECTING THE REALITIES FACED BY NATIVE PEOPLES TODAY.

Native peoples are still here, fighting for basic human & religious rights, and for respect. But because the majority of society learns about Native cultures in textbooks, cartoons, and movies, the realities they face and even their existence remains invisible. At Halloween, "Indian costumes" are sold alongside Spiderman, mermaids, and fictional characters. Many of us grew up playing cowboys and indians or watching sports that have indian mascots. These experiences support the entitlement of non-native people to reenact our storybook versions of exotic, romanticized stereotypes (noble savage, warriors, pristine environmentalists, shamans or magic indians). It is a kind of American Indian image painted by white oppressors. So sporting that headdress means being a walking representative of 500+ years of colonialism and racism, perpetuating stereotypes that native people have been fighting against for just as long.¹²⁷

Russell Ward, the publicist for "Lightning in a Bottle," states that the festival is not enforcing a ban on headdresses, but rather trying to educate those who in an effort to

¹²⁷ "Headdresses at LIB," Lightning in a Bottle.org. Accessed at <http://lightninginabottle.org/info/headdresses-cultural-appropriation/>

“honor” Native Americans unintentionally offend.¹²⁸ The website Beyond Buckskin.com is also taking a different approach to changing the culture of wearing headdresses. Beyond Buckskin is a website dedicated to empowering Native American artists and designers that allows them to create historically relevant and contemporary-designed pieces of clothing and art. By promoting authenticity and creativity in its designs, Beyond Buckskin also forges social relationships and cultural appreciation.¹²⁹ In April 2014, on the eve of the summer concert season, Beyond Buckskin posted a page on how to wear Native-inspired clothing without wearing a headdress. The page header reads, “Fest Fashion Sans Headdress: How to do Coachella/Native-Inspired Fashion Right.”¹³⁰ The website featured items that were all made by Native artists and designers saying that everything was created to be appreciated by people of all backgrounds. Starting at only \$22.00, some pieces featured on Beyond Buckskin were beaded sunglasses by Plains Cree and Métis artist Candace Halcro, a fringed bag designed by Dene artist Nathalie Waldman, and a chopped-up deconstructed OxDx tee made by Navajo artist Jared Yazzie.¹³¹

Other music festivals have taken a more strict policy. On July 23, 2014, the Canadian Bass Coast Festival posted on Facebook that it was banning attendees from wearing anything resembling a headdress. The Facebook post reads:

¹²⁸ Amy Stretten, “Finally a Music Festival Bans Native American Headdresses,” *Fusion* (May 14, 2014). Accessed at <http://fusion.net/story/5637/finally-a-music-festival-bans-native-american-headdresses/>

¹²⁹ “Beyond Buckskin: About Native American Fashion.” Accessed at www.beyondbuckskin.com/p/about_16.html

¹³⁰ “Fest Fashion Sans Headdress: How to Do Coachella/Native-Inspired Fashion Right,” Beyond Buckskin (April 10, 2014). Accessed at www.beyondbuckskin.com/2014/04/fest-fashion-sans-headdress-how-to-do.html

¹³¹ Ibid.

For various reasons, Bass Coast Festival is banning feathered war bonnets, or anything resembling them, onsite. Our security team will be enforcing this policy.

We understand why people are attracted to war bonnets. They have a magnificent aesthetic. But their spiritual, cultural and aesthetic significance cannot be separated.

Bass Coast Festival takes place on indigenous land and we respect the dignity of aboriginal people. We have consulted with aboriginal people in British Columbia on this issue and we feel our policy aligns with their views and wishes regarding the subject. Their opinion is what matters to us.¹³²

Bass Coast Festival, which took place on August 1–4, 2014, in Nicola Valley, British Columbia, Canada, might be setting a new trend to deter concertgoers from wearing headdresses. The Bass Coast Festival has also worked closely with the Coldwater Indian Band and Lower Nicola Indian Band to present cultural appropriation workshops that discussed how to positively appreciate aboriginal culture.¹³³ As the result of an online petition created by Daniel W. Round on change.org, the 2015 Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts decided to ban the sale of all headdresses at the festival and MTV.com has also stepped in and created a webpage titled “Here’s Why You Shouldn’t Wear a Native American Headdress.”¹³⁴

¹³² “Bass Coast Festival 2014: MUTINY,” Facebook, posted July 23, 2014. Accessed at

www.facebook.com/events/246395335571694/permalink/252142931663601/

¹³³ Zack Rota, “Why Native Headdresses No Longer Belong at Music Festivals,” Thump, July 29, 2014. Accessed at http://thump.vice.com/en_ca/article/why-native-headdresses-no-longer-belong-at-music-festivals

¹³⁴ Emma Akbareian, “Glastonbury 2015: Festival Bans Sale of Native American Headdresses,” *Independent*, October 14, 2014. Accessed at www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/news/glastonbury-festival-bans-sale-of-native-american-headdresses-9794579.html

The MTV webpage featured four questions about Native American cultural appropriation that white concertgoers might ask and provided answers by Native Americans. The four questions asked and addressed were:

1. What does wearing a headdress mean?
2. Why can't I wear a headdress?
3. Can I wear a headdress if I'm part Native American, like Pharrell?
4. How can I appreciate Native American culture without being offensive?¹³⁵

In response to question one, Dennis Zotigh (cultural specialist, National Museum of the American Indian) said,

Both feathers and face paint have purpose and often spiritual significance depending on tribal protocol and individual interpretation. In Native cultures, both feathers and face paint are earned through actions and deeds that bring honor to both tribes and nations. Individuals [outside the community] who wear feathers or face paint were not given the rights or permissions to wear them. This is analogous to casually wearing a Purple Heart or Medal of Honor that was not earned.¹³⁶

The point highlighted by Dennis Zotigh is one that might resonate with all of us. A United States military decoration is an award given to a person who has shown outstanding service and whose work is one of heroism. The Purple Heart is a military decoration that is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to honor people who were killed or wounded while serving in battle. We hold our veterans in high regard and we make sure to show our respect for those who have fought to protect our country.

¹³⁵ Brenna Ehrlich, "Here's Why You Shouldn't Wear a Native American Headdress," MTV News, June 4, 2014. Accessed at www.mtv.com/news/1837578/why-you-should-not-wear-headdresses/

¹³⁶ Ibid.

White Privilege and Singing Redface

In her classic article “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Peggy McIntosh points out that while she has been taught that racism is something that puts others at a disadvantage, she had never been taught that as result of others being at a disadvantage, those in power gain an invisible cultural advantage in almost all facets of life. McIntosh states that she believes whites are taught not to recognize white privilege because it acts as an invisible, weightless knapsack full of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, blank checks, and other tools for life.¹³⁷ But, as soon as people are made aware of their privilege, they are held accountable, which is why most people who benefit from white privilege avoid acknowledging their privilege. White Americans are not taught to see themselves as the oppressors, but as individuals who have been given the tools to seek the American dream. White Americans see themselves as the average, which others can be more like. They consider themselves to be color-blind, giving everyone the same opportunities. To further explore the benefits of white privilege, McIntosh compiled a list of daily or frequent events she has been given the benefit of. For the sake of viewing white privilege as a perpetuator of singing redface I only highlight a few of McIntosh’s benefits of the privileged:

- I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
- When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization,” I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
- I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.

¹³⁷ Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” Accessed at www.nymbp.org/reference/WhitePrivilege.pdf

- I can swear, or dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
- I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help my race will not work against me.¹³⁸

I have come to find that white privilege has become the main justification for singing redface and the use of culturally appropriated and misappropriated elements from Native American culture. I have heard excuses like, “It’s ok if [fill in the blank] because my friend is Native and he thinks it’s OK” or “I bought this headdress on an Indian reservation so it must be OK for me to wear it at concerts.” As a white female I have never been asked to clarify, articulate, or give permission for my entire race. If I disagree with another white female our opinions are often viewed equally as differing opinions. When I am asked about something pertaining to my race or gender, my answers might support other answers given, but are never viewed as a representative voice for all white women. Why is it that Native Americans are not given these same opportunities? The use of headdresses by non-Natives has become a problem because years of white privilege whispers that the artistic appropriation of other cultures is part of creative discovery, self-discovery, and individualism, rather than something that oppresses and diminishes the perceived value of headdresses in Native societies. We have come to view Native culture as something owned by American culture, a beautiful war trophy from America’s history of colonial expansion and manifest destiny to be

¹³⁸ Ibid.

played with by our children, rather than a vibrant, living community that is as much a part of contemporary life as any other cultural lineage in contemporary America.

What Now?

Change can be a daunting concept. We learn what we are taught and we project those same concepts onto others. It is ingrained in Americans to “play Indian” and we have been taught that “acting like Indians” somehow shows respect for their culture. Native American culture is deep, varied, unique, fascinating, and has long inspired artists and musicians alike. For many, the small glimpses into Native American culture only further spur the desire to play “Cowboys and Indians” and to watch movies about what one might have thought was a majestic and dying race. We are not taught about different Native American nations with regard to their sovereignty, nor are we taught about individualized cultural Native American identity in a modern societal context. How, both as a society and as individuals, are we expected to change when the stereotypical Indian is all we see?

The cultural confusion that dominates our understanding of Native culture is a patchwork blanket of misinformation from centuries of colonial propaganda, but now non-Native Americans have the opportunity to learn something different. Now is the time to let Native Americans speak for themselves. We live in a time where people around the world can use social media to create awareness and protest injustices. Hashtags like #NotYourMascot, #ChangeTheName, #IdleNoMore, and #RockYourMocs were created by Native Americans to promote this change and gain agency over the representation of Native Americans in popular culture.

Discrimination toward Native American women has also been embedded in our modern culture. The hashtags #MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women) and #VAWA (Violence Against Women's Act) create awareness about shockingly common violent acts against Native women and raise awareness and advocate for the justice for the families of missing and murdered Native American women. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become public forums to address these issues.¹³⁹ The advocacy group "Save Wiyabi Project" was created as a social media campaign to assist in the Violence Against Women Act and is continually developing projects to develop community-based solutions for Native women in both tribal and urban areas. By using social media, "Save Wiyabi Project" has a space for open and respectful dialogue. It can be a place where people can voice their opinions, share their stories, and create a positive and accurate image of Native women.¹⁴⁰ Through their Facebook page a link is provided for the website called "Save Wiyabi Mapping Project." At missingsisters.crowdmap.com a map provides locations for unsolved and solved murders, unsolved undetermined deaths, unidentified remains, and unsolved missing cases of indigenous women in the United States and Canada. They invite submissions from anyone either through email, filling out the form provided on the website, or by sending a tweet with the hashtag #OpThunderbird, #MMIW, or #MissingsIsMap. The more submissions that are provided, the more these cases will further illustrate the

¹³⁹ Taté Walker, "8 Top Social Media Conversations Starting With #RockYourMocs," *Native Peoples* November-December 2014. Accessed at <http://www.nativepeoples.com/Native-Peoples/November-December-2014/Going-Social/>

¹⁴⁰ "About Save Wiyabi Project," Facebook. Accessed at www.facebook.com/Save.Wiyabi.Project/info?tab=page_info

outstanding and serious problem in the United States and Canada.¹⁴¹ To show their support more than fifty Canadian artists spoke out against violence against Indigenous women in a one-hundred-page anthology edited by Canadian novelist and short story author Joseph Boyden. The ebook *Kwe: Standing with Our Sisters* was published on December 16, 2014, and was created out of frustration and sorrow in the wake of yet another violent assault upon a First Nations woman in November 2014. This book is a call to action saying a nation is only as good as it is strong and if people are mistreated that the country will be filled with anger.¹⁴² *Kwe*, which means “women,” but more specifically “life-giver” or “life carrier” in the Ojibwe language, speaks to women’s place at the center of First Nations society.¹⁴³

Native musicians are also using their music to replace singing redface tropes and to re-invent the popular image of Native Americans. The path forged by Native artists such as Buffy Sainte-Marie, XIT, Tom Bee, Keith Secola, Russell Means, Rita Coolidge, Robbie Robertson, Ulali, Pura Fé, John Trudell, Floyd Westerman, Joanne Shenandoah, Litefoot, and Blackfire has created a space for contemporary Native American musicians. Idle No More, a Native American sovereignty and environmental movement that began in Canada and “calls on all people to join in a peaceful revolution, to honour Indigenous sovereignty, and to protect the land and water,”¹⁴⁴ has released *Idle No More: Songs for Life Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*, an ongoing series of free downloadable

¹⁴¹ “Missing or Unsolved Murders of Indigenous Sisters,” Save Wiyabi Mapping Project. Accessed at <https://missingsisters.crowdmap.com/page/index/1>

¹⁴² “Kwe: Standing with Our Sisters,” on Indigo bookseller website. Accessed at www.chapters.indigo.ca/en-ca/books/kwe-kwe/9780143194910-item.html?ikwid=joseph%20boyden%20kwe&ikwsec=Home&ikwidx=0

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ “Idle No More,” accessed at <http://www.idlenomore.ca>

compilations of songs by artists who support the vision of Idle No More. The MTV World's music documentary series *Rebel Music* explores real stories told through the medium of young Native Americans' music, and the message that holds true is "get your music out there." Soundcloud, YouTube, CBC Radio 3, and self-release platforms have allowed these artists to be heard. Now coming to the forefront are groups like A Tribe Called Red, Tanya Tagaq, Wab Kinaw, Supaman, Frank Waln, Inez Jasper, Sihasin, Tall Paul, Jesse "Red Eagle" Robbins, Naát'áanii Means, and Mike Cliff a.k.a "Witko."

Due to contemporary Native American agency, the popularity of Native American artists, and the ease and immediacy with which the internet allows societies to react to social injustice and acts of misrepresentation, the chance is finally here to expose the centuries-old structure of Native American cultural misappropriation. It is my hope that the analysis and examples in this thesis will serve as tools for the agents of social change, and that the cultural instances of singing redface that seemed so integral to my childhood as an American will eventually be seen as an embarrassing and strange look into a racist past that future generations will struggle to understand.

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