Not Your Grandfather's Horse: Automobiles Performing the Trickster in Modern and Contemporary Work by Artists from Plains Cultures

By

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NOT YOUR GRANDFATHER'S HORSE:
AUTOMOBILES PERFORMING THE TRICKSTER IN MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY WORK BY ARTISTS FROM PLAINS CULTURES

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Abstract: The automobile is a recurring motif among modern and contemporary Native American artists that has gone severely understudied. By examining the use of the automobile motif by Native American artists from Plains tribes as well as the methods by which Native American artists have coopted automobile culture to expand their audiences, I will demonstrate that the automobile motif in Native American art functions as a "trickster" figure. In this "trickster shift," the automobile captures the attention of an audience through appeal to stereotype and absurdity only to reverse expectations and promote greater consideration of the other. In the creation of such work, Native artists claim the automobile as a Native American space and elevate the automobile beyond its mundanity by transforming an everyday object into a sign of cultural continuity and an embodiment of Native American historicity.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In *Nation on Wheels: The Automobile in American Culture Since 1945* (2009), author Mark S. Foster characterized Native American automobile ownership before 1945 as negligible on the basis that economic conditions limited access to automobiles to a largely Euro-American consumer base.[1] It is true that historic numbers concerning Native American automobile ownership are scarce, and that the focus of record keeping in the automobile market was undoubtedly on the purchase of new cars by the Euro-American majority. Few records of early aftermarket automobile purchases by individuals explicitly identified as Native are likely to have been preserved to the current date. Who, after all, keeps records of used car sales on hand a century or so after the fact or takes the time to record the racial identity of participants in such an exchange? However, outside the realm of corporate record keeping, early Native American ownership of automobiles was well attested to by non-Native observers. Journalists writing on an early powwow in Iowa noted with a hint of amazement the presence of cars from states across the Northern and Southern Great Plains[2]; Osage families who rode in sedans driven by chauffeurs and young Osage who sped down dusty country backroads in luxury coupes both in both prose and poetry from the 1920's.[3] In fact, the role of the automobile in modern Native American culture has been referenced in a variety of media including film, hide painting, collage, printmaking, sculpture, ledger and photography. Further, the status of automobile culture as a shared factor in the Native and non-Native cultures of North America has allowed modern and contemporary Native American artists and even tribal governments a space in which to create art and material culture with mutually intelligible messages. This study is centered on the use of the automobile motif in fine art by artists and makers from Native American communities like the Crow, Comanche, Sioux, and other tribes that have been subject to the "horse culture" stereotype of Native Americans from the North American Great Plains. It also includes popular films with Native American casts that were produced by Native people or created to present Native American viewpoints and government produced material culture like Tribal-issued automotive license plates. The rigorous academic examination of these objects yields meaningful insight into the relationships of both the individual Native American artists and Native American societies to the automobile.

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[1] Mark S. Foster, *Nation on Wheels : The Automobile Culture in America since 1945* (Belmont, California: Thomson, Wadsworth, 2003), 30–31.

These "plains" tribes have historically been defined as those Native American cultures that resided in the areas of the United States popularly termed the northern and southern Great Plains. Also included are tribes like the Coeur D'Alene that occupied liminal spaces bordering the Great Plains. Such groups also participated in the shared horse-buffalo-raiding economic system of the historic Great Plains. The horse culture stereotype has its roots in the adoption of the horse by Plains Indians in the seventeenth century and their subsequent creation of economic systems that revolved around the use of horses in hunting and the value of horses as a trade good in a commercial network (wherein Plains Tribes played the role of middlemen) that spanned the North American continent. This considered, I am critical of the term “horse culture,” as it essentializes the relationship between the tribes of the Great Plains and the horse. While it is true that the horse revolutionized economic activity on the Plains, Native cultures thrived in the region millennia prior to the reintroduction of horses to North America in the sixteenth century.[4]

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[2] "Iowa Indians - Heap Big Pow Wow," *Iowa Magazine*, 1918, 3–7.

[3] Philip Joseph. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 136–82.

Only a limited number of artists from a limited number of tribes can be included in this study. I have chosen to include work from artists who utilize the automobile motif or have a body of work that is in some way directly related to the automobile. Because of a shared historic economic system and similar cultural-survival strategies in shared geographic and political conditions, the cultures identified as plains tribes have a history of cultural exchange extending back at least to the introduction of the horse to the Great Plains region. I do not expect my thesis to result in a perfect and irrefutable description of the use of the automobile motif in each individual tribe deemed a “horse culture,” the scope of this thesis means that the conclusions I draw are more justifiably applicable to artists from culturally related entities like the Plains tribes than to Native American artists as a whole.

Among modern Native Americans, it could be argued that the automobile has achieved a level of economic and cultural importance which is comparable to that historically held by the horse in plains cultures. Prior research has revealed that the automobile has been economically important as a means of enabling one’s participation in the industrial and later post-industrial economic structures of Euro-American society. More importantly, it has been a tool of cultural reclamation and political expression. In the early 20th century, the automobile enabled Native Americans to utilize the highway system in conjunction with pre-existent networks of intertribal social interaction to create modern cultural institutions that operate at a pan-Native American level. These cultural institutions prefigured the development of pan-Native American political organizations like the American Indian Movement that continue to give voice to Native American desires for political autonomy within the United States and Canada. Later the automotive law became a significant legal battleground in which allowed Tribal governments to reaffirm their independence from the States in which their reservations lay. Thus the automobile is culturally significant to both twentieth and twenty-first century Native American history.

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[4] George P. Horse Capture et al., *A Song for the Horse Nation : Horses in Native American Cultures* (Washington: D.C. : National museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2006), 7.

This prior research has led me to three major questions I would like to address in my thesis: was the culturally significant role of the automobile accompanied by an individual significance that is reflected in the work of Native artists; what symbolism has the automobile taken on as a motif in the work of Native American artists; how has automobile culture been approached by both Native artists and Native governments? The topic of the automobile motif in Native American art has not yet attracted much academic attention but touches upon increasingly important areas of Native American history including the relation of Native Americans and technology and Native Americans in the early twentieth century. I will address my questions through the traditional approaches of iconographic and formal analysis of subject materials that include painting, sculpture, and film, as well as the study of Native American objects produced for the tourist trade, and material culture produced by tribal governments. By incorporating the study of such under-addressed, often utilitarian, materials, this study will further academic understanding of how early twentieth century Native artists encoded such material with symbolic significance. Similarly, by studying the use of art by Native governments this study will further academic understanding of the political function of visual art in contemporary Native American cultures. The knowledge garnered from this study will be of special use to scholars specializing in Native American studies, particularly Native American Art. In a more general sense, the study will be useful to art historians studying the representation of technology in the art of modern cultures. This study centers on how Native Americans have utilized the automobile motif to express their relationship with said technology. As such, it can be applied alongside existing texts on how the automobile-Native American relationship has been presented by outsiders in order to produce a more complete record of the presence of the automobile in Native American art.

The first three content chapters of this text answer questions regarding the historic significance of the automobile, cultural representation of the automobile, and the use of automobile culture as a means to produce art with greater public visibility. Each of these subjects will be addressed through case studies focusing on the work of relevant artists and art utilized by various tribal government entities. Chapter one addresses the early work of Horace Poolaw (Kiowa), a photographer active prior to World War II whose work often captured the automobile as accessory to contemporary youth culture or as a recurring element of the contemporary cultural landscape. His art demonstrates that even prior to World War II, the automobile had a role in Native American society that was significant enough for artists to take notice of. In chapter two I examine works by Dallin Maybee, Arthur Amiotte, Jay Polite Labor, and Wendy Red Star, all of whom have utilized the automobile as a motif in their work. The way in which the motif is used suggests that the automobile is attached by both artists and society as a whole to ideas of cultural continuity. This further underlines the degree to which the automobile has become part of Native American cultural property, a term referring to the objects and places with which a culture associates itself. The third and final content chapter of the thesis will examine the ways in which modern and contemporary Native American artists and governments have utilized the physical and legal infrastructure that evolved alongside automobile culture as a site in which cultural and political statements could reach a wider and more diverse audience than might otherwise be expected.

The methodologies I will use to examine the works in this essay include both iconographic and formal analysis informed by my knowledge of the performance of the Trickster Shift, a philosophical concept discussed in the context of First Nations (indigenous Canadian) art by prior scholarship. As explained in Allan J. Ryan's *Trickster Shift* (1999), reading the "trickster shift" entails an understanding of two paradoxical understandings of the Trickster. In popular culture and among ethnographers, the Trickster is most often described as a cosmological being often identifiable in folklore by a number of traits including amorality, mischievous actions, constant wandering, and insatiable hunger. Such figures, identified as embodiments of the Trickster, may be deities, demi-gods, mortal men, animals, or a being capable of shifting between one or more of these forms. Such figures appear in the cosmologies of peoples from across North America *(Fig. A1)*. However, such static definitions of Trickster figures conflict with how the concept is understood by Native intellectuals like Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa). Vizenor suggests that, rather than being a static being like a deity as conceived of in Western thought, the Trickster is more of a philosophical concept whose embodiment in a given form is dependent upon that object, animal, or human's performance of being the Trickster. Because of this, the Trickster's presence need not be announced by direct appeal to the forms the Trickster takes in cosmology. The Trickster performance purposefully provokes a sudden and dramatic shift in the perspective and political position of those who observe the performer. Further, the performing object will often "proclaim" itself the Trickster in a way that is immediately recognizable to an informed viewer. [5]

Historically, performers of the trickster in Native cultures were often ceremonial "clowns" who purposefully embraced impropriety during otherwise serious ceremonial functions. Some Plains tribes also included individuals who adopted long-term roles as public performers of the Trickster, such "contrary clowns" adopted lifestyles entirely contrary to that deemed normal or appropriate. Paradoxically, the actions of these figures served to reinforce both ceremony and social contract. To external observers, the irony, unexpectedness, or outright absurdity of the trickster clown’s actions made the importance of given ceremonies or normative beliefs stand out in harsh relief. It may be easiest to understand this mechanic as a form of social “schadenfreude,” wherein the self-humiliating actions of the Trickster can make one thankful for their own observance of the proscribed social order. Conversely, when the Trickster is inflicting humiliation upon another (often of higher rank) it serves to underline the humanity and fallibility of this figure. In this way, the historic performance of the Trickster also enforced humility. Building on this history, contemporary indigenous artists have often performed the Trickster as a way to deconstruct, subvert, or rehabilitate romanticized narratives of what it means to be “Indian” in modern society. It is in the process of this performance that contemporary Native artists often confront a major paradox of indigenous modernity; in order to neutralize harmful romantic narratives replicated in popular culture it is sometimes necessary to first entice audiences with purposeful appeals to stereotyped imagery.[6] *(Fig. A2)*

---

[5] Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift : Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 3–12.

The first imagess to portray relationships between Native Americans and automobiles were likely those created by non-Natives for the purposes of advertisement, brand recognition, and amusement. Such imagery was (and arguably remains) commodifiable because juxtaposing Native Americans with automobiles in the ostensibly indexical medium of photography had the potential to both affirm and contradict the popular narrative of the “disappearing Indian.” An observer could take imagery such as the frequently reproduced photograph of Geronimo wearing Euro-American clothes in a 1904 Locomobile Model-C *(Fig. A3)* as proof that the oft romanticized Native American warrior lived on into modernity; but the image also served as evidence of the inevitable success of assimilationist policies, the same could be said of other commodified images of the same subject that emerged in subsequent decades. Native American–Automobile photography in the decades after the Geronimo photograph continued to embrace a commercial bent. The photograph of Native people from Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show posed in two automobiles *(Fig. A7)* is a good example of how such objects typically appealed to audiences. Native people, posed in traditional attire, were photographed with the then new technology of the automobile. The novelty of such contrasting imagery was apparently successful enough to be picked up by advertisers, especially those selling automobiles.

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[6] Ibid., 13–23.

The commodification of Native American imagery and the names of Native American individuals and cultures by automobile producers has gradually receded over the last century but still exists with models like the Jeep Grand Cherokee or Winnebago trailers and RV's.[7] *(Fig. A6)* Branding and ad campaigns of this type are part of longstanding tradition appropriation that began with advertisements like the turn-of-the-century photo of Native men in warbonnets posed in a Toledo Automobile *(Fig. A4).* Similarly, the Pontiac Corporation (itself named after the historic chief) advertised it's 1928 Pontiac Six Sedan *(Fig. A5)* by appropriating the likeness and romanticized qualities of a noble but apparently antiquated Native warrior. These advertisements were effective not because non-Native consumers were unaware of contemporary automobile ownership, it was widely observed that many Osage were automobile owners and enthusiasts. Rather, observation of actual automobile ownership by Native people in the early 20th century was often viewed as incongruous; a comical or even distressing reality that non-Native observers had to resolve by recontextualizing Native American automobile culture within the relatively safe confines of preexisting stereotypes. An automobile (particularly an expensive model) in Native hands was a sign of irresponsibility with money rather than economic success. To use an automobile in the simple act of meeting with friends and family for a roadside cookout; evidence that one was still, at heart, a barbarian roasting meat over an open fire in the wilderness.[8]

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[7] Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 138.

[8] Alexandra. Harmon, *Rich Indians : Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History.* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2013), 171–87.

This project will reveal that, beginning in the early twentieth century with the initial spread of the automobile to Native American communities, Native Artists in the United States have been performing the Trickster and creating work in which the automobile performs the role of Trickster. In doing so, artists have exploited the automobile's presence in both Native and non-Native culture, transforming seemingly mundane objects like the automobile into performers with the power to subvert and rehabilitate romanticized narratives of what it is to be a "modern Indian" through biting irony and the occasional embrace of absurdity.

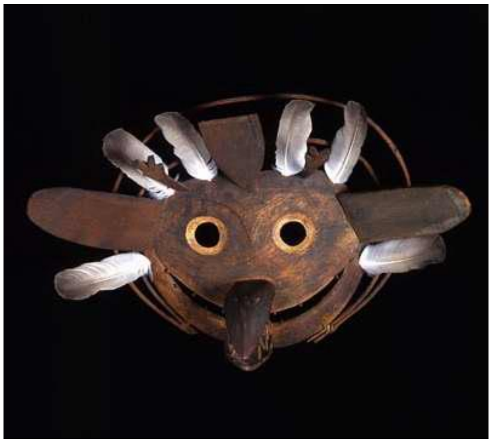


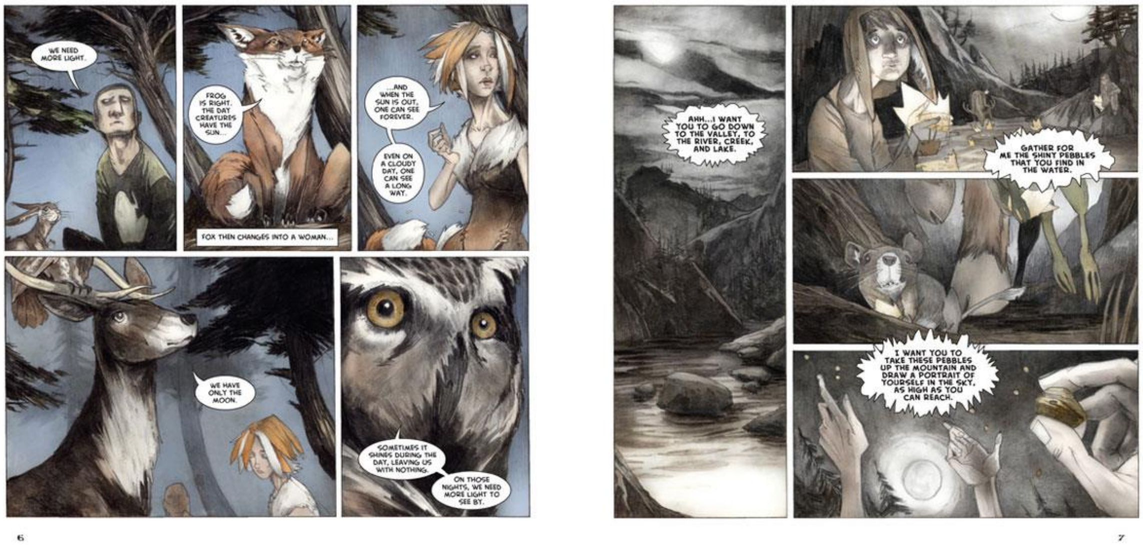
Fig. A1

Left: Central Yup'ik Craftsman, *Raven Mask of Doolagiak*, c.1911

The Raven is one of the forms of the Trickster in Yup’ik cosmology.

Below: Matt Dembicki, Excerpt from *Trickster*, Graphic Novel, 2010

A collection of Trickster Tales as told by contemporary Native American storytellers from across North America and illustrated by non-Native artist Matt Dembicki.


WE NEED MORE LIGHT.
FROG IS RIGHT. THE DAY CREATURES HAVE THE SUN...
FOX THEN CHANGES INTO A WOMAN...
...AND WHEN THE SUN IS OUT, ONE CAN SEE FOREVER.
EVEN ON A CLOUDY DAY, ONE CAN SEE A LONG WAY.
WE HAVE ONLY THE MOON.
SOMETIMES IT SHINES DURING THE DAY, LEAVING US WITH NOTHING.
ON THOSE NIGHTS, WE NEED MORE LIGHT TO SEE BY.
6
AHH...I WANT YOU TO GO DOWN TO THE VALLEY, TO THE RIVER, CREEK, AND LAKE.
GATHER FOR ME THE SHINY PEBBLES THAT YOU FIND IN THE WATER.
I WANT YOU TO TAKE THESE PEBBLES UP THE MOUNTAIN AND DRAW A PORTRAIT OF YOURSELF IN THE SKY, AS HIGH AS YOU CAN REACH.
7

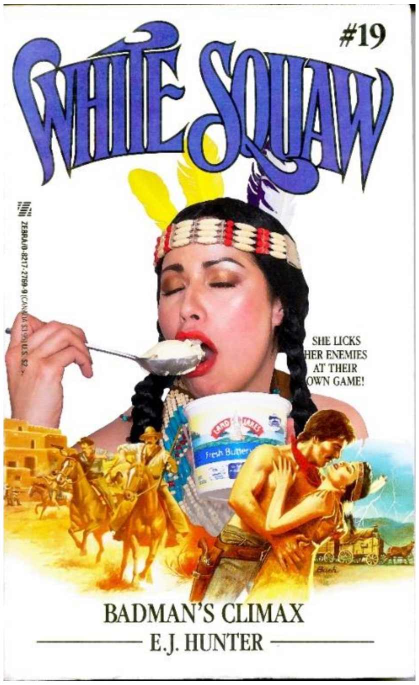

#19
WHITE SQUAW
SHE LICKS HER ENEMIES AT THEIR OWN GAME!
BADMAN'S CLIMAX
E.J. HUNTER

Fig. A2

Left: Wendy Red Star, "Badman's Climax," 2013

The Artist has parodied a variety of areas in which Native women have been fetishized in consumer pop-culture including serial western novels and the sale of certain dairy products.

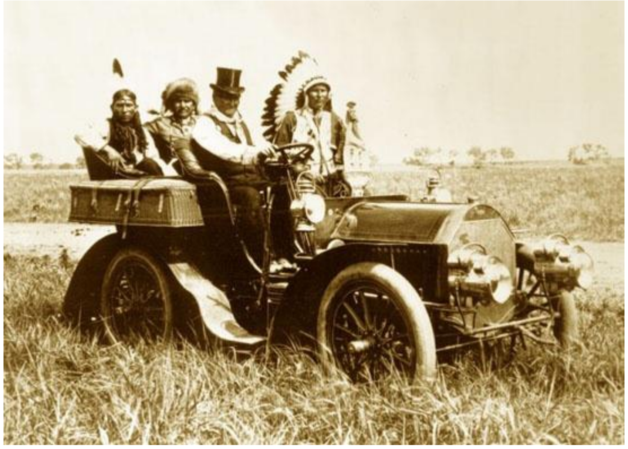


Fig. A3

Above: Geronimo at the Wheel of a 1904 Locomobile Model-C owned by Miller's 101 Ranch, 1905, Fort Sill, Oklahoma

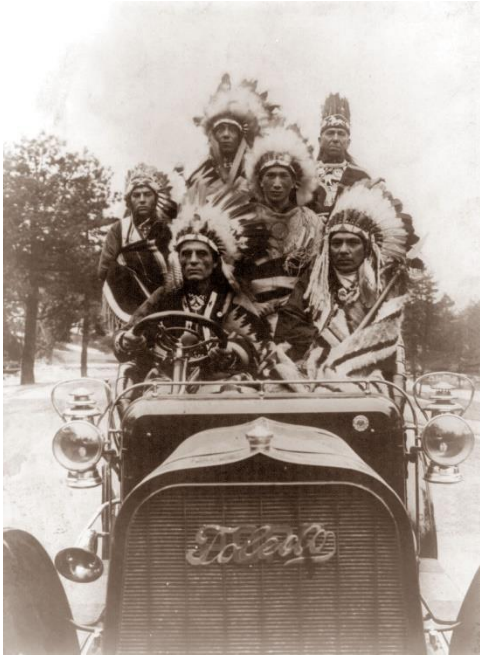
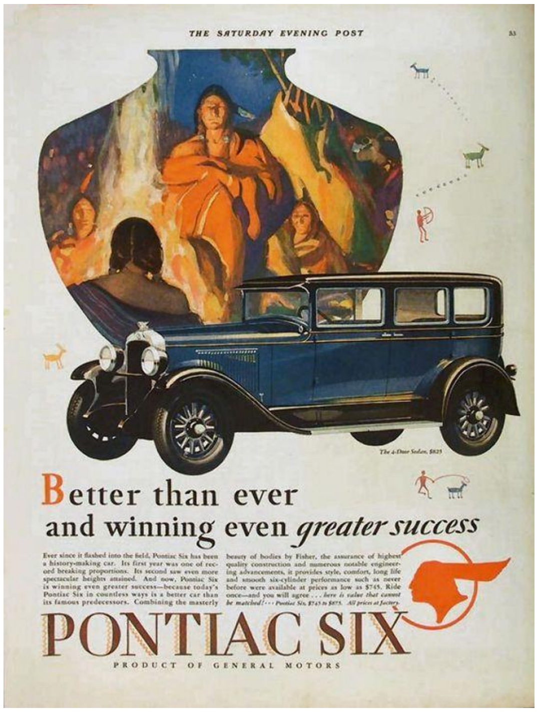


Fig. A4

Above: Unidentified Native men in a Toledo Automobile, c.1905


THE SATURDAY EVENING POST
33
The 4-Door Sedan, $825
Better than ever
and winning even greater success
PONTIAC SIX
PRODUCT OF GENERAL MOTORS

Ever since it flashed into the field, Pontiac Six has been a history-making car. Its first year was one of record breaking proportions. Its second saw even more spectacular heights attained. And now, Pontiac Six is winning even greater success—because today's Pontiac Six in countless ways is a better car than its famous predecessors. Combining the masterly beauty of bodies by Fisher, the assurance of highest quality construction and numerous notable engineering advancements, it provides style, comfort, long life and smooth six-cylinder performance such as never before were available at prices as low as $745. Ride once—and you will agree . . . *here is value that cannot be matched!* · · · *Pontiac Six, $745 to $875. All prices at factory.*

Fig. A5

Above: Ad for 1928 Pontiac Six, 1927

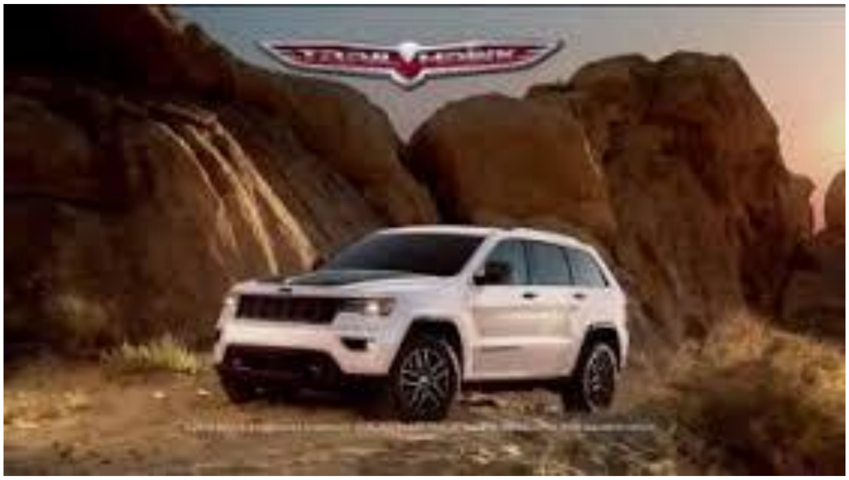


Fig. A6

Above: Still Frame, Television Ad, 2017 Jeep Cherokee *Trail Hawk*

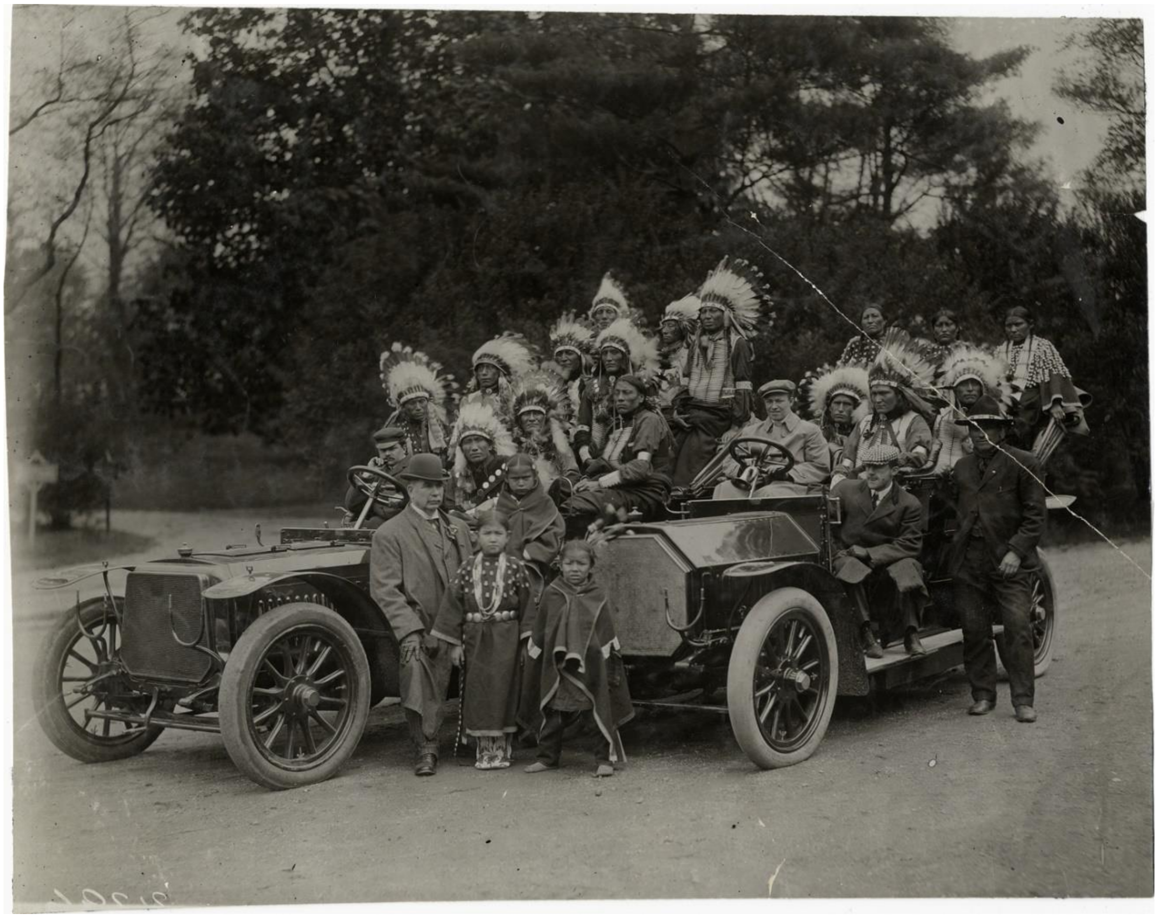


Fig. A7

View of American Indian men, women and children posing with drivers in two cars for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, Handwritten on back: "Wild West Shows--Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, 1908."

Stamped on back: "Spooner and Wells, 1931 Broadway, New York, duplicates any time, enlargements all sizes, tel. 3472-3473 Col., credit appreciated."

CHAPTER II

Horace Poolaw: Capturing the Early Native American Automobile

The photographer Horace Poolaw, whose Kiowa name was Pybo, was born in Mountain View, Oklahoma on March 13, 1906. Poolaw's family was large by today's standards; at the time of his birth it included Poolaw's four full-siblings born of his mother Tsomah, his father Gui po-lau also called Kiowa George, Kiowa George's other wife Keahtinekeah, and her three children who were Horace's half-siblings. Although the family eventually chose to move into a timber house built with money from the federal government, Horace was born in a tipi erected on the family property. Poolaw developed an early interest in photography. As a teenager, he obtained several small cameras during brief apprenticeships to photographers working in the Mountain View area and enrolled himself in a correspondence course in order to learn how to hand color his work with photo oils.[9] By 1926, the twenty year old Horace Poolaw had evidently developed a degree of skill with the photographic medium; Poolaw sought out George Long, a recently arrived non-native landscape photographer who hired him in the capacity of a more official apprenticeship than was possible in his teenage years.[10]

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[9] *War Bonnets, Tin Lizzies, and Patent Leather Pumps: Kiowa Culture in Transition, 1925-1955.* (Stanford, California: Stanford University, 1990), 12.

While Poolaw never actively promoted himself as an artist, he embraced an identity as a professional photographer. He often marked the back of his photographs with his signature and sometimes produced postcards that he marketed to the general public. The family photos and portraits which he produced for the Kiowa community have often stayed among these families. Poolaw's photography business was never able to independently support his family. At various times in his life, Poolaw worked agricultural and service jobs while continuing to practice professional photography. His professional career lasted from the 1920s until the 1970s when Poolaw's failing eyesight forced him to limit his photography to family. For the entirety of his career, Poolaw's photography focused mainly on subjects that were of immediate concern to his family and the Kiowa community. He photographed a range of family subjects and public events but also turned his lens to intensely personal subject matter such as funerals and religious ceremonies.[11] Poolaw spoke very little about himself. His artistic philosophy might be summed up in a quote wherein Poolaw suggested to a friend that he "did not wish to be remembered for his photography," but rather that his photography might help his people to "remember themselves." True to this sentiment, Poolaw produced a considerable amount of work, much of which remained on unprocessed negatives until the first gallery presentation of his art in 1989, and left little personal commentary regarding his photos.[12]

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[10] Laura E. Smith, *Horace Poolaw, Photographer of American Indian Modernity* (Lincoln ; London ; University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 96.

[11] Nancy Marie Mithlo et al., *For a Love of His People the Photography of Horace Poolaw ; [in Conjunction with the Exhibition For a Love of His People: The Photography of Horace Poolaw, Opening at the National Museum of the American Indian, New York, on August 9, 2014]* (New Haven [u.a.: Yale Univ. Press, 2014), 15–27.

[12] Ibid., 1–10, 49–56.

Photos taken by Poolaw from as early as the 1920s demonstrate a relationship between Native Americans and automobiles that directly contradicts the commonly held idea that Native people had only a negligible degree of interaction with the automobile prior to government urbanization efforts during and after World War II.[13] The semi-documentary nature of Poolaw's photography establishes him as a sort of "cultural historian" whose approach to the production of photos is shared by many contemporary Native American artists. Finally, the conventions with which Poolaw captured the automobile: his emphases on humor, the relationship of the automobile to family, and the subversive potential of the technology, are present in many later examples of the motif in Native American art. Together, these traits suggest that Poolaw is an early example, possibly the first, of a Native American artist recording his observation of the important role of automobiles in his society and investing the automobile with deep culturally relevant symbolism as part of his role as a record keeper. The means by which this symbolism was delivered is known as the "trickster shift," the act of representing decidedly profound truths via ostensibly mundane objects and acts.[14] By reading into the social context of some of Poolaw's early photography it is possible to follow his "shift" and understand that the automobile, even at this early date, was being utilized by Native artists in a symbolic role as a sign of membership in modernity.

The Trickster lending his namesake to the "trickster shift" is a concept personified in the cosmologies of Indigenous American cultures from Canada to Central America. The names, personality, and form of the trickster vary between cultures and even within single bodies of oral literature; depending on its role in a given story the trickster can be wise or a fool, helpful or unobliging, and heroic or villainous. Very often, the trickster makes itself known to people through jokes or pranks. However, the intent of the trickster's antics are often to help people gain a greater understanding of the world and its many multiplicities and paradoxes.[15] The humorous antics of the trickster, in the form of "clown" figures, can play a vital role in ceremonies of particular seriousness, he helps people to remember that the revelation of the sacred comes through surprise, upset, and reversal. Unsurprisingly, the particularly important acts of childbirth and generational renewal are often associated with the trickster.[16]

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[13] Foster, *Nation on Wheels : The Automobile Culture in America since 1945*, 30–31.
[14] Ryan, *The Trickster Shift : Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, 3–12.

Poolaw's photography can be interpreted as an alternative narrative of contemporary Native American life to that told in contemporary anthropological photography and art whose goals were often to preserve images of Native American life and cultural practices in a manner that obscured the chronological and geographic contexts of the Native Americans depicted therein. The illusory state of timelessness apparent in much of the work of photographers like Edward Curtis[17] or arguably, in the monotone backgrounds of paintings by the Kiowa Six, whose work was created for largely non-native audiences, allowed non-native viewers to imagine the contexts in which given subjects existed. Unsurprisingly, the process of creating imagined contexts could easily draw on longstanding stereotypes like the "disappearing Indian" or "noble savage" which have historically been replicated in Euro-American popular culture.

The comparability of Poolaw's work to that of either Curtis or the Kiowa Six is immediately evident upon examination. Edward Curtis' *Cheyenne Child* (*Fig. B3*, 1927), was taken in western Oklahoma on land that had previously been part of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Reservation, a geographic area immediately adjacent to the lands of the former Kiowa,

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Franchot. Ballinger, *Living Sideways : Tricksters in American Indian Oral Traditions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 21.

[17] Edward Sheriff. Curtis, Christopher M. Lyman, and Vine. Deloria, *The Vanishing Race and Other Illusions : Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis* (New York; Washington: Pantheon books ; Smithsonian Institute, 1982), 68–73.

Comanche, Apache Reservation on which Horace Poolaw was working.[18] Curtis' *Cheyenne Child* is a full length portrait of a young girl posed against the trunk of a tree. She is dressed in traditional hide clothing with beaded boots and is set against a blurred indistinct background. Curtis' aesthetic decisions are engineered to strip the subject of context; the title *Cheyenne Child* is gender neutral as is the subject's haircut and clothing, any reference points with which we might accurately judge the size or location of the subject have been obscured or left out of frame, the only reference point we are given is the appearance and material of the subject's clothing. The confusion is further exacerbated by the possibility that Curtis edited out other clues we might have had to the context of this photo, as he was known to do on occasion during post processing.[19] Thus it is understandable that an uninformed viewer might see the girl's hide dress and from its material and appearance assume that the subject existed sometime in the 19th century rather than contemporaneously with one's self.

Poolaw's photo of *Trecil Poolaw Unap* (*Fig. B7*, 1929) ostensibly shares a similar goal to Curtis' photo, to serve as the portrait of a single subject. Trecil Poolaw is depicted leaning against a stop-sign, she wears a floral pattern skirt and blouse made of cloth. The foliage in the photo is comparable to that in Curtis' *Cheyenne Girl* but the visual fidelity of the background is preserved revealing a built-up background containing a wooden fence and a number of gable-roofed structures in the distance. In the foreground, the artist has positioned himself so that his shadow falls within the frame. Poolaw's title, *Trecil Poolaw Unap* conclusively identifies his subject by name and allows us to extrapolate her blood relation to the artist. Trecil's dress and haircut suggests at a glance that she posed for the photo in the early 20th century, the stop sign and buildings indicate that the area in which she posed was both near a road driven on by automobiles and peopled by individuals who utilized western architecture. Further, these details hint at the social context of the time, a period when the people of the region were under increased government scrutiny as a result of allotment and the subsequent build-up of mobility infrastructure. The area of the former KCA reservation had in fact become a major hub of railroads and early highway construction.[20] Poolaw's shadow figuratively places him in a position directly adjacent to Trecil, making him the secondary subject of the photo. By virtue of the assumed indexicality of the photographic medium, it establishes the piece as a record of his own contemporaneous existence with the primary subject in early 20th century Kiowa County, Oklahoma. Where Curtis purposefully erased the context of his subject Poolaw purposefully arranged his composition in such a way that future viewers could extrapolate significant details related to Trecil's place in time and geography.

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[18] Edward S. Curtis and Frederick Webb Hodge, *The North American Indian : Being a Series of Volumes Picturing and Describing the Indians of the United States and Alaska* (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1970), vol. 19.

[19] Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 75–78.

In *Being Comanche*, historian Morris Wade Foster points out that the imposition of new infrastructure and white settlers in the area made Native residents of the former Kiowa Comanche Apache reservation subject to constant observation and greater social pressure from those Natives and non-Natives that pushed greater religious and cultural conformity with Euro-American Christian ideals.[21] However, the imposition of new legal and physical infrastructure provided new spaces for the expression of personal freedoms by Native people that had not been possible under the more direct forms of suppression utilized in the nineteenth century. Prior to the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, Native people were subject to a "pass system" that required them to seek the permission of their local Bureau of Indian Affairs branch to leave the bounds of the reservation. After 1924, the citizenship of Native people made them theoretically subject to the same laws as their non-Native neighbors. We should forget neither the discriminatory enforcement of the law nor the controversial nature of imposing citizenship on people who did not necessarily desire the status, but within the new system, Native individuals could become figures of authority over both Native and non-Native people. Almost a decade after he took the Trecil portrait, Poolaw's served a stint as a highway patrolman (1937-1938) whose duty was to enforce the very laws he had documented in earlier photography. He wore a uniform, carried a gun, drove an automobile or motorcycle, and had the legal authority to enforce the law among non-Native offenders.

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[20] Morris W. Foster, *Being Comanche : A Social History of an American Indian Community* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991), 117–20.
[21] Ibid.

The "documentary" quality of Poolaw's work was evident in many of his photos. Monroe Tsatoke's 1927 portrait of the flautist Belo Cozad was copied directly from a contemporary photograph by Horace Poolaw.[22] Tsatoke's portrait places Belo Cozad alone on a flat colored background that causes Cozad to appear as if he is floating in the foreground. Like Curtis' *Cheyenne Girl,* Belo Cozad is cut off from all context. The background omitted by Tsatoke says much about the aesthetics necessary to appeal to non-native audiences. Poolaw's original places Cozad back into time and space, revealing that the flautist was actually standing in front of both a Tipi and a Ford Model-A. Two major influences on Horace Poolaw's work are named in his posthumously published biography, Poolaw's father Kiowa George and his sister-in-law Lucy Nicolar. In his capacities as a healer, intellectual, and man of affluence within the community Kiowa George served as a historian for the tribe, he kept a traditional Kiowa winter count that included the work of an earlier scholar whose contributions began in the 1830s and Kiowa George's additions which record the years up to his death in 1939. Like Kiowa George's winter count, Poolaw's construction of highly contextualized photographic narratives was an attempt to capture moments in the history of his family and community through the creation of a pictorial record of family life, celebrations, political events and events of cultural significance in Kiowa society.[23] Lucy Nicolar's (Penobscot) contributions to Horace's art reflected her early career as the New York vaudeville actor, musician, and opera singer billed as "Princess Watawwaso." After meeting Nicolar sometime before 1928, Poolaw adopted an increased focus on the purposeful manipulation of compositions reflecting the theatrical sets Nicolar had experience with. In Poolaw's work this took the form of more obviously contrived compositions such as the "Indian Lovers" tableau of Bruce Poolaw and Lucy Nicolar from 1928 *(Fig. B8)* or his portrait of Howard Edwards as the Trickster Sendeh from the mid-1950s *(Fig. B9)*.[24] The art style that emerged from this combination of influences was one in which Poolaw acted as a pictorial historian, manipulating photographic compositions in such a way as to balance aesthetic concerns with the need to communicate more significant truths about contemporary Kiowa society to future generations than might be possible through purely indexical documentary photography.

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[22] Smith, *Horace Poolaw, Photographer of American Indian Modernity*, 115–22.
[23] Ibid., 1–15.

As a consequence of his pseudo-documentary photographic technique, automobiles are a recurring feature in Horace Poolaw's work. As a young man Poolaw was directly affected by the rapid introduction of the automobile to the Mountain View region, losing a brother to a car crash in 1921 and serving a year-and–a-half term as a highway patrol officer from 1937 to 1938 *(Fig. B1)*.[25] Poolaw was unafraid to position automobiles in the backgrounds of his photography and in several cases made their Importance especially evident by using them as secondary subjects. Even innocuous details of the automobile could be folded into photographs as deeply symbolic imagery.

In Horace Poolaw's photograph of Lela Ware, Paul Zumwault, and his sister Trecil Poolaw, Zumwault's 1928 Ford Model-A Tudor Sedan *(Fig. B2)* is as much a subject of the photograph as are the people. The human subjects of the photo sit inside the automobile and lean against it while looking off to the left, a composition signifying that the relationship on display is not just that which is shared between a group of friends but the relationship between these individuals and the automobile around which they are posing. The casual, confident, and detached appearance of these individuals suggest that that they are not looking for validation from a viewer and that the automobile is a point of joint pride, communicating social status and even acting as signifier for their shared membership in contemporary youth culture. The interests and pastimes of the Kiowa youth recorded by Horace Poolaw in the 1920s and 30s shared certain similarities with the youth culture recorded in “Exiles,” a 1961 pseudo-documentary drama wherein student director Kent Mackenzie hired young Native American emigrants to Los Angeles to recreate a dramatized version of a typical twelve hours in their lives. Chief among these similarities was an emphasis on the use of the automobile in the capacity of socialization as transportation, for displays of personal affluence, and as a means to escape observation by outsiders.[26] Where the somewhat impoverished cast of “Exiles” escaped at night to the hills outside LA, Poolaw’s apparently wealthier peers appear to have traveled significantly further afield to places like Wild West Shows in New York City or the resorts of Palm Beach Florida. In physically “escaping,” these youths were avoiding the gaze of those at home, both Native and non-Native, who might judge their lifestyles.

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[24] Ibid., 47–54; Mithlo et al., *For a Love of His People the Photography of Horace Poolaw ; [in Conjunction with the Exhibition For a Love of His People: The Photography of Horace Poolaw, Opening at the National Museum of the American Indian, New York, on August 9, 2014]*, 122–23.

[25] Smith, *Horace Poolaw, Photographer of American Indian Modernity*, 32; Mithlo et al., *For a Love of His People the Photography of Horace Poolaw ; [in Conjunction with the Exhibition For a Love of His People: The Photography of Horace Poolaw, Opening at the National Museum of the American Indian, New York, on August 9, 2014]*, 37.

The clothing worn by Lela Ware and Trecil Poolaw depart significantly from the more concealing stylistic preferences of their older contemporaries in the Kiowa community, as do the women’s’ hairstyles, which draw inspiration from contemporary film stars. The particular model of automobile suggests that the individuals posing for the portrait were particularly savvy to the latest trends and economically affluent enough to participate in them. As the Model-A Tudor had only been recently been released in December of 1927 it can be concluded that at the time of this photo the automobile was a fairly recent purchase and a moderately expensive one; in 1928 a Ford Model-A Tudor cost around 500 dollars.[27] In today's currency, several thousand dollars.

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[26] Kent Mackenzie et al., *The Exiles* ([Bois-Colombes]: les Films du Paradoxe, 2010).

Further evidence of the fashion sensibilities and central role played by the automobile in contemporary youth culture can be found in a photograph *(Fig.B5)* of Lucy Nicolar, Bruce Poolaw, Justin Poolaw and several family friends taken by Horace Poolaw in Pawnee, Oklahoma on their way to New York to see Pawnee Bill's Wild West Show in the 1930s. Examining this photo, John Poolaw (grandson of Horace Poolaw) used the term "fancy Indians" as a descriptor for his grandfather's generation.[28] The individuals in the photograph confirm the accuracy of that sobriquet. The group poses in and around a 1930 Buick Sedan owned by one of the men in the group; the vehicle is from a then upmarket automobile manufacturer contemporarily popular with the royal family of Great Britain. While the license plate indicates that the owner is from NY the ornament on the front bumper reads "Palm Beach – Where Summer Spends Winter," a phrase found on a brochure advertising business and relaxation opportunities in Palm Springs, Florida. Considering the multiple road trips necessary to go between New York and Oklahoma and the ornament connected to a popular vacation business retreat in Florida, it can be concluded that the owner was financially stable enough to make long trips at least semi-regularly and had a desire to make this evident to observers. The clothing worn by the group is evidence that the group shares the stylistic preferences of the owner of the automobile, the clothes are immaculately clean, pressed, and likely expensive in their own right.

As pointed out by John Poolaw, many men and women of Horace Poolaw's generation had been born in Tipis; they grew up in the decades immediately after the massacre at Wounded

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[27] Peter. Winnewisser, *The Legendary Model A Ford : The Ultimate History of One of America's Great Automobiles* (Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 1999), 43.

[28] Mithlo et al., *For a Love of His People the Photography of Horace Poolaw ; [in Conjunction with the Exhibition For a Love of His People: The Photography of Horace Poolaw, Opening at the National Museum of the American Indian, New York, on August 9, 2014]*, 139–40.

Knee in a time of cultural upheaval when government policy was aggressive assimilation through re-education and the allotment of reservation land. They became the first generation to adopt automobiles, wear Euro-American clothing at home, and model their appearance on that of movie stars. But they still spoke Kiowa among themselves and worked to adapt cultural traditions to the conditions of modernity. The "fanciness" of Poolaw's generation was not only the way they presented themselves, but in the effortless way they moved between Native American and Euro-American society.[29] The photo suggests something important about automobiles; while it is true that they could serve as symbols of personal prestige and extensions of the fashion sensibilities of contemporary Kiowa youth, the utilitarian value of the automobile remained a vital quality. After all, what use is a luxury interior with extra passenger space if you are not taking passengers with you? The Buick Sedan in Poolaw's photo was designed to hold five adult passengers, the group included four adults and two adolescents making it plausible that the group traveled from Oklahoma to New York in that single vehicle. The increased passenger space of the Buick combined with the way in which it was being used to haul large numbers of passengers is consistent with both the stylistic preferences and typical use pattern of the "Rez Car," an informal classification denoting the sometimes decrepit vehicles driven on Indian Reservations across the United States.[30]

Horace Poolaw's photography was possibly the first time a Native American artist ascribed a significant symbolic value to the automobile as a motif. Examination of his early work demonstrates that he was utilizing the automobile a multifaceted symbol. Just as later artists would do, Poolaw often utilized the automobile in conjunction with ironic humor as a sense of Native American modernity. The conclusions we might draw from specific depictions of the automobile in Poolaw's work imply a balance between use of the automobile as a symbol of healing; a sign that native American communities were moving forward together into the future, and a symbol of subversion; an object through which Kiowa youth, in the process of negotiating their own identities, could communicate a pattern of cultural affinities that was distinct from that of the older conservative generations of Kiowa or Euro-American society.

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Michael Taylor, "Iconic Images and Ethnic Humor: The Indian Car as Ethnic Humor and Cultural Identity" (Unpublished Manuscript, n.d.), 1.

In the group portrait (*Fig. B4*,1928) of Horace's cousin Newton Poolaw, Horace's son Jerry Poolaw, and Elmer Thomas Saunkeah (the child of Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Tribal Business Council member Jasper Saunkeah) the three children are posed, tallest in the center and right feet forward, against a spare tire mounted on the trunk of a car (possibly a Chevrolet Coupe). The shadows of three adults are seen in the lower left of the frame, the head of one of the shadows touches the rear driver-side tire of the automobile. The shadows of the children merge into a larger area of shadow that stretches between the automobile they are posing against and a second car that extends beyond the right edge of the frame.

The appearance of the children is telling; the clothes they wear suggest that Poolaw wished to project an image of economic stability. Each child wears finely made, presumably expensive clothing, especially Jerry Poolaw who sports a miniature three piece pinstriped suit replete with a bowtie, wingtip shoes, and a white fedora. Collectively, the children are dressed in styles extremely similar to that which may have been preferred by their fathers. Poolaw's photography suggests that by the 1920s, most Kiowa men and women had adopted Euro-American dress, a change that may have been due to both shifting personal tastes among Kiowa adults and the considerable external pressure placed on Indian residents of the former KCA Reservation as a whole to demonstrate the adoption of Euro-American culture.[31] Politically influential figures like Thomas' father, the council member Jasper Saunkeah, would likely have faced particular pressure to outwardly display conformity with contemporary assimilationist policies. Each child's clothing could be read as a commentary on the possible social roles each child might choose to adopt as adults; Newton Poolaw wears an aviator hat reminiscent of those worn by contemporary pilots (indeed many Kiowa chose to join the Air Force in subsequent decades), Jerry Poolaw's fedora and outfit are reminiscent of those preferred by contemporary young men of affluence, Thomas Saunkeah's pageboy hat and pea coat were favored by the same working class men whose interests were represented by Jasper Saunkeah on the business council.[32]

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[31] Foster, *Being Comanche : A Social History of an American Indian Community*, 106–9.

The artist's concern with the status of his photos as future historical documents is suggested by the way in which he posed his subjects and subtly arranged his composition. The identical contrapposto pose adopted by each child makes it appear as though they are ready to move forwards out of the pictorial space and into that of the viewer. Given the well-dressed appearance of the children this would both literally and figuratively entail putting their "best foot forward" as they make their way into the future temporal space occupied by the viewer. The artist's consideration for the cyclical nature of life in this piece is further evidenced by the presence of the tire positioned just behind the children; many Native American cultures, the Kiowa included, have historically perceived the "medicine wheel" or "hoop" motif as a symbol for the cyclical nature of reality, utilized hoops in traditional ceremonies of healing, and even practiced "hoop" dancing.[33] The date of Poolaw's photo coincides with a period of renewed interest in the medicine wheel; Horace Poolaw photographed Bruce Poolaw and Lucy Nicholar alongside two performers in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. One of these performers, whose picture was taken outside the context of performance, was wearing a large "medicine wheel" amulet.[34] The "hoop dance," may have served as further inspiration for Horace Poolaw's motif. In its traditional form, a hoop dance is male-only form of storytelling through a dance that incorporates one or more willow hoops, interest in this type of dance and, by proxy, its associated symbolism was renewed in part by the invention of the modern form of the dance by White Cloud (Jemez Pueblo) around 1930.[35]

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[32] Kathleen Morgan. Drowne and Patrick. Huber, *The 1920s* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2004), 111–18.

[33] Paula Gunn. Allen, *The Sacred Hoop : Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), chap. The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective.

[34] Smith, *Horace Poolaw, Photographer of American Indian Modernity*, 46.

Read with this symbolism in mind, the photo can be understood as a visual metaphor for the natural process by which children take the place of their parents in society. The collapse of long-term process such as the passing of generations into single images is well attested to in Kiowa winter counts like those kept by earlier generations of intellectuals including Silver Horn and Kiowa George, Poolaw's direct conceptual predecessors. Just as in Poolaw's photo of his sister Trecil, the shadows of the adults serve to testify to their presence. The photo captures them as they recede out of frame brushing against the "tire," symbolic stand-in for the wheel of time, as they recede out of frame. Their children "emerge" from the hoop, dressed to take the places of their parents. The symbolic value of the automobile as a whole is implied by its tires. Just as the automobile is the vehicle in which we navigate the physical world the "hoop" is the figurative vehicle in which we navigate the cycles of time. Time and space are in turn connected by the common phenomenon of motion (literally, as in talking between two points and figuratively, as the transference of energy between two points), making the automobile and automobile tire highly appropriate and somewhat ironic reminders for future Kiowa observers of both their predecessor's place in history and of their own unique span of time in an unbroken cycle by which individuals and entire cultures undergo change, permutation, and eventual transference of vital energy to successive generations.[36]

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[35] Dennis W. Zotigh, "History of the Modern Hoop Dance," *Indian Country Today*, May 30, 2007, https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/history-of-the-modern-hoop-dance/.

[36] Allen, *The Sacred Hoop : Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*, chap. The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective.

Poolaw's photograph of Kiowa passengers in an automobile (*Fig.B6)* was taken at an event near the Oklahoma City farmer's market c.1930-31, it includes (in order left to right) his Brother Bruce Poolaw, Caroline Bosin, Gladys Parton, an unknown male, Mertyl Berry, Hannah Keahbone, Barbara Louise Saunkeah, and Jasper Saunkeah. The passengers sit in a Lincoln Model L, a car billed as "luxury" for its spacious and finely crafted interior, streamlined bodywork, and powerful engine. Bruce Poolaw rides in the front seat wearing a warbonnet and mixed elements of western and traditional clothing, the young women wear traditional hide dresses but have styled and cut their hair in Euro-American fashions, and Jasper Saunkeah wears traditional attire and a larger more elaborate warbonnet than that worn by Bruce. The car is positioned close to the left of the frame, much like the adult shadows in Poolaw's portrait of three children, this creates a sense of motion in the otherwise inert vehicle.

Poolaw may have intended the photo to project a sense of inflated masculinity. Elsewhere in Poolaw's work, warbonnets like those worn by Bruce and Jasper are utilized to humorously suggest an inflated sense of masculinity on the part of their wearers.[37] The humorous connotations for Bruce and Jasper's masculinity in this photo are demonstrated by the inclusion of the young women, none of whom were married to Jasper or Bruce. The juxtaposition of the mixed Euro-American and indigenous fashion of the young women and Bruce with the traditional attire of councilman Saunkeah, who is seated in a position of authority at the rear of the vehicle, suggests that the photographer wished to emphasize that Kiowa youth were making a conscious compromise; internally, they upheld the values and traditions of the older generation while externally, they exhibited their cultural "dual-citizenship" through their flair for popular fashions in clothing and automobiles. The ostensibly non-Native driver of the automobile is not a reference to the hegemony of Euro-American culture so much as it is an indicator of the subversive value of the automobile in this photo. It would not have been uncommon for an individual wealthy enough to afford the Lincoln Model L to hire a uniformed chauffeur. During the Osage oil rush in the decade prior to this photo being taken, many newly wealthy Osage families that economically benefitted from the strike were reported (albeit by sensationalist authors) to have hired such individuals to drive their new automobiles.[38] Given this context, the automobile appears to be "speaking" two symbolic languages. On one hand the automobile acts as a symbol of prestige, affluence, and modernity that subverts the expectations of the viewer. On the other hand, the automobile holds much the same meaning in this photo as it did in Poolaw's portrait of Newton Poolaw, Jerry Poolaw, and Elmer Thomas Saunkeah; it acts as a symbolic representation of the "hoop," the "vehicle" by which successive generations move through time.

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[37] Smith, *Horace Poolaw, Photographer of American Indian Modernity*, 83.

Horace Poolaw was part of the "fancy" generation, a generation of Kiowa youth that existed simultaneously in Indigenous and non-Indigenous society. In a similar way, Poolaw existed simultaneously in the world of Euro-American professionals as a photographer and in his father's tradition as a keeper of wintercounts, a historian utilizing what we would term art to create a pertinent visual record of society at a given time. As a Kiowa living at the beginning of the age of the automobile, Poolaw observed the significance of this technology to his society and as a historian with experience as a professional photographer he found the automobile important enough to incorporate into his visual record of events. His visual record effectively demonstrates through photos the importance of the automobile in some Indigenous North American societies as early as the 1920s.

Because he needed his photographs to serve as a visual record for future generations, Poolaw often choreographed his photos to include humorous but seemingly mundane details of posture, dress, and accessories with deeper cultural significance. He was not alone in his efforts, many early 20th century Native American figures sought to guide the development of Native cultures internally, rather than have it dictated to them by non-Native progressives who often viewed total assimilation as the only solution.[39] As pointed out by Phillip Deloria, these figures were often dismissed as “assimilated” by previous scholarship on the basis of their Euroamerican clothing, religious affiliation, or professional status. Poolaw and many of his contemporaries fulfilled this stereotypes, the automobile, like their clothing were defining attributes of a “fancy” generation of Kiowa youth neglected by the scholars of the 1990s and 2000s. But the adoption of these objects should not be read as a purposeful attempt by the “fancy” generation to alienate themselves from the past. Their automobiles are a visual symbol of the contemporary struggle between the “fancy” generation, their predecessors, and non-Native society for the right to represent themselves and their culture as they wished it to be seen.[40] Horace Poolaw’s photography does not represent evidence that automobile ownership among native people was particularly widespread, only that he found the technology important enough to document for future generations. Poolaw utilized the automobile as a symbol of cultural continuity in the incipient neocolonial[41] world that he inhabited. But while he was likely among the very first to utilize the automobile motif in this capacity, he was not the last. As will be shown, the automobile motif has been consistently utilized by contemporary artists with an identical symbolic value.

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[38] Janet Berry Hess, *Osage and Settler Reconstructing Shared History through an Oklahoma Family Archive* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2015), 127.

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[39] Rosalyn R.. LaPier and David Beck, *City Indian : Native American Activism in Chicago, 1893-1934* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), i–vii.

[40] Philip Joseph. Deloria, “Four Thousand Invitations.,” *American Indian Quarterly.* 25, no. 2 (2013): 25–35.

[41] Neocolonialism is the indirect control of colonized populations through economic, cultural, and political means as opposed to the direct control entailed by a traditional colonial relationship (colonialism). Decolonization represents an undoing of the colonial relationship between two entities and is not complete with the dismantling of the mechanism by which one party directly dominates another. Rather, decolonization as it is understood today, is an ongoing process of dismantling structures of “soft” economic, cultural, and political control (neocolonial relationships) by which one party maintains undue influence over the economic, political, and cultural development of a second.

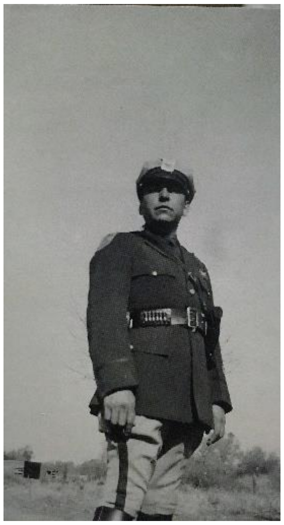

Fig. B1 Horace Poolaw in Highway Patrol Uniform (c.1937-38)

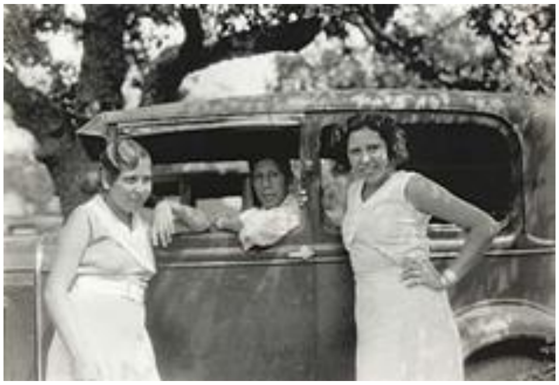

Fig. B2 Horace Poolaw. *Lela Ware, Paul Zumwault, and Trecil Poolaw (1928)*

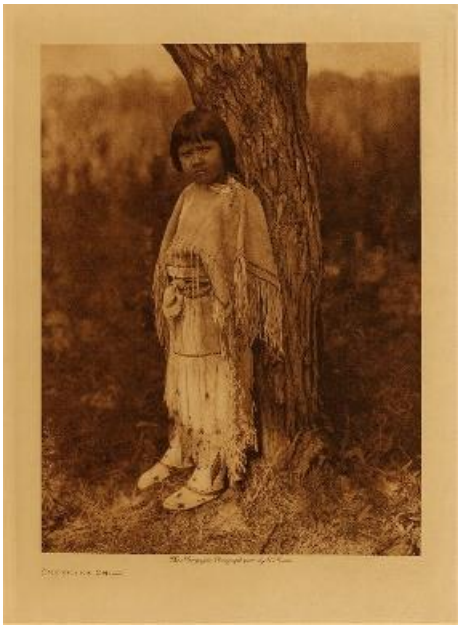

Fig. B3 Edward Curtis. *Cheyenne Girl*, 1926

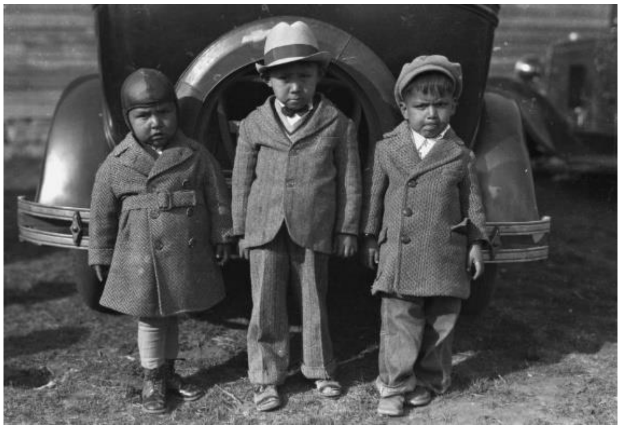

Fig B4.

Left. Horace Poolaw. *Newton Poolaw, Jerry Poolaw, and Thomas Saunkeah* (c.1928)

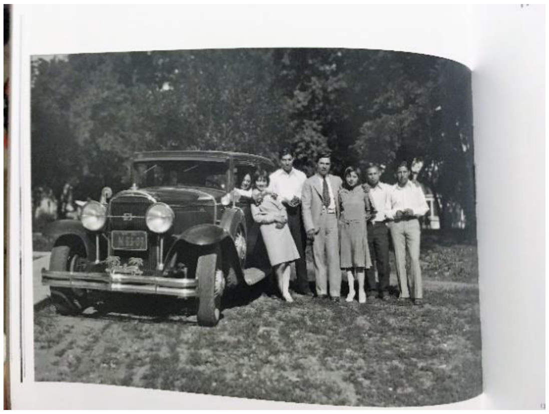

Fig. B5

Left: Horace Poolaw. *Bruce Poolaw, Lucy Nicolar, and Family Friends,* Pawnee Oklahoma (c.1930)

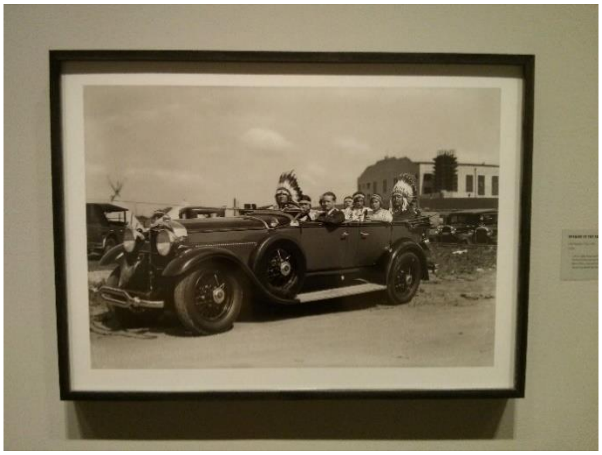

Fig. B6

Left: Horace Poolaw. *Bruce Poolaw, Caroline Bosin, Gladys Parton, an unknown male, Mertyl Berry, Hannah Keahbone, Barbara Louise Saunkeah, and Jasper Saunkeah in Lincoln Model L*, Oklahoma City Public Farmer's Market (c.1930-31)

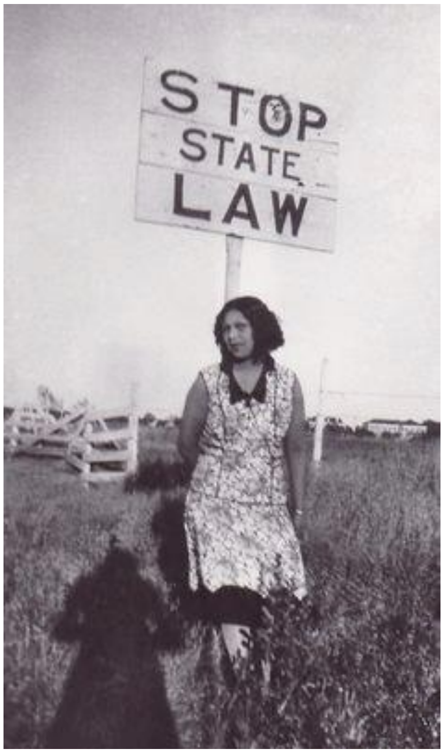

Fig. B7

Left: Horace Poolaw. *Trecil Poolaw Unap* (1929)

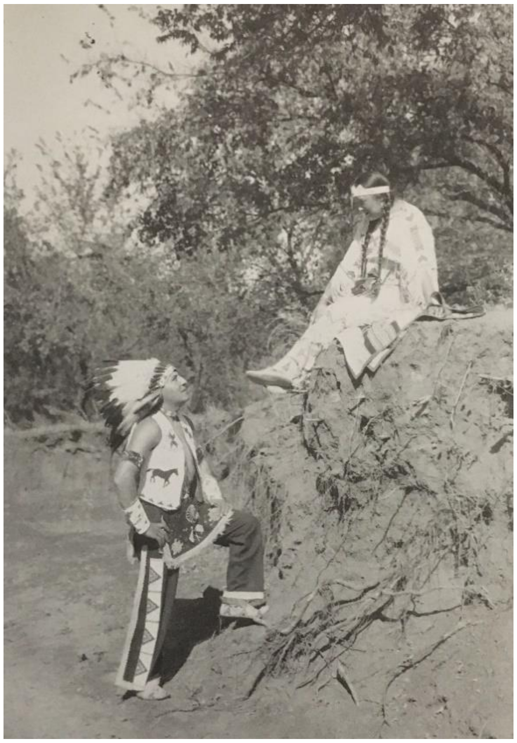

Fig. B8,

Above: Horace Poolaw. *Indian Lovers*, 1928

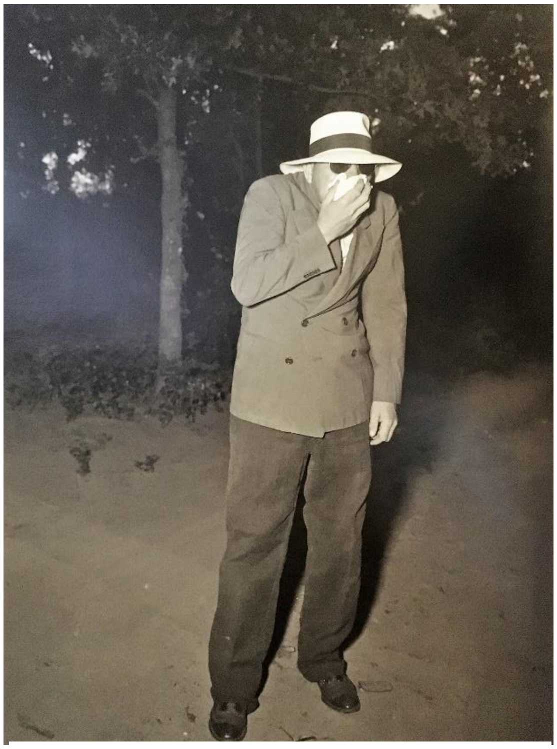

Fig. B9,

Above: Horace Poolaw. Howard Edwards as the Trickster Sendeh, c.1955

CHAPTER III

Native Artists Utilizing Automotive Motifs

The third chapter of this essay will address examples of both modern and contemporary Native American Art, in various media, from artists Arthur Amiotte, Dallin Maybee, Wendy Red Star, and Jay Polite Laber. These artists regularly utilize the automobile as a central motif in a recurring series or have incorporated a piece utilizing the motif into a wider body of work addressing the relationship of Native Communities to American popular culture. The artists examined in this chapter are still producing work as of 2016, and have typically chosen to utilize the automobile in extended series of works—sometimes dating back decades. Although it was not a prerequisite for their inclusion in this chapter, the artists tend to share an interesting biographical similarity with previously examined artist Horace Poolaw; a pronounced tendency to self-identify as cultural historians which, in the case of these contemporary artists, is accompanied by active participation in public academic roles as published scholars, public speakers, educators, and the heads of culturally significant institutions. Unlike much of Poolaw's work, the audiences of these contemporary artists typically includes both Native and non-Native observers. Much of the art utilizes iconographic conventions consistent with the "Trickster Shift": depictions of the automobile often utilize both humor and ambiguity in terms of ascribing a positive or negative value to the technology. Combined with their public aspirations to serve as historians, use of the trickster shift to address the relationship between Native American communities and automobiles suggests continued recognition of their centrality to modern native life. The trickster automobile carried culturally significant messages to a culturally diverse audience that included both Native and non-Native observers.

The structure of the chapter is organized around two sets of interrelated issues which the artists have chosen to address in their work. The first set of issues are *historicity*, the status of a succession of events as verifiable and significant *ex post facto*,[42] and *cultural continuity*, the status of a given community as a distinct entity which remains biologically and culturally viable and "alive" through the process of change.[43] These issues are addressed by both Arthur Amiotte and Dallin Maybee, who work in styles heavily influenced by historic modes of two-dimensional representative art utilized by Plains tribes, particularly nineteenth century Ledger Art. The second set of issues are *sovereignty*, the self-determinant status of Native American Communities,[44] and *cultural property*, the attachment of cultural significance to areas of geography and certain objects deemed relevant by a given community.[45] The artists addressing these issues are the sculptor Jay Polite Laber and the mixed-media artist Wendy Red Star. It is important to note that the essay has been organized in this way for the sake of readability. The relationship of each work or series examined in this chapter to the selection of issues mentioned above is often more fluid than is suggested by their placement in a particular section.

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[42] H. Marcuse and Seyla Benhabib, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* (Cambridge, Mass. [etc.]: MIT Press, 1987), 319–24.

[43] Anita Srivastava. Majhi, *Tribal Culture, Continuity and Change : A Study of Bhils in Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Mittal Publishing, 2010), 1–22.

[44] Federico. Lenzerini, "Sovereignty Revisited : International Law and Parallel Sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples," *Texas International Law Journal* 42, no. 1 (2006): 155–63.

[45] Almo Farina, "The Cultural Landscape as a Model for the Integration of Ecology and Economics," *BioScience* 50, no. 4 (2000): 313–15.

Each section will include brief biographic analyses of relevant artists followed by iconographic analyses of their work or series, which may be accompanied by a comparative analysis with relative work by another Native American artist. Throughout this process I will continue to bear in mind the "Trickster Shift." By examining these contemporary artists utilizing the method outlined above, I will demonstrate that contemporary Native American artists continue to utilize the automobile motif as a "trickster sign;" a seemingly mundane means with which to demonstrate the profoundly important reality of cultural continuity in Native communities while subverting intercommunal and sometimes intracommunal stereotypes regarding the relationships of Native people to cultural continuity, the act of artistic creation as history-making, indigenous political sovereignty, and the creation of cultural property.[46]

As described in Michael J. Chandler and Christopher LaLonde's study of suicide in Canadian First Nations communities, cultural continuity might be interpreted as the recognition of a given extant culture as one and the same as a recognized historic culture, with the latter having become the former through a process of change prompted by reaction to external stimuli and internal pressures.[47] This definition is, in essence, an application of an Aristotelian theory regarding the vital traits of living beings to the philosophical construct of separate human cultures; in living, an individual or culture is constantly subject to varying degrees of change over time, but remains recognizable as the same construct. In human communities, cultural continuity might most easily be recognizable through the observation of incremental changes to political systems, cultural practices, economic systems, and community institutions.[48]

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[46] Ryan, *The Trickster Shift : Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, 3–24.

[47] Michael J. Chandler and Christopher Lalonde, "Cultural Continuity as a Hedge against Suicide in Canada's First Nations," *Transcultural Psychiatry Transcultural Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (1998): 1–5.

[48] Ria O'Sullivan-Lago and Guida de Abreu, "Maintaining Continuity in a Cultural Contact Zone: Identification Strategies in the Dialogical Self," *Culture & Psychology* 16, no. 1 (2010): 73.

Notably, “community” or “nation” as most typically defined by Native North Americans does not simply constitute groups of individuals living under a common administrative body responsible for a given area of land. Rather, the recognition of a “community” or “nation” constitutes the observation of groups of individuals with a shared cultural heritage, some common goals, and some common values as they interact with both natural processes and the various manmade structures of power of which they are a part. Thus, a Native American can without contradiction be an individual, a member of a native community (tribe, band, nation, etc.), the citizen of a nation-state, and a member of the global community.[49] This multilayered definition of “community” has important ramifications for the ability of the automobile to become an implicitly Native American object, if automobiles are included as part of Native American cultural property, then they are evidence of cultural evolution rather than cultural depletion.

Within indigenous communities, the observation of cultural continuity is closely associated with the need to recognize a shared history culminating in a shared present, the need to assert communal sovereignty, and the need to recognize a distinct cultural geography. In doing so, indigenous communities ensure that the natural process of cultural change over time continues to be guided at least in part by the shared sets of internal values and goals by which they distinguish themselves from the wider world. The observation of cultural continuity is critically important for Native communities. Internally, the perception that cultural continuity has been broken can lead to decreased cohesion of values and goals among members of a given community. The loss of these communally defined values and goals can, in turn, lead individual members of that community to perceive the past, present, and future, as meaningless (a phenomenon positively correlated with the disproportionate suicide rate in some Native communities).[50] In terms of the relationship of Native communities in the United States to the federal government, the mistaken perception by individuals in positions of political power that modern Native Americans lack cultural continuity has periodically led to attacks on the recognized status of Indigenous communities and attempts to renege on federal obligations set forth in historic treaties. These trends considered, maintaining a sense of cultural continuity is vital for the long term economic, political, and biological survival of indigenous North American communities as distinct (though not always officially recognized) units of social organization within the colonial states of the United States, Mexico, and Canada.[51]

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[49] Duane. Champagne, *Social Change and Cultural Continuity Among Native Nations* (Lanham, Md.: Altamira press, 2007), 107–8.

[50] Chandler and Lalonde, “Cultural Continuity as a Hedge against Suicide in Canada’s First Nations,” 1–5.

Dallin Maybee's 2014 buffalo robe entitled "Conductors of Our Own Destiny" (*Fig. C3*) provides an excellent example of the use of the automobile motif in this exact capacity by a contemporary Native American artist. Dallin Maybee (Northern Arapaho/Seneca, b.1974) was raised on the Cattaraugus Indian Reservation in Western New York (Seneca Nation) and the Wind River Indian Reservation in central Wyoming (Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho). Maybee is an award-winning artist, acclaimed performer of traditional dance, and licensed attorney with a Juris Doctorate from the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University. He is currently the Chief Operating Officer of the Southwest Association of Indian Arts, parent organization of the Santa Fe Indian Market (the largest forum for the sale arts and crafts by Native people in the United States). Maybee's work frequently borrows from the artistic conventions of nineteenth and early-twentieth century ledger art. He has observed that modern Native Art is part of a long traditional continuity rather than belonging entirely to modernity.[52]

Conductors of Our Own Destiny (2014) is a painting on the exterior surface of a buffalo hide robe. It was included in *Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains (2016)* an exhibition of the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian which attempted to showcase the evolution of narrative art by artists from the Plains Tribes through the display of both historic and contemporary works. Maybee's work was particularly fitting for this exhibition as the artist often incorporates antique documents and the stylistic trends of 19th and 20th century ledger drawing directly into his work. In addition to referencing his stylistic predecessors, Maybee regularly utilizes pop-culture references by placing popular cartoon and film characters in the context of traditional hide painting scenes like hunting (*Fig. C1*). The combination of historical styles and contemporary references creates an obvious dissonance that can provoke laughter as well as a sense of discomfort. The automobile is a recurring feature of Maybee's work, reflecting an aesthetic trend among Native artists from various tribal origins working in the ledger style that has, at a glance, been present for at least the last decade (*Fig. C2, C4, C5, C6*).

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[51] Duane. Champagne, *The Indigenous Peoples' Movement: Theory, Policy and Practice* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: University of Saskatchewan, 2008), 12–14.

[52] Dallin Maybee, Curatorial Conversations with Dallin Maybee, FullTalk (2016), March 22, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-_8x40ukKM.

The buffalo hide robe upon which *Conductors of Our Own Destiny* has been painted is real tanned hide and fur rather than an artificial substitute. The painted landscape, located on the skin side of the hide, is executed in acrylic and utilizes vertical perspective to express distance. The central motif of the piece is a railroad and steam engine driven by a native conductor that bisects the robe. A plume of steam and smoke rises from the train and drifts over an encampment of brightly decorated tipis behind the tracks. In front of the train, there is a motif best described as two interconnected wheels aesthetically mirroring the construction of the two largest wheels of the steam engine as well as the "interconnected crosses" or "morning star" symbol utilized in historic Arapaho art.[53] Behind the train, a procession of Native people walk along the railroad tracks. A woman holding a parasol leads the procession followed by an adult male, an adolescent female, and an adolescent male. The last three figures hold hands and the adolescent male holds a lance in his free hand. In front of the tracks (nearest the viewer) a group of men and women in cars, on horseback, and riding a motorcycle race alongside a herd of buffalo running forward at pace with the train. This group is, again, headed by a woman carrying a parasol and their horses are decorated in a fashion reminiscent of the teepees. The scene appears to be illuminated by a large sun painted in the upper left of the robe and is bounded by linear and geometric decorations that reference biological structures and thus emphasize the status of the robe as both a "canvas" and the skin once occupied by a living American Bison. The robe is further decorated by the inclusion of two "tassel" structures located near the center of the painted side of the hide. These appear to be composed of hair, black ribbon, and beads and have historically been a form of decoration on both hide robes and tipis.[54]

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[53] Alfred Louis. Kroeber, *Decorative Symbolism of the Arapaho* (New York: Putnam, 1901), 313–15.

In terms of material and traditional value, it is worth noting the importance of the buffalo in supporting the historic lifestyles of Native peoples on the plains and the value that the buffalo robe once held as a staple trade good.[55] In fact, such hides continue to hold significant material value with intact buffalo hides retailing between 500 and 2,000 dollars online. Hides of this type were also historically used in the creation of "winter counts," a traditional mode of pictorial history keeping among many tribes from the Great Plains.[56] Thus the support for Maybee's painting is especially precious in terms of cultural value, material value, and because its procurement required the ending of a life. These qualities should, in turn, inform a viewer of the importance of the message communicated by the painting. Compositionally, Maybee has taken advantage of the unique shape of the hide to emphasize its biological character. A linear decoration suggestive of a buffalo skull demarcates the front of the hide and emphasizes the forward movement of the figures within the composition. The four "legs" of the hide are decorated with triangular geometric shapes topped with crescents encompassing a circle; they recall the forms of feet (responsible, of course for movement), of bison skulls (a reference closely related to practices among the Arapaho regarding the gathering of medicine), the Arapaho symbol for teepee (also "home"), and the interconnected triangles symbolizing "mountains" (or "destination"). The abstract symbolic values of these shapes combined with their locations at the four corners of the robe (which are suggestive of the four directions of the world) suggest that the intent of the decoration is to represent the physical diaspora of Native peoples, their cultural unity, and their continued spiritual strength.[57]

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[54] Emma I. Hansen, Beatrice. Medicine, and Buffalo Bill Historical Center., *Memory and Vision : Arts, Cultures, and Lives of Plains Indian Peoples* (Cody, Wyoming.; Seattle: Buffalo Bill Historical Center ; in association with University of Washington Press, 2007), 67–91.
[55] Ibid., 212.
[56] Ibid., 42–45.

The central train and track motif are visually suggestive of the buffalo spine. The interconnected wheels in front of the train wherein the tracks terminate recall both the "medicine" wheel that acts as a diagram of many Plains cosmologies and interconnected crosses of the Arapaho "morning star" sign which was historically placed on the toes of moccasins and remains associated with the concept of "guidance." Thus the train and associated procession of Native people (likely a family) are shown to move forward according to their own set of values. This conclusion is supported by Maybee's admission that the Native-driven train (a technology that was historically detrimental to Native life on the plains) is symbolic of the assertion of tribal sovereignty as a guiding force for Native individuals and communities. The automobile drivers, alongside the horse riders, and motorcycle rider have a similar symbolic value with the added dimensions of references to history, individual personalities, and family identities. Multiple eras of native life are referenced by the inclusion of horses painted in family heraldry also present in the decoration of teepees elsewhere in the composition, antique cars (body styles suggest they are from various decades), Maybee's own 69' Impala coupe (a desirable car among collectors), and Maybee's Honda Valkyrie motorcycle. These motifs are a visual metaphor meant to compare the succession of transportation technologies used by Native people (Maybee included) with their continued forward momentum as a community.[58] In *Conductors of Our Own Destiny*, the automobile is at once an extension of individual identity and representative of the cultural continuity of Native individuals, families, and communities with a common past, present, and future.

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[57] Kroeber, *Decorative Symbolism of the Arapaho*, 315–20; Bob Spoonhunter, "Arapaho Signs and Symbols" (Curriculum Development Project, Ethete, Wyoming: Wyoming Indian High School, 1983).

[58] "Unbound: Narrative Art of the Plains," Art and Culture, *The Brooklyn Rail*, (May 3, 2016), http://brooklynrail.org/2016/05/artseen/unbound-narrative.

Historicity is a philosophical term describing the ascription of historical actuality to a record of people and events as opposed to the relegation of a given record to the category of untruth, myth, or fable. The concept is vital to building a sense cultural continuity because it roots the people and institutions of the present day to a recollection of past events accepted as truthful. In more practical terms, it lends validity to any group claiming the authority to govern communities and geographic areas. The relationship of Native people in the United States to academic historicity has been troubled; as shown by Peter Nabokov in *A Forest of Time*, non-native academics in America have historically been hesitant to acknowledge or accept indigenous recollections of their own histories as truthful whether they were written down as words on paper as in Alva Ixtlilxochitl's compendium of Nahua intellectual thought, recorded pictorially as in a winter count, or remembered in oral traditions.[59]

The American tradition of denying Indigenous histories is itself rooted in a much older tradition dating back to initial contacts between Europeans and indigenous people; the gradual disintegration of medieval and classical modes of understanding in the face of incipient globalization led to a desire to establish an epistemological canon by which a new and stable worldview might be created.[60] In *Europe and the Peoples Without History*, Eric Wolf makes a compelling argument as to why Indigenous histories were so frequently ignored or refuted. In academic terms, Native histories, rooted in epistemologies deemed incompatible with the philosophical and religious sensibilities of early modern Europeans, inconvenienced attempts at building an acceptable understanding of the world.[61] In more practical terms, acknowledgment of the historicity of Indigenous recollections of the past lent an authority to sovereign indigenous communities that could pose a moral roadblock to European economic designs for the New World, namely, the establishment of trade relations advantageous to colonial states and the geographic expansion of those states through European settlement. A people deemed to be without a history aside from that bestowed on them and managed by European academics could make no defensible claims of sovereignty over territory so long as the keepers of the "authoritative" history did not wish it to be so. Opposition to the assertion of Indigenous historicity remained stalwart until at least the 1920s, when territorial ambitions were accomplished, military threats to colonial rule had been neutralized, and popular academic thought held that Native people would soon disappear altogether.[62]

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[59] Peter. Nabokov, *A Forest of Time : American Indian Ways of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–28.

[60] Ibid.; Anthony. Grafton, April. Shelford, and Nancy. Siraisi, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts : The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 1–10.

The recognition of Indigenous histories by American academics remains an ongoing process involving cooperation between those historians, folklorists, and anthropologists who acknowledge the veracity of Native cultural memories and various figures occupying corresponding roles in Native communities. Among the plains tribes, figures analogous to the European historians or folklorists include those individuals (traditionally men, although women now often occupy such roles) who from childhood choose or were chosen to serve as living repositories for culturally significant information including stories, songs, or prayers, and the artist/intellectuals (again, traditionally men but now including women in critically important capacities) responsible for keeping "winter counts," pictorial records of significant events kept on hide or paper.[63]Arthur Douglas Amiotte (Oglala Lakota, b. 1942) is well known among scholars of Native American art. He has lectured on the art of the Plains Tribes, published studies on the subject, and contributed to academic publications and exhibitions of Plains art. His work demonstrates strong influences from ledger art, consistently utilizes the automobile motif, and may have been essential to the popularization of that motif among contemporary native artists working in this genre.

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[61] Grafton, Shelford, and Siraisi, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts : The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*, 1–10.

[62] Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 385–91.

[63] Nabokov, *A Forest of Time : American Indian Ways of History*, 160–61.

Amiotte's best known works are the collages he began creating in 1988. These works typically incorporate diverse materials including hand drawn elements, photographs, clippings from antique printed media, and actual antique documents.[64] *The Visit*, 1995 (*Fig. C7*) is a mixed media collage incorporating photographs, advertisement cutouts, hand-drawn scenes and figures, clippings from a ledger book, and handwritten text. The central element of the collage is a bisected antique automobile apparently cut from an advertisement, it is set at the base of the composition. Standing between the bisected halves of the car is the photo portrait of a native family standing in front of a log cabin. The family seem likely to be relatives of Amiotte, as the adult male in the portrait is his great-grandfather Standing Bear (*Fig. C8*) (1859-1933) who fought alongside Black Elk in the battle of Little Bighorn and later illustrated the now controversial ethnographic biography "Black Elk Speaks."[65] An illustration of Standing Bear, identifiable by both facial characteristics and iconography identical to that appearing on garb worn by Standing Bear in multiple photos, sits above the hood of the car posed in a meditative position with his pipe. Directly above him, on a ledger page numbered "146," are written the words "When I pray really hard I see my long ago ancestors." Above and to the left of the meditating Standing Bear, four figures in the ledger style are visible beneath the moon and a field of stars on the roof of the family cabin, three are posed standing with their backs to the viewer as if participating in set of carefully orchestrated ceremonial movements, the fourth lay prone with outstretched hands, his face veiled by the darkness of the night. The bird and star iconography on their garb suggests they are participating in the "Dance in a Circle" commonly called the "Ghost Dance,"[66] (*Fig. C9*) above them two disembodied heads float among the stars with streams of blue color flowing from their respective eyes and forehead. To the right of the dancers, on ledger pages numbered "144" and "150" are written firstly, "In 1919 we stand on the threshold of a new and different time. We live in a wooden house." and secondly, "I dreamed my long ago ancestors over for a visit to see my grand-children and our new house. They said my grand-children were good. Some of them sat in that automobile. They Liked it." On either side of the Native family portrait are two figures drawn in the ledger style, on the right they are pictured floating in space as they ride on horseback, to the left, the same figures (identifiable by their identical clothing) are shown sitting in the driver's seat of the automobile.

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[64] Jennifer Vigil, "Arthur Amiotte" (Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, n.d.), http://www.iaia.edu/museum/vision-project/artists/arthur-amiotte/.

[65] Black Elk, John G. Neihardt, and Standing Bear, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Ogalala Sioux* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1932).

Amiotte is direct with the symbolism he intends for the automobile and its riders; although he states that the portrayal of ledger figures in automobiles is intended to be ironically humorous, the automobile, especially the type of antique often secondhand vehicles which were the first utilized by Native people, is a symbol of cultural change. Amiotte suggests that these first interactions between Native people and automobiles are often remembered in terms of both humorous stories reflecting the initial unfamiliarity of the technology and the creativity with which early native automobile owners maintained their vehicles.[67] Thus, the riders and automobile in Amiotte's work, when considered together, are an embodiment of the rapid adaptation necessitated by the staggering pace of economic, cultural, and political change in the twentieth century.

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[66] Rani-Henrik. Andersson, *Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890.* (Lincoln: Univ Of Nebraska Press, 2013), 59.

[67] Arthur Amiotte, Arthur Amiotte Collages, Film, April 7, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xERvjaKbjL4.

Amiotte's inclusion of numbered text serves as a key to greater understanding of the collage; the brevity of the sentences written on the ledger paper provide the bare bones of a narrative which we must interpret and give detail through knowledge imparted by both the sequence of images which Amiotte has chosen to provide and a knowledge of cultural and historical context garnered from independent study. By reading the ledger quotes in order of their page numbers and viewing the individual images of the collage in clockwise spiral beginning in the center of the page (the same way in which one "reads" the sequence of events in a winter count[68]), the story of an individual emerges. A man, Standing Bear, lives in the year 1919; he is shown alongside his wife and grandchildren in front of his cabin. Based on the year and context in which they are pictured, we might even assume their cabin is one of those which lay near the titular "Pine Ridge" of the Pine Ridge Reservation, the only source of construction quality timber available on the Oglala Lakota reservation at that time and an area of concentrated population density relative to the reservation as a whole.[69] This individual observes the significance of the changes in his own life; as a younger man he lived in a tipi and fought on horseback at Little Big Horn, now he lives in a wooden house, drives with his family in an automobile, and has at least two young grand-children. He uses prayer to engage with his ancestors; perhaps these prayers are made as he meditates, or perhaps he is one of those people who clandestinely continue to participate in the Ghost Dance. In either case, the ancestors are shown descending from the night sky; through prayer Standing Bear manifests them in his present. The ancestors ride in on horseback and visit awhile. They express their approval of Standing Bear's grandchildren. They do not mention Standing Bear's wooden house, it is not unlike those that settlers lived in, but they do express their approval when they sit in Standing Bear's automobile.

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[68] Candace S. Greene et al., *The Year the Stars Fell : Lakota Winter Counts at the Smithsonian* (Washington D.C.; Lincoln: Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History : Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian ; University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 1, 19, 63.

[69] Kate A. Berry and Martha L. Henderson, *Geographical Identities of Ethnic America : Race, Space, and Place* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002), 116–27.

So we might ask ourselves, how does the automobile relate to historicity if, by the artist's own admission, he equates the motif with the concept of cultural continuity? To begin, the automobile indeed represents the idea of cultural continuity. The concept of cultural continuity, by definition, is the recognition of a connection between past, present, and future selves which are at once different and the same. The act of placing one's past (the ancestors) within the cultural continuity (the car) encompassing the self and the community is equivalent to establishing historicity, an authoritative vision of the shared past upon which individual and community identities (values and goals) are rooted. Historicity is created through the process of history making; the interpretation and organization of the aggregate data sets (oral histories, written documents, personal experiences, etc.) by which plausible reconstructions of the past are formed. *The Visit* is an example of Amiotte acting as a history maker and thereby building historicity, and because its subject is an ancestor engaged in the same act it is also an artful demonstration of the means by which the act of building historicity through history making (an act rooted in a given moment) connects with the reality of cultural continuity (a concept straddling past, present, and future). The "present self" and "future self" of any given individual or society at any given moment remains meaningful only so long as these "selves" are perceived as being connected to a shared past whose verisimilitude is maintained through a continuous process of ontological negotiation.[70] Just as Amiotte might look to Standing Bear as his predecessor in performing the vital task of making history, so a future Native scholar will someday look to Amiotte as his or her own predecessor.

At the seventh meeting of the Organization of American States in the Montevideo Convention of 1933 a "state" was deemed to be a permanent population in possession of a defined territory and an organized government, the popular concept of indigenous sovereignty typically follows this definition. The majority of the original signatories of the Montevideo

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[70] Marcuse and Benhabib, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, 319–24.

Convention (prior to its acceptance by the League of Nations) were members of former colonial states in the Americas whose legitimacy had been at times questioned by the nation states of Europe. So while this definition of statehood eventually made it easier for similar types of overseas colonial possessions to claim independence from European powers, it did considerably less for Indigenous peoples in the Americas because a *de jure* requirement for the assertion of the authority of an independent state was a level of recognition as such by the international community. It goes without saying that nation-states have a vested interest in keeping internal populations from gaining recognition as sovereign political entities.[71]

While recognition of independent or sovereign status for modern Native North American states has not yet occurred, international law has retroactively judged that at the time of colonization the majority of peoples in the Americas met the definitions of Statehood. This was either outright or, in the case of Nomadic peoples, by virtue of the equivalency of permanent geographic settlement of the land with the system of mutually observed land-use agreements negotiated between nomadic societies through local leaders. Consequentially, the original colonization of the Americas (which relied on the legal fiction that lands therein were unowned and devoid of legitimate administrative bodies) has been internationally recognized as an illegitimate exercise of power. This recognition has had little effect on U.S. policies towards Native American states which has evolved over time in ways that reflect the interest the State has in asserting its preeminence over internal populations as they are incorporated into geographic areas it claims to administer.[72] In 1823, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court John Marshall deemed the sovereignty of Native people in the Americas to originate in divine power. In 1832, either recanting or clarifying his earlier claim, Marshall claimed that, because the federal government administered a “Christian empire” beneficently operating under divine consent, it had preeminence over the Indigenous peoples of America who at the time of first European colonization were not Christian.[73] Marshall's position was reinforced by the Indian Appropriation Act of 1871 that removed the religious stipulation from the observation of Federal authority over internal Native populations.[74] In the subsequent century and a half, Federal recognition of Native governments has been dependent upon the shifting desires of the federal government to either assimilate Native people or preserve distinct Native cultures.

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[71] Lenzerini, “Sovereignty Revisited : International Law and Parallel Sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples,” 155–57.

[72] Ibid., 155–69.

The modern relationship between Federal and Native American governments began with the "Indian New Deal," a body of legislation that helped reaffirm Native sovereignty over remaining reservation lands and recognized Native American governments on the condition that they reorganize themselves along federally dictated lines.[75] The powers of these governments relative to that of the states in which reservations reside remains a point of contention but essentially, Native governments continue to operate on levels parallel to state governments due to the previously explained reckoning that their power flows from the federal government. There is no consensus among Native observers as to the nature of this relationship. While some perceive the recognition of Native governments and gradual growth of their power within the federal system as a positive move towards more complete sovereignty, native academics like Vine Deloria Jr. have expressed concern with the possibility that the incorporation of Native governments into the federal system is a willful move towards the assimilation of Native communities and the reality that, because the power of Native governments is deemed to derive from the federal government rather than from an inherent right to self-determination, the Federal government, particularly the legislative branch which retains "awesome power" over the lives of

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[73] Peter d'Errico, "John Marshall: Indian Lover?," *Journal of the West* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2000).

[74] Rudolph C. Ryser, *Indigenous Nations and Modern States : The Political Emergence of Nations Challenging State Power* (Routledge, 2013), 54.

[75] Graham D. Taylor, *The New-Deal and American Indian Tribalism the Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-45* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2015), ix–xiii.

Native people, may still disregard treaties made with Native governments at minimal risk to its own credibility.[76]

Native governments have many of the same duties as non-Native government including enacting laws, collecting revenue, managing citizenship, and negotiating with state and federal governments. These duties must be accomplished while preserving a balance between cooperation with the Federal Government (which, theoretically, has the power to overrule or undermine the decisions of tribal government), state governments (which can be hostile to tribal government, as the two compete for revenue collection, and which has the *de jure* power to severely hinder the power of Native government), and the people they represent (some of whom will attribute too much cooperation with the prior parties as weakness or evidence of illegitimacy or too little as failure to represent their interests). Public self-representation through monumental art is an important part of supporting the legitimacy of those in power. Examples abound: the Ponca Tribe helped to install a 22 foot tall bronze statue of the historic chief Standing Bear in Ponca City (*Fig. C10*), the Oglala Lakota Chief Henry Standing Bear commissioned polish sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski to produce a still unfinished 563 foot tall statue of Crazy Horse in the Black Hills (*Fig. C11*), monuments to Sequoyah are common at educational institutions connected to the Cherokee government (*Fig. C12*), and the Piegan (Blackfoot) Tribal government partnered with sculptor Jay Polite Labor to produce four life-size statues of mounted sentries at the cardinal entrances to the reservation.

Jay Polite Laber (Blackfoot, b.1961) creates mixed media sculptures, usually utilizing reclaimed steel, which often include reclaimed automobile parts sourced from a large number of vehicles destroyed by a 1963 flood that devastated the Blackfoot reservation in northwest Montana. Laber's childhood home was in fact destroyed by this flood; he and his family were consequently forced to relocate to New Hampshire. Many of Laber's larger sculptures have been placed as public monuments in locations around Montana including at the University of Montana, Salish Kootenai College, the Stephensville Art & Culture Society, and on the Blackfoot Reservation. He currently works in the Art Department of his *alma mater* Salish Kootenai College, a tribal education facility located in Pablo, Montana (the seat of government for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation).[77]

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[76] Vine Deloria and Clifford M. Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice* (Austin: Univiversity of Texas Press, 2002), 40–45.

Laber's *Blackfoot Reservation Sentries*, 2000 (*Fig. C13*) is a sizable installation consisting of eight life-size warriors on horseback placed at the cardinal entrances of the Blackfoot Reservation. Like much of his work, each sculpture is composed of reclaimed metal and automobile parts. Like at least a few of his sculptures, these automobile include vehicles destroyed by the 1963 flood. The bases of these statues are constructed from sandstone blocks reclaimed from the grounds of the Holy Mission Church, part of a former Jesuit boarding school complex that operated from 1889 until the early 1940s.[78] (*Fig. C14*) The Holy Mission Church itself remains well kept and has been redecorated to reflect a syncretic attitude towards Piegan cosmological beliefs, it is attended by both Native and non-Native believers. A wooden barn from the era of the school stands near the church, but at some point after 1980 the large brick dormitories that housed students were demolished (a document from an attempt to register the site as a Historic Place suggests these buildings suffered severe flood damage). Efforts to register the site as a historic place evidently failed, historical marker #13 placed by the Blackfeet government outside the facility says simply that the complex was among the first institutions to offer education to Blackfeet children and that it played a role in religious and community development in the early years of the reservation.[79]

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[77] Mel Fenson, "Native American Sculptor, Jay Polite Laber," *Colorado Magazine Online*, 2007, http://www.coloradomagazineonline.com/Art/Jay_Polite_Laber/Jay_Polite_Laber.htm.

[78] Connie Flahertv, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form, Holy Family Mission" (United States Department of the Interior Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, October 1, 1980).

The government context of the work suggests that Laber's use of such specifically sourced materials was intended to send a powerful but purposefully ambiguous message. The significance of the automobile in this piece is both personal and communal. The 1963 flood transformed the automobiles used by Laber from privately significant modes of transportation to immobile parts of the landscape that served as tangible and communally recognized evidence of shared historic trauma. These have been taken by Laber from the landscape of the reservation and transformed once more into representations of Blackfeet people that are made of hard steel. Likewise, the stones of the Jesuit mission school (part of wider colonial institution whose troubled history with Native people might understandably be compared by some to that of a prolonged natural disaster) were taken by Laber and transformed into the foundations on which his representations of Blackfeet people stand. This act mirrors the government position communicated by the sign outside Mission Church which memorializes the educational and organizational roles of the Church on the Reservation but does not commemorate tragedy. In much the same way, Laber has transformed tangible reminders of problematic pasts into art that communicates qualities of stability and adaptability with which the Blackfeet government would likely wish to associate itself.

Rather than modern Blackfeet people, each of Laber's *Sentries* is a life-size equestrian statue of a Native Warrior from the pre-reservation era. They wear the tall Blackfoot ceremonial headdress called a stand-up bonnet. These were historically worn by senior tribesmen attending warrior society meetings or victory celebrations.[80] The raiment of each warrior is unique, as are the geometric patterns decorating their horses. The mens' horses and clothing are further decorated with strips of decorative chrome taken from automobile bodies. Finally, each sentry holds a long crooked lance, wrapped in barbed wire. Staffs of this type also indicated membership in a warrior society, they could be used in either a deadly capacity or to count coup. The sheet metal "feathers" decorating some of the coupe sticks may represent either decoration of the implement or take on a representative capacity, referencing deeds or exploits[81]. So in addition to the transformation of the relatively recent past, Laber's sentries recall long-term historical continuity, mastery over one's borders (as suggested by the barbed wire staves) and a sense of triumphant confidence. All of these are advantageous qualities for the Blackfeet government to associate itself with.

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[79] "Historical Marker #13 - Holy Family Mission" (Blackfeet Nation, n.d.).

[80] R. P. Koch, *Dress Clothing of the Plains Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 102.

The association of Laber's statues with historical continuity may be deeper than purely visual references to the past. The sentries are positioned along the cardinal-direction entrances of the reservation next to highways, this is undoubtedly useful in terms of ensuring they are seen. These locations also juxtapose the sentries with sites of historic and cultural importance. The sentries of the south lay immediately to the right of a section of Hwy 89 as one enters the reservation by automobile. This portion of highway is named "Lewis and Clark Trail" after a park just south of the statues dedicated to the explorer Meriwether Clark. The historical marker in this park recounts the reason for the importance of this location where the Lewis and Clark expedition encountered a party of eight Blackfeet men. The sign notes that on the morning after camping with the expedition "the Indians, by attempting to steal the explorer's guns and horses, precipitated a fight in which two of the Indians were killed." Curiously the sign adds further down that, at some point prior to this incident of violence, Lewis had unwittingly informed the Blackfeet men (whom he had mistook for another tribe) that the federal government would be arming an alliance of tribes hostile to the Blackfeet for a campaign meant to break their military control over the region. Although the sign does not make this connection outright, one might conclude that the supposed “attempted theft” perpetrated by the Blackfeet may have been related to an attempt on their part to warn their communities of the impending danger of invasion.[82] That the nearby “Welcome to the Blackfeet Nation” sign is adjacent to statues of armed sentries communicates the message that, like Lewis, one has entered territory protected and administered by the Blackfeet. The total number of sentries subtly suggests that the entire installation may function in some capacity to more properly memorialize the historic protectors accused of theft on a sign just outside Blackfeet borders.

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[81] L. J. Dempsey, *Blackfoot War Art : Pictographs of the Reservation Period, 18802000.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), 180–81.

The sentries of the north entrance also lay on Hwy 89, just to the right of the road as one enters the reservation from the Canadian border. (*Fig. C15*) Viewing them from the highway, one can look over the rolling plains behind them and catch a particularly striking view of the mountains in Glacier Park, including Chief Mountain a site which the Blackfoot Historical Reader for K-12 Teachers explains is a mountain that is believed to be the home of the Thunder, an omnipresent and animate supernatural force central to Blackfeet cosmology that is responsible for the yearly renewal of world.[83] It is also the focus of a number of stories focused on the acts of Napi, a trickster and culture giver who is said to have used the unique rectangular shape of the mountain to shift the alignment of the Rocky Mountains to their current north-south direction.[84] Commenting on the mountain in 1916, the Piegan historian Yellow Wolf put forward the story of Wise Man and Wise Woman, who went to the mountain, gathered materials from the animals and plants of the land to make precious articles of clothing, and returned with the knowledge of producing these things to the other Piegan.[85] The Piegan (Blackfeet) name for the mountain is

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[82] “Captain Meriwhether Lewis” (Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, n.d.).
[83] Carol. Murray et al., *The Days of the Blackfeet : A Historical Overview of the Blackfeet Tribe for the K-12 Teachers in the State of Montana* (Helena, Montana: Montana Office of Public Instruction, Indian Education Division, 2010), 19.
[84] Ibid.
[85] James Willard Schultz, *Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 235–41.

Ninaistaki, it contains the root word “Ni**na**” a word for man, chief, lord, or boss, which is etymologically related to the word “**Na**pi” which is the name of the trickster but also a term that can reference any elderly man.[86] Given the actions of the “Wise Man” of Yellow Wolf’s story, the particular mountain which prompted his telling of this story, and the known role of Napi as a creator and trickster, it is sensible to conclude that Yellow Wolf was in fact referring to the trickster figure. Considering that there are two roads leading south from Canada into the reservation, the position of the northern sentries (so called “junk” sculptures) on this road and in front of this particularly significant mountain may indicate a purposeful reference to the trickster’s (and artist acting as trickster’s) capacity as a creator. The eastern sentries lay on Highway 2 Near Cut Bank, Montana. They are within sight of a large junkyard. The western sentries lay on Highway 2 near East Glacier Park Village in a small roadside stand of pine trees. Like the Northern and Southern Statues, they are flanked by signs welcoming visitors to the Blackfeet Nation and poles flying the flags of The United States, Canada, Montana, and the Blackfoot Nation. These associated objects mirror those present at the Highway 89 Canadian border checkpoint on the northern border of the reservation and can be read as reinforcing the administrative independence of the Blackfeet reservation from the government of the surrounding state of Montana.

Native American cultural landscapes are defined by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Society (a group that works to protect such landscapes from commercial development) as large scale properties that are of historic significance to Native American Tribes or Native Hawaiian organizations. These properties can vary widely in size and include properties as small as a few acres of land with historic buildings, large territories centered on historic sites of spiritual significance like the Medicine Wheel and Medicine Mountain in Wyoming, or truly large areas that encompass historic routes like the 2,600 mile long Old Spanish Trail.[87]

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[86] Jack Holterman and Piegan Institute., *Piegan Institute Blackfeet-English Dictionary* (Browning, Montana: Creative Publications, n.d.), 165–66.

Conversely, individual objects of historic or cultural, especially spiritual, significance can be equally important. These objects are very often candidates for preservation, repatriation, or even neutralization through ceremonial destruction. Many of these significant objects have been categorized as Native Art but are actually utilitarian items such as regalia, ceremonial wares, statuary, textile, tools or ceremonial implements in addition to being aesthetically pleasing.[88] Laber's *Sentries* demonstrated that an automobile can be both a significant Native American object and part of a culturally significant Native Landscape by serving as tangible proof of the veracity of personal and communal Native American histories. His work leaves us with a question: should the implicitly Native American automobile be taken as seriously as better recognized and more explicitly "Native" properties like historic objects and landscapes?

Wendy Red Star (Crow, b.1981) is a mixed media artist raised on the Apsáalooke (Crow) reservation in Montana. A researcher and historian as well as an artist, she considers it her artistic mission to record the experience of being Crow in contemporary society in ways that utilize subtlety and wit while provoking a sense of discomfort in a viewer. Although her work embraces pop-culture influences and even stereotypes, she places emphasis on creating her work with an understanding the preexisting framework of Crow cultural traditions.[89] Red Star creates installation work as well as smaller pieces primarily in photography, collage, and fiber. Red Star's work explores the intersection of reservation and off reservation cultures, the imagery she has created which is relevant to this essay includes photography that captures derelict "Rez Cars"

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[87] "INFORMATION PAPER ON CULTURAL LANDSCAPES: Understanding and Interpreting Indigenous Places and Landscapes" (Advisory Council on Historical Preservation, October 11, 2016), 1–5.

[88] Andrew. Gulliford, *Sacred Objects and Sacred Places : Preserving Tribal Traditions* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2007), 41–66.

[89] Sarah Margolis-Pineo, "Red Star Rising," *Bitch*, July 2015.

in situ, collages and prints that isolate “Rez Cars” from physical context, others that connect them directly to specific times and cultural contexts, and pieces that superimpose them onto handmade shawls or images of the patterns of Native American textiles. These conventions mirror those with which she depicts a number of diverse topics relevant to her childhood including, stray dogs, government housing, powwow culture, and family. She has reported that her work is an extension of her self-defined role as a cultural archivist for contemporary Apsáalooke society and a researcher of both archival materials and historical narratives related to her culture.[90]

Among the photo arrangements in “Home is Where My Tipi Sits” (2011), Red Star’s first solo exhibition, is collage of nine photographs of derelict “rez cars” in front of people’s houses on the Apsáalooke reservation. (*Fig. C16*) Other subjects of the exhibition, presented in an identical manner are government housing, examples of government (federal and tribal), church, school, and business signage around the reservation, the churches of various denominations, and sweat lodges made with a variety of framing materials, tarps, and blankets. As suggested by the title, Red Star’s overarching subject for the series was her home reservation. Unlike later series, the photos appear to have been intended as almost entirely documentary in nature and capture subjects along with their immediate locational contexts without obvious alteration of the images beyond their arrangement into grids. Like Red Star’s other subjects in this semi-documentary series, the automobile represented an integral part of the landscape in which she grew up and something worth preservation in a way that could meaningfully inform future archivists (like Red Star herself).

“Circling the Camp” (2014) (*Fig. C17*) is a photo series wherein the artist has strategically separated subjects from vintage photography (seemingly taken at a parade associated with a 1977 Powwow) by eliminating elements of their immediate context extraneous to her desired composition. The title references the historic practice of Euro-American settlers circling wagons to defend from attack and humorously, among the photos of the series are two station wagons whose outer surfaces are ridden by native people in historic clothing and powwow regalia. The bodies of the wagons are covered with a variety of Native American textiles, hides, beadwork, and parfleche boxes (rawhide carrying containers). Additional automotive imagery includes a large van marked “Yakima Nation Youth Activities” whose roof is ridden by young people in powwow regalia sitting on Native textiles, a Ford truck flying the flag of the Crow Nation and pulling a flatbed trailer on which a child in regalia carrying a flute looks back at a group of similarly attired adults, and a black sedan ridden by adults and children in full regalia with a banner commemorating the 100th anniversary of the conclusion of the Nez Perce war and a hood ornament consisting of a headdress and a lance decorated with eight feather (this suggests the lance belonged to an accomplished warrior). Other photos in the exhibition include Native people wearing powwow regalia and riding horses draped in Native textiles (presumably at the same event). One photo contains a sequence of two Native individuals on horseback and one tiny figure who leans against the open door of a car and peers through the window. Almost all of the horseback photos include the asphalt road the riders are moving down and some of these roads show tire tracks evidencing the recent passage of cars. In an on-the-nose way the series draws a comparison between the utilitarian importance of automobiles and that historically held by horses, as well as the way in which these modes of transportation have been adopted and transformed into native goods by their use in utilitarian capacities. Her work further communicates that, rather than replace the horse, the two exist concurrently as objects with similar symbolic but disparate utilitarian value.

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[90] Ginger Dunhill, *Interview With Wendy Red Star*, mp4, Broken Boxes Podcasts, n.d., https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/art-beat-conversations-episode/id827507772?i=263776393&mt=2.

Photos from “Home is Where My Tipi Sits” and “Circling the Camp” are included in two other series; “The Crow’s Shadow Prints” (2015-2016) (*Fig. C18*) and the “Fancy Shawl Project” (2009) (*Fig. C19*). “The Crow’s Shadow Prints” (lithographs) again focuses on the subject matter of powwows, rez cars, and housing. Station Wagons from “Circling the Camp” are placed onto backgrounds of geometric patterns sampled from Native American textile, the ghostly forms of derelict “rez cars” are placed in the center of neon pink and blue fields, and three modern vehicles (two trucks and a van) decorated in a fashion not dissimilar to the powwow parade from “circling the camp” (with textiles, lances, and riders in regalia) process along the center of a complex geometric background. “The Fancy Shawl Project” includes a number of the brightly colored garments. They are decorated with long multi-colored tassels and photos sewn on in the manner of decorative patches. Each Shawl contains photos that address individual subjects including basketball, “rez dogs” (stray animals that roam some reservations alone or in packs), government housing, sweat lodges, and “rez cars.” These projects suggest that the artist perceives the automobile to have been incorporated into contemporary Native Society as a cultural property to the same degree as the other symbols included in the series. While not quantified, the nature of this absorption is evidenced by the unique base onto which Red Star has placed these motifs. The shawl is used in Powwow culture, women will wear one while dancing even if they are otherwise in “street clothes” and it is sometimes even codified as a mandatory accessory for female powwow participants. Shawls are objects of personal significance which in the act of dancing, are unfurled for spectators to see. While sold as standardized readymade products, they are often custom ordered, altered, or even entirely handmade. The custom decorations of Red Star’s shawl suggest that she wishes viewers to recognize the deep personal importance of those objects to the artist.[91] Together, the objects whose images are replicated by the artist over and over include elements of post twentieth century, non-culturally specific, Native cultural properties with positive, negative, and ambiguous connotations. The replication of initially documentary imagery in exaggeratedly Native contexts suggests an intent to create an easily interpretable connection between implicitly native objects like automobiles and more explicitly native objects like Fancy Dance Shawls as way to express personal history, but also as a way to help Red Star's Native and non-Native audience understand that these objects too were part of the experience of being Native in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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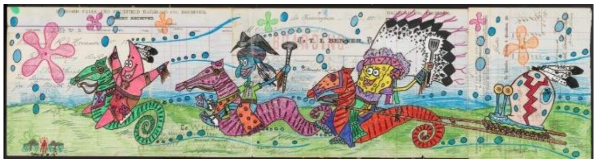
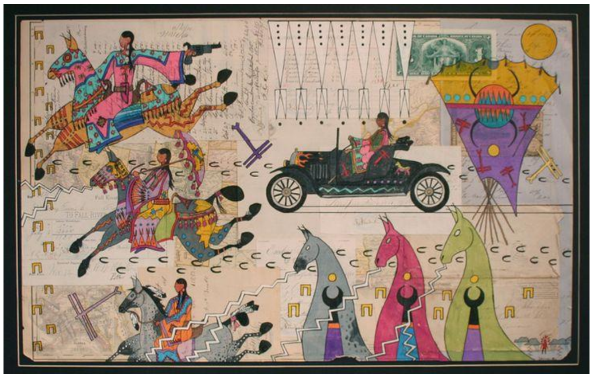
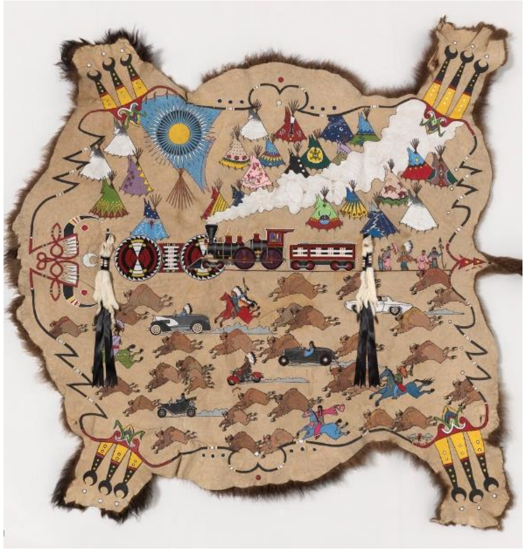
[91] Autumn Whitefield-Madrano, “The Evolving Beauty of the Fancy Shawl Dance,” *Indian Country Media Network*, March 20, 2011, https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/the-evolving-beauty-of-the-fancy-shawl-dance/.

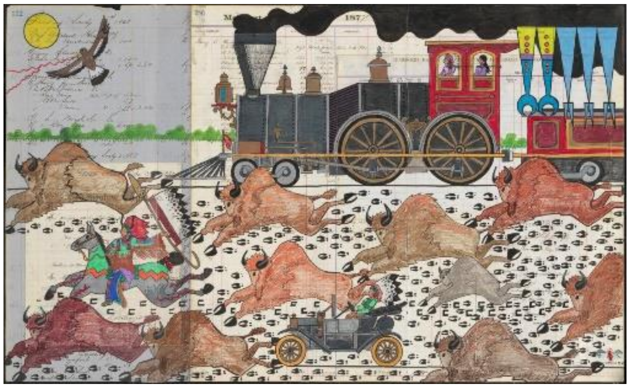
It is evident from examining the use of the automobile in Native American art produced by members of the Plains tribes that a connection exists between the use of the automobile motif and the need to express cultural continuity within Native communities and to outside observers. The automobile motif functions as a powerful symbolic connection between the imagined past, the present, and the hoped-for future. This symbolism, already recognized by individual artists, has been coopted by Native governments to reinforce their claims to sovereignty by associating themselves with a symbol of constancy and forward momentum. This strategy is effective because it can be understood on some level by outsiders (often in terms of its capacity to represent an Indian modernity that surprises the uninformed) but also because, as suggested by the contexts in which the symbol has proliferated in native art, many native people have come to incorporate the automobile into their personal histories as symbols of the adaptability, mobility, personal sovereignty, or economic success, of parents, grandparent, great- grandparents, and Indian people in general over the last century. In the act of affirming cultural continuity, the artists above utilized the seemingly mundane automobile as a way to deliver broad statements on the nature of Native American historicity, as a way to anchor themselves and their governments to this historicity. These principles are demonstrated in *Conductors of Our Own Destiny* where the status of the automobile (particularly the "classic" automobile) as a symbol of continuity was made purposefully obvious by the placement of the motif in a depiction of a historic mode of economic subsistence alongside the more "traditional" horse. This symbolism was elaborated upon and explained almost diagrammatically in *The Visit*, where Arthur Amiotte depicted placed his immediate and distant ancestors in a succession of scenes focusing on the automobile as a way to represent the symbolic function of the automobile as a trans-temporal “vehicle” which allows one to negotiate the place of one’s present self on the figurative road from the past to the future. In more direct terms the automobile, described in this way, is a sign of historicity. But while the automobile is used to insure compatible concepts of history, the present, and the future, its in this capacity is based on the status of the automobile as an object that is unique to post twentieth century Native life but representative of a long history of cultural adaptivity and the ready adoption of useful technology. Because of this, Jay Polite Laber was able to use the reclaimed automobile parts of his *Sentries* as concrete links to the past and the transformation of these parts as a sign of triumph over sometimes adverse conditions. This symbolism was easy enough to recognize and persuasive enough that the Blackfeet Nation sought to publicly identify itself with his work. Wendy Red Star demonstrates why Laber’s symbolism was so effective. Her documentary collages and custom powwow regalia place the automobile alongside various emblematic images of reservation life in visual expressions of how such objects and scenes have been incorporated in into Native American cultural property via successive generations of personal relationships with such technologies, practices, and conditions.





Counterclockwise: Fig.C1, *A Cruise Through Bikini Bottom*, 2012; Fig. C2, *Trophy Wives, c.2010;* Fig. C3, *Conductors of Our Own Destiny*, 2014; Dallin Maybee

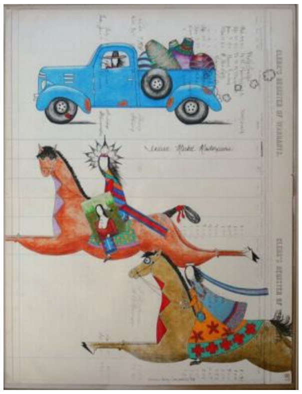


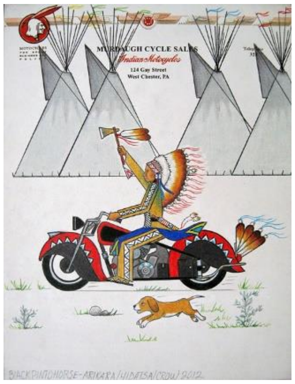


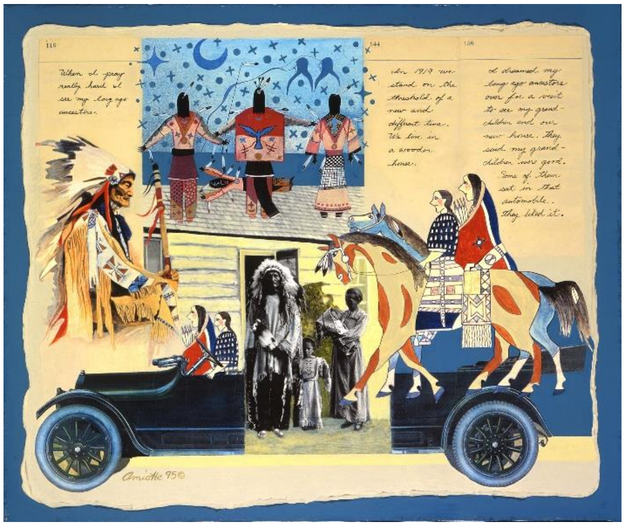
Left: Fig. C4, *Power Struggle*, 2012; Dallin Maybee

Below Left-Right: Fig.C5, *Indian Market Masterpieces*, 2008; Dolores Purdy Corcoran (Caddo)

Fig. C6, *My Tribal Steel Pony… Life is Good, 2012;* Monte Yellow Bird Sr. (Black Pinto Horse) (Arikara/Hidatsa/Crow)




MURDAUGH CYCLE SALES
Indian Motocycles
124 Gay Street
West Chester, PA
BLACKPINTOHORSE-ARIKARA/HIDATSA/CROW 2012

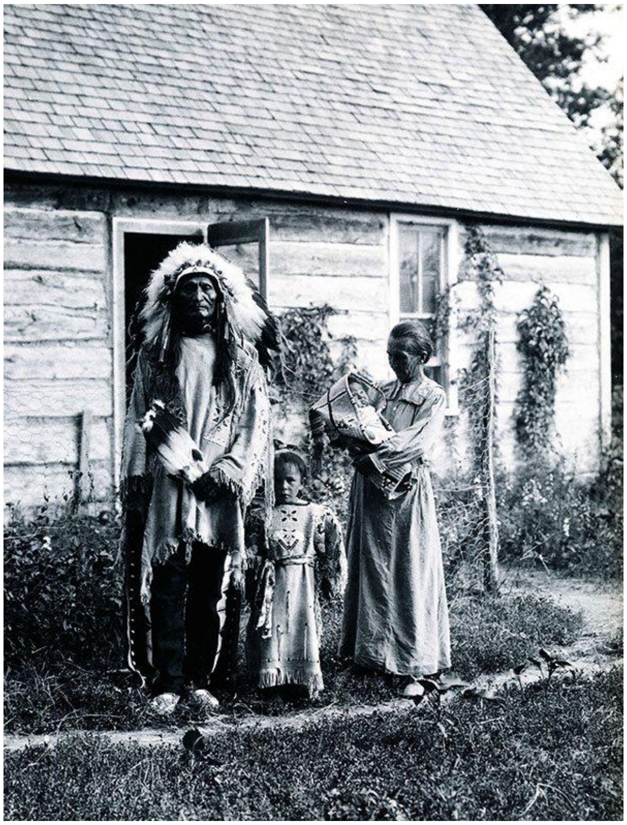

When I pray really hard I see my long ago ancestors.
In 1919 we stand on the threshold of a new and different time. We live in a wooden house.
I dreamed my long ago ancestors over for a visit to see my grandchildren and our new house. They said my grandchildren were good. Some of them sat in that automobile. They liked it.
Amiotte 95©

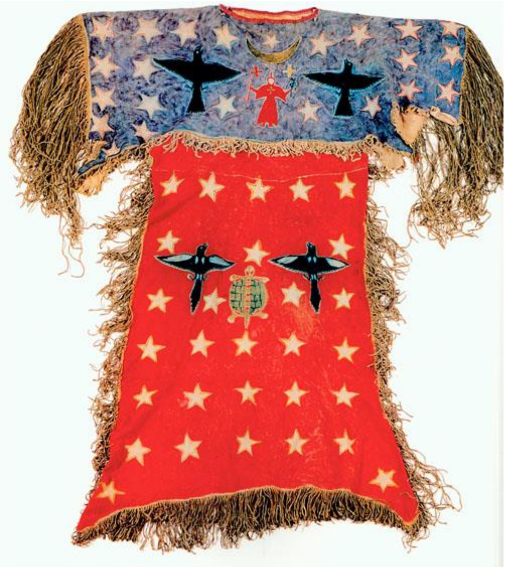
Counter Clockwise

Fig. C7, Arthur Amiotte, *The Visit*, 1994

Fig. C8, *Standing Bear, Rose Two Bonnets, Lula Two Bonnets, and Louisa Standing Bear in front of their home*, 1919.

Fig. C9, Arapaho, *Ghost Dance Dress*, c. 1890





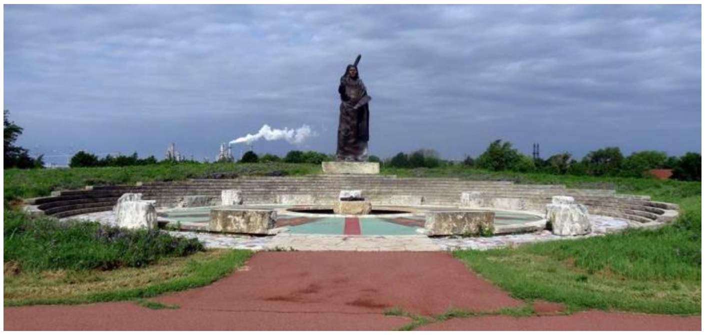


Fig. C10

Left: *Standing Bear Park and Memorial*, Ponca City, Oklahoma, 1996, Photo c. 2016

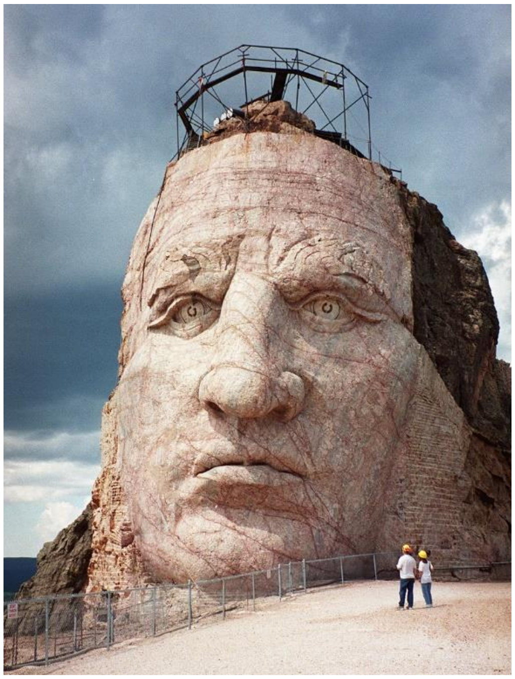


Fig. C11

Left: Face of Unfinished Crazy Horse Monument, 1948 – Ongoing, Photo C.2001

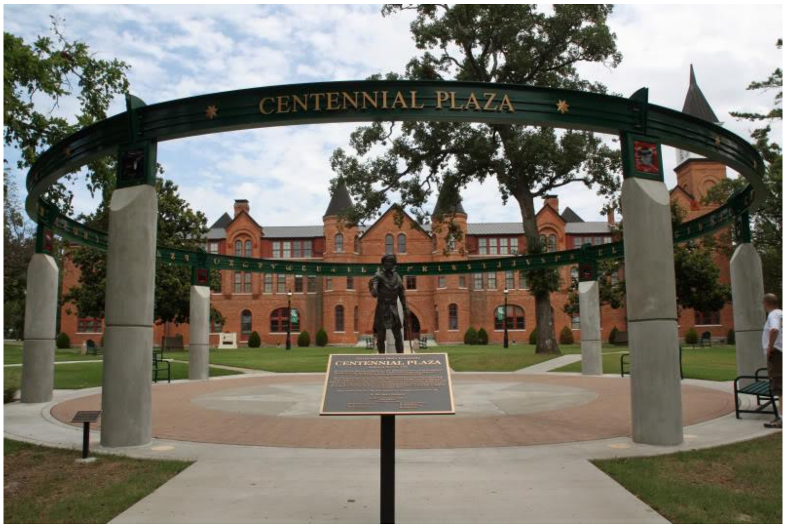

CENTENNIAL PLAZA
CENTENNIAL PLAZA

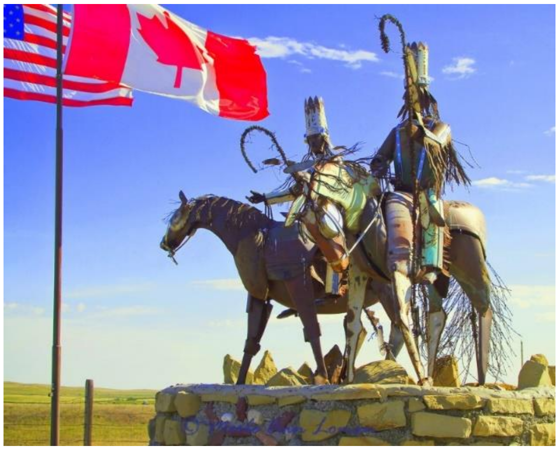
Fig. C12

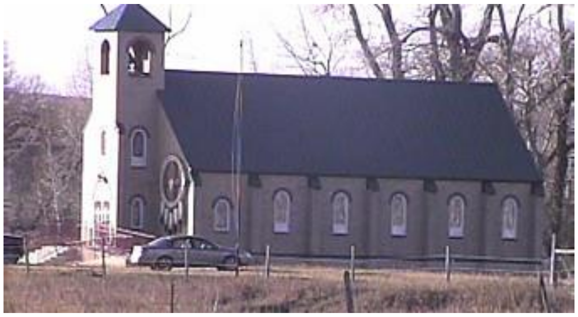
Left: Statue of Sequoyah, Northeastern University, Tahlequah Oklahoma, c.2007, Photo c.2016

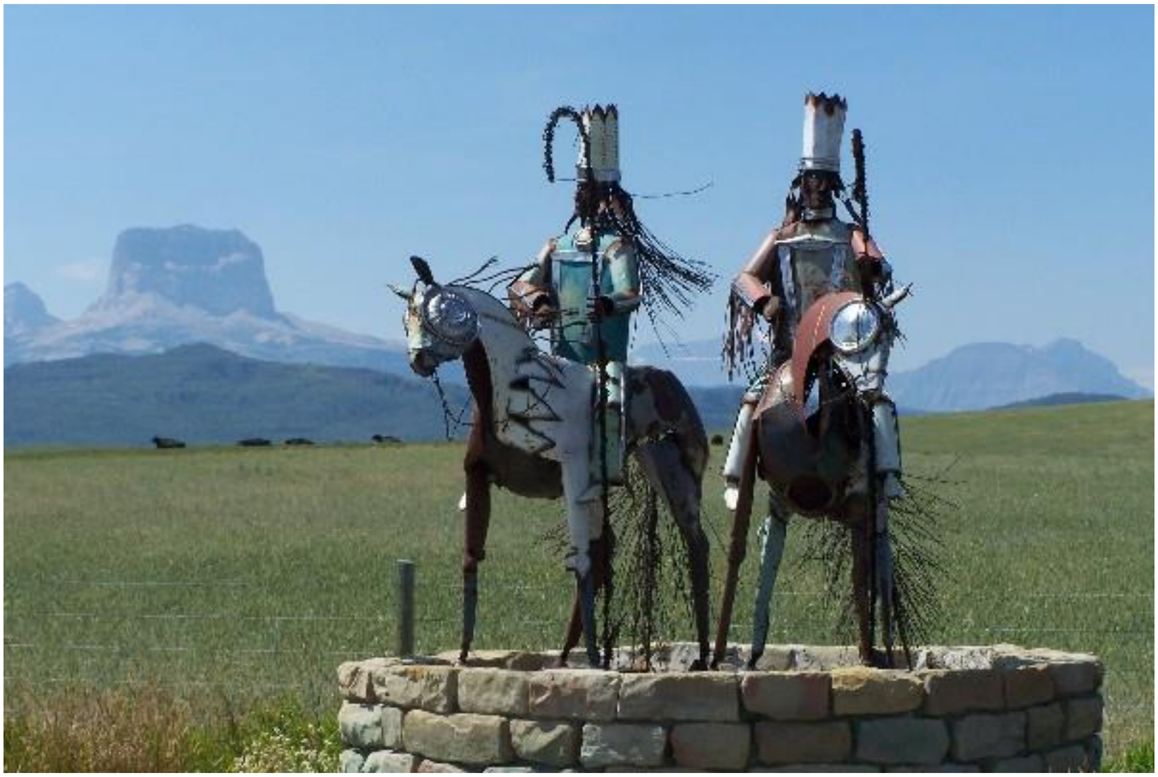
Below Left Fig. C13, Jay Polite Labor, *Blackfeet Sentries*, South, 2000

Below Right: Fig. C14 Holy Mission Church

Bottom: Fig. C15, Jay Polite Labor, *Blackfeet Sentries*, North (Chief Mountain to left), 2000







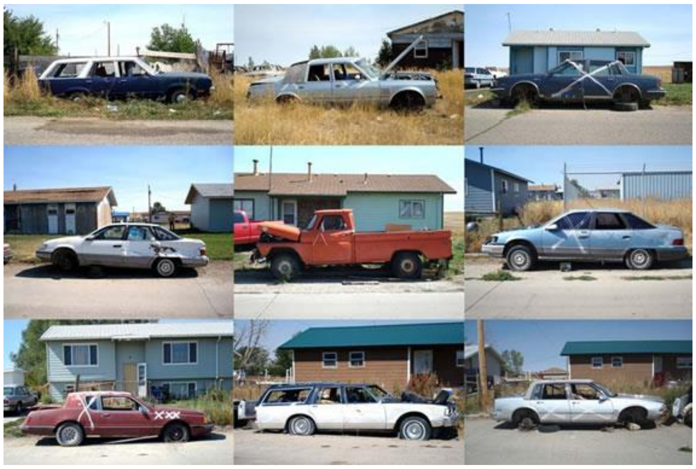


Fig. C16

Left: Wendy Red Star, Rez Cars Series, from *Home is Where My Tipi Sits*, 2011

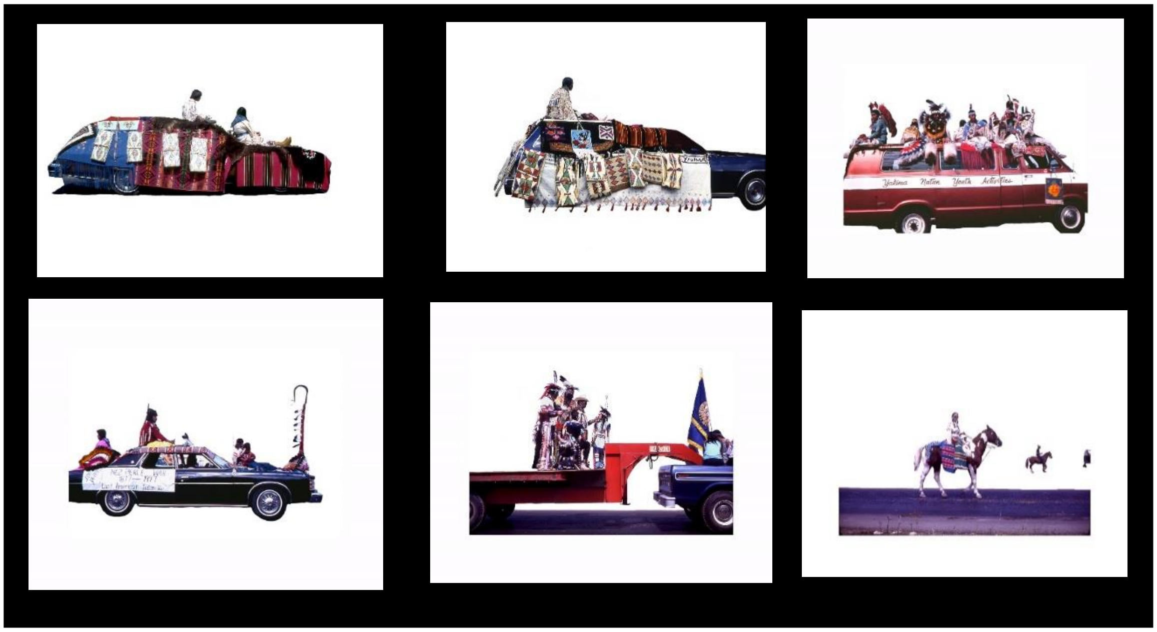

Yakima Nation Youth Activities

Fig. C 17

Above: Wendy Red Star, Powwow Automobiles, from *Circling the Camp*, 2014

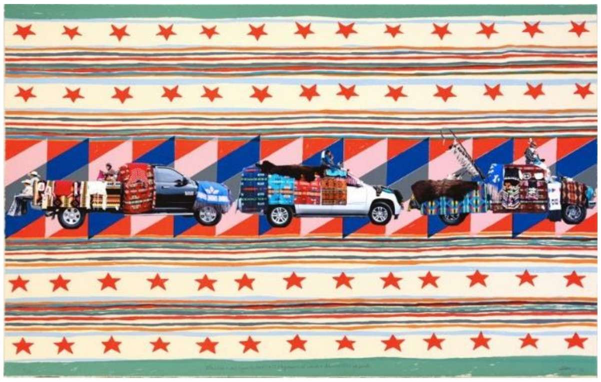
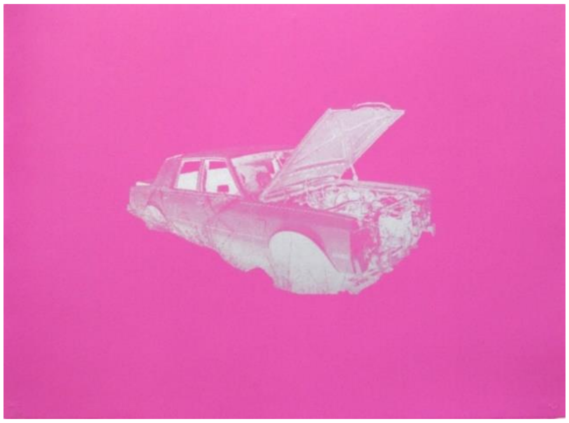
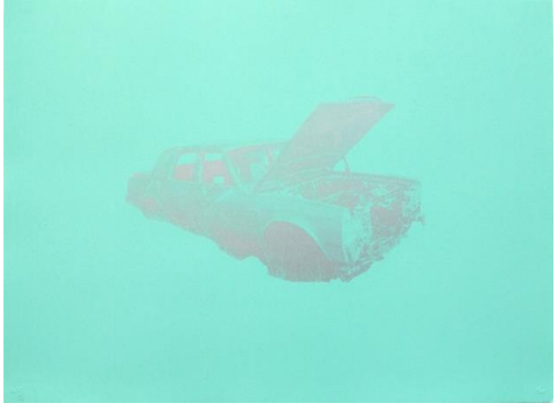


Fig. C18

Left: Wendy Red Star, *iilaalée = car (goes by itself) + ii = by means of which + dáanniili = we parade, Lithograph, 2016*

Below: Wendy Red Star, automobile prints, from Crow Shadow Prints, c.2015-2016





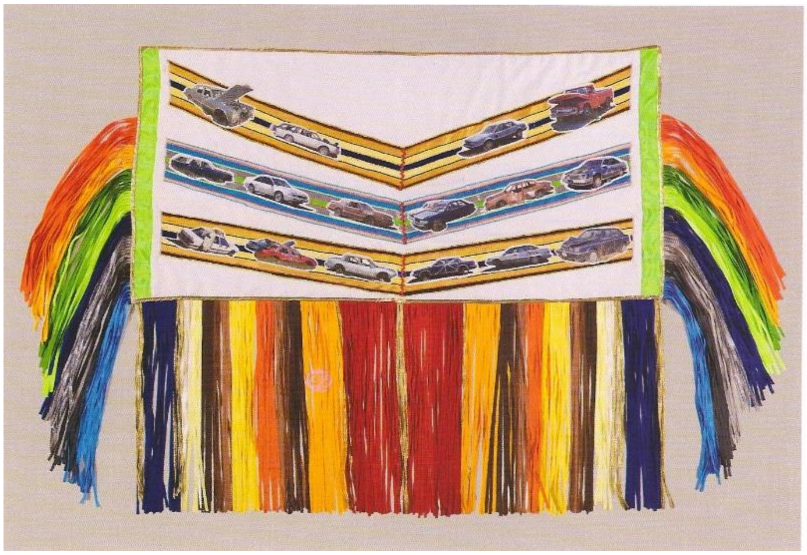


Fig. C19

Above: Wendy Red Star, *Rez Car Shawl*, 2009

CHAPTER IV

Native Artists and Governments Utilizing Automobile Culture

The final chapter of this essay concerns the way in which native artists have coopted automobile culture when creating their work in ways that do not necessarily involve the direct use of the automobile as a motif, although this does of course happen. The chapter includes both modern and contemporary artists working in the disparate genres of "tourist art," cinema, and public signage as well as license plates, a form of public signage issued by Native American governments in their capacity as collective representational entities. First, this chapter will engage with Acee Blue Eagle's promotional glassware set "Famous Oklahoma Indians." This glass set will be related to both "Powwow Highway" and "Smoke Signals," two of the most popular (and financially successful) examples of Native American cinema. Then, the essay will discuss the relationship between Edgar Heap of Birds' public signage and the advent of license plates issued by Native American governments for tribe members and residents of reservation land.

By demonstrating the connections between these two sets of Native American artistic expression, I will demonstrate how the cooption of automobile culture by Native artists and governments has furthered the cause of Indigenous visual sovereignty. Firstly, by allowing artists a mutually inclusive cultural niche in which to mass-produce native-viewpoint interpretations of native people and issues for a mixed Native and non-Native audience. Secondly, by providing native artists and organizations a space to speak with voices of cultural and political authority via the physical and legislative infrastructure that accompanies automobile culture.

Acee Blue Eagle: Capitalizing on the Modern Motorist Market

Beginning in the 1920s, a process of infrastructure construction and route designation undertaken by a succession of United State Presidents gradually coalesced into a system of well-regulated cross-continental roadways. The initially piecemeal process of infrastructure improvement was greatly accelerated by national infrastructure projects during the great depression and subsequently, by the needs of the federal government for a reliable network of roads capable of supporting the movement of military supplies and personnel in the event that the American continent was invaded by a foreign power. By the 1950s, the decades long process of highway building, coupled with a pronounced increase in national economic prosperity, led to a period of national automotive culture that might be deemed a golden age.[92]

In the midst of these developments, post-war government policy towards Native people continued to emphasize the relocation of Native individuals to major cities in an effort to fill industrial jobs and, arguably, to weaken cultural ties between Native individuals and their cultural homelands on reservations and former reservations. This practice was rooted in “tribal termination,” a policy by which the federal government attempted to end official recognition of tribal entities, abscond its treaty obligations to Native people, and redistribute the natural resources of tribal lands to private corporations.[93] Termination candidates were decided on the basis of their economic success, which many non-natives perceived as a sign that they were no longer culturally "Indian." Consequentially, many Native people found themselves caught in what has come to be known as the "double-bind," wherein economic success garnered through a combination of the powers granted to indigenous governments and longstanding collectivist cultural traditions became the justification for repeated federal assaults on both Indigenous governments and culture that lasted into the early 1970s.[94] The double-bind of native communities reflected the historic double-bind imposed upon native people as discussed by Philip Deloria in his examination of the discrimination (to the point of lynching and casual murder) faced by newly wealthy Osage in the aftermath of the first Osage County Oil boom in the 1920s.[95]

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[92] John Alfred. Heitmann, *The Automobile and American Life* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2009), 133–63.

Acee Blue Eagle (1909-1959), who produced much of his work during the "termination period" was born and spent his early childhood in Anadarko, Oklahoma. His parent's died when Blue Eagle was young and he was subsequently raised by his grandmother. During his childhood, Native Americans in Oklahoma were subjected to a process called "allotment," a policy (1887-1934) by which the federal government pressured many tribal governments to dissolve themselves and split reservation land amongst members of the tribe. Comparable to the urban migration encouraged during "termination," "allotment" was accompanied by a push to erode native cultures through the institution of boarding schools designed to reeducate Native American children. Blue Eagle attended two of these Indian boarding schools after being taken from his home (age 8) by an agent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. First, Haskell Industrial Training

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[93] Robert J. Miller, *Reservation "Capitalism": Economic Development in Indian Country* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 46–47.

[94] J. R. CATTELINO, "The Double Bind of American Indian Need-Based Sovereignty," *Cultural Anthropology* 25, no. 2 (2010): 241–45.

[95] Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 177–82.

Institute in Kansas and later Chilloco Indian Agricultural School in Oklahoma where he obtained his High School degree in 1928. Both schools had reputations for harsh treatment of students, with Chilloco utilizing a regime of education and reeducation modelled on that of the military. Surprisingly, given its purpose and reputation, Chilloco was where Blue Eagle first experimented with watercolor paintings and posters depicting scenes of Native history and culture.[96]

In college, Blue Eagle studied at both Bacone Indian College in Muscogee (a tribal college) and then at University of Oklahoma at Norman where his artistic talents were encouraged by Dr. Oscar Brousse Jacobson. Jacobson had previously aided the careers of the Kiowa Six and helped to further the popularity of the "flat style" painting adopted by both the Kiowa Six and Acee Blue Eagle. Blue Eagle received his baccalaureate in 1932, created a number of successful commissions, and in 1934 was recruited by the Federal Arts Project to paint public murals.[97] The same year, the Wheeler-Howard act, part of a larger body of legislation aimed at encouraging Native American economic independence and cultural expression, ended allotment and allowed for the reorganization of previously dissolved Native governments (many of which never ceased to exist as unrecognized entities) into officially recognized representational bodies.[98]

Early in his career, Blue Eagle was recognized for the intensive research on Native history and culture he performed before creating each piece. By 1935, Blue Eagle had lectured on Native American Art at Oxford College in England and begun a tour of Europe as an educator and performer. Upon his return home, he accepted a position as head of Bacone Indian College's art program which hired Blue Eagle and a number of other nationally recognized native artists at the same time in order to attract donations to supplement the loss of funding as the wealth of major Native American donors was sapped by lawsuits and dirty politics. Among Blue Eagle's duties was the solicitation and collection of funds. He chaired Bacone's program until resigning in 1938 to resume his career as a fulltime artist.[99]

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[96] Oscar Brousse Jacobson and Jeanne d'Ucel, *American Indian Painters* (Nice, France: C. Szwedzicki, 1950), 12; Tamara Liegerot. Elder, *Lumhee Holot-Tee : The Art and Life of Acee Blue Eagle* (Edmond, Oklahoma: Medicine Wheel Press, 2006), 3–30.

[97] Elder, *Lumhee Holot-Tee : The Art and Life of Acee Blue Eagle*, 28, 31–59.

[98] Taylor, *The New-Deal and American Indian Tribalism the Administration of the Indian Reorganization Act, 1934-45*, 1–27.

Blue Eagle served three years in the Army Air Corp during World War II (1943-45), during this time he worked as a camouflage artist and created educational cartoons to inform aspiring airmen of dangers to be avoided during training. These duties did not exclude him from missions in combat zones overseas, Blue Eagle was nearly killed aboard a B-17 Bomber flying over Germany.[100] After the war Blue Eagle continued to produce work, taught as a member of the Okmulgee Technical Institute's art department, and starred in an educational program for children that aired out of Tulsa. Throughout his career, Blue Eagle's work received national and international attention. In part, this may have been due to his penchant for self-promotion and entrepreneurial enterprise that embraced certain Native American stereotypes. He frequently made his public appearances in full plains regalia. His public speaking, writing, and poetry often utilized an exaggerated Indian-pidgin dialect.[101] Using these strategies may have been an effective way of circumventing the "double bind" at personal level, the financial success (garnered via visual representation of Native cultures) which might have made his authenticity suspect in contemporary non-Native eyes was offset by the exaggerated Indian persona he adopted.[102] A similar tactic was adopted by some writers in the 1976 3rd edition of the "Indian Cookbook" illustrated by Blue Eagle's cousin Fred Beaver for sales to native and non-natives visiting the All Indian Fair in Ardmore, Oklahoma.[103]

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[99] Elder, *Lumhee Holot-Tee : The Art and Life of Acee Blue Eagle*, 61–89; Lisa Kay Neuman, *Indian Play : Indigenous Identities at Bacone College* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 167–70.

[100] Elder, *Lumhee Holot-Tee : The Art and Life of Acee Blue Eagle*, 94.

[101] Gregory D. Smithers and Brooke N. Newman, *Native Diasporas : Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 412–18.

[102] Ryan, *The Trickster Shift : Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*.

[103] Neoma Rainwater, ed., *Indian Cookbook*, 3rd ed. (Ardmore, Oklahoma: All Indian Fair, Ardmore, Oklahoma, 1976), 1,4,41,50-51.

Using this subversive strategy, Blue Eagle leveraged his exaggerated identity into a significant multimedia presence that included paintings, poetry, public speaking tours, public performances, mass marketed greeting cards, a storybook for children (posthumously published), gas-station promotional dining sets, and an educational television series for children broadcast out of Tulsa. Blue Eagle's non-commercial writing can be construed as betraying a deeply conflicted mindset; he reveled in the cultural achievements of what he viewed as incipient pan-Indian civilization and expressed vehement opposition to the portrayal of Native people as "blood-thirsty savages, content with haphazard existence."[104] But in the very same document, suggests his resignation to the self-perceived inevitably that this nascent civilization will be subsumed by the overwhelming influence of Euro-American culture. This is despite his self-stated mission to promote the growth of Native American artists and the considerable effort he undertook throughout his life to make Native culture part of the wider public sphere. Perhaps owing to his notoriety, a year before his death, he was named "Outstanding Indian of the United States" at the Anadarko American Indian Exposition. Blue Eagle died in a VA hospital in 1959 and was posthumously honored by Oklahoma for his services to the state.[105]

In the late 1950s, the Enid[i] based gasoline/motorist services company Knox Oil entered a partnership with Acee Blue Eagle. Blue Eagle, at the time a nationally recognized artist, created a glassware set to be given away as a promotion at the 65 gas stations owned by Knox Oil in Oklahoma. This was a common tactic among small oil companies and service stations in the 1950s and 1960s and a "Native" themed tumbler set attached to the Blue Eagle name would have appealed to the tastes of contemporary popular culture. Blue Eagle received the Knox Oil commission for *Famous Indians of Oklahoma* (*Fig. D1*) at some point prior to his death in 1959 and may have lived to see at least the first release of his glassware set. The set of eight frosted-glass tumblers, a frosted-glass pitcher, a wooden platter with pyrograph decorations, and an informative brochure could be obtained through the purchase of at least 10 gallons of "Knox-less Super 90 Regular" or "Knox-less Super 100 Ethyl" and proved highly successful. Later, a set of white china using Blue Eagle's designs and further editions of the glassware set (with either clear or frosted glass) were released by Knox prior to their absorption of the company by Kerr-McGee Oil in 1963. The glasses remain popular among collectors and may still be found through online retailers and in antique stores around the state of Oklahoma; complete sets, especially those in clear glass or including the pitcher or wooden tray, can be especially expensive. Each tumbler in the set contains the portrait, name, and tribe of a Native American historical figure.[106]

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[104] Elder, *Lumhee Holot-Tee : The Art and Life of Acee Blue Eagle*; Roy A. Keech, Pop Chalee, and Acee Blue. Eagle, *Pagans Praying* (Clarendon, Texas: Clarendon Press, 1940), 7–8.

[105] Elder, *Lumhee Holot-Tee : The Art and Life of Acee Blue Eagle*, 147–68.

The tumbler portraits reflect the Native concept of historicity discussed earlier in the essay, a version of historicity acknowledges the validity of personal stories and oral history in addition to written records. As such, the portraits include figures from the written "canon" of Native American history like Geronimo or Sequoyah who are acknowledged as important by subsequent generations of both Native and non-Native observers, but also more obscure individuals like Tsatooke and Ruling-His-Son whose stories suggest a significance that is more local or even personal in nature. In terms of the possible personal significance of these historical figures, it is notable that the portraits include both intellectuals and warriors from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of whom played vital roles in preservation of their communities by helping to pass down knowledge or, in their capacity as warriors, attempting to physically defend Native people. Some of the warriors had even aligned themselves with the federal government when fighting against a common enemy. This was not unlike Blue Eagle's own lifelong role as an artist and his status as a veteran of WWII. Further, many of the individuals identified by the artist as "Famous Oklahoma Indians" achieved their prosperity through their willingness to adapt to the conditions of their time, even if it meant leaving themselves open to the criticism of their peers. Most poignantly, all of the historical figures, like Blue Eagle and many of his Native contemporaries, demonstrated a capacity to pick up camp and move of either of their own volition or when external circumstances dictated that they must if it proved beneficial to the survival of Native culture. (See Appendix, Pg. 105-107)

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[106] Robert E. Lee, "Knox Oil Co. Offered Glasses," *The Oklahoman*, November 3, 1995.

Two designs of the pitcher are available. The newer model in clear glass is simply a transference of a previously used portrait of chief Dull Knife onto the larger body of the pitcher. The older model is more complexly decorated with two Native American men in war-bonnets playing the flute as they face a tipi. Behind both of the flute players, does can be seen hiding behind pine trees. In the skies above them are the afternoon sun, clouds, and the silhouettes of birds consistent with Blue Eagle's depictions of self-referential eagles elsewhere in his body of work. The scene may be a reference to the use of the flute in the historic dating practices of many plains tribes (Pawnee included); the woman hypothetically listening to the music from within the teepee is symbolized by the doe listening from behind the pine trees.[107] At the base of glass is written "Oklahoma" over the words "Home of the Red Man." The platter on which the glassware set was intended to be presented consisted of a long slab of wood with eight indentions for each glass, a central raised area to contain the pitcher, and two handles for ease of use. Burned into the slab are a number of symbols including the morning star, whose symbolic value might be best generalized as guidance given by observation of the past, the Thunderbird symbol associated with victory, stylized coyote tracks possibly referencing a personification of the Trickster in Pawnee cosmology, a zigzagging arrow referencing both lightning and the concept of speed, and the outline of the state of Oklahoma at the center of the enclosure intended for the pitcher.

The "Oklahoma" at the center of the platter, enclosed on all sides by a wooden "fence", holds the pitcher which is intended to refill the cups of those who drink from each tumbler. So it might be understood that the “Indian Territory” or “Home of the Red Man” as described on the pitcher, while in original practice a glorified prison colony for many tribes, might continue to serve as a cultural spring from which the future Native American Oklahomans, wherever they may be and for whatever reasons they are there, might figuratively drink and consider the sometimes tragic but ultimately triumphant histories that they share. The use of a courting ritual motif on the pitcher may further support this reading by symbolically associating the pitcher itself with the concepts of both physical renewal through biological reproduction (via the courtship context of the scene) and the replication and transmission of cultural information (via the act of playing the flute for another to hear).

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[107] Raymond J. DeMallie, William C. Sturtevant, and Smithsonian Institution., *Handbook of North American Indians. Volume 13, Part 1 & 2 Volume 13, Part 1 & 2*, 2001, 1029–30.

Several companies appear to have attempted to emulate the design of Blue Eagle’s design, with limited success. McGee Oil, which absorbed Knox in 1963, contracted with Bill Flores’ (Cherokee) for a set of Native American caricature tumblers that had a limited run. The Texan offshoot of Knox Oil co., C.E. Knox Oil co., released a set of “Famous Texan” tumblers with a similar concept and art style to that of Blue Eagle, but these too proved less successful. New Jersey based Bonded Oil Co. released a tumbler set entitled “Famous Indians of Ohio” with an ostensibly identical concept, identical fonts, and similar art style, but with mostly “action” portraits of Native American historical figures posed carrying various weapons. The Native people of the lattermost tumbler set reflect the very “bloodthirsty” stereotype that Blue Eagle detested.[108] The crude stereotyping of the Ohio tumblers reflects the wider contemporary popularity of the crass commodification of Native culture. When we consider that, at the time, the extent of many people’s exposure to Native culture lay somewhere between gunfights in serial westerns (which natives almost inevitably lost) and staying in a Wigwam Hotel, it is understandable that, alongside his myriad of other entrepreneurial pursuits, Blue Eagle would desire to use the contemporary automotive craze as an ideal vehicle by which to deliver more meaningful representations of native people and culture. In practical terms, this strategy exposed Blue Eagle’s work to a wide audience of Native and non-Native consumers across Oklahoma while symbolically, the historical figures and motifs chosen by Blue Eagle for this piece work to undermine the assimilationist policies of the contemporary federal government by positing a vision of a semi-decentralized “Indian civilization” which, by attaching itself to a shared histories of both personal and communal significance, could exist with or without reservations as geo-cultural heartlands.

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[108] Keech, Chalee, and Eagle, *Pagans Praying*, 7–8.

This reading of Blue Eagle’s tumbler set suggests that his collective entrepreneurial activities and consistent emphasis on high public visibility constitute an effort to influence the public representation of Native People by engaging with popular media and popular culture. For Blue Eagle, this meant engaging in a give-and-take between exploiting and revising popular Native American stereotypes. Had he worked in cinema, Blue Eagle’s purposeful promotion of self-representative imagery would be termed an expression of “visual sovereignty.”[109] As will be shown, Native actors and filmmakers have been confronted with many of the same issues as Blue Eagle. As with Blue Eagle, automobile culture provided invaluable common ground on which stories with wide public appeal could be crafted and marketed to the Native and non-Native public. But as with Blue Eagle, the tradeoff when producing work with cross-cultural appeal could entail concessions to popular stereotypes in the name of delivering alternative historical narratives and lessons relevant to the Native community.

Native American Cinema Appealing to Automobile Culture

The fact that the automobile was almost from its inception a common element of Native and non-Native cultural lexicons played a vital role in the success of two of the highest grossing and most beloved works of Native American Cinema; Smoke Signals and Powwow Highway. Both films address issues that were highly relevant to contemporary Native people (many of which remain so today) and do so via the well-established archetypes of the “road movie” or “buddy” films centered on journeys of discovery undertaken by pairs of typically homosocial pairs often with conflicting but paradoxically complimentary personalities. It is worth noting that archetypal stories of almost exactly this type have historically proliferated not just in the supposedly non-Native medium of film but within Native North American cosmologies as “hero twin” stories told by Indigenous communities across the continent. Likewise, the tropes of the “long road trip,” “sudden car trouble,” and the “beater car” are all present in both Native and non-Native car cultures. In the latter case these tropes are often associated with the “Rez Car.”[110]

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[109] Michelle H. Raheja, “Reading Nanook’s Smile : Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner),” *American Quarterly*, 2007, 1160–61.

Powwow Highway, 1989[111] (*Fig. D2*) is a film based on a 1979 novel of the same name by David Seals (Huron, b.1947). It was directed by Jonathan Wacks (Non-Native, b.1948) and starred Adolfo Larrue “A” Martinez III (Mexican-American/Apache/Piegan Blackfeet, b. 1948) as the quick tempered American Indian Movement activist Buddy Red Bow (Cheyenne) and Gary Farmer (Cayuga Nation, b. 1953) as the peaceable spiritualist Philbert Bono (Cheyenne). Despite the film’s positive reception, Seals, a former member of AIM, expressed dissatisfaction with Wacks’ take on his work. Seals expressed discomfort regarding the film’s apparent simplification of both his story and the real-world socio-political issues which are referenced throughout the work. This considered, *Powwow Highway* has reached a near cult-film status among native and non-native viewers because, rightly or wrongly, it both embraces and subverts over-simplifications of Native people and social issues. The automobile in *Powwow Highway* remains at the center of much of the action in the film; it is the common interest of both Philbert, who wishes to utilize it to further his own journey of self-discovery, and Red Bow, who needs the vehicle to rescue his sister (Bonny) and her children from corrupt law enforcement agents in Santa Fe. Both characters, at least in the film, are partially suggestive of the stereotypical archetypes of the sentimental Native American spiritualist and the violence-prone Native American activist. Beyond their sometimes semi-stereotypical nature, these characters represent polar opposites in terms of motivation and personality. Their common cultural origins as Cheyenne, Philbert's recognition of Bonny's previous kindness, and their mutual reliance on Philbert's automobile are arguably the only forces which unite them prior to their adventure.[112]

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[110] Taylor, “Iconic Images and Ethnic Humor,” 1–8; Linda Ruth. Williams and Michael Hammond, *Contemporary American Cinema* (London; Boston: Open University Press, 2006), 14–17.

[111] Janet Heaney et al., *Powwow Highway* (United States; Troy, Michigan: [StarMaker : Paragon Entertainment Corp.] ; Distributed by Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2004).

Philbert's decision to purchase the 1964 Buick Wildcat "War Pony the Protector," is motivated by the seemingly conflicting forces of exploitative capitalism and Cheyenne tradition. Sitting in a crowded bar, Philbert witnesses a used car commercial (for Mustangs, Pintos, and Broncos) featuring a Euro-American car salesman in a headdress making crude attempts to appeal to Native American stereotypes. Seeing the commercial, Philbert begins daydreaming of horses, mounted warriors, and his own desire to embark on a quest to become a Cheyenne warrior (a process which entails the acquisition of a horse and the "gathering of medicine" through the symbolic act of acquiring "tokens" which indicate the approval of the mission by higher spiritual powers). He is led by these daydreams, themselves triggered by but not originating with the pitch of the Euro-American salesman, to purchase an automobile that will enable him to accomplish his goals. By acknowledging the role of Euro-American capitalism in making automobiles accessible to Native people but attributing the motivation for the procurement of these vehicles to implicitly Native American goals, the film reconciles the status of the automobile as both a Native and non-Native object. This reading is further reinforced by the exchange which takes place when Philbert obtains War Pony after which the automobile becomes directly associated with the horse, another

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[112] Ryan, *The Trickster Shift : Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art*, 13–23; Peter C. Rollins, *Hollywood's Indian : the portrayal of the Native American in film* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 139–52.

Euro-American mode of transportation fully incorporated into Native culture. Unlike the automobile, which for many viewers might continue to escape direct association with Native people, the horse has long been acknowledged as a member of both native and non-native cultural spheres.[113]

In the car lot, Philbert offers the used car dealer, a man named Fidel, 20 dollars, a flask (presumably containing alcohol), food stamps, and a bag of marijuana in exchange for "one of [his] fine ponies." The car dealer accepts and hands Philbert the keys. As he starts his car for the first time, Philbert removes a statue of the Virgin Mary from the dashboard of his new (used) car by tossing it out the door into the grass. This scene differentiates the automobile from the myriad of damaging non-Native goods which Philbert disposes of. Where drugs, alcohol, and outside religion are identifiable as goods and practices which result in physical or symbolic loss of personal and social autonomy, the automobile, directly associated by Philbert with the horse, is a virtual necessity in the modern world which helps one maintain autonomy and status.

The "claiming" of the automobile as a Native American space is evident through the language with which War Pony is referenced, its status as a quintessential "Rez Car," the actions with which it is associated, and the status of War Pony as a semi-living embodiment of the Trickster. Protagonist Philbert often acts in ways which are consistent with his own desire to identify with historic Cheyenne warriors through his actions and speech (a tendency which, according to some critics, treads a fine line between satirical humor and the replication of stereotype). In keeping with this personality quirk, he consistently refers to his car with vocabulary usually reserved for horses (i.e. the car is said to "gallop" when rolling at full speed) and treats the automobile as a living entity. Horse associations aside, War Pony fits exactly the paradigm of the stereotypical Native American Rez Car, it comes from a decade known for large car bodies (1964), is used to carry a large number of passengers (at one point holding 4 adults and 2 children), and is in a laughably dilapidated state (a fact commented on by others but mostly unacknowledged by Philbert, who reveres the car as equivalent to a literal war-horse).[114] But the film does not rely entirely on the direct comparison of War Pony to an actual horse. Early in the film, Buddy and Philbert discuss their travel arrangement in War Pony over a shared cigarette. The price for Buddy's passage is agreed on (gas money), and the deal is cemented in Cheyenne rather than English. This exchange reinforces the idea that automobiles may become proper contexts for traditional modes of ritual exchange and implicit Native American spaces (Philbert is seen to refuse the consumption of tobacco on all other occasions in the film, all of which lay outside of traditional contexts). This is represented again near the end of the film when Philbert passes down information on obtaining warriorhood to Bonny's children as they ride together in the car. Humorously, the attitudes of the children towards this lesson suggest that the children have opposing personalities that mirror those of Philbert and Red Bow. Finally, it is strongly hinted that by acting as a protector and conduit for valuable lessons War Pony is functioning in some capacity as an embodiment or messenger of the Cheyenne Trickster *Veeho*, a figure whose name means "spider" but whose form is that of a benevolent and often clownish man who helps the Cheyenne people when they are in need.[115] Several examples of War Pony's benevolence stand out as references to this identity. First, when War Pony aids Philbert and Red Bow's close escape from a gun-wielding stereo salesman. Then, in a scene wherein a tarantula, identified by Philbert as a sign of the Trickster's presence, is found in War Pony's glovebox and leads to the Red Bow being thrown from the car in the ensuing panic as Philbert attempts to prevent its death. During the incident, a revolver which Red Bow had threatened to use against the law enforcement personnel holding his sister captive is irreparably damaged, spoiling Red Bow's original plan to liberate his sister by force. Philbert and the children eventually rescue Bonny through trickery with the aid of War Pony rather than through violence. Finally, to throw off the police pursuing Philbert, Red Bow, and their friends and family, War Pony "throws" its riders, crashes, and immolates itself to deceive law enforcement into believing everyone had perished.

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[113] Horse Capture et al., *A Song for the Horse Nation : Horses in Native American Cultures*, 14–16; Rollins, *Hollywood's Indian : the portrayal of the Native American in film*, 144–50.

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[114] Taylor, "Iconic Images and Ethnic Humor," 1–8.

[115] Richard. Erdoes and Alfonso. Ortiz, *American Indian Trickster Tales* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 1–4.

Similarly to how War Pony was handled in *Powwow Highway*, the 1998 film *Smoke Signals* utilizes an automobile in a fashion that suggests its association with the trickster. In *Smoke Signals*¸ Victor Joseph (Coeur d'Alene) played by Adam Beach (Saulteaux First Nation, b.1972) is a cynical and quick tempered young man whose estranged father Arnold Joseph (Gary Farmer) has recently passed away. To retrieve Arnold's bodily remains he is forced to depart on a journey to New Mexico alongside Thomas Builds-the-Fire (Coeur d'Alene) portrayed by Evan Adams (Sliammon First Nation, b.1966) who is emotionally attached to the memory of Victor's father Arnold. Near the beginning of their journey Victor and Thomas encounter Lucy and Velma, two eccentrically dressed Native women who drive their 65 Chevy Malibu backwards down the reservation roads. In exchange for one of Thomas' many stories, Lucy and Velma give the two a ride to the bus stop from which they depart the reservation.[116] (*Fig. D3*)

As the scene begins, Lucy and Velma are seen driving backwards across the frame as a reservation radio DJ tells the audience that a listener has requested a sad song be played. "Road Buddy" by Dar Williams[117] begins and the scene cuts to a view of the car's 8-Track player/radio. A woman in rose tinted glasses and heart-shaped earrings (Velma) loudly exclaims her love for the song and begins dancing. The camera pans to the driver (Lucy) who wears a leopard print hat, clear glasses, and circular earrings. Lucy admonishes Velma for loving "every" song and asks her for a beer. Velma reminds her that they no longer drink alcohol and gives her a coke instead. Lucy closes her eyes, takes a drink, and Velma reminds her to keep her eyes on the road (seen through the back glass rather than windshield in this vehicle). Lucy exclaims that she in fact *is* watching where she's going and shortly thereafter points out something she sees on the road ahead (ostensibly Victor and Thomas walking down separate sides of the highway). Lucy and Velma then share a look and laugh which suggests the statement was an inside joke of some sort. Lucy stops the car, apologizes to Victor for the loss of his father, and asks him if he needs a ride. Velma smiles at Thomas and in a somewhat mocking tone, asks him to barter for a ride. Thomas tells a long story about Arnold which Victor identifies as a lie. Unaffected by the revelation, Velma asks Thomas to finish and identifies his story as “a fine example of the oral tradition”. All four characters then depart to the reservation bus stop where, in parting, Velma asks whether Thomas and Victor had brought passports. She states that they are leaving the reservation and going into a whole different country. A confused Thomas says that they are going to the United States to which Lucy chimes in, “damn right it is, that’s as foreign as it gets.” The scene ends as Lucy and Velma depart, leaving Victor and Thomas to continue their journey.

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[116] Chris Eyre et al., *Smoke signals* (Burbank, CA; Burbank, Calif.: Miramax Home Entertainment ; Distributed by Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2000).

[117] *End of the Summer* (Razor & Tie, 1997), /z-wcorg/.

This scene is filled with symbolism relevant to contemporary Native American life and also serves to summarize the plot of *Smoke Signals* as a whole. Many plains tribes share a tradition of individuals who take on a role known in the terminology of anthropologists as the Contrary-Clown, individuals whose actions emulate those of the Trickster. Exact tradition regarding such individuals varies from tribe to tribe, but Contrary Clowns often purposefully reverse many normative social behaviors in a humorous fashion in order to dispel the tension of solemn occasions or encourage humility among the proud. Often the practice of performing the Contrary-Clown entails dressing eccentrically, displaying the opposite of expected emotional reactions, and riding horses backwards. In keeping with this, Lucy and Velma dress strangely, laugh and joke while the radio plays sad songs, and drive backwards in their car (a practice accepted without question by Thomas and Victor and which otherwise goes unexplained within the film).[118] Their last statement to Victor and Thomas is both a nod to the sovereign status of the reservation and a warning about the inherent dangers of leaving the familiar surroundings of one's home.

The two Contrary-Clowns play leading roles in a deconstruction of the film's plot and an explanation of one of the film's overarching lessons for viewers. Velma, in rose colored glasses, is an upbeat analogue for Thomas who humors his stories even when their accuracy is suspect. She represents a positive conception of the past and contemporary Native American history. Lucy, who wears clear glasses, is more of a cynic and, like Victor, is quick to question Thomas' stories. She represents a more wary conception of the past and contemporary Native American history. The clown driven, forward moving, reverse-drive car that so effectively embodies a modern concept of the Trickster suggests that the viewer is expected to arrive at an important conclusion regarding both the "Lucy and Velma" scene and the film as a whole. They serve as mutually inclusive metaphors for a definition of cultural continuity rooted in observing sovereignty and historicity; individuals and communities must keep an eye on the past as they move forward and work to maintain both personal and group sovereignty (thus Velma's comments regarding alcohol and the status of the U.S. as a country distinct from the reservation). This concept is communicated through a more extended metaphor by Thomas and Victor's journey to reclaim Arnold's ashes and truck (itself a symbol of attaining personal sovereignty through the attainder of mobility) while being forced by circumstance to confront and reconcile their often conflicting memories of Arnold (who in this capacity, can be considered a symbol of Native American history).

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[118] John. Plant, *Heyoka : Die Contraries Und Clowns Der Plainsindianer* (Wyk auf Foehr, Germany: Verlag Für Amerikanistik, 1994): 4-15.

Both *Powwow Highway* and *Smoke Signals* appealed to a mass audience by utilizing the tropes of the popular “road movie” and “buddy movie” genres. Automobiles play a central role in the plot of both films and the road trip itself serves as an effective metaphor for the personal growth of the characters in these stories, these are part of the transcultural appeal of the film, they are recognizable to both Native and non-Native audiences. But because these films are also meant to convey serious messages concerning social and political issues in Native American communities they utilize absurdity and stereotype to draw attention to issues non-Native audiences might not otherwise identify with or pay attention to. That is not to say that there are no elements of the film which are meant to appeal to a specifically Native audience, insider information like the identity of the glovebox spider as an embodiment of the Trickster in *Powwow Highway* or Lucy and Velma emulating the Heyoka Clowns in *Smoke Signals* lets informed viewers know that these films are utilizing the performance of the Trickster. In this way, the films can contain “Triskster Shift” meta-performances which deliver serious social and political messages while externally remaining a film that entertains both Native and non-Native audiences.

Native American Artists and Governments Utilizing Automobile Culture

The cross-cultural act of negotiating the physical and legal infrastructure of automobile culture has provided a literal and figurative niche which Native artists and governments have used, respectively, to subvert colonial power structures and exert their rights to political sovereignty. Edgar Heap of Birds (Southern Cheyenne) was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1954. He holds an MFA from Tyler School of Art in Pennsylvania, a Bachelor’s degree from the University of Kansas, an honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the Massachusetts College of Arts and Design, and has studied at the Royal College of Art in London. Although he has been a guest professor at a number of institutions, he has been employed at the University of Oklahoma in Norman since 1988. His work has garnered significant attention from critics and has been exhibited both nationally and internationally. Heap of Birds has worked in a variety of media including, abstract painting, public awareness messages, public installations, and printmaking. Because much of his work centers on the delivery of clear and often blunt messages to wide audiences, some of his art has made strategic use of the ubiquity of automobile infrastructure in North America. These works include a number of faux "road signs," billboards, large vehicle decals, and a web-art piece entitled "Who Stole the Tee Pee."[119]

Heap of Birds' road signs are part of the public signage strategy he has utilized since at least 1990 when he installed "Building Minnesota" along a riverside pedestrian walkway between Third Avenue Bridge and Portland Avenue in Minneapolis and "Mission Gifts," a series in which the artist installed thirty placards on San Jose city busses which decried the historic grievances of California Natives with the system of Catholic Missions introduced by Spanish colonial authorities in the eighteenth century. (*Fig. D4*) Like his earlier signage campaigns, his 1997 untitled commission (*Fig. D5*) from the Neuberger Museum at Purchase College (part of the State University of New York) is designed to mimic the semi-standardized systems of colors and fonts which characterize the design of road and pedestrian signs installed by government authorities. Befitting the name of its commissioner, it displayed text which questioned whether the State of New York had been purchased, stolen, or reclaimed. This text was written in white letters on a green field (like a "miles to" sign) and was positioned so as to attract the attention of motorists on an adjacent two-lane road.[120]

Heap of Birds has a history of creating and participating in installations which encompass a combination of road and pedestrian signage; his 1996 "American Leagues" billboard (*Fig. D*6) , was installed by a Cleveland roadside with the collaboration of the Cleveland Institute of Art. It was created to open dialogue concerning “Chief Wahoo,” a Native American caricature which remains a logo of the *Cleveland Indians* Major League Baseball team. The piece consisted of an intentionally crude drawing reminiscent of a smiling Chief Wahoo juxtaposed with the words “SMILE FOR RACISM” in red on a white field; a Heap of Birds “trademark” signature is included just below the text.[121] His 2006 series “Insurgent Messages for Canada” (*Fig. D7*) consisted of subversive messages regarding First Nations-Canadian relations in red letters on a white field. It was posted on roadside billboards, at bus stops, near parking lots, and on pedestrian walkways. More recently, in 2011, the collaborative installation project Digital Natives (in which Heap of Birds took part in a design capacity) (*Fig. D8*) incorporated a number of Native language and English quotes, social commentary, and twitter posts from Native people which were printed on signs and subsequently positioned in roadside medians near Burrard Bridge in Vancouver, British Columbia. A large electronic billboard of the type often used to publically announce traffic issues was positioned on land just below the south side of the bridge which was owned by the Squamish First Nation (thus preventing its removal). As motorists passed by, the sign displayed twitter messages by Native people commenting on a variety of issues relevant to their lives and communities. Like an advertisement, Heap of Bird’s public signage is intended to exploit the public association of signage with authority. The harsh and standardized appearance of much of his work further references the appearance of signage installed by government entities, a type of public “art” implicitly connected to the pretensions of states to establish objective definitions of right, wrong, truth, and falsehood through the inescapably subjective processes of litigation. The faux government-PSA road sign is especially effective. It is a naturally high visibility medium because, whereas we might regularly and safely ignore or discount much of the signage with which we are confronted on a daily basis, the presence of large high-contrast signs on the roadside is often associated with the communication of potentially life-saving warnings or essential infrastructure information. Further, we are accustomed to accept the veracity of these signs without question. In a hostile viewer this can result in a values dissonance that leaves them confused and frustrated, as suggested by the many complaints written in regards to the Burrard Bridge collaborative signage project which strategically incorporated First Nations land over which the government of Vancouver had no authority.[122]

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[119] Bill. Anthes, *Edgar Heap of Birds.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), chap. Introduction.

[120] Lawrence Abbott, *I Stand in the Center of the Good: Interviews With Contemporary Native American Artists* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 29–54.

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[121] Elizabeth Hoffman Nelson, *American Indians and Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 200–204.

The power with which seemingly mundane "road art" like signs are invested has been utilized by Native governments as well as individual Native artists. Utilized by a government such art, namely license plates, are a form of collaborative self-representation in which every member of a given tribe can potentially participate no matter where they are located in the country. The first tribal license plates were issued by the Red Lake Band of Chippewa in 1974. (Fig D9) Because these first plates were issued to Chippewa citizens without the approval of the federal government or the state government of Minnesota they were not recognized by state judiciary or law enforcement authorities and as a result, individuals driving outside of the Chippewa reservation were subject to legal recourse. In response to the arrest of several members of the Red Lake Band, the tribal government filed suit with the state of Minnesota for the recognition of tribal license plates. In 1976, Red Lake vs. State of Minnesota was decided in favor of the plaintiff. The case not only resulted in recognition of tribal authority to issue plates but exempted tribal members that registered and tagged their vehicles through the tribe from corresponding state registrations and fees. Perhaps more importantly, the license plate ruling reinforced the equivalency of the powers of tribal government to the powers of state governments by basing the ruling of the case on the principle that tribal governments carried authority equivalent to that of a United States territory or special district or, perhaps more provocatively, that of a Canadian province.[123] In the 43 years since Red Lake Band v. State of Minnesota, many of the 300 federally recognized tribes (and several unrecognized tribal entities) have sought the ability to issue license plates. As a result of the mixed legislation which dictates federal-tribal and state-tribal relationships on a case-by-case basis, it has often been necessary for tribes seeking recognition of automotive licensing powers to take legal action against the various states on whose infrastructure their citizens would reasonably be expected to drive. The license issue has provided an invaluable forum through which to clarify the dynamics of state-tribal government relations. However, these court cases have not necessarily been easy wins for tribes seeking greater delineation of their sovereignty; the process in some states has been piecemeal.

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[122] Anthes, *Edgar Heap of Birds.*, 38–39.

A prime example of state resistance to tribal licensing authority (and the degree of sovereignty communicated therein) is South Dakota. In 1985, the Rosebud Sioux received notice from the South Dakota government that their self-issued license plates would be recognized neither on nor off the reservation due to a 1959 state law wherein South Dakota claimed to have assumed maintenance and de facto ownership of all highways on the reservation. This aggressive response to a seemingly harmless act was due in no small part to a more general trend in South Dakota's government to oppose even small expressions of tribal sovereignty. The subsequent legal battle led to a 1989 ruling wherein tribal and state governments were deemed to have concurrent ownership of reservation highways. This ruling touched off a prolonged political battle wherein the Rosebud Sioux refused to allow agents of the South Dakota Highway Patrol onto reservation land and in a punitive measure, the South Dakota government halted new infrastructure development on the reservation. The conflict grew so far as to raise the possibility of renewed episodes of political violence on the reservation before a 1989 decision by the circuit court of appeals reaffirmed complete Lakota sovereignty over the reservation.[124] However, as of 2017 the State of South Dakota continues to deny the recognition of any license plate issued by a tribe living in South Dakota. This is despite widespread precedent for the state-government recognition of tribal plates and South Dakota's recognition of license plates issued by tribes living outside of state borders. Instead, the South Dakota government issues official plates that may only be transferred upon tribal government vehicles and a number of "special-interest" plates with tribal names and insignia that are sold by the state (for a fee of 10 dollars on top of various prior registration fees and a 5 dollar mailing fee, along with a written form submitted to local country treasurers) to both native and non-native motorists. (*Fig. D10*) They are sold alongside special plates for a number of professions, hobbies, and volunteer positions.[125]

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[123] Sheran, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians v. State of Minnesota, No. 45592 (Supreme Court of Minnesota December 10, 1976); "Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians v. State," *Minnesota Reports* 311 (1976): 240–45.

In practical terms, the tribal license plate and associated arguments for tribal automotive licensing rights are important in terms of their relation to the balance of political power between tribal and state governments, the collection of taxation, the nature of the political sovereignty of tribal government over reservation lands, and the creation of Native national consciousness through mobile public declarations of a cultural/political affiliation with a tribal rather than state government. This public declaration of affiliation arises both incidentally, as a by-product of the sometimes cheaper cost of tribal licensing compared to that of state governments, and purposefully, as the result of either personal desire to declare such affiliation or legislation which makes the procurement of such a license plate mandatory for automobile drivers (sometimes both native and non-native) living in the bounds of the reservation. Concerning license plates, practicality tends to takes precedence over aesthetics. As such, many plates contain only sparse imagery and text positioned and colored so as to preserve the legibility of the license.

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[124] Edward Charles Valandra, *Not without Our Consent : Lakota Resistance to Termination, 1950-59* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 1–4.

[125] SL 1991, ch 243, § 1; SL 1992, ch 210; SL 2007, ch 173, § 46.

The standard Pawnee tribal plate (*Fig. D11*) consists of a red wolf's head over a crossed ceremonial pipe and tomahawk on a blue field whose bottom is bordered with a number of white arrowheads. The design references the government of the tribe in that it imitates the Pawnee tribal flag and seal, the self-identification of the Pawnee government as the head of a martial nation through the red wolf and arrowheads which reference the wars in which Pawnee have fought in service to the US government. The pipe and tomahawk reference the symbolic capacities of the tribal government's power over peacetime and wartime affairs. In Oklahoma, tribal plates like that issued by the Pawnee government with varied imagery and designs unique to each tribal government issuing said license are common sights. By contrast, South Dakota plates sold by the state as "special interest" designs or issued to tribal governments, are highly standardized. "Special Interest" plates are white with red lettering and a variant of a tribal government seal or flag positioned to the left of the license number. Tribal government plates are white with black lettering and a "tax exempt" notice. Both official and "special interest" plates are marked as having been issued by South Dakota. This does not necessarily preclude references to tribal sovereignty on individual plates among the "special interest" set, the Rosebud Sioux variant makes precisely such a reference on the bottom of the Rosebud Sioux Flag. The unrecognized plates of the Pine Ridge Sioux, issued during the state licensing conflict of 1986-1989 are red with white lettering. They display the flag of the Oglala Sioux with letter denoting Oglala Sioux tribal affiliation on the upper border and "Pine Ridge" near the bottom, any sign of affiliation with the state of South Dakota is notably absent from the design. (Fig D12)

As symbols of sovereignty and identity tribal license plates are surprisingly powerful. The very existence of the many tribal license plates now officially recognized evidences the potential power of sovereign Native American governments to express a level of power that can be difficult for state governments to accept. While licensing disagreements have only once come close to bloodshed these conflicts of litigation have proven themselves to be frontlines for furthering the sovereignty of Native communities. Through them, Native governments are often able to reaffirm their powers of taxation and legal jurisdiction over reservation land while either allowing for or making mandatory a standardized statement of geographic (if not necessarily cultural) identity among motorists who are, via the license plate, publically recognizable as being subject to Native law or as identifying with their respective Native governments in addition to an affiliation with the law of their respective states.

Discussions of Native American adaption to life in the twentieth century often it with "survivance," a word originating with Jacques Derrida's original use of the term as a descriptor for a kind of symbolic undeath.[126] The coopting of automobile infrastructure by Native Artists and government suggests that this definition is a mischaracterization of the truth; such an act of adaptivity is not a measure of desperation undertaken by one of Derrida's cultural zombies. An alternative understanding of the term "survivance," closer to the reality of\ Native American use of automobile infrastructure, may be found in *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* by the Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor.[127] In the text, the author provides a flexible definition of the term as the spirit of a kind of metaphysical (spiritual) survival which transcends the mere continuation of names, tribal affiliation, or strings of genetic information. "Survivance," in Vizenor's sense, renounces the dominant narratives of "dominance, tragedy, and victimry" by encompassing the myriad ways in which Native worldviews and stories (both personal and communal) have continued to evolve and grow.

The automobile provides an excellent example of how Vizenor's concept of survivance, in all its seriousness, can be related to the relationships of Native people with objects we might easily dismiss as mundane. Like the adoption of the horse in centuries prior, the automobile was rapidly adopted by successive generations of Native people because its utility was immediately recognizable. Unlike the horse, the automobile was adopted by both Native and non-Native people, albeit to varying degrees, essentially contemporaneously. By finding such areas of common cultural ground, Native artists have historically been better able to communicate their viewpoints and lessons. This was demonstrated by the attempts of filmmakers and cultural icons like Acee Blue Eagle to produce and market art providing Native American viewpoints on subjects of mutual interest with non-Native audiences. Likewise, by exploiting the reliance of automotive culture on considerable frameworks of physical and legislative infrastructure, Native Artists and governments have established themselves as figures of symbolic or actual power over both Native and non-Native viewers. This was performed symbolically by Edgar Heap of Birds through his pseudo government signage and in very practical terms by the many Native American governments that have chosen automobile licensing and legislature as an arena for the expression of cultural and political identity.

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[126] Jacques. Derrida et al., *The Beast & the Sovereign* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 193–94.

[127] Gerald Robert Vizenor, *Manifest Manners : Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), vii.

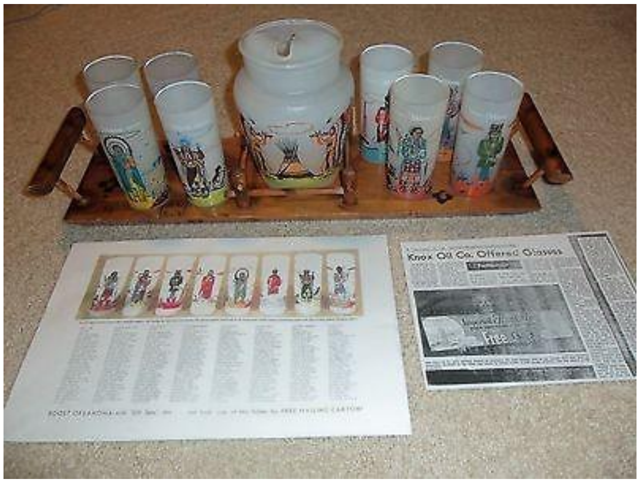
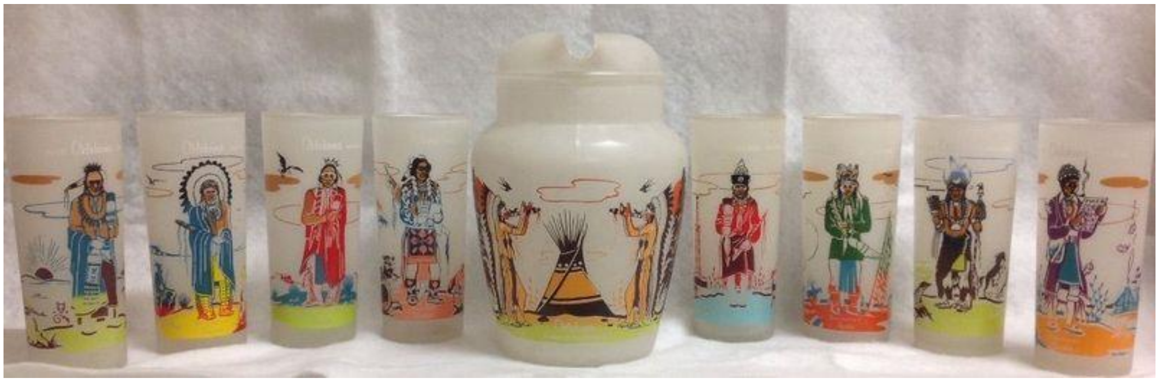

Knox Oil Co. Offered Glasses

Fig. D1

Left and Below: Acee Blue Eagle, *Famous Indians of Oklahoma*, Promotional Tumbler Set, 1959, 1st ed.



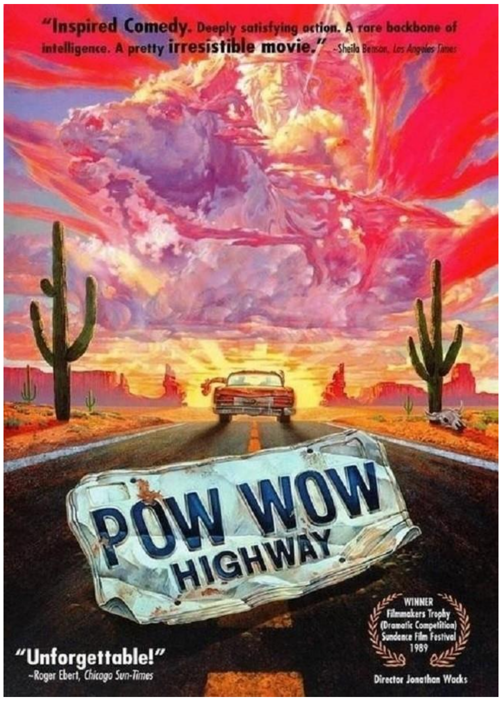

"Inspired Comedy. Deeply satisfying action. A rare backbone of intelligence. A pretty irresistible movie." –Sheila Benson, Los Angeles Times
POW WOW
HIGHWAY
WINNER
Filmmakers Trophy
(Dramatic Competition)
Sundance Film Festival
1989
"Unforgettable!"
–Roger Ebert, Chicago Sun-Times
Director Jonathan Wacks

Fig. D2

Left: Promotional Poster, *Powwow Highway*, c.1989

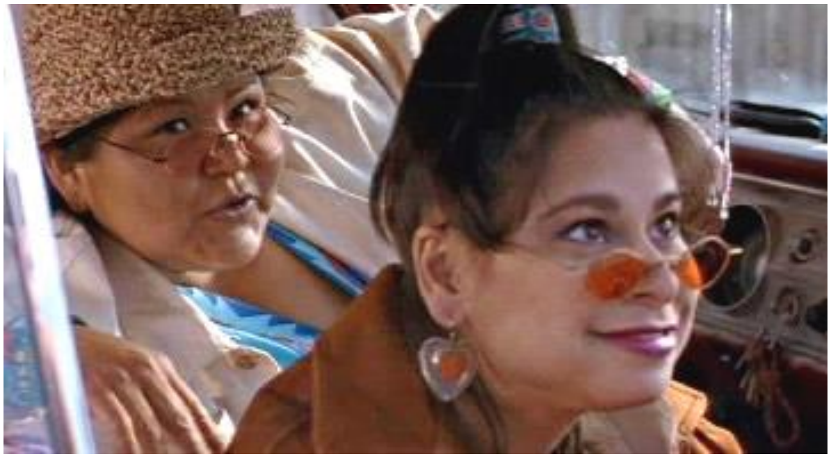
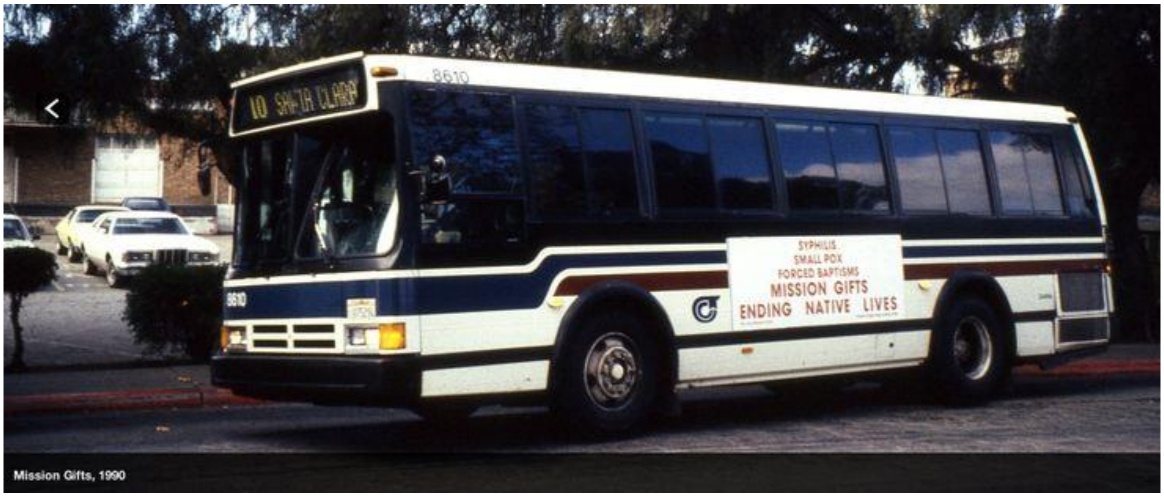
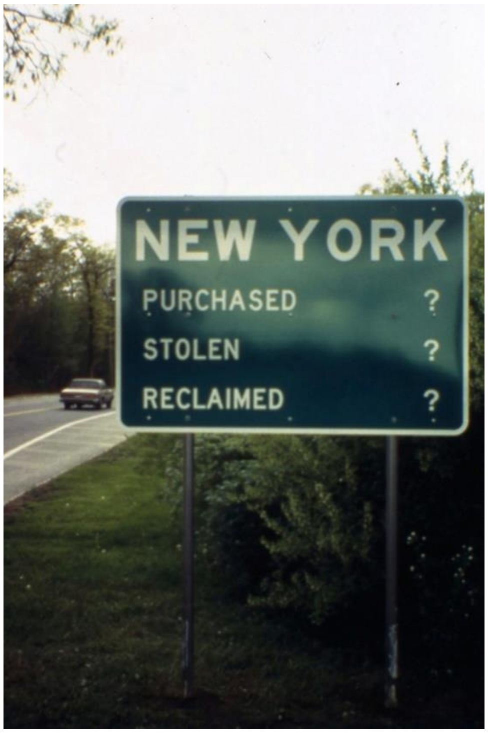


Fig. D3

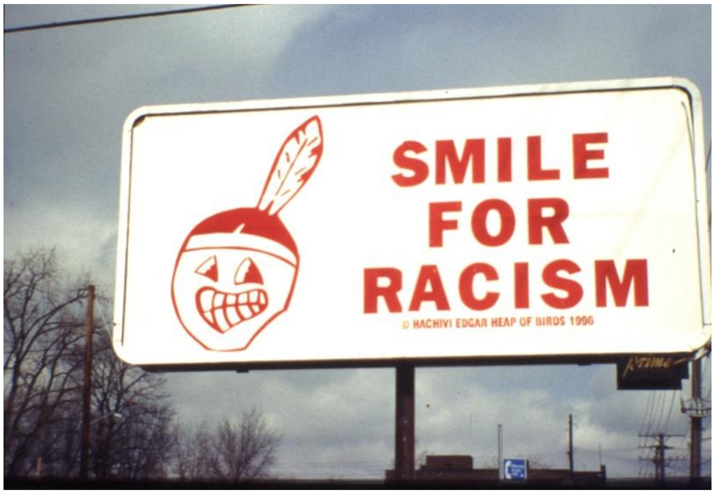
Left: Lucy and Velma, *Smoke Signals*, 1998


10 SANTA CLARA
8610
SYPHILIS
SMALL POX
FORCED BAPTISMS
MISSION GIFTS
ENDING NATIVE LIVES
Mission Gifts, 1990


NEW YORK
PURCHASED ?
STOLEN ?
RECLAIMED ?

Above: Fig. D4, Edgar Heap of Birds, *Mission Gifts*, 1990

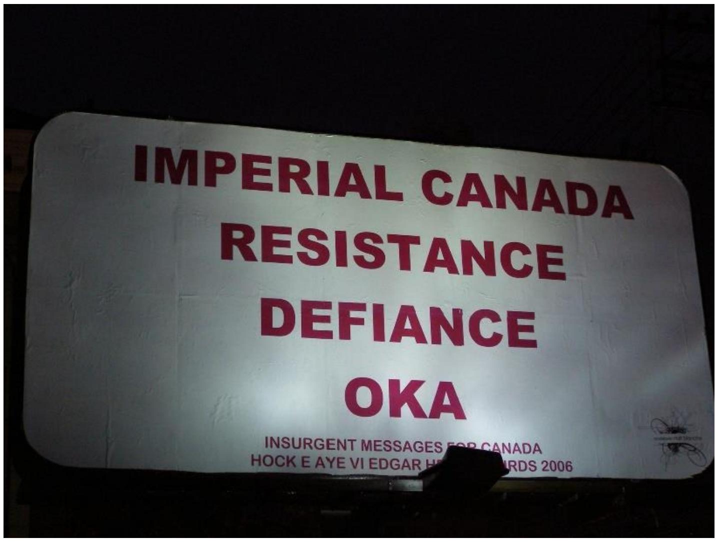
Left: Fig. D5, Edgar Heap of Birds, *untitled*, 1997

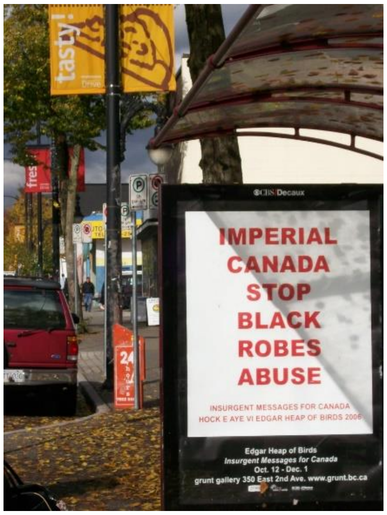

SMILE
FOR
RACISM
© HACHIVI EDGAR HEAP OF BIRDS 1996

Left: Fig. D6, Edgar Heap of Birds, *American Leagues*, 1996

Below Left: Fig. D7a, Edgar Heap of Birds, Billboard, from *Insurgent Messages for Canada*, 2006

Below Right: Fig. D7b, Edgar Heap of Birds, Bus-Stop Placard, from *Insurgent Messages for Canada*, 2006


IMPERIAL CANADA
RESISTANCE
DEFIANCE
OKA
INSURGENT MESSAGES FOR CANADA
HOCK E AYE VI EDGAR HEAP OF BIRDS 2006


IMPERIAL
CANADA
STOP
BLACK
ROBES
ABUSE
INSURGENT MESSAGES FOR CANADA
HOCK E AYE VI EDGAR HEAP OF BIRDS 2006
Edgar Heap of Birds
Insurgent Messages for Canada
Oct. 12 - Dec. 1
grunt gallery 350 East 2nd Ave. www.grunt.bc.ca

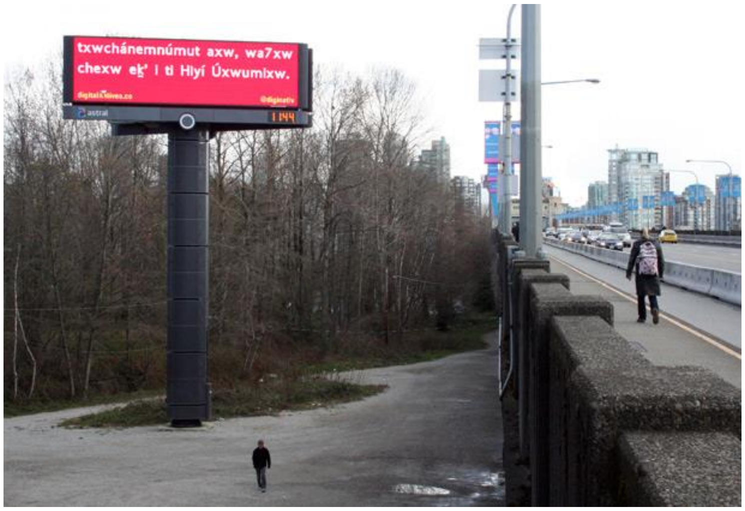

txwchánemnúmut axw, wa7xw
chexw eḵ' i ti Hiyí Úxwumixw.

Fig. D8

Left: Electric Billboard, from *Digital Natives*, 2012

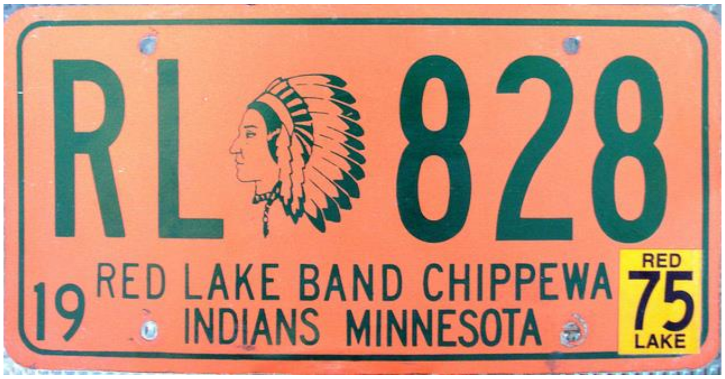

RL 828
19
RED LAKE BAND CHIPPEWA
INDIANS MINNESOTA
RED
75
LAKE

Fig. D9

Left: Red Lake Band Chippewa, License Plate, 1975

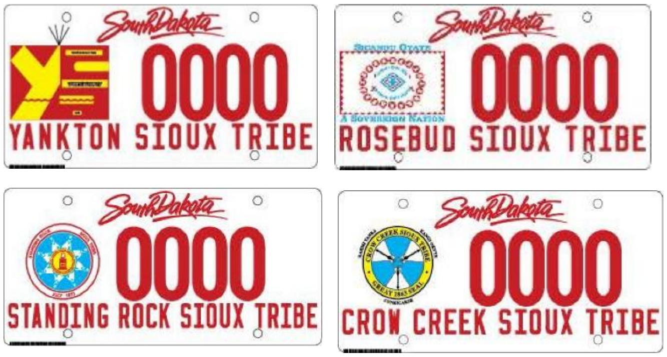

South Dakota
0000
YANKTON SIOUX TRIBE
South Dakota
0000
ROSEBUD SIOUX TRIBE
South Dakota
0000
STANDING ROCK SIOUX TRIBE
South Dakota
0000
CROW CREEK SIOUX TRIBE

Fig. D10

Left: State of South Dakota, Selection of Special Interest Tribal Plates, c.2016

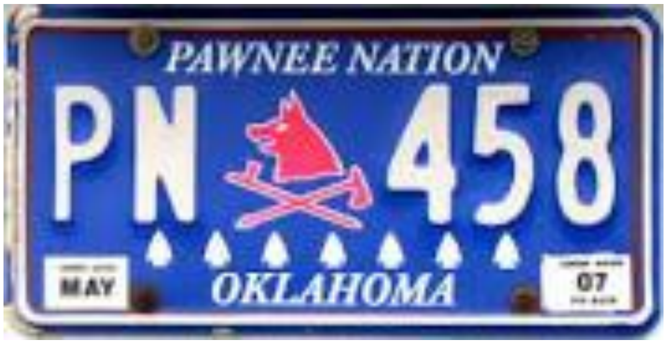

PAWNEE NATION
PN 458
MAY
07
OKLAHOMA

Fig. D11

Left: Pawnee Tribe, License Plate, 2007

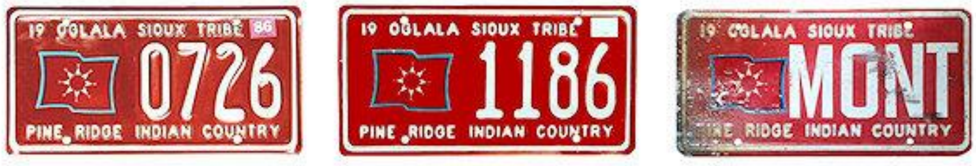

19 OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE 86
0726
PINE RIDGE INDIAN COUNTRY
19 OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE
1186
PINE RIDGE INDIAN COUNTRY
19 OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE
MONT
PINE RIDGE INDIAN COUNTRY

Fig. D12

Above: Pine Ridge Oglala Sioux Tribe, Unrecognized License Plates, 1986-1989

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Chapter two examined some of the early work by the twentieth century Kiowa photographer Horace Poolaw. His photography often included automobiles and even automobile infrastructure. He had a personal relationship with automotive technology that was defined by the various roles Poolaw played in his early life; a member of Kiowa youth culture, the brother of the victim of a fatal car crash, and was among the first officers of the Oklahoma highway patrol (est.1937). His artistic drive was centered on his desire to record and communicate cultural information to future generations through his photography. The semi-documentary nature of his work means that his photography trends towards the presentation seemingly mundane scenes ostensibly created as indexical records of moments in the lives of his peers. However among these are examples of work like the Trickster portrait of his brother-in-law wherein Poolaw hid complex cultural or cosmological messages and identities in otherwise mundane scenes. Experimental readings of his work suggested that the photos he took of automobile and automobile-related imagery were, on the surface, intended to present the reality of the social dynamics around these vehicles; the automobile was an extension of the contemporary progressive Kiowa youth culture that had readily adopted the technology for both utilitarian and prestige purposes. On a deeper level, the automobile was presented so as to emphasize its role as a tool that symbolically unified traditionalist and progressive elements of Kiowa society by physically encapsulating them. Further analysis suggested that recognition of this symbolic role led to the association of the automobile with the promise of a space in modernity for the continuation of Kiowa people and culture.

Chapter three revealed that Native American artists since at least the 1980s have utilized the automobile as a central motif in art that performs the trickster shift, neutralizing/rehabilitating stereotypes and romanticized narratives of Native people. Dallin Maybee incorporated the automobile into a scene that combined imagery of historic and modern transportations being utilized for traditional economic pursuits. The scene was placed on a traditional foundation for pictorial art and rendered in a mix of historical and modern materials. In this context, the automobile was part of a message that Native people continue to express personal sovereignty by continuing to incorporate traditional culture into modern life. Arthur Amiotte used an automobile as the central motif of a narrative cycle where the artist imagines an ancestor as this individual imagines the approval his own ancestors would have for his automobile as represented visually by the artists simultaneous placement of successive generations in the same automobile. In this context, the motif serves as an affirmation of Indigenous historicity with the automobile serving as a metaphorical vehicle by which the artists ancestor is uniting the past with the present and the future (as represented by his grandchild). Jay Polite Laber expanded the role of the automobile as an affirmation of historicity. His transformation of used automobile parts and reclaimed stone into an installation of equestrian statues representing historic warriors was metaphor that transferred the traits of endurance, ingenuity, and protectiveness onto the Blackfoot Nation government while insinuating the connection of this institution to a history rendered verifiable by the very materials of the sculpture. Here, the automobile was a testimony by both Laber and the Blackfoot government of the significance of their connections to the area and dedication to its prosperity. Finally, Wendy Red Star's stark and sometimes bitingly witty work utilized the implied indexicality of photography to create works that demystify Native modernity by documenting some of the mundane, absurd, and difficult (aesthetically and otherwise) realities of life on the Crow reservation. The day-to-day presence of the automobile is documented by unaltered photography, further contextualized through the use of historic automobile-powwow imagery, and finally, the symbolic incorporation for the automobile into Native modernity is expressed by the utilization of the motif in the creation of objects typically considered to be examples of modern pan-Native American material culture. Red Star expresses that, like other objects and situations she observes as part of her culture, the automobile too is part of Native American life.

The final chapter of the thesis examined the ways in which Native artists and governments have utilized the commonality of automobile culture to Natives and non-Natives in order to reach wide audiences. Here, the trickster shift was being performed on a massive scale through mass marketed goods and cinema as well as public signage campaigns from both government and non-government sources. Acee Blue Eagle, an artist who often appealed to stereotypes in order to affirm his validity in the eyes of the non-Native public, released a set of glasses to be marketed to motorists during the "golden age" of the American highway system by an oil company. But rather than appeal to popular imagery of warlike Indian, Blue Eagle's glasses rehabilitate the concept of famous Native Americans by portraying a mix of intellectuals and warriors who occupied a number of roles that might have surprised contemporary observers. Further, Blue Eagle insured the figures reflected historic and culturally specific styles of clothing rather than the contemporaneously popular (and often generically applied) plains aesthetic. Native cinema adopted a similar strategy, appealing to stereotype, but using this attention to present indigenous viewpoints on contemporary issues. Examinations of signage and licensing demonstrated the adoption of the Trickster shift by both Native Individuals and government. The prevalence of automobile culture allowed Edgar Heap of Birds to produce large and small scale works whose audiences participate in when they perform the roles of "motorist" or "attentive citizen." Heap of Birds signs are public service announcements for the subversion of hegemonic political and cultural control over Native people that transfer unto themselves the authority of the very governments and cultural narratives they parody by adopting similar aesthetics. Native governments, on their part, utilize a very similar strategy when they issue license plates. While the art and appearance of the plates publically emphasize the cultural affiliation and authority of the governments which issue them, the associated legal battles serve to better delineate the extent of the powers of Native government.

In each chapter of the essay the automobile motif and the involvement of Native artists with automobile culture were shown to be closely associated with the performance of the Trickster shift. Each contemporary artist discussed in the essay that used or continues to use the automobile as a recurring motif in their work, does so in the context of neutralizing or rehabilitating negative or romanticized narratives of Native American life; Poolaw used the automobile in the creation of works that he intended to portray the liminal culture of the "Fancy Indians" which directly conflicted with the dichotomous assimilated/unassimilated narrative of contemporary Native Life. Amiotte, Dallin, and Laber used the automobile as a way to symbolically connect present and past Native American life in ways that conflict with popular conceptions of the inverse relationship between Native cultural stability and modern technology. Finally, Red Star used images of particularly disheveled automobiles in conjunction with other images typically associated with poverty to symbolically "claim" the objects and help to dispel romanticized narratives of what it means to be Native in the twenty-first century. Likewise artists and governments that coopted automobile culture, did so while performing the Trickster Shift. Acee Blue Eagle built a public persona on exaggerated "Indianness," his promotional series used familiar warrior figures and the mass market for goods aimed at motorists to push new and more inclusive criteria for what constitutes an important or famous Native American. Filmmakers utilized the market for "road movies" and even made open appeals to stereotype in their films for the sake of broadcasting Native viewpoints on contemporary societal issues. Finally, Heap of Birds and many native governments have coopted the perceived authority of road signage as a way to publically advertise the presence of Native people and power of Native government in ways that frustrated the uninformed public and the conflicting authority of State governments.

Elements of the study both supported and contradicted the limited amount of prior scholarship on the historic relationship of Native Americans and automobiles. In terms of Native American automobile ownership, this study reaffirms the ownership of automobiles by Native people prior to World War II as cited by Phillip J. Deloria in *Indians in Unexpected Places* in his examination of Osage automobile ownership during the Osage County oil boom of the 1920s.[128] But unlike either Deloria's study or Mark S. Foster's history of American automobile ownership, *Nation On Wheels* (which suggested that Native automobile ownership before World War II was essentially negligible)[129], this study uncovered evidence in the form of Horace Poolaw's photography that Native automobile ownership prior to World War II may have been less limited to recipients of oil money and vested with more symbolic meaning to contemporary native people than has previously been suggested. These photos may in fact constitute the first visual evidence of an understudied and automobile centric Native American youth subculture extant in at least the 1920s which was colloquially identified by John Poolaw as "Fancy Indians."[130] This author is aware of no prior studies of the use of the automobile as a motif in Native American art, however the use of the automobile as a motif in Native American literature received a small mention in Deborah Clarke's *Driving Women*, an examination of twentieth century automobile fiction. Not unlike the results of my study, Clarke identified the association of automobile imagery with Native people in works by Native authors with the symbolic expression of both hope for the future and the modern phenomenon of liminal "citizenship" in both Native and non-Native communities.[131] Such a description is entirely consistent with the ways in which modern and contemporary Native artists have chosen to utilize the automobile motif or coopt automobile culture for their own ends.

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[128] Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 177–82.

[129] Foster, *Nation on Wheels : The Automobile Culture in America since 1945*, 30–31.

[130] Mithlo et al., *For a Love of His People the Photography of Horace Poolaw ; [in Conjunction with the Exhibition For a Love of His People: The Photography of Horace Poolaw, Opening at the National Museum of the American Indian, New York, on August 9, 2014]*, 139–40.

Although no lengthy scholarship on the relationship of Native American artists to automobiles had been conducted prior to this thesis, the topic actually lay at the center of a number of topical foci in contemporary Native American studies. The Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) is among the largest and most respected organizations for the study of indigenous people. It has an international membership composed of scholars, graduate students, independent researchers, and community members working in various disciplines connected to indigenous studies. This thesis connects to a number of international and North American indigenous studies subjects covered at the annual meeting of the organization since 2010, these include Post-WWII Termination/Urbanization studies, Pre-WWII mobility, work, and "mainstreaming" studies, the economics of Settler Colonialism, the politics and legislation of indigenous sovereignty, Native American film, Native American printmaking, the relationship of Native people to popular culture, and the right to visual sovereignty.

The new material being generated by interest in these topics informs the ways in which the study will expand. The biggest improvement to be made is in the expansion of the study to encompass a pan-Native American focus; observations made during the study have suggested that the automobile is being used by Native artists of many different cultures and across North America. Greater effort must be given to find female artists utilizing the automobile motif when the study is expanded, Wendy Red Star was the only female artist present in this study, and her work seems to differ thematically from the male artists of the study in that her use of the motif associates the automobile primarily with modern native economic struggles and cultural expression rather than historic hunting or warrior culture. Greater attention may also be paid to finding artists incorporating the automobile into their work prior to World War II. Finally, the expanded study will attempt either to relate the use of automobile motifs and cooption of automobile culture by Native Americans to comparable practices by indigenous peoples across the world.

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[131] Deborah. Clarke, *Driving Women: Fiction and Automobile Culture in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 101–10, 175–78.

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APPENDICES

Allotment Period (1887-1934)

A period, beginning with the passage of the Dawes Act (1887), wherein the government began the process of dissolving Indian reservations through the allotment of the land therein to individual families and the sales of “excess” lands to the public. In Oklahoma, led to the dissolution of all Indian Reservations in the state with the partial exception of that belonging to the Osage, who maintained mineral rights to their lands. Ended with the passage of the Wheeler-Howard Act in 1934.

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

Agency of the United States Department of the Interior responsible for the administration of Native American lands held in trust by the federal government of the United States. Historically, has also been responsible for providing a range of legal, administrative, economic, and health services. In 19th and early 20th centuries, agency was responsible for carrying out government assimilation policies via actions like the creation of the boarding school education system. It has been widely accused of furthering the interests of the federal government and private individuals through cooperation with law enforcement agencies to suppress Native American political protest, covertly supporting the election of authoritarian leaders in Native communities, repeatedly underpaying employees, and mismanaging Native lands held in trust.

Enid, Oklahoma

The town lay in the old Cherokee Outlet alongside U.S. Route 64 (which went from North Carolina to the Navajo (Diné) community of Teec Nos Pos, Arizona) and was a common stop for travelers as they transferred from Route 64 onto Route 66.

Indian New Deal (1934-1954)

Body of legislation beginning with the Wheeler-Howard Act of 1934 which sought to undo the economic damage to Native people done by allotment policies. Legislation generally attempted to encourage the development of Native American communities which were more economically independent of the government.

Kiowa Comanche Apache Reservation (KCA)

A joint reservation which existed in Southwest Oklahoma and was occupied by members of the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache tribes. Reservation was established in 1867 by the Medicine Lodge Treaty. Dissolution of the reservation began in 1901 with the beginning of the allotment of the territory and the official opening of the reservation to settlers.

Knox Oil Company

Knox Oil Co. based in Enid, Oklahoma was among the many small oil companies taking advantage of the growing automobile service market in the 1950s. Operated stations across Oklahoma until being absorbed by McGee Oil Co. in 1963.

Knox Oil Glass Set, "Famous Indians of Oklahoma"

Bacon Rind (1860-1932), was an Osage chief who supported both the allotment of his reservation and the development of a regional oil and gas industry that allowed many Osage to prosper through the 1920s via the Osage Business Council in charge of administering the mineral rights to the reservation. He wore traditional Osage clothing his entire life.[132]

Quanah Parker (1845-1911), was a Comanche war-leader who, upon leading his band into the reservation, became an effective proponent of adaptive economic and educational measures among the Comanche. He remained faithful to native spiritual practices and maintained a traditional polygamous marriage arrangement. Prior to his death, he lived in a large ranch house purchased through his business acumen as a rancher with his sizable multigenerational household. He was widely believed to have been the single wealthiest Native American individual at the time of his death.[133]

Hen-Toh (Bertram N. O. Walker) (1870-1927), was the native-language pen name of a Wyandot intellectual, educator, and businessman who authored at least two books of Wyandot stories and poetry. He is remembered as a proponent and preserver of traditional Wyandot storytelling, poetry, and music.[134]

Geronimo (1829-1909), was a Chiricahua Apache war-leader who fought prolonged guerilla conflicts with both the Mexican and United States governments. By the time of his surrender in 1886, the then 57-year-old Geronimo was a celebrity among both natives and non-natives. Geronimo and his band spent 27 years as prisoners of war before arriving in Fort Sill, Oklahoma to serve as scouts for the U.S. Army. Geronimo died at Fort Sill in 1909 after contracting pneumonia.[135]

Dull Knife (1810-1883), was a Northern Cheyenne chief sometimes called Morning Star. In 1876 he and fellow Northern Cheyenne chief Little Wolf led two groups of their people out of the resource-poor Southern Cheyenne reservation in Oklahoma, where many had starved, on a 400 mile trek to historically Northern Cheyenne territories in Montana. Along the way, further deaths occurred as Dull Knife, Little Wolf, and their people were forced to evade or elude the pursuing United States military. The group led by Little Wolf was captured but allowed to stay in Montana, while Dull Knife's group was eventually captured and imprisoned in Fort Robinson, Nebraska. Dull Knife continued to resist deportation to Oklahoma (then Indian Territory) and in early 1879 escaped along with his remaining people. Although Dull Knife and his family made it to Pine Ridge where safety could be found among the Lakota strategically spread across the Montana reservation, many of Dull Knife's group were killed, wounded, and/or recaptured. Due in part to significant pressure by the American public, the survivors (of whom there were less than 80) and Dull Knife's family were finally allowed to settle alongside Little Wolf's band by late 1879.[136]

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[132] Terry P. Wilson, *The Underground Reservation : Osage Oil* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 116–27.

[133] Foster, *Being Comanche : A Social History of an American Indian Community*, 85–111.

[134] Mary B. Davis, *Native America in the Twentieth Century : An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Pub., 1996), 318.

[135] Angie Debo, *Geronimo : The Man, His Time, His Place* (London: Pimlico, 2005), 80–445.

Ruling His Son (c.1828-1928) was a chief of the Pawnee who served as a scout in the U.S. army during the wars between the Federal government and Sioux. He is noted for having to be physically restrained from attacking a member of the Sioux delegation during a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Massacre Canyon (The final battle of the last war in which the Pawnee and US Military were allied against Sioux forces). He lost one of his wives and a child to a Sioux ambush during this conflict. His 1928 obituary in the Dallas Morning Herald reports that, despite having never voted, Ruling His Son had previously voiced his intent to vote for "Cousin Charlie," a reference to Republican vice-presidential candidate (future vice-president in the Herbert Hoover administration) and Kansas Senator Charles Curtis (Osage) whom he had reportedly planned to visit shortly before his death.[137]

Hunting Horse "Tsatooke" (1846-1953) was a Kiowa chief and former scout under Colonel George Armstrong Custer. He expressed pride at his service and at some point in his life tattooed himself on the wrist with the sign of the morning star in reference to "Son-of-the-Morning-Star," a name by which the Sioux called Custer. It is notable that the Sioux had historically been enemies of the Kiowa and that Tsatooke's service could be interpreted as participation with the federal government in a fight against a group that was, at the time, a mutual enemy. Hunting Horse continued to recount his service with Custer through public lectures and storytelling into his old age, often regaling a local Boy Scout troupe named in his honor and even broadcasting his war stories through a radio show appearance at the age of 107. As a young man, he converted to Christianity (Methodist) and began to adopt Euro-American clothing and customs, although he never adopted the English language. As an old man he expressed a degree of satisfaction with both his 160 acre allotment and the 75.00 dollar a month old-age pension he received from the government for his service. His three sons and three daughters all outlived him with the exception of the famed artist and member of the Kiowa Six, Monroe Tsatoke who died of tuberculosis in 1937. Hunting Horse's stories were reported to have been the source of many of the scenes in his son's work.[138]

Sequoyah (1770-1843) was a famous Cherokee scholar and artist. As a child, he invented a number of useful farming mechanisms and at some point began making jewelry via the reuse of silver coins brought to his mother's trading post. As a young man he achieved a degree of economic power through the inheritance of this trading post, but recognized that he was beginning to become excessively dependent on the alcohol which was sold and often consumed on the premises during periods of socialization. In response to his self-perceived problem he ceased drinking and selling liquor at his establishment and, as a therapeutic measure, taught himself how to draw, how to work and repair iron tools, and how to decorate his ironwork with silver. Around 1809, Sequoyah began studying examples of the written word which arrived at his trading post through Euro-American traders and experimenting with different systems of writing. After some initial setbacks, he created a system of syllabary which he was able to teach to his daughter Ayoka. He was eventually able to introduce his system to all the Cherokee.[139]

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[136] Vernon R. Maddux and Albert Glenn. Maddux, *In Dull Knife's Wake : The True Story of the Northern Cheyenne Exodus of 1878* (Norman, Oklahoma: Horse Creek Publications, 2003), 19–175.

[137] "Ruling His Son, Patriarchal Chief of His Tribe Ends Vivid Career of Warrior," *Dallas Morning News*, October 4, 1928, sec. Obituaries.

[138] Ron Jackson, "Hunting Horse," *The Oklahoman*, March 5, 2005; Mary Ellen Ryan, "Custer's Hunting Horse," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 34 (1956): 326–35.

Powwow

A modern (Post-19th Century) public gathering which is inclusive of individuals from various Native American communities. Typically such occasions involve organized competition and cultural exposition in the forms of singing, drumming, and dancing, socialization opportunities for attendees, live music, food, and displays of art.

Reservation

An area of land belonging to a Native American tribe but generally administered in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Practice of pushing Native people into distinct geographic locations began informally with initial colonization of North America. In the U.S., the practice gradually evolved into its modern form during the 18th and 19th centuries, especially after the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

Route 66

A road once deemed the “mother highway” began in Chicago, Illinois, moved south through Missouri, bisecting the state of Oklahoma as it passed through Tula and El Reno, plunged south into Amarillo, and moved west through Albuquerque, New Mexico, Flagstaff, Arizona, and Los Angeles, California, before ending at Santa Monica Pier.

Termination Period (1950s-1970s)

A period in which the federal government reversed its prior policies on native people and attempted to dissolve the official status of many Native American tribes. Many tribes lost legal recognition, but most were later able to recover their status as legally recognized entities through separate court cases.

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[139] Grant. Foreman, *Sequoyah* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996); John B. Davis, “The Life And Work Of Sequoyah,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 8, no. 2 (June 1930): 149–80.

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