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YVONNE NICOLE TIGER
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ART WITH A CAUSE: EXAMINING THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ART AND THE WELLNESS OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF NATIVE AMERICAN STUDIES

BY

[redacted]

Dr. Joe Watkins, Chair

[redacted]

Dr. Barbara Hobson

[redacted]

Dr. S. Matthew DeSpain

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Dedicated to my wonderful husband, partner,
and Ph.D. candidate, Paul, to Jordan and Lula,
to my mom and dad,
and to all my grandparents.
I love you all. Mvto/Wado.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In 2009, the artist Thomas Poolaw (Delaware/ Enrolled Kiowa) delivered a lecture in the University of Oklahoma's School of Art during which he discussed the photography of his grandfather, Horace Poolaw, and his own art. It was interesting to listen to Thomas talk about the special relationship he had with his grandfather and how his grandfather's photographs influenced him. I, too, come from a family of artists. The work of my uncle Jerome Tiger, especially his paintings of the Trail of Tears and those of traditional Muscogee-Creek and Seminole people, continues to be important even today forty-four years after his death. A prolific artist, his legacy influenced his brothers, his children, and his grandchildren to pick up the brush. My family's art tradition prompted my interest in conducting research on a Native American artist who was also inspired by an artist within his own family. I wanted to know more about Thomas Poolaw's work, processes, and influences. This inquiry was the original focus of my thesis. After examining Poolaw's life and art career, I began looking at his involvement in organizations focused on healthful living and wellness within the Native American community. It soon became apparent to me that it was more pertinent for this thesis to explore the connection between Native American art, healthful living, and wellness.

While researching Poolaw's work, I encountered a 2009 article about the artist group known as "The Urban Indian 5," hereafter UI5, in which writer Kent Anderson pondered the question: "What constitutes health?" He concluded that, "it encompasses not only the body, but the mind as well, and the intangible that is often

call the 'soul.'" (Anderson 2009). It is a question that has also been on the mind of Thomas Poolaw whose concern for the health and well being of Native people began much earlier in his life when he watched diabetes deteriorate his grandmother's health, steal his grandfather's leg, ultimately, ending his life. Since 2006, spiritual and physical wellness have become important to Poolaw's career as an artist and a quest in his personal life. That year he became a member of the Urban Indian 5 and began his affiliation with the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic, hereafter OKCIC, which I will explore further in Chapter Two, then in 2010 he began working with the University of Oklahoma's American Indian Institute, hereafter Aii. In 2011, this journey has continued and even intensified. Horace Poolaw's memory is the motivation behind his desire to help Indian people become healthy spiritually, mentally, and physically, to fight diabetes and to adopt a healthful lifestyle.

The concept of wellness, as advocated by the organizations Poolaw is involved with, only came about in the last century. Dr. Louis Dunn (1896-1975), who was a physician and a statistician, was the first to surmise that there was a connection between one's physical health and how, or where, the person lived (Miller 2005: 88). Through this inference, Dr. Dunn brought to the foreground the idea that wellness and healthfulness was more than simply being cured of disease, but that it was "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well being" (Miller 2005). For many Native Americans who live outside of their communities, and often times very far from "home," they are already at a lesser state of wellness and social well being, as advocated by Dunn. Federal Indian Policies of Removal and

Relocation are mainly responsible for the displacement of many Native Americans (Dippie 1982).

In regards to Native Americans and the Wellness Movement, it is an area that is gaining in momentum vis-à-vis the creation of organizations, but not as much in the area of scholarship. As to the organizations, there are a few well-known ones such as the Aii, which will be discussed in this thesis, the White Bison Center for Wellbriety, and The Native American Wellness Institute (NWI). These groups are overseen by Native People for the wellness and recovery of Native People. The Native American Wellness Institute, a designated not-for-profit org, has a well constructed and informational website, www.nativewellness.com, with a clear mission of "promot[ing] the well-being of Native people through programs and trainings that embrace the teachings and traditions of our ancestors." This website places the origins of the Native American Wellness movement as stemming from the 1970s and the move towards self-determination, resulting in a period of revializaiton and cultural uplift in the 1980s. According to NWI, by the late 80s and into the 90s, organizations centered around Native wellness began to form. Today, many tribal governments, such as the Seminole and the Chickasaw, have taken the cue by building Wellness Centers for their tribal communities. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of information on the actual Native Wellness Movement.

By 1959, Dunn realized wellness involved the spiritual, too. In Western medicine, the assessment of wellness went: body, mind, spirit (physician, psychiatrist, and religious leader). Dunn, however, knew these three areas were not mutually exclusive; they had to be harmonized for wellness to be fully present

(Miller 2005: 89). This is an area in which clinical psychologist Dr. J.P. Gone has conducted his research. In his work, he focuses exclusively on Native American and First Nation communities, examining their needs and the cultural sensitivity given when delivering those needs. In a recent article, he writes about a northern Algonquian "Healing Lodge" in Canada that has reclaimed their clinical space "'to provide an integrated and holistic therapeutic approach to healing and wellness for individuals, families and the community utilizing western and aboriginal practices'" (Gone 2011:191). For a Native community, this is a balanced approach towards Western medicine and traditional healing, which incorporates indigenous spiritualism. Dunn's findings were not lost on Poolaw, or the other members of the UI5, OKCIC, or the University of Oklahoma's Aii, all organizations who focus on Native wellness and healthful living, as will be discussed in Chapter Two.

In this thesis I will examine the connections between traditional concepts of Native American wellness, healing, and art and how local organizations in Oklahoma City and Norman, Oklahoma, work to promote healthful living. I will argue that art, wellness, and the Native community are inseparable and that contemporary artists are using their art in a way that harkens back to non-Western means of healing. Most culturally participating Native American communities still, with some regularity, utilize traditional means of healing in the form of ceremony. In the less culturally connected urban environment, groups like UI5, Aii at the University of Oklahoma, and the OKCIC most closely resemble those traditional means of achieving wellness. I will discuss the history and functions of these organizations and the artists involved, primarily Thomas Poolaw and

Marwin Begaye, to analyze and assess the connection between traditional Native American ceremony and wellness, healing, and art.

For my framework, I sought out books that deal specifically with researching Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous methodology, such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999). The work of the Urban Indian 5, a truly all Native American grassroots organization, fits well within the framework of the modern Indigenous Peoples' project which was wrought out of the need for survival in the face of historical traumas such dislocation, assimilation, and "the devastation of disease" (Smith 1999:107). This description also applies to the other organizations that will be examined herein because they really are projects that call for decolonization. For example, the main message of the American Indian Institute's Wellness Conferences is to urge Native Peoples to move away from how mainstream society lives and eats, and to return to a healthier, natural way of eating. According to the American Planning Association's website, a non-profit educational organization, "As Native Americans were pushed into the dominant food system, the incidence of diet-related disease rose rapidly. Diabetes-related mortality among American Indians is over twice that of the general U.S. population (231 percent)." For Indigenous People whose diets have undergone drastic change in the last one hundred thirty years, fast food is a fast track to heart disease and diabetes, just to name a few ailments. Smith's book encourages researchers to put the needs of Indigenous People first and to think in terms of decolonization and survival.

Two articles that have inspired this thesis are about Native artists Will Wilson and Larry McNeil (Asken, 2007; Vigil, 2008). Wilson and McNeil are both photographers who alter their works to emphasize the issues that face their people, be it their tragic tribal history or the current polluted state of their tribal lands. While their images are engaging, or even sublime, their art is more than "art for art's sake;" it sends a powerful message about the state of the People in Indian Country. Poolaw's work in the Wellness movement and his views on the current health of our Native community make his work, and the works of other artists such as Marwin Begaye, as pro-active as the work of Wilson and McNeil. All of these artists make some references to their families, issues that plague their communities (past and present), and influences that forged stronger communities. These articles furthered my understanding of how art delivers the artist's message, and how Native artists are using this malleable medium to further an agenda that is not just about art, but about the survival of Native Peoples. The works of Poolaw and other artists offer a similar opportunity for study.

Chapter Two: The Oklahoma City Indian Clinic and the University of Oklahoma's American Indian Institute—Traditions, Healing, and History

Every year the Oklahoma City Indian Clinic, or the OKCIC, holds The Red Feather Gala and Art Auction, a fundraiser held to benefit the clinic in its projects and development. The OKCIC is a health clinic and wellness center that serves Oklahoma City's urban Indian population. As a designated non-profit organization, the clinic relies on grants, funding, and donations for financial support. Due in part to the state of the economy, the thirty year-old center has struggled to move forward with its plans for expansion. The Red Feather Gala brings attention to the clinic and its work and is an important source of funding.

Since its inception in 2004, the Red Feather Gala has become a major event for the clinic, undergoing numerous changes. One of the most significant changes has been the addition of the art auction in 2006. Since becoming part of the Gala, the art auction has brought in a substantial amount of money for the clinic, but the first year of the auction was an unmitigated disaster, according to the clinic's community liaison Steve Barse, speaking at a public lecture. Numerous generous artists, including some Native American artists, donated a significant amount of valuable art to the auction and it looked as though the clinic stood to make a substantial monetary return. Unfortunately, the organizers forgot to put a minimum bid on the art. As a result, very valuable pieces went for pittance; people walked away with expensive art for bargain-basement prices. The clinic made only a fraction of what it should have made from the art auction. The organizers quickly

realized amends had to be made with the artists, and so Steve Barse, organized a meeting with some of them to apologize for letting the art sell so far under value.

In a meeting that included Barse, Oglala Lakota painter Gerald Cournoyer, and Sac and Fox painter/mixed-media artist Tony Tiger, the matter of the art auction was discussed further. During that casual meeting in a small kitchen in Norman, Oklahoma, they also talked about the clinic and wondered what could be done to bring support to the clinic. It was an inquiry that would have a profound effect on the OKCIC and upon the lives of several artists, including Thomas Poolaw. They decided to form an artistic collective. After a session of brainstorming about the function, mission, name and make up of such a group of artists, the concept for the Urban Indian 5, a play on the name Kiowa Five, was born. Initially, the function of the group was limited to donating money made from the sale of art at collective exhibitions of the group's work. Originally, they wanted to be called the "Urban 5," but had to change it to avoid conflict and confusion with urban5.com, a risqué glamour-modeling agency somewhere in Europe and already established on the internet.

The Kiowa Five were a group of Kiowa artists from Anadarko, Oklahoma, who came to the University of Oklahoma to study art. The Kiowa Five came to OU in 1926 and their mentor at OU was Oscar Jacobson, the first director of the University's School of Art and the one who created the program that enabled them to take art classes. Jacobson acknowledged that the art of the Kiowa Five was important, and used his reputation as an artist and his connections in the art world to successfully elevate the status of the Kiowa art from functional to fine art. This

shift in the designation of Indian art as fine art opened the door for future Native American art and artists. In calling themselves the Urban Indian 5, the group identified themselves as members of the local Native art community.

The original members of the UI5 were Thomas Poolaw, Gerald Cournoyer, Marwin Begaye, Brent Greenwood, and Kimberly Rodriguez. The tribal affiliation of the original membership of the group reflects the diversity of the urban Indians who utilize the clinic—Kiowa/Delaware, Oglala Lakota, Navajo, Ponca/Chickasaw, and Muscogee Creek/Lakota. In an interview with the Oklahoma Gazette, Barse stated: "When we contacted the artists, we invited them to be part of a new art movement that will wage war on diabetes, heart disease and historical trauma. That resonated in people's minds (Martin, 2009)." The diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, as well as other issues that lead to death, like suicide, addiction, and accidents, are major contributors to the high death rates of Native Americans. And like Poolaw, who watched his both his paternal grandparents battle diabetes, it is the rare Indian person who has not been affected, or even afflicted with, these diseases.

Many things have changed since the initial formation of the group. The most immediate change was the function and mission of the UI5 from being a charitable act to entering into a relationship with the clinic. Once the creation of the group was solidified, the clinic invited the artists over for a meal to celebrate their formation and thank them for their generosity. Gerald Cournoyer, who is a special person amongst the Lakota, brought his pipe to the dinner. According to Barse, after the group had visited and enjoyed their meal, Cournoyer took out his pipe and

they all prayed. The inclusion of this aspect of important Lakota traditionalism made the relationship between the artists and the clinic cohesive—it brought them together as relatives. This inclusion and respect for traditionalism is a quality that is very meaningful to the members of UI5, several of whom who have participated in traditional ceremonials, such as the Sundance and Kiowa Gourd Dance. Today, the mission of UI5 is: "To educate and promote Indian health and wellness through art, symbology, and traditional ceremony. The artists and Native Peoples affiliated with the clinic acknowledge these points as vital elements of native life, both on the reservation and in the urban dwelling. The melding of art and health allows healing in a unique way by addressing traditional values through a contemporary vision" (Southern Plains Indian Museum 2010).

In 2007, the OKCIC opened the doors to the Art of Healing Gallery. This space within the clinic housed the works of all of the UI5 artists and demonstrated to the clinic's patrons the importance of the art beyond its aesthetics. The art was not there just to be sold, but to represent the commitment the artists had to helping the clinic serve the Indian people—it was "Art with a Cause." As one article put it, "The clinic's behavioral health team created a 'healing room' with the artwork on the walls" (Anderson 2009). One of the OKCIC's clinical therapists, D.J. Battiest, stated in an interview that the patients opened up after being shown the art: "They [the patients] feel safer and ready to explore and express themselves" (Anderson 2009). When Poolaw and the other artists found out that the therapists were using their work towards this end, they were very pleased. They had no idea that when

they organized the UI5 that their art would become sources of healing as part of the art therapy movement.

Art therapy has a fairly recent history and distinctive goal. According to Metafora.org, which works collaboratively with the University of Barcelona in Spain, art therapy is "a helping profession which uses fine arts as a tool in the expression and resolution of emotions and physiological and emotional conflicts" (Metafora). The foundations of this interdisciplinary profession emerged in the 1930s, with its utilization of theories from a number of disciplines, to include art, art history, and psychologically. It arose as a distinctive field in the 1940s, having developed almost simultaneously in both the United States and England in the pre-World War II era. The historiography of the field also began in the 1940s, and is referred to as the 'Classical Period.' The use of art in the clinic's therapy sessions brings their work into the realms of art therapy. And while the use of art in conventional Western psychotherapy might be a fairly recent fusion, the practice of mingling art and healing is by no means a new concept to non-Western cultures.

In the past and as in today, many non-Western societies combine healing and the maintenance of wellness with what Westerners call "art," including painting, singing, and dancing. According to Professor Randy Vick, "[the] pairing [of art and health] is as old as human society itself" (Vick 2003). Consider, for example, Navajo sandpaintings and Buddhist sand mandalas. They are both healing art forms that predate Western medicinal interference, or influences, and are still used today. The Buddhist mandalas are used to heal the earth and its inhabitants and are swept up shortly after their creation, as a metaphor to life. To the Navajo, their

sandpaintings are an important part of their culture and healing:

> because the ritual image attracts and exalts the Holy People; serves as a pathway for the mutual exchange of illness and the healing power of the Holy People; identifies the patient with the Holy People it depicts; and creates a ritual reality in which the patient and the supernatural dramatically interact, reestablishing the patient's correct relationship with the world of the Holy People (Griffin-Pierce 1995). …[T]he sandpainting is a dynamic, living, sacred entity that enables the patient to transform his or her mental and physical state by focusing on the powerful mythic symbols that re-create the chantway odyssey of the storys protagonist, causing those events to live again in the present. The performative power of sandpainting creation and ritual use reestablish the proper, orderly placement of the forces of life, thus restoring correct relations between the patient and those forces upon which the patient's spiritual and physical health depend. The sandpainting works its healing power by reestablishing the patient's sense of connectedness to all of life (Griffin-Pierce 1995). (Navajo People.org)

Today, these paintings are still created to tend to a person's spiritual and/or physical ailments to bring about, or ensure, wellness. While "art therapy" has only been recognized as a distinctive Western medical practice for just over sixty years, in its essence, it is a form of medicinal healing that is pre-historical. Such methods were not considered an "art" form until the late 1920s and early 1930s, when Oscar Jacobson elevated Native art from its utilitarian status to that of fine art on the nation and international art scene. In our contemporary society, while sandpaintings and mandalas are still used for their traditional purposes of healing and wellness, they have been taken out of their traditional setting and appropriated by mainstream society. One can buy "an authentic traditional Navajo sandpainting" for $60. And, if the monks are visiting a museum near you, you may be able to witness the creation and destruction of a sand mandala without traveling to Asia.

One of the fundamentals of art therapy is "the notion that artworks in some way reflect the psychic experience of the artist" (Vick 2003: 4). Art therapists, who are usually artists themselves, have their patients either create or visually engage with art of any medium, be it paintings, performance, photography, or installation. In the OKCIC's Healing Gallery, the practice of restoring health to a patient utilizing artistic forms, such as Poolaw's paintings, is a reflection of non-Western means of healing combined with Western medicine and methods.

Whereas mainstream Western medicine generally only engages the body, Native American ceremonials engage the mind, the body, and the spirit to promote wellness and healing. Traditional Native American ceremonials include dancing, the use of paint, and music. For example, within the arena of the Kiowa Gourd Dance Society, of which Thomas Poolaw is a member, the drum brings healing to the people who are dancing and to those who they are praying for. Another example of dancing being used to heal is the Jingle Dress Dance, a dance that came to the Anishinaabeg just after World War I. More specifically, it came to a man, a father, as an answer to a vision that he sought for his sick daughter. He was told to make the dress and instructed how to construct it. He was given the song, and told how the dance would be performed. He did as he was ordered. He then told his daughter to wear the dress and he taught her the dance. After performing the dance, the daughter was cured and she taught three other young women to make the dresses, each in a color of the four directions, and showed them how to dance. According to author Tara Browner, "They [these women] became the nucleus of the Jingle Dress Dance Society" (Browner 2004: 53).

Today, the jingle dress dance is still seen as sacred and is given reverence by the Anishinaabeg as it is still used for healing. On the powwow circuit, Jingle Dress is a women's category of contest dancing. In the arena, the women are judged on the textile artistry of the dress, the rhythmic and graceful movements of the dancer, and the "sound of the cones that sing out to the Spirit" (Browner 2004: 53). Even in the arena, however, one should never lose sight of the fact that the Anishinaabeg were not given this dress, dance, and song for its aesthetic value—it was first and foremost a healing ceremony. Indeed, the Native healing arts were truly "arts."

Certainly, it is almost paradoxical that the healing art of the UI5 hangs within the OKCIC, a place designated to treat Native American patients with Western medicine. After all, it is within the last one hundred and twenty years of United States history that the federal government banned what they referred to as "heathenish practices," i.e., Native healing practices, dances, and ceremonials. These bans affected all Native Americans including Poolaw's tribe, the Kiowa. The first federal ban came in November 1, 1883 through the Court of Indian Offenses at the behest of Henry Teller, then Secretary of the Interior. It was specifically directed at ending:

> . . .the heathenish dances, such as the sun-dance, scalp-dance, &c. [sic] [And to end the practice of taking patients to the Medicine Men, who] rely mainly on their art of conjuring. Their services are not required even for the administration of the few simple remedies they are competent to recommend, for the Government supplies the several agencies with skillful physicians (Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior 1883).

The United States government denigrated the healing ceremonial practices of the

Native Peoples as barbaric, savage, and heathen, and thus halted them, which was justified by the presence of the presumably superior Western physician. These bans were reaffirmed in Federal Indian law in 1892 and in 1921, the latter going largely unheeded by Native Americans (Department of the Interior 1892 and 1921).

Dance in the public forum as exhibition for non-Native people was never prohibited, although several Commissioners of Indian Affairs, from Thomas Jefferson Morgan until Albert Fall, attempted to do so. The most overt form of public dancing during the dance ban era was the performative aspect of Wild West dancing of Indians employed by Buffalo Bill, with whom Morgan had a very public battle of wills over the dancers. Morgan viewed the performances as propagating savagery in contrast to the governments' more civilizing projects of assimilation through agriculture and education. In Oklahoma, the Wild West mantle was upheld by the "Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Real Wild West," which employed Indians from across the state, including many Kiowa, to perform in front of audiences (Ellis 2009: 95). There was also the All-Indian Fair and Exposition at Craterville Park, near Cache, Oklahoma, which began in 1924, right after the final dance ban. Thomas Poolaw's grandfather took many photographs of the performances at Craterville Park. This Indian show moved to Anadarko in 1935 and was renamed, "The American Indian Exposition," and is now one of the annual must-go to powwows of the powwow trail (Oklahoma State Digital Library). It should be noted that during the bans, non-exhibition tribal dances and ceremonials continued to happen underground, but there were many songs that went away, or were forgotten. These bans were finally repealed under Secretary of the Interior John

Collier in 1934 (Department of the Interior 1934).

The impositions of these bans, especially the initial one in 1883, posed an undeniable hardship on Native Americans who were already in the grip of the Federal Government's Assimilation Policies and the Boarding School Era, and inflicted both psychological and physical harm on the people. As one scholar points out, the actions against Native religion and medicine made it difficult for Native people to access Native healers, instead making them reliant upon Western medicine and exposed to Western philosophies of healing (Dufrane 2010:122). It can also be argued that the lifting of the dance bans and those bans against Native religion resulted in a revitalization of ceremony, which may have had some effect on the vitality of art in the decades post-WWII, such as the decorating of the Kiowa's Black Legging's society teepee. Yet, the removal of Native American children from their families during the boarding school era, which began four years before the first dance ban, inflicted wounds of upon the Native community that, in many ways, have yet to heal.

The Boarding School Era officially began in America in 1879. Although Christian missionaries had been educating Indians for decades and saw it as their duty to bring Christianity to the "heathen" Indians, by the late 1800s, the United States government felt it was time to make education more akin to public school education. In the United States, this took Indian education out of the hands of the Christians and put it in the hands of the bureaucrats. In Canada, where the indigenous people were sent to boarding schools, the government began to allocate funds towards the schools by 1879, but left the Christians to run them. In both

countries, the idea of assimilation through education essentially meant cultural and, in some cases, corporeal genocide, as well as strict "Anglo conformity (Hoxie 1984: 33)." In Canada, the schools ran from the 1840s to 1996, when the last residential school finally closed. In the United States, some of the schools are still in operation today, though under a much different directive.

When Lt. Richard Pratt opened the doors to Carlisle Indian Industrial School in 1879, he established the first off-reservation, government-run Indian boarding school, developed the directive, "Kill the Indian, Save the Man," and regarded education as "the great civilizer." This school was the result of his experimentation into Indian education at Hampton in 1878 where he introduced a few of his former Indian prisoners from Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida, to formal white education. In 1880, the Board of Indian Commissioner's endorsement of education revealed its underlying feelings and beliefs: "As a savage we cannot tolerate him any more than as a half-civilized parasite, wanderer, or vagabond. The only alternative left is to fit him by education for civilized life" (Prucha 1978:194). Pratt's legacy to this era is that he made the Indian boarding school system an American institution that went global. Carlisle became the model for all federally run off-reservation schools that operated identically in function, directive, and abuse. During this era, the "savage" was finding salvation, assimilation, and civilization through education, or at least this was the plan.

Pupils who entered the off-reservation boarding school in its early years were Native American children who were forcibly removed from their homes, or in many instances, were kidnapped, or coerced, from their families. Pratt and his

followers deemed it necessary "to remove every child, mixed-blood and full-blood, for at least three years" from their tribal communities to achieve civilization and acculturation (Jacobs 2006). But the separation of Indian children from their families was not easily achieved, and so the government sought to enforce this policy through legislation. Attendance became mandatory both in Canada and in the United States By 1891, however, the United States Congress disallowed the forced removal of Indian children from the reservation for the purpose of education "without the consent of parents;" yet, compulsory attendance to the on-reservation boarding school or day school was still mandatory. "Congress [also] authorized the Commissioner of Indian Affairs 'to make and enforce by proper means' rules and regulations to ensure that Indian children of suitable age attended the schools established for them" (First Peoples 2004: 346). When removal proved difficult to accomplish, the Indian agents, who were in charge of removal, devised several coercive and sometimes violent tactics, oftentimes circumventing the law to separate the children from their parents, such as falsely arresting the parent who refused (Jacobs 2006: 212-213). Scholar Margaret Jacobs contends that for the most part, attendance was "achieved at gunpoint" (Jacobs 2006: 214). "In 1893, Congress authorized the Secretary of the Interior to withhold rations and other annuities from parents and guardians who refused to send their children to school," according to scholar Michael Coleman (Coleman 1993: 43). Regardless of the law, the families were still subjected to the same coercive tactics as before Congress intervened and the children were "hauled off" by soldiers or agents (First Peoples 2004: 346).

Although the reformers of this era saw the schools as an act of benevolence and a path to civilization, the government simply viewed it as a way to control Indian adults—the parents of the children. If the government had custodial care of the children, the parents would not rise up against them (Jacobs 2006:214). Along that same line of thought, the government also deemed it "cheaper to educate Indians than to raise another generation of savages and fight them" (Jacobs 2006:211-212). One of the keys to the off-reservation boarding school's success was the distance it put between the children and their homeland. Also, "it's close, prisonlike supervision of the students, and its outing system, in which students spent summer months or a year living in the home of a good Christian White family, Pratt hoped to destroy the 'Indian' in the 'race' in favor of the 'man,' as he was fond of saying" (Berkhofer 1978:171). According to historian Robert Berkhofer, by the end of the nineteenth century, "nearly half of all Native children attended school for some period of time" (Berkhofer 1978).

The Boarding School era, which lasted almost a century, and the Assimilation era, during which reservation life was broken up into individual land ownership and nuclear families, left repercussions that many Native communities are still struggling to overcome today. One report on the Boarding School era states that, "While not all Native people viewed their boarding school experiences as negative, it appears to be the case that, after the onset of boarding schools in Native communities, abuse became endemic within Indian families" (Boarding School Healing Project 2008). According to the document by the Boarding School Healing Project, the United States government has yet to acknowledge the devastation of this

era by way of issuing an apology. This has left its victims to suffer in shame and silence without a way to find healing, "The effects of boarding school abuses continue today because these abuses have not been acknowledged by the larger society. …It could also be used to pressure the U.S. to support language and cultural revitalization programs to reverse the effects of boarding schools resulting what has become known as historical trauma" (Boarding School Healing Project 2008). It should be noted that the other two countries, Canada and Australia, who committed the same atrocities against their indigenous Peoples in the same fashion as the United States both issued apologies to their nations in 2008. The United States has remained silent.

The phrase "Historical Trauma" is the way that Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart was able to help others understand why Native communities in Indian Country were in such bad shape, with high rates of abuse, addiction, violence, and suicide. Historical trauma is "the collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide" (www.historicaltrauma.com). What Dr. Brave Heart discovered is that Native American communities were in a declining state of well-being due to the historical traumas suffered by North American Indigenous people since the beginning of colonization. According to Dr. J.P. Gone, "Native American HT [historical trauma] is modeled after longstanding clinical observations of the adverse psychological effects of the Shoah not just for Holocaust survivors, but also for their offspring (Baranowsky, Young, Johnson-Douglas, Williams-Keeler, & McCarrey 1998)" (Gone 2009:752). Much like the effects experienced by Holocaust survivors

and their offspring, the historical traumas faced by Native Americans have had a negative impact on subsequent generations resulting in the abusive and violent way many Indians live within their communities.

The boarding school, or residential school experience was "a proximal expression of colonial subjugation experienced by Native communities in both the United States and Canada [that] involved the coercive cultural assimilation of indigenous youths in government-administered or church-run residential schools" (Gone 2009:752). The treatment of the students in these institutions has left them scarred from the historical traumas. "In Canada, the call for national redress and reconciliation has largely run its course, resulting in a national apology and the creation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF). The AHF has disbursed federal funds to Aboriginal organizations and communities to redress the "legacy of physical and sexual abuse in the residential schools, including their intergenerational impacts" (*Funding agreement*, 1998, p. 7)" (Gone 2009:753). Yet the lack of apology from the United States government who codified in law the forced removal and assimilation of generations of Native American youth continues to harm Native People who are suffering in silence and perpetuating the abuse either wrought upon them or upon their parents, or grandparents.

Dr. Brave Heart has identified the issues, articulated the problem, and built a framework for overcoming historical trauma, thus giving people a way to recover. As Dr. Gone and Nadia Ferrara have pointed out in their work, one has to first establish what "healing" means to the indigenous population one is operating within in order to built a framework for healing that will work for that population (Gone

2009:758; Ferrara 2004). Drs. Brave Heart and DeBruyn suggest that turning to traditional ceremonies can be "therapeutic and cathartic, " and help people maintain their sobriety (1998). According to the doctors: "Tribes need to conduct specific grief ceremonies, not only for current deaths, but for historical traumas: the loss of land, the loss of the right in the past to raise our children in culturally normative ways at home, and mourning for the human remains of ancestors and sacred objects being repatriated" (1998). According to the research of Walters and Simoni, "Recent data suggest that immersion in traditional health practices (e.g., use of indigenous roots and teas) and healing practices (e.g., use of a sweat lodge in ritual purification) may have intrinsic benefits directly connected to positive health outcomes among Natives. (2002:523) But although I have found little literature to support my assertion, I would argue that ceremonies are not the only means of confronting the silence and shame suffered by many of the survivors of historical trauma. The use of contemporary Native American art in therapy provides not only a way for artists to convey specific messages about Native American history, but also allow the patient to feel represented and to find a way to confront their demons or diseases (see article, "Native American artists use art and storytelling to bring cancer statistics to life").

The works of Urban Indian 5 artists such as Poolaw and Begaye are tools that the clinical therapists at the OKCIC use to bridge the gap between Western medicine and some aspect of traditional healing. It helps that contemporary Native American artists, such as Poolaw, have a foot in both worlds; they participate in ceremonies and they create contemporary art. As part of the Urban Indian 5, Gerald

Cournoyer commented on the relationship between art and healing,

> There are Native people who have lost their belief system in the higher power, and I incorporate that [into my art], as does every one of these artists [in the Urban Indian 5]. Anyway we can connect to that spirit is important. We all see a need for some type of healing. When we found out that the mental health people were bringing patients in to view the art, it took on a whole other meaning (Anderson 2009).

In other words, all of these components are necessary to bring about help and healing to the Native American community.

The artists of the Urban Indian 5 adhere to a common philosophy of doing good works for the benefit of the clinic and Native people, and bringing a sense of wellness and healing to whatever they do. It has even changed how some of the artist's approach their work. For example, in an interview about the clinic's gallery, the artist Brent Greenwood stated, "People have been known to look at [Mark Rothko] work and just weep, and trying to bring out that kind of emotion is the approach I've taken in my career. The clinic has given me a reason to really focus on that. It has always been a part of my work, but it has pushed me to really pursue that" (Martin 2009). Native American art that is focused specifically on the goal of promoting healing and wellness is another tool for the people at the OKCIC to use in bringing health and balance to their patients.

Recognition of the art and efforts of the Urban Indian 5 has rapidly developed in the wake of their first show at the University of South Dakota in May 2009. In 2010, the UI5 showed their art at Red Earth in Oklahoma City. Their art was moved from the Art of Healing Gallery at the OKCIC to the American Indian

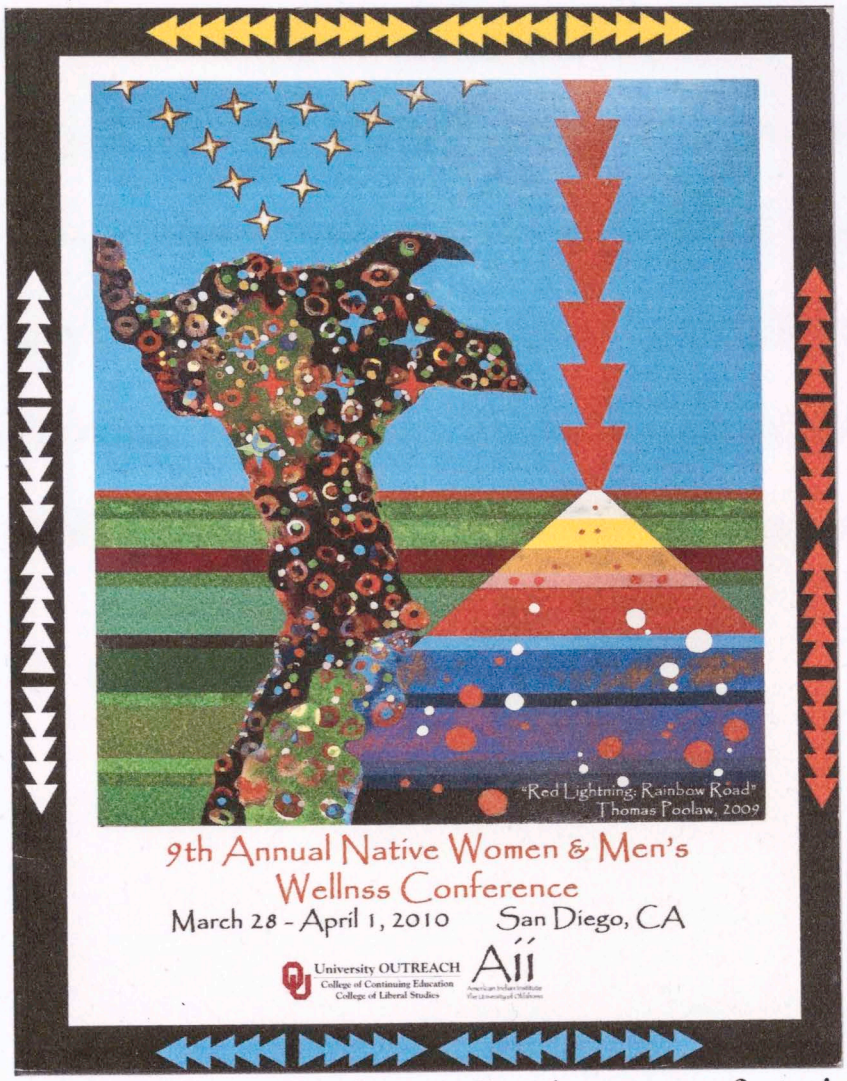
Diabetes Prevention Center at the OU-Health Science Center, and then in the fall of 2010, it was moved to the OU's College of Public Health. Each move has increased awareness of the OKCIC's work, as well as creating new and important relationships. When the art exhibit, "Blending Science and Tradition," was opened on March 31, 2010 at the OU's Children's Physician's Building members of the UI5 and the OKCIC conducted a cedaring ceremony during which UI5 artist Brent Greenwood sang a Ponca prayer song. One of the nation's leading experts on pediatric endocrinology, Dr. Kenneth Copeland, participated in the ceremony and said of this experience, "It was one of the most touching and powerful experiences one can imagine. I was deeply honored by the event" (Barse 2010). He was presented with art from the UI5.

The art has also hung at the Harold Hamm Diabetes Research Center. From September 26 to November 20, 2010, their art was exhibited at the Southern Plains Indian Museum, a Bureau of Indian Affairs' museum located in Anadarko, Oklahoma. The pieces in the show were described as: "Work based on traditional teachings to inspire wellness" (Southern Plains Indian Museum 2010). Indeed, as the UI5 reaches out to the community, more opportunities arise for both the artists and for the OKCIC.

In late 2009, OU's American Indian Institute issued a call for art to represent their organization at their 9th Annual Native Women and Men's Wellness Conference. The Aii was founded in 1951 as a non-profit organization working as a "service, training, and research organization" for the Native American community (American Indian Institute). It is part of OU's Outreach Program in the College of

Continuing Education. Today, it runs a Head Start program in Tecumseh, but primarily organizes conferences for Native Americans and provides education in the areas of Indian education, culture and language preservation, and tribal leadership. It also offers organizational development, business and economic development, and health and wellness (American Indian Institute).

The organization decided to solicit new art for its brochure because the organizers felt their old images of Indians dressed in feathers and buckskin did not fit with their modern message or the lives of contemporary Indian people. Knowing that Poolaw appreciated the importance of helping out the local Native American community, I forwarded the email to him. According to Aii, when the organizers came upon the images Poolaw submitted to the call for artwork, they were immediately attracted to his style and use of colors. They felt that the work represented the direction they were headed in as an organization and would connect with modern Native Peoples. At the end of March 2010, Poolaw's art adorned the brochures and public relations materials for Aii's San Diego Wellness Conference.



Aii's 9th Annual Wellness Conference Brochure cover featuring Thomas Poolaw's *Red Lightning: Rainbow Road*, 2009. (Fig. 1.1)

Poolaw's participation in the Urban Indian 5 is as an artist who contributes his work in the spirit of inspiring wellness and healing for OKCIC patients and the urban Indian community, but that is different from his work with the Aii. His affiliation with Aii is not just as an artist, which can be somewhat detached from the cause, but also as an activist. In appreciation for his work, the organization paid for Poolaw to attend the conference. The conference in San Diego enlightened Poolaw about the Wellness movement. He now attends the conferences to champion its cause, to participate in the wellness sessions and workshops, and to learn about wellness as a movement. Such is the reciprocal nature of the Wellness movement that he is now not just the man who created the art on the brochure, but also a Native American man benefiting from learning about healthful living and wellness.

Through his participation, he has inspired people with his art and with his desire to be involved in Aii's message. He really has become an activist for Wellness, which is the objective of the Aii—to inspire Native Peoples to live better, healthier lives.

While Poolaw may think that he is not making art specifically for wellness, he clearly has wellness in mind. His message is a powerful one and contributes to the positive reception of his art by people involved in the Wellness movement.

Chapter Three: "Art with a Cause"—Contemporary Native American Artists with a Message of Healing, Wellness, and Education

Contemporary Native American art plays an important role in confronting historical trauma, bringing about wellness, and maintaining healthful living. For example, three artists who are either immersed in the Wellness movement, concerned with the health of Native Peoples, or use their art to address historical issues are Thomas Poolaw, Marwin Begaye, and Larry McNeil. All three are prime examples of a new way of using contemporary art to convey a message of healing to modern Native American communities outside of the ceremonial. Yet, the message of wellness is as important as any traditional ceremony.

Thomas Lee Poolaw

Thomas Lee Poolaw, who was introduced in the previous chapter, is an enrolled member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, and a founding member of the Urban Indian 5. He is a contemporary artist who received his training as a painter, but now works in many mediums. As the son of a Marine, he lived in various cities around the United States. while growing up, but like all military "brats," he had a specific location he called "home," and that was Anadarko, Oklahoma, the home of his paternal grandparents, Horace and Winnie Poolaw. Thomas treasured the relationship he had with his grandfather who is acknowledged as the first Native American professional photographer.

Horace Poolaw's work had a lasting visual impact on Thomas as an artist. Horace photographed the people of his Kiowa community and family and was also

interested in the larger community around him and he photographed Indians and non-Indians participating in local events. Many of the pictures that survive today document the people, both Indian and non-Indian, and the changes that occurred around Mountain View, Oklahoma.



Cletus Poolaw's Honor Dance in Carnegie, OK. c. 1952.
Courtesy of Thomas Poolaw. (Fig. 2.1)

In 1978, Thomas Poolaw matriculated into the University of Oklahoma (hereafter "OU") and entered the OU School of Art the following year. At the university, Poolaw was especially stimulated by his art history courses, which introduced him to a world of influences and art he would not otherwise have been exposed to. Poolaw opened his first one-man show at the Southern Plains Indian Museum and Craft Center in Anadarko, Oklahoma on December 14, 1980. Since that time, he has exhibited his art nationally and internationally. His work has been collected by the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma, by the Southern Plains Indian Museum, and by the Smithsonian's National Museum of

the American Indian collection. Poolaw graduated from the University of Oklahoma with his B.F.A. in painting in 1992.

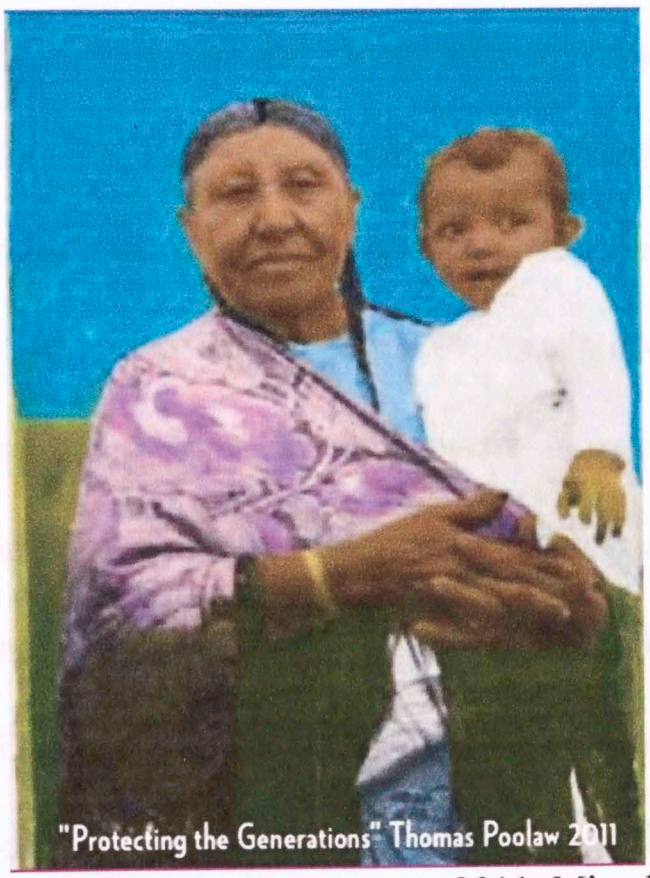
Poolaw's journey towards promoting wellness and healing through his art began much earlier in his life when he witnessed and experienced the loss of his grandfather. In his advancing years, Horace Poolaw suffered the ravaging affects of diabetes. Over the years, Thomas Poolaw has become more and more concerned with the way we are living our lives, especially Native Americans who are predisposed to developing the disease.

As a founding member of UI5, he became involved with the group in 2006. Working with the UI5 and Aii has not changed the content of his art, but it has taken it beyond "art for art's sake" into what the group refers to as "art with a cause." Poolaw's art is now a tool to help promote healing and wellness. And the same can be said for Poolaw's relationship with Aii; his art is being used to helping to inspire and educate Native Peoples about the benefits of healthful living.

Poolaw's relationship with the OKCIC, UI5, and Aii has no end in sight. In fact the affiliations seem to be deepening. In the fall 2010, Poolaw was asked by Aii to submit new work for their diabetes conference, so that season and into the spring of 2011, he worked on new pieces for them.



Horace Poolaw. Tsomah and Linda, circa 1940. (Fig. 2.2)



Thomas Poolaw. *Protecting the Generations*, 2011. Mixed Media. (Fig. 2.3)

For the new piece that Poolaw created for the Aii's diabetes conference he turned to his grandfather's photographs. The significance of using Horace Poolaw's work and the photograph he specifically chose for this piece is that they both represent inter-generational relationships and are connected to the high incidence

rates of Native American with diabetes. The photograph by Horace Poolaw is of his daughter Linda being held by his mother, Tsomah. Thomas Poolaw's reinterpretation of this black and white photograph is titled, *Protecting the Generations*, 2011, because that is what grandmothers do, they protect their children and grandchildren. The question is: What is Tsomah trying to protect Linda from?

It is this Kiowa grandmother's generation that experienced extreme cultural changes, as they had to stop surviving off of the buffalo and had to turn to foods foreign to them. Some of these dietary changes have resulted in illnesses such as diabetes. One can read this photograph as Tsomah trying to protect the child from the negative affects such extreme cultural changes have wrought upon the grandmother's generation. Maybe Tsomah is trying to protect Linda from diabetes, which makes the overarching message of Poolaw's work: Today, as in our past, we must continue to protect the generations. While Poolaw's involvement in the Wellness movement has not led him to create art with an overt message of healthful living, he clearly has wellness in mind. His work is sending a powerful message and contributing to the reception of his art by people involved in the Wellness movement. Together, Thomas Poolaw and the institutes he is working with are helping to inspire and educate Native People about the benefits of healthful living, for us and for our children.

Marwin Begaye

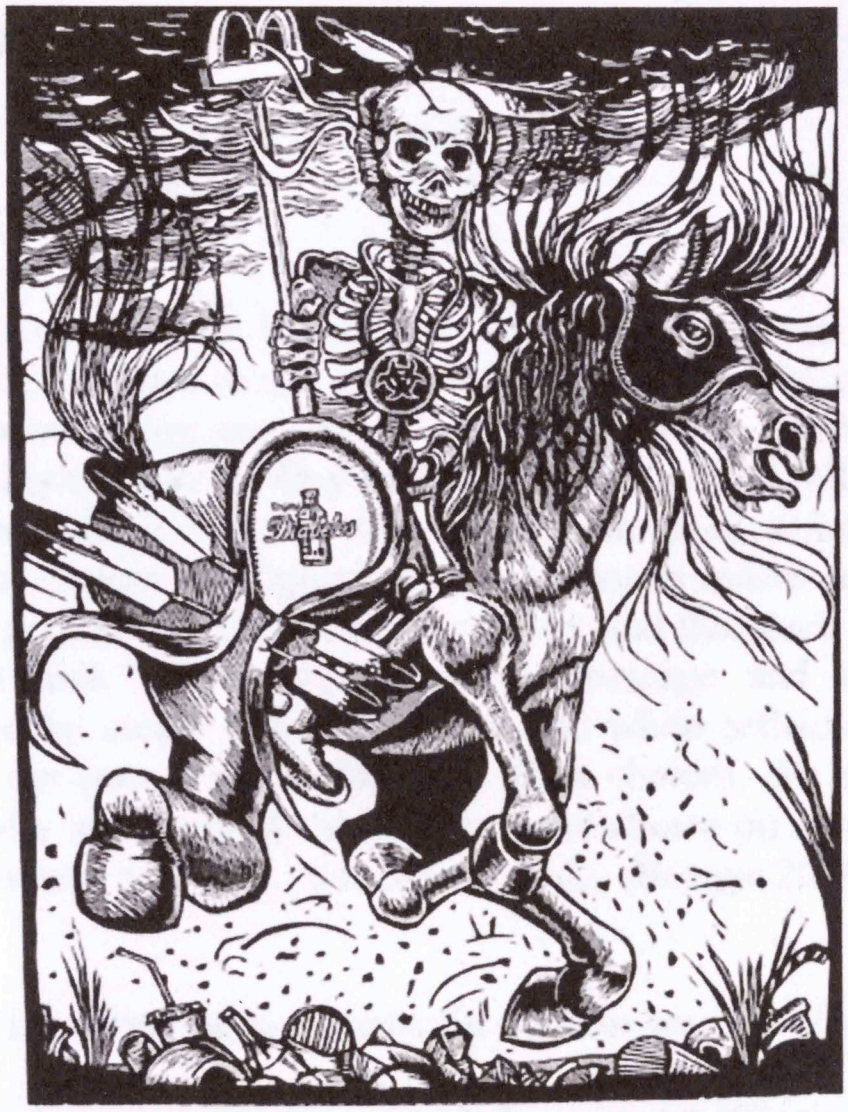
The lithographer/graphic artist, Marwin Begaye, is member of the Navajo Nation and teaches printmaking and painting in the School of Art at the University of Oklahoma, the same institute from which he received his M.F.A in Printmaking.

This award-winning artist has exhibited his work both nationally and internationally. He is also one of the founding members of the Urban Indian 5 in 2006, but had to leave the group due to other obligations in 2009.

In the Autumn of 2006, Begaye exhibited the series, "What's Your Sugar?" at the Southern Plains Indian Museum in Anadarko, Oklahoma. This series of prints confronts its audience with the reality of diabetes and the poor choices modern people tend to make on a daily basis. While diabetes has become almost an epidemic across all ethnic groups in the United States, Begaye's work is aimed at a Native American audience:

> As Indian people, we're quite good at making our world beautiful. But this disease isn't pretty and we don't seem to be reacting to the ugliness. We've sugar-coated the issue so we can continue to eat and drink products that are heavily processed and sugar-laden. These things are killing us and our future generations. I just wanted to expose that...to expose the truth (Southern Plains Indian Museum 2006).

While his work challenges all Native Peoples to consider their complicity in the spread of this disease, it is also very personal and urgent message that he is conveying. Like most Native Americans, Begaye has members of his immediate family who are afflicted with the disease.



Marwin Begaye, *Enjoy Diabetes*, Linocut, from the series, "What's Your Sugar?" (Fig. 2.4)

The series, "What's Your Sugar?," are all black and white linocuts that combine elements from past and present Native American life with pop-cultural references and issues that plague modern life—it is very complex and scholarly. For example, in *Enjoy Diabetes*, there is the skeleton of a man from a Plains Indian tribe who rides on a ground littered with refuse from fast food restaurants and wine bottles under a black and polluted sky. The skeleton is adorned with Plains warrior accouterment, but with the exception of the eagle feather that mysteriously dangles from his skull, all of his adornments make reference to hazardous waste, Coca-Cola, and McDonald's. In this work, only the masked horse looks healthy, although he appears to be a spectral image, perhaps a Nightmare. Many of the other linocuts from this series include similar elements and references. While the prints are very

confrontational, they are also thought-provoking, educational, and created out of Begaye's concern for the Native American community.

> This body of work is intended to increase awareness about the epidemic of Diabetes in our community. I hope that the viewer will see their own actions are complicit in this disease….Each of us has responsibility to make healthy choices. The woodblock, oil and water based paints/inks seem to be the right medium from which to create images that explore the impact on the American Indian community. The stark graphic quality of the woodblock and the black ink has an old-school look for the contemporary message and allows the message to be clear. These are black and white reflections of the impact of our poor tobacco, food and drink choices. We make these choices daily and rarely do we evaluate the choice on its effect. But the choices have an effect...one that is deadly (Begaye 2006).

Begaye's work is imploring us to consider the choices we make for our family members and ourselves. It is also a personal plea, since during the creation of this series, he and his son were diagnosed with sugar-cane allergies which put them at a greater risk for developing diabetes and called for a drastic dietary change. In this series, he is also speaking beyond the harm that we inflict upon our bodies, but to the harm that supporting a fast food lifestyle does to the environment. He is a contemporary artist who is committed to using his art to point people in the direction of wellness. His art has an undeniable cause—healthful living.

Larry McNeil

Larry Tee Harbor Jackson Xhe Dhé McNeil is a Northern Tlingit/Nisga'a photographer, digital artist, and scholar. He was born into the Killer Whale House, Keet Hít, from Juneau and Anchorage, Alaska. He sees himself as,

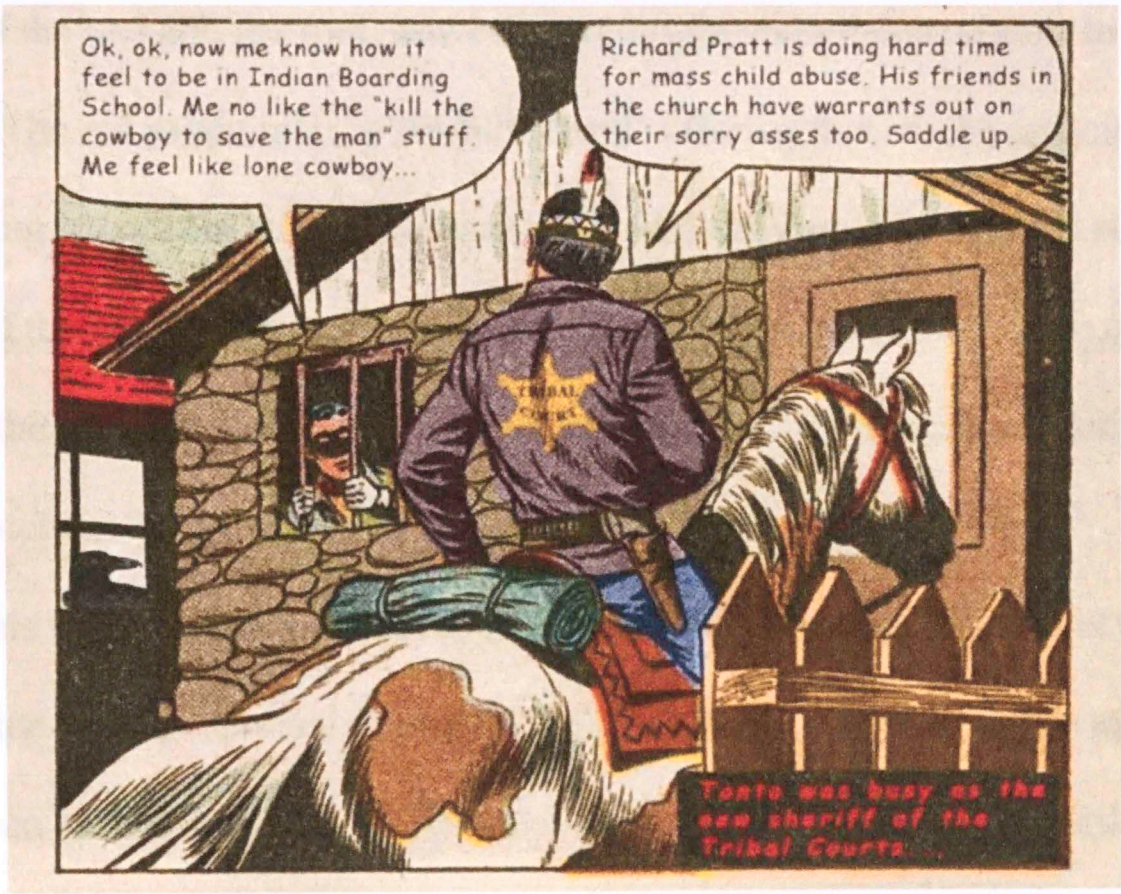
> a product of both [the] traditional Tlingit culture and the mainstream world of North America, with an emphasis on the Tlingit aspect. …My photographs are about my view of what it means to be mired in the milieu of the intersection of two cultures and the absurdities that magically appear. I see my work as '...a bridge between cultures that is satirical about both; we're both guilty of our own quirks and should come clean about it in order to move on....' (National Georgraphic.com)

McNeil's father, Chris McNeil, is a survivor of the Canadian residential boarding school system. As discussed in a previous chapter, surviving one's experiences at these school is a feat, since it was certainly not guaranteed. But Chris McNeil not only survived, he transcended a difficult past and led a fruitful life as a fishing boat captain, a hereditary chief in his tribe, and a beloved father. Larry McNeil has a close relationship with his father and has paid homage to his father's life in his art, and has also used his art to issue an indictment against those responsible for bringing about some of the atrocities that plagued the lives of Native Peoples—especially the Boarding School era.

In 2008, McNeil created the print, *The New Sheriff*, as part of a print exchange entitled, "As You Wish," organized by artist Melanie Yazzie. Initially, McNeil was not sure what to make for the exchange, but he found inspiration in his father:

> I had just gotten off the phone with my 86-year old dad up in Juneau and he was *so* delighted. He had just gotten one of those big screen TV's…. Dad bought it with some of the money he'd received from the Canadian government's "Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement." This seemed like a bit of poetic justice; he was truely [sic] enjoying himself while his oppressors were long-dead. Not only

that, his indigenous identity is intact. …I was thinking that if I had my wish, none of the residential school experiences would have ever happened in the first place….*This one's for you, dad* (McNeil 2008).



Larry McNeil, *The New Sheriff*, 2008. Lithograph. (Fig. 2.5)

McNeil designed this print to follow the image, *Tonto's TV Script Revision*, 2006, which was an digitally altered black and white photograph that showed Tonto arresting the aforementioned Richard Pratt and photographer Edward Curtis for their crimes against humanity. *The New Sheriff* is a continuation of Tonto's saga as the man in charge with the Lone Ranger as his flunky. This lithograph is completely different from its predecessor in every way except content; the theme and storyline are obviously connected, but the style is a complete shift. This print perfectly resembles a block from a comic book story, right down to the grainy quality in the heavily pigmented areas and the tiny places in the print where it looks like the color did not take. "I had a Tonto comic for years, and I finally had the opportunity to do something with it," McNeil said of selecting this style for his print (Weideman

2008). The comic book undoubtedly helped the artist capture some of the subdued colors used in older comic books, such as the yellow and purple on Tonto's jacket. The red of the text and the roof, however, are bright and vibrant, almost to an extreme. The red might refer to the blood and suffering that can be associated with the boarding school era and the children who died therein. Also, the red roof on the left side of the print grabs the viewer's attention and makes her take note of Raven sitting in the window, watching the scene between the lone ranger and his boss, Tonto, watching Tonto's transformation.

This image, like most of McNeil's work, relies heavily on the text to provide the storyline. In this reversal of power, the Lone Ranger is being taught a lesson. He has been locked in the jail to experience what life in a prisonlike boarding school must have been like for Native children. Unlike the imprisoned children, the Lone Ranger has Tonto to unlock the door. This helpless and subordinate sidekick shouts to Tonto, in stereotypical Indian speak, that he does not like it and feels like a "lone cowboy." Clearly, Tonto was on his way to release the Lone Ranger because they had work to do.

Again, in typical McNeil style, nothing in this picture is without some complex layers of meaning. Historically speaking, the entire content of this image puts us in the 1880s. The tribal court system has just been implemented in 1883. In McNeil's print, Tonto just might have been one of the first tribal court sheriffs in his area. The era of allotment began in 1887; Native peoples were being put onto individual parcels of land and separated from their kinship network. McNeil makes reference to the idea of the nuclear family and individual land ownership in two

places in the print. The first is the Lone Ranger's comment about being a lone cowboy. Removing Indians from their communal societies was very isolating for them. Americans liked the idea of rugged individualism, and the isolation of allotment and the isolation of children in the boarding school system was exactly what the government intended. Secondly, the fence at the forefront of the print also makes reference to isolation—being fenced in. It also probably refers to the impending end of the Indian wars in 1890 and closing of the frontier in the early 1890s. In regards to the boarding school system, it was still in its nascent state. The narrative leads us to believe that our hero, Tonto, and the tribal court system got it right—they arrested Pratt and liberated the children. Tonto was on his way to arrest the Christians that also ran Indian boarding schools. This scene is a direct reference to McNeil's father and to the Canadian residential schools. As stated earlier in this paper, the Canadian boarding schools were left in the hands of Christian missionary groups. In this print, the Christians are well on their way to being brought to justice, so by the time Chris McNeil reaches school age, he will not be taken from his family—his son has spared him that fate.

McNeil makes his perspective known in his artist's statement for *The New Sheriff:*

> If there were such as thing as blind justice in the world, this [boarding schools] would have happened in real life. Instead, we have entire generations of child abusers who never had to answer for their crimes (not on this world anyway) at the Indian boarding schools. People not informed about the issue think that all this happened hundreds of years ago, and why should we care about ancient history? Well, because it extended into this generation with indigenous families today, right this moment. Thousands of families

> are still trying to heal from the decades of abuse….If I had my choice, I'd sure as hell hire a sheriff and start rounding up the criminals that are still here today (McNeil 2008).

McNeil's frustration lies in the fact that while other countries have apologized to their boarding school victims, the initiators of the atrocities, namely the United States government, is "alone in [its] denial that any problem exists…where untold thousands of indigenous children were not only kidnapped, but also abused and murdered" (McNeil 2008). McNeil is correct in his assessment of the situation for survivors and their families. His images about the boarding school system are important, not only for their artistic content and creativity, but also because they remind us—Native Peoples—that someone has not forgotten our past. This art essentially states that the pain and suffering was and is real, and that justice is vital to promote the healing that our People need. It is a contemporary piece of art that bring the suffering of so many Native American children and families to the forefront. *The New Sheriff* validates the pain of the survivors, provides a sense of righteous anger, and delivers the justice that is still denied so many victims.

The art of Thomas Poolaw, Marwin Begaye, and Larry McNeil demonstrates how education can come in a form more akin to early Native means of communication—through signs and symbols. This is especially true in the work of Begaye, whose pieces use symbols to challenge the viewer to change their lifestyles by not choosing fast-food and death. As a minority group, Native Americans are dying at a faster rate than any other group due to disease, accidents and self-inflicted harm, according to the CDC's studies on Indians. All three artists' works bring awareness to the situation Native communities are currently in with their physical

and mental health. Their work is contributing to the move towards wellness that so many Native Americans need to survive and overcome a historically devastating past.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

The connection between art, healing, or wellness, and the needs of the Native American community are undeniable. Non-Western means of attaining health, maintaining harmony, and achieving wellness, are based in the arts—the use of paint, music, and dance. As Native Americans were forced to assimilate into mainstream society, the federal government denied them access to their traditional means of regaining health and balance, leaving them to become reliant upon Western medicine which might cure, but is not restorative. Almost one hundred thirty years since the first dance/medicine man ban, Native Americans are actively seeking out forms of their cultural epistemology to heal the wounds inflicted by historical trauma and by living in mainstream society.

The importance of organizations such as the OKCIC and Aii should not be overlooked or discounted. As people forced to assimilate into dominant culture, many Native Americans still regard themselves as members of their own tribal culture. OKCIC and Aii conduct their work and conferences with Native American identity and culture in mind. Many urban Indians are not afforded the opportunity to benefit from their tribal community or face barriers when trying to access ceremonials. As did the urban Indian centers at the height of Termination and Relocation era, the aforementioned organizations allow Native Peoples to interact with each other, make connections, and to learn from one another. This is why the presences of the UI5's art at the clinic is so important; it has allowed Native American patients to engage with Native American art, content, and symbology. It has also enabled them to form a community whose common goal is wellness.

Contemporary Native American artists are an important component to accessing healing. While museums and galleries are not necessarily readily available to many Native American communities, the UI5-OKCIC resolved that issue by creating a space for art within the clinic. The art has brought comfort to some patients and has been used as a beneficial therapeutic tool for others. And as the art of Larry McNeil demonstrates, "art with a cause" does not only come from artists of the UI5. There are many contemporary Native American artists across Indian Country, such as Tony Tiger, C. Maxx Stevens, and Will Wilson, who are using their art to confront a past filled with historical traumas, dislocation faced by many urban Indians, as well as modern issues such as pollution and poverty.

One very complex example of healing through art is the film, *Carved From the Heart*, directed by Ellen Frankenstein, about Tsimpsean carver Stan Marsden who lost his son to a drug overdose. As a result, the carver directed his grief into creating a traditional art form—he carved a totem pole. What began as one man's grief became a cathartic community project, addressing all the issues experienced by this Native community, including addiction, abuse, suicide, and domestic violence. One of the most poignant parts of the film was the raising of the pole. It was a communal event, where everyone took part in carrying the pole, and in many ways, these people were carrying each other's grief and feeling the weight of it. One of the most important points this makes in regards to this thesis is that you may be feeling alone when confronted with such a loss, yet, healing does not take place alone—People need a community. The pole symbolizes so many things, such as

birth, life, death, and, especially, togetherness. It is a piece of art that was created to bring healing to an entire community.

In 2010, the OKCIC had to close the doors to the Healing Gallery. The clinic's patient population had outgrown their office space, which is a good problem to have, but one that resulted in the requisitioning of the gallery space. Some of the art is hanging in the hallways and other pieces are in another room where, although they are not hanging, they are still accessible to the clinical therapists using the art. The rest of the art has moved around as part of the exhibition that hung at the OU Medical Research Center and in the Harold Hamm Diabetes Center. As the clinic continues to benefit from the work of the UI5, so has the local Oklahoma City urban Indian patient population. The art has forged valuable relationships, become a source of insight and healing, and helped the Wellness movement to grow among the urban Indians of Oklahoma.

The Native American Wellness movement will benefit from an increase in the scholarly work on historical trauma and as the need for culturally sensitive therapies becomes more widely understood and implemented. In many ways, they will benefit each other. Wellness centers bring to light the need for more work in these areas. Hopefully this attention to wellness will bring with it more scholarship on Native American Wellness and the Native community. It is a void that needs to be filled to increase education to Indian people.

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