

**ALL IS ONE:
BECOMING INDIGENOUS AND BAHÁ'Í IN GLOBAL NORTH AMERICA**

by

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Abstract

This study offers fresh perspective on Indigenous identity, conversion, and community. It does so through the little-studied lens of the Baha’i Faith, a religion of mid-nineteenth-century Iranian origin based on principles of oneness and a global vision of “unity in diversity.” Several thousand Indigenous people “declared” (or converted, as other faiths more commonly put it) as Baha’is in North America during the second half of the twentieth century. This study considers, by way of oral history, how and why Indigenous individuals from a broad range of backgrounds in both Canada and the United States, people who now share a sense of community, became Baha’is in this period. It demonstrates the dynamic interplay between their practices of Indigenous identities and of the Baha’i religion. Indeed, challenging conventional (and colonial) readings of Indigenous conversion and identity, which frame the first as assimilation and the second as static, this study illustrates that for many Indigenous adherents the process of becoming Baha’i was at once a process of becoming Indigenous.

For some, becoming a Baha’i served to strengthen an existing sense of self as Indigenous, outside colonial strictures. For others, it was in fact through their Baha’i observance that they came to openly identify as Indigenous for the first time. Baha’i declaration and practice also brought adherents into new Indigenous and intercultural interaction, both in and outside the Baha’i community. Indigenous Baha’is often worked to realize their religious vision of peace and unity in diversity through outreach and service among other Indigenous people, in North America and elsewhere. In the process, they produced a sense of global Indigenous identification and made multiple contributions to such fields as Indigenous health, education, and cultural revitalization. In building Baha’i community, specifically, they also forged striking relationships of mutual respect with non-Indigenous adherents, while also confronting colonial tensions of

intercultural communication and normative patterns of non-Indigenous practice and privilege. This study, then, further illuminates the pain and the promise of forging unity in diversity in Indigenous, and global, North America.

Preface

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Dedication

In memory of

Jacob Bighorn (1945-2008)

and

John Terrance Field (1921-2010)

Chapter 1: Opening

It was a warm autumn morning in October 2008 when mourners gathered at the Eagles Hall in Duncan, British Columbia to honour and help usher Lakota Baha'i Jacob Morris Bighorn Jr., Tasunke Maza (Iron Horse), into the "other side camp." The walls inside the hall were draped with Lakota star quilts, as was Bighorn's casket. Flowers also rested there and flanked a main stage area. Above this hung a medicine wheel and a large projection screen with an image of the globe blazing. This image, Bighorn's eldest son shared during the service, was a symbolic invocation of global community and the prayers that were flowing for his father from the four corners worldwide. The intercultural composition of those gathered was acknowledged, prior to the start of the service, as a speaker shared insight and instruction on Indigenous protocol. After the hall was smudged by an intertribal team, the service opened with a casket procession and words and a welcome song from a local Quw'utsun' Elder. It then moved through a program that included invocations and reflections from relatives and friends, and a video from Bighorn himself, offered in languages ranging from two area Indigenous tongues, Hul'qumi'num' and Nuu-chah-nulth, as well as Lakota, Dakota, English, and Arabic. Bighorn's was a Baha'i funeral. But his service also paid homage to his Presbyterian and Plains heritage and included film footage of his home community in Montana, a sibling singing a Dakota hymn, and several rounds of Amazing Grace led by his children. After the service, the diverse assembly proceeded to a nearby cemetery, where Bighorn was buried while Indigenous and Baha'i prayers were offered. The group then retired back to the Eagles Hall for a feast and giveaway ceremony.

Just how this moment came to be calls for contemplation. The idea that a Lakota man born on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana and raised in the Presbyterian Church was buried in such diverse spiritual context and company in traditional Quw'utsun' territory on

Vancouver Island as a member of the Baha'i religion, a faith founded in mid-nineteenth-century Iran on a global vision of "unity in diversity," is counterintuitive to say the least. Bighorn became a Baha'i in 1989 while living in Salem, Oregon and moved to Duncan with his wife and three children to work at Maxwell International Baha'i School, located on the shore of nearby Shawnigan Lake, several years later. As his funeral so powerfully attested, his Baha'i declaration (or conversion, as other faiths more commonly put it) did not mark a rejection of his Indigenous (or Christian, for that matter) heritage. Rather, in a broad context of Indigenous ethnic and cultural renewal in North America, Bighorn in fact cultivated a strengthened sense of Indigenous identity by way of his Baha'i observance. And he built new Indigenous and intercultural relationships as well.

This study is concerned with precisely these points, and processes, of combination. It considers, by way of oral history, how and why Indigenous individuals from a broad range of backgrounds in both Canada and the United States became Baha'is in the mid-to-late twentieth century. It demonstrates the dynamic and mutually constitutive interplay between their practices of Indigenous identities and of the Baha'i religion. Over seven thousand Indigenous people joined the Baha'i Faith in North America in the second half of the twentieth century, but their histories have attracted little analysis.¹ This owes in part to the religion's fairly limited public profile and the fact that few of these thousands ultimately became active in Baha'i community life (though they may well have continued to identify themselves as Baha'is).² But scholarly

¹ Baha'i statistics are slippery and this is an approximate, if conservative, number based on figures supplied by the Canadian and American Baha'i National Centers (email to the author from Larry Clarke, Records Department, Canadian Baha'i National Centre, 5 November 2004; email to the author from Robert Stockman, Research Department, American Baha'i National Center, 28 February 2008).

² Although the Baha'i Faith is the second-most geographically dispersed religion in the world after Christianity, proscriptions against proselytizing and the relatively small number of Baha'i places of worship worldwide have contributed to relatively a limited public profile. On the religion's wide geographic distribution see Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 8, 199 (fn 1). While Indigenous Baha'i histories are all the more unknown within public and academic

neglect of Indigenous Baha'is also connects to a deeper layer of unexpectedness that this project aims to interrupt. Ideas of authenticity, longstanding assumptions that set Indigenous peoples beyond the bounds of modernity, relegating them to a rigid timeless tradition, maintain strong currency in North America today.³ From this colonial perspective, and a related, equally resilient, reading of religious conversion as rupture and assimilation, the very equation “Indigenous and Baha’i” is impossible (or, were the calculus conducted, would guarantee it would equal the latter). This study challenges this outcome, and advances another formulation altogether. Situating Indigenous Baha’i histories in a context of combination (as distinct from addition or subtraction), it reveals that neither the Baha’i Faith nor Indigeneity were static stable bases upon which new identities were simply grafted. The process of becoming Baha’i, I argue, was for many Indigenous adherents at once a process of becoming Indigenous.

Established in a context of Muslim millenarianism in mid-nineteenth-century Iran, the Baha’i religion is based on a core tenet of “progressive revelation,” a teaching that acknowledges prior prophets as legitimate for their time, while advancing Baha’i founder, Baha’u’llah (1817-1892), as the “Manifestation of God” for the modern age. Building on the vision of his precursor, the Bab (1819-1850), Baha’u’llah outlined a pacifist yet activist program aimed to erect a “New World Order” of spiritual unity and governance at once global and grassroots.⁴ Baha’u’llah’s son and successor, Abdu’l-Baha (1844-1921), further refined his father’s teachings in dialogue with

circles, Baha’is themselves frequently point to the presence of Indigenous people within their fold as evidence of “unity in diversity.” The pamphlet available at the entry to the Baha’i House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois, for example, notes that Baha’is “live in every state of the union, including on more than 100 Indian reservations.” It also includes a colour photograph captioned, “Navajo Baha’is of three generations participate in a study class.”

“Welcome: The Bahá’í House of Worship for the North American Continent, Wilmette, Illinois,” Chelsea Horton Personal Collection.

³ I draw the language of “unexpectedness” from the Dakota Sioux historian Philip J. Deloria’s insightful cultural history, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004). On authenticity see Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

⁴ For introductions to Baha’i history and teachings see Margit Warburg, *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha’is from a Globalisation Perspective* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2006); Peter Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha’i Faith* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Western audiences and, in the wake of a 1912 journey to North America, articulated what later became characterized as a prophecy concerning the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. This brief yet layered statement stressed the innate spiritual capacity of “Indians” and went on, in the second half of the twentieth century especially, to inspire explicit Baha’i outreach efforts to Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States, and Latin America as well. A handful of existing, primarily unpublished, studies have considered Indigenous-Baha’i intersections from the perspectives of anthropology, ethnomusicology, sociology, and religious studies, and in regional and tribal framework.⁵ Taking a broader geographic and more historical view, this project builds on this budding scholarship and brings Indigenous, religious, and global histories into fresh conversation.

It does so, in part, by shifting analysis from standard frameworks of the local and the national to the transnational. Historians of Indigenous North America, specifically, tend to train their analysis either at the level of policy (a perspective that supports generalization across tribal difference, but can diminish Indigenous agency and specificity) or local, sometimes regional, community (a framework that allows for culturally-specific analysis, but which can obscure

⁵ See, in the North American context, Linda S. Covey, “Diné Becoming Bahá’í: Through the Lens of Ancient Prophecies” (MA thesis, Missouri State University, 2011); Lynn Echevarria, “A New Skin for an Old Drum: Changing Contexts of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá’í Storytelling,” *The Northern Review* 29 (Fall 2008), 39-62; Chelsea Horton, “‘According to your faith so shall your power and blessings be’: The Aboriginal-Bahá’í Encounter in British Columbia” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2005); Andrew Pemberton-Piggot, “The Bahá’í Faith in Alberta; 1942-1992: The Ethic of Dispersion” (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1992); Carolyn Patterson Sawin, “Native Conversion, Native Identity: An Oral History of the Bahá’í Faith among First Nations People in the Southern Central Yukon Territory, Canada” (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2000); Pauline Tuttle, “‘Beyond Feathers and Beads’: Interlocking Narratives in the Music and Dance of Tokeya Inajin (Kevin Locke),” in Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 99-156; Pauline Tuttle, “The Hoop of Many Hoops: The Integration of Lakota Ancestral Knowledge and Bahá’í Teachings in the Performative Practices of Kevin Locke” (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2002). Brief references within wider academic literature include Kirk Dombrowski, *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 166; John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 201; Steve Pavlik, “Navajo Christianity: Historical Origins and Modern Trends,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 12, no.2 (1997): 58.

broader connections).⁶ Further, despite the colonial origins of the border that bifurcates them, Canadian and American historiographies seldom speak across the forty-ninth parallel. There are, to be sure, compelling reasons for pursuing analysis at the national, both Indigenous and state, level. And local and regional frameworks are particularly well suited to the study of land-based Indigenous lifeways.⁷ As emerging studies of Indigenous transnationalism suggest, however, too firm an “ethnospatial fix” can flatten Indigenous movement and mobility and alternative spaces of contact, community, and identity.⁸ This is particularly relevant during the second half of the twentieth century when increasing numbers of Indigenous people in Canada and the United States came to reside in urban and off-reserve environments and fomented new formulations of Indigeneity, in North America and globally.⁹ While an established literature has documented key events from the so-called Red Power era in North America, historians are just now turning their attention to the second half of the twentieth century more broadly and scholarship on Indigenous religious encounter in this period remains slim.¹⁰

⁶ Philip Deloria discusses such framing in *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 11-12.

⁷ On place-based Indigenous perspectives see, for example, Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 30th Anniversary Edition (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 2003 [1973]); Peter Nabokov, *Where the Lightning Strikes: The Lives of American Indian Sacred Places* (New York: Viking, 2006).

⁸ “Ethnospatial fix” is Donald Moore’s term, discussed in Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn, “Introduction,” in Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn, eds., *Indigenous Experience Today* (New York: Berg, 2007), 16. On Indigenous transnationalism and “alternative contact” see Paul Lai and Lindsay Claire Smith, eds., *American Quarterly*, “Special Issue: Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies” 62, no.3 (Sept 2010); Hsinya Huang, Philip J. Deloria, Laura M. Furlan, and John Gambler, eds., “Special Forum: Charting Transnational Native American Studies: Aesthetics, Politics, Identity,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 4, no.1 (2012); Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁹ I establish this context in greater detail in coming chapters. On urban migration and interaction see, for example, Craig Proulx and Heather A. Howard, eds., *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Ramirez, *Native Hubs*. On shifting identification see, for example, Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

¹⁰ This shift is evident in the focus of recent graduate theses. See, for example, Lianne C. Leddy, “Cold War Colonialism: The Serpent River First Nation and Uranium Mining, 1953-1988 (PhD thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 2011); Mary Jane Logan McCallum, “Labour, Modernity, and the Canadian State: A History of Aboriginal Women and Work in the Mid-Twentieth Century (PhD thesis, University of Manitoba, 2008). A

The current Indigenous Baha’i community in North America is composed predominantly of individuals and family groups spread throughout many Indigenous nations and communities. To capture and consider these contours, this study draws upon qualitative interviews with twenty-five Indigenous Baha’is from almost as many backgrounds, both urban and reserve, in Canada and the United States (brief biographical sketches of all narrators are available in Appendix 1). I recruited narrators (as I call my participants, following current oral historical practice) by way of chain referral (or, in less social scientific discourse, word of mouth), a method that itself lends coherence to what may otherwise appear an unwieldy and disconnected data set.¹¹ Indeed, though Indigenous Baha’is did and do not regularly come together in physical space, they share a sense of conceptual community and, as my sample bears out, concrete relationships as well. Jacob Bighorn’s service was again a fine example of this: six people who I had previously interviewed (from Indigenous backgrounds ranging from Quw’utsun’ to Abenaki) were present at the gathering in person, while another three (from Yankton Sioux¹² and

literature on twentieth-century Indigenous Pentecostalism and Evangelical Christianity is emerging. See, for example, Kimberly Jenkins Marshall, “Performing Conversion Among the Diné Oodlání (Navajo Believers)” (PhD thesis, Indiana University, 2011); Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Clinton N. Westman, “Pentecostalism Among Canadian Aboriginal People: A Political Movement?” in *A Liberating Spirit: Pentecostals and Social Action in North America*, ed. Michael Wilkinson and Steven Stuebaker (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 85-110. The Red Power literature is vast. For two examples see Duane Champagne, Troy R. Johnson, Joane Nagel, eds., *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allan Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: New Press, 1996).

¹¹ On chain referral, also known as chain sampling, see H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Fourth Edition (New York: Altamira Press, 2006), 192; Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods* (London: Sage, 2011), 100.

¹² As the Oglala Lakota scholar Karen D. Lone Hill explains, the term Sioux “is a fragment of the English and Ojibwa word *nadouessioux*, which is generally believed to be a derogatory term meaning ‘little snakes.’ The name resulted from a history of territorial conflicts between the Sioux and Ojibwas, who were located to the east of the Sioux. Contemporary Sioux prefer the terms *Dakota*, *Nakota*, and *Lakota* when referring to themselves as a people and a nation, for these are the names of group’s different dialects, regions, and economies.” “Before European contact,” Lone Hill adds, “the Sioux Nation consisted of seven major divisions, which called themselves the Oceti Sakowin, or Seven Council Fires.” Karen D. Lone Hill, “Sioux,” in Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Encyclopedia of North American Indians* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 590. In this study, I employ the term Sioux where and when it is used by narrators and scholars themselves (thus, in this case, the Yankton Sioux), while avoiding it as a blanket designation for Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota peoples.

Chickasaw, Blackfoot, and Lakota heritage, respectively) were mentioned in the printed program.¹³ Several of these people I had met in the context of my relationship with Jacob and his wife, Deloria; others I was introduced to through separate (but, it turned out, connected) channels altogether.

That narrators spoke, in their interviews with me, of a process of becoming Baha'i is not surprising. That they spoke, simultaneously, of process of becoming Indigenous is rather more. This is not to say that narrators did not identify in any way as Indigenous, or according to more specific tribal appellations, prior to joining the religion. Rather, in an ongoing context of settler colonialism and missionary traffic in Indigenous North America, they found the Baha'i vision of "unity in diversity" refreshing and saw space within the religion for both Indigenous people and perspectives. Some who had been racialized explicitly as "Indians" and experienced formal assimilation efforts first-hand came, by way of their Baha'i declarations and practice, to cultivate an empowered sense of Indigenous self outside colonial strictures. Others, conversely, who grew up disconnected from their Indigenous heritage, came to openly articulate and activate an Indigenous identity for the first time. Narrators simultaneously stimulated, through their Baha'i observance, a global vision of religious belonging and relationship. And they worked to realize this both within the Baha'i community and through interactions with other Indigenous people, in North America and abroad.

Contexts and Contributions

The Baha'i Faith

At the risk of setting up precisely the sort of baseline that this study aims to undo, it is necessary, before proceeding, to establish some background on the Baha'i Faith. Baha'i

¹³ "Tasunke Maza, Iron Horse, Jacob Morris Bighorn," Funeral Service Program, 8 Oct 2008, Chelsea Horton Personal Collection.

intersections with Indigenous North America, after all, are in part so unexpected simply because the religion is so unknown. While scholars have debated whether the Baha'i Faith is best characterized as a "world religion" or a "new religious movement," either way it has developed from a mid-nineteenth-century offshoot of Shi'i Islam into a global faith with a following of over five million (with particular growth, since the mid-twentieth-century, in the global south).¹⁴ The historian Todd Lawson has described Baha'i-founder Baha'u'llah as a "Persian theorist of modernism and globalization" and, with several other scholars, has situated the Baha'i Faith in an accelerating context of what the geographer David Harvey calls time-space compression.¹⁵ Contrary to the assumptions of much scholarship on globalization (which has, on the whole, been curiously silent on the subject of religion), Baha'u'llah's universal vision did not entirely flatten difference.¹⁶ Rather, as Abdu'l-Baha expressed by way of botanical and biological imagery that remain go-to metaphors among Baha'is today:

Consider the flowers of a garden, though differing in kind, color, form and shape, yet inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm and addeth

¹⁴ Todd Lawson, "Globalization and the Hidden Words," in Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind, eds., *Baha'i and Globalisation* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 37; Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 65-68, 217-220. Anthony A. Lee characterizes the faith as a new religious movement in his recent study *The Baha'i Faith in Africa: Establishing a New Religious Movement, 1952-1962* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2011). For a useful overview of Baha'i expansion patterns see Peter Smith, *Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 137-154.

¹⁵ Lawson, "Globalization and the Hidden Words," 38. See also Juan R. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Warburg et al., *Baha'i and Globalisation*. On time-space compression see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, UK: Blackwell, 1989), 147. As the anthropologist James Lorand Matory has argued eloquently, although global religious flows did accelerate at the turn of the twentieth century, they extend much earlier than this: *Black Atlantic Religion: Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁶ Despite the fact that, as the political scientist Susanne Hoeber Rudolph notes, "Religious communities are among the oldest of the transnationals," most scholars of globalization and transnationalism have not attended carefully to religion. Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, "Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society," in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori, eds., *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997), 1. For calls for heightened attention to this intersection see Thomas J. Csordas, ed., *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Manuel A. Vásquez and Marie Friedmann Marquardt, *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

unto their beauty. Thus when that unifying force, the penetrating influence of the Word of God, taketh effect, the difference of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions and dispositions embellisheth the world of humanity. This diversity, this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole. When these different limbs and organs come under the influence of man's sovereign soul, and the soul's power pervadeth the limbs and members, veins and arteries of the body, then difference reinforceth harmony, diversity strengtheneth love, and multiplicity is the greatest factor for coordination.¹⁷

Abdu'l-Baha's grandson and successor, Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), cited a similar statement in a November 1931 letter to Baha'is, prefacing his grandfather's words with the first explicit Baha'i statement of "unity in diversity." "Let there be no misgivings," he averred:

as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Bahá'u'lláh. Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity such as 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has explained.¹⁸

Unity in diversity, this study reveals, has yet to be fully achieved in practice. But this vision nevertheless served as a tremendous source of inspiration for Indigenous Baha'is.

In line with the broad Baha'i vision of unity in diversity are a set of more specific teachings that Abdu'l-Baha distilled and disseminated during a series of early-twentieth-century travels in Europe and North America. Adherents, at least in the West, still describe these as the "twelve principles": "(1) one God, (2) one humanity, (3) unity of the Manifestations of God, (4)

¹⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), 291 (accessed online 6 March 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/SAB/>).

¹⁸ Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991 [28 Nov 1931]), 41-42.

harmony between science and religion, (5) the independent search after truth, (6) equality of men and women, (7) elimination of racial prejudice, (8) universal education, (9) international peace-keeping force, (10) international tribunal, (11) universal auxiliary language, and (12) world government.”¹⁹ The “Global North America” in the title to this study is a nod to this internationalist orientation and the global perspective and connections that narrators cultivated as Baha’is. This is something they activated both as “situated universalists” at home, and through travels abroad.²⁰ There is a strong “ethic of itinerancy” in the Baha’i Faith that stretches back to journeys made by the religion’s core figures (the Bab, Baha’u’llah, Abdu’l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi) and takes in and propels ongoing expansion efforts by Baha’is.²¹ There is no clergy or paid missionary staff in the religion; individual adherents hold responsibility for what Baha’is call “teaching” and “pioneering” (two thoroughly loaded terms in the context of colonial North America).

This activist orientation also extends to the construction of what Shoghi Effendi dubbed the Baha’i “Administrative Order.” Envisioned by Baha’u’llah and elaborated over the course of the twentieth century, this order now consists, in its core elements, of a system of Local Spiritual Assemblies (composed of nine elected Baha’is from a local area), National Spiritual Assemblies (made up of the same on the national scale), and the Universal House of Justice (the international Baha’i ruling body, first elected in 1963 and based in Haifa, Israel; seemingly contradictory to

¹⁹ Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá’í Community of Canada, 1898-1948* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 203.

²⁰ “Situated universalist” is the Baha’i sociologist Michael McMullen’s term: *The Bahá’í*, 12.

²¹ “Ethic of itinerancy” is the Baha’i law scholar Roshan Danesh’s term: “The Journey Motif in the Baha’i Faith: From Universal Revelation to Global Religion,” *Journal of Baha’i Studies*, forthcoming, 20. Baha’is refer to the Bab, Baha’u’llah, and Abdu’l-Baha as the “Central Figures” of the Faith; Shoghi Effendi is known as “the Guardian.” On “the guardianship,” an institution conceived by Abdu’l-Baha “to provide a line of future heads of the Faith,” see Smith, *Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá’í Faith*, 169-170.

the teaching of gender equality, only men may be elected to this institution).²² Shoghi Effendi characterized the Administrative Order as “the nucleus” and “the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind.”²³ Following his interpretation of Baha’u’llah’s teachings, Baha’is tend to exhibit an explicit sense of historical consciousness attuned to the relative youth of their religion, its position along a teleological prophetic trajectory, and a future period called the “Most Great Peace.”²⁴ Their approach to this peace is, again, activist. Baha’is value education, in particular, as a tool to build understanding, an approach that narrators have applied in their own lives and through “service” among others as well.²⁵

The Baha’i writings engage a constructivist discourse that stresses the gradual unfolding of the faith over time and call for creativity and flexibility as diverse peoples and cultures are brought into Baha’i community and in line with Baha’i law.²⁶ Consistent with this aim, and

²² For an overview of the Administrative Order see Smith, *Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá’í Faith*, 24-28. On the Universal House of Justice being confined to male membership see Helen Bassett Hornby, compiler, *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá’í Reference File* (New Delhi, India: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 2010 [1983]), 613-614; William Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America* (London: Praeger, 2005), 158-159.

²³ Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 144.

²⁴ On Baha’i historical consciousness and sacred time see John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 1996), 173. In expounding on the writings of Baha’u’llah, Abdu’l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi distinguished between millennial visions of the “Most Great Peace,” to be achieved through the erection of what Shoghi Effendi called the Baha’i “World Order,” and the “Lesser Peace,” an international political peace. These visions also contain apocalyptic elements. See William P. Collins and Peter Smith, “Babi and Baha’i Millennialism,” in Catherine Wessinger, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 484-486.

²⁵ These threads have often intersected directly. A number of narrators, for example, have graduate-level degrees, and the majority of these are in education. Some narrators pursued their degrees prior to becoming Baha’is, but nevertheless went on to apply their education within explicitly Baha’i spheres. Jacob Bighorn, to give but one example, was already pursuing a Masters degree in education when he began investigating the Baha’i Faith; he and his wife, Deloria, who completed a Masters degree in community organization development and planning after becoming a Baha’i, later moved to British Columbia to work at Maxwell International Baha’i School. Jacob Bighorn, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 11 Aug 2004; Deloria Bighorn, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 20 March 2008. Narrator Scott Tyler, for his part, was raised as a Baha’i and noted the impact of engagement with the Baha’i writings on he and his sibling’s childhood reading and writing skills; Tyler is a medical doctor. Scott Tyler, interview with the author, Bellevue, Washington, 28 July 2008. I discuss the issue of education and service in further depth in Chapter 8.

²⁶ For Baha’is, “the Writings” refer to those of the Bab, Baha’u’llah, and Abdu’l-Baha (which together constitute the sacred Baha’i texts); I use the term writings in a wider way to encompass works written by other leaders like Shoghi Effendi and institutions like the Universal House of Justice as well.

frequent framing of the Baha'i Faith as a modern rational religion free from the fetters of fear-based superstition and empty ritual, few set religious practices are prescribed.²⁷ Some that are, such as the offering of obligatory daily prayers, maintain an Islamic flavour.²⁸ Further, the dominant non-Indigenous demographic in the North American Baha'i community has substantially shaped Baha'i practice in this context. Most existing literature on the Baha'i Faith is prescriptive in orientation, while many academic studies are sociological.²⁹ Training analysis on practice and power over theory and theology, this study, by contrast, offers new insight on the religion as constructed in historical context and through subsequent acts of memory that narrators articulated in their interviews with me.

Religious Encounter

Though literature on the Baha'i Faith is thin, recent scholarship on Christian contact zones illuminates how religion has historically functioned as an innovative, while always heavily freighted, site of colonial contact and exchange. The literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt articulated her influential concept of the contact zone – a space and perspective that considers interactions between diverse peoples “not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power” – in specific relation to travel writing.³⁰ Recent studies of Indigenous-Christian interaction, however, also bear the imprint of her thinking and share in a

²⁷ McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 7-8, 76-77.

²⁸ Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, 52.

²⁹ As the Baha'i sociologist Will van den Hoonaard has observed, a practice of what he calls “biographical zoning,” where Baha'is privilege a person's religious affiliation to the exclusion of other aspects of their lives (or, conversely, whereby non-Baha'i writers ignore or overlook the Baha'i aspects of their subjects' lives) also characterizes much Baha'i scholarship. Will van den Hoonaard, “Biographical Zoning and Baha'i Biographical Writing: The Case of Rose Henderson,” *Baha'i Studies Review* 12 (2004), 51. Sociological studies of the religion include Lynn Echevarria, *Life Histories of Bahá'í Women in Canada: Constructing Religious Identity in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011); McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, Warburg, *Citizens of the World*; van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*.

³⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6-7.

wider related shift to postmodern and postcolonial perspectives attuned to hybridity, liminality, and the creative capacity of the in-between.³¹ Such analysis, like recent literature in the field of Indigenous history more broadly, has made important strides in nuancing strict binaries like Indigenous victimization versus resistance and tradition versus modernity.³² There remains a danger, though, of overplaying Indigenous agency to the point of diminishing colonial reality (and, as the historian Joel Martin has noted in a related vein, of overextending contact metaphors like Richard White's resilient "middle ground").³³ As the historian Adele Perry has argued in the context of nineteenth-century British Columbia, "the seductive language of 'contact' and its various metonyms, including 'encounter,' implies a simplicity that belies the layered and fractured character of the meetings between Europe(s) and America(s) here and elsewhere."³⁴ It is necessary, the Dakota Sioux cultural historian Philip J. Deloria has suggested elsewhere, "to think beyond the familiar questions of resistance and the 'cultural creativity' that is all too often the only consolidation of the dispossessed."³⁵ This project, then, contributes to an effort to articulate a more nimble framework for understanding processes of religious encounter in the second half of the twentieth century, when colonialism continued in North America but took

³¹ See, for example, Emma Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007); Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012); Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³² For a review of literature that embodies this shift see Nicholas G. Rosenthal, "Beyond the New Indian History: Recent Trends in the Historiography on the Native Peoples of North America," *History Compass* 4/5 (2006): 962-974.

³³ Joel W. Martin, "Visions of Revitalization in the Eastern Woodlands: Can a Middle-Aged Theory Stretch to Embrace the First Cherokee Converts?" in Michael Harkin, ed, *Reassessing Revitalization Movements: Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 86. Richard White applied the term the "middle ground" to describe a very specific, if fluid, site of mutual misunderstanding and exchange in the *pays d'en haut* between the mid-seventeenth-century and the early nineteenth: *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

³⁴ Adele Perry, "Metropolitan Knowledge, Colonial Practice, and Indigenous Womanhood: Missions in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," in Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale, eds., *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 109.

³⁵ Philip J. Deloria, "Foreword," in Lee Irwin, *Coming Down From Above: Prophecy, Resistance, and Renewal in Native American Religions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), xii.

substantially different form than during the earlier periods of exchange that have occupied most historians of Indigenous religious encounter. In the case of the Baha'i Faith, we find a new religious message emanating from the Middle East, not Europe, yet disseminated, at least in the early stages, largely by non-Indigenous adherents propelled by religious teaching to extend their faith to "Indians," but prohibited by the same source from proselytizing. For a number of Indigenous Baha'is, further, it was factors like dream, vision, and prophecy, not Baha'i "teaching books" or "proclamation campaigns," which moved them to become Baha'is.

Where the history of Indigenous-Christian interaction was once predominantly written from church perspectives, then missionary-infused categories like "success," scholars have begun to interpret the process more closely from Indigenous perspectives. A series of recent edited volumes, together with a growing collection of more focused monographs, confirm that substantial rethinking of Indigenous religious encounter is indeed afoot in North America and elsewhere.³⁶ This literature rejects the lingering assumption that conversion to Christianity was an "either/or" proposition that necessarily marked assimilation, a position advanced several decades ago by early ethnohistorian of mission, James Axtell.³⁷ Responding to rigid readings of cultural clash and conquest that emerged during the 1970s, scholars like Axtell began to probe motivations on both sides of "the Christian curtain" and demonstrate how Indigenous people (in

³⁶ Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton, eds., *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada* (under advance contract with UBC Press); Peggy Brock, ed., *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2005); David Lindenfeld and Miles Richardson, eds., *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism: Indigenous Encounters with Missionary Christianity, 1800-2000* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012); Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas, eds., *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). Recent monographs include Peggy Brock, *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah: A Tsimshian Man on the Pacific Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Tracy Neal Leavelle, *The Catholic Calumet: Colonial Conversions in French and Indian North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); David Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christianity, and Community among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard, 1600-1871* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³⁷ Historian Susan Neylan discusses this either/or dichotomy in *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 16, 211.

New England, in the case of Axtell's observations) actively adopted Christianity as a form of "protective coloration" in the face of what the anthropologist David Aberle earlier called "relative deprivation" incited by colonial factors like violence, disease, and dispossession.³⁸

Though this analysis went a long way in acknowledging a more nuanced Indigenous agency and seeing converts as more than strictly dupes or sell outs, in treating Indigenous Christianity as "patina," it typically reduced Indigenous motivation to strategy and parsed the political and the spiritual in a way inappropriate in many Indigenous contexts where there existed (and exists) no strict separation between the sacred and the secular.³⁹ This study, by contrast, builds on more recent analysis that approaches religious encounter and conversion as a process of "making meaning," not just "making do."⁴⁰

As part of this effort, it considers Indigenous Baha'i history in what the religious studies scholar Catherine Albanese has called combinatory perspective.⁴¹ In reframing religious encounter as more than a unilateral process of colonial imposition, many scholars have engaged

³⁸ James Axtell, "Some Thoughts on the Ethnohistory of Missions," *Ethnohistory* 29, no.1 (Winter 1982): 36, 39; James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); David Aberle, "A Note on Relative Deprivation Theory As Applied to Millenarian and Other Cult Movements," in William Less and Evon Z. Vogt, eds., *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, Second Edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 537-541. For a helpful review of deprivation theories see also Gregory E. Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 198-201.

³⁹ The religious studies scholar Michael McNally employs "patina" in a discussion of earlier acculturation analysis, but the term is apt to Axtell's analysis as well. Michael D. McNally, "The Practice of Native American Christianity," *Church History* 69, no.4 (Dec 2000), 844. On the inseparability of politics and spirituality in Indigenous contexts see, for example, Lee Irwin, "Native American Spirituality: An Introduction," in Lee Irwin, ed., *Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 3; Jace Weaver, ed., *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998). The historian Catherine Murton Stoehr makes a similar point, and offers a trenchant critique of Axtell, in "Salvation From Empire: The Roots of Anishinabe Christianity in Upper Canada, 1650-1840 (PhD thesis, Queen's University, 2008), 23-25. With other recent literature that seeks to revitalize the mid-century "revitalization theory" of anthropologist Anthony Wallace, Murton Stoehr's study presents Methodism as a source of Anishinabe revitalization. Michael Harkin, ed., *Reassessing Revitalization Movements: Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ This is the religious studies scholar Michael McNally's phrase: "The Practice of Native American Christianity," 852.

⁴¹ Catherine Albanese, "Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls: Contact, Combination, and American Religious History," in Thomas Tweed, ed., *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 200-226.

the concept of syncretism, a term that denotes the blending of religious “beliefs, symbols, rituals, and cultural expressions.”⁴² While effective in foregrounding Indigenous agency in contexts of spiritual exchange, syncretism, a concept with theological origins, also carries negative connotations of corrosion. It thus functions to implicitly rewrite a baseline of purity onto which hybrid innovations are then affixed. This, as the anthropologist Aisha Khan and others have observed, in turn invokes false binaries of “great” versus “little,” “authentic” versus “invented,” and “world” versus “other” religions.⁴³ Baha’is, too, have their own reservations around syncretism, although for rather different reasons: in response to portrayals of their faith as “a simplistic mixture of ideas from other religions,” the Baha’i historian Robert Stockman explains, adherents seek to establish their own baseline and assert their status as an independent world religion.⁴⁴ Instead of syncretism, then, we can think more productively in terms of all spirituality being forged in contexts of combination. Albanese made this point persuasively over a decade ago in the context of American history. She stressed that:

⁴² Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 15. For discussions and applications of syncretism see, for example, Kenneth Morrison, “Baptism and Alliance: The Symbolic Mediations of Religious Syncretism,” *Ethnohistory* 37 (1990): 416-437; Laura Peers, “‘The Guardian of All’: Jesuit Missionary and Salish Perceptions of the Virgin Mary,” in Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds., *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 1996), 284-303.

⁴³ Aisha Khan, *Callaloo Nation: Metaphors of Race and Religious Identity Among South Asians in Trinidad* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 24. For further cogent critiques of syncretism see Talal Asad, “Comments on Conversion,” in Peter van der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 265; McMullen, *Ojibwe Singers*, 13-14; Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion*, 268, 278; Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, eds., *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis* (New York: Routledge, 1994). For an article that thoughtfully engages such politics of synthesis in the context of colonial British Columbia see John Barker, “Tangled Reconciliations: The Anglican Church and the Nisga’a of British Columbia,” *American Ethnologist* 25, no.3 (1998): 433-451.

⁴⁴ Robert Stockman, “The Baha’i Faith and Syncretism,” in *Resource Guide for the Scholarly Study of the Bahá’í Faith* (Wilmette, IL: Research Office of the United States Bahá’í National Center, 1997), accessed online 29 April 2013, http://bahai-library.com/stockman_bahai_syncretism. See also McMullen, *The Bahá’í*, 109. One characterization of the faith as syncretic is found in the anthropologist Kirk Dombrowski’s study of Indigenous Pentecostalism in Alaska: “The Bahai organization is a syncretic missionary movement aimed mainly at indigenous peoples in colonized areas of the world, and especially Native Americans. Mission dogma is fluid, an amalgam of spiritual beliefs and practices drawn mainly from many indigenous traditions, including Native American ceremonies.” While Dombrowski’s description offers a compelling hint of how the religion was presented and practiced in Southeast Alaska, it also overlooks progressive revelation and related Baha’i teachings. Dombrowski, *Against Culture*, 166.

to evoke the presence of syncretism is to suggest the non-normal and marginal, the unnatural and exotic. More, it is to imply a loss of self and soul, to call under judgment a decomposition of sorts. It is to say, in so many words, that elements of original and ‘pure’ religions have surrendered their previous integrity in bowdlerized and inferior blends that represent a religious devolution.

Taking, instead, a constructivist stance, Albanese continued:

To talk about ‘combination’ and ‘addition’ (and a related shedding of the no-longer-relevant), in contrast, is to move the analysis toward a different set of assumptions and assessments. It is to talk about a natural cultural process that occurs whenever and wherever contact comes. It is to own that – unless religious systems are relics to be admired in a taxonomy of the sacred that comes with museum shelves – they let go and add on; they lose; they gain; they exchange.⁴⁵

Religion, in this formulation, is always, actively, under renovation.

With this turn from syncretism to combination comes a shift from the realm of belief to practice. As Joel Martin has observed, studies of “lived religion” and the “ethnographic turn” in religious history have powerfully illuminated “what ordinary people did with and through religion” and “how religion was embodied, ritualized, and felt through powerful emotions.”⁴⁶

The work of anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff has further proven particularly influential for scholars of Indigenous religious exchange. The Comaroffs’ analysis of historical mission and colonialism in southern Africa sparked productive attention to what the historian Susan Neylan describes in a study of nineteenth-century Tsimshian Christianity as the “politics of everyday life” and, as the religious studies scholar Michael McNally notes in a study of Ojibwe singing, how domination and resistance are worked out in sites like “clothing, music making, body posture,

⁴⁵ Albanese, “Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls,” 224-225.

⁴⁶ Martin, “Introduction,” 8. Compelling studies in this vein include Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Robert A. Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women’s Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Robert A. Orsi, ed., *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

and the organization of time and space.”⁴⁷ At the same time, the Comaroffs’ dialectic model results in a somewhat rigid reading of missionary modernity and what the Comaroffs call the “colonization of consciousness.”⁴⁸ While certainly informed by the legacies and ongoing practice of Christian mission in North America, Indigenous-Baha’i interactions differed substantially from the earlier exchanges that the Comaroffs and others consider. Indeed, with a combinatory discourse and ambition all its own – one that augurs, and activates, the gradual construction of a global Baha’i world united in diversity – the Baha’i Faith is a particularly rich site through which to plumb the practice and the politics of religious combination. Far from assimilation, or even what Susan Neylan describes as “the co-existence of old and new forms of religious expressions,” what I illustrate in this study is the co-production of Indigenous and Baha’i identities.⁴⁹

Identity

The same intellectual currents that have informed recent rethinking of religious encounter have likewise contributed to what the cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall described over fifteen years ago as a “veritable discursive explosion” around the concept of identity.⁵⁰ So saturated is the field of identity studies (if one can properly speak, across sub/disciplinary difference, of such a thing) that some scholars like the anthropologists Frederick Cooper and Rogers Brubaker

⁴⁷ Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing*, Chapter 8; Michael D. McNally, *Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and a Native Culture in Motion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 13-14.

⁴⁸ Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol.1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), xi and *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity of a South African Frontier* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). For a nuanced critique of the Comaroffs’ texts by an historian of South African mission see Elizabeth Elbourne, “Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity, and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff,” *American Historical Review* 108, no.2 (April 2003): 435-459.

⁴⁹ Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing*, 14. Neylan herself takes up the subject of identity formation (and identification, discussed below) more explicitly in a later study co-authored with Melissa Meyer: “‘Here Comes the Band!’: Cultural Collaboration, Connective Traditions, and Aboriginal Brass Bands on British Columbia’s North Coast, 1875-1964,” *BC Studies* no.152 (Winter 2006/07): 35-66.

⁵⁰ Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who Needs ‘Identity?’” in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), 1.

advocate jettisoning the term altogether.⁵¹ Taking in the study of personal subjectivity and group affiliation alike, identity studies are broadly concerned, in the social psychologist Margaret Wetherell's words, with "'names and looks', and what is done with these."⁵² The rise of literary and cultural studies, and postmodern analysis more generally, helped to destabilize the idea of any "integral, originary and unified identity," with scholars illustrating instead how categories like race, class, gender, and, more recently, religion have been constructed in specific contexts of power.⁵³ As Cooper and Brubaker observe, constructionist literature has offered the critical insight "that affinities, categories, and subjectivities develop and change over time."⁵⁴ In its attention to discourse and power, however, poststructural scholarship, in particular, has prompted pitched academic exchange concerning agency and experience. Feminist scholarship, for example, continues to grapple with whether and how women's lives, and their roles in shaping them, can be retrieved and analyzed apart from language and discourse.⁵⁵

These issues are deeply relevant to the study of Indigenous identity as well. Feminist antiracist activist and scholar Andrea Smith, for example, argues that some poststructuralists, engaging a stance she calls "vulgar constructionism," go too far by suggesting that "because axes of identity (race, class, etc.) are socially constructed they do not 'really' exist."⁵⁶ As she adds, however, citing the critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, "'To say that a category such as

⁵¹ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no.1 (Feb 2000), 1-47.

⁵² Margaret Wetherell, "The Field of Identity Studies," in Margaret Wetherell and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds. *The Sage Handbook of Identities* (London: Sage, 2010), 3.

⁵³ Hall, "Introduction," 1. For a classic interrogation of the category "women," for example, see Denise Riley, *Am I That Name?": Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). For a trenchant analysis of race and religion as "idioms of identity construction" in the Caribbean see Khan, *Callaloo Nation*, 13.

⁵⁴ Cooper and Brubaker, "Beyond 'Identity,'" 31.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* Vol.17, no.4 (Summer 1991): 773-797; Joan Sangster, "Invoking Experience as Evidence," *Canadian Historical Review* 92, no.1 (March 2011): 135-161.

⁵⁶ Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right*, 214. The religious studies scholar Richard King similarly cautions against extreme forms of postmodern analysis that overstate the fragmentary free-floating nature of identity: *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and 'The Mystic East'* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 198.

race or gender is socially constructed is not to say that category has no significance in our world.”⁵⁷ Indeed, Indigenous identity is a category with teeth and teeth, in the Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson’s expressive phrase, “that bite through time.”⁵⁸ “Indianness” itself is a category born of colonialism. There were no Indians in the Americas before Columbus’ storied geographic blunder in 1492.⁵⁹ Rather, there were diverse peoples, with deep relationships to place, many of whose own group appellations translate as “the people.”⁶⁰ As I elaborate in the next chapter, colonial constructions of Indianness closely contributed to the dispossession of Indigenous lands and the disruption (although not, as intended, destruction) of Indigenous peoplehood, erecting a rigid baseline of tradition and authenticity against which claims to rights, resources, self, and sovereignty continue to be judged. Indigenous identity, however, was not and is not static, something either strictly imposed or preserved over time.

This study accordingly contributes to the project called for by the historian Alexandra Harmon to “chronicle the changing bases, parameters, manifestations, and uses of Indianness, especially from Indian points of view.”⁶¹ As Harmon argues, “Indianness” is not stable essence, “something that the descendants of aboriginal people have managed to preserve through centuries of assault on their identities. Instead, the lesson of history – when written as much as possible to give voice to all the participants – is that Indianness is an ongoing creation, and Indians are chief among its creators.”⁶² Harmon herself has richly illustrated this process in the

⁵⁷ Kimberlé Crenshaw cited in Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right*, 214.

⁵⁸ Audra Simpson, “On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, ‘Voice,’ and Colonial Citizenship,” *Junctures* 9 (Dec 2007), 69.

⁵⁹ Thinking, upon landing in the Caribbean, that he was in Asia, Columbus “called the peoples he met *los indios*.” Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979 [1978]), 4-5.

⁶⁰ Bonita Lawrence, “Legislating Identity: Colonialism, Land and Indigenous Legacies,” in Wetherell and Mohanty, eds., *The Sage Handbook of Identities*, 508.

⁶¹ Alexandra Harmon, “Wanted: More Histories of Indian Identity,” in Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury, eds., *A Companion to American Indian History* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 249.

⁶² Harmon, “Wanted: More Histories of Indian Identity,” 261.

context of Puget Sound in the Pacific Northwest, demonstrating how factors like kinship, trade, policy, and treaty all informed constructions of “Indianness” over time.⁶³ Religion has likewise served as a source of shared Indigenous ascription. Where the Ghost Dance, a prominent prophecy movement in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century American West, for example, was long cast as a last whisper of Indigenous resistance or a descent into delusion and deprivation, the historian Gregory Smoak has instead recently illustrated how it functioned as a site of pan-Indigenous ethnogenesis and what he describes as “a vehicle for the expression of meaningful social identities.”⁶⁴ Though it eschews the somewhat functionalist tone that the term “vehicle” invokes, this study shares in the effort to explore the religious construction of Indigenous identities, especially beyond the common ethnohistorical units of tribe and region. This is particularly pressing in the context of the second half of the twentieth century, a period when many Indigenous people in North America came into increasing intertribal interaction, often in urban and off-reservation environments, and when a substantial number of people came to openly identify as Indigenous for the first time.

In addition to ethnohistorical analysis, my approach is informed by Brubaker and Cooper’s call for attention to “identification” over identity. As they explain, identification is “an active term, derived from a verb,” that emphasizes process over content and condition. “It invites us,” they continue, “to specify the agents that do the identifying” and recognizes that “self- and

⁶³ Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities Around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁶⁴ Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 3. Application of the concept of “ethnogenesis” in relation to Indigenous identity dates to the publication of the article, “Creeks into Seminoles,” by the anthropologist William C. Sturtevant in 1971. See Richard A. Sattler, “Remnants, Renegades, and Runaways: Seminole Ethnogenesis Reconsidered,” in Jonathan D. Hill, ed., *History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492-1992* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 36. The concept’s attention to ethnic emergence relates to the anthropologist Fredrik Barth’s contemporary and equally influential formulation of “boundary maintenance,” which stresses the construction of ethnicity in contexts of encounter rather than in terms of static cultural content. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969).

other-identification are fundamentally situational and contextual.”⁶⁵ This distinction between self- and other-identification, and what Brubaker and Cooper call “categorization” carried out by institutions and discourse, is especially helpful in the context of the oral histories examined here.⁶⁶ For in becoming Baha’is, narrators generated strengthened self-identification as Indigenous, outside of the colonial categorizing currents that had in some cases explicitly racialized them as “Indians” and in others circumscribed their prior connection to this aspect of their heritage. (At the same time, the fact that two narrators expressed to me directly before agreeing to be interviewed that they might not fit my sample on the basis on being “mixed-blood” is strong signal of the ongoing operation of racialized categories of “Indianness.”)

The study of Indigenous identity is a charged enterprise and constructionist analysis, in particular, has drawn sharp critique from some quarters. In the Pacific region, for example, literature on the “invention of tradition” has generated criticism from Indigenous scholars who have accused White academics of attempting to defend their professional turf and “adjudicate authenticity.”⁶⁷ In the United States, conversely, some White academics like the anthropologist James Clifton have leveled accusations of specious invention against a growing number of individuals and communities who claimed “Indian” identity during the last decades of the twentieth century.⁶⁸ More recently, postcolonial theory has cultivated sophisticated analysis of

⁶⁵ Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” 14. The concept of identification has roots stretching back to Freud and, in its psychoanalytic usage, also carries an affective dimension (“identifying oneself emotionally *with* another person, category, or collectivity”) that also resonates in the context of Indigenous Baha’i history. Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” 17. See also Stuart Hall’s framing of identification, which takes in both discursive and psychodynamic dimensions. Hall, “Introduction: Who Needs ‘Identity’?”

⁶⁶ Brubaker and Cooper, “Beyond ‘Identity,’” 15.

⁶⁷ Clifford, “Indigenous Articulations,” 480.

⁶⁸ James A. Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1990). For discussion of this iteration of the “invention of tradition” see Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 165 (fn 17). For a thorough critique of Clifton’s text see Vine Deloria Jr., “Comfortable Fictions and the Struggle for Turf: An Essay Review of *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies*,” in Devon A. Mihesuah, ed., *Natives and Academics: Research and Writing about American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 65-82. For a different take on the invention of tradition, one that highlights active processes of cultural construction on the Northwest Coast, see Michael Harkin, “A Tradition of Invention: Modern Ceremonialism on the

colonial systems of knowledge and power, as well as subaltern pasts, but has also been critiqued by a number of Indigenous scholars for keeping its view too tightly trained on colonial categories and such in-between conditions as hybridity.⁶⁹ Plus, the “post” prefix, which for some postcolonial scholars denotes “that time of post-independence of the former colonial world, even if the struggle for decolonization is not yet complete,” simply does not apply in the settler colonial states of Canada and the United States.⁷⁰ While the concept of hybridity can refer to “a space betwixt and between two zones of purity in a manner that follows biological usage,” it is typically taken in postcolonial iteration to denote transculturation.⁷¹ The Mi’kmaq sociologist Bonita Lawrence has underlined the high stakes of analysis focused on cultural hybridity in a context where Indigenous rights continue to be evaluated on the basis of authenticity. She also notes concern registered by a number of Indigenous scholars around approaches to hybridity that stress a liminal state of what she calls “mixed-bloodedness.” In the face of persistent colonial discourse and policy that sees Indigenous identity diminishing through “racial mixing,” Lawrence argues that “[f]or many mixed-blood Native people, Indigenous empowerment means demanding the right to be not defined solely by their hybridity and instead identifying entirely with their Indigenous nations.”⁷² A rich literature by Indigenous scholars working in a number of different fields, several of who have considered intersections with Christianity (and, in one recent case, the Baha’i Faith too), elaborates flexible formulations of Indigenous identity outside

Northwest Coast,” in Marie Mauzé, ed., *Past is Present: Some Uses of Tradition in Native Societies* (Lanham: University of America, 1997), 97-111.

⁶⁹ For assessments of the value and limitations of postcolonial analysis see Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 102-104; Paul Lai and Lindsay Claire Smith, “Introduction,” *American Quarterly*, “Special Issue: Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies” 62, no.3 (Sept 2010), 426; Jace Weaver, “From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Native Americans and the Post-Colonial,” in Jace Weaver, ed., *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 11-15.

⁷⁰ Weaver, “From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics,” 13. See also the reflections of Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 98.

⁷¹ Renato Rosaldo, cited in Vásquez and Marquardt, *Globalizing the Sacred*, 59; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 118-121.

⁷² Lawrence, “Legislating Identity,” 511.

the colonial category of race.⁷³ Ties to land are central to these various formulations of what it means to be, in Taiaiake Alfred's application of the Mohawk term, Onkwehonwe, or "original people."⁷⁴ This marks another key point of tension with constructionist (and its recent cousin, transnational) analysis: perspectives that privilege routes over roots and diaspora over dwelling are slippery for those seeking, today, to defend and develop place-based Indigenous sovereignty and knowledge.⁷⁵

Yet these positions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The anthropologist James Clifford, for example, has collapsed strict binaries like roots versus routes, probing instead the conditions and possibilities of "dwelling-in-travel" and what he calls "articulated sites of indigeneity."⁷⁶ "In articulation theory," Clifford explains (with a nod to Stuart Hall):

the whole question of authenticity is secondary, and the process of social and cultural persistence is political all the way back. It is assumed that cultural forms will always be made, unmade, and remade. Communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing selectively on remembered pasts. The relevant question is whether, and how, they convince and coerce insiders and outsiders, often in power-charged, unequal situations, to accept the autonomy of a "we."

⁷³ See, for example, Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), Chapter 6; Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Rin, 2011); Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right*; James Treat, ed., *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Allan Warrior, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Weaver, ed., *Native American Religious Identity*. In his recent study of Indigenous identity and nationalism, the literary scholar Scott Richard Lyons includes a brief discussion of prominent Lakota musician and Baha'i (and narrator in this project), Kevin Locke, pointing to Locke's interpretation of Baha'u'llah (as the fulfillment of Lakota holy person White Buffalo Calf Woman's covenant) as an example of the flexibility of Indigenous "constitutive myths." Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 141-142.

⁷⁴ Alfred, *Wasáse*, 19.

⁷⁵ For discussion of these concepts in the context of Indigeneity, and how are they invested differently in North versus Latin America see R. Aída Hernández Castillo, "Indigeneity as a Field of Power: Multiculturalism and Indigenous Identities in Political Struggles," in Wetherell and Mohanty, eds., *Sage Handbook of Identities*, 379-403.

⁷⁶ James Clifford, "Indigenous Articulations," *The Contemporary Pacific* Vol.13 No.2 (Fall 2001), 470, 472. See also James Clifford, "Varieties of Indigenous Experience: Diasporas, Homelands, Sovereignties," in Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn, eds., *Indigenous Experience Today* (NY: Berg, 2007), 197-224.

“This seems to me,” he adds, “a more realistic way of talking about what has been called cultural ‘invention.’”⁷⁷ As Clifford argues, a shift from “invention” to “articulation” situates scholarship “on more concrete, because more dynamic, historical grounds.”⁷⁸ My goal with this project, to be clear, is in no way to police the parameters of “real Indianness.” Rather, I aim to help undo what the anthropologists Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn have described as the “spurious calculus of authenticity and cultural purity” altogether.⁷⁹

There is a difference between invention and change over time and to hold Indigenous peoples to a false standard of purity is both profoundly disingenuous and ahistorical. Scholars have done important work in analyzing the colonial regulation of Indigenous identity (the impact of legislation like the Indian Act in Canada, for example, and recognition processes in the United States) during the second half of the twentieth century.⁸⁰ But we need to know more about Indigenous people’s own processes of identification in this period, and not just in Indigenous nationalist frameworks. Some contemporary Indigenous nationalists, for example, take issue with pan-Indigenous formulations of Indigeneity, arguing that they homogenize and deterritorialize distinct place-based Indigenous cultures.⁸¹ While this is a valid and important political critique, pan-Indigenous identities are nevertheless in need of historicization. Plus, as this study bears out, interaction across tribal lines and the development of shared Indigenous

⁷⁷ Clifford, “Indigenous Articulations,” 479-480. For another study that thoughtfully applies articulation theory to the study of Indigenous identity see Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, *Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 4, 45, 71, 214, 240, 256.

⁷⁸ Clifford, “Indigenous Articulations,” 480.

⁷⁹ Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn, “Introduction,” in de la Cadena and Starn, eds., *Indigenous Experience Today*, 9.

⁸⁰ See, for example, Garrouette, *Real Indians*; Brian Klopotek, *Recognition Odysseys: Indigeneity, Race, and Federal Tribal Recognition Policy in Three Louisiana Indian Communities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Bonita Lawrence, “Real” Indians and Others: *Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Pamela D. Palmeter, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity* (Saskatoon, SK: Purich, 2011).

⁸¹ See, for example, Bonita Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview,” *Hypatia*, vol. 18 no. 2, “Indigenous Women in the Americas” (Spring 2003), 5; Leanne Simpson, “Oshkimaadiziig, the New People,” in Leanne Simpson, ed., *Lighting the Eight Fire: The Liberation, Resurgence, and Protection of Indigenous Nations* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008), 16.

spiritual practices and community did not necessarily extinguish tribal difference and identity. To signal this, I employ the term “intertribal,” as opposed to “pan-Indigenous,” in this study. I also engage the concept of Indigenous transnationalism as recently articulated by scholars such as the Winnebago anthropologist Renya Ramirez. In a study of contemporary Indigenous community in the Silicon Valley region of California, Ramirez challenges the lingering assumption that “urban Indians” are entirely cut off from traditional territory and reservation life and, by extension, assimilated into settler society or a generic pan-Indigenous culture. She argues suggestively, instead, that they are transnationals who negotiate ongoing tribal ties as well as new expressions of urban Indigenous community and belonging.⁸²

This study is transnational on several scales: it examines the experiences of and connections between Baha’is from different Indigenous nations and across colonial state borders and takes in the global spiritual geography that narrators generated as Baha’is as well. Some participants in this project were raised in tribal contexts and made sense of the Baha’i Faith on this basis. For some who were not, the religion in fact propelled them to connect with their respective tribal territories and communities. Others still operated and identified primarily in intertribal arenas. The broad framing of this project means that I am constrained in my ability to situate each subject in his or her specific tribal context and I have, in effect, bracketed the issue of land throughout most of this study. Indeed, critical as land is to many formulations of Indigeneity, it is not a subject that emerged in depth throughout my interviews. I return to the question of what this means in the context of the global Baha’i vision and current decolonizing projects in my conclusion. In adopting the wide view that it does, this study uniquely illustrates connections across tribal lines and opens up the histories of people less readily recognized, in historical time and historiography, as Indigenous. Narrators not only deepened their personal

⁸² Ramirez, *Native Hubs*.

Indigenous identities by way of Baha’i declaration and practice, they forged new group identifications as well. This included a sense of faith-based affiliation with Indigenous and non-Indigenous Baha’is and, through Baha’i outreach, a sense of global Indigenous identification as well. This study suggests not simply that Indigeneity could stretch to take in new religious affiliation, but instead that both Indigenous *and* Baha’i identities were constructed in transnational contexts of combination.

A Word on Words, and a Roadmap

This study is concerned with identification, but is marked, like all writing, by the limits of language. As Alexandra Harmon has observed of the specific challenge of historicizing “Indianness,” “It is hard to portray an ethnic group as provisional and mutable when the only available vocabulary presupposes the group’s existence and continuity.”⁸³ Adding to this challenge are different terminologies deployed on either side of the forty-ninth parallel. While the terms Indian, American Indian, and Native American are used widely in the United States, Aboriginal (a term that, since the patriation of the Canadian constitution in 1982, legally takes in First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people) and Native are more common, albeit contested, appellations in Canada. Narrators themselves deployed a range of these terms and I maintain their vocabulary when citing them directly. My own use of the term Indigenous is intended to avoid reduction to any single national vocabulary and follows a growing academic practice. The term Indigenous has gained significant traction with the growth of a transnational Indigenous movement (one that sheds expressly colonial language like “Indian,” but connects via a shared experience of colonialism) in recent decades and thus also carries a global valence appropriate to

⁸³ Harmon, “Wanted: More Histories of Indian Identity,” 250.

the Baha'i context.⁸⁴ Where possible and relevant, I deploy and discuss more specific tribal designations as well.

Terminological challenges likewise dog the designation of non-Indigenous people in the settler colonial states of Canada and the United States. In order to stress this ongoing colonial context and acknowledge that not all non-Indigenous people are "White" (especially in the Baha'i community), I employ the terms settler and non-Indigenous alike in this study. When speaking specifically about Canadians and Americans of European heritage, I do use the term "White." While this word problematically flattens difference, it also represents what the literary scholar Pauline Wakeman has described as a "tactical homogenization of that which often presents itself as a hegemonic norm."⁸⁵ In cases where I can be more specific (when speaking of Iranian Baha'is, for example), I am. My spelling of Baha'i terms follows current academic convention: in the interest of accessibility, diacritical marks are omitted (thus, for example, Baha'i not Bahá'i).⁸⁶ I similarly observe current practice regarding the spelling of Indigenous terms, in this case maintaining diacritical marks. I identify narrators as such the first time that I introduce them in the study (narrator Jacob Bighorn, for example); after this, I refer to them simply by name (Jacob Bighorn). I do the same with the scholars who I discuss and distinguish

⁸⁴ As Mary Louise Pratt explains, Indigenous is a "relational and retrospective" term that invokes "prior-ity in time and place"; "social groups become indigenous or aboriginal or native by virtue of the recognition that someone else arrived in a place and found them or their ancestors 'already' there." Pratt, "Afterword," in de la Cadena and Starn, *Indigenous Experience Today*, 398. For recent history of the term see Ronald Niezen, "The Global Indigenous Movement," in Garrick A. Bailey, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians*, Volume 2, *Indians in Contemporary Society* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 2008), 438-445. My capitalization of "Indigenous" signals that I am speaking of a human group and distinguishes the term from its usage in relation to flora and fauna "indigenous" to a particular place.

⁸⁵ Pauline Wakeham, *Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 38. In capitalizing White, I refer, to borrow the historian Paige Raibmon's words, "not so much to a static racial group as to members of an immigrant, colonizing society." Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 212 (fn 17).

⁸⁶ In the case of references and direct quotes, I reproduce names and terms as they appear in the original source. On Baha'i transcription and transliteration see Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 29-31; Lee, *The Baha'i Faith in Africa*, ix-x.

them from narrators by specifying their academic discipline (the literary scholar Pauline Wakeham, for example).

This study proceeds thematically and is organized into a series of chapter pairings. The first of these establishes several intersecting contexts that inform the study at large. In Chapter 2 I detail, through the method and metaphor of genealogy, the emergence of Indigenous-Baha'i interactions and "Indianness" in North America. I illustrate how the Baha'i Faith, including the prophecy that inspired outreach to Indigenous peoples, was articulated and disseminated in contexts thick with power, contradiction, and contingency. Paying particular attention to colonial policy, I further track formulations of "Indianness" through the twentieth century. In setting down sharp and shifting parameters of "Indianness," colonial policy contributed to common experiences and shared identification among diverse Indigenous peoples; narrators, in turn, inherited these historically specific identities. I ground these genealogies in Chapter 3 by way of a series of selective background portraits that demonstrate the diverse experiences of "Indianness" that narrators brought to their interactions with the Baha'i Faith. There was, this chapter illustrates, no single or set pathway to becoming Indigenous and Baha'i. The life story interviews that I analyze in this study are, further, the product of intersubjective interactions between narrators and me, a process I also reflect on in this chapter through meditation on my oral historical method.

I turn, next, to "declaration stories" and the question of just how and why Indigenous people became Baha'is. Through close analysis of a handful of oral histories, Chapters 4 and 5 illuminate how narrators told composed stories of "rational" and "spiritual" declaration, respectively. Chapter 4 illustrates how four female narrators found the Baha'i Faith a "rational religion" that reconciled their experiences of racism and concerns about belonging, and offered

concrete “techniques for living” as well.⁸⁷ The declaration stories that these women shared were narratives of empowerment that explicitly express their agency and the strengthened sense of Indigenous self that each cultivated by way of becoming Baha’i. Chapter 5 further illuminates articulations of Indigenous Baha’i identity, through what I am calling spiritual declaration stories. All declaration, of course, is in its own way spiritual and there is, in fact, overlap between even the specific stories I consider in these two chapters, as well as others that I do not examine in such close detail. In taking a tight view on these particular stories, and separating out the “rational” and the “spiritual,” I aim to highlight distinctions and convey the rich composure that characterized these stories. These distinctions, though, are not total and, approached together, these chapters underscore how conversion cannot be reduced to intellectual, utilitarian, or spiritual explanations alone. They also reveal a pattern of extending family histories of Indigenous Christian leadership by way of becoming Baha’i. Further, a simultaneous rejection and embrace of Christianity marked many declarations. A number of narrators described being turned off by violence and hypocrisy that they and their relatives had experienced at the hand of Christian churches and were attracted by Baha’i conduct and principles of belonging. At the same time, in coming to accept the principle of progressive revelation, which stresses the relative and evolutionary nature of religious truth, a number also described becoming “more” or “truly” Christian through becoming Baha’i. As I illustrate in Chapter 5, some also interpreted the Baha’i Faith as the fulfillment of teachings from various Indigenous traditions. The three subjects of this chapter, specifically, were inspired to declare as Baha’is by way of spiritual inspirations including dream, vision, and prophecy, idioms and experiences they expressly characterized as Indigenous.

⁸⁷ “Techniques for living” is philosopher Jacob Needleman’s term, applied by Lewis R. Rambo in *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 84.

Turning from the terrain of declaration to practice, the next pair of chapters examines efforts to live the vision of unity in diversity. More specifically, these chapters illuminate how narrators came into both Indigenous and Baha'i communities, and forged explicitly intersectional identifications as well, by way of their religious practice. In Chapter 6, I illustrate how a number of narrators deepened their own sense of Indigenous identification and cultivated connections with Indigenous communities outside the Baha'i Faith through the practice of what they called "culture." Narrators, here, engaged a specific revivalist idiom of Indigenous culture that refers to practices such as drumming, singing, and dancing. They were encouraged, through their Baha'i observance, to take up such practices, yet, as I elaborate in the second half of this chapter, Baha'i proscriptions against ritual and superstition, coupled with a normative baseline of non-Indigenous Baha'i practice, meant that the place of Indigenous cultural practices within the Baha'i community was also an active subject of contemplation and sometimes contestation. Chapter 7 extends discussion of Baha'i community dynamics. It illustrates how narrators forged striking relationships of mutual respect with non-Indigenous Baha'is, while they also confronted tensions of intercultural communication and understanding. This study focuses, in a way, on the exceptions in the sense that it considers the histories of Indigenous people who became active Baha'is and continue to maintain connection with the religion. (Likewise, this project does not delve into the perspectives of Indigenous people who did not join the religion at all.) In this chapter, though, I also note a broader pattern of Indigenous retreat from Baha'i activity, something Baha'is themselves often attribute to challenges of what they call "consolidation" (follow up and "deepening" after the initial act of declaration), but which also had to do with uneven power relations within the Baha'i community. I also track the construction of a specifically Indigenous Baha'i community, itself infused by shared slights from non-Indigenous

Baha'is, by intertribal cultural exchange and connection, and by Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy. Though there have been and remain several pockets of cultural and geographic concentration among Indigenous Baha'is in North America (among the Tlingit and Tagish in the Yukon, for example, and the Diné in the Southwest), this community was and is transnational.

The final pair of chapters in this study further engages this transnational framework. Chapter 7 examines "teaching" and "pioneering" that Indigenous Baha'is carried out among other Indigenous peoples, in North America and globally. Through this activity, which narrators often made great sacrifices and travelled great distances in order to participate in, Indigenous Baha'is deepened their religious identities and cultivated a sense of global Indigenous identification as well. Baha'i outreach work often took the subtle form of what Baha'is call "service" and this chapter also elaborates on a hidden history of Indigenous Baha'i activism woven throughout this study at large. Through their strong commitments to peace and justice, Indigenous Baha'is (and a number of non-Indigenous adherents as well) made and continue to make significant contributions in such fields as Indigenous cultural revitalization, community development, education, health, law, and reconciliation. Baha'is are forbidden from proselytizing and take this prohibition seriously; they are also instructed to refrain from partisan politics and see work as a form of worship. As a result, it was not uncommon for Baha'is to labour for years in support of principles such as cultural diversity and intercultural learning without explicitly labeling their efforts as Baha'i, or even, for that matter, mentioning their own religious affiliation. Baha'is worked for and continue to seek change in a rather different register than Indigenous nationalists, in the past and today. Indeed, as I posit in the conclusion to this study, the explicitly global orientation and ambition of the religion also prompts probing questions concerning the place of place (and, with this, land) in formulations of Indigeneity.

Inside/Out, Method/Me

This project is a product of oral history. This methodology (and theory too), which I elaborate on in greater detail in Chapter 3, is suited to the study of Indigenous Baha’i history in several different ways.⁸⁸ On one basic but important level, interviews with Indigenous Baha’is assist in the reconstruction of a history of religious encounter not readily accessible in documentary records. The decentralized nature of the Baha’i Faith at the local level, including an absence of paid “teaching” and administrative personnel, has made for irregular record-keeping practices. There are national Baha’i archives in both the United States and Canada, the former well organized and formally staffed and the latter not. I was granted access to the former but not the latter (staff at the Canadian Baha’i National Centre, though, did share some records via correspondence). Records like letters, committee reports, and Baha’i periodicals have proved tremendously helpful to my analysis of Baha’i outreach to Indigenous people, which I outline, together with the intersecting genealogy of “Indianness,” in the next chapter. But these records reveal little of the historical experiences of Indigenous Baha’is themselves. Herein lies the strength of oral history. Like other forms of historical research, oral history does not tap pure “lived experience.”⁸⁹ Here, it offers rich insight into active, and ongoing, processes of Indigenous and Baha’i identification, stories shaped through specific interaction between interviewees and me.⁹⁰

This project is ineluctably informed by my own social and spiritual location. There is a slippery line between reflexivity and self-indulgence that I do not seek to cross here, but it is

⁸⁸ On oral history as method and theory see Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁸⁹ See, again, Scott, “The Evidence of Experience”; Sangster, “Invoking Experience as Evidence.” See also Sangster’s defense of historical materiality in oral history in “Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History,” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 87-100.

⁹⁰ On the unique value and insight of the interactive genre of oral history see Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 63-74. I discuss these issues in further depth in Chapter 3.

critical I acknowledge that I am neither Indigenous nor Baha'i.⁹¹ I am a White woman of British heritage, born, raised, and still residing in Coast Salish territories on the west coast of what is now Canada, with settler roots stretching back to that charged colonial vessel, the Mayflower. I am a spiritual person, but do not belong to any organized religion.⁹² In the context of this study, then, I am a “dual outsider.”

The question of what it means to do research from the inside and out has long animated the academic enterprise. In our current age of the “post,” with its heightened attunement to subjectivity and power, issues of researcher positioning, voice, and representation are especially charged. These issues, though, are variously charged across the disciplines. “Insider”/“outsider” dynamics are heavily freighted, for example, in both Indigenous and religious studies, but in rather different ways. In the face of centuries of colonial research, many Indigenous studies scholars now model and advocate collaborative research – and its correlate, insider investigation – as the ethical standard.⁹³ In religious studies, conversely, outsider analysis is still routinely

⁹¹ Declaring and writing from within one's own self-location is a common feature of Indigenous research methodologies and I do not mean to reiterate critiques of this approach as indulgent; rather, I make this statement as a settler scholar who seeks not to reinscribe colonial power by folding analysis too tightly back on herself. On Indigenous methodologies and critiques as indulgent see Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* Kobo Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 33-34 (Chapter 4). On the slippery line between reflexivity and self-indulgence see Devon A. Mihesuah, “Introduction,” in Devon A. Mihesuah, ed., *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing About American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 9; Katrina Srigley and Stacey Zembrzycki, “Remembering Family, Analyzing Home: Oral History and the Family,” *Oral History Forum* (Special Issue) 29 (2009), 8.

⁹² Though this statement may sound canned and cliché, there is in fact a long history in the coastal region I call home of “spiritual, but not religious” inclination. For contemporary reflection on this subject see Douglas Todd, ed. *Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia: Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: Ronsdale, 2008).

⁹³ See, for example, Jo-ann Archibald (Q'um Q'um Xiiem), *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008); Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*; Mihesuah and Wilson, eds., *Indigenizing the Academy*; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*. For self-reflexive observations on the complexity of insider Indigenous research see also Robert A. Innes, “Wait a Second. Who Are You Anyways?: The Insider/Outsider Debate and American Indian Studies,” *American Indian Quarterly*, “Special Issue: Working from Home in American Indian Studies” 33 no.4 (Fall 2009): 440-61; Lianne Leddy, “Interviewing Nokomis and Other Reflections: The Promise of Community Collaboration,” *Oral History Forum*, “Special Issue: Oral History and Environmental History” 30 (2010): 1-18. For a recent study by a non-Indigenous scholar that productively stretches the contours of intercultural collaboration see Sophie McCall, *First Person Plural: Aboriginal Storytelling and the Ethics of Collaborative Authorship* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

vested with authority over its “confessional” counterpart.⁹⁴ The field of Baha’i studies, further, is populated overwhelmingly by adherents and has seen animated exchange among some Baha’is, who are required by religious dictate to submit their work for “pre-publication review,” and former members of the religion (some who left by choice, others by excommunication), disillusioned by what they deem censorship, surveillance, and fundamentalism in the faith.⁹⁵

Located at the intersection of these fields, and the practice of oral history, this project raises probing questions about just what it means to do such work in a good way. I am acutely attuned to the history of abuses committed in the name of research in Indigenous communities and have done my utmost to be respectful and responsive through all stages of the research process.⁹⁶ It is my great hope that this work will contribute to productive dialogue and prove a relevant and respectful contribution that resonates with narrators. But, it is essential to recognize, this is not a collaborative project. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, this study grows out previous research and I was encouraged to pursue this project based on Baha’i reactions to that earlier work. Although I remain unsure about the exact motivations that inspired each participant to take part in this project, narrators clearly had their own reasons for doing so (and not everyone who I approached agreed to be interviewed, though the majority did). As the Baha’i sociologist Michael McMullen has observed, Baha’is in general “recognize their own relative obscurity”;

⁹⁴ See, for example, Russell T. McCutcheon, ed., *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London: Cassell, 1999); Russell T. McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001). For a defense of “outsider” research in specific relation to Indigenous religion see Sam Gill, “The Academic Study of Religion,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (JAAR) 62, no.4 (1994): 965-975. See also the following responses: Christopher Jocks, “American Indian Religious Traditions and the Academic Study of Religion: A Response to Sam Gill” and Sam Gill, “Rejoinder to Christopher Jocks,” *JAAR* 65, no.1 (1997): 169-176, 177-181; Lee Irwin, “Response: American Indian Religious Traditions and the Academic Study of Religion,” *JAAR* 66, no.4 (1998): 887-892.

⁹⁵ For useful reviews of these tensions and literature see Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America*, 143-148, 162-166, 179-180. Margit Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, Chapter 2, esp. 68-70. For Baha’i writings on the subject of pre-publication review see Helen Bassett Hornby, compiler, *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá’í Reference File* (New Delhi, India: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 2010 [1983]), 100-104. Theses are not subject to this review process. As a non-Baha’i, I do not intend to submit any future publications that I may pursue on the basis of this research for Baha’i publication review.

⁹⁶ On the history of colonial research see Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Chapters 1-5.

similar to what McMullen encountered in the context of his research with the Atlanta Baha'i community, participants seemed pleased "to be 'studied' and 'researched' by someone who was not automatically going to label them as a 'cult' or 'sect of Islam.'"⁹⁷ A number of Indigenous Baha'is told me that they feel I am precisely the right person to be undertaking this project, for, as an "outsider," I can be "objective" and "non-biased." Demonstrating awareness of the currency of "outsider" analysis, some also explained that they are glad I have taken up this project as they feel my work will attract a wider readership and be taken more seriously than would any contribution from a Baha'i. Narrators, further, were keen to help document and open up the subject of Indigenous Baha'i history, specifically. And as I elaborate, again, in Chapter 3, several expressed to me explicitly their belief that I am particularly well poised (as a non-Baha'i, especially, they implied) to probe dynamics such as intercultural tensions within the Baha'i community, topics that are tough to broach from the inside.

With issues of research from the inside and out come questions, in this case, relating to spiritual truth, agency, and causality. A growing Indigenous Studies literature calls for Indigenous ways of knowing and being to be taken as legitimate knowledge systems and insists that their "spiritual and sacred elements" not be sanitized.⁹⁸ This directly challenges the contours of Western historicity, which, as the postcolonial historian Dipesh Chakrabarty has argued, cannot contain the spirituality of subaltern pasts. Chakrabarty himself endorses efforts to articulate subaltern (that is, spiritual) histories, but also draws attention to the high stakes involved. There are, for example, benefits, he observes, to the production of "minority histories"

⁹⁷ McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, xii.

⁹⁸ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 104. For other calls and efforts to center Indigenous knowledge see, for example, Alfred, *Wasáse*; Archibald (Q'um Q'um Xiim), *Indigenous Storywork*; Rauna Kuokkanen, *Reshaping the University: Responsibility, Indigenous Epistemes, and the Logic of the Gift* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Mihesuah and Cavender Wilson, *Indigenizing the Academy*; Simpson, *Dancing on our Turtle's Back*; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

that contribute to projects of democracy and social justice.⁹⁹ In an article in which he explores competing Indigenous and settler interpretations of a 1906 meeting between a Coast Salish delegation and King Edward in London, the historian Keith Carlson likewise reflects on the risks of his approach as he describes being “agonized over presenting [his] thesis [that spiritual communication informed Salish interpretations of the London encounter] for fear that it would be incorrectly regarded as evidence of the unreliable nature of Native oral tradition, and used to discredit or undermine legitimate Aboriginal claims.”¹⁰⁰

I fully support the project of articulating and applying Indigenous knowledge frameworks within the academic world and the pursuit of related queries concerning the agency of nonhuman beings and forces.¹⁰¹ I have tried, in what follows, to open and leave space for spiritual reality, but do not actually write from within this perspective, especially as a non-Baha’i. Indeed, this project presents the additional problematic of what it means to take Indigenous worldviews seriously when the focus of inquiry falls on conversion to another faith. Just where does the “confessional” line lie? Or should this language be banished altogether? Though I like the idea of it being otherwise, I recognize that I have, in the end, rather defaulted to what Chakrabarty describes as the “anthropologizing” impulse of belief.¹⁰² This forcefully hit home for me at an Indigenous Baha’i gathering at which I was invited to share some reflections on my research. During the Q & A that followed, one of the Indigenous Baha’is present explained that he found my findings useful, but considered them very linear (about as direct a characterization of

⁹⁹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), esp. Chapter 4 (“Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts”).

¹⁰⁰ Keith Carlson, “Rethinking Dialogue and History: The King’s Promise and the 1906 Aboriginal Delegation to London,” *Native Studies Review* 16, no.2 (2005), 25.

¹⁰¹ For a study that takes up the issue of nonhuman sentience see Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005). For a review that challenges, or at least reveals profound discomfort, with this subject of sentience see Cole Harris, “Do Glaciers Really Listen? A Review Essay,” *BC Studies* no.148 (Winter 2005/06), 103-106.

¹⁰² Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 105.

Western method and interpretation as they come), a perspective he contrasted from his own circular worldview. He went on to ask me if I believe in God. My answer was an honest, if perhaps unsatisfying to those present, “I don’t know.” I am very comfortable with concepts of spiritual mystery and interconnection, but, as I was reminded in this moment, still carry reservations around the language of God. Here, then, was the limit of my approach laid bare. Though I strive not to reduce spiritual experiences such as communication with ancestors or the power of prayer, prophecy, and dream strictly to “social facts,” without actually placing God at the center of my analysis, I cannot produce a history of Indigenous Baha’i conversion and practice that fully illuminates this process as my participants themselves understand it.¹⁰³ (After all, as another person at this same gathering put it, the reason she became a Baha’i is not because of Indigenous interpretation or identity (though these, she noted, were indeed a factor), but because Baha’u’llah is the new Manifestation of God). Which brings me back to the anthropologizing realm (i.e. she became a Baha’i because she believes Baha’u’llah is the new Manifestation of God), but not necessarily recourse to belief. As the religious studies scholar Robert Orsi has reflected on this concept, with vocabulary specific to the Catholic context of his own research: “Belief has always struck me as the wrong question, especially when it is offered as a diagnostic for determining the realness of the gods. The saints, gods, demons, ancestors, and so on are real in experience and practice, in relationships between heaven and earth, in the

¹⁰³ The religious studies scholar Robert Orsi, citing Chakrabarty, challenges the resilient academic assumption that “the human is ontologically singular, that gods and spirits are in the end ‘social facts,’ that the social somehow exists prior to them.” *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 150. The historian Coll Thrush and the anthropologist Colleen Boyd also invoke Orsi in a discussion in which they challenge scholars not to “punt” on the issue of nonhuman agency and their own spiritual locations. “Introduction: Bringing Ghosts to Ground,” in Colleen Boyd and Coll Thrush, eds., *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), xxx-xxxiii.

circumstances of people's lives and histories, and in the stories people tell about them."¹⁰⁴ It is this tack, with its attention to historical context, practice, and story, which I take in this study.

What follows, then, is *a*, not *the*, history of becoming Indigenous and Baha'i, an interpretation that I offer in a spirit of respect and dialogue. This is a history of the unexpected that aims to interrupt the very idea of expectation itself. It is a history, put bluntly, of things that do not, according to colonial assumption, belong together, but which, approached in historical combination, are in fact found to fit, not as static pieces, but as flexible spaces of interaction, and identification. This is a process that was, again, eloquently invoked at Jacob Bighorn's funeral. At the feast and giveaway ceremony that followed Bighorn's burial, I sat in quiet conversation with a Hesquiaht man from the west coast of Vancouver Island, himself a Baha'i. Taking in the scene at Eagles Hall, he turned to me and shared: "It's like we say in my language, heshook-ish tsawalk: all is one."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ On the Nuuchah-nulth concept of heshook-ish tsawalk, which speaks to the "unity of existence," human and not, see Umeeek (E. Richard Atleo), *Tsawalk: A Nuuchah-nulth Worldview* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 117.

Chapter 2: Genealogies

Although planning complications prevented a better-timed opening, by the summer of 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition was ready to welcome the world and mark the four hundredth anniversary of its namesake's "discovery." Located on nearly seven hundred acres skirting Lake Michigan, the White City (an architectural reference with apt racialized resonance) paid homage to Old World influence, while celebrating progress and the upstart spirit of the New.¹ Millions of pilgrims flocked to this sacred space where industry, art, and entertainment, and the politics that underlined them all, collided.² East and West, and the category of religion itself, were under construction in Chicago that year.³ At the World's Parliament of Religions, held in September in conjunction with the fair, over sixty religious leaders from around the world came together at what the religious studies scholars Catherine Albanese and Stephen Stein have described as an "ecumenical convocation before there was an ecumenical movement."⁴ Competing visions of Indianness were also on display at and around the fair. In an address to the American Historical Association timed to coincide with the exposition, the historian Frederick Jackson Turner expounded upon the closing of the American frontier and the victory of civilization over savagery.⁵ Drawing on evolutionary discourse of the "vanishing Indian," Canadian and American authorities, for their part, mounted live exhibits of Indigenous children

¹ Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 34-35; Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 38-71.

² The religious studies scholar Richard Hughes Seager, following Mircea Eliade, describes the exposition as a "sacred space" in *The World's Parliament of Religions: The East/West Encounter, Chicago, 1893*, Religion in North America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 11.

³ Following the historian Joy Dixon, my use of the terms East and West is "always intended to signal their ambivalent and ambiguous status – as imaginary entities that nevertheless had very real effects." Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 11.

⁴ Catherine L. Albanese and Stephen J. Stein, "Foreword," in Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions*, ix.

⁵ R. David Edmunds, "Native Americans, New Voices: American Indian History, 1895-1995," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (1995): 717. For a thoughtful rehabilitation of Turner see Kerwin Lee Klein, "Reclaiming the 'F' Word, or Being and Becoming Postwestern," *Pacific Historical Review* 65, no. 2 (1996): 183-186.

in replica residential and boarding schools. This, these performances proclaimed, was progress in process. Elsewhere on the fair grounds, the influence of anthropology, with its newfound scientific gloss, and tourism, with its commercialized imperial gaze, produced competing representations of Indigenous people in “normal” domestic scenes. Here was the “before” upon which so many colonial binaries turned, the savage noble, traditional, and authentic.⁶

This may seem an odd, or at least somewhat obtuse, opening onto Indigenous Baha’i history. After all, the first recorded Indigenous enrollment in the religion did not occur until the 1930s and narrators in this study, specifically, all became Baha’is in the second half of the twentieth century.⁷ Yet Chicago in 1893 is an apposite entrée to the oral histories that follow in coming chapters in more ways than one: it was here, at the World’s Parliament of Religions, that a lecture delivered on behalf of Reverend Henry Harris Jessup, an American Presbyterian missionary stationed in Syria, made the first recorded mention of the Baha’i Faith in North America.⁸ Further, the performances of progress and authenticity on offer at the fair explicitly articulated colonial formulations of Indianness and allied assimilation efforts at the turn of the century. Jumping off from this point of intersection, this chapter tracks shifting formulations of Indigenous identity and the emergence of Indigenous-Baha’i interactions in North America by way of genealogy. This is, on one level, an apt, quite literal, metaphor: international Baha’i leadership resided within a single family, complete with sibling rivalry, for three generations. And the religion often spread in Indigenous North America by way of kinship networks. But

⁶ Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 34-49.

⁷ Research as to who was the first Indigenous Baha’i in North America is ongoing. While the historian Robert Stockman has speculated that a woman named Pocahantas Pope who became a Baha’i in Washington, DC in the early twentieth century may have had Indigenous heritage, Oneida woman Marion Steffes, who joined the religion in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in the 1930s, is generally credited with this status. Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá’í Faith in America, Volume 2, Early Expansion, 1900 - 1912* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1995), 225; “Marian Steffes, 1900-1978,” *The Bahá’í World, Volume 17, 1976-1979* (Haifa: Bahá’í World Centre, 1981), 458-459.

⁸ Christopher Buck, *Religious Myths and Visions of America: How Minority Faiths Redefined America's World Role* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 193-194, 263 (fn 67 and 68); Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá’í Faith in America, Volume 1, Origins, 1892-1900* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1985), 32-33.

genealogy, in this case, is also effective method. Drawing on the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, the historian Paige Raibmon has recently advocated and applied this approach in a penetrating study of “Indian land policy and settler practice” in British Columbia.

Genealogy, she explains, “is not the same thing as literally tracing family trees, but the metaphor is useful, because we need to map ‘family connections’ not only between people but among an array of past practices, policies, and even accidents.” Eschewing teleology, analysis falls on “constitutive ingredients,” not “final product[s].”⁹ Approached from this perspective, the Chicago World’s Fair becomes effective entry, not origin, point and the Baha’i religion and Indigenous identity alike are illuminated in specific, and sometimes intersecting, historical context.

As I illustrate in the first half of this chapter, the Baha’i Faith did not arrive in Chicago preformed and prefigured (and there were, in fact, no Baha’is in the city until five months after Jessup’s address was delivered at the Parliament of Religions). Nor could Abdu’l-Baha, who was based in Chicago during a several month visit to North America in 1912, have known or fully understood the contexts into which Baha’is would subsequently carry the statement, mentioned in the introduction to this study, that he made about the Indigenous peoples of the Americas in 1916. Issues of translation, literal and symbolic, abounded as adherents carried this message into “Indian Country.” And, as I elaborate in the second half of this chapter, just who was an “Indian” proved a matter of substantial and shifting contestation over the course of the twentieth century. “Indianness” was forged out of hundreds of specific, varied Indigenous identities through the fire of colonialism’s common experience. I pay particular attention to the

⁹ Paige Raibmon, “Unmaking Native Space: A Genealogy of Indian Policy, Settler Practice, and the Microtechniques of Dispossession,” in Alexandra Harmon, ed. *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest in association with University of Washington Press, 2008), 58-59. See also Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 76-100.

place of colonial policy in this process, tracing the sharp and shifting parameters of “Indianness” it set out, and its impact on the production of a sense of shared identification among Indigenous people. As I noted earlier, such identification did not necessarily mark a flattening of tribal difference, though it did sometimes designate new combinations. The policy context that I detail here helped produce the historically-specific Indigenous identities that narrators in this study subsequently inherited. The resemblance between the two family histories tracked in this chapter is nascent and will emerge further in coming chapters. Indeed, the many ways of being Indigenous and Baha’i that this study illuminates germinate from the genealogies plotted here.

Context for a Prophecy: A Baha’i Genealogy

The spirit of ecumenism with which the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions has been associated tracks closely with the Baha’i vision of peace and the “oneness of religion.” As such, it is not surprising that Baha’is regularly trace their religion’s North American root to this gathering, even though there were two Baha’is of Syrian Christian heritage, Ibrahim Kheiralla and Anton Haddad, in the United States by the end of 1892.¹⁰ The Parliament both signaled and gave rise to growing Western interest in “alternative” religion.¹¹ Not surprisingly, though, liberal Protestants dominated numerically and politically. They authorized the Parliament’s inclusions and exclusions (Hinduism and Buddhism were in, for example, but the Mormon church and

¹⁰ Stockman, *The Bahá’i Faith in America, Volume 1, Origins*, 26. In his study of the early Canadian Baha’i community, the sociologist Will van den Hoonaard also details how several people who attended the World’s Parliament of Religions subsequently became Baha’is. Will C. van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá’i Community of Canada, 1898-1948* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 1-2, 16.

¹¹ In contrast to contemporary movements like Theosophy, however, which looked to an imagined “mystic East” for spiritual direction, the Baha’i Faith emanated from Iran and expanded from a base in what is now Israel. On the construction of alternative, exotic, and mystic Eastern religion see, for example, Dixon, *Divine Feminine*; Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and “The Mystic East”* (London: Routledge, 1999); Stephen R. Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

Indigenous religions were not) and bolstered a core narrative of civilization, triumph, and progress.¹²

This perspective was clearly articulated in the address, “The Religious Mission of the English-Speaking Nations,” that Reverend George A. Ford, another missionary stationed in Syria, delivered on behalf of Reverend Henry Harris Jessup. In a logic reminiscent of reformers who advocated for the establishment of Indian boarding and residential schools in North America in the same period, the paper asserted the superiority and divine destiny of the “English-speaking race,” while acknowledging that “all men are made in God’s image” and deserving of salvation.¹³ Jessup’s address then turned to the context of his own mission field. “In the palace of Behjeh,” he explained:

of Delight, just outside the fortress of Acre, on the Syrian coast, there died a few months since a famous Persian sage, the Babi saint, named Behâ Allah – the ‘Glory of God’ – the head of that vast reform party of Persian Moslems, who accept the New Testament as the Word of God and Christ as the delivered of men, who regard all nations as one, and all men as brothers.

This man, Jessup continued, “gave utterances to sentiments so noble, so Christ-like,” that the missionary closed his address with words from the “Persian sage” himself. Citing British orientalist scholar Edward Granville Browne, who had recently visited Baha’u’llah in Bahji, Jessup concluded:

“That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease and differences of race be annulled; what harm is there in this? Yet so it shall be. These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come. Do you not in Europe need this also? Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.”¹⁴

¹² Richard Hughes Seager, “General Introduction,” in Richard Hughes Seager, ed., *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism: Voices from the World’s Parliament of Religions, 1893* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1993), 6-7.

¹³ Henry Harris Jessup, “The Religious Mission of the English-Speaking Nations,” in Seager, ed., *The Dawn of Religious Pluralism*, 38, 42.

¹⁴ Jessup, “The Religious Mission of the English-Speaking Nations,” 42. As Christopher Buck notes, this statement comes originally from Browne’s introduction to his 1891 translation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s *A Traveler’s Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb*; Buck further notes, quoting the historian Robert Stockman, that

That these words were recorded by Browne and transmitted by way of an American Presbyterian missionary working in Syria suggests the accelerating global flow of religious people, ideas, and power in this period.

The Baha'i Faith began not in Bahji, but in Iran, the place adherents call "the Cradle of the Faith." It emerged in a context of mid-nineteenth-century Muslim millenarianism and was rooted in a movement initiated by the merchant Sayyid Ali Muhammad. This man sparked strong reaction from Shi'i authorities when he proclaimed himself, in 1844, "the Bab," or gate, to the "Hidden Imam."¹⁵ Opposition further mounted, four years later, when the Bab claimed to be the "Mahdi," the reappearance of the Hidden Imam and a figure considered in popular Shi'i belief to be "the rightful ruler of the faithful and the inaugurator of the final days prior to the Resurrection."¹⁶ The Bab also referred in his writings to the coming of "a further messianic figure" and in 1863, thirteen years after the Bab's execution, one of his followers, the merchant Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri, or Baha'u'llah (the "Glory of God"), declared himself "He Whom God Shall Make Manifest" (*man yuzhiruhu'llah*).¹⁷ He made this proclamation in a garden outside Baghdad, where he had been exiled in 1853 after four months of incarceration in Tehran. Although Baha'i sources typically paint a portrait of smooth succession from the Bab to Baha'u'llah, then down through three generations of the latter's family, contested claims to leadership arose at this early stage and after the deaths of Baha'u'llah, his son and heir, Abdu'l-Baha (the "Servant of Baha"), and his great-grandson and Abdu'l-Baha's successor, Shoghi

"Jessup did not reproduce the quotation exactly as Browne gave it." Buck, *Religious Myths and Visions of America*, 263.

¹⁵ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Second Edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 473.

¹⁶ Peter Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4, 10, 11 (quote appears on 11).

¹⁷ Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith*, 13, 14, 23.

Effendi, as well.¹⁸ Strict shunning methods were elaborated to isolate and excommunicate those deemed “Covenant-breakers” and, in the language of official Baha’i history, prevent schism.¹⁹ For Baha’u’llah, exile to Iraq marked the beginning of a series of forced migrations through the Middle East that culminated in the Mediterranean town of Akka (then in Syria, now in Israel). A close group of his loyal family and followers – known since 1866, when Baha’u’llah publicly proclaimed his station in Edrine, as Baha’is, or “the people of Baha” – were deported with him.²⁰ After several years of confinement in the fortified port city, an elderly Baha’u’llah moved slightly north to the mansion of Bahji mentioned in Jessup’s address, where he remained until his death in 1892.²¹

Baha’u’llah revived and refined the Bab’s teachings. He wrote prolifically, in Persian and in Arabic. The focus and flavor of his writings vary from the mystical to the mundane and from the local to the global. In the *Kitab-i-Iqan* (Book of Certitude), for example, Baha’u’llah drew on the Qur’an to elaborate and defend the Bab’s claims and his own station as the new “Manifestation of God” to a Muslim audience.²² As the sociologist Margit Warburg has explained, in declaring himself “He Whom God Shall Make Manifest,” “Baha’u’llah abrogated the Bab’s *shari’a* [religious law] and with the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* [the Baha’i “Book of Laws,” also

¹⁸ On these tensions see, for example, Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 473; Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha’i Faith*, 14, 16-17, 23-26, 36, 43-44, 55-57, 66-69.

¹⁹ Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha’i Faith*, 44, 55, 61, 67-68, 173. Margit Warburg notes that although there have been relatively few Baha’is excommunicated over the course of Baha’i history, the discourse of “Covenant-breaking” has nevertheless served a significant boundary maintenance function. Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 182. See also Margit Warburg and David Piff, “Enemies of the Faith: Rumors and Anecdotes as Self-Definition and Social Control in the Baha’i Religion,” in Eileen Barker and Margit Warburg, eds., *New Religions and New Religiosity* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1998), 66-82.

²⁰ The Azalis, the followers of Baha’u’llah’s half-brother, Mirza Yahya Nuri, or Subh-i-Aal (“Morn of Eternity”), who had jockeyed for Babi leadership from the family’s time in Baghdad in the 1850s, rejected this claim and were deported to Cyprus. Margit Warburg, *Baha’i* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2003), 13.

²¹ For useful reviews of early Babi and Baha’i history see Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha’i Religions: From Messianic Shi’ism to a World Religion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 5-71; Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha’i Faith*, 3-54; Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 119-194.

²² Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 168-169.

described as “the Most Holy Book”] he gave his adherents a new one.”²³ Baha’u’llah’s religious law overturned a number of the Bab’s “strict ordinances,” including jihad (holy war), while maintaining a number of his innovations such as a calendar composed of nineteen months of nineteen days. The *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, which was not released in full English translation until 1992, also maintained elements informed by the broader Islamic context, including prescriptions for daily prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage.²⁴ Baha’u’llah’s numerous deportations, combined with improvements in transportation and communication through the second half of the nineteenth century, exposed him to cosmopolitan ideas and influences that likewise informed his thinking.²⁵ He engaged modern questions ranging from nationalism to women’s rights and negotiated a religious vision grounded in the fundamental principle of global unity.²⁶ “The earth,” Baha’u’llah claimed, “is but one country, and mankind its citizens.”²⁷ As the historian Juan R.I. Cole has observed, Baha’u’llah’s own liminality may have informed his understanding of “the malleability of identity and underlying human unities”: “Born an Iranian, he became an Ottoman subject. Born a speaker of the Mazandarani dialect, he learned literary Persian and then spent much of his life in Arabic-speaking environments, becoming fluent in Arabic. He probably also knew Ottoman well. Born a Shi’ite Muslim, he became a Babi and then created a new religion.”²⁸ Baha’u’llah’s vision can likewise be located in a Muslim family tree with roots reaching back to the Mughal emperor, Akbar, who developed a striking ecumenism over the

²³ Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 178.

²⁴ Denis MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha’ism* (London: British Academic Press, 1994), 178. For a study that usefully positions Baha’i ideas and practices in the broader Islamic and Babi milieu in which they emerged see John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1996).

²⁵ This is a point made by multiple contributors to Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind, eds., *Baha’i and Globalisation* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005). See, in particular, Todd Lawson, “Globalization and the Hidden Words,” 35-53.

²⁶ Juan R.I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha’i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

²⁷ Bahá’u’lláh, “Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd (Tablet of Maqṣúd),” in *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1988), 167, accessed online 21 May 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/TB/>.

²⁸ Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium*, 116.

course of his sixteenth-century rule, and ahead to Amaddiyya, a Muslim revival movement that was launched in India in the late nineteenth century and, like the Baha'i Faith, spread to the United States (and Chicago specifically) at the turn of the twentieth.²⁹

It was Baha'u'llah's son and successor, Abbas Effendi, or Abdu'l-Baha, who took this new religion global. Baha'u'llah had overseen the spread of his nascent faith to India, Burma, and Russia and had initiated correspondence with European leaders as early as the 1860s.³⁰ The years of Abdu'l-Baha's ministry, however, corresponded with growing global interaction that the new leader considered especially ripe for Baha'i expansion.³¹ After the Young Turk Revolution abolished political restrictions upon his mobility in 1908, Abdu'l-Baha relocated from Akka to Haifa (also in Syria, now in Israel), where he began the work of building the Baha'i World Centre that his father had called for on the slopes of Mount Carmel.³² Abdu'l-Baha was based for the rest of his life in Haifa, but lived briefly in Egypt and travelled to Europe in 1911, 1912, and 1913. He spent close to eight months in North America in 1912.³³

Ibrahim Kheiralla, who migrated to the United States in December 1892, initiated the first Baha'i teaching efforts in North America. An entrepreneur with professed healing powers, Kheiralla moved to Chicago in February 1894, where he began teaching the Baha'i Faith in the

²⁹ On Akbar see Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 372, 377-378. For a comparative analysis of the Baha'i Faith and Ahmadiyya see Morten Warminde, "Baha'i and Ahmadiyya: Globalisation and Images of Modernity," in Warburg et al, eds., *Baha'i and Globalisation*, 141-152. Baha'is may bristle at the comparison of their faith (which they stress is an independent world religion) and Ahmadiyya (which remains under the umbrella of Islam); I am pointing here to a shared context and current of Muslim innovation and dialogue. See also Oliver Scharbrodt's recent comparative analysis of Abdu'l-Baha and modern Islamic reformer Muhammad Abduh: *Islam and the Baha'i Faith: A Comparative Study of Muhammad 'Abduh and 'Abdul-Baha 'Abbas* (New Brunswick, NJ: Routledge, 2008).

³⁰ His "Tablets to the Rulers," which he began writing in 1867, included letters to Napoleon III, Queen Victoria, Alexander II, and Pope Pius IX. Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith*, 28-31.

³¹ On Abdu'l-Baha and globalization see Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 100-101; Juan R. I. Cole, "Globalization and Religion in the Thought of 'Abdu'l-Baha," in Warburg et al., *Baha'i and Globalisation*, 55-75.

³² Warburg, *Baha'i*, 16. This move, telling of internal family tension, was also motivated in part by an effort by Abdu'l-Baha to distance himself from his half-brother, Muhammad-Ali, who (in a split reminiscent of tensions between Baha'u'llah and his half-brother, Subh-i-Azal) challenged Abdu'l-Baha's leadership as laid out in Baha'u'llah's will.

³³ Peter Smith offers a useful outline of Abdu'l-Baha's travel itineraries in *Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2000), 17.

afterglow of the World's Fair.³⁴ Through his efforts, which drew heavily on the Bible but included an "esoteric" flair, over fifteen hundred North Americans became Baha'is in the 1890s.³⁵ Many were women and most were White, middle-class, and of liberal Christian heritage.³⁶ Concerns over perceived inaccuracies in Kheiralla's program led to long-distance attempts at codification by Abdu'l-Baha and a gradual sharpening of the boundaries of Baha'i membership, a shift that led a number of early (especially politically-oriented) adherents to pull back from active Baha'i participation.³⁷ When Abdu'l-Baha would not grant Kheiralla leadership of the American Baha'i community, the latter shifted his loyalty to Abdu'l-Baha's half-brother, Muhammad-Ali, who contested Abdu'l-Baha's authority.³⁸ Most North American Baha'is ultimately maintained allegiance with Abdu'l-Baha and Kheiralla is typically treated as somewhat of a black sheep in Baha'i sources.³⁹

Amidst internal community tension, Abdu'l-Baha's 1912 visit to North America thoroughly galvanized the host community and attracted significant public attention. For those Americans who looked "East" for inspiration and internal critique in this period of heightened antimodernist sentiment and anxiety, the exotic "white-bearded and snowy-turbaned" Abdu'l-

³⁴ Kheiralla and Haddad had hoped to sell one of the former's "inventions" to fair organizers, what the historian Robert Stockman describes as a "ticket with space on it for advertising." Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 1*, 26.

³⁵ Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 1*, 20, 47, 50.

³⁶ Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 1*, 103-104; Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 2*, 7; William Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 80-81; van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, 11-12, 223, 245, 283.

³⁷ A teleological tone, characteristic of much Baha'i scholarship, shines through in Robert Stockman's otherwise quite even-handed history of the early American Baha'i community as he discusses "inaccuracies and non-Bahá'í accretions" in Kheiralla's program. Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 1*, 188. On codification attempts and sharpened membership boundaries and their effects, see Cole, "Globalization and Religion in the Thought of 'Abdu'l-Baha," 63; Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 1*, 154-155, 167, 173, 183-184, 191-193; Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 2*, 166, 391; Will C. van den Hoonaard, "Biographical Zoning and Baha'i Biographical Writing: The Case of Rose Henderson," *Baha'i Studies Review* 12 (2004): 50-66. Lil Abdo has documented a similar process of decreasing participation by early adherents as the boundaries of the British Baha'i community hardened in the same period: "Religion and Relevance: The Baha'is in Britain, 1899-1930" (PhD thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2003).

³⁸ Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith*, 44, 50.

³⁹ See, for example, the derisive tone of Firuz Kazemzadeh's discussion of Kheiralla in his foreword to Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 1*, xiv.

Baha cut an attractive figure.⁴⁰ Headlines that ran during his nine-day stay in Montreal, the only Canadian stop on his North American tour, captured this context and the tenor of Abdu'l-Baha's own message: "Persian Prophet in Flowing Robes Calls for Unity," the *Montreal Daily Star* reported on 2 September. "Racialism Wrong Says Eastern Sage," proclaimed the *Gazette* on the same day.⁴¹ Abdu'l-Baha maintained a busy speaking schedule and during his public talks articulated his message in a format digestible for his overwhelmingly Christian audiences.⁴² It was through these talks and interactions that he distilled the Baha'i teachings down to "the twelve principles" outlined in the introduction to this study.⁴³

If North American audiences projected their modern unrest and urban ennui onto Abdu'l-Baha (much as they did "Indians"), he in turn looked to the continent, and the United States especially, for inspiration.⁴⁴ From his first visit with American pilgrims in Haifa in 1898, Abdu'l-Baha accorded the United States, with its "rational" administrative abilities, a unique

⁴⁰ 13 April 1912 article in the *New York City Evening Mail*, cited in Allan L. Ward, *239 Days: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey in America* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), 20. Ward's text lacks comprehensive citations, but nevertheless provides a detailed (if partisan) portrait of Abdu'l-Baha's journey based on contemporary media coverage and other archival sources. On American antimodernism see T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981). And on "Eastern" inspiration see Susan Nance, *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream, 1790-1935* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Prothero, *The White Buddhist*; Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism*. A novel by Gertrude Atherton published the year of Abdu'l-Baha's visit, in which the main character travels to meet "the Master" (as Abdu'l-Baha is known to Baha'is) in Akka, also spoke directly to these sentiments. "Even a little of the wisdom of the east," protagonist Julia France proclaimed, "must widen our vision and prove an everlasting antidote to the modern spirit of unrest." Gertrude Atherton, *Julia France and Her Times* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 276, cited in Ward, *239 Days*, 199.

⁴¹ van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, 300.

⁴² Some contemporary publications were likewise geared towards Christian audiences. See, for example, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, collected and translated from the Persian by Laura Clifford Barney (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2001 [1908]). Abdu'l-Baha also met with a number of Theosophists (including, on the European leg of his journey, the movement's leader, Annie Besant) and Kahlil Gibran. Ward, *239 Days*, 44, 55, 75, 117, 131, 145, 167-168; van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, 31; Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith*, 51.

⁴³ van den Hoonaard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, 203. As Peter Smith notes, the number of principles that Abdu'l-Baha presented during his public talks ranged between 9 and 14, *An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith*, 52.

⁴⁴ As Christopher Buck observes, the definition of "America" in Baha'i history and writings varied by context and included, at turns, the nation (the United States of America), the continent (North America; and/or Canada and the United States), and the hemisphere (the Americas). Buck, *Religious Myths and Visions of America*, 180.

station in growing the global Baha'i community.⁴⁵ During his travels, he critiqued American materialism, but regularly praised the United States for its commitment to freedom and justice and, in the shadow of brewing political tensions in Europe, called for the country to release the "light of peace" to the world.⁴⁶ He also drew consistent attention to race relations. Speaking at an interracial gathering in Washington, D.C., for example, Abdu'l-Baha asserted that, "In the sight of God there is no distinction between whites and blacks; all are as one. Anyone whose heart is pure is dear to God – whether white or black, red or yellow."⁴⁷ Abdu'l-Baha concluded this talk with a call for unity and his favoured botanical metaphor in which he invoked the image of a technicolour rose garden.⁴⁸ While his vision was expansive, and included "the red men, the Indians," Abdu'l-Baha's activity during his time in America concentrated mostly on Black-White interactions.⁴⁹ In an act of silent erasure, his evaluation of American politics and peacemaking potential likewise overlooked the country's policy of Manifest Destiny and its own internal history of settler colonialism.⁵⁰

It was after his journey to North America that Abdu'l-Baha articulated what Baha'is would come to describe as his prophecy concerning the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Upon his return to Haifa and in the midst of the First World War (a conflict that further

⁴⁵ Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 1*, 152-153; Buck, *Religious Myths and Visions of America*, 180-186. This first pilgrimage by American Baha'is was led and financed by wealthy philanthropist, Phoebe Hearst. For a recent Baha'i account of this journey see Kathryn Jewett Hogenson, *Lighting the Western Sky: The Hearst Pilgrimage and Establishment of the Bahá'í Faith in the West* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 2010).

⁴⁶ Mírzá Maḥmúd-i-Zarqání, *Maḥmúd's Diary: The Diary of Mírzá Maḥmúd-i-Zarqání, Chronicling 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey to America*, Mohi Sobhani, translator, with the assistance of Shirley Macias (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 1998), 98. See also Maḥmúd-i-Zarqání, *Maḥmúd's Diary*, 41, 88, 122, 235, 306, 277-278, 299; Ward, *239 Days*, 143, 186, 235, 377-378, 399.

⁴⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "10 November 1912, Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hannen, 1252 Eighth Street, NW, Washington, D. C. (Notes By Mr. Joseph H. Hannen)" in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by Abdu'l-Baha During his Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), 425, accessed online 15 Feb 2012, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/PUP/>.

⁴⁸ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "10 November 1912, Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hannen," 427-428.

⁴⁹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "10 November 1912, Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hannen," 428. On Black-White interactions see, for example, Ward, *239 Days*, 26, 40, 43, 48, 49, 65, 102, 110, 120, 145, 159, 177, 187.

⁵⁰ See Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).

propelled his pacifist perspective), Abdu'l-Baha dictated a series of letters, a common Baha'i communication tool, to Canadian and American Baha'is in which he cemented their role in global Baha'i expansion. Five of these letters were published in English in the Baha'i periodical *Star of the West* in 1916; translator Miraz Ahmad Sohrab presented the remaining letters in English at a convention in New York City three years later.⁵¹ In this second set of letters, midway through an address titled, "First Tablet to the Assemblies of the United States and Canada in reference to Alaska, Mexico, Central America, South America, the West Indies and other islands of the Western Continent," Abdu'l-Baha offered the following instructions:

You must give great importance in teaching the Indians, *i.e.*, the aborigines of America. For these souls are like the ancient inhabitants of Peninsular Arabia, who previous to the Manifestation of His Holiness Mohammed were treated as savages. But when the Mohammedic light shone forth in their midst, they became so illumined that they brightened the world. Likewise, should these Indians and aborigines be educated and obtain guidance, there is no doubt that through the Divine Teachings, they will become so enlightened as in turn to shed light to all regions.⁵²

The historian Andrew Pemberton-Piggott has characterized this statement as the sole "racial" prophecy in the Baha'i writings.⁵³ In an earlier letter, which would later inspire a narrator in this study to move to the Arctic for the purpose of Baha'i outreach, Abdu'l-Baha also signaled his hope that, "Perchance, God willing, the call of the Kingdom may reach the ears of the Eskimos, the inhabitants of the Islands of Franklin in the north of Canada, as well as Greenland."⁵⁴ His statement about "the Indians," however, is especially striking, both for the vigor with which it was taken up by later Baha'is and for its resonance in the context of colonial North America.

⁵¹ "Tablets Revealed by Abdul-Baha to the Bahais throughout the United States and Canada," *Star of the West* 7, no. 10 (September 8, 1916): 87-91; "Unveiling of the Divine Plan, Bahai Congress New York City, April Twenty-Sixth to April Thirtieth, Inclusive Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," National Bahá'í Library, United States.

⁵² "Unveiling of the Divine Plan," 47.

⁵³ Andrew Pemberton-Piggott, "The Bahá'í Faith in Alberta, 1942-1992: The Ethic of Dispersion" (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1993), 34.

⁵⁴ "Tablets Revealed by Abdul-Baha to the Bahais throughout the United States and Canada," 89.

In urging Baha'is to "give great importance in teaching the Indians," a people "treated as savages" until a new religion "shone forth in their midst," this passage readily invokes the image of outsiders descending upon Indigenous communities in order to spread truth and light and seems to identify itself as an iteration of missionary imperialism. In suggesting that Indigenous peoples are in need of education and guidance from "the Divine Teachings," it positions them as the subjects of external enlightenment and appears to align itself with the assimilationist aims of Christian missionaries intent on Indian civilization and uplift. And in asserting that Indigenous peoples possess unique spiritual capacities, and have the potential to "shed light to all regions," this statement further conjures a romantic noble savage discourse that casts "authentic Indians" as refuge and foil for settler discontent and imperial longing.⁵⁵

Despite such shared heritage, however, the actual history of Indigenous-Baha'i encounter defies any such straightforward categorization. The letter in which Abdu'l-Baha's prediction appears has not drawn detailed academic attention and the specific inspiration for his statement about "Indians" remains unclear.⁵⁶ While Abdu'l-Baha's own account of his time in North America has yet to be translated into English, available sources do not indicate that the Baha'i leader interacted directly with Indigenous people on this trip.⁵⁷ Although he traveled as far west

⁵⁵ See discussion of religion, colonialism, and authenticity below for further context on these intersections.

⁵⁶ For analysis of another "tablet" by Abdu'l-Baha relating to Indigenous peoples and religion in North America see Donald Addison and Christopher Buck, "Messengers of God in North America Revisited: An Exegesis of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to Amír Khán,'" *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 1 (2007): 180-270.

⁵⁷ The recent centenary of Abdu'l-Baha's visit to North America sparked a number of Baha'i commemorations, awareness campaigns, and publications. See, for example, the American National Spiritual Assembly-sponsored website, "Commemorating 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America, 1912-2012,'" accessed online 8 May 2013, <http://centenary.bahai.us/>, and Negar Mottahedeh, ed., *Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey West: The Course of Human Solidarity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). The extant record on his journey, however, remains limited. Ward notes, for example, that Abdu'l-Baha penned an account of his journey, but that it remains among his many papers that have yet to be translated into English: Ward, *239 Days*, 175. Neither the media coverage that Ward cites in *239 Days* nor the published diary of Mirza Mahmud-i-Zarqani, who Baha'i authorities consider the official chronicler of Abdu'l-Baha's trip, suggest direct interaction with Indigenous people. In his history of the early Canadian Baha'i community Will van den Hoonaard recounts the story of Jim Loft, a Mohawk man who became a Baha'i in 1948, who told of seeing Abdu'l-Baha pass by his community, near Belleville, Ontario, on a train; Abdu'l-Baha reportedly waved at a young four-year-old Loft, who, startled, fell off the fence on which he was perched.

as California, the Baha'i leader was based predominantly in cities in the American Midwest and along the Eastern Seaboard where, owing to formal policies and informal practices of removal, Indigenous populations were limited (although by no means, as settler society and scholarship once assumed, nonexistent).⁵⁸ The extant record, however, does indicate engagement with “imaginary,” if not “real” Indians.⁵⁹ That Ibrahim Kheiralla included Hiawatha, the subject of a massively popular nineteenth-century poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, in his list of prophets predating Baha'u'llah, for example, suggests an interest in and awareness of things Indian among early Baha'is.⁶⁰ Given the close company that Abdu'l-Baha kept with his followers during his North American tour, they may well have discussed such ideas, albeit through an interpreter given Abdu'l-Baha's limited command of the English language. Abdu'l-Baha is also reported to have praised Indigenous collections, described as Mexican in one source and the products of “early American civilization” in another, during a visit to the American Museum of Natural History in New York.⁶¹

Perhaps his greatest source of Indian information and inspiration, however, was Honoré Jaxon. Born William Henry Jackson, Jaxon was a Canadian of British heritage who took up an

While it is possible that Loft did see Abdu'l-Baha in person (van den Hoonard correlated Abdu'l-Baha's travel schedule with Loft's account), this story, which continues to circulate in the Loft family and the Baha'i community more broadly, is more interesting in the context of memory and claiming such connection several decades on. van den Hoonard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, 62; Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Bahá'í Pioneers* (Essex, MD: One Voice, 2011), 25.

⁵⁸ Hazel Hertzberg, for example, notes the existence and activity of urban Indigenous populations in cities like Chicago and New York (two major stops for Abdu'l-Baha) in the early twentieth century in *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 213-236. More recently, Coll Thrush has demonstrated the mutually constitutive nature of urban and Indigenous histories in *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

⁵⁹ On the concept of “imaginary Indians” see Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, Second Edition (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011).

⁶⁰ Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 1*, 67.

⁶¹ The diary of Juliet Thompson describes the exhibit as Mexican, while that of Mirza Mahmud-i-Zarqani calls it “a collection of relics of early American civilization.” Christopher Buck's suggestion that the exhibit was Blackfoot (based on the fact that the museum's curator, Clark Wissler, had done research on this tribe) seems, in the absence of further evidence, a stretch. Maḥmúd-i-Zarqání, Zarqani, *Maḥmúd's Diary*, 159; Juliet Thompson, *The Diary of Juliet Thompson*, with a preface by Marzieh Gail (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1983 [1947]), accessed online at 21 May 2013, <http://bahai-library.com/books/thompson/>; Addison and Buck, “Messengers of God in North America Revisited,” 208-209.

Indigenous identity after serving as secretary to Louis Riel, the leader of the Métis resistance movement on the Prairies, during a major confrontation with state authorities in 1885.⁶² Jaxon settled in Chicago after fleeing Canada, where he was wanted for his involvement in the Northwest Resistance, and became a Baha'i in 1897. He was an expansive thinker who moved fluidly between activities ranging from an attempt to secure Métis representation at the Chicago World's Fair (an effort undone when his imaginary Indian mantle was revealed), to participation in the labour and socialist movements, studies in medicine, work in law, and his final (tragically failed) effort to establish a library dedicated to Métis and Indian history.⁶³ He was also pivotal in helping the Baha'i community secure title to land (territory, his biographer Donald Smith points out, that "was once Metis land") for a temple in Wilmette, just north of Chicago.⁶⁴ In a report on the formal dedication of this temple site, which took place during Abdu'l-Baha's 1912 visit, Jaxon listed "the North American Indians" among "the races and countries" represented at the event; he was more than likely referring to himself here.⁶⁵ It is quite possible that Jaxon, who, despite his tenuous claim to Indigenous heritage, had real relationships with Indigenous people and communities, shared his ideas with Abdu'l-Baha, whom he interacted with on several occasions during the Baha'i leader's time in Chicago.⁶⁶ These ideas may well have included the

⁶² Donald B. Smith, *Honoré Jaxon: Prairie Visionary* (Regina, SK: Coteau, 2007).

⁶³ On Jaxon at the fair see Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 226 (fn 77); Smith, *Honoré Jaxon*, 88-92.

⁶⁴ Smith, *Honoré Jaxon*, 156. "Record of the Second Annual Convention of Bahai Temple Unity, Held April 25 and 26, 1910," *Bahai News* 1, no. 4 (May 17, 1910): 19-25. For further discussion of Jaxon's Baha'i life see May Maxwell, "Letter from Montreal," in *Star of the West* 3, no.1 (March 21, 1912), 8; *Star of the West* 2, no.16 (Dec 31, 1911), 14; van den Hoonard, *The Origins of the Bahá'í Community of Canada*, 18-21, 35, 67; van den Hoonard, "Biographical Zoning and Baha'i Biographical Writing"; Will C. Van den Hoonard, "Social Activism Among Some Early Twentieth-Century Baha'is," *Socialist Studies: The Journal of the Society for Socialist Studies* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 77-96; Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 1*, 90-93; Stockman, *The Bahá'í Faith in America, Volume 2*, 157, 173-174, 450 (fn 147).

⁶⁵ Honore J. Jaxon, "Dedication of the Maskrak-El-Azkar Site," *Star of the West* 3, no.4 (17 May 1912), 6.

⁶⁶ Honore J. Jaxon, "A Stroll With Abdul-Baha: Culminating in a Typical Bahai Meeting Under the Trees of Lincoln Park, Chicago," *Star of the West* 3, no.4 (17 May 1912), 27-29. Jaxon's layered relationships and positionality are reminiscent of another "imaginary Indian," Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance, described by Donald Smith: *Long Lance: The True Story of an Imposter* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1982). For a more nuanced analysis of Long Lance (or

advice that Jaxon offered his mother in 1896: “Study the Indian and his ways if you would find the light which alone can save the white man’s civilization.”⁶⁷ Abdu’l-Baha’s message certainly conveys the sense that Indigenous peoples possess a unique spiritual capacity and the potential to “shed light to all regions.”

An even more direct influence on Abdu’l-Baha’s views as expressed in his letters, and perhaps his prophecy too, was an American geography textbook that made its way to Haifa via a Persian student studying at the American University in Beirut. This student gifted the book, Ralph Tarr and Frank McMurry’s 1912 *World Geography: One-Volume Edition*, to Miraz Ahmad Sohrab, a Baha’i who served as an interpreter for Abdu’l-Baha during his time in North America (Sohrab and Jaxon, Smith points out, met at this time and later reconnected in New York City through the New History Society, a group that Sohrab co-founded in 1929).⁶⁸ Sohrab returned to Haifa with Abdu’l-Baha and was the first to translate the leader’s letters, including that containing his statement about Indians, into English. Finding him “poring over” Tarr and McMurry’s book one day in Haifa, Abdu’l-Baha asked Sohrab to translate the text into Persian and the resulting influence is obvious.⁶⁹ Abdu’l-Baha’s letters mirror the textbook’s geographic subdivisions exactly: there are tablets to the Northeastern States, the Southern States, the Central States, the Western States, and even Canada and Greenland.⁷⁰ More subtly, the book echoes the

Sylvester Long) see Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 3-4.

⁶⁷ Smith, *Honoré Jaxon*, 100.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Honoré Jaxon*, 176.

⁶⁹ Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, *The Story of the Divine Plan: Taking Place During, and Immediately Following World War I* (New York: The New History Foundation, 1947), 7. Ralph S. Tarr and Frank M. McMurry, *World Geography: One-Volume Edition* (New York: Macmillan, 1912). A typed note inserted into the copy of this book contained in the “Relics” collection of the National Bahá’i Archives, United States identifies it as the text (although not the specific copy) given to Sohrab and describes it, and the interest it stirred in Abdu’l-Baha, as “the beginning of a great revolution resulting in the writing of the 14 Tablets embodied in the ‘Story of the Divine Plan.’”

⁷⁰ Tarr and McMurry, *World Geography: One-Volume Edition*, xi. “Tablets Revealed by Abdul-Baha to the Bahais throughout the United States and Canada”; “Unveiling of the Divine Plan, Bahai Congress New York City, April Twenty-Sixth to April Thirtieth, Inclusive Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen.” It is equally possible, of course, that these subdivisions came straight from Sohrab.

erasure by silence that was at work in Abdu'l-Baha's previous public addresses in America. The doctrine of discovery is present ("After Columbus had returned to Europe in safety, other men dared to explore the *New World*, as it was called, to distinguish it from the *Old World*, where all white men lived"), as is a celebration of American freedom and democracy, but the text does not discuss the colonial project in detail.⁷¹ Rather, through a narrative strategy common in textbooks (even now), Indigenous peoples were positioned as a precursor to and outside of "Industry, Commerce, and Government," as people without history who pave the way, materially and rhetorically, for White settlers and pioneers.⁷² The book also reproduced contemporary racialized hierarchies and their perceived scientific authority.⁷³ Here, the "red race," illustrated by two images of heavily feathered and beaded Indian men, was placed lower on the scale of progress than "the leaders," "the whites," who "have learned the use of ships in exploring distant lands, and have spread with great rapidity. They have conquered the weaker peoples and have taken their lands from them, so that they now rule the entire world."⁷⁴ While Abdu'l-Baha engaged the colour-coded language of race, he rejected the primordialist assumptions at work in Tarr and McMurry's text.⁷⁵ It is possible too that the book's section on Arabia, Persia, and Afghanistan, which invoked a similar tone of condescension and relegated these "brown" people to a similar subaltern status as the "red race," may have sparked a sense of solidarity with Indigenous peoples for Abdu'l-Baha. The text's critique of the Persian government (which, the authors proclaimed, "has long resembled that of Turkey, and has therefore been bad") may also

⁷¹ Tarr and McMurry, *World Geography: One-Volume Edition*, 87. See also 86-87, 109-110, 171, 202-204.

⁷² Tarr and McMurry, *World Geography: One-Volume Edition*, 59. See also 2-3, 235-236. The phrase "people without history" is Eric Wolf's: *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

⁷³ Section III of Part IV of the text is dedicated to, "The Races of Mankind," Tarr and McMurry, *World Geography: One-Volume Edition*, 306-309.

⁷⁴ Tarr and McMurry, *World Geography: One-Volume Edition*, 307-309 (the quote is located on 307-308, the images on 308-309).

⁷⁵ Cole, "Globalization and Religion in the Thought of 'Abdu'l-Baha," 60-61.

have resonated with the leader of a religious movement persecuted by Iranian authorities from its inception.⁷⁶

The discourse of savagery also appears in the textbook, but we ought not assume a direct parallel with Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy. Abdu'l-Baha's statement underwent a series of translations over time. The original Persian term that he dictated, which Sohrab rendered as "were treated like savages," was "vuhúsh"; the Research Department at the Baha'i World Centre notes that dictionary definitions of this term include "wild beasts" and "savages."⁷⁷ Abdu'l-Baha elsewhere invoked the language of savagery in relation to Arab, African, and European peoples as well.⁷⁸ In this application and logic, the Baha'i leader distinguished between those civilized by divine revelation and those who lacked its inspiration and influence.⁷⁹ Savagery, in this evaluation, was a question of religious, not racial, alterity.⁸⁰ In comparing Indigenous peoples to "the ancient inhabitants of Peninsular Arabia," and noting the effect of "the Manifestation of His Holiness Mohammed" upon them, Abdu'l-Baha confirmed what he saw as their latent spiritual

⁷⁶ Tarr and McMurry, *World Geography: One-Volume Edition*, 424.

⁷⁷ Memorandum to the author and the Universal House of Justice from the Research Department, Bahá'í World Centre, 10 August 2008. For Sohrab's reflections on the broader translation project see Sohrab, *The Story of the Divine Plan*.

⁷⁸ Memorandum to the author. In *Some Answered Questions*, Abdu'l-Baha directly compares "Arab tribes" with "the savages of Africa and wild Indians of America": "These Arab tribes were in the lowest depths of savagery and barbarism, and in comparison with them the savages of Africa and wild Indians of America were as advanced as Plato. The savages of America do not bury their children alive as these Arabs did their daughters, glorying in it as being an honorable thing to do." 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 19. For an example relating to Africa see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 309. For an example relating to "Europe and most sections of America" see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), 10, accessed online 17 Feb 2012, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/SDC/>.

⁷⁹ Memorandum to the author.

⁸⁰ This was a perspective shared by a number of Christian missionaries in North America and elsewhere. For an example from the early contact period see Emma Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith: The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 95. And from the late nineteenth century see Brett Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary: John Booth Good and the Confluence of Cultures in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 23, 47. David Chidester likewise observes in the context of the South African frontier that, "religion, not race or ethnicity, provided the basic vocabulary of difference." David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996), 21.

capacity. Indigenous peoples, his statement implied, possessed not only the potential to be spiritually enlightened, they also held the key to global illumination.

Abdu'l-Baha's grandson and successor, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, picked up on this potential and subsequently took up this statement as a major motivator and mandate for Baha'i outreach efforts in Indigenous North America. If Abdu'l-Baha was the charismatic figure that took the Baha'i Faith global, Shoghi Effendi, who took over leadership of the religion in 1921 (again, amongst contested leadership claims), "routinized" this energy and laid plans for further Baha'i expansion.⁸¹ In this, he looked to Abdu'l-Baha's letters to the North American Baha'is, published in 1936 under the title, *America's Spiritual Mission*, and, from 1959, as the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*.⁸² These letters, according to Amin Banani in his foreword to the 1977 edition of the *Tablets*, set the blueprint for global "spiritual conquest."⁸³

In his work with these letters, Shoghi Effendi drew attention to Abdu'l-Baha's passage about Indigenous peoples and offered revised English translations of his grandfather's statement in two letters of his own, first in 1938 and again in 1947.⁸⁴ It is possible that a desire to distance Abdu'l-Baha's letters from Sohrab informed these revisions. Sohrab was among Baha'is who chafed at the more rigid boundaries of Baha'i membership that Shoghi Effendi erected and the New History Society that Sohrab co-founded was subject to censure, and even formal legal

⁸¹ Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 194-195. Shoghi Effendi launched the first of a series of global "teaching plans," an approach kept up by the Universal House of Justice after him, in 1937. For a specific breakdown of these plans see Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 213-215.

⁸² *America's Spiritual Mission: Teaching Tablets Revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the American Bahá'is During 1916 and 1917, Reprinted for the American Bahá'í Community by the National Spiritual Assembly* (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1936), National Bahá'í Library, United States; *Tablets of the Divine Plan: Revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the North American Bahá'is during 1916 and 1917* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1959), National Bahá'í Library, United States. Both these editions retain Sohrab's original phrasing of Indigenous people being "treated as savages."

⁸³ Amin Banani, "Foreword to the 1977 Edition," in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993), xxi.

⁸⁴ Memorandum to the author. These retranslations are reproduced in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990 [original letter dated 25 December 1938]), 55, accessed online 17 Feb 2012, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/se/ADJ/>; Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980 [original letter dated 5 June 1947]), 16, accessed online 17 Feb 12, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/se/CF/>.

action, by Baha’i leadership.⁸⁵ Either way, Shoghi Effendi’s 1947 translation, which the Universal House of Justice later adopted as authoritative, contained several key semantic shifts:

Attach great importance to the indigenous population of America. For these souls may be likened unto the ancient inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, who, prior to the Mission of Muḥammad, were like unto savages. When the light of Muḥammad shone forth in their midst, however, they became so radiant as to illumine the world. Likewise, these Indians, should they be educated and guided, there can be no doubt that they will become so illumined as to enlighten the whole world.⁸⁶

Aborigines became indigenous. Once “treated as savages,” this population was now “like unto” them. This iteration, which the Research Department at the Baha’i World Centre describes as “a more accurate translation of the original Persian,” effectively transformed Indians into savages.⁸⁷ Yet it also exhibited a certain nuance. Where Sohrab’s first translation laid out “the Divine Teachings” as the specific spark that would ignite Indigenous (and, by extension, global) illumination, Shoghi Effendi did not specify the terms of Indigenous education and guidance. Baha’i outreach efforts to Indigenous people in the Americas (recall the hemispheric context in which Abdu’l-Baha’s statement was first articulated) were underway by 1947. Shoghi Effendi’s omission may well have been informed by these early teaching experiences and a resulting effort to avoid a doctrinaire tone.⁸⁸ Educated at Oxford, he would also have been abreast of rising politics of decolonization and humanitarianism at this time. Although Shoghi Effendi strongly urged Baha’is to avoid partisan politics, it is quite possible that his retranslation, which advanced

⁸⁵ Leaders objected to the Society’s use of the term “Baha’i,” which, as anthropologist June Wyman has noted, “had been copyrighted in 1928”; the New History Society won the case. June Wyman, “Becoming a Baha’i: Discourse and Social Networks in an American Baha’i Community,” (PD thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1985), 66. See also, Smith, *Honoré Jaxon*, 180; Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha’i Faith*, 67.

⁸⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, 33 (original statement made in 1916; translation by Shoghi Effendi in 1947). See also Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, 16.

⁸⁷ Memorandum to the author, 10 August 2008.

⁸⁸ Indeed, in the letter in which his retranslation appears, Shoghi Effendi mentions specific sites of established contact in the Americas and stresses that “A special effort should be exerted to secure the unqualified adherence of members of some of these tribes to the Faith, their subsequent election to its councils, and their unreserved support of the organized attempts that will have to be made in the future by the projected national assemblies for the large-scale conversion of Indian races to the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh.” Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, 16-17.

a more loaded framing of savagery yet posited a more ambiguous spiritual solution, was informed by this current as well.⁸⁹

Explicit expansion plans that Shoghi Effendi and others after him set out, however, make clear that Baha'is still considered their religion's teachings critical to the education and guidance that Indigenous peoples were to obtain.⁹⁰ Like his grandfather before him, Shoghi Effendi kept up a vigorous correspondence with Baha'i individuals and institutions and was intimately connected with outreach developments throughout the world.⁹¹ He regularly encouraged adherents throughout the Americas to cultivate the "latent capacity" of those he dubbed the "standard bearers of the faith."⁹² Wielding a striking arsenal of military metaphors, Shoghi Effendi called for "entry by troops" on the part of Indigenous peoples, whose conversion, he proclaimed, was "long overdue."⁹³ Racialized rhetoric concerning the primitive and the

⁸⁹ For a discussion of Shoghi Effendi's position on politics, and what Margit Warburg calls his "world-rejecting" stance, see Margit Warburg, "The Dual Global Field: A Model for Transnational Religions and Globalisation," in Warburg et al, eds. *Baha'i and Globalisation*, 165.

⁹⁰ These plans, as elaborated at the Canadian and American Baha'i administrations, often included specific numeric and spatial target goals for Indigenous conversion. For review of major goals elaborated for the Canadian and American NSAs (not including Indigenous teaching) see Pemberton Piggot, "The Bahá'í Faith in Alberta," Appendix 1, 96-97.

⁹¹ See, for example, Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*; Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*; Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada* (Thornhill, ON: Bahá'í Canada Publications, 1999); Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991 [1938]); Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Teaching Indigenous People: Extracts from the Guardian's Messages* (Toronto: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'is of Canada, 1968); Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice, *A Special Measure of Love: The Importance and Nature of the Teaching Work Among the Masses: Messages from Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1974).

⁹² The phrase "latent capacity" is from a 1956 letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi and cited in American Indian Service Committee, "The American Indian and the Bahá'í Faith, April 1972," 2, National Bahá'í Archives, United States; his expression "standard bearers of the faith" is cited in National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, "Indians of Canada: A Guide to Teaching," [n.d. 1965?], 6, National Bahá'í Archives, Canada.

⁹³ See, for example, a letter from Shoghi Effendi to the American National Spiritual Assembly, 18 July 1953, *The Importance of Teaching Indigenous People*, 15. The reference to "long overdue conversions" appears in Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, 69. "Entry by troops" was a common Baha'i phrase used outside the Indigenous teaching context as well; though Baha'is tend to downplay the martial aspect of the metaphor, this resonance is still striking, especially for such an avowedly pacifist religion. For a discussion of "entry by troops" see Linda S. Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í: Through the Lens of Ancient Prophecies" (MA thesis, Missouri State University, 2011), 154.

downtrodden, the ignorant and the innocent, also surfaced in his writings, twinned with a romantic noble savage ideal.⁹⁴

Figurative as well as literal translation took place, too, as Baha'is in North America aimed to apply Abdu'l-Baha's ambiguous and layered statement. Separate Canadian and American National Spiritual Assemblies (NSAs) were established in 1948; an Alaskan NSA was elected for the first time in 1957. All three administrations dedicated substantial rhetorical attention to Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy and the issue of Indigenous outreach (although what Shoghi Effendi called the "most challenging issue" of Black-White relations always dominated the "race" agenda in the United States).⁹⁵ They struck specific Indigenous teaching and service committees and shared outreach aids, strategies, and "personnel" across borders (within North America and more globally).⁹⁶ Official Baha'i organs also echoed the hearty appetite for Indian inspiration and guidance articulated in Shoghi Effendi's writings. *Canadian Bahá'í News*, for example, confirmed in 1961 that mass enrolment of Indigenous people was "the lever that will release mass conversion among the white community."⁹⁷ Seven years later, this same publication

⁹⁴ Two letters written on Shoghi Effendi's behalf in 1951, and later circulated and cited in the North American context, well capture this intersecting discourse. See "From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the N.S.A. of Meso-America and the Antilles, dated July 11, 1951," in Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Teaching Indigenous People*, 7. This letter is also cited in National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, "Indians of Canada: A Guide for Teaching," 2. From a letter written on the Guardian's behalf to the National Teaching Committee of the Americas, dated September 1, 1951," in Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Teaching Indigenous People*, 8 (emphasis in original). For other examples see Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Teaching Indigenous People*, 5, 8; Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada*, 129.

⁹⁵ The first issues of both *Canadian Bahá'í News (CBN)* and *Alaska Bahá'í News (ABN)*, for example, both stressed the importance of outreach to Indigenous people: *CBN* no.1 (May 1948), 3; *ABN* no.1 (August 1957), 5. Annual reports of the National Spiritual Assembly in the United States likewise document steady interest in Indigenous outreach. On "the most challenging issue" see Will van den Hoonaard, "Etching the Idea of 'Unity in Diversity' in the Baha'i Community: Popular Opinion and Organizing Principle," in Warburg et al, *Baha'i and Globalisation*, 254.

⁹⁶ Such exchange is documented, for example, in the records of the American Indian Service and Teaching Committee, National Bahá'í Archives, United States. Arthur Irwin, "Early Native Teaching in Canada," Unpublished Memoir, 1983, Will van den Hoonaard Personal Collection and National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, "Indians of Canada: A Guide for Teaching" likewise describe and mobilize the outcomes of such exchange.

⁹⁷ *CBN* no.142 (Nov.1961), 3. See also "Ruhyyih Khanum Shares Teaching Observations," *Baha'i News* no.40 (June 1961); *National Bahá'í Review* no.18 (June 1969), 13.

reported that the White community was “starving for the spiritual qualities that the Indian believers will bring them.”⁹⁸ Such statements strongly echoed noble savage currents then swirling in settler society at the same time that they maintained an earlier tradition of stressing religious, not racial, difference.

Adding to the somewhat paradoxical nature of Baha’i outreach to Indigenous peoples was the religion’s prohibition against proselytization. As the Baha’i Faith possesses neither a clergy nor a paid missionary force, individual adherents are charged with the duty to disseminate their faith, which they are instructed to do without force, pressure, or persuasion.⁹⁹ Baha’u’llah early encouraged his followers to:

Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindness and good-will. If it be accepted, if it fulfills its purpose, your object is obtained. If any one should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.¹⁰⁰

Abdu’l-Baha further promoted the “independent investigation of truth,” a teaching that left significant space for personal inquiry and interpretation (yet also, as anthropologist June Wyman has noted, implicitly assumed that “seekers” would all come to the same conclusion, “since ‘the fundamental reality is one.’”)¹⁰¹ Consciously distinguishing their methods and mentality from what Shoghi Effendi described in another letter cited in the context of Indigenous outreach as the “purely mercenary approach” of “many Christians,” Baha’is marked their difference (or, in

⁹⁸ *CBN*, no.219 (May 1968), 10. See also *CBN* nos.129 (Oct.1960), 2 and 216 (Jan-Feb 1968), 7.

⁹⁹ See Bahá’u’lláh, Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and Universal House of Justice, “Guidelines for Teaching,” in *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 2*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Mona Vale, NSW: Baha’i Publications Australia, 1991), 295-326.

¹⁰⁰ Bahá’u’lláh, “Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh,” cited in *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 2*, 289.

¹⁰¹ Wyman, “Becoming a Baha’i,” 76.

ethnogenetic discourse, maintained their boundary) through a distinct vocabulary.¹⁰² They were “teachers,” not ministers, “pioneers,” not missionaries. Teaching referred to the general process of sharing the faith, while pioneering denoted the act of moving to a new location for the purpose of expanding the territorial reach of the religion.¹⁰³ Although Baha’is did not intend to sound a colonial chord with this vocabulary, in a context where histories of residential schooling and land dispossession remained fresh, “teaching” and “pioneering” both carried their own heavy baggage.

Further, for all the rhetorical attention that Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice, and North American National Spiritual Assemblies paid to teaching and pioneering among Indigenous peoples, few Baha’is took up this task in practice. The White composition and tenor of the Baha’i community persisted through the second half of the twentieth century and only a minority proved interested or willing to step out of what one author has described as the “rather waspish” Baha’i mainstream in order to take part in Indigenous outreach.¹⁰⁴ Those who did so in the United States concentrated their early efforts especially among the Omaha in Nebraska, the Cherokee in North Carolina and Oklahoma, the Lakota and Dakota in North and South Dakota, the Diné in Arizona and New Mexico, the Makah and Yakama in Washington, the Nez Perce in Idaho, and the Crow, Cheyenne, Lakota and Assiniboine in Montana.¹⁰⁵ In Canada, Honoré Jaxon may well have been the first to introduce the Baha’i Faith on reserves on

¹⁰² “From a letter written on the Guardian’s behalf to the British N.S.A. dated April 29, 1948,” in Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Teaching Indigenous People*, 5. On boundary maintenance see Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1969).

¹⁰³ van den Hoonard, *Origins*, 181.

¹⁰⁴ Patricia Verge, *Angus: From the Heart: The Life of Counsellor Angus Cowan* (Cochrane, AB: Springtide Publishing, 1999), 73. See also, for example, Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 72, 88, 95-96, 115; Irwin, “Early Native Teaching in Canada,” 10, 13-14; “Ruhyyih Khanum Shares Teaching Observations”; *CBN*, no.166 (Nov 1963), 3; *CBN*, no.187 (Aug 1965), 4.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, American Indian Service Committee, “The American Indian and the Bahá’í Faith, April 1972,” 9-10, 13, 15. Outreach patterns are also charted in annual reports of the National Spiritual Assembly in the United States, National Bahá’í Archives, United States.

the southern Prairies, and it was here, in communities surrounding Calgary and Regina, as well as the Whitehorse area of the Yukon, that Canadian Baha'i outreach concentrated during the 1950s and 60s.¹⁰⁶

Compared with Christian missionary practice, both old and new, Baha'i outreach methods were at once familiar and unexpected. Baha'is placed an early emphasis upon translation and in pamphlets like, "A New Day Comes," published in Cherokee in 1954 and in Navajo two years later, presented the Baha'i teachings through vernacular, if somewhat stock, Indigenous imagery and idioms.¹⁰⁷ Baha'i leaders and publications also encouraged adherents to secure employment in places and positions that would facilitate contact with Indigenous people and a number worked in the fields of health, education, and Indian affairs.¹⁰⁸ Eager to avoid proselytizing and dissuaded from taking on a charity role, Baha'is strove instead to "live the life" and offer "service" that supported the Baha'i vision of unity in diversity.¹⁰⁹ Experiments in

¹⁰⁶ Donald Smith notes that Honoré Jaxon and his wife took a "box of Baha'i publications" with them to the Mistawasis Reserve in Saskatchewan when they travelled to visit Jaxon's brother, an agency clerk and, for a time, acting Indian agent, in the community; Jaxon's mother lived there as well. Smith, *Honoré Jaxon*, 148, 121-122. On Indigenous Baha'i outreach on the Prairies see Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*. And, in the Yukon, see Carolyn Patterson Sawin, "Native Conversion, Native Identity: An Oral History of the Bahá'í Faith among First Nations People in the Southern Central Yukon Territory, Canada" (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2000). Noel Wuttunee, a Cree man from the Red Pheasant First Nation in Saskatchewan, was living in Calgary when he enrolled in 1947; he is recorded as the first Indigenous person to have become a Baha'i in Canada. van den Hoonaard, *Origins*, 153. Melba Loft, an Ojibwa woman from the Curve Lake First Nation in southern Ontario was living in Michigan when she became a Baha'i sometime before this; her husband, Alfred Loft, joined the religion in 1948 and, with a personal nudge from Shoghi Effendi, the couple moved with their children as pioneers to Alfred's Mohawk community of Tyendinaga a year later. Watts and Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga*, Chapters 5 and 6.

¹⁰⁷ "A New Day Comes," published in Cherokee and Navajo in 1954 and 1956, respectively, Publication Files, National Bahá'í Archives, United States. See also, in the Canadian context, Charles Cooke, translator, "A-De-Rih-Wa-Nie-Ton On-Kwe-On-We- Neh-Ha: A Message to the Iroquois Indians" (Toronto: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, [195?]), National Bahá'í Archives, Canada; National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, "Okí! Nitsítapee: A Message to the Blackfeet Indians" (Toronto: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1955), National Bahá'í Archives, Canada. On the significance and encouragement of translation in the Baha'i context see Charles Carnegie, *Postnationalism Prefigured: Caribbean Borderlands* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 196-197.

¹⁰⁸ Such calls were made regularly in a range of Baha'i publications and communications. See, for example, National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, "Indians of Canada: Looking to the Future," 1964, 6-8, National Bahá'í Archives, Canada. For an applied example see the memoir of White Baha'i Arthur Irwin, who worked as a geologist for the Department of Indian Affairs. Irwin, "Early Native Teaching in Canada."

¹⁰⁹ On the concept of "living the life" see Shoghi Effendi, "Living the Life," in *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 2*, 1-28; Lynn Echevarria in "The Canadian Baha'is 1938-2000: Constructions of Oneness in Personal and

“direct teaching” undertaken during the 1970s and modeled on mass outreach efforts in India were relatively more explicit, and more contested, among Baha’is and potential converts alike.¹¹⁰ Indeed, in a period of ongoing missionary competition, when Indigenous people were increasingly pressing their own rights to spiritual and political sovereignty, Baha’i outreach, however subtle, not surprisingly grated for some.¹¹¹ Established teaching methods like “firesides,” informal gatherings where Baha’is provided hospitality and fielded questions from interested parties, and “proclamation,” which included public meetings and thematic awareness campaigns, persisted into and past this period.¹¹² The Universal House of Justice, further, sanctioned a global shift towards Baha’i social and economic development activity in 1983, thus solidifying a service-based approach to teaching common in the Indigenous field from mid-century.¹¹³

Teachers and pioneers taught a message that stressed the fulfillment, not the failure, of Indigenous spiritual systems. As one undated pamphlet produced in Fort Yates, North Dakota, stated: Baha’is “believe that the old Indian religion was also inspired and do not call it

Collective Identity,” in Warburg et al, *Baha’i and Globalisation*, 233. On service, not charity, see, for example, National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, “Indians of Canada: A Guide for Teaching,” 11-13; American Indian Teaching Committee, “Unified Action Approach,” no date [1975?], 9-11, American Indian Teaching Material Subject Files, National Bahá’í Archives, United States; National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, “Indians of Canada: Looking to the Future,” 19.

¹¹⁰ See, for example, in the context of British Columbia: Chelsea Horton, “According to your faith so shall your power and blessings be’: The Aboriginal-Bahá’í Encounter in British Columbia” (M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2005), 50-57. Baha’i discomfort and anxiety around direct teaching was not isolated to the area of Indigenous outreach. See, for example, Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America*, 136-137, 140; Michael McMullen, *The Bahá’í: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 133; David Michael Piff, *Bahá’í Lore* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 2000), 76-79, 261-262.

¹¹¹ A 1972 teaching report from Haida Gwaii, an archipelago located off the British Columbian coast, for example, bluntly captured this sentiment: the Haida, one council spokesperson was recorded as stating, were “sick and tired of people coming in to try and shove more religion down their throats.” Cited in “Teaching report, Jan 1972 ‘Army of Light’ proclamation initiative on the Queen Charlotte Islands,” Fletcher Bennett Personal Collection. Robert Burkinshaw reports similar resistance to Pentecostal mission on Haida Gwaii in the mid-1960s: “Native Pentecostalism in British Columbia,” in *Canadian Pentecostalism: Transition and Transformation*, ed. Michael Wilkinson (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), 149.

¹¹² On the “fireside” term and method see van den Hoonaard, *Origins*, 186-187; Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America*, 55.

¹¹³ On this shift see Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 478.

pagen.”¹¹⁴ In addition to what Baha’is call the “three onenesses” – of God, religion, and humanity – teachers also promoted the specific principle of progressive revelation. Abdu’l-Baha’s “promise,” as it was often described, also achieved central billing in Baha’i teaching materials.¹¹⁵ In a significant editorial act, however, Baha’is often omitted the loaded language of savagery when citing the prophecy in print.¹¹⁶ This reflects, in part, a routine teaching move of trying to spark connection through positive or palatable channels and subsequently introducing what Baha’is, through their omission, acknowledged as more controversial or troubling detail.¹¹⁷ It equally reflects the likelihood that teachers and pioneers learned through their interactions with “real,” not “imaginary,” Indians, that the discourse of savagery was loaded and omitted it accordingly.

It also signals a Baha’i understanding of both teaching and conversion as process. In the same way that Baha’is mark off their outreach methods through the vocabulary of teaching and pioneering, they distinguish their understanding of religious change through the discourse of “declaration.” Reminiscent of the Islamic shahadah, the short statement of faith that “makes a person a Muslim,” a person becomes, or declares him or herself, a Baha’i simply by

¹¹⁴ “A Promise to the Indians,” unpublished and undated teaching pamphlet from Fort Yates, North Dakota, Kenneth Jeffers Papers, M-378, Box 15, National Bahá’í Archives, United States (spelling and emphasis as appears in original).

¹¹⁵ On Abdu’l-Baha’s prophecy as “promise” see Amatu’l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum, *A Message to the Indian and Eskimo Bahá’ís of the Western Hemisphere* (Toronto: Bahá’í Canada Publications, 1969), 8; “A Promise to the Indians.” Examples of teaching manuals and aids in which Abdu’l-Baha’s prophecy appears in full include National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, “Indians of Canada: A Guide for Teaching,” 1; “A Promise to the Indians”; American Indian Teaching Committee, “Unified Action Approach,” 4, American Indian Teaching Material Subject Files, National Bahá’í Archives, United States.

¹¹⁶ See, for example, Amatu’l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum, *A Message to the Indian and Eskimo Bahá’ís of the Western Hemisphere*; Cooke, “A-De-Rih-Wa-Nie-Ton On-Kwe-On-We- Neh-Ha: A Message to the Iroquois Indians”; National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Canada, “Okí! Nitsítapee: A Message to the Blackfeet Indians”; “A New Day Comes,” Cherokee and Navajo editions; Peter Simple and John Kolstoe, “Bahá’í Teachings,” edited copy included in letter from Nancy Phillips to Janet Smith, NSA of the Baha’is of Alaska, 11 March 1965, Non-U.S. National Spiritual Assembly Files – N.S.A., Alaska, National Bahá’í Archives, United States; “Circle of Unity” (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980 [1977]), Will van den Hoonaard Personal Collection.

¹¹⁷ This is what Andrew Pemberton-Piggot has described as a “gradualist” Baha’i teaching strategy of “deliberately seeking points of agreement and only later introducing issues and laws more difficult for the inquirer.” Pemberton-Piggot, “The Bahá’í Faith in Alberta,” 39. See also Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 108, 313-314 (fn 10).

acknowledging Baha'u'llah as the Manifestation of God for the age and by agreeing to abide by his laws.¹¹⁸ More formal enrollment procedures have varied over time and place. In Canada, for example, up until 1958, a rigorous program of scriptural study was required in order to join the Baha'i community. Growing Indigenous interest in the religion in this period contributed to revision of this requirement.¹¹⁹ Formal Baha'i membership, though, still was and is marked by the modern administrative act of signing a "declaration card."¹²⁰ This enrollment procedure is considered but the first step in an ongoing process of Baha'i learning, or "deepening."¹²¹

Baha'i statistics are slippery, but sources indicate that over seven thousand Indigenous people declared as Baha'is in Canada and the United States during the second half of the twentieth century.¹²² Most, however, did not become practicing members. This had partly to do with methods. Spurred on by explicit expansion plans that included set numeric and spatial

¹¹⁸ Michael Molloy, *Experiencing the World's Religions: Tradition, Challenge, and Change* (Toronto: Mayfield, 1999), 410.

¹¹⁹ Irwin, "Early Native Teaching in Canada," 5; Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 61, 308 (fn 15), 310 (fn 16).

¹²⁰ On the development of enrollment card procedure see van den Hoonaard, *Origins*, 259-260. This process was and is not universal. Graeme Were, for example, reports a more stringent and public process of declaration in New Ireland, Papua New Guinea: "Fashioning Belief: The Case of the Baha'i Faith in Northern New Ireland," *Anthropological Forum* 17 no.3 (Nov 2007), 247. Similarly, Molly Marie Rhodenbaugh reports that declaration cards were not used among the Guaymí people in Panama until the 1970s: "The Ngöbe Bahá'ís of Panama" (MA thesis, Texas Tech University, 1999), 91.

¹²¹ Wendi Momen defines "deepening" as a lifelong process of learning consisting of the "study of the Bahá'í Faith in all its aspects." It includes familiarizing oneself with the Baha'i sacred texts, teachings, laws, principles, and "Administrative Order." Wendi Momen, ed. *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 1989), 68.

¹²² As noted in the introduction, this number is based on figures supplied by the Canadian and American Baha'i National Centers (email to the author from Larry Clarke, Records Department, Canadian Baha'i National Centre, 5 November 2004; email to the author from Robert Stockman, Research Department, American Baha'i National Center, 28 February 2008). It includes a total of 6,237 Indigenous enrollments in Canada and 1,100 in the United States. New Baha'is in Canada were given the option to specify their ethnicity on their enrollment cards, while this feature was not introduced in the United States until the 1980s. There were more Indigenous enrollments overall in Canada than in the United States, but the figure of 1,100 is low and out of step with contemporary teaching reports. For example, statistics from the American National Center indicate a total Indian enrollment of 156 for the period of 1964-1973, while a 1972 report recorded "a minimum of 324 Indian enrollments" between January 1971 and April 1972 alone. The report further observed that, "This does not include any Indians who may have enrolled and not indicated that they were Indian, nor does it include the 3-400 Lumbee Indians purported to have been enrolled in North and South Carolina during 1970 and 1971." A following section on "Statistical Evaluation of Teaching Efforts to Reach the American Indian" noted further discrepancies. "The American Indian and the Bahá'í Faith: A Report by the Minority Teaching Office of the National Teaching Committee, April 1972," 11-12, American Indian Teaching Material Subject File, National Bahá'í Archives, United States. On Baha'i statistics more generally see Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 213-228.

target goals, teachers and pioneers followed a Baha’i seasonal round that concluded each April with a flurry of intensive outreach as they scrambled to secure the election of as many Local Spiritual Assemblies as possible.¹²³ The goal of Indigenous outreach, as laid out by Shoghi Effendi, was not only to secure conversions, but also to encourage “self-sufficient and independent” Indigenous Baha’i communities.¹²⁴ While Baha’is often met formal target goals for Indigenous enrollment, they seldom accompanied this outreach with effective and consistent follow-up procedures.¹²⁵ “Consolidation” challenges dogged Baha’i outreach in general and, in an effort to encourage “deepening,” Baha’i communities in North America were encouraged to implement a more formalized system of “training institutes” and “study circles,” known as the Ruhi method, beginning in the 1990s.¹²⁶ Still, a lack of participation in the prophesied Indigenous teaching field suggests that it was not a substantial priority for most North American Baha’is. Focused initiatives at the end of a Baha’i year or action plan could generate temporary interest and participation, but it was a small number of Baha’is who committed themselves to this work long-term who were left with the challenge of helping to educate new Indigenous adherents. Although those Indigenous people who enrolled may well have continued to identify

¹²³ This cycle is well documented in publications like *Canadian Bahá’í News*. For specific examples from the Canadian Prairies see Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 80-90, 219-222; Pemberton-Piggot, “The Bahá’í Faith in Alberta,” 46.

¹²⁴ Cited in “Commentary: National Spiritual Assembly,” in Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Teaching Indigenous People*, 33.

¹²⁵ These challenges will be discussed in more detail in coming chapters. Sources in the Canadian context include Pemberton-Piggot, “The Bahá’í Faith in Alberta,” 44; “Status Report on Native Teaching in Canada: Prepared by the National Indian Desk for the October 31, 1986 National Spiritual Assembly Meeting,” Will van den Hoonaard Personal Collection; Fletcher and Elinor Bennett, interview with the author, Saanich, British Columbia, 21 July 2004.

¹²⁶ The curriculum for these circles and institutes, which have spread throughout the Baha’i world, is derived from materials and methods developed at the “Ruhi Institute” in Colombia. Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America*, 146. For discussion of consolidation challenges in other Baha’i contexts see Juan R.I. Cole, “The Baha’i Faith in North America as Panopticon,” *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37 (June 1998), 236-237; Richard Hollinger, “Introduction: Bahá’í Communities in the West,” in *Community Histories*, Studies in the Bábí and Bahá’í Religions, Volume 6, ed. Richard Hollinger (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1992), xxxi; McMullen, *The Bahá’í*, 132-135; Piff, *Bahá’í Lore*, 78-79, 261-262. “Hand of the Cause” Dorothy Baker warned American Baha’is as early as 1953 that new members “will never retain their faith on a picture and a pamphlet”: “Text of Taped Message by Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker, Ridvan 1953,” Kenneth Jeffers Papers, M-378, Box 15, National Bahá’í Archives, United States.

with Baha'i principles, and even call themselves Baha'is, few had enough regular interaction with the religion and community to become active adherents.¹²⁷

Ongoing colonial currents within the Baha'i community further complicated, and sometimes quelled, consolidation. The entry of several thousand Indigenous people into the religion during the 1960s and 1970s, in particular, contributed to a significant demographic shift in the North American Baha'i community overall. As more youth and people of colour joined the religion, they pressed the principle of unity in diversity into real community practice. The immigration of significant numbers of Iranian Baha'is in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which intensified persecution of Baha'is in Iran, further amplified this process.¹²⁸ In addition to the duty to teach, Baha'is were also tasked to build religious community and the oral histories that follow in coming chapters readily illustrate how many forged meaningful and lasting relationships of mutual respect across colour and cultural lines. But painful colonial attitudes and structural inequalities persisted as well, causing a number of Indigenous Baha'is to retreat from community practice.¹²⁹

Setting Settler Colonialism: A Genealogy of Indigenous Identity

Whether Baha'is knew it or not, they were situated in a context shot through with uneven power relations. Tracing the genealogy of Indigenous identity in North America through this same period, with a particular eye to policy, clarifies shared kinship between Baha'i and Indigenous histories and confirms the contingent nature of both. As I noted in the introduction to

¹²⁷ Jack Bastow, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 24 July 2004; Lee Brown, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 21 March 2008; Pemberton-Piggot, "The Bahá'í Faith in Alberta," 34; "Status Report on Native Teaching in Canada."

¹²⁸ Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America*, 74-144; Hollinger, "Introduction," pp.x-xxxiii. There was relatively significant numerical growth in the religion in this period as well: from approximately 11,000 in 1963, to approximately 75,000 in 1976, to 110,000 by 1991 in the United States and from 554 in 1953 to 17,724 in 1986 in Canada. Hollinger, "Introduction," xxx.

¹²⁹ I consider these tensions and processes in more detail in Chapter 6, specifically.

this study, the very idea of “Indianness” stretches back to Columbus’ Caribbean landfall in 1492.¹³⁰ Four centuries and a year later, human and ecological imperialism had combined to dramatically reduce pre-contact Indigenous populations in North America.¹³¹ As the Indian Wars on the American Plains and the Northwest Resistance on the Canadian Prairies (where William Henry Jackson, as he was then known, had served as secretary to Riel) drew to a close, both Canada and the United States looked to consolidate their national rule and legitimate policies of assimilation and land and resource dispossession to a growing settler population.¹³² With its official theme of progress, the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago proved a potent venue in which to perform this ideology.¹³³ Indigenous people, to be sure, turned colonial categories like the authenticity on display in Chicago to their own, albeit constrained, ends.¹³⁴ The stakes of such efforts, however, were always high and from the time of Columbus’ “discovery” (which the fair, recall, memorialized), the category of Indianness was vigorously contested.

¹³⁰ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the Indian From Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 4-12.

¹³¹ Ecological imperialism is historian Alfred Crosby’s term: Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986). On depopulation see Russell Thornton, “Health, Disease, and Demography,” in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 68-84.

¹³² Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 36.

¹³³ Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 34-35; Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*, 47.

¹³⁴ See, for example, Paige Raibmon’s analysis of Kwakwaka’wakw performance at the fair: *Authentic Indians*, 15-17, 35, 50-73. For other examples of Indigenous agency in contexts of exhibition see, for example, Coll Thrush’s discussion of the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in *Native Seattle*, 118-122; L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996). For analysis of colonialism and Indigenous agency in the context of Christianity on the Northwest Coast see Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003); Susan Neylan and Melissa Meyer, “‘Here Comes the Band!’: Cultural Collaboration, Connective Traditions, and Aboriginal Brass Bands on British Columbia’s North Coast, 1875-1964,” *BC Studies* no.152 (Winter 2006/07): 35-66.

Some settlers in the late nineteenth century drew on a narrative of the “dying Indian” as supporting evidence for contemporary theories of social evolution and racial hierarchy.¹³⁵ Others, led by anthropologists, mourned the loss of this “vanishing race” and scurried to salvage what they perceived as authentic remnants of dying cultures.¹³⁶ In a striking, but not coincidental, parallel to nineteenth-century scholars of religion, these anthropologists relegated “real” Indigenous people to the “savage slot” of pure static tradition.¹³⁷ Indigenous people had, since first contact, served as a “negative reference group” against which colonists defined their own sense of self and superiority and, from the American Revolution in the United States, the “national symbolic.”¹³⁸ Indians both noble and ignoble were reduced, in the colonial imagination of the late nineteenth century, into a safe and sanitized commodity onto which settler and imperial populations projected their own anxieties and fantasies.¹³⁹ Indigenous people, again, could and did deploy such “imperialist nostalgia” for their own purposes.¹⁴⁰ Still, the pressure, in the words of Seneca anthropologist Arthur Parker, “to have to play Indian in order to be

¹³⁵ On the image and discourse of the “dying Indian” see Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*, 29, 144-145; Mary-ellen Kelm, “Diagnosing the Discursive Indian: Medicine, Gender and ‘the Dying Race,’” *Ethnohistory* 52 (2) (Spring 2005): 371-406.

¹³⁶ On salvage ethnography see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Ishi’s Brain, Ishi’s Ashes: Anthropology and Genocide,” *Anthropology Today* 17, no.1 (Feb 2001), 14. On the “vanishing Indian,” and intersections with American policy, see Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).

¹³⁷ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “The Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness,” in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. Richard G. Fox (Santa Fe: School for American Research Press, 1991), 17-44; Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). On intersecting genealogies of colonialism and religious studies see David Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996).

¹³⁸ Quotes are from the following sources, respectively: Alexandra Harmon, “Wanted: More Histories of Indian Identity,” in Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury, eds., *A Companion to American Indian History* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2002), 249 and Lauren Gail Berlant cited in Kate Flint, *The Transatlantic Indian, 1776-1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 8. See also Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Cheryl Walker, *Indian Nation: Native American Literature and Nineteenth-Century Nationalisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998).

¹³⁹ Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian*; Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, Flint, *Transatlantic Indian*; Deloria, *Playing Indian*; Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*; Paige Raibmon, “The Practice of Everyday Colonialism: Indigenous Women at Work in the Hop Fields and Tourist Industry of Puget Sound,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 3, no.3 (2006): 23-56.

¹⁴⁰ Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 6. See also, for example, Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

Indian,” ran deep.¹⁴¹ North Americans “played Indian,” as well as “Eastern” and “Oriental,” in this period and Baha’is were certainly influenced by the convergence of savagery and authenticity at this time.¹⁴²

These broad cultural and intellectual currents intersected with official efforts to regulate Indian identity. As the Canadian and American states sought to secure land for resettlement and agricultural and industrial development, such regulation was deployed as a central tool of dispossession.¹⁴³ Although Canada has long sustained itself on a myth of benevolence in Indian affairs, distinguishing its practices from a history of more explicit violence south of the border, the young country quickly erected mechanisms to legislate Indian identity after Confederation in 1867.¹⁴⁴ The Indian Act of 1876 consolidated former policy and produced a shared grammar that continues to guide formal regulatory efforts in Canada.¹⁴⁵ The Indian Act imposed a definition of Indianness that distinguished “status” from “non-status” Indians, a designation that determined access to treaty rights (then being negotiated in much of the country) and other “benefits” and thus carried very real material and political implications.¹⁴⁶ No single definition of “Indianness” united federal policy in the United States, but efforts to legislate Indian identity were informed by similar anxieties and impulses. The General Allotment, or Dawes, Act of 1887, introduced two critical designations that continue, with modification, to serve as formal markers

¹⁴¹ Cited in Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity*, 319.

¹⁴² Deloria, *Playing Indian*; Nance, *How the Arabian Nights Inspired the American Dream*, especially her introduction, “Playing Eastern,” 1-18.

¹⁴³ Bonita Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview,” *Hypatia*, vol. 18 no. 2 (Spring 2003), 3, 6.

¹⁴⁴ On the persistent “peacemaker” myth in Canada see Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), esp. 83-110.

¹⁴⁵ Following Foucault, Bonita Lawrence offers analysis of regulatory regimes and grammars of rule in her article, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity” (see, for an explicit explanation, 3-4). She also applies this perspective in *“Real” Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

¹⁴⁶ Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity,” 8-10. For further detail and context on treaties in Canada see J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

and measures of Indianness in the United States. The first, blood quantum, marshaled biological taxonomies of race to determine degrees of Indian ancestry.¹⁴⁷ The second, tribal rolls, established a legal baseline against which subsequent claims to tribal membership were frequently evaluated.¹⁴⁸ Like the Indian Act, which encouraged “enfranchisement” and imposed a system of band council governance, the Dawes Act aimed to undermine Indigenous landholding and leadership practices by pushing individual land allotments for formally recognized Indians.¹⁴⁹ Closely tied to cultural constructions of Indian identity, such legal and biological benchmarks fostered fissures between so-called “full” and “mixed bloods,” recognized and unrecognized, status and non-status, and Indian and Métis people.¹⁵⁰ Such designations and discourse intimately informed the histories of narrators in this study.

Despite the air of authority and fixity that officials attempted to project, the project of “making Indians” was often haphazard and always historically contingent. Sociologist Eva Marie Garrouette, for example, has described the disjointed and discretionary process of compiling tribal rolls as “almost unbelievably complicated.”¹⁵¹ Pushing beyond the salvage ethnographic paradigm, anthropologists also joined the fray in the early twentieth century. Pressing science to the service of identity, they analyzed feet, hair, and skin as measures of Indianness. Despite their “rather variable” outcomes, anthropological assessments contributed to evaluations of tribal recognition, critical for determining access to federal rights and services.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Edmunds, “Native Americans, New Voices,” 733-734; Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 42-43; Melissa Meyer, “American Indian Blood Quantum Requirements: Blood is Thicker Than Family,” in Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger, eds., *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 231-252.

¹⁴⁸ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 21-22; Alexandra Harmon, “Tribal Enrollment Councils: Lessons on Law and Indian Identity,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2001): 175-200.

¹⁴⁹ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 21-22; J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, Third Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 256.

¹⁵⁰ Garrouette, *Real Indians*; Lawrence, “*Real*” *Indians and Others*.

¹⁵¹ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 21.

¹⁵² Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 58.

In a series of court cases in the turn of the century Southwest, it was Pueblo culture that was placed on trial. Labeled at first too civilized to be Indian, the Pueblo were, by the early twentieth century, deemed too pagan to be otherwise.¹⁵³ Whether cultural, legal, biological, or some combination thereof, these evaluations turned on colonial assumptions of purity and stasis. Yet as the historian Alexandra Harmon and others have illustrated, measures of Indian identity, as lived and negotiated on the ground, changed over time.¹⁵⁴ This is readily born out in the oral histories to come: Baha'i conversion and practice directly promoted individual and shared processes of Indigenous identification.

Religion itself, like identity, was also profoundly imbricated in the project of settler colonialism in North America. In a context where “the Bible and the plough” were promoted as the twin pillars of progress, Indigenous practices like the potlatch ceremonial complex on the Northwest Coast, which included the ritual redistribution of wealth, simultaneously offended Christian and capitalist sympathies.¹⁵⁵ In support of their civilizing missions, the Canadian and American states both criminalized Indigenous spiritual practice in the 1880s.¹⁵⁶ Missionaries played varying roles in Indigenous communities during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as they had since early contact. As scholars of religious encounter in North America and elsewhere have demonstrated, Christianity did not march in blind lockstep with commercial and political powers.¹⁵⁷ Missionaries frequently decried what they saw as poor examples being set by

¹⁵³ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 64.

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities Around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Malinda Maynor Lowery, *Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South: Race, Identity, and the Making of a Nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

¹⁵⁵ Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 254-282.

¹⁵⁶ Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties That Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 87-105; Lee Irwin, “Freedom, Law, and Prophecy: A Brief History of Native American Religious Resistance,” in Lee Irwin, ed., *Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 295-296.

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, Ryan Dunch, “Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Cultural Theory, Christian Missions, and Global Modernity,” *History and Theory* 41, no. 3 (2002): 301-325; Nicholas Thomas, “Colonial Conversions: Difference,

the larger, less pious, colonial population and sometimes advocated politically on behalf of their Indigenous charges.¹⁵⁸ Nor did Christians present a single united front: Catholic and Protestant (and different denominations within these broad branches) and male and female missionaries, for example, all differed in their methods and motives.¹⁵⁹ At the same time, Christianity remained intimately tied up in civilization efforts in North America. On the nineteenth-century Northwest Coast, for example, Anglican missionary William Duncan established the model village of Metlakatla, which he envisioned as a paragon and training ground of Victorian virtue.¹⁶⁰ Metropolitan principles of punctuality, industry, thrift, domesticity, and sexuality were likewise promoted in other less formal arenas, where missionaries worked, consciously or otherwise, to effect what the anthropologist Peter van der Veer has elsewhere described as “conversion to modernities.”¹⁶¹ Indigenous people, though, were not passive pawns in this

Hierarchy, and History in Early Twentieth-Century Evangelical Propaganda,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34, no.2 (April 1992): 366-389.

¹⁵⁸ For examples of missionary/settler tensions in North America see Anderson, *The Betrayal of Faith*, 210; John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter Since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 14, 36, 107, 219. For examples of missionary advocacy see Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary*, 34, 137-152; Celia Haig-Brown, “The ‘Friends’ of Nahnebahwequa,” in *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada*, ed. Celia Haig-Brown and David Nock (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 132-157; Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 46, 54-56, 77, 79 87, 93.

¹⁵⁹ On Catholic, Protestant, and denominational difference (and tension) see, for example, Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, 32, 65, 80, 84, 90. On the gendered dynamics of mission in North America see, for example, Jan Hare and Jean Barman, eds. *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006); Mary-ellen Kelm, ed. *The Letters of Margaret Butcher: Missionary-Imperialism on the North Pacific Coast* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006); Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002). And, in broader context, Mary Tyler Huber and Nancy Lutkehaus, eds. *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999); Elizabeth Prevost, *The Communion of Women: Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁶⁰ Jean Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla: A Victorian Missionary in British Columbia* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1974). For a study that thoughtfully positions Duncan and his contemporaries in the context of Indigenous (specifically, Tsimshian) history see Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*.

¹⁶¹ Peter van der Veer, ed. *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christian Modernities* (New York: Routledge, 1996). For a trenchant discussion of this process in the context of British Columbia see Adele Perry, “Metropolitan Knowledge, Colonial Practice, and Indigenous Womanhood: Missions in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past*, ed. Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 109-130. And, in the context of Southern Africa, see Jean Comaroff

process. One narrator in this project, specifically, recalled the religious dedication of her ancestors, who were among the first Tsimshian people to move to the “new” Metlakatla in Alaska when the community relocated there in 1887.¹⁶²

The frequency with which missionaries took recourse to institutions to disseminate their ideals further indicates that they were hardly the universals so touted.¹⁶³ This is reflected perhaps most sharply in residential and boarding schools. Christianity had played a varying hand in colonial education from early contact, but in the late nineteenth century, the religion was marshaled in direct service of the modern colonial mission. On the East Coast of the United States, intellectual, political, philanthropic, and religious reformers, the humanitarians of their day, held out assimilation as the solution to the “Indian problem.” The first American Indian boarding school opened in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1879 under the direction of former military commander Richard Pratt. His oft-cited goal to “kill the Indian in him and save the man” well captures the intent of these institutions.¹⁶⁴ Sent by Canadian Prime Minister John A. MacDonald to investigate the American system, Nicholas Davin recommended in the same year that Canada look south for inspiration. Although they shared this initial spark, the Canadian and American

and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol.1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹⁶² Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interview with the author, by telephone, 19 Aug 2008. On Indigenous agency in this context see also Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*. As discussed in the introduction to this study, historians have been increasingly attentive to Indigenous agency in the context of religious encounter. For studies of Indigenous missionaries, specifically, see Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-1875* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012); Winona Wheeler, “The Journals and Voices of a Church of England Native Catechist: Asknootow (Charles Pratt), 1851-1884,” in Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds., *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* Second Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 237-263.

¹⁶³ Adele Perry makes this point eloquently in “Metropolitan Knowledge, Colonial Practice, and Indigenous Womanhood,” 109-110, 126.

¹⁶⁴ Richard H. Pratt, *Official Report of the Nineteenth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction* (1892), cited in Ronald Neizen, *Spirit Wars: Native North American Religions in the Age of Nation Building* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 41. This statement is often (mis)rendered “kill the Indian and save the man.” See, for example, Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2004); Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism From Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 151.

systems diverged on the ultimate role of religion in the schools. American funding for missionary schools was scaled back within a decade of Carlisle opening its doors; the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 removed this influence completely. In Canada, by contrast, Catholic and Protestant churches were paid by the state to operate residential schools well into the second half of the twentieth century. The expansive and malleable tool of the Indian Act was used to legislate student attendance and impose stiff penalties on resistant families.¹⁶⁵

These schools, which often moved children great distances from their home communities, were potent tools of resocialization that sought to destroy, or at least radically remake, Indigenous kinship systems. Living conditions were frequently poor, while instruction stressed gendered manual and domestic training and repetitive religious ritual over academic instruction.¹⁶⁶ Some former students have fond memories of their residential and boarding school experiences and, as in other contexts, Indigenous people were not simply hapless victims.¹⁶⁷ Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, however, were all too common, especially in the Canadian context.¹⁶⁸ This system also generated some unexpected and unintended results. In

¹⁶⁵ For a succinct review of this history see Neizen, *Spirit Wars*, 46-87. The literature on residential and boarding schools is vast. See, for example, in the Canadian context, J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1968* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999). And, in the American context, David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Clifford E. Trafzer, Jean A. Keller, and Lorene Sisquoc, eds. *Boarding School Blues: Revisiting American Indian Educational Experiences* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 151-288.

¹⁶⁷ For positive residential school experiences see, for example, Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 8-9, 269-287; David Wallace Adams, "Beyond Bleakness: The Brighter Side of Indian Boarding Schools, 1870-1940," in Trafzer et al, *Boarding School Blues*, 35-64. And for discussion of resistance see, for example, Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 343-374; K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). As Scott Richard Lyons has observed, positive experiences are accorded limited space in current public discourse and memory: *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 21-23.

¹⁶⁸ Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 317-342. It is not clear at this point whether abuse was more rampant in Canada or whether, in view of the political climate in this country, it has simply been more reported and discussed. An Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement was reached in Canada in 2006. Under the terms of this agreement, Canada is currently convening a Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools.

bringing together youth from a wide range of tribal backgrounds, it contributed to the production of a shared sense of Indigenous identity. These schools also produced a new generation of leaders who deployed their education, however circumscribed, to challenge the colonial system.¹⁶⁹ The Canadian Baha’i community lodged formal critiques of the residential school system; at the same time, some adherents pursued employment at such schools as a way to foster contact with Indigenous people.¹⁷⁰ Several narrators attended residential schools themselves, while many more felt their intergenerational effects.

State efforts to regulate Indigenous identity and genealogy, and thus contain the perceived “Indian problem,” persisted well into the twentieth century. In the United States, the policy pendulum swung several times between explicit assimilationist efforts like the Dawes Act and somewhat more self-determinist legislation like the Depression-era Indian Reorganization Act. The brainchild of Indian Affairs commissioner John Collier (who was among authors Baha’is would later recommend to those looking to do background reading prior to participation in Indigenous outreach), the Indian “New Deal” reversed the privatization of Indigenous landholdings spurred by the Dawes Act and promoted a limited tribal self-government and religious freedom.¹⁷¹ The end of World War Two, which had stimulated and sustained urban Indigenous migration as people participated in wartime industry and returning (and often politicized) soldiers pursued education and work in cities, brought another federal about-face. During this “termination” era, policy aimed to sever historic treaty relationships and to solve the

¹⁶⁹ See, for example, Child, *Boarding School Seasons*; Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 12-13, 116; Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, 373, 417, 430.

¹⁷⁰ See, for example, the Baha’i submission to H.B. Hawthorn, ed. *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada: Economic, Political, Education Needs and Policies*, Vol.2 (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs, 1967), 60-61. The teaching guide, “Indians of Canada: Looking to the Future,” for example, noted “A number of Baha’is have served as teachers in Indian day schools designated as Protestant.” National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, “Indians of Canada: Looking to the Future,” 6.

¹⁷¹ Collier is recommended to Baha’i readers in National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, “Indians of Canada: A Guide for Teaching,” 6.

vexed question of recognition by erasing tribes, even Indians, themselves. “Relocation,” reminiscent of “removal” over a century before, was a central strand of this strategy. Over two decades, beginning in the early 1950s, over 100,000 Indigenous people were relocated from reservations to selected cities stretching from Chicago to Cleveland and Seattle to San Jose. These policies, however, were hardly the one-way ticket to integration that legislators had intended. While termination and relocation achieved some of their aims, at least on paper, they also brought diverse Indigenous populations into interaction and stimulated expanded kinship networks and a new intertribal politics.¹⁷² Though Baha’i teaching and pioneering typically concentrated on reserves and reservations, Shoghi Effendi and other Baha’is called for outreach in cities as well and a number of narrators were active in urban Indigenous communities both before and after joining the religion.¹⁷³

In Canada, the Indian Act continued to guide and inscribe federal policy through the twentieth century (and, indeed, until today). Between 1927 and 1951, when an amendment to the Act lifted the “potlatch law” and allowed women to run in band council elections, Indians were prohibited from hiring lawyers to defend their land and resource title.¹⁷⁴ Gendered provisions that stripped Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men of their formal Indian status

¹⁷² Joane Nagel offers a succinct overview of these policies and processes in *American Indian Ethnic Renewal*, 117-120, 140. See also Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 917-1084. On termination and relocation policy specifically see Donald Fixico, *Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945-1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986). On expanded postwar urban Indigenous community, kinship, and politics see, for example, Susan Lobo and Kurt Peters, eds. *American Indians and the Urban Experience* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira, 2000); Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Thrush, *Native Seattle*, esp. 162-183.

¹⁷³ Calls for urban Indigenous Baha’i outreach include Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Teaching Indigenous People*, 8; American Indian Teaching Committee, “Unified Action Approach,” 11; National Indian Reserves Teaching Committee, “Indians of Canada: A Guide for Teaching,” 11; American Indian Service Committee, “The American Indian and the Bahá’í Faith, April 1972,” 4, 20.

¹⁷⁴ Arthur J. Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada’s Native People* (Toronto: Key Porter, 2010), 326, 328.

remained in place until 1985.¹⁷⁵ This legislation sometimes intersected with Baha’i law: one narrator reported that he and his wife came close to losing their Baha’i “administrative rights” when they chose not to legally register their Baha’i marriage as this would have resulted in his wife losing her Indian status (as an American of Cherokee heritage, this narrator was not a “status Indian” himself); after discussion with the couple, however, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly recommended that their Baha’i voting rights be protected “because of the injustice of the situation.”¹⁷⁶ Although Canada had no large-scale relocation policy akin to that in the United States, exclusions imposed by the Indian Act, together with shared economic imperatives, contributed to similar patterns of urban migration.¹⁷⁷ Here too, they promoted heightened intertribal interaction and political mobilization.¹⁷⁸ When, in 1969, the federal government tabled a White Paper (now *the White Paper*) that proposed to eliminate “special” Indian status in the interests of a liberal “Just Society,” many Indigenous people across the country rallied in response.¹⁷⁹ Cree leader Harold Cardinal’s searing rebuke, *The Unjust Society*, captured this anger and energy as it exposed a Canadian history of cultural genocide and forcefully demanded that the “buckskin curtain,” the real source and symbol of “the Indian-problem problem,” be dismantled.¹⁸⁰ Sioux activist and academic Vine Deloria Jr. published his own blistering critique of colonialism, *Custer Died for Your Sins* (another piece of

¹⁷⁵ Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity,” 8.

¹⁷⁶ Lee Brown, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 28 October 2008.

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, Craig Proulx and Heather A. Howard, eds. *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011); Frances Sanderson and Heather Howard-Bobiwash, eds. *The Meeting Place: Aboriginal Life in Toronto* (Toronto: Native Canadian Centre of Toronto, 1997).

¹⁷⁸ See, for example, Heather Howard-Bobiwash, “Women’s Class Strategies as Activism in Native Community Building in Toronto, 1950-1975,” *American Indian Quarterly* 27 nos.3/4 (Summer and Fall 2003): 566-582; Lee Maracle, *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1990 [1975]).

¹⁷⁹ Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens*, 328-339.

¹⁸⁰ Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1999 [1969]), 1.

recommended Baha'i reading), in the same year, suggesting the shared currents brewing on either side of the border.¹⁸¹

Both Cardinal and Deloria identified missionaries as central and especially problematic players in the colonial project, further signaling Christianity's shifting status (some might say its fall from grace) in this period.¹⁸² As activists and academics pushed for the legal protection of Indigenous spiritual practice and the repatriation of sacred property, spirituality proved a powerful site for articulating and activating sovereignty.¹⁸³ And although contemporary discourse frequently set them in opposition, Christianity and Indigeneity were not mutually exclusive categories. Events like a series of Indian Ecumenical Conferences held on the Prairies beginning in the early 1970s, for example, suggest that Christianity remained, for a number of Indigenous people, a significant, if contested, site of spiritual and political practice.¹⁸⁴

Informed by this context, and related theologies of liberation, inculturation, and ecumenism, Protestant and Catholic churches historically engaged in Indigenous missions began to rethink their roles and adopt (in word, if not always in deed) new strategies of "mission as solidarity."¹⁸⁵ Other denominations, meanwhile, entered the mission field. Mormons (motivated, from the nineteenth century, by their own Indian prophecy), Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's

¹⁸¹ Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969). This book is recommended to Baha'i readers in American Indian Teaching Committee, "Unified Action Approach," 4.

¹⁸² Cardinal, *The Unjust Society*, 68-75; Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 101-124.

¹⁸³ Irwin, "Freedom, Law, and Prophecy."

¹⁸⁴ James Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era: A Narrative Map of the Indian Ecumenical Conference* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). See also James Treat, ed., *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Andrea Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Jace Weaver, ed., *Native American Religious Identity: Unforgotten Gods* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).

¹⁸⁵ The phrase "mission as solidarity" is Kenneth A. David and John C. Boonstra's, cited in Theresa S. Smith, "The Church of the Immaculate Conception: Inculturation and Identity among the Anishnaabeg of Manitoulin Island," in Irwin, ed., *Native American Spirituality*, 146-7. See also Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, 206-211; Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire*, especially 61-87; Otávio Velho (translation by David Rogers), "Missionization in the Postcolonial World: A View from Brazil and Elsewhere," in Thomas Csordas, ed. *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization*, Thomas Csordas, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 31-54.

Witnesses, Catholic Charismatics, and especially Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians were, like Baha'is, all active in "Indian Country" during the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁶

Spirituality also served important functions in postwar North American cities. As urban Indigenous populations swelled, residents interacted beyond tribal borders and developed shared spiritual forms and what the sociologist Joane Nagel has described as a broader "supratribal consciousness and constituency."¹⁸⁷ Reflecting the longstanding influence of Plains Indian culture as an (imagined) arbiter of Indianness, the powwow and the pipe, the smudge and the sweat were among the key ceremonial markers of this intertribal spirituality.¹⁸⁸ Such practice, as well as intertribal politics, had important earlier antecedents.¹⁸⁹ The Indigenous protest that burst into popular awareness and onto television screens after the establishment of the American Indian Movement in Minneapolis-St. Paul in 1968, for example, drew on a long activist history and historical reference points.¹⁹⁰ Events like the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island by the "Indians of all Tribes," said to kick off the Red Power era in earnest, were the stuff of news headlines and captured the interest and imagination of observers then and since. Such media-friendly tactics were precipitated and accompanied, though, by other Indigenous activisms,

¹⁸⁶ See, for example, Burkinshaw, "Native Pentecostalism in British Columbia," 142-170; Kirk Dombrowski, *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*, 201-202; Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right*; John A. Price, "Mormon Missions to the Indians," in *Handbook of North American Indians: Volume 4, History of Indian-White Relations*, ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 459-464; Clinton N. Westman, "Pentecostalism Among Canadian Aboriginal People: A Political Movement?" in *A Liberating Spirit: Pentecostals and Social Action in North America*, ed. Michael Wilkinson and Steven Studebaker (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 85-110.

¹⁸⁷ Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal*, 12. Also 9, 118, 143, 202-203.

¹⁸⁸ Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal*, 6, 201-202; Joan Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, L.A.: Maintaining Ethnic Community in Complex Society*, Revised Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 60.

¹⁸⁹ See, for example, Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity*; JoAllyn Archambault, "Pan-Indian Organizations," in Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Encyclopedia of North American Indians* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996), 462-464.

¹⁹⁰ The Trail of Broken Treaties in 1972, confrontation at Wounded Knee in 1973, and the Longest Walk in 1978, for example, all invoked significant historical reference points. See, for example, Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal*, 136-137, 175-176.

many led by women, who operated in a less visible, but no less critical, register.¹⁹¹ Further, as the Red Power moniker and action like marches, occupations, and “fish-ins” suggest, Indigenous people, youth especially, also looked to other contemporary activists for inspiration. Movements for civil, student, labour, and women’s rights, along with global decolonization efforts, all contributed to a heady atmosphere of unrest and potential in the 1960s and 70s.¹⁹² Baha’is, Indigenous and not, made significant contributions in this context, but kept their vision trained on a spiritual vision of global unity rather than a politics of difference.

The process of Indigenous “ethnic renewal” at work in this period included not only those with prior Indigenous affiliations, but also a good number who claimed this identity for the first time. As awareness about colonialism, in particular, and ethnicity, in general, grew, a striking number of people (over a million in the United States between 1960 and 1990) began to self-identify as Indian for the first time.¹⁹³ People who had previously hidden or not known about their Indigenous heritage began to investigate their family histories and adopt and perform Indigenous identities (or, in the words of Zug G. Standing Bear, founder of the Deer Clan of the Southeastern Cherokee Confederacy, began the journey of ““becoming a minority””).¹⁹⁴ This was, for many, a profound and empowering process and another legacy that a number of

¹⁹¹ On Red Power activism see, for example, Troy R. Johnson, Joane Nagel, and Duane Champagne, eds. *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Paul Chaat Smith, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: New Press, 1996). For works that offer a broader genealogy and analysis of Indigenous activism see, for example, Daniel Cobb and Loretta Fowler, eds. *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007); Daniel Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008); Horton, “Beyond Red Power”; Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather Howard-Bobiwash, eds. *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women’s Activism in Urban Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Thrush, *Native Seattle*, 162-183.

¹⁹² Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal*, 130-132.

¹⁹³ Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal*, 5. The anthropologist Circe Sturm describes those individuals “who have changed their racial self-identification on the U.S. census from non-Indian to Indian” as “racial shifters.” Circe Sturm, *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-first Century* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2010), Part One.

¹⁹⁴ Cited in Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 83.

narrators in this project shared as they forged new, but not “inauthentic,” Indigenous identities in this period.

At a time when it was increasingly “in to be skin,” such self-identification was often deeply contested. Accusations of “ethnic switching” and opportunism ““of the rankest stripe”” were leveled against so-called “new” and “born-again Indians” by some members of both Indigenous and settler societies.¹⁹⁵ Renewed antimodern and countercultural currents, together with formal policy changes, generated fears of cultural and material appropriation, concerns that were boosted by real cases of exploitation.¹⁹⁶ As settler society projected, once more, its own “dreams and discontents” onto imaginary Indians, the noble savage was figured as the prototypical environmentalist, warrior, pacifist, and more.¹⁹⁷ Popular texts like Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (another book that made recommended Baha’i reading lists) simultaneously evoked sympathy and stereotype.¹⁹⁸ And in their romantic, often hyper-sexualized, longings, “friends” sometimes became “wannabes.”¹⁹⁹ The New Age movement in the United States, in particular, has demonstrated a vigorous appetite for all things Indian, especially “spiritual and ceremonial” things Indian, prompting both unconscious and more egregious forms of appropriation.²⁰⁰ The “self-determinist” (in name, if not always in spirit or application) policy package that the American government rolled out from the early 1970s set

¹⁹⁵ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 85-86.

¹⁹⁶ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 82-98.

¹⁹⁷ The phrase “dreams and discontents” is Hazel Hertzberg’s, *The Search for an American Indian Identity*, 296. On authenticity and counterculture in this period see Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 128-180; Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Philip Jenkins, *Dream Catchers: How Mainstream America Discovered Native Spirituality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁹⁸ Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970). Edmunds notes the popularity of this text in “Native Americans, New Voices,” 724. *Bury My Heart* is recommended to Baha’i readers in American Indian Teaching Committee, “Unified Action Approach,” 4.

¹⁹⁹ Rayna Green, “The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in Europe and America,” *Folklore* (England) 99 (1988): 30-55; Laura E. Donaldson, “On Medicine Women and White Shame-Ans: New Age Native Americanism and Commodity Fetishism as Pop Culture Feminism,” *Signs* 24, no.3 (Spring 1999): 677-696.

²⁰⁰ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 84-85.

out mechanisms like a Federal Acknowledgement Process that determined access to critical rights and resources and similarly sparked anxiety, accusations, and cases of concrete abuse.²⁰¹

Despite the formal rhetoric of self-determination, and increased self-identified claims to Indigenous identity, legal regulation, and allied assumptions of authenticity, lingered. The American government, for example, maintained the authority to erase Indian tribes with the stroke of a pen (or keyboard), as it did the Samish in Washington State in the 1990s. And, while the Bureau of Indian Affairs Branch of Acknowledgement and Research claimed that “tradition” was not a marker necessary to achieve federal recognition, claimants were still required to demonstrate consistent community life based on the assessment of external authorities that held authenticity as the ultimate benchmark of Indianness.²⁰² A similar, sometimes more bald, logic was likewise leveled in courtrooms where culture was once again put on trial. In Canada, for example, culinary choices have recently been submitted to serious judicial scrutiny – if you eat pizza, Crown Counsel has argued, you cannot possibly be an Indian.²⁰³ The furor that erupted over a whale hunt undertaken by the Makah Nation in 1999 further confirmed that assumptions of purity and stasis and the affiliated tradition/modernity divide held outside the courtroom too.²⁰⁴

The Makah whale hunt again revealed how Indigenous people could and did deploy assumptions of authenticity to their own, albeit constrained, ends. In some contexts, however, colonial categories were also internalized. The Indigenous women in Canada who led efforts to reform the patriarchal dimensions of the Indian Act, for example, encountered strong resistance

²⁰¹ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 25-29.

²⁰² Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 27-29.

²⁰³ Dara Culhane, *The Pleasure of the Crown: Anthropology, Law, and First Nations* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1998), 229; Robin Ridington, “Fieldwork in Courtroom 53: A Witness to Delgamuukw v. A.G.,” in *When You Sing It Now, Just Like New: First Nations Poetics, Voices, and Representations*, Robin Ridington and Jillian Ridington (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 246-247.

²⁰⁴ Terry Jay Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 359-372; Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 1-3, 8, 11, 13, 206, 208, 211 (fn 2).

from many male leaders who insisted that gender be subordinated to race in the quest for Indigenous rights.²⁰⁵ Bill C-31, finally introduced in 1985, was hardly a panacea. In addition to sloughing off its gendered exclusions to later generations, the chilly reception that many women with newly reinstated status encountered in Indigenous communities reveals the degree to which this legal definition of Indianness had become normalized within Indigenous communities themselves.²⁰⁶ Biological constructs proved similarly resilient, especially in the United States, where those who met federal requirements achieved what Garrouette has dubbed the “dubious distinction” of carrying a Certificate of Degree of Indian Blood and where a majority of tribes applied some formulation of blood quantum to determine membership.²⁰⁷ Nor did culture, even its more self-determined variations, prove a neutral space for evaluating Indian identity. For those “new Indians” who history had denied an earlier connection to their Indigenous ancestry, for example, wielding culture as the ultimate barometer of identity could exacerbate a sense of pain and disconnect and foster further cleavage.²⁰⁸ A century on from Chicago, the specter of authenticity continued to haunt and Baha’is, Indigenous and not, shared in this shadowy ancestry.

Genealogies

This may seem a long way from the White City in 1893. Family history is often this way, however: as much as favorite relatives and repeated anecdotes, genealogies are composed of deeds and connections forgotten, silenced, and unknown. In tracing family trees of ideas, practices, and policies that informed the Baha’i Faith and “Indianness,” and in pointing up their shared relationship as well, this chapter has established the historically-specific foundation from

²⁰⁵ Joanne Barker, “Gender, Sovereignty, and the Discourse of Rights in Native Women’s Activism,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 7, no.1 (2006): 127-161. See also Barker’s critique of the internalization of colonial markers of authenticity and Indianness in: *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Duke, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

²⁰⁶ Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity,” 12-15, 21, 27-28.

²⁰⁷ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 38; Meyer, “American Indian Blood Quantum Requirements.”

²⁰⁸ Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 79-81.

which narrators in this project interacted with the Baha'i religion and formulated both Indigenous and Baha'i identities. A shift away from origins destabilizes assumptions of purity, and attendant declensionist narratives. "Indianness" was a category riven by power and colonial policy policed the parameters of Indigeneity at the same time that it contributed to a sense of common bond among diverse peoples who came to recognize their shared experiences of colonialism. That Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy would even come to be characterized as such was not obvious when he first articulated this statement in Persian in 1916. Baha'is were engaging historically contingent and contested constructions of Indigeneity and were situated in a context of uneven relations of power. These manifested themselves within the Baha'i community itself, generating resistance from some Indigenous people and causing pain and retreat for some others who did declare. At the same time, however, the flexible Baha'i vision accommodated a wide range of Indigenous interpretations and identifications and this proved one of its major strengths and appeals. There was substantial, if still finite, space for Indigenous people to make what they saw fit of the faith. Grounded in the genealogies tracked here, narrators in this project went on to forge their own literal and figurative family histories as Indigenous Baha'is.

Chapter 3: Narratives and Narrators

This project is a work of oral history, a methodology that is as much intersubjective process as it is polished final product. The field of oral history has moved steadily beyond its early add-more-voices-and-stir stance (a recipe it shared with other subdisciplines, including Indigenous history, intent upon democratizing the historical record) and in this chapter I reflect on the genealogy of the oral histories that I analyze through the rest of this study. This chapter also grounds the histories of “Indianness” and encounter just plotted by establishing the diverse backgrounds of narrators prior to becoming Baha’i. This project is not based on “*life story*” in the sense that participants were asked to reflect on their entire life experience through a series of set stages and scripted interview prompts. Instead, it engages a method of “*life story*” through which narrators were asked to share about a particular aspect of their lives (that is, their experience of becoming and being an Indigenous Baha’i) in the context of loosely structured interviews.¹ I constructed, through the questions that I put to my participants, a particular narrative structure. And narrators supplied further framings of their own, sharing from the perspective of their personal histories and in particular response to me. The resulting narratives are remarkably rich, and varied. In order to convey a sense of this texture and dynamism, the second half of this chapter details a series of introductory portraits that demonstrate the diverse experiences of colonialism and Indigeneity that informed narrators’ subsequent encounters with the Baha’i religion.² This chapter clarifies the multiple and intersecting narrative contexts that

¹ On this distinction between “*life story*” and “*life story*” see Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 40-41; Alessandro Portelli, “The Best Garbage Man in Town: Life and Times of Valtèro Peppoloni, Worker,” in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 118.

² Ethnographers working in both Indigenous and religious studies have argued (and illustrated) that such portraits help to convey the rich “breath and texture of life experience” that thematic analysis inevitably flattens. See, for example, Michael McNally, *Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and a Native Culture in Motion* (New York: Oxford

frame the oral histories to come. And it demonstrates that, despite the shared identification that later came to link narrators, there was no single or set pathway towards becoming Indigenous and Baha'i.

Narratives

My intervention as an oral historian forms one of the most obvious frames within which the histories that follow nest. I am attuned to the “narrative turn” in qualitative research and this study is aligned with this shift to the degree that it treats interviews not simply as static sources of data, but rather as dynamic discursive resources.³ As the oral historian Lynn Abrams has recently observed, the narrative turn has cultivated “an understanding that life stories are complex and revealing narrative performances which can offer an insight into both identity formation and the relationship between that and larger historical forces.”⁴ *What* people chose to tell, oral historians now recognize, is shaped very much by their audience and the specific time and place in which they are speaking. Further, *how* people tell, or narrate, their histories is equally contextual, and revealing. Where memory, for example, was once considered a slippery source of evidence, it is increasingly embraced as a productive site of study unto itself (albeit, as the postcolonial historian Antoinette Burton has observed, a site typically gendered as female and aligned with “Other” voices and thus still somewhat contained outside the bounds of capital-H “History”).⁵ Following Alessandro Portelli, a pioneer (no Baha'i pun intended) in the field,

University Press, 2000), 146; Paul Bramadat, *The Church on the World's Turf: An Evangelical Christian Group at a Secular University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), Chapter 2.

³ This “narrative turn” has been interdisciplinary. See, for example, D. Jean Clandinin, *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007); Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005); Hester Lessard, Rebecca Johnson, and Jeremy Webber, eds., *Storied Communities: Narratives of Contact and Arrival in Constituting Political Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

⁴ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 33.

⁵ Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 21-23. For oral histories studies that explore memory within the sphere

Abrams has described oral history as a “composite” genre that demands a certain methodological and theoretical “promiscuity.”⁶ As Portelli himself has argued, however, oral history is also unique. Distinguishing what he calls “history-telling” from its “cousin,” storytelling, Portelli contends that:

at the core of oral history, in epistemological and in practical terms, lies one deep thematic focus which distinguishes it from other approaches and disciplines also based on interviewing and fieldwork, such as anthropology, sociology and folklore: the combination of the prevalence of the narrative form on the one hand, and the search for a connection between biography and history, between individual experience and the transformations of society, on the other.

Oral history, Portelli continues, is concerned with the “in-between”: “its role is precisely to connect life to times, uniqueness to representativeness, as well as orality to writing. The key word in *life and times* is the one in the middle.”⁷ This study occupies this middle space, exploring how Indigenous Baha’i identities, both individual and shared, were constructed in historical time and in the context of the interview itself.

This study grows out of earlier research that I conducted on Indigenous-Baha’i interactions in British Columbia and, before this, on early Saulteaux Baha’i Dorothy Maquabeak Francis. Telling of the “hidden history” of Indigenous Baha’i activism that I noted in the

of home and family see, for example, Mary Chamberlain and Selma Leydesdorff, “Transnational Families: Memories and Narratives,” *Global Networks* 4, no.3 (2004): 227-241; Mary Chamberlain, “‘Praise Songs’ of the Family: Lineage and Kinship in the Caribbean Diaspora,” *History Workshop Journal* 50 (2000): 114-128; Katrina Srigley and Stacey Zembrzycki, eds. “Remembering Family, Analyzing Home: Oral History and the Family,” *Oral History Forum* (Special Issue) 29 (2009).

⁶ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 3.

⁷ Alessandro Portelli, “Oral History as Genre,” in Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson, eds., *Narrative and Genre* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 25-26. See also Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 63-74. For a discussion of the differences between oral history and oral tradition (including storytelling) see Julie Cruikshank, “Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues,” *Canadian Historical Review* LXXV, no.3 (1994): 403-418. Writing from a Dakota perspective, the historian Waziyatawin Angela Wilson does not draw as sharp a distinction between oral history and oral tradition as does Cruikshank: *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives*, with translations from the Dakota text by Wahpetunwin Carolynn Schommer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 27. The authors of *The American Indian Oral History Manual* have recently observed that what they call the “archival oral history process” (a category into which the life story method would fall) is increasingly being employed in Indigenous communities as a way to record and preserve personal stories. Charles E. Trimble, Barbara W. Sommer, Mary Kay Quinlan, *The American Indian Oral History Manual: Making Many Voices Heard* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2008), 15, 18.

introduction to this study, I was initially drawn to Francis' life story on account of her remarkable social activism in support of Indigenous peoples in both urban and reserve settings in Canada. In the first of many serendipitous connections that have shaped the course of my research, I first heard about Francis from the historian Paige Raibmon, who had herself learned about her from a family friend named Ella Benndorf. Through Benndorf, a Baha'i friend of Francis' who had collected a significant amount of primary source material relating to Francis' life (and generously shared this with me), I learned that Francis was among the founding Indigenous Baha'i figures in Canada and quickly came to appreciate the multiple and profound ways through which her faith had informed her activism.⁸ Benndorf also connected me with several other Baha'is who had known Francis and, from there, I developed a deepened interest in just how and why Indigenous-Baha'i interactions had developed in the first place. This led to my Masters thesis on Indigenous-Baha'i encounter in British Columbia, for which I interviewed a number of non-Indigenous and Indigenous Baha'is in the province.⁹ I have included six of the Indigenous Baha'is who I interviewed for that study as narrators here. Building on the relationships that that I cultivated through this research and ongoing "chain referral," I in turn interviewed another twenty people, from almost as many different backgrounds and locations, specifically for this project.¹⁰ These interviews took me near and far: throughout the Greater Vancouver area (where I was then living), across the Salish Sea and Columbia River, over the

⁸ Chelsea Horton, "Beyond Red Power: The Politics of Culture, Spirituality, and the Integrated Activism of Dorothy Maquabeak Francis" (Undergraduate Honours Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2003). I published a revised version of this thesis as Chelsea Horton, "Beyond Red Power: The Alternative Activism of Dorothy Maquabeak Francis," *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 14, no.3/4 (Sept-Dec 2004), 35-71.

⁹ Chelsea Horton, "According to your faith so shall your power and blessings be": The Aboriginal-Bahá'í Encounter in British Columbia" (M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2005).

¹⁰ Nineteen of these are included here as narrators. One person who I initially interviewed was omitted from this stage of the study as I never heard back from her about her transcript or received final consent for her participation. On chain referral, also known as chain sampling, see H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Fourth Edition (New York: Altamira Press, 2006), 192; Monique Hennink, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey, *Qualitative Research Methods* (London: Sage, 2011), 100.

Rocky and Cascade Mountains, to the cliffs of Dinetah, the suburbs of Chicago, and elsewhere. Practical considerations of time, resources, and my own geographic location on the west coast meant that the majority of those I interviewed were located in the North American West. A strong historical pattern of Baha'i mobility, however, also meant that several of those who were residing in Western Canada and the United States at the time that I interviewed them hailed originally from elsewhere in North America.

The broad framing of this project aptly captures the contours of Indigenous Baha'i community and raises several particular methodological considerations. In engaging with participants from a wide range of Indigenous backgrounds – from Blackfoot, Lakota, Cherokee, Choctaw, and Abenaki, to Tlingit, Coast Salish, Métis, Mohawk, and more – I had (and have) limited ability to situate each subject in his or her own specific local context. I had, however, existing relationships with some of those who I interviewed and strove, in all cases, to establish a rapport (often, of necessity, by way of long distance communication) prior to conducting interviews. There were cases, though, where I recorded interviews upon first meeting participants or not long afterwards. I interviewed people on reservations, mostly in cities, and usually in their own homes; I also conducted several interviews by telephone. I interviewed most participants once, some twice, for an average of three hours. My interview style was informal and open-ended. I prepared specific questions, some shared and others personalized, prior to each interview, but was also interested to follow the lead of narrators. Indeed, I came to this work with an open heart and open mind and an appreciation for the importance of respectful and responsive listening.¹¹ I further took to heart advice that I received from Tlingit Baha'i Joyce

¹¹ On the importance of active listening in oral history see Daniel James, "Listening in the Cold: The Practice of Oral History in an Argentine Meatpacking Community," in Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2006), 125, 130; Portelli, "What Makes Oral History

Shales, who has her own academic research experience, who counseled against asking direct questions in Indigenous interview contexts. This approach allowed important insight into the ways that participants themselves plotted and narrated their own lives.¹² At the same time, it sometimes left me without certain key (or at least what I consider key) biographical details. I articulated and refined the questions that I posed in the context of each interview and the broader development of the project. Where I had initially imagined analyzing ritual practice in closer detail, for example, I found it difficult to prompt thorough historical reflection on the subject.¹³ Narrators, for their part, shared both what they deemed appropriate and, I suspect, what they believed me, as a non-Indigenous non-Baha'i scholar, equipped to understand.¹⁴ Interestingly enough, where most of my own focus (and anxiety) hung throughout the research process on issues of Indigenous context, it was more often in sharing Baha'i stories and concepts that participants would pause in their interviews to clarify. It seems that narrators saw faith as a larger gap between us than "race."

Different," 70. And, in the context of Indigenous oral history research more specifically: Kim Anderson, *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2011), 25.

¹² On plot in oral history see Mary Chamberlain, "Narrative Theory," in Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds., *Handbook of Oral History* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 384-407.

¹³ This was not entirely surprising. Ritual practice, in general, is a mysterious thing that is hard to grasp, even in the moment, and I was and remain aware of Indigenous proscriptions against making certain spiritual knowledge public and the danger of offering up detailed descriptions of ceremony as fodder for New Age or other appropriation. See, for example, Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 32; Gregory E. Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 8; Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 92.

¹⁴ See, for example, the anthropologist Julie Cruikshank's reflections on the "cultural scaffolding, the broad framework" that Tlingit and Tagish Elder Angela Sidney established before, in Cruikshank's words, "I could begin to ask intelligent questions." Julie Cruikshank, "'Pete's Song': Establishing Meanings Through Story and Song," in *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 27. See also the anthropologist Carolyn Sawin's reflections on her confusion during the early stages of her fieldwork in the Yukon as to why her Tlingit and Tagish narrators were sharing traditional stories in response to her queries about their experiences of becoming Baha'i. Carolyn Patterson Sawin, "Native Conversion, Native Identity: An Oral History of the Bahá'i Faith among First Nations People in the Southern Central Yukon Territory, Canada" (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2000), 5, 13. Studies that explicitly illustrate the meaning-making through story that initially puzzled Sawin include Cruikshank's *The Social Life of Stories* and Julie Cruikshank, in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Histories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990). My experience was rather the inverse of Sawin's. Where I thought myself prepared to hear traditional stories, they seldom appeared, or did so in different form than I had anticipated.

There was a strong performative, as well as intersubjective, dynamic to the interviews that narrators and I co-produced.¹⁵ Moments of laughter, pause, and pain, a smile, shrug, or a smirk – these all contributed to making each interview what it was and inevitably informed my own subsequent reflection. Translating such dynamics, as well as cadence and other verbal cues, however, into written form is a challenge.¹⁶ As many oral historians have observed, the process of interview transcription is a vexed one and is certainly more art than science.¹⁷ Editing, according to Portelli, means taking “(responsible and thoughtful) liberties with the material.”¹⁸ My approach, which I have altered over time, partly in response to narrators’ reactions to my written representation of their spoken words, is to try to retain the flavour and flow of interviews without unduly weighing transcripts down with every single utterance, every “um,” “ah,” and “oh.” Like Portelli in his most recent book, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History*, I have followed two main rules: “never putting into people’s mouths words that they did not actually say (insertions are in brackets), and striving to retain on the written page some of the impact of the spoken performance.” Also with Portelli, “I have retained the speakers’ choice of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and construction,” but have “avoided efforts to reproduce orthographically” speech patterns such as the “use of an apostrophe to signal a ‘missing’ final g.” As Portelli argues in the Appalachian context of his research, this effort is “always marred by negative

¹⁵ On the importance of attending to the “velocity” of narration, along with body language, laughter, and other verbal cues, see Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 20, 141; Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 66; Leslie Robertson, *Imagining Difference: Legend, Curse, and Spectacle in a Canadian Mining Town* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), xxxi; Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005), 303, 318.

¹⁶ Some scholars (typically working with a single or small sample of interviews) place such performative dynamics at the centre of their analysis. For an example see Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet, “Narrative Structures, Social Models, and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story,” in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 77-93.

¹⁷ Elinor Mazé, “The Uneasy Page: Transcribing and Editing Oral History,” in Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless, eds., *History of Oral History: Foundations and Methodology* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007), 227-261; Portelli, “Oral History as Genre,” 34, 38, 40.

¹⁸ Alessandro Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County: An Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9.

connotations and excessive ‘othering.’”¹⁹ To ensure that narrators were comfortable with me including what they shared in their interviews in my final analysis, I followed up with all participants with typed transcripts, providing them with the opportunity to review and revise, as they deemed appropriate. Most made small corrections, while a handful supplied more substantive changes.

My process in turn involved “deep exchange” with these transcripts (and sometimes return to the original audio recordings as well).²⁰ As Michael Frisch and Douglas Lambert have recently observed, for all their attention to interview production and final presentation, oral historians have not meditated as explicitly on their actual hands-on “work with interview collections – that ground between raw and cooked.”²¹ Although I was introduced to their evocative phrase fairly far into my research, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis’s concept of “letting the data sing” captures my own method well.²² This process involved immersing myself repeatedly in the interview material, looking for shared themes as well as exceptions, contradictions, and anomalies. As patterns did emerge (and, as we will see shortly, the organization I have chosen is but one possibility among many), I made the decision to quote quite extensively from transcripts in my writing.²³ Here, I am attempting to share some of the feel and flavour of the spoken word and allow stories a certain room to breathe.²⁴ To invoke another musical metaphor, this one from Portelli, we might imagine these lengthy quotations as

¹⁹ Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*, 10.

²⁰ “Deep exchange” is Portelli’s term, cited in Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 10.

²¹ Michael Frisch and Douglas Lambert, “Case Study: Between the Raw and the Cooked in Oral History: Notes from the Kitchen,” in Donald Ritchie, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 334-335.

²² Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 22, 397 (fn 72). See also Valerie Yow on John and Lynn Lofland’s discussion of the simultaneous “surrender” and “discipline” that qualitative research demands: *Recording Oral History*, 282.

²³ In-citation ellipses without brackets signal a pause in speech; ellipses inside square brackets indicate that I have edited out material not related to the issue at hand.

²⁴ The expression allowing stories to breathe derives from Arthur W. Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

arias, expressive solo melodies that are then “woven together by the half-sung, half-spoken recitative (in this case, my own narrative voice).”²⁵ There is truth, as Portelli argues, that resides in beauty and I strive to convey, however partially, the “aesthetic project” of my narrators as I analyze their histories.²⁶

In my work with the interview transcripts, I listened for “narrative fluency” and places where it breaks down.²⁷ As Abrams observes, the quest for “composure,” for “a version of the self that sits comfortably within the social world, an account that achieves coherence, with which the interviewee can be content,” is a common dynamic of the oral history interview process.²⁸ Participants in this project, specifically, typically told composed conversion stories. There is, in the Baha’i Faith, no established genre of “declaration narrative,” nothing akin, for example, to the performative Pentecostal practices of testimony and witnessing, ritualized rhetorical forms in which converts share stories of personal salvation (to other converts, in the case of testimony, and potential proselytes, in that of witnessing).²⁹ Scholars of Baha’i conversion, however, have observed the exchange of personal and “exceptional” declaration stories among adherents and

²⁵ Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County*, 11. See also Saurabh Dube’s use of “overture” and “coda” in “Conversion, Translation, and Life-History in Colonial Central India,” in David Lindenfeld and Miles Richardson, eds., *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism: Indigenous Encounters with Missionary Christianity, 1800-2000* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 27, 43.

²⁶ Portelli, “Oral History as Genre,” 37-38.

²⁷ On narrative fluency see Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 126.

²⁸ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 175. Abrams elsewhere defines composure as, “the way in which the individual creates a comfortable sense of self by aligning the life story with publicly available discourses.” Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 42.

²⁹ As Kirk Dombrowski, who has observed Pentecostal practice in Native Alaska, explains, “testifying” refers to the sharing of conversion stories “at the altar,” while “witnessing” occurs beyond church confines. Kirk Dombrowski, *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 142-143. According to the anthropologist Susan Harding, such stories do not simply recount and strengthen the salvation of the speaker, but initiate the conversion of the listener as well. Susan Harding, “Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion,” *American Ethnologist* 14, no.1 (February 1987), 167-181. See also Simon Coleman, “Continuous Conversion? The Rhetoric, Practice, and Rhetorical Practice of Charismatic Protestant Conversion,” in Andrew Bucker and Stephen D. Glazier, eds., *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion* (Oxford: Roman and Littlefield, 2003), 15-28.

have noted the impact of such exchange on the construction of Baha'i identity.³⁰ This was readily evident in the context of my interviews: narrators came prepared to describe and discuss their experiences of becoming Baha'is and it was clear in a number of cases that their stories, or at least key phrases and components, were practiced and familiar. This narrative fluency frequently faltered, however, when we moved into discussing narrators' subsequent Baha'i lives.³¹ A number of people were less flowing and forthcoming about their interactions within their home and Baha'i communities, in particular. There may well be practical explanations for this: perhaps I did not clearly communicate my interest in Baha'i practice prior to my interviews, maybe the questions I posed were less effective at opening this up, or perhaps narrators and I had simply lost steam after long interview sessions.

At the same time, these moments of narrative tension, evasion, and silence must be understood in relation to the Baha'i prohibition against "backbiting," which adherents take seriously.³² As the sociologist Margit Warburg has noted, Baha'u'llah spoke of backbiting in the same breath as murder and adultery in his "Book of Laws," the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*: "You have been forbidden to commit murder or adultery, or to engage in backbiting and calumny; shun ye, then,

³⁰ See, for example, Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'ís: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 15-16, 19; David Piff, *Bahá'í Lore* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2000), 80-84. The term "exceptional conversion narrative" comes from Diane Austin-Broos, "The Anthropology of Conversion: An Introduction," in Bucker and Glazier, eds., *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion*, 8. In an anthropological study of American Baha'i discourse from the early 1980s, June Wyman explores conversion narratives as American expressions of "the self." Although she overstates this element of her analysis, her treatment of narrative, including the role of conversion tales in the construction of collective Baha'i identity, is instructive. See June Wyman, "Becoming a Baha'i: Discourse and Social Networks in an American Baha'i Community," (PhD thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1985), esp. Chapters 4 and 7. Her approach contrasts with that of the sociologist Margit Warburg, who registers concern about accretion and the "frailty of memory" in her engagement with qualitative interview data on conversion: *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 298-302.

³¹ Carolyn Sawin observed a similar pattern in the Yukon: "Native Conversion, Native Identity," 5-6.

³² On evasion see Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 104. As Luisa Passerini has explained, "As oral historians we have frail but precious tools: attention to language and form, to how things are remembered, or forgotten; and not only to the contents of memory, but also to what is not remembered, to silences." Cited in Robertson, *Imagining Difference*, xxxiii.

what hath been prohibited in the holy Books and Tablets.”³³ Baha’u’llah proscribed “faultfinding” too. As he laid down in his Arabic *Hidden Words*: “O Son of Being! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me.”³⁴ In addition to these specific proscriptions, Baha’i teachings on unity and obedience to the “Administrative Order” likely further contributed to reticence on the part of many narrators to discuss potentially controversial issues or to engage in criticism (what some academics might distinguish as critical reflection) of past people and events.³⁵ As the historian William Garlington has explained, the issue of internal Baha’i unity is closely tied to the religion’s “Greater” and “Lesser Covenants.” The first of these takes in God’s promise “to continue to send guidance to mankind, while humanity in turn promises to obey and follow the teachings of the Manifestation”; the second, “Lesser,” covenant “requires Baha’is to accept the leadership of Baha’u’llah’s appointed successors and ordained institutions.”³⁶ As Garlington elaborates:

Baha’is see the ultimate purpose of the Lesser Covenant as the establishment of a unified world. Since this unity is understood to have been Baha’u’llah’s specific historical mission, it would be impossible, the reasoning goes, for the Baha’i Faith to accomplish such a goal if it were itself disunited. It is at this point that the Lesser Covenant and the Greater Covenant converge, for unity within the Baha’i community is understood as a guarantee that God’s revealed guidance will become manifest for all mankind.³⁷

³³ Cited in Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 351. See also “Backbiting, Criticism, Fault-Finding, Gossip, Lies, Slander, Etc.,” in Helen Bassett Hornby, compiler, *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá’í Reference File* (New Delhi, India: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 2010 [1983]), 88-94.

³⁴ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1985), 10, accessed online 12 March 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/HW/>.

³⁵ On obedience to Baha’i leaders and the “Administrative Order” see, for example, Bahá’u’lláh, “Ishtaráqát (Splendours), *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1988), 128-129, accessed online 12 March 13, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/TB/>; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Will And Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1990), 11-12, accessed online 12 March 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/WT/>.

³⁶ William Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America* (London: Praeger, 2005), 71.

³⁷ Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America*, 72. For a clear statement of the position that Garlington describes see J.E. Esslemont, “Obedience,” in *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980), 77-78, accessed online 12 March 13, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/je/BNE/>.

The obedience that the Baha’i writings call for is hardly passive.³⁸ Nevertheless, concern for protecting Baha’i unity (and, by extension, the religion’s twin covenants) quite likely contributed to silence on the subject of internal Baha’i community tension. Reluctance to dwell on past tensions or prejudice may also stem from a more general impulse and effort on the part of narrators to avoid casting themselves as victims.³⁹ Indeed, as the next chapter vividly illustrates, the declaration stories that participants shared were very much narratives of empowerment.

Such framing may tie, further, to Indigenous teachings surrounding silence and respect and, similar to the approach that the Cree-Métis historian Kim Anderson takes in her recent book, *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine*, narrators may have consciously chosen to focus on the positive as an act of decolonization.⁴⁰ Indeed, while this study itself does not apply a tribally-specific research methodology of the order modeled and advocated by Indigenous scholars such as Jo-ann Archibald, Margaret Kovach, and Winona Wheeler, it is possible to see an Indigenous methodology at work in the way that narrators themselves shared their stories with me.⁴¹ Kovach, like Archibald and Wheeler, stresses the importance of articulating research methods that are specific and accountable to particular Indigenous peoples. At the same time, her recent book *Indigenous Methodologies:*

³⁸ As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 7, for example, the Baha’i decision-making method of consultation calls, at least in theory, for “frank and open” discussion between Baha’is. Shoghi Effendi, 28 Oct 1935, Letter to an Individual Believer, cited in Bahá’u’lláh, Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and Universal House of Justice, “Consultation,” in *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 1*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Mona Vale, NSW: Baha’i Publications Australia, 1991), 104.

³⁹ Valerie Yow makes this argument about feminist artist Marlene Malik in *Recording Oral History*, 305.

⁴⁰ In her work with the prominent Lakota performer and Baha’i (and narrator in this project), Kevin Locke, for example, Pauline Tuttle identified both “Indian ways” and the Baha’i prohibition against backbiting as sources of silence: “‘Beyond Feathers and Beads’: Interlocking Narratives in the Music and Dance of Tokeya Inajin (Kevin Locke),” in Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 115. See also Anderson, *Life Stages and Native Women*, 3-4, 19; Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, 80-81, 91.

⁴¹ Anderson, *Life Stages and Native Women*; Jo-ann Archibald (Q’um Q’um Xiiem), *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008); Winona Wheeler, “Reflections on the Social Relations of Indigenous Oral Histories,” in Ute Lischke and David McNab and *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and their Representations* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 189-214.

Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts also identifies a number of shared principles and perspective, including respect, relationship, holism, and the power of spiritual experiences such as dreams, that connect Indigenous methodologies more generally.⁴² A number of participants in this project narrated their experiences of becoming and being Baha'is as holistic journeys animated by spiritual power, manifested often in dreams. These narratives defy dissection into separate constituent, and strictly cognitive, elements. Narrators further activated an Indigenous methodology in the way that many responded to interview questions through story and stressed that they spoke only for themselves, on the basis on their own experience and perspective.⁴³ Indigenous methodologies, Kovach and others further emphasize, are framed to produce scholarship that is relevant to community and we might also interpret narrators' motivations for taking part in this study in these terms.⁴⁴ Indeed, while silence surrounding charged issues such as intercultural tension among Baha'is was common, some narrators were eager, and others became more willing over time, to discuss this very history. As my relationships with narrators developed and I received invitations to address Indigenous Baha'i audiences about my research, I came to appreciate that this was why at least some people were interested and willing to speak with me in the first place: there *are* issues concerning ongoing colonialism within the Baha'i community that need to be addressed but which are difficult to broach from the inside. Several narrators expressed to me explicitly their belief that I am particularly well positioned (more, they

⁴² Kovach, to be clear, is concerned with the articulation of tribally-specific research models and intentionally interviewed a number of other Cree scholars in order to gain insights specific to her own Plains Cree and Saulteaux context. For reflections on shared principles of holism and respect and methodologies of dream and vision see Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, Kobo Edition, 27 (Introduction), 43-45, 48-49, 56 (Chapter 1), 22 (Chapter 2), 5-6, 14-15, 30, 47 (Chapter 3), 9-10 (Conclusion).

⁴³ On story as methodology see Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, Kobo Edition, Chapter 5; Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*. On speaking from personal experience and belief see Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, Kobo Edition, 50 (Chapter 1), 39 (Chapter 2), 10 (Chapter 6); Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians*, 117.

⁴⁴ Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies*, Kobo Edition, 40 (Introduction), 23 (Chapter 1), 26 (Chapter 4); 33-34 (Chapter 8). See also Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*, 1; Wilson, *Remember This!*

implied, on account of my religious than “racial” difference) to probe internal tension within the Baha’i community, a subject I take up in Chapters 5 and 6 of this study.

That said, it is essential to recognize that narrators are not speaking directly for themselves in what follows.⁴⁵ One goal of this research was to record and share the voices of a population that has received little historical attention; as in oral history in general, there remains a “redemptive urge” and “reconstructive agenda” to this project.⁴⁶ And interviews themselves were very much co-productions. Narratives, however, underwent a significant level of interpretation as they were transcribed and edited. Further, I have maintained analytic control and remain, to return to musical metaphor, the conductor of this project. Though the interviews themselves were collaborative acts of knowledge production, subsequent analysis of them is my own.

Narrators

This is true, too, of the introductory sketches that compose the remainder of this chapter. I typically opened my interviews by asking narrators to share about their backgrounds prior to becoming Baha’i and most dedicated fairly substantial space and weight to these histories. The details that follow, then, are among those that narrators chose, in the specific context of their conversations with me, to share by way of orientation, part of what Abrams describes in a

⁴⁵ As the critical race theorist Sherene Razack has warned, a colonial, if well-intentioned, current often underlines the impulse to “give voice.” Sherene Razack, “Commendatory Foreword,” in Susan Dabulskis-Hunter, *Outsider Research: How White Writers ‘Explore’ Native Issues, Knowledge, and Experiences* (Bethesda, MD: Academica, 2002), xii. See Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs*, 33 for a(n unconvincing) claim of allowing narrators to “analyze their own experiences” by citing extensively from transcripts and fieldnotes. For thoughtful reflection on the claim that narrators are simply “speaking for themselves” see Sophie McCall, *First Person Plural: Aboriginal Storytelling and the Ethics of Collaborative Authorship* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 6-7, 29. And for a study that models innovative methods of collaboration, in the final text as well as the research process, see Leslie A. Robertson with the Kwagu’l Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga’axsta’las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

⁴⁶ Daniel James describes the persistent “redemptive urge” underlining the field of oral history in “Listening in the Cold: The Practice of Oral History in an Argentinean Meatpacking Community,” in *Doña María’s Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Community* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 138. Abrams describes oral history’s persistent “reconstructive agenda” in *Oral History Theory*, 5.

discussion of coherence as ““the things you need to know about me to know me.””⁴⁷ I have constructed these histories, however, drawing primarily from narrators’ responses to my background query, but occasionally from broader interview material as well, in order to convey a sense of the broad range of experiences and understandings of Indigeneity that narrators possessed prior to becoming Baha’is. Narrators all came to identify as Indigenous Baha’is, but their backgrounds are tremendously varied. The selective portraits that follow demonstrate this diversity; I offer biographical sketches of all narrators in Appendix 1. Some narrators were raised on reserves and reservations, others in urban environments. Some were connected to tribal communities and cultures, others to intertribal populations and practice, while others still grew up without awareness or access to either. Some narrators are self-described “full bloods,” most are of mixed heritage. Even assembling examples is difficult, and discretionary; the backgrounds that I have narrated one way here could easily be told in many other ways. This mutability itself, though, is demonstration of diversity and further illustration that, as the genealogy of colonialism plotted in the last chapter pointed up, there were many ways of being Indigenous in the twentieth century.

This is well demonstrated by Klara Tyler, the eldest and earliest Baha’i participant in this study. Born in 1923 to an Ehattesaht (Nuu-chah-nulth) mother and a German father, Tyler grew up in and around a number of Indigenous communities, both urban and reservation, in the Pacific Northwest. Tyler’s mother was born in the late 1870s and was raised according to traditional Ehattesaht teachings on the west coast of Vancouver Island.⁴⁸ She, like other Nuu-chah-nulth and

⁴⁷ Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 41. As Abrams further observes, invoking Portelli, oral history is always a ““confrontation of partialities’ in which no encounter will ever produce the representation of an undivided or whole self.” *Oral History Theory*, 63.

⁴⁸ A photograph of a young woman that Tyler and her siblings believe to be their mother, Cecilia Thompson, appears in Martha Black, *HuupuKwanum Tupaat: Out of the Mist: Treasures of the Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs* (Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1999), 46.

Coast Salish people from what became, in 1871, the Canadian province of British Columbia, participated in annual summer migration to berry fields in Washington state and made the decision, one year, to remain there rather than return to a difficult arranged marriage at home.⁴⁹ She settled in the Tacoma area, where she met Tyler's father, a Lutheran born in Berlin in 1888. Tyler's father had travelled to the east coast of the United States by merchant ship and, as a "hobo," as Tyler described him, made his way west by rail, interacting regularly with Indigenous people ("the Germans," Tyler noted, "always seem to like the Indians").⁵⁰ The two married after Tyler's mother travelled back to Vancouver Island to secure the sanction of the area Catholic priest, who assented, Tyler explained, given that her mother's first marriage had not taken place in the church; Tyler was the youngest of their five children. The family, she recalled, worked as farmers in an intercultural community located on the Puyallup Indian Reservation, where land and identity were both hotly contested, then in various occupations on the Olympic Peninsula during the tenuous years of the Great Depression.⁵¹ Tyler spent a year in Nevada after her high school graduation in 1941, babysitting for one of her older sisters, then returned with her sibling's family to Tacoma, where she, like a number of women, worked in wartime industry, first at Fort Lewis then Boeing Aircraft.⁵² Postwar, Tyler worked at Cushman Indian Hospital

⁴⁹ Paige Raibmon, "Meanings of Mobility on the Northwest Coast," in Theodore Binnema and Susan Neylan, eds., *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 176. On labour migration more broadly see John Lutz, "Work, Sex, and Death on the Great Thoroughfare: Annual Migrations of 'Canadian Indians' to the American Pacific Northwest," in John Findlay and Kenneth Coates, eds., *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 80-103.

⁵⁰ On German-Indigenous interaction and affinity see Colin Calloway, Gerd Gemünden, and Suzanne Zantop, eds., *Germans and Indians: Fantasies, Encounters, Projections* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). This affinity is something several other narrators noted as well: Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 12 March 2008; Phil Lane Jr., interview with the author, Whiterock, British Columbia, 3 Jan 2009; Joyce Shales, interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 29 July 2008.

⁵¹ On Puyallup see Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities Around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 134-135, 143-144, 198, 204.

⁵² On wartime industry and Boeing, specifically: Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 164. On Boeing and Indigenous women's postwar work see

where she reconnected with a Makah patient, Bill Tyler, who she had known in her youth.⁵³ The couple married in Tacoma and moved not long afterwards to her husband's community, the Makah Nation in Neah Bay, on the far western tip of the Olympic Peninsula.⁵⁴

Although Tyler grew up geographically removed from her own tribal community and relatives, she also described growing up with a secure sense of self as "Indian." Nuu-chah-nulth people regularly migrated across the Canadian-American border, and had done so long before this colonial bifurcation was imposed, but the fallout from her mother's first marriage (which had included police and church authorities coming to Washington to seize her children from that relationship), meant that Tyler did not connect closely with her Ehattesaht relatives until later in life. She recalled, though, subtle cultural teachings from her mother, who Tyler described as a woman of great strength and spirit: her song and the power of her prayer, for example. "She would tell us Indian stories," Tyler noted, "but we weren't smart. We heard them so much, we didn't want to hear them anymore." Casting storytelling as Indigenous pedagogy, she continued, "Of course, that's the way Indians teach. But it wasn't that important to us."⁵⁵ In her telling, Tyler grew up neither the subject nor the agent of intolerance. Her father, she recalled:

always said, "There's no difference with the colour of the skin." I never really felt prejudiced against people. I can remember when I was a little girl, there was a Chinese

Cherokee storyteller Thomas King's discussion of his mother in *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 2003), 3-5.

⁵³ Anthropologist Elizabeth Colson characterizes Cushman Indian Hospital as site and source of intertribal identification in *The Makah Indians: A Study of an Indian Tribe in Modern American Society* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1953), 134-135. Likewise, Cesare Marino notes that "landed and landless tribes" joined together in the 1950s termination era as the Inter-Tribal Council of Western Washington and attempted, without success, to stop the closure of Cushman. "History of Western Washington Since 1846," in Wayne Suttles, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7, Northwest Coast* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 178.

⁵⁴ Klara Tyler, interview with the author, Neah Bay, Washington, 8 July 2008.

⁵⁵ Though Tyler stated that her mother's storytelling "wasn't that important to us," her son, narrator Scott Tyler, shared some of the same stories about his grandmother as Tyler did in his interview with me, suggesting that she carried on this storytelling practice with her own children. Scott Tyler, interview with the author, Bellevue, Washington, 28 July 2008. Other narrators also spoke to Indigenous storytelling as teaching: Eleanora McDermott and Allison Healy, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008; Tina Kahn, interview with the author, Pine Springs, Arizona, 21 June 2009.

family in Port Angeles and I'd go by and I'd grin and grin and he'd smile and my sister would grab my hand, "Klara, don't be like that!" Because I was friendly, I just liked people. So, that just always had a lot of meaning to me, there's no difference but the colour of the skin. I never felt ashamed of being an Indian either. I didn't mind being what I was, you know. I think we went through some really hard times in our lives, but I think that made us better people.⁵⁶

As a person of mixed heritage, who lived at the intersection of a number of communities and categories, Tyler's worldview was an inclusive one.

Other narrators grew up with a secure sense of Indigenous identity rooted in more specific tribal perspectives. Joyce Shales, for example, grew up in the coastal Tlingit community of Sitka, Alaska at mid-century and expressed a strong affiliation with Tlingit culture and community, in general, and her own family, in particular. Shales' grandfather, Rudolph Walton, was a hereditary Tlingit leader and an early Presbyterian in Sitka who challenged colonial constructions of authenticity through activist efforts like a campaign to have his "mixed-race" children, who he had adopted through traditional Tlingit marriage protocol, admitted to the public, not mission, school in Sitka.⁵⁷ Humbly acknowledging her grandfather as a "very remarkable man," Shales noted that much of what she and her family knows about Walton derives from research that she undertook into his life for her doctoral dissertation in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. Her grandfather, Shales explained, "did a lot of things in his life that we had no idea that he had done because he never spoke about it and nobody else did either because talking about yourself or your family was kind of like bragging and so it wasn't really a thing that people would do anyway even if they knew about it."⁵⁸ This precept of modesty, along with a collective sense of self, extends also to Shales' narration of her

⁵⁶ Tyler, interview.

⁵⁷ Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), Chapters 8 and 9; Joyce Walton Shales, "Rudolph Walton: One Tlingit Man's Journey Through Stormy Seas, Sitka, Alaska, 1867-1951" (PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 1998).

⁵⁸ Shales, interview. She makes this same point in the introduction to her dissertation: "Rudolph Walton," 14.

own history: she was at first reluctant to be interviewed for precisely this reason and, when she did do so, she expressly articulated her story in a plural familial “we,” not an individual “I.”⁵⁹

While Shales was raised with and continues to observe tribal teachings like this, there were other elements of Tlingit culture that she and her relatives did not regularly practice growing up. Speaking to the criminalization of Indigenous spiritual practice and a conscious family history of cultural brokerage, for example, Shales explained that her grandmother was among Elders who advocated a move away from potlatching in the early twentieth century and instructed her family not to hold a potlatch following her own passing. In the context of colonialism, Indigenous people regularly faced such constrained choices.⁶⁰ The decision not to host a potlatch in her grandmother’s honour, Shales admitted, was, “totally shameful, really, in a way. Because it was totally against tradition.”⁶¹ Such choices, however, did not extinguish her family’s sense of Tlingit identity. As Shales elaborated:

my grandmother stood up for what she believed, which was that the traditions, in a way, were to be left behind. Now that does not mean, because my dad taught me a lot of things, that does not mean that your traditions are shameful. That does not mean that you leave and forget everything you ever were taught and that we should have no regard for them. What that means is that you remember the good things that you were taught and you carry them with you and then you teach them to your children, but that doesn’t mean that you have to carry everything.

⁵⁹ Hertha Dawn Wong describes this stance, in a study of Indigenous autobiography, as a “communal ‘I’”: *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Tradition and Innovation in Native American Autobiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 23.

⁶⁰ See, for example, a recent study of Ga’axsta’las, or Jane Constance Cook, a Kwakwaka’wakw Anglican woman who likewise removed herself (and, by extension, many of her relatives) from the potlatch system. Her descendants (who include a narrator in this project, Chris Cook Jr.) initiated this collaborative study in order to offer a more nuanced portrait of Ga’axsta’las than that circulated in scholarly literature and community discourse alike. Robertson with the Kwagu’l Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga’axsta’las*.

⁶¹ On the role of the potlatch in Tlingit identity- and place-making see Thomas Thornton, “Ritual as Emplacement: The Potlatch/ Ku.éex’,” in *Being and Place Among the Tlingit* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 173-188.

The good things that Shales invoked in the context of her interviews with me included values of listening and observation, respect for family, work for peace, and the power of dreams and prayer.⁶²

Where some narrators like Shales grew up in close physical connection with their tribal communities, others were raised off reservation, or moved between urban and reservation environments. Siblings Philip Lane Jr. and Deloria Bighorn, for example, grew up geographically distant, yet culturally connected with their Yankton Sioux and Chickasaw heritage. Their parents met in the intertribal environment of Haskell Indian Boarding School in Lawrence, Kansas, an institution also attended by one of Tyler's sisters. Lane himself was born there in 1944; his mother worked at the school while his father served in the navy during the Second World War. Schools like Haskell often served to cultivate shared Indigenous consciousness and community, a phenomenon upon which Lane himself reflected.⁶³ "I'm sure," he recalled:

that as a young child I was given lots of love and nourishment by the different Native students who were there from all over the country. And I've got pictures at a young age of myself there at Haskell, I was a little tiny boy, probably two years old – one and a half, two years old – standing, holding onto the hand of, I remember, somebody had bells coming down, so he was a powwow dancer there. So that part of myself, and identity, goes way down deep there.⁶⁴

⁶² Shales, interview; Shales, interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 30 July 2008. For broader discussion of Tlingit history and culture see Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, eds., *Haa Shuká, Our Ancestors: Tlingit Oral Narratives* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987) and *Haa Kusteeyí, Our Culture: Tlingit Life Stories* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

⁶³ See, for example, Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 12-13, 116; J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 417, 430; Brenda Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 2, 4. Haskell still exists and is now Haskell Indian Nations University: accessed online 12 March 2013, <http://www.haskell.edu/about.html>.

⁶⁴ Lane, interview.

It was, in part, owing to a close relationship that their father forged with a Umatilla friend at Haskell that the family eventually settled in the Northwest, in the southeastern Washington town of Walla Walla, after a time living in the Canal Zone in Panama.⁶⁵

Through a strong family tradition of storytelling, especially on their father's Dakota side, Lane and Bighorn grew up with a clear connection to their ancestors and ancestry. Like Shales's, their heritage included a long history of hereditary and Christian leadership; their great-grandfather, Tipi Sapa (Black Lodge), or Philip J. Deloria, was a Yankton Sioux chief and Episcopalian minister.⁶⁶ Their father, Philip Lane Sr., lived with Tipi Sapa for a time as a child and often shared stories from this formative period with his own children. Like many narrators, Lane and Bighorn had to wrestle with what Lane, drawing on current discourse, described as the intergenerational impacts of colonialism. Having spent considerable parts of their youth in boarding schools, Lane and Bighorn's mother and father struggled to parent their own children. Both siblings, though, noted the cultural training that their parents and other relatives like their maternal grandmother, who lived with them for significant periods of time during their youth, provided. Reflecting back on the effort that his father took to provide him with a spiritual education, which included Christianity, Lane also acknowledged that his father sheltered him somewhat from difficult everyday life conditions found in many reservation communities (conditions, including violence and poverty, that other narrators noted).⁶⁷ As a result, Lane observed, "I was raised with this very altruistic, almost unreal, viewpoint of Indians, of Dakotas."

⁶⁵ Lane, interview; Deloria Bighorn, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 20 March 2008. The family lived in Panama before Deloria was born; reflecting on his time there, Lane noted the influence of his two babysitters, one a young Jamaican woman and the other Indigenous.

⁶⁶ For context on Tipi Sapa see accounts by his grandson, Vine Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit: A Portrait of the Dakota Sioux* (Santa Fe: Clear Light, 1999) and his great-grandson and namesake, Philip J. Deloria, "Vine V. Deloria Sr.: Dakota," in R. David Edmunds, ed., *The New Warriors: Native American Leaders Since 1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 80-82.

⁶⁷ Beverley Knowlton, interview with the author, between Calgary and Sylvan Lake, Alberta, 26 April 2008; Lorintha Umtuch, interview with the author, Toppenish, Washington, 21 June 2008; Jacob Bighorn, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 7 July 2008.

If his understanding of Dakotas was idealistic, Lane and his family also had more immediate relationships with Indigenous people in the Northwest. This included local communities in nearby Pendleton, Oregon as well as intertribal populations in larger urban centers like Seattle.⁶⁸

While intertribal spiritual practice would come, by the 1970s, to draw heavily on Plains Indigenous culture for inspiration, Deloria Bighorn observed there were “no ceremonies of our culture out in the Northwest” as she was growing up in the 1950s and 60s. “Of course now,” she continued, “ten years after that, fifteen years after that, everything was portable to everywhere, but not in my day.” Bighorn took part, in her youth, in available area events like powwow and recalled her keen interest, as a child, in frequent Lakota language lessons from her father. Although she noted that, “because I wasn’t raised at home, I don’t have such a belonging feeling,” she simultaneously described growing up “secure in who I was.” As Bighorn added in another context, “I feel I was raised, for me, and my circumstances, in the most traditional way. And in a funny sense, the most traditional contemporary way.”⁶⁹

Bighorn contrasted this “traditional contemporary” upbringing directly with that of a Lakota narrator, her husband, Jacob Bighorn. Jacob, she noted, had “never worn a ribbon shirt until we got married. He was thirty-two years old.”⁷⁰ A self-described “full blood,” Bighorn was raised by his grandparents on the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana and was not active in Lakota culture growing up. While this disconnect may have stemmed in part from the legacies of colonial mapping, which had isolated a pocket of Lakota people at Fort Peck, a reservation shared with Assiniboine people, it also had much to do with the conscious survival strategy that

⁶⁸ Lane, interview; Deloria Bighorn, interview.

⁶⁹ Deloria Bighorn, interview. For a study that illuminates not just the persistence, but the flourishing, of tradition in an off-reservation context see Andrew H. Fisher, *Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

⁷⁰ Deloria Bighorn, interview.

Bighorn's Presbyterian grandparents adopted in the face of intense assimilation pressures.⁷¹ As

Bighorn shared:

my grandparents were aware that the language and the customs were underground. They knew they were there, but in my grandparents' case, they chose to go public with their Christian practice, their Christian traditions, and put away whatever they knew of Indian tradition. Which short-circuited my life when they chose not to teach me any language or customs or whatever, assimilated me basically into the local public school. Which was a reaction because they didn't want the government to force me to go to a residential school, such as they had. So they did whatever was necessary to make sure all of their grandchildren were public school people right there in the community.⁷²

This choice, coupled with related racism that Bighorn and his relatives regularly encountered, contributed to a lengthy and difficult journey of coming, in Bighorn's description, "to understand and appreciate my Indianness."⁷³

Many participants in this project were born in the 1940s and 1950s and were, in the case of narrators from the United States (where boarding schools began closing their doors decades earlier than they did in Canada) of the first generation in their families not to attend boarding schools.⁷⁴ Lorintha Umtuch, for example, grew up on the Yakama Reservation in south-central Washington, where she participated in a wide range of spiritual practices including Washat services, Shaker Church meetings, and a number of other Christian denominational observances. (Speaking to this flexibility, she observed: "Indian people are highly tolerant of religion and it doesn't faze us to go from one to another and hear this and do that. It just ... the Indians are very

⁷¹ David Reed Miller, Joseph R. McGeshick, Dennis J. Smith, James Shanley, and Caleb Shields, *The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, 1800-2000* (Helena: Fort Peck Community College and Montana Historical Society Press, 2008). For a study of identity on another shared reservation in Montana (Fort Belknap, home to Gros Ventre and Assiniboine peoples) see Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1778-1984* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

⁷² Jacob Bighorn, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 7 July 2008.

⁷³ Jacob Bighorn, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 11 Aug 2004.

⁷⁴ The 1928 Meriam Report proved a significant catalyst for this shift and Bureau of Indian Affairs commissioner John Collier continued to press the mandate to close schools over the course of his 1933-1945 term. Child, *Boarding School Seasons*, 40.

tolerant of that.”)⁷⁵ While connected with local cultural practice, Umtuch did not learn the Yakama language as a child. As she explained:

my parents were both proficient in the language but when they were growing up they were punished for speaking Yakama, they were punished for having hair, long hair in braids, they were punished for wearing Indian “stuff,” they were punished for that. And if they spoke their language, the missionaries would wash their mouths out with soap, in those days it was lye soap. So they didn’t teach me ... they didn’t teach us kids Yakama because they didn’t want us to suffer the same way they suffered. So that was their kindness to us but at the same time we didn’t grow up knowing Yakama that well because they didn’t want us to suffer the same way they suffered ... the way they were penalized for being Yakama and being cultural. You know, so that resentment is still there but I’m trying to let it go.⁷⁶

This recognition of kindness, coupled with mourning for cultural loss, is a perspective itself informed by Baha’i observance and the personal healing that it could promote.

Several narrators did attend residential schools in Canada. Over the past thirty years in this country, a series of prominent personal testimonies, court cases, apologies, and legal settlements has brought this formerly shrouded subject into more open discussion.⁷⁷ This is readily apparent in the frequency with which narrators – both survivors, to engage contemporary discourse, and those who felt the school’s intergenerational effects – discussed these institutions in their interviews. Responding, perhaps, to strong public and media fixation on histories of residential school violence and abuse and articulating, like Umtuch, an understanding (and

⁷⁵ The Washat ceremonial complex and Shaker Church are themselves combinatory movements that include Christian influences and emerged in the context of nineteenth-century colonial expansion in the Plateau region and Puget Sound, respectively; the former movement was strongly influenced by the Wanapum prophet Smohalla and the latter by the Squaxin leader John Slocum. See Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau: Smohalla and Skolaskin* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989) and *John Slocum and the Indian Shaker Church* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

⁷⁶ Umtuch, interview.

⁷⁷ On this context and for various perspectives on residential schools and reconciliation in Canada see the Aboriginal Healing Foundation research series: Marlene Brant Castellano, Linda Archibald, and Mike DeGagné, eds. *From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2008); Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné, eds. *Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Journey* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2009); Ashok Mather, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné, eds. *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation Through the Lens of Diversity* (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2011). These publications are available online, accessed 30 Jan 2012, <http://www.ahf.ca/publications/research-series>.

Baha'i-inflected) perspective, narrator Eleanora McDermott noted of her own experience that, "it wasn't all bad."⁷⁸ Although McDermott attended Anglican schools not too geographically distant from her natal Peigan community, her younger sister, Beverley Knowlton, observed in her own interview that "Eleanora was gone quite a bit from our home."⁷⁹ Unlike her older siblings, Knowlton herself did not attend residential school. She explained that she and Eleanora's father, Peigan councilor Samson Knowlton, was among those who worked to dismantle these institutions and he and his wife, Rose, risked imprisonment in order to keep their youngest out of the system.⁸⁰

Another Blackfoot narrator, Allison Healy, also placed significant emphasis on her residential school experience in describing her background. Born to a Siksika mother and Kainai father in the "Indian hospital" on the Siksika Reserve in southern Alberta in 1942, Healy was enrolled at the Catholic Crowfoot Indian Residential School in Cluny at the age of five.⁸¹ With the exception of some weekend and summer trips home, important periods of cultural connection when Healy and her siblings spent time, for example, with relatives at the Sun Dance at Kainai, she remained at Crowfoot for the next eleven years.⁸² Healy recalled an environment of intense surveillance and repetitious religious instruction measured, in her telling, by a haunting sensory soundtrack of bells and claps. Students, she explained, found ways to convey the emotions they were strictly instructed to suppress – "we speak," for example, "with our eyes" – and were

⁷⁸ McDermott, interview. On the silencing of "positive" boarding school histories see Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 22-23. For reflections on the possibilities and limitations of the resonant "Stolen Generations" narrative in Australia see Bain Attwood, "In the Age of Testimony: The Stolen Generations Narrative, 'Distance,' and Public History," *Public Culture* 20, no.1 (2008): 75-95.

⁷⁹ McDermott, interview; Knowlton, interview.

⁸⁰ Knowlton, interview.

⁸¹ On the hospital at Siksika see Maureen Lux, "We Demand Unconditional Surrender: Making and Unmaking the Blackfoot Hospital, 1890s to 1950s," *Social History of Medicine* 25, no.3 (Aug 2012): 665-684.

⁸² For context on the Sun Dance, including criminalization under the Indian Act, see Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties That Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 3, 53-54, 56-61, 97-98, 135-137, 183-186.

attuned to what Healy described as the hypocrisy of nuns who demanded their Blackfoot charges speak English while they conversed amongst themselves in French.⁸³

This environment marked Healy indelibly and contributed to a severely circumscribed vision of herself and her world. She spoke to this in rich detail in each of our two interviews together. As she shared in the second:

being in a residential school I felt cut away from who I am, like I was really, what you'd say, assimilated into another culture. And so I felt like I wasn't raised to be who I really am. I had to be somebody else and so I lost my true identity as an Indian person. And then especially hearing that everything about our culture was paganism. And our ceremonies were paganism and I never did hear anything good about being an Indian. Even our language, our ways. And so I just lived in fear because we were mostly taught about sin. If you do this, you'll be punished. It's always, if you don't go this way you'll be punished. So I felt very conditioned to do these things and then when I left the boarding school, I didn't know how to live out there. I used to think of the boarding school as a cycle, that I could never leave that cycle. It was just a continuous world, it was a world for me that when I reached Grade 12, I would start all over again this cycle. It will just be continuous. I never looked beyond. I never knew about a future. Even when I go home, onto the reserve, I could never believe that I would ever leave that environment. I just couldn't think beyond from the state I was in at the time.⁸⁴

Healy did leave Crowfoot in the eleventh grade, but the insecurity instilled in this institution accompanied her to Red Deer, where she completed high school, then Edmonton, where she studied nursing. As she put it, “after I left the boarding school I just did everything wrong because I didn't know how to live out there. I had no more guidance from this residential school. I was on my own.”⁸⁵ Her education and work did bring her into contact with “other different cultures of Indigenous people,” yet she also recalled being racialized as Asian.⁸⁶ Healy recalled that the first time that she was taken for Chinese by fellow students in Red Deer, she was upset. But, she explained, “I guess it stuck in my head that, after I left I went into the big city of

⁸³ Allison Healy, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 27 March 2008.

⁸⁴ Allison Healy, interview with the author, North Vancouver, British Columbia, 16 Jan 2009.

⁸⁵ Healy, interview, 16 Jan 2009.

⁸⁶ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008. Narrator Nedra Greenaway, who is of Métis and Chinese heritage, likewise encountered racism growing up in southern Alberta. Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 12 March 2008.

Edmonton, so just to be accepted, I would really dress up and maybe even if people think that I'm Chinese they can think that."⁸⁷ "I used to be ashamed," she elaborated elsewhere, "after coming out of the boarding school. I was ashamed of my identity. Being a Native person. Some people thought I was Chinese and I'd go for that. Just to fit in."⁸⁸

This quest to fit in was one shared by a number of narrators, but took different form based, again, on diverse backgrounds. Where Healy was racialized explicitly as an "Indian" from her start, others of mixed descent, who were not raised in Indigenous communities, shared stories of disconnect from their Indigenous heritage during their youth. For Linda Covey, for example, who was born in New Mexico to a mother of Cherokee, German, and English descent and a father of Cherokee, Southern Cheyenne, and French heritage, "Indianness" was a subject of family silence and tension and, as a result, something that she and her brothers experienced, as children, as a profound personal loss. Her maternal grandfather's mother, Covey explained, was a "full-blood Cherokee," but her grandfather, who married into a wealthy English family in New Mexico, hid this aspect of his heritage and reacted strongly when his daughter, Covey's mother, eloped with an "Indian migrant worker" from Oklahoma. Both sides of the family were angry and expressed their censure by refusing contact with her two older siblings: "the brother that looked more like the Indian side," Covey explained, "the Indian side wouldn't have anything to do with, and the brother who looked more like the non-Indian side, that side wouldn't have anything to do with." Covey never met her father, who left near the time of her birth, but she and her brothers heard stories "of our Indian grandmother" from their mother: "Her Indian remedies, her birth-control that didn't work, the braid down her back, the long braid, and she was very, very proud of her heritage." "So we always knew that," Covey continued, "and we knew that she

⁸⁷ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

⁸⁸ Healy, interview, 16 Jan 2009.

had been given land in Oklahoma, but that she didn't take it." Speaking elsewhere to the Dawes Act, that contested instrument of Indianness, Covey noted that her grandmother is listed on the rolls in Oklahoma.⁸⁹

Despite this legal link and family story, however, "Indianness" was a more an absence and "source of pain" for Covey and her siblings growing up. Covey's sense of liminality was amplified when, after her parents divorced, her mother served as a missionary for the fundamentalist Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and moved her children to the Ozarks in Missouri, where she was stationed.⁹⁰ The family, Covey recalled, had "a very, very hard time." Covey and her brothers faced prejudice on account of their physical appearance and were, likewise, set apart by local genealogical structures. As Covey explained, "in that area of the country, if you didn't have relatives two or three generations back, the hill country people, you just didn't fit in. A person didn't fit in."⁹¹ Tacking back to the topic of Indianness, she continued:

So I guess in growing up there was always this split within us. There was this side of us that knew that we were part Indian and that we'd lost our father and that side of our family over that issue, it made it very real to us, it wasn't something that was distant or happened to somebody else, it didn't have anything to do with who lived on the reservation or who didn't, it was just a fact of our childhood, that we lost, because of that.⁹²

⁸⁹ Linda Covey, interview with the author, Evanston, Illinois, 10 June 2008. Another self-described "mixed-blood" narrator, Tina Rainwater Kahn, of Cherokee, Osage, and Hungarian heritage, was conversely raised off reservation with a strong sense of Indigenous self, but noted that her family, at her Cherokee great-grandfather's insistence, was never registered "on the rolls." Tina Kahn, interview with the author, Pine Springs, Arizona, 21 June 2009. There is a rich literature that considers the complex and contested construction of race and identity among the Cherokee. See, for example: Tiya Miles, *Ties that Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) and *Becoming Indian: The Struggle Over Cherokee Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2010).

⁹⁰ On the Moody Bible Institute, established in Chicago in 1886 (initially as the Chicago Evangelization Society) see Randall Herbert Balmer, *The Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 389.

⁹¹ Covey, interview. For context on the Ozarks see Brooks Blevins, *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers and Their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); W.K. McNeil, *Ozark Country* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995).

⁹² Covey, interview.

This palpable personal loss was something that Covey came to address in her adult years and by way of her Baha'i observance as well.

In this she was not alone. Indeed, for all their difference, the biographies just sketched also share a compelling family resemblance. They illustrate, in an intimate immediate way, the flexible and fractious genealogy of "Indianness" and hint, further, at the diverse Christian heritage that most participants in this project also share. Narrators also share more direct interconnections, manifested in the networks that led me to them. I was first introduced to Linda Covey, for example, by way of an email discussion about Indigenous Baha'i research, the same context in which I met another narrator, Donald Addison. Of Choctaw and White background, Addison was born and still resides in Oregon and from there connected me with another two narrators in the Pacific Northwest: Lorintha Umtuch and Jane Grover. Of Abenaki and White heritage from New England, Grover lived on Vancouver Island before moving to McMinnville, Oregon, where I interviewed her, and worked at Maxwell International Baha'i School in Duncan with Jacob and Deloria Bighorn. Deloria Bighorn, for her part, put me in touch with Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, a woman of Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Filipino heritage raised on Bainbridge Island, across from downtown Seattle, and living at the time of our interviews in Juneau, Alaska. Gubatayao-Hagen, in turn, made mention in her interview of Klara Tyler, a close friend of her mother's, all three of whom, in addition to another narrator, Tyler's son Scott, spent time pioneering on the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho. Tyler had been visiting with the Bighorns in Duncan, British Columbia just a week before my interview with them there. I could continue, but even this swift sketch suggests how narrators are tied together, in historical time and today. These intersections are not an incidental product of my own intervention, but instead indicative of Indigenous Baha'i interactions that I consider in coming chapters.

Given the diverse backgrounds from which participants in this project come, it is not surprising that they encountered the Baha'i Faith in a variety of different ways. Official Baha'i rhetoric stressed the importance of teaching on reserves and reservations and a number of participants were introduced to the religion by non-Indigenous pioneers in this context. Indigenous adherents were themselves encouraged to swiftly take up the teaching task following their declarations and other participants "found the Faith," to use a common Baha'i catchphrase, through family members or other Indigenous Baha'is. Others still encountered the religion outside the Indigenous teaching context in various small town and urban environments. All narrators declared during the second half of the twentieth century. The first did so in 1956 and the last in 1995; the majority (16 of 25 narrators) became Baha'is during the mid-to-late 1960s and 1970s. Most of these were in their twenties and thirties when they declared and are, as such, "second generation" Indigenous Baha'is. While this designation is largely figurative (meant to distinguish these narrators from "first generation" Indigenous adherents like Dorothy Maquabeak Francis), for some it is more literal: a few narrators grew up in Baha'i homes while several others had parents who declared before them.

Narratives and Narrators

That narrators would come to share identification as Indigenous Baha'is is hardly obvious from the background biographies detailed here. In my early work with these oral histories, I strove to establish a set pattern around the sort of background that led people to become Baha'is. These narratives, however, defy efforts to establish any typology of "the" Indigenous Baha'i and what at first appeared an impediment in the end became the argument: there was no single background that primed people to declare as Baha'is. Assembled with a particular eye to issues of "Indianness," the portraits in this chapter emphasize the remarkably broad range of Indigenous

experiences that participants brought to their encounters with the Baha’i Faith, simultaneously grounding the genealogies traced in the previous chapter and hinting at those forged through subsequent Baha’i declaration. Composed from stories that narrators shared in the context of life story interviews, these biographies mark my own interpretation. I too, readers should recall throughout, am a narrator. This study is not a collaborative one, but strives very much to be a respectful contribution that contributes to academic and Baha’i community dialogue alike. As this chapter has illustrated, this project delves into sensitive personal territory and I do not take the responsibility of working with these histories, and those to whom they belong, lightly.⁹³ Such intimate detail, though, was among that which narrators chose to share by way of orienting context in narrating their life stories of becoming Indigenous Baha’is. And as coming chapters elaborate, declaration and deepening were empowering processes through which narrators wrestled with colonialism, negotiated family history, and formulated new visions of relationship altogether.

⁹³ Indeed, am I aware of concerns expressed by some in the Indigenous Baha’i community in the Yukon, specifically, concerning previous research that has emphasized social dynamics and “personal and family circumstances” over storytelling. Lynn Echevarria, “A New Skin for an Old Drum: Changing Contexts of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá’í Storytelling,” *The Northern Review* 29 (Fall 2008), 57 (fn 9).

Chapter 4: Choosing the Faith

“Well, it’s kind of a convoluted story, but I was on this path of search.”¹ This comment, offered by a narrator in opening response to a question I posed concerning his experience of becoming Baha’i, echoes a common refrain articulated by many participants in this project. This statement not only signals the complexity of the conversion process, but also a significant shared theme of “seeking.” Baha’is designate those who express an interest in their religion “seekers” and in drawing on this discourse of search in their interviews with me, narrators expressed their current affiliation as Baha’is right in the context of the telling. This idiom of seeking ties, further, to the principle of the “independent investigation of truth” and what many narrators described as a rational process of religious inquiry. Reminiscent of Abdu’l-Baha’s alignment of science and religion (“To oppose reason in the name of religion,” as the Baha’i scholar Peter Smith explains of this stance, “is superstition”), seekers are encouraged to engage directly with the Baha’i teachings and writings, determining of their own volition whether and why to declare.² Like the language of seeking, the discourse of choice and rationality that narrators deployed articulates their current Baha’i vocabulary and identification. Yet theirs were not solely retrospective reconstructions. Narrators exercised agency and rationality through the historical act and process of declaration as well.

The issue of agency has long occupied scholars of conversion and colonialism alike. As the historian Bruce Hindmarsh has explained, “The central image and etymological root of the

¹ Kevin Locke, interview with the author, by telephone, 28 March 2008.

² Peter Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha’i Faith* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 114. For statements from Abdu’l-Baha on the unity of science and religion, the independent investigation of truth, and the Baha’i Faith as rational religion see, for example, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (Wilmette: IL: US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982), 107, 128, 138, 175-176, 181, 231, 290, 348-349, 374, 394, 440, accessed online 14 March 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/PUP/>.

word ‘conversion’ is ‘turning’, and its semantic field is wide.”³ In Christian theological terms, this turning evokes a dramatic event of rupture as the individual convert makes “a supreme act of independent choice” to turn to God.⁴ In many historical contexts of Christian religious encounter in Indigenous North America and elsewhere, such turning was further tied to colonial modernities.⁵ In British Columbia, specifically, scholars like the historian Robin Fisher once counted the arrival of missionaries in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century as a key measure of a shift from “non-directed” to “directed” cultural change (i.e. from Indigenous agency to settler control).⁶ As the historian Susan Neylan has observed in relation to Indigenous religious exchange in the province, however, binaries of internal/external and in/voluntary conversion are unsatisfying and run the alternate risk of downplaying or overstating the uneven power dynamics that, by definition, inhere in spiritual contact zones.⁷ The academic pursuit of agency, according

³ D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11.

⁴ Elizabeth Elbourne, “Christian Soldiers, Christian Allies: Coercion and Conversion in Southern Africa and Northeastern America at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” in David Lindenfeld and Miles Richardson, eds., *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism: Indigenous Encounters with Missionary Christianity, 1800-2000* (New York: Berghahn, 2012), 81; Timothy J. Steigenga and Edward L. Cleary, “Understanding Religious Conversion in the Americas,” in Timothy J. Steigenga and Edward L. Cleary, eds., *Conversion of a Continent: Contemporary Religious Change in Latin America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 7; Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Christian Encounter* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 149.

⁵ See, for example, the historian Adele Perry’s discussion of missionary transmission of metropolitan models of womanhood in British Columbia in: “Metropolitan Knowledge, Colonial Practice, and Indigenous Womanhood: Missions in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, ed. Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 109-130. For two collections that consider the co-production of Christianity and modernity more broadly see: Robert W. Hefner, ed., *Conversion to Christianity: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives on a Great Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), including Hefner’s introduction, “World Building and the Rationality of Conversion,” 3-46; Peter van der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christian Modernities* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁶ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* Second Edition (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992 [1977]), 47, 119-145. The language of “directed” and “non-directed cultural change” that Fisher engages is the anthropologist Ralph Linton’s.

⁷ Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 21-23. Uneven relations of power, recall, are a constitutive feature of Mary Louise Pratt’s definition of the contact zone: *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 6-7. Though Neylan’s book insightfully illustrates active Tsimshian interpretations and expressions of Christianity, it also downplays the context of colonialism by, for example, relegating discussion of residential schools to a postscript. Writing of the same Northwest Coast context as Neylan,

to the anthropologists Talal Asad and Webb Keane, is an artifact and expression of modernity itself (one tacitly informed, Keane adds, by “the humanist assumption that self transformation is not only a central fact of history but also a good that exceeds local systems of value.”)⁸ As Asad has observed in a trenchant commentary on conversion: “Too often the assumptions we bring with us when talking about the conversion of people in another epoch or society are the ideological assumptions in and about our modern condition. Conversion is regarded by moderns as an ‘irrational’ event or process, but resort to the idea of agency renders it ‘rational’ and ‘freely chosen.’ Everyone has agency; everyone is responsible for the life he or she leads.”⁹ Yet in the case of the declaration stories considered here, the language of choice and rationality comes directly from narrators themselves, calling for attention both to the process and idiom of declaration and the particular historical contexts in which participants became Baha’is.

As we saw in the last chapter, there was no single or set pathway towards becoming an Indigenous Baha’i. To further flesh out this diversity, I focus here on two pairs of declaration stories that richly illuminate the varied process of “choosing the Faith.” Joyce Shales, Nedra Greenaway, Deloria Bighorn, and Allison Healy became Baha’is in Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, and Alberta, respectively, and together their declaration stories demonstrate the wide ways through which narrators first connected with the Baha’i religion: through Indigenous kith and kin, non-Indigenous teachers and pioneers, on reserve and off. For these four women, who became Baha’is between 1964 and 1972, the Baha’i Faith was a “rational religion” that “made sense” in light of their diverse histories, including experiences of colonialism. As the anthropologist Carolyn Sawin has noted in the context of the Indigenous Baha’i community in

historian Clarence Bolt put the question of agency bluntly in the title of his 1983 article: “The Conversion of the Port Simpson Tsimshian: Indian Control or Missionary Manipulation?” *BC Studies* 57 (Spring 1983): 38-56.

⁸ Keane, *Christian Moderns*, 3; Talal Asad, “Comments on Conversion,” in van der Veer, ed., *Conversion to Modernities*, 263-274.

⁹ Asad, “Comments on Conversion,” 272.

the Yukon, this discourse of rationality seems to conjure the specter of deprivation theses which frame conversion as a turning away from irrational and ineffectual lifeways.¹⁰ There was, to be sure, at times a utilitarian draw to declaration; in the face of colonial-induced issues of addiction, for example, the Baha’i law prohibiting the use of drugs and alcohol offered an effective “technique for living.”¹¹ Rather than a turning, however, declaration marked instead a process of becoming. Connecting with core Baha’i principles of progressive revelation and unity in diversity, combined with the conduct of adherents, the four subjects of this chapter generated both an empowered sense of religious belonging and strengthened self-identification as Indigenous as well. These stories, again, illuminate the diverse form that such identification could take. Nedra Greenaway and Allison Healy, for example, spoke explicitly of coming to cultivate an entirely new sense of Indigeneity through becoming Baha’i, the former as a woman of Métis and Chinese heritage and the latter as Blackfoot. Joyce Shales and Deloria Bighorn, conversely, reflected more implicitly on a process of strengthening existing identifications as Tlingit and Yankton Sioux and Chickasaw, respectively.

¹⁰ Carolyn Patterson Sawin, “Native Conversion, Native Identity: An Oral History of the Bahá’í Faith among First Nations People in the Southern Central Yukon Territory, Canada” (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2000), 141. Sawin posits, in response to this reading of rationality, that her Tlingit and Tagish participants were instead engaging a “*pre-existing* cultural practice of examining and evaluating new ideas each time they are introduced.” For analysis of agency and empowerment through an overdrawn model of “possessive individualism” in the context of Baha’i declaration on the island of New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, see Graeme Were, “Fashioning Belief: The Case of the Baha’i Faith in Northern New Ireland,” *Anthropological Forum* 17, no.3 (Nov 2007): 239-253.

¹¹ “Techniques for living” is philosopher Jacob Needleman’s term, applied by Lewis R. Rambo in *Understanding Religious Conversion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 84. The anthropologist Richard Fox Young discusses “utilitarian” versus “intellectual” approaches to conversion and calls, with fellow anthropologist Joel Robbins, for “*détente*” between these poles in: “Horton’s ‘Intellectualist’ Theory of Conversion, Reflected on by a South Asianist,” in Lindenfeld and Richardson, eds., *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism*, 120-121. Fox Young makes this call in the context of a reevaluation of the anthropologist Robin Horton’s influential “intellectualist” formulation of conversion. Horton framed conversion as a process of “explanation, prediction, and control” through which small-scale African societies negotiated “micro-” and “macrocosm.” As Fox Young notes, critiques of Horton’s theory “are legion”; though reductionist on several registers, however, Horton’s analysis was also “remarkably prescient” in “reinvest[ing] African traditional religionists with an agency all their own.” Fox Young, “Horton’s ‘Intellectualist’ Theory of Conversion,” 119.

Together, their stories suggest that, as the literary critic Gauri Viswanathan has argued of conversion in the very different context of nineteenth-century British imperialism, we might approach declaration as “a mode of asserting difference,” one that “reclaims religious belief from the realm of intuitive (nonrational) action to the realm of conscious knowing and relational activity.”¹² At the same time, the tales of “rational religion” that I consider here include reflections on spiritual inspirations and interpretations as well. And the spiritual declaration stories that I in turn probe in the next chapter contain “rational” elements too. These distinctions, then, are not total (indeed, as the historian Keith Carlson has observed in a discussion of Coast Salish epistemology, “what constitutes practical and rational behavior is culturally and temporally situational”).¹³ Further, it is important to recognize that those who narrated their declarations through the idiom of choice and rationality in their interviews with me might well have chosen, in another context, to stress more spiritual elements or inspirations (and visa versa for those who told more spiritual declaration stories). Indeed, one narrator effectively said as much to me, noting as we chatted post-interview that there is, “of course,” another whole spiritual dimension to her declaration that she did not delve into in detail. This is a strong reminder of the intersubjective and situational nature of the life story interview and the control that narrators exercised as they chose what to share with me.

The decision to focus this chapter on four female participants was not a predetermined one on my part, but rather something that emerged organically through shared narrative and historical threads. And as the next chapter, which focuses on three men, bears out, women were not the only narrators to describe experiences of “seeking” or “rational” interpretation. That it

¹² Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 42, 176.

¹³ Keith Carlson, “Rethinking Dialogue and History: The King’s Promise and the 1906 Aboriginal Delegation to London,” *Native Studies Review* 16, no.2 (2005), 5.

was women, however, who shared particularly composed stories of choice and rationality suggests a certain gendered dynamic at play. Narrators, overall, did not share their stories in an expressly gendered key. This may well have been a function of my interview framing; aware of my interest in their experiences specifically as Indigenous Baha'is, it is possible that participants privileged this thread over others. When I asked Nedra Greenaway, for example, whether she connected with the Baha'i teaching of the equality of women and men, she returned to speak about her feminist stance at the time that she became a Baha'i in the mid-1960s, something she had not previously broached.¹⁴ Though they did not articulate it explicitly, these women may well have been speaking back to a longstanding Western characterization of women, as well as Indigenous people, as “spiritual,” not “rational,” actors.¹⁵ Conversely, or perhaps in addition, they may have been engaging a common characterization of Indigenous women as “keepers of tradition.” As the Cree-Métis historian Kim Anderson observes, this image, and its correlate of Indigenous women as “mothers of the nation,” connects with Indigenous women’s traditional roles and responsibilities, yet can also marginalize women and confine them to “a role that casts them as inherently static and relegates them to the backburners of political development.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert’s Creek, British Columbia, 15 August 2008. Conversely, when I put the same question to Joyce Shales she responded in relation to concepts of gender complementarity in Tlingit society and stories of women’s power with which she was raised. “It wasn’t an issue, really, I don’t think,” she shared. “Not like with Western women, because we could see that men and women had roles.” Invoking a position articulated, then and now, in other quarters of Indigenous North America as well, she added, “The discrimination against us [as Indigenous people] was so strong that that discrimination overpowered any other worry about whether you were male or female.” Joyce Shales, interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 30 July 2008. The balance between women’s and Indigenous issues remains a point of tension for Indigenous feminists (and others who reject the term). See Shari M. Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack, “Indigenous Feminism: Theorizing the Issues,” in Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman, eds., *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 1-20.

¹⁵ On the “feminization of piety,” stemming back to the late eighteenth century, see Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularization, 1800-2000* Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2009), esp. Chapter 4. For discussion of what the historian Naomi Lloyd describes as “ahistorical Victorian notions of the ‘secular man’ and ‘spiritual woman’” see “Evangelicalism and the Making of Same-Sex Desire: The Life and Writings of Constance Maynard (1849-1935),” (PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 2011), 95; Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 18-19.

¹⁶ Kim Anderson, “Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist,” in Suzack et al., *Indigenous Women and Feminism*, 86-88 (quote on 87).

Narrators may have taken this “keeper of tradition” characterization as a given, and thus may not have felt a particular need or compulsion to elaborate on the spiritual elements of their declarations or may, again, have been pushing back on the idea by stressing their own rational agency.

Rational Religion: Two Tales

The subjects of this chapter, though, like narrators more broadly, come from a wide range of backgrounds and a pair of declaration stories from two participants who both became Baha’is in 1964 helps clarify just how diverse the process of becoming Indigenous and Baha’i could be. While Joyce Shales’ investigation of the Baha’i Faith was shared with family members, and framed in both tribal and Christian terms, Nedra Greenaway’s was, at the start anyway, more personal and political. Both women, however, stressed that they had sought “unity” and “belonging” long before learning of the Baha’i Faith and this desire animated their respective – and, they both emphasized, rational – interactions with the religion when they found it. Joining this religion of mid-nineteenth-century Iranian origin fostered the belonging that these women sought in two ways at once: in a global community of faith and as Indigenous people.

I opened my interview with Joyce Shales by asking her to share about her “pre-Baha’i” life. She responded with a statement that echoed through our entire conversation: “Well, it’s really hard to know where to start. Pre-Baha’i. I don’t know if there is a pre-, to tell you the truth. It’s almost like it was always meant to be there, to me, almost like it was a road”; “In a sense,” she added later, “I think it is a path that we’ve always been on.”¹⁷ This is, in part, a very Baha’i statement, what the sociologist David Piff, in a discussion of the anthropologist June Wyman’s work, has described as an articulation of “life history as a series of steps that have pushed [a

¹⁷ Joyce Shales, interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 29 July 2008.

seeker] towards becoming a member of the religion.”¹⁸ Shales, though, did not consciously narrate her history in the aim of fashioning an individual “seeker” identity, if it also achieved this end. Instead, she framed her process of becoming Baha’i as an explicit and shared extension of family history.

She proceeded by speaking about her grandfather, hereditary Tlingit leader and Presbyterian, Rudolph Walton.¹⁹ Walton was born into the Raven moiety and Kiks.’adi clan of the Sheet’*kakwáan*, or the “inhabitants of Sitka,” a coastal settlement located on the western shore of Baranof Island in Southeast Alaska, in 1867, the year that Alaska was transferred from Russian to American control.²⁰ This was a time, Shales stressed in her interview, of swift and substantial change for the Tlingit and, from the time of his tenure as an early student at the Presbyterian mission school established in Sitka in 1878, her grandfather carefully and consciously navigated the “stormy seas” of early American colonialism in Southeast Alaska.²¹ The anthropologist Sergei Kan has drawn a rather sharp line between what he calls “traditionalist” members of the Russian Orthodox Church (which he describes as accommodating of Tlingit custom) and “progressive” Presbyterians (said to be more closely

¹⁸ David Piff, *Bahá’i Lore* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 2000), 81. Discussing June Wyman, “Becoming a Baha’i: Discourse and Social Networks in an American Baha’i Community,” (PhD thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1985).

¹⁹ Shales explains in her doctoral dissertation on her grandfather that Walton was “known in the Tlingit community as Kaawootk’ or Aak’wtaatseen (Ah-ta-tsene).” Joyce Walton Shales, “Rudolph Walton: One Tlingit Man’s Journey Through Stormy Seas, Sitka, Alaska, 1867-1951” (PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 1998), 1.

²⁰ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008; Shales, “Rudolph Walton,” 23. As the historian Paige Raibmon explains, Walton’s “social world was divided into two moieties, Raven and Eagle (also called Crow and Wolf respectively), and further subdivided into clans, and then house groups of ten to forty members. Clan and moiety were matrilineally determined, so Walton belonged to the same moiety, Raven, and clan, *Kiks.’adi*, as his mother.” Walton was a member of the *Tin.aa Hit*, or “Copper Shield House.” Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 137, 138. For further detail on Tlingit social structure see Frederica de Laguna, “Tlingit,” in Wayne Suttles, ed. *Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7, Northwest Coast* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1990), 203-228. As the former capital of Russian America, and the site where the Russian flag was lowered and an American one hoisted in its stead, Sitka occupied an especially charged position in this exchange.

²¹ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. The term “stormy seas” comes from the title of Shales’ dissertation, “Rudolph Walton.” On early Presbyterian education in Sitka see Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 138.

aligned with American policies of civilization and assimilation) in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Sitka.²² Shales, by contrast, described how her grandfather combined his commitments to his people and the church, noting that he more than once privileged the first over the second.²³ In 1903, for example, Walton raised the rancor of Presbyterian authorities when, in an application of Tlingit law, he participated in a peace ceremony performed in order to settle a dispute between the Kiks.'adi and L'uknax.'adi clans.²⁴ Two years later, he was stripped of his position as a church Elder when, after the death of his first wife, he quickly married her clan relative, widow Mary Dick Davis, in what Shales described as “a Tlingit tribal way.”²⁵ At the same time, Walton, a silversmith, shopkeeper, and resident of “the cottages,” populated by graduates of the local Presbyterian mission school, strongly valued Christianity and education and went, Shales stressed, to great lengths to secure access for his family.²⁶ In the face of strict policies and assumptions of authenticity, though, they faced steep barriers. An early-twentieth-century legal bid, for example, to have Davis’ “mixed-blood” children admitted to public school in Sitka was denied on account of the family’s so-called “uncivilized” status.²⁷

²² Although, as Kan documents, many Tlingit people in Sitka turned to the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1880s as a more accommodating alternative to American missions, the traditionalist/progressive dichotomy that he sets up is overdrawn. Sergei Kan, *Memory Eternal: Tlingit Culture and Russian Orthodox Christianity through Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), esp. Chapters 6 and 7. Kan reiterates this argument in “‘It’s Only Half a Mile from Savagery to Civilization’: American Tourists and the Southeastern Alaska Natives in the Late 19th Century,” in Marie Mauzé, Michael E. Harkin, and Sergei Kan, eds., *Coming to Shore: Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions, and Visions* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 204.

²³ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

²⁴ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008; Shales, “Rudolph Walton,” 170-174; Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 170-172. On the peace ceremony as Tlingit law see Sidney L. Haring, *Crow Dog’s Case: American Indian Sovereignty, Tribal Law, and United States Law in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 220-221.

²⁵ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. For further detail on this marriage and its accordance with Tlingit custom see Shales, “Rudolph Walton,” 151-153; Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 172-173. Though Walton’s first marriage was conducted in the Presbyterian Church, it too followed Tlingit custom in the sense that Walton married across clan lines; his first wife, Daisy Jackson, was Kaagwaantaan. Shales, interview, 29 July 2008; Shales, “Rudolph Walton,” 91-92.

²⁶ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. His enthusiasm for Christian education was not shared by his wife, Mary, who left home in protest over Walton’s decision to send his children away to mission school; in another application of Tlingit tradition, Walton composed a love song in order to bring her back. Shales, “Rudolph Walton,” 112-114; Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 173.

²⁷ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008; Shales, “Rudolph Walton,” 175-204; Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, Chapter 9.

Though formal segregation persisted within the school system until Shales' generation, nearly if not all of Walton's living children nevertheless completed high school studies at the Sheldon Jackson mission school in Sitka, something Shales described as "a pretty amazing achievement."²⁸ Speaking to Walton's twin commitments to education and Christianity, she observed:

I think my grandfather's aim was to get us out from under the thumb of a mission school life so that we could stand on our own two feet. That with a public school education we could better help ourselves and that with Christianity we had the moral compass to do it. And I think that was his idea.²⁹

Not unlike the school system, the Presbyterian Church maintained separate Tlingit and settler churches in Sitka between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s and many Tlingit people had pulled back from this denomination in the increasingly White town by the time Shales was born in the 1940s.³⁰ She and her cousins, however, all attended Sunday school in their youth and Shales explained that an eschatological message they received there concerning the return of Christ contributed to the path of search that her family was walking at mid-century. This path was prompted, further, by persistent prejudice within the church and elsewhere in Alaska. As she recalled in relation to her father, James Walton:

My dad was always searching for the religion that was going to bring us to that next step, because he saw there had to be more. And I knew when I was a kid that he was searching, but I didn't know what he was searching for. I knew he was searching the churches looking for one that would satisfy him, but I didn't know what he was searching for and I just knew that he was looking for a religion that would satisfy him. Because there was so much prejudice. He was looking for a place, I guess, where we'd be accepted and where ... there was that next step.³¹

²⁸ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. On segregation in education see Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 455; Maria Shaa Tláa Williams, "A Brief History of Native Solidarity," in Maria Shaa Tláa Williams, ed. *Alaska Native Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 203.

²⁹ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

³⁰ Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 468, 508. The 1939 census detailed a White population of 1342, over twice that of the Indigenous population of 633, in Sitka. Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 456.

³¹ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. Such prejudice was felt acutely in churches in Canada and the "lower-48" as well and likewise prompted searches on the part of other narrators. For example, Lorintha Umtuch, interview with the

Legal changes in Alaska at mid-century targeted such prejudice; the 1946 Antidiscrimination Act (passed, in good part, through the efforts of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, of which Rudolph Walton was a charter member), for example, was the first legislation of its kind in the United States.³² And Shales, specifically, observed that she had a strong sense of freedom growing up in coastal Sitka: “We would go swimming, we would climb the mountains, we would pick berries, we would go fishing. So we were just free.” “On the other hand,” she added:

when we went to school there was a lot of prejudice from the other kids and from the school teachers and from the community, so being free, we were free when we were in the woods and on the beach and fishing and hunting or ... just out on the ocean, digging clams, do you know what I mean? And so the hard times were when you were having to deal with the rest of the world as it was.³³

Her father, Shales explained, “had a really hard time dealing with that” and consequently struggled with alcohol addiction, something that placed great strain on the family.³⁴

It was in this context that James Walton encountered the Baha’i Faith in Juneau, a larger coastal city located on the mainland roughly one hundred and fifty kilometers east of Sitka, as the crow (or raven) flies.³⁵ As Shales recalled:

he went over to Juneau fishing one time and I think my mother had just about had it with him and somebody helped him over there and they were Baha’is and that’s where he became a Baha’i. Those Baha’i friends helped him and I wish I could remember their names, he told me. An older couple, I believe, fishermen who lived on the dock probably.

author, Toppenish, Washington, 21 June 2008; Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interviews with the author, by telephone, 11 July and 19 Aug 2008.

³² Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 462-464; Williams, “A Brief History of Native Solidarity,” 204-206. Speaking to acute prejudice in the period that the Anti-Discrimination Act was passed, Williams observes that “It was not unusual to see signs in cities such as Juneau, Sitka, Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Nome that stated “No dogs or Indians Allowed.” Williams, “A Brief History of Native Solidarity,” 203. On Walton and the Alaska Native Brotherhood: Shales, interview, 29 July 2008; Shales, “Rudolph Walton,” 156, 206.

³³ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

³⁴ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. Walton was not alone in this struggle. For other Indigenous voices see Brian Maracle, *Crazywater: Native Voices on Addiction and Recovery* (Toronto: Viking, 1993).

³⁵ For a helpful introduction to Alaskan geography, with particular emphasis on Indigenous peoples and territory, see Maria Shaa Tláa Williams, “Alaska and Its People: An Introduction” in Maria Shaa Tláa Williams, ed. *Alaska Native Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 1-11.

They helped him and he became a Baha'i and ... started teaching other people about the Baha'i Faith just like that.³⁶

After he declared in 1953, Walton not only brought the Baha'i Faith back to Sitka, where a number of his relatives declared, he eventually carried it to other Indigenous communities, in North America and elsewhere.³⁷ Connecting her father's teaching activity back to that of his father before him, Shales added, "He was like Grandpa because he understood that the Baha'i Faith could help our people like Christianity helped people" through a period of major change and trauma.³⁸

When I asked Shales what it was about the religion that really "clicked" for her father, she pointed, in particular, to the principle of progressive revelation. This teaching, she stressed, was logical, to her father and to her too:

Well, I can't swear, but I believe that he told me that the Baha'i Faith is the one thing that teaches that all people are equal and strives for it. And that all the religions are one and strives for that belief. And all the prophets are one and that religion is progressive and makes sense intellectually. So, intellectually, it made sense to him. And he said to me, when he was telling me about it, let me see, how did he put it?

Pausing slightly in an effort to recall his specific phrasing, Shales carried on:

Something about the same sun rising every day. The prophets might change but it's the same God and it makes sense to understand that God would send somebody to educate mankind, because mankind needed it from time to time and from place to place. And that he did not leave the Indian people out. That was the other thing. As far as the Christians were concerned we were just left totally out. Because I could never figure that out myself. Why were we just left here on this continent with nothing? If there was a God and he

³⁶ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

³⁷ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008; "Jim Walton," in "Obituaries," *The Bahá'í World, 2003-2004: An International Record* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2005), 239. Walton's teaching in the Yukon is discussed in Sawin, "Native Conversion, Native Identity," 93-94, 142-143, 145; on the Prairies see Patricia Verge, *Angus: From the Heart: The Life of Counsellor Angus Cowan* (Cochrane, AB: Springtide Publishing, 1999), 78, 80, 83, 87-88, 197, 280, 312 (fn 3). The spread of the Baha'i Faith by way of social and kinship networks was common among Baha'is, Indigenous and not, elsewhere as well. See, for example, Linda S. Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í: Through the Lens of Ancient Prophecies" (MA thesis, Missouri State University, 2011); Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 15, 17; Sawin, "Native Conversion, Native Identity," 141-142, 173.

³⁸ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. Shales noted that her grandfather taught as well as observed Christianity. "He wrote," she explained, referencing the journals that Walton kept over a forty-year period, "about going to different villages and talking to the people about Christianity and what it meant and how it helped people."

wanted to speak to people and he went and talked to Jesus, but he just left us sitting here with nothing ... what was the point of that? Were we not his children too? Obviously, it didn't make any sense. And then all of a sudden you say, "Oh, there were all these different teachers" and they would rise from time to time and from place to place and they would educate mankind as they were able to understand it, it made sense. All of a sudden it all made sense, of course. Then that's why there was a Muhammad or a Buddha. There wasn't just a Jesus and that was it. That's what made sense to me.³⁹

This understanding encompassed not simply recognition of Indigenous presence, but also confirmation of Tlingit knowledge and capacity. For progressive revelation, and the broader teaching of "unity in diversity," took in and acknowledged Indigenous spiritual heritage as well.

As Shales continued in specific reference to dreams:

Because then it means that we weren't just left here either because we knew we had dreams. Or that there was somebody here on this side that had some dreams too that told us something. You know, take the people here or take the people there so they'll be safe, same thing.⁴⁰

Dreams were, and are, a significant source of spiritual inspiration and guidance for Shales and her family (and, as the next chapter elaborates, for a number of other Indigenous Baha'is as well). The Baha'i Faith, in her interpretation and remembrance, validated and extended such spiritual knowledge and her own family's history of religious combination.

Shales herself formally declared as a Baha'i around the age of twenty while living in Fairbanks, nearly eleven hundred kilometers north of Sitka in the Alaskan interior. Emphasizing the text-based nature of Baha'i study, she explained that beyond interacting with the few resident Baha'is and teachers like her father, who stayed with her in Fairbanks for a time, "The only way

³⁹ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. The "same sun" metaphor similarly spoke to Ditidaht man John Thomas, an early Indigenous Baha'i in British Columbia: Chelsea Horton, "'According to your faith so shall your power and blessings be': The Aboriginal-Bahá'í Encounter in British Columbia" (M.A. Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2005), 85. Abdu'l-Baha frequently expounded on the "same sun" theme. See, for example, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "The Sun of Reality" and "The Quickening Spirit," in *Bahá'í World Faith: Selected Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), 254-257, 261-263, accessed online 15 March 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/c/BWF/>. Other narrators likewise spoke to progressive revelation as a strong source of attraction to the religion. For example: Linda Loft, interview with the author, Meades Creek, British Columbia, 16 Aug 2004; John Sargent, interview with the author, by telephone, 21 July 2008; Tina Kahn, interview with the author, Pine Springs, Arizona, 21 June 2009.

⁴⁰ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

you'd know anything about it was to read the books that they gave you and decide for yourself whether you thought it was real or not."⁴¹ Invoking a metaphor of homecoming echoed by a number of narrators, she continued:

So I read what I was given and I had to decide for myself whether I believed it or not. And I read it and I felt like I was home. This was it. I believed it ... without a doubt. I had no doubt that this was true, that it made total sense. If there was a God, he's the God of everybody. There was no picking and choosing. If there was such a thing as a prophet then it had to be that there was a possibility that there were numerous ones, that there wasn't just the one and only one.⁴²

World citizenship was another teaching that spoke to Shales from the start. As she shared:

Back when I heard these words for the first time, those were not concepts you heard every day. But those are concepts that I really believed in the minute I heard them. All of them. So I just felt like that was what my father and my grandfather would have believed and I believed them too. And, after that, I just couldn't understand any other way of seeing the world than that, as one small place with a whole bunch of people in it who just needed to learn to get along.⁴³

Concepts like world citizenship and progressive revelation might have been new, but they resonated and made sense to Shales in light of a long history of colonialism and creative cultural brokerage.⁴⁴ They offered an open and inclusive vision with the prospect to transcend parochialism and prejudice at the same time they confirmed Indigenous presence and spiritual power. In carefully and consciously situating her declaration within her family history, as the "same road" as that walked by her father and grandfather before her, Shales articulated a strong

⁴¹ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. Shales recalled that the literature she was given included early British Baha'i Sara Louisa Blomfield's 1940 *The Chosen Highway*, American Baha'i William Sears's 1960 *God Loves Laughter* and books on "the Baha'i institutions."

⁴² Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. 'Namgis Baha'i Chris Cook Jr., for example, spoke to a similar sense of homecoming through the faith and shared "I understand more about my grandfather saying now, 'It doesn't matter if we're in fifty rooms and that we're all praying [in] different tongues, or different beliefs, because we're all talking to the same God.'" Like Shales, Cook comes from a family with a strong (and contested) history of Indigenous Christian leadership. See the recent study of his grandmother: Leslie A. Robertson with the Kwagu'ł Gixsam Clan, *Standing Up with Ga'axsta'las: Jane Constance Cook and the Politics of Memory, Church, and Custom* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

⁴³ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

⁴⁴ On the concept of cultural brokerage see Margaret Szasz, ed. *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994). A forthcoming collection edited by the historians C. Joseph Genetin-Pilawa and James J. Buss explicitly challenges this "two worlds" paradigm: *Beyond Two Worlds* (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming in 2013).

heritage of religious flexibility and a strong sense of self as Tlingit. Shales also shared a story during our time together about her mother's great-grandmother, who was born to a Haida mother and a German Jewish father. Recalling a childhood fascination that she had with "the holy land" in Israel, even before she learned about this Jewish relative, Shales noted that subsequent trips that she made to "the holy land" as a Baha'i were especially touching on account of this connection. Speaking about her first trip to Israel in 1968, she recalled: "I got down and kissed the ground when I went there. I felt like I came home. Must be my ancestors, my genes, my DNA, the one that kissed that ground."⁴⁵

While personally uplifting, the sense of global religious connection that the Baha'i Faith inspired also had the effect of setting Shales and her relatives somewhat apart within their own community. The most vigorous reaction, Shales recalled, came from Presbyterian clergy in Sitka, who met her and her relatives who became Baha'is with anger when they went to remove their names from the church rolls. Shales recalled being berated:

"They just take the best of every religion, that's what they do. They just take the best. Don't you know that? They just take the best of every religion." That's what they yelled at me. But they just screamed at my sister and held her out in the middle of the street in the pouring down rain screaming at her.⁴⁶

When I asked her about the reaction of the Tlingit community more broadly, Shales described it as more tempered. Speaking implicitly to the non-proselytizing stance that she and her family observed as Baha'is, she shared:

Your family and friends learn you're Baha'i when you tell them, one at a time. You don't announce it with a megaphone or something. Your family learns when you tell them you are and some take it well and some don't, it just depends on who they are. Most had no clue what it was because in those days nobody had ever heard of it. Most people thought it was Jewish, because the name sounds Jewish. They thought it was B'nai Brith [a Jewish service organization] or something like that. And so most people took it well. Others, if they were [Christian] fundamentalist, then those are the ones that could be

⁴⁵ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008.

⁴⁶ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

nasty about it. Otherwise most people could care less or maybe they just thought you were real weird. But it took courage to do it. It wasn't easy to belong to a religion that nobody had heard of on top of being an Alaska Native.⁴⁷

Such difficulty, though, did not extinguish, for Shales and her family, the empowering sense of Indigenous and faith-based belonging that their choice to become Baha'i cultivated.

Further down the coast in British Columbia, the Baha'i Faith also made sense to Nedra Greenaway, although for rather different reasons. Greenaway situated her introduction to the Baha'i religion in a context of 1960s political ferment and youth and student activism.⁴⁸

Recalling her first exposure to the religion from University of British Columbia student, Jack Bastow, for example, she shared:

At the time I was more political oriented. You might say I was a socialist, even probably a communist, at least I felt I was. I didn't join the party or anything like that, but that was my thinking at the time. And I had a very negative view on religion, you know, basically a Marxist view on religion, as the opiate of the people. At the time I made contact with Jack Bastow he introduced the Baha'i Faith to me more from the point of view of a world system of social justice. That is the ideal of the communists, you know. A better life for more people without economic disparity between people. And so I was very attracted to that aspect of the Baha'i Faith, the social teachings.

“The mystical spiritual aspect,” she added, “came later for me.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. Fundamentalist Pentecostal and Assembly of God churches began to establish themselves in Sitka in the 1940s. Kan, *Memory Eternal*, 510. For discussion of more recent fundamentalist Christian activity in Alaska, including an episode of tension with Baha'is, see Kirk Dombrowski, *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 166. Baha'is in the Makah community of Neah Bay, on the far northwestern tip of Washington, likewise encountered resistance from Christian community members: Klara Tyler, interview with the author, Neah Bay, Washington, 8 July 2008; Scott Tyler, interview with the author, Bellevue, Washington, 28 July 2008. Scott Tyler likewise acknowledged how growing up in a Baha'i household sometimes set him and his siblings apart in their community, a point also echoed by Beverley Knowlton, interview with the author, between Calgary and Sylvan Lake, Alberta, 26 April 2008.

⁴⁸ Greenaway dated her first introduction to the Baha'i Faith slightly differently in our two interviews together (early 1960s, at the age of twenty, in the first, and 1960, at nineteen, in the second). Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 12 March 2008; Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 15 August 2008. In a context of what the sociologist of religion Robert Bellah called a “crisis of meaning,” the Baha'i Faith saw significant growth on college campuses and intellectual circles in North America in this period. Robert Bellah, “The New Consciousness and the Crisis of Modernity,” in Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah, *The New Religious Consciousness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 339. William Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America* (London: Praeger, 2005), 131-132.

⁴⁹ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

Greenaway elaborated on her rational process of Baha’i investigation in the context of a recurring dream. Articulating a sense of Indigenous identification, which she first fostered through the very process of becoming Baha’i, she led in to this by noting, “As with many Native people, I was guided by a dream.” “When I was in my teens,” Greenaway continued:

and up to the time I met Jack, I had this recurrent dream. In this dream I was standing by the seashore, and I saw a huge wave, you might say a tsunami, coming in and the water rose and rose as I ran inland up to the hills. As I was running the water kept rising and rising and rising until it was almost at my shoulders. Suddenly I saw a big boat with four pillars on the corners which made it look like an upside down turtle. Somehow I swam to this boat and I was saved from drowning. This dream occurred over and over from age eleven to nineteen until I met Jack, and I connected that dream with meeting the Faith. It was the end of my personal search to find some kind of refuge, a home for my concerns about the world and society.

Though the dream connection that she drew could be called mystical, in Greenaway’s narration, her attraction to the religion was thoroughly material, and rational. Expressing, again, her prior aversion to religion, she elaborated:

So I had this approach when I was a teenager that I wanted to find some solutions to world problems and so through the dream and meeting Jack I felt here was a religion or system of belief – although at first I really didn’t look at it as a religion – that made sense. Here was a philosophy or an approach or a system that had a way of getting people together. And it was logical.⁵⁰

Greenaway began studying the Baha’i Faith with Bastow in the greater Vancouver area and kept in communication with him and his wife when she moved north in 1961 to help organize a union at Alcan, a major aluminum smelting operation located in the company town of Kitimat.⁵¹ She formally declared as a Baha’i in 1964.

Greenaway returned to Vancouver the same year. As a charter student at Simon Fraser University, a left-leaning Vancouver-area school that opened in 1965 and was known, Greenaway noted, as the “Berkeley of the North,” she was immersed in a context of “intellectual

⁵⁰ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

⁵¹ For a popular account that offers context on Alcan in British Columbia see Bev Christensen, *Too Good to Be True: Alcan’s Kemano Completion Project* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1995).

ferment and searching and the youth movement” and continued to grapple with the spiritual, as opposed to political, orientation of the Baha’i Faith.⁵² “I was a Baha’i for a year,” Greenaway explained:

before I really believed in God and took on the spiritual aspect of prayer and growth. Because I had no strong belief in God, actually I didn’t understand the concept of God. But you can’t say the prayers and recite “O God, O God” daily without having to deal with that issue.

Drawing on an established Baha’i discourse of “head” versus “heart” conversion, she described coming to realize that “my own spirituality was something I had to discover”:

Abdu’l-Baha said the longest journey ever made was from the head to the heart. And I was always a head person. And I had to discover that part of myself too. But what finally convinced me to believe in God, I believed in Baha’u’llah, but God was another matter. What finally convinced me was another logical explanation of Abdu’l-Baha’s, he said that God is that force, that power that animates, dominates, and permeates creation. And with that definition, I could believe. Even though God is a mystery and cannot be defined, “This is for the feeble-minded,” this kind of explanation. Because God is really a mystery, to human beings. And whatever conceptions we have of the Creator are human conceptions. Because the Creator is beyond our comprehension. And this is also part of Indian and Chinese philosophy too.⁵³

In citing these philosophies, and her own “head-to-heart” conversion, Greenaway tacked between past and present, historical context and contemporary commentary. For in the same way

⁵² Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008. For context on Simon Fraser University see Hugh Johnston, *Radical Campus: Making Simon Fraser University* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005). SFU was not alone among Canadian universities in claiming the Berkeley moniker. See, for example, Sara Z. Burke, “The Berkeley of Sudbury: Student Radicalism at Laurentian University in the Sixties,” *History of Intellectual Culture* 8, no.1 (2008/2009): 1-15. On the sixties in Canada see Karen Dubinsky et al, eds. *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2009); Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Greg Kealey, eds. *Debating Dissent: Canada and the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

⁵³ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008. On Baha’i “head” versus “heart” declaration discourse see Wyman, “Becoming a Baha’i,” Chapter 4; Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America*, 134. “The longest journey is from the head to the heart” is a phrase commonly attributed in popular Baha’i discourse to Abdu’l-Baha, but which does not seem to appear in his formal writings (at least not those accessible in English). Heart and heart knowledge is also a key element of many Indigenous worldviews. See, for example, in the Dakota context: Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives*, with translations from the Dakota text by Wahpetunwin Carolyn Schommer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 37-38. Stó:lō educator Jo-ann Archibald (Q’um Q’um Xiiem) articulates an Indigenous approach to “educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit,” in *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

that she came to believe in God through becoming Baha'i, she came to embrace her Indigenous and Chinese heritage through the same process.

Greenaway explained that her grandfather came to the future province of British Columbia from China in 1870 and, after working as a cook and camp organizer on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, settled in Alberta, where he married a Métis woman from Manitoba.⁵⁴ “This has been my history,” Greenaway shared near the start of our first of two interviews together, “but I think culturally it’s been a search for me. A search to discover who I am and what I identify with.”⁵⁵ When I asked Greenaway during our discussion of her declaration whether she felt a sense of connection with her Chinese and Indigenous heritage at the time, she responded:

I think that I had somewhat, I’ve always had some connection with my Chinese heritage. The Indigenous one was kind of hidden for a long time. [...] You know, my mother really didn’t tell me for a long time that her mother was Indian. She didn’t want to disclose it at all. And then when I finally found out, I guess I was in my teens, I was very curious. Because I grew up alongside a lot of people that were Indigenous and that was very interesting to me. So I had to discover that too.⁵⁶

Greenaway, who was born in 1941, explained later in our interview that she grew up, “up to the time I was fourteen or fifteen, in an entirely White community” in southern Alberta:

⁵⁴ Greenaway explained that her grandmother came from a Métis settlement that “adjoins or abuts” the Waywayseecappo Reserve, a Saulteaux community in Western Manitoba. Speaking to the legislation of Indian identity, she added: “These people may have the same percentage of Indian blood but because of a legal definition are Métis.” Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008. An article about Greenaway’s grandfather, Chow Sam, that appeared in an Alberta centennial publication puts his date of arrival in Canada several years later; it states that Sam first migrated to California in 1873, returned to China, then migrated to Vancouver after this. “Chow Sam (1854-1954),” [Alberta centennial publication], Nedra Greenaway Personal Collection. Chinese men began migrating east from British Columbia following the completion of the CPR in the 1880s (although, as Brian Evans has recently noted, the first Chinese people on the Prairies predated this, arriving in Winnipeg, Manitoba via Minnesota in 1877). Brian L. Evans, *The Other Side of Gold Mountain: Glimpses of Early Chinese Pioneer Life on the Prairies* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2010), 10. On the history of Chinese migration to Canada see Edgar Wickberg, ed., *From China to Canada: A History of Chinese Communities in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1982); on the construction of the CPR see 20-26. The history of Indigenous-Chinese interaction in Canada is an emerging, if sensitive, area of study, especially in British Columbia. See, for example, Jean Barman, “Beyond Chinatown: Chinese Men and Indigenous Women in Early British Columbia,” *BC Studies* no.177 (Spring 2013): 39-64; Henry Yu, “Refracting Pacific Canada: Seeing Our Uncommon Past,” Special Issue of *BC Studies* no.156 (Winter 2007/08): 10.

⁵⁵ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

⁵⁶ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

In Bowness, which is just now part of Calgary, it was outside of Calgary at that time, a little community, and there was some Indigenous people around, but no one that looked like me. Maybe a couple of them sort of looked like me. So I felt really isolated and I had people call me “Chinky Chinaman,” ‘cause at that time I felt I was only sort of Chinese. I didn’t know about the other part.⁵⁷

Like Indigenous peoples, Chinese in Canada faced both informal and institutional racism at mid-century and after.⁵⁸ Articulating an understanding perspective reminiscent of that of Lorintha

Umtuch on the subject of language loss (see Chapter 3), however, Greenaway continued:

And so I’ve always had that. I’ve always had people looking at me and saying, “Who are you?” and “What are you?” But I’ve come to feel that that’s okay, it’s curiosity, mostly it’s not malicious. I understand that. It’s pure curiosity.⁵⁹

Greenaway’s own curiosity led her take up undergraduate then graduate study of “Northwest Coast Indians,” which, she noted, “was what was in Anthropology at that time at SFU.”⁶⁰

Through Jack Bastow, who had begun Baha’i teaching on reserves on the Prairies in the 1950s, she also connected with a number of Indigenous Baha’is in British Columbia, including the subject of her Masters thesis, Ditidaht Baha’i, John Thomas.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

⁵⁸ The Exclusion Act barring Chinese immigration to Canada, for example, was not lifted until 1947, the same year that Chinese Canadians received the federal franchise, a right not extended to “status Indians” until 1960. On Chinese history on the Prairies see Evans, *The Other Side of Gold Mountain*. And for discussion of Chinese community in Calgary, specifically, see Wickberg, *From China to Canada*, 59-61, 67, 91-93, 138, 193-196, 259-261. The history of Chinese migration and settlement has not been deeply integrated into Prairie history, or historiography. The index of Gerald Friesen’s award-winning *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, for example, contains no entries for either “Chinese” or “Asian.” Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). Likewise, Frances Swyripa’s much more recent *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2010) “ignores the comparatively few American Blacks and even fewer Asians who went to prairie farms.” Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 9-10. John Herd Thompson’s 1998 textbook, *Forging the Prairie West* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998), by contrast, includes at least brief mention of Chinese migration, including the oppressive head tax, and notes the disingenuous rhetoric of White residents of Prairie cities like Calgary, who opposed Chinese presence while simultaneously relying on Chinese labour. Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West*, 73-74. Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen’s more recent collection, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) also includes discussion of Chinese migration and community in urban contexts.

⁵⁹ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

⁶⁰ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

⁶¹ For context on Bastow and Thomas see Horton, ““According to your faith,”” 46-54, 74-75. Greenaway is working on a book based on her thesis titled, “Living in Two Worlds: The Story of John Thomas.”

Greenaway also undertook a more personal search, which she spoke to in the context of Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy. None of the people that I interviewed for this project pointed to Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy about Indigenous peoples as a specific motivation or inspiration for declaration. When I asked Greenaway about it during our second interview together, however, she connected Abdu'l-Baha's statement to an "identity crisis" that she described facing in the period that she became a Baha'i.⁶² As she recalled:

What was happening in my life at that time is I was in crisis and I was searching for an identity too. Because I had been a very political person. I was wanting to get involved in politics and then I met the Faith and it had an impact on me. What really attracted me was, you might find this kind of odd, but the administration, the political structure of the Faith. I thought it was really good. And I was struggling with, personally, I was in kind of an identity crisis. Because, you know, I have First Nations, I have Chinese, but I was raised with hardly any of this. It just sort of was on the side. And so I was trying to figure that out. And I think what happened when I became a Baha'i, it resonated with me, that statement of Abdu'l-Baha's, because you know I think a lot of people that have Native blood or that heritage are kind of ashamed of it.⁶³

Slightly contradicting her prior statement regarding her Indigenous heritage as a subject of silence within her family, Greenaway elaborated:

And although my mother always told me and I knew Native people where I was, because I lived in southern Alberta, it just never connected. That wasn't part of me. And I think that when I became a Baha'i and I then read what Abdu'l-Baha said, I said, "Yes. That's it." Because you don't have to be ashamed anymore. Yeah, maybe they're regarded as savages or whatever, but they have what the Chinese say, a bright future.⁶⁴

As Greenaway explained at the start of our first interview, she took her search for identity to the point of constructing her own personal (and racialized) acronym: she was, she decided within

⁶² The term "identity crisis" was in wide use in the period that Greenaway became a Baha'i. See, for example, Hazel Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 292.

⁶³ Greenaway, interview, 15 August 2008. Several other narrators expressed a similar attraction to the Baha'i administrative system. For example, Steve Cook, conversation with the author, Alert Bay, British Columbia, 31 July 2004; Phil Lane Jr., interview with the author, Whiterock, British Columbia, 9 Jan 2009. Tlingit and Tagish Baha'is in the Yukon have also drawn links between the Baha'i administrative structure and their own clan system, which they helped to revive by way of their Baha'i adherence. See Lynn Echevarria, "A New Skin for an Old Drum: Changing Contexts of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá'í Storytelling," *The Northern Review* 29 (Fall 2008), 58 (fn 14); Sawin, "Native Conversion, Native Identity," 160-161.

⁶⁴ Greenaway, interview, 15 August 2008.

several years of declaring as a Baha'i, a "YAASB." "I styled myself," she explained, "a Yellow Aboriginal Anglo-Saxon Baha'i, because this takes in all my physical and spiritual heritage, and my education."⁶⁵ For Greenaway, then, as for a number of other narrators of mixed heritage, developing a strengthened sense of self as Indigenous was an explicit, but not exclusive, process. As she observed elsewhere and in more contemporary context:

I think in the Baha'i Faith that I'm many things and I guess the Chinese and the Indian heritage is there, it is very much part of me. And I feel comfortable with that, I feel that it's comfortable in the Baha'i community.⁶⁶

This religion, for Greenaway, proved a supportive structure and space in which, as she put it, drawing on another Chinese maxim, to "dig her root" as a person of mixed heritage.⁶⁷

Though they became Baha'is in the same year and at roughly the same age, the paths of Shales and Greenaway differed rather dramatically. Where Shales was raised in close connection to Tlingit values, family, and community, as well as Christianity, Greenaway grew up without clear knowledge of her Indigenous background and with a strong secular and political orientation. Baha'i teachings of oneness and equality "made sense" to both women on the basis of their histories, which were distinct and yet also shared. The discourse of rational religion that both engaged did not mark a turning away from Indigeneity. On the contrary, Shales' declaration marked an extension of a long family history of religious conversion and leadership as well as an expression and affirmation of a specifically Tlingit sense of self. For Greenaway, it was through the process of becoming Baha'i itself that she embraced her explicitly hybrid heritage, as well as the very idea of God, and articulated an express and empowering identification as Indigenous.

⁶⁵ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

⁶⁶ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008. Narrator John Sargent, for example, who is of Mohawk and White heritage, identifies himself as "a hybrid" (though he also noted at several points in our interviews together that he prefers and aspires to conceive of himself first and foremost according to his religious identification as a Baha'i). John Sargent, interview with the author, by telephone, 22 July 2008. Other narrators of mixed heritage, conversely, identify more according to their Indigenous than White heritage. For example, Donald Addison, interview with the author, Eugene, Oregon, 24 June 2008.

⁶⁷ Greenaway, interviews, 12 March 2008 and 15 August 2008.

Born Again Baha'is

The declaration narratives of Deloria Bighorn and Allison Healy, who became Baha'is in 1969 and 1972, respectively, offer further perspective on this empowering process of “choosing the Faith.” In the course of narrating their experiences of becoming Baha'i, both women invoked the language of being “born-again,” a phrase typically tied in the twentieth century, and the context of Indigenous North America specifically, to evangelical and fundamentalist Christian conversion. As the anthropologist Kirk Dombrowski has observed, being “born-again,” in this context, is often thought to mark a turn “against [Indigenous] culture.”⁶⁸ Further, as sociologist Eva Marie Garrouette explains, “born-again Indian” is also a pejorative label that has been leveled against newly self-identified Indigenous people accused of a specious process of “ethnic switching.”⁶⁹ For Bighorn and Healy, however, being born-again was not a process of turning away, but instead one of strengthening their sense of self and agency specifically as Indigenous women. For Bighorn, there was a certain utilitarian draw to declaration. In the face of alcohol addiction and teenage pregnancy, the religion supplied a structure and set of laws, including a specific ban on substance use, which proved attractive and efficacious. Teachings of social and spiritual unity, however, also made sense to Bighorn in the context of her Yankton Sioux,

⁶⁸ Dombrowski, *Against Culture*. Evangelical Christianity emerged as a defined Protestant movement in eighteenth-century England. See David Bebbington, *Evangelicals in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-3. On the American context see George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991). Andrea Smith offers a useful overview of evangelicalism, fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, and charismatic Christianity as they relate to postwar Indigenous America in “Appendix 1: A Brief Map of Christian Right and Native American Organizing,” in *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 276-284. Smith's study is part of an emerging literature that complicates the view of conservative Indigenous Christianity as inherently anti-cultural and apolitical. See also Kimberly Jenkins Marshall, “Performing Conversion Among the Diné Oodlání (Navajo Believers)” (PhD Thesis, Indiana University, 2011); Clinton N. Westman, “Pentecostalism Among Canadian Aboriginal People: A Political Movement?” in *A Liberating Spirit: Pentecostals and Social Action in North America*, ed. Michael Wilkinson and Steven Studebaker (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 85-110; Clinton Westman, “Understanding Cree Religious Discourse” (PhD Thesis, University of Alberta, 2008).

⁶⁹ Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 85-86.

Chickasaw, and Christian heritage and these elements equally informed her declaration. For Healy, it was the actual conduct of Baha'is as much as abstract principle that first drew her to "the Faith." The formal act of signing a declaration card, in her case, proved a powerful expression of choice and Healy extended her agency as she went on, in her own words, to "become real" and "find her true identity" as an Indigenous person.

I opened my interview with Deloria Bighorn by asking her to share about her background and, like her brother Philip Lane Jr., whose declaration story I consider in the next chapter, she spoke in rich detail concerning her family history. As she transitioned to speak about her experience of becoming Baha'i, she emphasized, especially, the difficult pasts of her parents, which in turn marked her own upbringing in small-town southeastern Washington state. As Bighorn recalled:

my parents scrimped and saved. They weren't, you could say the effects of residential school and a sad life and deaths of their parents and loss of lifestyle and all this, they were survivors, but their life, they were workaholics. I guess a fear of being poor and starving and everything. So they just worked all the time. Really hard. And their goal was to buy some land so that he [Bighorn's father] could have horses and, you know, that's what they did. So, it was good. It was good in that sense. But, you don't step off of those kinds of experiences without a lot of heartache I guess. So they had not really been parented much, I guess you could say.⁷⁰

This lack of parenting, Bighorn explained (and her brother corroborated), translated into an intense rigidity towards their son and an inverse leniency in the case of their daughter.⁷¹ This, Bighorn hinted elsewhere in our interview, was compounded by her experience of coming of age as a young Indigenous woman in 1960s Walla Walla, a town steeped in Wild West and White frontier mythology.⁷² Though Bighorn described feeling "secure in who I was," she also

⁷⁰ Deloria Bighorn, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 20 March 2008.

⁷¹ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008; Philip Lane Jr., interview with the author, Whiterock, British Columbia, 3 January 2009.

⁷² Originally inhabited by Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, and Nez Perce peoples, the Walla Walla (meaning "many waters," but long described by settlers as "the town they liked so well, they named it twice") region became a fur

observed of her Indigeneity that, “in junior high, I certainly didn’t talk about it.” There were few Indigenous students at her school and Bighorn recalled her experience in gendered terms:

I always felt different than the other girls. I always felt like there was a club that they belonged to that I couldn’t totally be in, even though, like, I was student body secretary of my school. So you could say I was a popular girl. But I always felt like in order to be that popular girl, I had to do twice or ten times as much as the rest of the girls in order to be in there. When I got to high school, I really, really wanted to fit in. I really, really, really wanted to fit in.

It came as a major blow, then, when she and several friends were kicked out of school, and their numerous extracurricular activities, for skipping class in the ninth grade. This, Bighorn stressed, “really was a turning point in my life.” She recalled her reaction clearly: “I thought, I’ve tried to be so good, you know, and I just can’t get in. And now this happened, the hell with it. You think I’m bad? I’ll show you bad.” Bighorn began drinking seriously and, at the age of sixteen, became pregnant, something she described as a “pretty sobering event” that intimately informed her decision to declare as a Baha’i.⁷³

She did not do so immediately upon encountering the religion, however. Like Joyce Shales, Bighorn was introduced to the Baha’i Faith by a relative, her brother, Phil Lane. Eight years his sister’s senior, Lane had been facing his own battles with addiction when he

trading base in the early nineteenth century and, in 1847, was the site of what one recent settler history describes as “one of the most famous events in Western [American] history: the Whitman Massacre,” in which Protestant missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman were executed by Cayuse “Indians.” After 1855, when the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla people signed a treaty with the American government and were confined to reservation lands in what is now northeastern Oregon state, the Walla Walla valley opened to further White settlement and military establishment; the city of the same name was incorporated in 1862. For a celebratory settler perspective on this history see Elizabeth Gibson, *Walla Walla* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2004), quotes from 4, 7. Recent (award-winning) publications by the Fort Walla Walla Museum likewise convey such positive pioneer perspective. See, for example, Laura Schulz, Paul Franzmann, James Howard Payne, Hans Matschukat, Fort Walla Walla Museum, *Soldiers, Pioneers, and Indian People: Positive Interaction Between Cultures in Southeastern Washington* (Walla Walla, WA: Fort Walla Walla Museum, 2007). For tribal perspectives on this history see the website of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, accessed online 14 Sept 2012, <http://www.umatilla.nsn.us/history.html>; Jennifer Karson et al, *Wiyáxayxt/Wiyáakaaawn = As Days Go By: Our History, Our Land, and Our People: The Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla* (Pendleton, Portland, Seattle: Tamástslikt Cultural Institute; Oregon Historical Society; Distributed by the University of Washington Press, 2006).

⁷³ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008.

encountered the Faith in Walla Walla and swiftly enrolled.⁷⁴ Lane moved to Hollywood to pursue a career in acting not long after this and, while there, became engaged to a non-Indigenous Baha'i woman. Baha'i law requires parental consent for marriage and Lane accordingly contacted his mother and father in Washington, who in turn dispatched his sister to California to investigate. As Bighorn shared in rich detail that again reveals a subtle undercurrent of longing for normative White womanhood:

So I went, I flew down there, I was like fifteen years old, I remember this so clearly. And she had a 1952 T-Bird convertible. And she was very glamorous. I mean, she was the typical Hollywood girl. Heart of gold. But, with the false eyelashes and the bleached blond hair and she was really gorgeous. I mean, whoa. She was just like, with the bellbottoms and the makeup and just, you know, someone you would see in a movie. And she was a hairstylist. So, the minute I got in the car they started talking incessantly about this Baha'i. Baha'i, Baha'i, Baha'i. And, you know, by the time we got to wherever we got to, I thought, "Well, I know this. This makes sense to me."

The religion made sense to Bighorn, at least in part, in light of a longstanding disquiet she had surrounding Christianity. Bighorn explained that given her family's "strong Christian roots," she attended the Episcopal Church in her youth, but did not connect spiritually. Reminiscent of Shales, who was buoyed by Baha'i recognition of Indigenous presence in Alaska, Bighorn also recalled a longstanding preoccupation with "Black people in Africa": "I really wondered," she recalled, "if there really was a God if he could just abandon a whole continent of people."⁷⁵ "I just saw nothing but hypocrisy," she added.⁷⁶ Bighorn's firsthand experience in Walla Walla was amplified by stories about Christian abuses against Indigenous peoples that her father shared during their travels together on the rodeo circuit. Consequently, she explained that by the time she encountered the Baha'i Faith in the mid-to-late 1960s, she was "really turned off religion,"

⁷⁴ Lane Jr., interview, 3 January 2009.

⁷⁵ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008. This was a concern shared by other narrators. Linda Covey, in particular, made a strikingly similar statement in interview with the author, Evanston, Illinois, 10 June 2008. A statement, in turn, strikingly similar to Covey's is found in McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 24.

⁷⁶ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008.

having “just seen how it had done nothing but hurt my people.” At the same time, Bighorn described having maintained “this nature and heart” and recalled quickly connecting with the concept of progressive revelation. As she elaborated, picking back up on her trip to California:

So when I heard all of this stuff, when my brother said, “You know, there’s not a Buddhist God’s territory, an Islamic God’s territory, and a Christian God’s territory. It’s not like that. God isn’t in competition with himself. He sent these messengers, like teachers, in successive waves, to move humanity ahead and no human was ever left without guidance from God. And that’s this eternal covenant. He makes promises that he’ll never leave us alone.” I thought, “I know that. I know that!” That’s the only way possible that God would make sense to me. And then, you know, I’m sure that all races, all peoples had guidance and prophets of God and teachers. That just made perfect sense to me. And that the next step is the eradication of these differences and the folding of mankind into one? Of course. Perfect sense.⁷⁷

The sticking point came, for Bighorn, when she learned of Baha’u’llah’s prohibition of alcohol consumption.⁷⁸ Unwilling to submit to this law, her investigation of the Baha’i Faith was over before it began.

Bighorn explained that it was her unplanned pregnancy that caused her reconsider the religion. Her parents, she recalled, were supportive (“that,” she noted, “was sort of the beginning of the turn of our relationship, with my parents and I”) yet stern:

They couldn’t have been kinder. But the path was very clear: if you want to have this baby, it’s your baby, you deal with it. Which meant, of course, I’d have to quit high school and sling hash somewhere or something. “You can marry the father,” but I said, “I don’t want to do that.” “Okay, or you have to give this baby up for adoption.”

Illustrating the strong stigma that accompanied teenage pregnancy, Bighorn’s parents sent her across the country to Atlanta to stay with an aunt, her mother’s elder sister who did not have any children of her own. Not long after her arrival in the South, Bighorn explained, her aunt had to temporarily relocate to Nashville for work and Bighorn ended up living for several months in a

⁷⁷ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008.

⁷⁸ On the Baha’i prohibition on alcohol see Bahá’u’lláh, Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and Universal House of Justice, “Alcohol, Prohibition on Drinking,” in *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 2*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Mona Vale, NSW: Baha’i Publications Australia, 1991), 245-256.

Florence Crittenton Home for Unwed Mothers in that city.⁷⁹ She described the place vividly:

“And it was like the typical what you would think: paint peeling off the walls, it was a brownstone, it was three stories and it just looked dingy, but, I had no choice and neither did she [Bighorn’s aunt].” Bighorn remembered her time in this institution as positive, however:

But actually it turned out to be a fine place. They were wonderful people. It was very good in the sense that there were twenty or thirty girls who were just in the same position that I was. And lots to talk about. And we all got along really well together, we just got along great. As far as I know, we got along great. I mean, there were Black girls, a number of Black girls there, and I would imagine for some of those southern girls it might have been quite a little shock. But it was my first experience at ironing those Black girls’ hair and stuff like that, it was really, it was kind of, it was fun. But it was then that I decided that I’d better look into this Baha’i Faith.⁸⁰

She described doing so by looking the religion up in the phone book and asking their local contact: “is there anyway that you could send somebody over here to tell me about the Baha’i Faith?” The woman the Baha’is sent, Bighorn recalled, was Erma Hayden, a pianist and the wife of Robert Hayden, a prominent African American poet and professor then teaching in Nashville.⁸¹ In the course of narrating her youth, Bighorn mentioned a number of women, most of them Indigenous, who had provided her with significant strength and guidance and Hayden was another. “Very loving and kind and accepting,” she recalled. “And very knowledgeable, of course, about the Faith.”⁸² Bighorn remembered noticing that each Sunday at the home, “we all

⁷⁹ The Florence Crittenton organization began in the late nineteenth century with a focus on moral reform for prostitutes, but had shifted almost exclusively to a focus on maternal care by the mid-twentieth-century. For a brief history see Katherine G. Aiken, “Florence Crittenton: National Florence Crittenton Mission/ Crittenton Services,” in Kathy S. Stolley and Vern L. Bullough, eds., *The Praeger Handbook of Adoption* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 235-237.

⁸⁰ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008. Racial segregation was a controversial issue within the Florence Crittenton organization and policy varied by location. See Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Routledge, 2000 [1992]), 71-74.

⁸¹ Bighorn stated that Hayden was teaching at Vanderbilt, but she likely meant Fisk University, where Hayden taught from 1946-1969.

⁸² On Erma and Robert Hayden see Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, “Radiant Lights: African-American Women and the Advancement of the Bahá’í Faith in the U.S.” and “Race, Gender and Difference: African-American Women and the Struggle for Equality,” in Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis and Richard Thomas, eds. *Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Bahá’ís in North America, 1898-2000* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 2006), 54-55, 84-86.

had to have a minister or somebody come to do a church type of thing”; she asked, accordingly, for a Baha’i speaker. Noting, again like Shales, the obscurity of the religion, Bighorn added that, “I think they thought it was B’nai Brith, rather than Baha’i Faith. Because I’m sure they wouldn’t have liked it.” Bighorn explained that she received her Baha’i speaker and ended up attending worship service at a nearby Baha’i Centre with a number of other young women from the home. Reflecting back, she observed:

And you can imagine how they [the Baha’is] must have felt. We were very obviously young unmarried girls in this condition. But you know, I never once felt unwelcome. I never once felt, it never really occurred to me that it would be a problem. Of course, I look back on it now and understand it must have stirred a big controversy in that community. I would think. But they were just so wonderful, you know, and I was very happy and really reading a lot and investigating and really, I knew then that I wanted to become a Baha’i. And that I should have become a Baha’i before.

Bighorn remembered being unsure about “how in the world I was going to live up to all these rules.”⁸³ In her telling, though, there was little alternative:

I thought, “You know, look where it’s landed me this way. I can’t go any further that way. Because what’s left for me? I mean, I’ve done all the worst things you can do. Besides kill somebody. And I have to abandon my child and I’m out of high school, I don’t even have a high school education. I’m estranged from my parents in a sense. I mean, what is there really for me? I have to have something that I can build my life on. Or I’m not going to have a life.”⁸⁴

For Bighorn, becoming Baha’i was quite literally a matter of choosing to live.

She was, in her words, “born-again.” Drawing on a practiced declaration narrative, or at least phrasing, Bighorn explained that, “I always say that I’m a born-again Baha’i”:

Because that’s how I feel about it. I feel like without it, I know what kind of person I’d be. I know what would happen to me. So, I can’t perceive any other way, or thought. But I can understand for other people who haven’t done those stupid things. Or experienced

⁸³ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008. Other narrators recalled a similar sense of reticence around declaring, including Umtuch, interview; Loft, interview; J.C. Lucas, interview with the author, Nanaimo, British Columbia, 6 Oct 2004; Eleanora McDermott, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008. Concerns about not being able to live up to the Baha’i teachings or contribute sufficiently were not isolated to Indigenous Baha’is. See also discussions on doubt in Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 71 (on White Baha’i, Joyce McGuffie); Wyman, “Becoming a Baha’i,” 76-77.

⁸⁴ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008.

those stupid things. Or known themselves to be that kind of person. I can totally understand why there's other ways to live, but not for me.

"I feel like when I became a Baha'i," she added elsewhere in our interview, "I learned what it is to be a human being. Even though I should have known, I guess." In addition to reconciling Bighorn's longstanding concern with universal belonging (the fate of "Black people in Africa"), the Baha'i Faith also provided a structure that helped mitigate the intergenerational impacts of colonialism as they manifested in her own struggle with addiction. Sobriety did not come easily or automatically for Bighorn, but, like many narrators, she described the overall effect of living a Baha'i life as profoundly healing.⁸⁵

Being born-again and becoming human, in her case, did not mean assimilation or sameness. As I discussed in the last chapter, Bighorn was raised with a strong sense of her Chickasaw and Yankton Sioux heritage; she and her family were also connected to local Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla communities and other Indigenous people in the Plateau region as well. When I asked her if she drew any particular connections between the Baha'i Faith and her "Nativity," Bighorn responded with, "Oh, everything, everything. Absolutely everything."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008. Other narrators echoed this impact as well. Although not drinking could serve, like Baha'i adherence more generally, to set Indigenous Baha'is somewhat outside within their own communities ("it was," as Shales put it, "to be on the outs in a lot of ways"), it was also personally empowering. Shales, interview, 29 July 2008; Scott Tyler, interview; Jane Grover, interview with the author, McMinnville, Oregon, 22 June 2008. The sociologist Margit Warburg observes that a sense of being on the outs on account of not drinking was not confined to Indigenous Baha'is: *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 414-415. Where some Indigenous Baha'is continued to struggle with drug and alcohol use after joining the religion, others achieved sobriety prior to their declarations (and spoke to spiritual awakening and healing they experienced through treatment, energy they in turn channeled and cultivated through the Baha'i Faith as well). For example: Cook, interview; Lucas, interview; Sonny Voyageur, interview with the author, North Vancouver, British Columbia, 12 Nov 2004.

⁸⁶ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008. This was not unlike the reaction of 'Namgis Baha'i Steve Cook, who when asked the same question responded by raising his two hands like a balanced scale, a silent expression of their complementary nature. Steve Cook, conversation with the author, Alert Bay, British Columbia, 31 July 2004. Graeme Were has pointed to a similar image popular among Nalik Baha'is in New Ireland: "According to Naliks, a bird needs two wings to fly: one wing represents the teachings of the Baha'i prophets, the other, traditional Nalik beliefs." Were, "Fashioning Belief," 244.

With emotion, she then spoke of her father, who had died not long before our interview together.

“I remember towards the end of his life,” she shared, “he often would say he was a Baha’i”:

And I remember one time, I was going to the [Baha’i] national convention, he sat me down and he said, “I want to tell you, you tell those people over there, I send my greetings and you tell them that the teachings of the Baha’i Faith and the teachings of our Native people are the same. And tell them how much those teachings are interwoven in and how they both support each other and how clear it is to me that the Baha’i Faith respects and knows that our Native teachings are valid and true, and we in turn see the truth of their way too.” And I did, I did.

Bighorn then panned back to her own investigation of the Baha’i Faith and pointed to a shared teaching of relationship, “the whole concept of this having respect for each of the kingdoms of God.” Addressing me directly, she elaborated:

Because as you know, Indian people assign, anthropomorphically, a spirit to everything. And when I saw in the writings, literally saying, the spirit of the mineral kingdom, the spirit of the vegetable kingdom, I was like, ah, they know this. They know that there’s a power in that kingdom. They call it a kingdom. They know that there’s these levels of life. I mean, it just seemed so amazing to me.⁸⁷

As Bighorn’s relative, noted Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr. observed, a concept of relatedness, one that links the human and nonhuman worlds in intimate sacred interaction, connects Indigenous philosophies in North America.⁸⁸ Bighorn spoke, here, of “Indian people” in general, though she could also have been describing the more specific (albeit now thoroughly intertribal) Lakota invocation *mitakuye oyas’in*, or “all my relations,” spoken to by other narrators as well.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008. Narrators Linda Covey and Linda Loft likewise spoke directly to the Baha’i formulation of the various “kingdoms of God” and consonance with Indigenous teachings of relationship. Covey, interview; Loft, interview. Abdu’l-Baha spoke frequently of the “four kingdoms”: “the mineral, vegetable, animal, and human.” It is the “rational soul,” he stressed, that distinguishes human beings from animals. See, for example, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace; Paris Talks* (London: UK Bahá’i Publishing Trust, 1972), 96, accessed online 15 March 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/PT/>; *Some Answered Questions* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá’i Publishing Trust, 1990), 208, 217-218, 239-240, accessed online 18 April 13, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/SAQ/>.

⁸⁸ Vine Deloria Jr., “Relativity, Relatedness and Reality” in Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta, eds., *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr. Reader* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1999), 32-39.

⁸⁹ Covey, interview; Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interview with the author, by telephone, 19 Aug 2008; Tina Kahn, interview with the author, Pine Springs, Arizona, 21 June 2009. Choctaw narrator Donald Addison employs the phrase *mitakuye oyasin* in an online newspaper article expounding on Indigenous-Baha’i connections (this piece is also a fine example of Baha’i teaching methods, a topic I explore in more depth in Chapter 8): Donald Addison,

She pointed, too, to visions of the Oglala holy man Black Elk (another set of Lakota-cum-intertribal teachings, discussed in more detail in the next chapter) as “one of the bases upon which I could see that the Faith was true.”⁹⁰ Although she did not develop her own acronym in order to articulate it, it is clear that Bighorn brought a strong sense of Indigenous self to her experience of, as she put it, becoming human and becoming Baha’i.

While Bighorn framed this experience as an ongoing process, she also stressed the specific place and date of her declaration. She explained that she wanted to sign her declaration card in Walla Walla, where she returned after giving birth and putting her son up for adoption in Atlanta, and waited until his birthday, 28 August 1969, in order to do so.⁹¹ For Baha’is, declaration was and remains, at its core, a spiritual act of accepting Baha’u’llah as the “Manifestation of God” for the present age.⁹² The actual signing of a declaration card is typically downplayed in Baha’i literature, which often characterizes this act as a strictly administrative matter.⁹³ Many narrators did not describe or dwell in their interviews with me upon the actual moment of their declaration. In the same way, however, that Bighorn ascribed significance to the time and place where she signed her declaration card, for Allison Healy, this act, and the independent choice that it signaled, marked a potent moment of empowerment.

“Mitakuye Oyasin!” *Eugene Weekly* 5 Aug 2004, accessed online 16 March 2013, <http://www.eugeneweekly.com/2004/08/05/views.html>. On mitakuye oyas’in as employed as prayer in the Lakota sweat lodge, and intertribal diffusion, see Raymond A. Bucko, *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge: History and Contemporary Practice* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 3, 56, 89, 125, 126, 223.

⁹⁰ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008.

⁹¹ Bighorn, interview, 20 March 2008.

⁹² As the opening lines of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* aver: “The first duty prescribed by God for His Servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation.” Discussed and cited in Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 306.

⁹³ For characterizations of the declaration card as administrative see McMullen, *The Bahá’i*, 111; Will C. van den Hoonard, *The Origins of the Bahá’i Community of Canada, 1898-1948* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 260. Narrator Linda Loft described the act of signing a declaration card in this way as well; having grown up in a Baha’i family, she resisted signing her card when she turned fifteen (the Baha’i “age of maturity”) as she felt it was an overly administrative act that diminished her faith. Loft, interview. According to the sociologist Margit Warburg, “the signing of the declaration card is ... not only a membership entry, it is the Baha’i profession of faith, ritualised in the form of an administrative act.” Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 306.

Healy is among those narrators who were introduced to the Baha'i Faith by way of explicit Baha'i outreach efforts on reserve. And like many others, she also described being on a path of search prior to joining the religion. She narrated this search in an explicitly Baha'i frame: "in the Baha'i Faith," she explained in our first of two interviews together, "we independently investigate about the truth."⁹⁴ What "started me to start searching," "started me to investigate," she explained, was concern over the prospect of what she called a "mixed marriage."⁹⁵ Though this phrase readily invokes, in the context of colonial Canada, marriage across racial and legal lines (recall the gendered Indian Act that, until 1985, stripped Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men of their formal "Indian status"), Healy was here referring to marriage outside of the Catholic Church. As we saw in the last chapter, Healy was born in 1942 on the Siksika Indian Reserve, located close to the city of Calgary in southern Alberta, and attended a Catholic residential school in nearby Cluny through most of her childhood. In the early 1960s, she moved roughly two hundred kilometers south to another Blackfoot community, the Blood (Kainai) Reserve, from where her father originally hailed; it was here she met her future husband, Earl, an Anglican.⁹⁶ Residential school teaching regarding Catholicism as "the only true faith," Healy recalled, informed their early relationship. As she explained:

another thing we learned in Catholic school was that the Catholic faith was the only true faith. And I was even afraid, I know my sister's ex-husband used to have a Bible, a little Bible, and when I used to live with them I was even scared to touch that book because we were taught Catholic was the only true faith. Everything else was not allowed. So that really stuck into my head and so when we were gonna get married, the reason why we didn't get married right away is because my husband was Anglican and I was Catholic and I didn't want to have a mixed married. I've heard of mixed marriages. The reason for

⁹⁴ Allison Healy, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 27 April 2008.

⁹⁵ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

⁹⁶ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008. The Blackfoot Nation is composed of the Siksika (Blackfoot), the Kainai (Blood), and the Piikani (Peigan); Kainai chief Red Crow and Siksika chief Crowfoot signed Treaty 7 with the Canadian government on behalf of the Confederacy in 1877. See Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with Walter Hildebrandt, Dorothy First Rider, and Sarah Carter, *The True Spirit and Intent of Treaty 7* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996). The Peigan are divided between a reserve in Albert and a reservation in northern Montana (with the latter known, in the United States, as the Blackfeet).

that is I didn't want my husband and I to have any conflict of which church our children should go to or to be baptized.⁹⁷

Healy accordingly began attending Anglican catechism classes and she and Earl were eventually married in that church.

This experience, she explained, “started my journey of searching.”⁹⁸ Like other Indigenous people who declared as Baha’is on reserves and reservations, Healy recalled a context of thick missionary traffic and competition at Kainai and she described interacting with Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses during this period, the late 1960s, as well.⁹⁹ “And just around that time,” she added, “the Baha’is started to come so I got more in tuned with the Baha’is, with the message that they were delivering.” Healy noted that she had heard of the faith twice before this – the first time from a Siksika Elder in the early 1960s and the second from a Catholic cousin who married a Baha’i – but she did not begin investigating the religion until 1969.¹⁰⁰

It was winter of that year, she explained, in the wake of a major snowfall, when a Blackfoot cousin and a non-Indigenous Baha’i friend unexpectedly turned up at her home. While Allison’s husband, Earl, who she described as “very outspoken,” “hospitable,” and “just so open,” readily welcomed the women in, Healy recalled being more tentative. “And for me,” she shared:

I get kind of timid and especially, I’m not used to White people coming to my home. And I get kind of embarrassed and here, my husband is always so welcome, “Come in, sit down.” And of course we know our cousin but the other lady, non-Native, she was very cordial and right away she just fit in and started carrying a conversation. And so we were visiting for awhile and later on Eva [the non-Indigenous Baha’i] started to talk about the Faith and my cousin was standing behind Earl at the table, we were sitting around the table, and I was facing her and then I asked her in our language, “Are you in this faith?” And she shook her head. She was just laughing. And I told her in our language, I asked her, “Well, how come you brought this lady to talk to us about this faith if you’re not in

⁹⁷ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

⁹⁸ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

⁹⁹ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008. Klara Tyler, Lorintha Umtuch, Kevin Locke, and Robert George all noted relatively heavy missionary traffic on their respective reservations/reserves (Makah, Yakama, Standing Rock Sioux, and Cowichan) as well. Klara Tyler, interview; Umtuch, interview; Kevin Locke, interview with the author, by telephone, 28 March 2008; Robert George, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 5 Oct 2004.

¹⁰⁰ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

it?” She was just laughing. But Eva had been talking to Earl and Earl, he’s very argumentative too. He kept trying to raise up an argument about what Eva was saying and Eva continued. And then before they left she left us with some pamphlets and I had forgotten what I did with them, but I never looked at them after they left.¹⁰¹

Healy explained that there were a number of pioneers, including Joyce McGuffie, who had herself become a Baha’i while teaching at a school on the Peigan Reserve, living in the nearby town of Cardston and as the weather warmed, they continued to visit.¹⁰² They were, Healy recalled, “very consistent” in this.¹⁰³

She identified the concrete conduct of Baha’is, as much if not more than abstract principle, as a tremendous source of attraction to the religion. In an ongoing context of colonialism, where racism was rampant and non-Indigenous visits to reserves rare, Healy was struck by what she described as the demonstration of “genuine love”:

At first I would forever be apologetic about my home situation and not used to White people coming and thinking, “Oh, they’re not going to like our food, they’re not going to like our lifestyle.” We think the non-Native are so perfect. But the Baha’is who came were so cordial and so friendly. They were just part of the family. I soon got rid of that feeling because, like I said, my husband is so open and the Baha’is come and if they happen to come while we’re eating he’ll tell them, “Sit down, eat with us.” And although they bring their own lunch, they’ll sit down and eat whatever we have and then after they’d help with the dishes and play with the kids and they were just right in with the family and I soon forgot that they were White.¹⁰⁴

That these visits, which took place within such an intimate domestic sphere, had the power to transcend race, even temporarily, is striking and speaks powerfully to the sense of shared humanity that Baha’i encounter could confirm.¹⁰⁵ For a woman who spent eleven years in a residential school, followed by time trying to make it in racist rural and urban Alberta, this was

¹⁰¹ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

¹⁰² Healy, interview, 27 April 2008. On Joyce McGuffie: Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 70-71, 311 (fn 10).

¹⁰³ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

¹⁰⁴ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

¹⁰⁵ Many other narrators likewise commented on the conduct of and connections with non-Indigenous Baha’is. For example: Locke, interview; Klara Tyler, interview; Umtuch, interview. In an interview with religious studies scholar Linda Covey, Diné Baha’i Chester Kahn described White Baha’is who he met in Nevada in the 1950s as “a ‘different kind of white people’ than he had ever known.” Covey, “Diné Becoming Bahá’í,” 84.

something new. “So that’s what attracted me,” Healy stressed, “this love from the Baha’is, which I never really experienced this love.”¹⁰⁶

She was also drawn by answers she found to questions lingering from her residential school education. Through pioneers like McGuffie, a teacher by trade who Healy credited with providing her a strong foundation in the religion, Healy learned more about Christianity as well as the Baha’i Faith and moved beyond what she described as a theology of fear disseminated at residential school. Like a number of other narrators, Healy described American Baha’i author William Sears’ 1961 *Thief in the Night, or The Strange Case of the Missing Millennium* as an especially formative text.¹⁰⁷ As she recalled of her process of investigation:

I was reading, and not only reading that book, I had a Bible, because in the boarding school we were never taught about the Bible. And what was written in this holy book. What we learned was very limited I think, repetitious prayers and being scared of where we’re gonna be going. You either be good or bad. But it made more sense to learn about what I learnt from Joyce and then I had this Bible which we were never taught about. I only started to open it after learning about the Faith because Baha’u’llah, in his writings, refers to quotes from the Bible and he clarifies them. So that’s why I had the Bible and my dictionary and in the Baha’i writings there’s some really high words and so I had the book I was reading, the dictionary, and the Bible. And so it took me a long time to finish this book.¹⁰⁸

Healy noted that her initial intent was to find fault in Sears’ argument that Christ had returned, a case Sears built by examining, through a first-person narrative, Biblical prophecies and early-

¹⁰⁶ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

¹⁰⁷ William Sears, *Thief in the Night, or The Strange Case of the Missing Millennium*, 23rd reprint (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 2012 [1961]). Sears was a journalist and radio and television personality in the United States before he pioneered to South Africa with his family in 1953. His obituary in the 1986-1992 volume of *The Bahá’i World* observes that Sears wrote *Thief in the Night* “to fill a need, to answer the question asked repeatedly by people of primarily Christian backgrounds in southern Africa.” William Sears Jr., “William Sears, 1911-1992,” in *The Bahá’i World: An International Record, Volume 20, 1986-1992* (Haifa: Bahá’i World Centre, 1998), 798. As a “Hand of the Cause of God” (Baha’is appointed by Baha’u’llah, Abdu’l-Baha, and Shoghi Effendi and charged with special responsibility for the propagation and protection of the religion), Sears was also connected to the Indigenous teaching field in North America. At a 1962 Baha’i-sponsored powwow in the Qu’Appelle Valley in southern Saskatchewan, for example, he gave an address he dubbed a “Baha’i book review” of antimodernist Ernest Thompson Seton’s 1936 text, *Gospel of the Redman*. William Sears, “The American Indian and the Bahá’i Faith,” unpublished manuscript (1962), Library, Association for Bahá’i Studies North America, Ottawa, Ontario.

¹⁰⁸ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008. For context on residential school education in Canada see J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), Part Two, “Experiencing Residential Schools.”

nineteenth-century millenarian expectations surrounding 1844, the year that the Bab declared his mission. Through this and other readings, however, Healy was ultimately convinced.¹⁰⁹ She recalled, in particular, how the religion helped her reconcile concerns about spiritual access and authority:

Because I always thought the priests, I guess we look up to them as gods. One time, in the Catholic Church you have to confess to the priest but I didn't know that before. When we go into the confessional, I'm gonna start telling my sins, I have my eyes closed and I'm thinking I'm talking to God. One time I had no response because we get these, penance they call them, you have to say so many Hail Marys, depending how many sins you made. So this one time it was so quiet. I didn't hear any voice. And then I looked up and I seen this priest that I know. And I just overcame fear, the fear in me and thinking, "Have I been telling my sins to him all these times?" And then I guess I woke him up when I made the noise to get up. Because the confessional is separated from him on the other side and there was just a little screen there. When I quickly got up to move, he looked up and he said, "Oh," as if he let on that he wasn't sleeping, he just told me to say how many prayers and I was so shocked. I thought, "My goodness." I was really shocked that day. And then after that I always think about that. I used to always wonder, "Why do we have to say our sins to the priest? Why?" I thought, our communication, our spiritual communication, is with God and these were the kinds of questions I used to wonder about.¹¹⁰

The independent investigation of truth that the Baha'i teachings called for was not limited to "seekers." Rather, in the same way that adherents were charged with the responsibility to build up Baha'i community life and institutions like Local Spiritual Assemblies, they were likewise instructed to observe a practice of daily prayer and scriptural reading and encouraged to "deepen" themselves in the faith through ongoing engagement with Baha'i texts.¹¹¹ This was a significant shift from the hierarchical Catholic structure that Healy had experienced through her youth. The

¹⁰⁹ Other narrators who described Sears' text as a strong influence include: Addison, interview; Lee Brown, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 21 March 2008; Gubatayao-Hagen, interview; Voyageur; Covey, interview. The historian Louis Venters recently described *Thief in the Night* as "The classic popular Bahá'í treatment of Biblical prophecy." Louis Venters, "'Most Great Reconstruction': The Baha'i Faith in Jim Crow South Carolina, 1898-1965 (PhD Thesis, University of South Carolina, 2010), 20 (fn 22). Baha'i scholars William P. Collins and Peter Smith also note the text's wide popular appeal and diffusion: "Babi and Baha'i Millennialism," in Catherine Wessinger, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 487.

¹¹⁰ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

¹¹¹ For discussion of these instructions see McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 77-81. For Baha'u'llah's original injunctions see Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1992), 21-22, 73-74, accessed online 18 April 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/KA/>.

practice of Baha'i study and deepening, she noted, demanded perseverance (and a certain level of literacy as well) and proved challenging for some Indigenous Baha'is whose engagement with Christianity and residential schools had rendered them, in the words of another Blackfoot Baha'i, very "minister oriented."¹¹² (Likewise, Healy observed that building and sustaining the local administrative structure called for within the faith was (and remains) a struggle, especially after the wave of pioneers with whom she studied left and administrative boundaries were redrawn, leaving on-reserve Local Spiritual Assemblies in her region isolated). Still, Healy stressed that the opportunity for personal study and worship, and direct contribution to religious community development, was tremendously empowering and she, like many other narrators, has dedicated decades to this work.¹¹³

This sense of personal agency extended to Healy's formal declaration as a Baha'i as well. Like Bighorn, Healy recalled being anxious about not knowing enough about the Baha'i Faith or being able to live up to its lofty principles, but described coming to realize, "Well, God is the All Knowing, the All Wise, how could I know everything about the Faith before I believe?" She explained how after several years of study and consistent visits by Baha'is, "all of a sudden I felt I was ready to really accept Baha'u'llah and his teachings." She recalled the subsequent exchange with great detail and emotion:

And all of a sudden I asked Joyce, I think she also had forgotten that we're not Baha'is, and all of a sudden I asked her, "Oh, do you have a card?" And she says, "What card?" The older lady I thought was so cute. I said, "Well, you know those cards you sign to become a..." "Oh." And she just had a great exclamation and told Eva, "Eva! Do you have a card? I can't find one in my bag." 'Cause she was starting to put her stuff away. And Eva said, "No, but I can check in the car." She runs out and it was in the month of

¹¹² Healy, interview, 27 April 2008; Eleanora McDermott, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008.

¹¹³ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008. Linda Covey makes a similar observation concerning Diné Baha'is, arguing that the Baha'i "religious matrix" (a term she borrows from Lewis Rambo), including the "Administrative Order," helped foster "autonomy, empowerment, and religious self-governance" for Diné adherents. Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í," 21.

February, we still had winter, she runs out and she comes back in with a card and then I was sitting there so calmly.

The power of choice is abundantly clear here. For this was, Healy continued:

such a blessed feeling, because that was my very first time to make a choice. That was really something, a special feeling. It makes me emotional. But anyway, my husband came from the other room and he was getting ready to go play hockey, he came running when he heard all this commotion and he says, “Oh, do you know what you’re doing?” And still I was so calm, I thought nobody was gonna stop me. At that time I just felt like a bird just flew out of the cage and nobody’s gonna put me back in here. I had my own choice, my very right, my own very right to sign this card and for me it was a great blessing and that was my feeling. I didn’t care about anybody else, not even my husband. So I signed my card and he says, “Are you sure you know what you’re doing?” I said, “Yes, I’m sure.” And then Joyce and Eva, they were so happy and it was such a happy occasion. So, that was in ’72, February, and since then I’ve been so busy.¹¹⁴

This is evocative illustration of the potential power of the act of declaration itself, of the power to choose one’s own fate and faith. Healy positioned this uplifting experience most directly in the context of colonialism, yet as her reference to her husband indicates, her reflections articulate a fresh sense of female agency as well.

In both of my interviews with Healy she directly tied this element of choice to an allied experience of strengthened self-identification as Indigenous. As she put this in our first interview together: “I was happy to be a Baha’i because like I said, it was my greatest experience to know that I have a right to choose for myself. That was a really happy experience. And then the other thing is to know my identity.”¹¹⁵ This knowledge came, for Healy, in the context of Indigenous ceremony, something she came to participate in after becoming a Baha’i and in specific support of her husband who, she explained, “was going through his sobriety by going to a medicine man.”¹¹⁶ She described her first sweat lodge as an especially numinous experience. Speaking to cultural change in this period, Healy noted that while only men entered the lodge when she was

¹¹⁴ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

¹¹⁵ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

¹¹⁶ Allison Healy, interview with the author, North Vancouver, British Columbia, 16 January 2009.

young, this sweat was mixed, with women seated on one side and men on the other. She described finding the heat and steam difficult at first, but recalled that she “just kept praying, praying.” “I really had an experience in there,” she shared in our second interview (and in phrasing strikingly similar to our first):

with the rattles and eagle feathers and it just seemed like they were just on me all the time. And so at the end of the ceremony I was talking to the medicine man and I was asking him what these things meant. That I was experiencing. And he told me that, “Well, your beliefs are very strong. It’s not because you’re a bad person. You’re being tested for how strong your faith is and you have a really strong faith.” So after experiencing these kind of ceremonies, I felt like, “Oh, now I found myself.” You know, as a Native person. I found who I really am and there’s nothing wrong with it. I’m not committing a sin, it’s all a belief and the medicine man did mention it too that, “You’re being tested about how strong your faith is.” And then being a Baha’i and from all what I read and learned, everything just came together.¹¹⁷

The relationship between the Baha’i Faith and Indigenous cultural practice was something that Healy’s husband, who became a Baha’i three years after her, came to question, but which she readily reconciled. As she recalled:

I know for my husband, he was going through his sobriety with the Indian ceremonies and then he became a Baha’i but then he was getting puzzled at one time wondering, did he have to make a choice, to stay with the traditional way and the beliefs? And then he started to question about the Faith. And at that time, as best I could explain it to him, I said, “You didn’t have to make a choice. Baha’u’llah didn’t say, ‘To become a Baha’i you have to leave this.’” Everything just comes together and that’s how I felt I found my true identity.¹¹⁸

In both her interviews, Healy directly situated her Baha’i declaration in the context of her residential school history and the diminished sense of self that it stimulated. Drawing also on the same discourse of rebirth deployed by Bighorn, she continued:

And I became so proud of who I am, like I just felt like a new person. I guess I experienced when they say, ‘You’re born again.’ Like I felt I was just born, knowing who I am. That I could make my own choices. For me, I have to look after myself. I have to know who I am and it just renewed my spirit, that I’m not ashamed. I used to be ashamed after coming out of the boarding school. I was ashamed of my identity. Being a Native

¹¹⁷ Healy, interview, 16 January 2009.

¹¹⁸ Healy, interview, 16 January 2009.

person. Some people thought I was Chinese and I'd go for that. Just to fit in. But all that just disappeared from me after participating. And that was back in '74 and I became a Baha'i in '72. And this was two years after I participated in the Native ceremony. So everything just came together as one. I felt whole. Yeah, before I was just living, not really knowing who I am. So I just renewed my spirit and became, I guess I became real. That's the best way I could explain, finding my true identity.¹¹⁹

For a woman who had been racialized throughout her life as an Indian, this process of renewal and identification, combined with the power to choose, was deeply empowering. While Healy employed the terms "Native" and "Indian" alike in describing the Indigenous identity that she found (or, fostered) by way of her Baha'i declaration, she explained elsewhere that she cultivated a more specific Blackfoot identification as well.

Choosing the Faith

Healy shared these specific thoughts about "finding her identity" in response to my request at the start of our second interview together that she elaborate on the subject, something she had spoken to during our first interview as well. In both cases, she shared similar stories (regarding her experiences at residential school and in her first sweat lodge ceremony, for example), at times almost verbatim, revealing a composed declaration story. My aim in this chapter has not been to track the historical trajectory or set down the key conventions and rhetorical functions of a specifically Baha'i genre of declaration narrative.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, the

¹¹⁹ Healy, interview, 16 January 2009. In addition to the Christian evangelical connotation of being born-again discussed above, the concept of rebirth also resonates in relation to the sweat lodge. For reflection in the context of the Lakota sweat lodge see Arval Looking Horse, "The Sacred Pipe in Modern Life," in Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, eds., *Sioux Indian Religion: Tradition and Innovation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 72. The Lakota sweat lodge ceremony (inipi, which the Lakota anthropologist Bea Medicine translates as "to live again") strongly informed intertribal spiritual practice in the period Healy became a Baha'i; though she did not specify the style of sweat lodge ceremony that she and her husband took part in, it is quite possible, particularly given the widespread incorporation of the inipi into drug and alcohol treatment efforts in "Indian Country," that she was exposed to this philosophy as well. On the inipi, including Medicine's translation, see Bucko, *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge*, 122-124.

¹²⁰ The historian D. Bruce Hindmarsh, for example, has tracked the rise and fall of the evangelical Christian conversion narrative in the context of early modern England in *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*. See also Peter G. Stromberg, *Language and Self Transformation: A Study of the Christian Conversion Narrative* (Cambridge:

oral histories analyzed in this chapter certainly reveal a shared plot of seeking. Reflecting back on their processes of becoming Baha’i, Shales, Greenaway, Bighorn, and Healy all described, each in her own way, being on a path of search that led them, after investigation, to take up this new “rational religion.” In narrating their experiences of becoming Baha’i through this discourse and framing, these women expressed their current Baha’i identities. At the same time, the discourse of rational religion that they deployed also signals a faith that made sense – or, better, which these women themselves made sense of – in the context of their own specific histories. They elected to join the Baha’i Faith of their own volition and in choosing the religion, and later reflecting on the process in their interviews with me, activated and articulated their own agency, as women and Indigenous people alike.

Their particular reasons for becoming Baha’i were personal, yet also shared: this was a religion that helped reconcile what they and their relatives had experienced and perceived as hypocrisy and prejudice from Christian churches, and settler society more generally, which opened space for a diverse membership and belonging. There could be, as Bighorn’s history demonstrates most directly, a utilitarian draw for declaration. And becoming Baha’i could prompt a process that both she and Healy described as being “born-again.” Resilient assumptions regarding Indigenous conversion as turning and assimilation might prime one to read such religious rebirth as a rejection of Indigeneity. What these Baha’i declarations reveal instead, however, is a process of becoming and deepened identification as Indigenous. The rupture that Healy, specifically, described was not from a previously pure or static Indigeneity, but rather a rootless sense of self stimulated through colonialism, in general, and her time at residential

Cambridge University Press, 1993); Wayne C. Booth, “The Rhetoric of Fundamentalist Conversion Narratives,” in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds. *Fundamentalisms Comprehended* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 367-395. The anthropologist Clinton Westman attends closely to Pentecostal discourse and genre in “Understanding Cree Religious Discourse (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Alberta, 2008).

school, in particular. As she stimulated a strengthened Blackfoot identity through her declaration, Shales and Bighorn likewise deepened their specific tribal identities through the same process. Further illustrating the wide range of Indigenous identifications that narrators came to assemble under the Baha'i umbrella, Greenaway came through her declaration to openly identify as a woman of Métis and Chinese (and "Anglo-Saxon," in the way of her education) heritage. Baha'i practice, as we will see in coming chapters, sometimes differed from theory. But this did not negate, in historical time or in subsequent interview reflection, the empowering act and process of choosing the Faith.

Chapter 5: Declaring Spirituality

Then a Voice said: “Behold this day, for it is yours to make. Now you shall stand upon the center of the earth to see, for there they are taking you.”

I was still on my bay horse, and once more I felt the riders of the west, the north, the east, the south, behind me in the formation, as before, and we were going east. I looked ahead and saw the mountains there with rocks and forests on them, and from the mountains flashed all colors upward to the heavens. Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy.

Then as I stood there, two men were coming from the east, head first like arrows flying, and between them rose the day-break star. They came and gave a herb to me and said: “With this on earth, you shall undertake anything and do it.” It was the day-break-star herb, the herb of understanding, and they told me to drop it on the earth. I saw it falling far, and when it struck the earth it rooted and grew and flowered, four blossoms on one stem, a blue, a white, a scarlet, and a yellow; and the rays from these streamed upward to the heavens so that all creatures saw it and in no place was there darkness.¹

These are the words of the Oglala Lakota holy man Black Elk (1863-1950), as rendered by his biographer and adopted relative, American poet John G. Neihardt (Flaming Rainbow) in the 1932 text, *Black Elk Speaks*.² They detail part of a powerful vision that Black Elk experienced at the age of nine, a vision particular to the Lakota people, but which carried wider global valence as well. According to the anthropologist Raymond DeMallie, it was Neihardt who injected a strong universal orientation into *Black Elk Speaks*. As DeMallie adds, however, “Black

¹ John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* The Premier Edition, annotated by Raymond J. DeMallie (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008 [1932]), 33-34.

² Ronald Neizen characterizes *Black Elk Speaks* as “spiritual biography” in *Spirit Wars: Native North American Religions in the Age of Nation Building* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 208.

Elk himself provided the basis for Neihardt's interpretation." In the original transcript in which he relates his vision to Neihardt, Black Elk explained that "The sacred hoop means the continents of the world and the people shall stand as one."³ He likewise articulated an expansive sense of place. As Neihardt detailed in a note to the above passage, "Black Elk said the mountain he stood upon in his vision was Harney Peak in the Black Hills [in South Dakota]. 'But anywhere is the center of the world,' he added."⁴ *Black Elk Speaks* did not garner wide readership when it was first published in 1932. Reissued in paperback in 1961, however, it attracted not only a faithful non-Indigenous audience, but a youthful Indigenous demographic as well.⁵ In a context of growing intertribal interaction, activism, and identification, *Black Elk Speaks* became what the Sioux scholar Vine Deloria Jr. described in his introduction to the 1979 edition of the text as "a North American Bible of all tribes."⁶ Thus it was, for example, that in Seattle, Washington, the intertribal organization United Indians of All Tribes took up Black Elk's vision as namesake and architectural inspiration for the Daybreak Star Cultural Center that the group opened on the site of a former army base, Fort Lawton, in 1977.⁷

Perhaps not surprisingly, given its simultaneously Indigenous and global valence, Black Elk's vision resonated with Baha'is as well. Vinson Brown and William Willoya, the Baha'i authors of the 1962 text, *Warriors of the Rainbow: Strange and Prophetic Dreams of the Indian Peoples*, for example, included Black Elk's vision among the series of Indigenous stories they

³ DeMallie in Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, 33 (fn 28).

⁴ Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, 33.

⁵ DeMallie, "John G. Neihardt and Black Elk," in Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, 295.

⁶ Vine Deloria Jr., "Introduction to *Black Elk Speaks* [1979]," in James Treat, ed., *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 233.

⁷ Lawney Reyes, *Bernie Whitebear: An Urban Indian's Quest for Justice* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 112-113. In this way, Black Elk became part of what the historian Coll Thrush has called Seattle's Indigenous "place-story." *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 171-173.

presented portending the arrival, from the east, of a new message of global unity.⁸ Although the formal standing of Indigenous holy people remains a subject of discussion among some Baha'is (who contemplate whether they classify as “major” or “minor” prophets), from the start of Baha'i outreach in Indigenous North America at mid-century, teachers readily incorporated them into the religion's evolutionary lineage.⁹ Many Indigenous people who became Baha'is likewise did so on account of spiritual connections that they drew between the faith and their own tribal teachings and worldviews. The ethnomusicologist Pauline Tuttle accordingly opens her study of Lakota Baha'i (and narrator in this project) Kevin Locke with a portion of the epigraph above and explores how Locke has interpreted the religion as fulfillment and renewal not just of Black Elk's vision but also the teachings of Lakota messenger Ptehiŋčhala Ská Wíŋ, or White Buffalo Calf

⁸ Vinson Brown and William Willoya, *Warriors of the Rainbow: Strange and Prophetic Dreams of the Indian Peoples* (Happy Camp, CA: Naturegraph, 1987 [1962]), 56-60. This text was authored by White Baha'i and biologist, Vinson Brown, and Inuit Baha'i, William Willoya; it also included contributions, in the way of story and artwork, from several other Indigenous and non-Indigenous Baha'is. Detailing visions and prophecies from a range of Indigenous spiritual traditions (primarily North American, but also global), the slim volume contains, with the exception of two sources in the bibliography, no explicit Baha'i references. Read with this genealogy in mind, however, *Warriors* reads as a clear presentation of progressive revelation and affirms the place of Indigenous prophets in this lineage. Correspondence between Vinson Brown and the American Indian Service Committee confirm that the text was indeed conceived as Baha'i teaching literature and that the Indigenous stories it contains were edited to emphasize Baha'i themes. The National Spiritual Assembly, however, determined after its pre-publication review of the text that it should not include the word “Baha'i,” or even be distributed to Baha'is after publication. American Indian Service Committee, Files on Individuals, Vinson Brown, 1962-1967, n.d., National Bahá'í Archives, United States. The Baha'i origins of the book are little-known among non-Baha'is and *Warriors of the Rainbow* is more readily recognized as the namesake of environmental organization Greenpeace's ship, The Rainbow Warrior. Rex Weyler, *Greenpeace: How a Group of Journalists, Ecologists, and Visionaries Changed the World* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004), 397, 593 (fn 3), 605 (fn 16).

⁹ Some teaching materials made general references to Indigenous holy people while others mentioned specific figures such as Black Elk. See, for example, Charles Cooke, translator, “A-De-Rih-Wa-Nie-Ton On-Kwe-On-We-Neh-Ha: A Message to the Iroquois Indians” (Toronto: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, [195?]) and National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, “Okí! Nitsítapee: A Message to the Blackfeet Indians” (Toronto: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1955), National Bahá'í Archives, Canada; “A Promise to the Indians,” unpublished and undated teaching pamphlet from Fort Yates, North Dakota, Kenneth Jeffers Papers, M-378, Box 15, National Bahá'í Archives, United States. For discussion of the station of Indigenous prophets see Donald Addison and Christopher Buck, “Messengers of God in North America Revisited: An Exegesis of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to Amír Khán,” *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 1 (2007): 180-270; Christopher Buck, “Native Messengers of God in Canada?: A Test Case for Bahá'í Universalism,” *Baha'i Studies Review* 6 (1996): 97-133; William P. Collins, “Commentary on Christopher Buck's ‘Native Messengers of God in Canada?: A Test Case for Bahá'í Universalism,’” *World Order* 8 (1998): 55-58; Pauline Tuttle, “The Hoop of Many Hoops: The Integration of Lakota Ancestral Knowledge and Bahá'í Teachings in the Performative Practices of Kevin Locke” (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2002), 188.

Woman.¹⁰ Further, the religious studies scholar Linda Covey has illustrated how many Diné Baha'is in the Southwest were moved to declare by what they found as fulfillment of traditional narratives of the Unity Chants and Warrior Twins.¹¹ Studies of Tlingit and Tagish Baha'is in the Yukon have also illuminated the influence of dreaming upon declaration and explored the flexibility of prophecy as interpretive idiom.¹² The anthropologist Julie Cruikshank, for example, has perceptively illustrated how stories about the same shaman, Major, have been shared in order to explain and reconcile Christian and Baha'i conversion alike.¹³

This certainly complicates the resilient view of Indigenous religious conversion as assimilation and affiliated ideas concerning a pure static Indigenous tradition. One has only to look to the veritable publishing industry spawned by Black Elk, or Nicholas Black Elk as some prefer to call him, to see these tensions at play. Some consider Black Elk, who converted to Catholicism in 1904 and quickly began serving as a catechist (something that Neihardt excised from *Black Elk Speaks*, which concludes with the 1890 massacre of hundreds of Lakota people at Wounded Knee), as a trove of traditionalism, others claim him as a “Catholic regenerate,” while

¹⁰ Tuttle, “The Hoop of Many Hoops.” Locke (who also has Anishinabe heritage) echoed this interpretation of the White Buffalo Calf Woman in his interview with me: interview with the author, by telephone, 28 March 2008. Some Lakota Baha'is share this interpretation. See, for example, Patricia Locke, “The Return of the ‘White Buffalo Calf Woman’ – Prophecy of the Lakota,” interview with Jacqueline Left Hand Bull, 1989, accessed online 13 May 2013, <http://bci.org/prophecy-fulfilled/wbcalf.htm>. For a discussion of Locke’s interpretation as an example of the flexibility of Indigenous “constitutive myths” see Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 141-142.

¹¹ Linda S. Covey, “Diné Becoming Bahá’í: Through the Lens of Ancient Prophecies” (MA thesis, Missouri State University, 2011). Diné Baha'i Annie Kahn discusses the Unity Chant in a follow-up to *Warriors of the Rainbow*: Annie Kahn, Olin Karch, and Blu Mundy, *Four Remarkable Indian Prophecies* (Healdsburg, CA: Naturegraph Company, 1963), 3-6.

¹² Lynn Echevarria, “A New Skin for an Old Drum: Changing Contexts of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá’í Storytelling,” *The Northern Review* 29 (Fall 2008), 39-62; Carolyn Patterson Sawin, “Native Conversion, Native Identity: An Oral History of the Bahá’í Faith among First Nations People in the Southern Central Yukon Territory, Canada” (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2000).

¹³ Julie Cruikshank, “Claiming Legitimacy: Prophecy Narratives from Northern Aboriginal Women,” in *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 131-135. See also Julie Cruikshank, in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned., *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Histories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 154-158; Echevarria, “New Skin for an Old Drum,” 43; Sawin, “Native Conversion, Native Identity,” 137-138.

others still see him as “strategic syncretist.”¹⁴ Similar tensions have animated analysis of Indigenous prophecy, which, as the religious studies scholar Lee Irwin has documented, has served as a significant Indigenous interpretive idiom from the time of first contact. Prophetic movements arose in multiple contact zones in North America and scholars have rightly situated figures ranging from the 1760s holy man Neolin (Lenape) and turn-of-the-century prophets Handsome Lake/Ganioda’yo (Haudenosaunee) and Tenskwatawa (Shawnee) to later nineteenth-century figures like Plateau region dreamers Smohalla (Wanapum) and Skoláskin (Sanpoil) and founders of the Shaker Church, John Slocum (Squaxin), and the Ghost Dance movement, Wovoka (Paiute), in specific contexts of colonialism.¹⁵ At the same time, many have judged such movements inauthentic on the basis of Christian influence or reduced them to strategic cognitive theories such as deprivation, nativism, and revitalization. As Irwin argues, however, prophetic movements “were not simply a ‘revitalization’ but an *ongoing vitality*”; “The religious issues,” he elaborates, “are far more generative and genealogical as Native ways of thinking than they are as simply reactions to the impact of invasion.”¹⁶ Several historians of Indigenous Christian conversion have made similar arguments, demonstrating how Indigenous people predicted and

¹⁴ These phrases come from literary scholar Dana Anderson, who offers a useful evaluation of the Black Elk literature in “Black Elk Speaks and Is Spoken: The *Dialectic* of Constitutions Revisited,” in *Identity’s Strategy: Rhetorical Selves in Conversion* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 140-161. For another useful review of the voluminous Black Elk literature see DeMallie, “John G. Neihardt and Nicholas Black Elk,” 289-316. And for a reader that contains a range of perspectives see Clyde Holler, ed., *The Black Elk Reader*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

¹⁵ Lee Irwin offers context on these figures, and others, in *Coming Down From Above: Prophecy, Resistance, and Renewal in Native American Religions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 129-134 and 377-381 (Neolin), 155-171 (Handsome Lake/ Ganioda’yo), 177-194 (Tenskwatawa), 255-263 (Smohalla), 263-267 (Skolaskin), 267-277 (John Slocum), 299-315 (Wovoka). For a useful review of Indigenous prophecy movements, including citations of larger literature, see also Gregory E. Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 197-198.

¹⁶ Irwin, *Coming Down From Above*, 8 (emphasis in original). For discussion of deprivation, nativism, and revitalization see Irwin, *Coming Down From Above*, 7-8; Smoak, *Ghost Dances and Identity*, 198-202. For a recent reassessment of revitalization (what the anthropologist Anthony C. Wallace defined as “a deliberate, organized, conscious effort to construct a more satisfying culture”), in particular, see Michael Harkin, ed, *Reassessing Revitalization Movements: Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).

made meaning of Christianity by way of Indigenous spiritual mediums such as prophecy, dream, and vision in a number of colonial contact zones.¹⁷

Where the last chapter considered the “rational” process of choosing the Faith, I turn in this one to examine spiritual declaration stories. These distinctions, again, are not total. In the same way that the last chapter included discussion of dreams, for example, we see paths of search, processes of investigation, and empowering expressions of choice here too. Further, as I noted in the introduction to this study, all declaration stories are in their own way spiritual. Yet with little prompting from me, the three subjects of this chapter shared particularly composed stories that stressed Indigenous spiritual interpretation (and, by extension, identification) and it is this aspect of declaration that I analyze here. Phil Lane Jr., Lee Brown, and Jacob Bighorn became Baha’is in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, in Pendleton, Seattle, and Salem, respectively. Their paths sometimes crossed directly. Lane and Brown, for example, were both involved with United Indians of All Tribes in Seattle, and Lane and Bighorn were brothers-in-law. All three were inspired to become Baha’is and subsequently reflected on the process in their interviews with me by way of Indigenous spiritual influences and interpretations including symbolism, synchronicity, dream, vision, and prophecy.¹⁸ This chapter simultaneously illuminates such shared idioms *and* the diverse possibilities that narrators found for combining Indigenous and Baha’i spirituality,

¹⁷ See, for example, Joel W. Martin, “Visions of Revitalization in the Eastern Woodlands: Can a Middle-Aged Theory Stretch to Embrace the First Cherokee Converts?” in Michael Harkin, ed, *Reassessing Revitalization Movements: Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 61-87; Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003), Chapter 7 (“Prophets, Revivals, and Evangelists”).

¹⁸ On concepts of relationship, symbolism, and synchronicity in Indigenous worldviews see Vine Deloria Jr., “Relativity, Relatedness, and Reality” and “If You Think About It, You Will See That it is True,” in Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta, eds., *Spirit and Reason, The Vine Deloria Jr., Reader* (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1999), 32-39, 40-60. On prophecy, dream, and vision as Indigenous spiritual knowledge see Lee Irwin, *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 21 and *Coming Down from Above*. Not all Indigenous cultures accord the same significance to such elements. As Irwin observes, for example, “Navajo religion does not emphasize dreams or visions, even though both are recognized as important sources of guidance for innovation.” *Coming Down From Above*, 364. Linda Covey makes a similar observation in her thesis, “Diné Becoming Baha’i,” 157.

specifically in urban and off-reservation contexts in the Pacific Northwest. Lane, for his part, articulated his declaration as a clear extension of a family history of Dakota Christian leadership, while Brown became a Baha'i in an explicit context of intertribal spiritual experience and exchange, one that included both Lane and Black Elk. Bighorn, who was propelled to declare by a dream, likewise connected the Baha'i Faith with Black Elk's vision and reflected on this intersection in more specific Lakota perspective.

Together, this intersecting trio of declaration stories inserts the Baha'i Faith into a dynamic context of urban intertribal spiritual exchange, while illustrating ongoing connections with family and tribal history too.¹⁹ And it hints at the construction of Indigenous Baha'i community as well. While this chapter focuses on three men, there were certainly Indigenous Baha'i women, including several narrators in this project, in the Pacific Northwest in the period that Lane, Brown, and Bighorn became Baha'is.²⁰ The decision to focus this chapter, like the last, on narrators of a single gender emerged again through shared narrative and historical threads. In the same way that women who shared rational declaration stories may have been speaking back

¹⁹ In this way, this chapter, like this study more broadly, helps unsettle an enduring binary between on- and off-reservation contexts and the allied assumption that, as Renya Ramirez has explained, "urban Indians [are] exiles without culture, stuck in a liminal space between the traditional and the modern, problematically separated from an authentic ideal of Indian culture and identity." Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 21. See also Penelope Kelsey, "Gathering the Threads Together: Comparative Urban/Rural/Diasporic/Multitribal Nationalisms," in M. Bianet Castellanos, Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera, and Arturo J. Aldama, eds., *Comparative Indigenities of the Americas: Toward a Hemispheric Approach* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012), 23-37; Thrush, *Native Seattle*, esp. Chapter 9; Joan Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, L.A.: Maintaining Ethnic Community in Complex Society*, Revised Edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), esp. 114-117, 131, 153-177. Where Weibel-Orlando has illuminated the role of churches in the construction of Indigenous community in Los Angeles, here we find religious interactions outside such structure and physical and story links between city and tribal homeland as well.

²⁰ Indeed, it is not my intent here to reproduce the androcentrism that characterizes much scholarship on the so-called Red Power period and urban Indigenous activism. For studies that challenge this framing see Chelsea Horton, "Beyond Red Power: The Alternative Activism of Dorothy Maquabeak Francis," *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 14, no.3/4 (Sept-Dec 2004), 34-71; Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather Howard-Bobiwash, eds., *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009). Female narrators from this region include: Deloria Bighorn, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 20 March 2008; Klara Tyler, interview with the author, Neah Bay, Washington, 8 July 2008; Lorintha Umtuch, interview with the author, 21 June 2008; Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interviews with the author, by telephone, 11 July and 19 Aug 2008.

to images of the “religious woman,” the subjects of this chapter may have been articulating space within an affective spiritual realm more closed, in Western discourse, to men. In addition to sharing richly composed spiritual declaration stories, Lane, Brown, and Bighorn were also among the most forthcoming narrators in this study on the subject of intercultural Baha’i tension. As I elaborate in the conclusion to this chapter, desire to open and air these issues may also have informed their choices to share with me in an expressly spiritual key.

A Family Heritage

Phil Lane Jr. opened our interview together by offering a prayer “to give thanksgiving,” he explained, “for your coming here and the opportunity to share from my heart of hearts this journey that I’ve gone through, my spiritual journey and history and background, my relationship with the Baha’i Faith.”²¹ He also took care to detail his family history. Lane focused, in particular, on his father’s side and a spiritual lineage stretching back to his great-great-grandfather, Saswe, or François Deloria.²² Lane explained that his father, Philip Lane Sr., who spent formative time living with one of Saswe’s sons, Tipi Sapa/Philip Joseph Deloria, as a child, went to significant effort to share family stories with his children. These “old stories” were a particularly influential context in which Lane both responded to the religion and later reflected on the process in his interview with me. Lane’s initial impulse to declare came through

²¹ Philip Lane Jr., interview with the author, Whiterock, British Columbia, 3 Jan 2009.

²² Lane’s relative Vine Deloria Jr. explains that “The Yanktonais could not pronounce ‘François,’ and so they reversed the sounds and called him ‘Saswe.’” Born in 1816, Saswe was the son of Mazaicunwin, “a prominent woman from the Blackfeet band of Tetons,” and François Xavier, who was the son of another François, a young Frenchman who was saved from starvation by “a band of Yanktonais Sioux” and eventually married into the tribe. Vine Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit: A Portrait of the Dakota Sioux* (Santa Fe: Clear Light, 1999), 6-9. Saswe’s name is rendered variously in the historical record and later scholarship. Deloria Jr.’s father, Vine Deloria Sr., for example, calls him Francis; Deloria Jr.’s son, Philip J. Deloria, calls him Frank (the name, Deloria Jr. notes, that “appears on the treaty monument at Greenwood, South Dakota”). Vine V. Deloria, Sr., “The Establishment of Christianity Among the Sioux,” in Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, eds., *Sioux Indian Religion: Tradition and Innovation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987) 91; Philip J. Deloria, “Vine V. Deloria Sr.: Dakota,” in R. David Edmunds, ed. *The New Warriors: Native American Leaders Since 1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 80.

inspiration he received while reading a Baha'i prayer, an experience he connected to Tipi Sapa's Christian conversion. He likewise linked his declaration to Saswe and several key stories relating to this Yankton headman and healer. Indeed, Lane articulated his experience of becoming Baha'i as a clear extension of ancestral vision and family history.

He also detailed how aspects of his own specific upbringing set him on a path that intimately informed his reaction to the Baha'i Faith when he unexpectedly encountered it in his early twenties. Lane explained, for example, that while he derived great strength from the spiritual education that his parents strove hard to supply, he also faced intense pressure from his father to excel and to be tough. "Some of it served," he shared, "and some of it, he passed on a lot of the anger and the crap too, which I had to play out in my life." Where his sister, Deloria, recalled encountering leniency from her parents, Lane described facing strict expectations and emphasized his effort and desire to please his father during his youth. Speaking, for example, to his involvement in athletics, Lane recalled: "I wanted to win so bad, to please my father, to be a good boy, because there was an underlying sense I think that came from my dad's upbringing," (his father had lost his parents at a young age and he attended Haskell Indian Boarding School in Kansas), "that I wasn't a good boy. And so I wanted to be a good boy, more than anything in the whole world." Lane stressed that by the time he reached his early teens, "I had really become tough. I mean, tough. Impervious to pain, physical pain. And I had really shut off my emotions." He spoke also of an incident of sexual abuse that he suffered at the hands of an older male teenager when he was thirteen, reflecting in hindsight: "that had a deep impact on my psyche, I think. I think it really led me to a lot of later stuff in my life, an unhealthy relationship with

women and so forth.” Lane likewise emphasized how his tense but loving relationship with his father continued to impact his life course into adulthood.²³

Lane spent a year travelling in Europe after graduating from high school in Walla Walla then enrolled at the University of Washington in Seattle (something his father arranged while Lane was abroad). His studies, however, were interrupted by an unplanned pregnancy. As he recalled:

So I was doing fine, my [high school] wrestling career, I kind of put it to the side, and then when J.F. Kennedy was killed [in November 1963], I went to see this girlfriend of mine I had known during high school, and some alcohol was involved, we were intimate, and the next thing I know, around Christmastime, she called me and told me she was pregnant. So, I can tell you how I was raised. In those days, if somebody was pregnant, you married them. There was no such thing as having an abortion or telling them to have the baby, or leaving, it just wasn’t done. The way I was raised. If somebody got pregnant, then you married them. And part of me too was feeling like maybe this will help me settle down.

Lane explained that he left the University of Washington to take up a wrestling scholarship at Olympic College in Bremerton, across Puget Sound from Seattle, and was settled in his new family life for a time. Back at the University of Washington (the UW) the next year, however, Lane sampled LSD, something that set him on a difficult course. “That I think really fouled me up,” he shared, “in a certain way”:

And in a certain way, I just went through my thing. And that took me through a really rough period. I mean, a really rough period. I kept trying to wrestle. At the same time, I was suffering from alcoholism, drug abuse, I started taking diet pills in order to keep my weight down. I really, really intensely was, in a way, in a really rough spot. I mean, in a really rough spot.

Lane explained, however, that in the midst of this heavy substance abuse and instability, he also began having “this deep spiritual longing,” “these spiritual inclinations,” “this spiritual hunger.”²⁴

²³ Lane, interview. This is also evident in letters that Lane wrote home to his parents from his pioneer post in Bolivia during the early 1970s. Phil Lane Jr. Personal Collection.

This was the context in which Lane described encountering the Baha'i Faith. He had in fact attended a Baha'i fireside during his senior year of high school, but noted that he did not remember this at the time. Indeed, Lane stressed that he knew virtually nothing about the religion when he was moved by a Baha'i prayer to declare. Lane left the UW before finishing his degree and was living back in Walla Walla when he came across a Baha'i prayer book at the home of a man with whom he described having a complicated relationship. This man was an artist and former Christian minister and Baha'i who had left the religion on account of tension over his being gay (homosexuality being, according to Shoghi Effendi, an "affliction" that is "spiritually condemned").²⁵ Lane explained that this man mentored him in various creative pursuits, but also attempted to cultivate an intimate relationship with him. As he recalled:

And in myself, I already knew I preferred women. But I really liked him too. At the same time, the fact that he was trying to pull this deal on me, you know, he gave me André Gide to read and all these different things. Trying in some way to convince me that that would be a good way to be. But I just couldn't. That wasn't me. And yet I felt a love for him, because he gave me, during that time, you know, he got me introduced to acting and singing and all this creative side to me that I had.²⁶

²⁴ Lane, interview.

²⁵ "From a Letter Written on Behalf of the Guardian to an Individual Believer, May 21, 1954," in Helen Bassett Hornby, compiler, *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File* (New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2010 [1983]), 365. The full excerpt reads: "Amongst the many other evils afflicting society in this spiritual low water mark in history, is the question of immorality, and over-emphasis of sex. Homosexuality, according to the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, is spiritually condemned [see section 107 of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*]. This does not mean that people so afflicted must not be helped and advised and sympathized with. It does mean that we do not believe that it is a permissible way of life; which, alas, is all too often the accepted attitude nowadays. We must struggle against the evils in society by spiritual means, and medical and social ones as well. We must be tolerant but uncompromising, understanding but immovable in our point of view. The thing people need to meet this type of trouble, as well as every other type, is greater spiritual understanding and stability; and of course we Bahá'ís believe that ultimately this can only be given to mankind through the Teachings of the Manifestation of God for this Day." Subsequent statements from institutions including the Universal House of Justice and the American National Spiritual Assembly have effectively drawn the same conclusion: homosexuals should not be treated with "prejudice and disdain," yet must bring themselves in line with Baha'i law and work to overcome what is cast as an unnatural condition. See Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, 366-369; William Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America* (London: Praeger, 2005), 170-171.

²⁶ Lane, interview. Lane noted that Baha'i condemnation of homosexuality is a teaching he does not agree with, a point also made by Lee Brown, who shared the following on the subject: "I don't agree that homosexuality is a sickness. I think homosexuality is natural, is part of what the Creator has made. I think that in Native culture people who are gay are viewed as having their own gifts, their own kinds of gifts and they have their own place. And I don't like the attitudes towards homosexuals that a lot of Baha'is have. You know, it's a homophobia." Lee Brown, interview with the author, 21 March 2008.

In this context of sexual tension, struggle with addiction, and personal spiritual search, Lane picked up a Baha'i prayer book at this man's home and read the Tablet of Ahmad. Written by Baha'u'llah in 1865 to a follower facing persecution, this letter (which Shoghi Effendi subsequently uplifted to special prayer status) encourages forbearance and forecasts uplift for those confronting "difficulties" and "afflictions."²⁷ The prayer resonated deeply with Lane, who recalled his visceral reaction: "I didn't know anything about the history of the Baha'i Faith," he stressed, "I knew nothing. But this prayer literally caught me on fire. It caused a spiritual fire, literally. I remember that profound experience I had reading that prayer."²⁸ Calling on the language of siddha yoga, a practice that he has observed since the early 1980s, Lane elaborated, "they talk about shaktipat, that's where the kundalini is awakened." "This thing," he emphasized, "really caused an awakening in me."²⁹

In addition to describing this moment of awakening through the discourse of current spiritual practice, Lane also tied it back to family history. The imprint of Lane's father on his life trajectory is clear, even from the partial history I have shared here, but their relationship was grounded, too, in the lives of relatives before them. Philip Lane Sr. shared many stories about Tipi Sapa, a Yankton Sioux leader and prominent Episcopal minister, with his children. And Lane linked his own moment of Baha'i awakening to Tipi Sapa's Christian conversion. Early in

²⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, "Tablet of Ahmad," in Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), 208-213, accessed online 16 March 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/c/BP/>; Shoghi Effendi, "Prayers (Daily Obligatory)," in *Directives from the Guardian* (India/Hawaii, 1973), 60, accessed online 11 Aug 2011, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/se/DG/>.

²⁸ Lane, interview. Lakota narrator Kevin Locke likewise described the impact of a Baha'i prayer on his own decision to declare as a Baha'i. After returning from a challenging fast, during which he had offered a prayer for spiritual direction for his people, Locke read Abdu'l-Baha's "Tablet for the Central States" in *Tablets of the Divine Plan*; he did not declare immediately upon reading this text, but recalled a strong sense of resonance with his own prayer and was in turn propelled to continue his process of Baha'i investigation (which was sparked by pioneers to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Diane and Gerald Henrikson). Locke, interview.

²⁹ Lane, interview. For context on siddha yoga see Kathleen M. Erndl, "New Hindu Movements," in Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether, eds., *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America* Volume Two (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 670-671.

our interview, as he was describing the life of Tipi Sapa and his father, Saswe, Lane recommended that I read the book, *Singing for a Spirit: A Portrait of the Dakota Sioux*, written by one of Tipi Sapa's grandchildren, Vine Deloria Jr. (if the "Philips," "Delorias," "Lanes" are somewhat hard to keep a handle on here, they are certainly indication of a strong family bond).³⁰ "I think," Lane explained of this book, "it will really help you a lot to understand this calling and how this all fits into the Baha'i Faith."³¹ In *Singing for a Spirit*, which Deloria Jr. wrote in the aim of correcting and contextualizing White Episcopalian Sarah Olden's *The People of Tipi Sapa*, a popular early-twentieth-century church account about his grandfather, he notes that Tipi Sapa "became attracted to Christianity in a strange way," in turn reversing his prior plans to pursue a traditional warrior path.³² Deloria cites Olden's text, and his grandfather's voice contained therein, in explaining how, at the age of approximately seventeen, Tipi Sapa was one day drawn by the sound of singing as he rode past the Episcopal Mission on the Yankton Reservation on horseback; he returned on several "successive Sundays" until, on the fourth, he heard "the hymn I had longed for":

I stood next to a man who sang out of a book. From him I caught the words of the first verse and learned them by heart. When I left that church, able to carry the tune and sing the first verse of the Dakota translation of "Guide Me, O Though Great Jehovah," I felt that I was the possessor of a great treasure. From that day on I attended the services with regularity, hoping to learn other things as beautiful as that hymn.³³

Eventually, Tipi Sapa elaborated, after repeated dialogue with Reverend Joseph Cook:

finally I compared the two courses which lay ahead, the heathen life and the Christian life, and after much deliberation, I made my decision. Going to Mr. Cook I gave myself up, had my long hair cut off, and assumed the dress of the white man. It was far from easy to go back and face my people, many of whom were disappointed and jeered at me.

³⁰ Vine Deloria Jr. is the cousin of Lane and Deloria Bighorn's father, Philip Lane Sr.; Vine Jr. and Lane Sr. are the sons of Tipi Sapa/Philip Deloria's son, Vine Deloria Sr., and daughter, Lyma Lane, respectively. Phil Lane Jr. referred to Vine Deloria Jr. as both "uncle" and "grandfather" in our interview together.

³¹ Lane, interview.

³² Vine Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 42.

³³ Cited in Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 42-43.

“Coward! He fears warfare,” “See, he chooses an easy life,” and many similar taunts were thrown at me.³⁴

Tipi Sapa explained that he was confirmed in 1871, studied for several years in Nebraska and Minnesota, and became a lay reader quickly upon returning to his people in 1874. Deloria Jr. notes that while this is the story that the church and Tipi Sapa himself told about his Christian conversion, Tipi Sapa was surely also influenced by his father Saswe, “who had invited the Episcopalians to the reservation.”³⁵ Lane and his sister, for their part, both shared stories about Tipi Sapa being reticent, even hostile, towards the church in his youth. They, like Deloria Jr., however, also explained how Tipi Sapa went on to combine tribal leadership with full-time church work on a number of reservations, including Standing Rock, where he was stationed for several decades.³⁶ In Lane’s description, Tipi Sapa considered Christianity a viable path and position from which to work for the benefit and unification of his people under the constraints of late-nineteenth-century colonialism: he “really did come to believe that this was something that was the next stage in the spiritual journey for himself and for the people. That the other things were too broken to put back together again. At least at that time.”³⁷

In recounting his own experience of Baha’i awakening, Lane linked this to the church story of Tipi Sapa’s Christian conversion. Struggling somewhat to articulate the connection, he shared:

³⁴ Cited in Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 45.

³⁵ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 45. Tipi Sapa was well respected in the Episcopal Church and his statue was included among “The Company of Heaven” in the National Cathedral in Washington in 1936. Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 83.

³⁶ Lane, interview; Bighorn, interview; Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 48-84.

³⁷ Lane, interview. Like his sister, Lane also made particular mention of Tipi Sapa’s work in founding the Planting Society, later the Brotherhood of Christian Unity, a mutual aid and ecumenical society (an effort that certainly resonates in Baha’i context). Lane, interview; Deloria Bighorn, interview. On these organizations see also Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 49-54; Deloria, “Vine V. Deloria, Sr.,” 82. For context on the “Plains Sioux” and settler colonialism in the period that Tipi Sapa took up Christianity see Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism From Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. Part 2. Ostler discusses Saswe and the Deloria family at 189-190.

in a way, I guess, because of it, I can really understand – how do I say it? Not that I’m of any similar thing as my great-grandfather, Tipi Sapa, but I really understand that experience he went through, that mystical experience he went through when he went to that church and became a Christian. Because the experience was, I said, “What is this? What is this thing? What is this? I had this experience, what is it?”

Lane recalled that when the man at whose home he read the Tablet of Ahmad, John Ford, told him, “Well, this is the Baha’i Faith,” his response was immediate: “I want to be a Baha’i. Simple as that.” He and Ford promptly travelled to nearby Pendleton, Oregon where they both enrolled (or reenrolled, in Ford’s case). The spiritual inspiration that he derived from reading the Tablet of Ahmad moved Lane not just to enroll, but also to pen a prayer of his own, which he kept, and shared in his interview with me.³⁸

Despite being formally enrolled, however, Lane explained that he did not become immediately active in the Baha’i community. His complicated relationship with Ford took Lane to California, then England, and back to Los Angeles. His sense of spiritual search and hunger, he noted, persisted through this period and it was while living in Hollywood that Lane ended up at a fireside that greatly galvanized his Baha’i life. It was, he recalled, 2 March 1967, the first day of the annual Baha’i fast (something, he added, he was not aware of prior to arriving). Lane met his future (now-ex) wife, described in such vivid detail by his sister in the last chapter, at this gathering. “And at that point,” he stressed, “from there on, that was it. From that night, it stopped. Alcohol. Drugs. Women. A little temptation on the women side, but it really fell away. And I fell in love.” He described the period that followed as a “spiritual honeymoon”: “And I just totally got into being a Baha’i. I mean, totally into it. Completely. And that’s when I began understanding what it was about.”³⁹ Lane recalled how he kept up this energy and activity when he and his new wife moved back to Walla Walla in 1968. He served on the Local Spiritual

³⁸ Lane, interview.

³⁹ Bighorn’s reflections on her visit with the couple in California (discussed in Chapter 4) suggest that the religion had indeed become a central focus of her brother’s life by this time.

Assembly and the couple regularly hosted large firesides at their home. Lane began coaching wrestling and teaching Native Studies at a local community college. He and his father also initiated a support program for Indigenous inmates, a form of service that other Indigenous Baha'is participated in elsewhere as well and, as his sister Deloria recalled, through which the Lane family connected with members of the American Indian Movement and their relatives.⁴⁰ Looking back, Lane noted that he still “felt some temptations” from what he called his “old life,” and faced “little tests and difficulties” (a very Baha'i line that I heard from other narrators as well), but stressed that “I really was focused on being a Baha'i and I was a Native Baha'i and I had these prophecies to fulfill, and all this kind of stuff.”⁴¹

A good part of this energy derived from prophecy and an expectation, on Lane's part, of imminent fulfillment. Lane made general mention of the consonance of Indigenous and Baha'i prophecies throughout our interview, pointing, for example, to “the prophecies of Wovoka,” the founder of the Ghost Dance movement, “who said that Jesus was going to come back.”⁴² The far more central framing of his declaration, as it he told it to me, however, are family stories. In addition to Tipi Sapa, who Lane referred to repeatedly throughout our interview, he also linked his Baha'i declaration back to Tipi Sapa's father, Saswe. In his introduction to *Singing for a Spirit*, Vine Deloria Jr. explains that “the spiritual visions of Saswe” held and still hold great

⁴⁰ Lane, interview; Bighorn, interview. I discuss Indigenous Baha'i service, including prison reform efforts, in further detail in Chapter 8.

⁴¹ Lane, interview.

⁴² Accounts about Wovoka's visions vary. Lane's mention, however, of the prophesied return of Jesus, together with Wovoka's own account of being told by God, during a vision in 1889, “to return to earth, to tell his people that they had to be good, love one another, not quarrel, and live in peace with the whites,” readily resonates with the Baha'i messages of peace and progressive revelation. Irwin, *Coming Down from Above*, 302. See also Irwin, *Coming Down From Above*, 299-307 and, for a Baha'i reading of Wovoka, Brown and Willoya, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 62-64. Deloria Bighorn also spoke to the Ghost Dance in her interview with me, connecting the timing of Baha'u'llah's mission with contemporary Indigenous struggles on the Plains: “And the timing? Look at what Native people were going through in those times. Look at the search. What in the world was a Ghost Dance, but a search for God? A desperate search for the Creator. I mean, it just seemed very clear to me.” Deloria Bighorn, interview.

bearing on the history of the Deloria family and their specific religious trajectory.⁴³ In a chapter on the influential medicine man, Deloria Jr. details one especially formative vision that, as Lane explained in his interview, “really has a big meaning to me.”⁴⁴ Deloria Jr. relates that at one point in this vision, which Saswe experienced while on a vision quest as a young man, he came upon “a large black tipi” (what Lane called a “black lodge”), “in the middle of the road and so situated that he could not go around it.” “Recognizing that this encounter was something holy,” Deloria Jr. writes, Saswe entered the tipi, or lodge. There, he encountered two roads:

On the left-hand road facing him were four human skeletons lined up in a row, extending a good distance down the track. These skeletons were seated with their legs bent, their upper torsos leaning forward, and their forearms resting on their knees. They were looking down at the road. On their arm and leg bones were tied large bundles of grass. As he looked from the skeletons to the road ahead, he saw that the road appeared chalky white. Taken together with the skeletons, it looked rather ordinary and unexciting. The road on the right was blood red. Looking down this road, Saswe saw four purification tents, small, black, and somber.⁴⁵

At the end of each road was a bird, sitting and staring at Saswe: a black hawk on the left and a white owl on the right. The hawk eventually spoke, saying, Deloria Jr. relates, to Saswe “that he had to make a decision about the course of his life, that he must look carefully at the two roads. When he had made his choice, the meanings would be made clear to him.”⁴⁶ After careful deliberation, Saswe selected the red road on the right. The owl and the hawk then clarified the implications of his choice. “Had he chosen it,” Deloria Jr. elaborates:

the left-hand road with the four skeletons would have meant that Saswe would have four generations of prosperous descendants, but the people following him would be no more than skeletons with flesh who would contribute virtually nothing to the world. It would have been a safe but completely nondescript family that nonetheless would have luck and would prosper.

⁴³ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 5.

⁴⁴ Lane, interview.

⁴⁵ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 17. Vine Deloria Sr. also relates this vision in “The Establishment of Christianity Among the Sioux,” 93-96.

⁴⁶ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 17.

The red road, on the other hand, was fraught with danger but filled with life. The four purification tents meant that Saswe would kill four men of his own tribe and have to undergo four purification rituals. He would have great powers as a medicine man, the Thunders would be his close friends, and many birds and animals would help him. He was given a special stone to make it rain.⁴⁷

Deloria Jr. explains earlier in his account that in the context of “Plains Indian visions,” the number four, the “four skeletons and four tents,” would be understood “to represent four generations of descendants who would be bound by this choice.”⁴⁸ Later, he specifies that Saswe’s vision (of which the above is but one, albeit central, piece), “had predicted that four generations of his family would assume religious responsibilities.”⁴⁹ Saswe himself eventually converted to Christianity. As Vine Deloria Jr.’s son, the historian Philip J. Deloria (namesake of Tipi Sapa) has observed, “He seems to have perceived missionaries (correctly, one might add) through lenses that were at once spiritual and political in nature; to him missions looked like places where one might negotiate questions of power.”⁵⁰ Deloria Jr. notes that even before Saswe was baptized, however, he “began advising his son to consider the white man’s religion.” “We have often wondered,” he adds, speaking of the Deloria family, “if Saswe saw this change as a partial fulfillment of his vision, since there was no doubt that he wanted Philip to follow a religious life but not necessarily the traditional Sioux religion.”⁵¹

Lane, who noted that the symbolism of the number four in Saswe’s vision extends “down to my generation and beyond,” did not draw a direct line between Saswe’s lineage of religious

⁴⁷ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 18.

⁴⁸ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 17.

⁴⁹ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 45-48.

⁵⁰ Deloria, “Vine V. Deloria, Sr.,” 80.

⁵¹ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 36. See also 69, where Deloria Jr. discusses Tipi Sapa’s determination for his son, Vine Deloria Sr., to follow in his footsteps as a priest: “The motives were clear: Philip saw his black clerical clothes as a physical representation of the black tipi of Saswe. There were four purification tents and so there should be four generations of the family following a religious vocation.” And at 84: “In view of Philip’s continuing work as a chief of Band Eight and his interest in renewing the old ways after his retirement, it seems to me that, like his father, he saw Christianity as the only viable alternative for his people in those early days. Saswe had directed him down the road just as Philip later got my father to travel the same road. They created a family heritage that has been a heavy burden but one that seemingly could not have been avoided once Saswe chose the red road.”

leadership and his own Baha'i declaration. Instead, he highlighted a theme of purification, the "time of purification coming down," and the spiritual gifts that Saswe, and his relatives after him, received as a result of choosing the red road. He, like Deloria Jr., explained that Saswe did go on to become a powerful, even feared, healer and medicine man, and, as his vision also predicted, to kill four men.⁵² In 1856, Saswe even brought Tipi Sapa (which translates as Black Lodge, a name Saswe bestowed upon his favoured child in honour of his influential vision) back to life after he died from fever as a young boy.⁵³ These stories, which Lane shared at start of our interview together, form the context through which he understands and articulated, in his interview with me, his own spiritual journey and life course.

Lane spoke also of another story that demonstrates Saswe's strength and, in his telling and interpretation, foretold his family fortune. As he explained, "there had been this old prophecy that there would appear a white buffalo."⁵⁴ Saswe, at the time, was training a young man named Mato Gi, or Brown Bear, and during a hunt when a white buffalo appeared, gave Mato Gi permission to mount a bay horse that he ordinarily did not let anyone ride.⁵⁵ As Deloria Jr. recounts in *Singing for a Spirit*:

When the white buffalo was discovered everyone rode after him, but only Saswe's horse could stand the pace of the chase. He outran all the other hunters and enabled the man to kill the white buffalo. When the white buffalo was brought back to the Yankton camp, Saswe gave a great feast. He brought out a necklace made of large bear claws, a very valuable thing. The people led the horse around the camp, singing songs extolling his stamina. Then Saswe put the necklace around the horse's neck and announced that the

⁵² Family stories also link these four murders to Saswe's Christian conversion. Around the age of fifty-five, Saswe began to be troubled by the ghosts of the men he killed. When visits to various Yankton medicine men did not help, Saswe began approaching local missionaries about it. Though his conversion seems to have been motivated as much by political pragmatism as spiritual inspiration, the hauntings ceased after this baptism. Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 34-36; Deloria Sr., "The Establishment of Christianity Among the Sioux," 104-105.

⁵³ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 31-34, 37.

⁵⁴ Lane, interview. The white buffalo is an important symbol in Lakota and Dakota culture and there remains a vibrant "prophetic tradition," as the religious studies scholar Lee Irwin puts it, surrounding "the return of the White Buffalo Calf whose birth signifies the recovery of sacred power and wisdom by Native peoples." Irwin, *Coming Down From Above*, 360-361.

⁵⁵ Mato Gi was the name of Lane's father, Philip Lane Sr., who in turn gave the name to Lane Jr.'s son.

horse would never be ridden again in honor of the buffalo. He renamed the horse “Eagle Claws.”⁵⁶

For Lane, the significance of this story extends to the prediction that “whoever took the white buffalo, from that lineage would appear a people who would have certain gifts to give to the people.” As he elaborated:

I’ve heard and I’ve reflected on this deeply, and all its meaning. What does it mean? Because there’s been a lot of people come out of that lineage who have had a lot of influence on Native people. Saswe, who trained the rider, Brown Bear, and who raised the horse, he had twenty-two children.⁵⁷ So, some of these that are coming out, who are related through the eighteen daughters he had, who didn’t carry the name Deloria particularly. But even the Delorias, you’ve got Sam Deloria, who got the law school going at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. You’ve got Vine [Deloria] Sr., who was such a spiritual leader after his father [Philip Deloria/Tipi Sapa] died. He only really did that because of his father. He didn’t really want to be a minister, but he did it because his dad wanted him to. You’ve got Vine Deloria Jr., you’ve got [anthropologist and author] Ella Deloria, you’ve got my mother, my father, who did well. And that’s not to say, “is better than,” it’s just been something that has been brought up in my soul about this.⁵⁸

Raised with such stories and encouragement (sometimes pressure) from his father, especially, to cultivate a “warrior” spirit, Lane continues to carry a strong sense of responsibility and desire to contribute to his lineage’s legacy.

Lane likewise saw a message of Indigenous spiritual leadership and capacity confirmed within the Baha’i Faith and, from the time he became active in the religion in the late 1960s, identified explicitly as an Indigenous adherent. As we will see in a coming chapter, Lane

⁵⁶ Deloria Jr., *Singing for a Spirit*, 26.

⁵⁷ Vine Deloria Jr. also details that Saswe had twenty-two children, “eighteen girls and four boys,” by three wives. *Singing for a Spirit*, 29.

⁵⁸ Lane, interview. For useful overviews of the Deloria family’s rich history of cultural brokerage, including specific family members Lane mentions, see Susan Gardner, “Introduction,” in Ella Cara Deloria, *Waterlily* New Edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), vii-viii; James Treat, “Introduction: An American Critique of Religion,” in Vine Deloria Jr., *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 4-8. This genealogy includes the same Philip J. Deloria (namesake of Tipi Sapa) whose work in the field of Indigenous history has so strongly informed this study. For reflections from Philip J. Deloria on his grandfather, Vine Deloria Sr., in specific relation to sport, see: “‘I Am of the Body’: My Grandfather, Culture, and Sports,” in *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 109-135; for a wider biography: Deloria, “Vine V. Deloria Sr.”

activated this ambition by pioneering to Bolivia in 1970. He eventually pulled back from active Baha'i practice on account of intercultural tension within the community and a sense of being claimed by Baha'is, of being labeled as an adherent, for the purpose of what Lane called proselytization, in contexts where he may not have chosen to identify as such. Lane was at first reluctant to partake in this project for similar reasons: "Simply because," he explained, "I did not want to have my name associated with the Baha'i Faith and have people say, 'Well, he's a Baha'i.' Because of the attacks that have come upon me because of that." If his later Baha'i life was charged, though, Lane nevertheless stressed that, "in the core of my soul, I know where I got that spiritual inspiration."⁵⁹

In connecting his numinous experience of reading the Tablet of Ahmad with his great-grandfather Philip Deloria's Christian conversion, Lane situated himself in the context of family history and made Indigenous spiritual meaning of the Baha'i Faith. Reminiscent of the "same road" metaphor that Joyce Shales deployed in narrating her own choice to become a Baha'i, Lane situated his declaration in the context of formative family story and framed it as an extension of a long history of religious combination and leadership. The prophecy of the white buffalo, which Lane invoked at several points in discussing his process of becoming Baha'i, foretold a lineage that would have particular gifts to give to the people, something Lane also highlighted in Saswe's vision, and strove to fulfill, at least for a time, within the flexible (but not, as his later experiences revealed, entirely elastic) contours of the Baha'i community.

⁵⁹ Lane, interview.

Intertribal Tradition

Family was a critical, but hardly the only, Indigenous context in which Lane became a Baha'i and practiced his faith. He was involved in Indigenous education and activism in Washington state prior to his time pioneering in Bolivia, for example, and worked at United Indians of All Tribes in Seattle after his return.⁶⁰ Here, he influenced the declaration of another narrator and active member of Seattle's intertribal community, Lee Brown. Like Lane's cathartic moment of reading the Tablet of Ahmad, Brown's declaration was deeply informed by the spiritual inspiration of a relative, his grandfather, and by prophecy and vision as well. Brown, who is Cherokee, became a Baha'i in an explicit context of intertribal spiritual exchange and practice. His declaration story explicitly inserts the Baha'i Faith into the genealogy of contemporary intertribal dialogue and community in the Pacific Northwest, helping paint a richer portrait of a period often dominated by images of a political Red Power without recognition of diverse "religious roots" and dialogue.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Lane also worked at United Indians more recently: at the time of our 2009 interview, he had just stepped down as director of the organization. See Reyes, *Bernie Whitebear*, 160. In a January 2007 interview with *Colors* magazine discussing his work as CEO at United Indians and his wider "strategic security strategy" called the "Fourth Way," Lane spoke to Black Elk's daybreak star prophecy, noting that "Black Elk's prophecies concerning the need for bringing all the tribes and nations together based in a spiritual foundation has been the thing that's animated me these past 40 years." "The whole prophesy of the Daybreak Star," Lane added, "that was something very much in my heart and mind. Now I've come back and I can really see this incredible time in history in which Indigenous peoples and their allies have a tremendous opportunity to make a tremendous contribution in finding together a way out of this deepening crisis and chaos." Lane also shared, in this interview, many of the same elements that he shared in his interview with me, suggesting a certain practiced life story. This interview, however, does not mention the Baha'i Faith; instead, it describes what I read as Lane's Baha'i declaration this way: "A spiritual experience in 1968 helped Lane free himself from his self-destructive addictions and he devoted his life to serving the Creator and his people." Alex Valdes, "The Fourth Way: Phil Lane Jr.'s Vision for Harmony, Prosperity," *Colors* (Jan 2007), cover story, accessed online 14 May 13, http://www.unitedindians.org/publications_articles001.html.

⁶¹ On Red Power see, for example, Paul Chatt Smith and Robert Allan Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement From Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: New Press, 1996). Though a recent collection edited by Daniel M. Cobb and Loretta Fowler usefully advocates a move "beyond Red Power," it remains focused predominantly on political activism: *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2007). James Treat draws attention to "the religious roots of Red Power" in "Intertribal Traditionalism and the Religious Roots of Red Power," in Lee Irwin, ed., *Native American Spirituality: A Critical Reader* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 270-294 and *Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era: A Narrative Map of the Indian Ecumenical Conference* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2003).

I opened my first of two interviews with Brown by asking him to share about his background, in response to which he described a difficult childhood marked by “alcoholism in the home and then the illnesses that came about for me as a result, which I’m still struggling with, even now.” As a result of this serious sickness, Brown set out as a teenager in pursuit of wellbeing, a path, he explained, that led him to “Native culture, to Native ways of healing.” “And my primary doorway into this, the world of Native healing,” Brown elaborated, “was to participate in Native singing. I became a singer. I petitioned the Elders with tobacco to become a singer.” Growing up in the Pacific Northwest in a period of accelerating intertribal interaction, Brown was trained by Elders from a number of different nations; he kept up and expanded this intertribal practice when he moved from his rural hometown of Washougal, Washington to Seattle to study Business Administration at the University of Washington. He recalled, for example, his activity with groups such as the Northwest Intertribal Club and Kinatchitapi, a group involved with the March 1970 takeover of Fort Lawton and a forerunner to United Indians of All Tribes.⁶² Where popular memory and academic literature on Indigenous activism in this period has tended to privilege images of political militancy, Brown explained that his own participation stemmed from his involvement as a singer, activity that in turn led him into Indigenous ceremony. In Seattle, Brown came under the tutelage of “a number of Native ceremonial leaders,” who hailed from communities as close-by as the Muckleshoot Reservation (Don Matheson, himself from Puyallup), located thirty miles south of the city, and as far afield as the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota (Lakota William Schweigman) and the Onondaga

⁶² According to prominent Colville and Filipino activist Bernie Whitebear, Kinatchitapi is a Blackfoot term that translates as “all Indians”: Bernie Whitebear, “Taking Back Fort Lawton: Meeting the Needs of Seattle’s Native American Community Through Conversion,” *Race, Poverty, and the Environment: A Journal for Social and Environmental Justice* 4, no.4/5, no.1 (Spring-Summer 1994), 4.

Reservation in New York (Iroquois Beeman Logan).⁶³ Matheson, together with David Four Lions, a Quileute from the coast, and Andy Callicum, Nuuchah-nulth but raised on the Colville Reservation in eastern Washington, became Brown's sweathouse teachers.⁶⁴

Brown established this urban intertribal context as the setting in which he first heard of the Baha'i Faith. This was a time, he explained: "when I was really involved with the sweat and I was practicing tradition and I had never heard of the Baha'i Faith, I was not interested in Christianity and had been abused in a church as a young man, and was really turned off to Christianity." Brown was working as the director of the "Native division of the Educational Opportunity program" at the University of Washington and was, he stressed, "going strong, I was doing good and five or six, seven nights a week I would be involved in some kind of Native activity, a powwow, a ceremony, a sweat, a pipe, or a talking circle, you know, every night I was just constantly busy and things were going good." It was in this period, Brown recalled, while in a sweat at Don Matheson's on Muckleshoot that he heard his grandfather's voice advising him, "Ask Phil Lane for a book." "And I didn't really know Phil Lane," Brown noted. "I knew who he was, I knew he worked at United Indians of All Tribes, I had seen him around at different gatherings, but I didn't know him deeply at that time." Though his grandfather's words were unexpected, Brown recalled that he felt compelled to comply. He explained that he and his grandfather, who Brown lived with for a significant portion of his childhood, were close, a connection that deepened following this grandfather's death in 1971. Brown recalled that after this time he began to experience a recurring nightmare, an intense "tormenting" dream so

⁶³ The anthropologist Raymond Bucko discusses Schweigman and notes significant intersections between his sweat lodge practice and teachings articulated by Black Elk in texts published by the anthropologist and religious studies scholar Joseph Epes Brown. Raymond A. Bucko, *The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge: History and Contemporary Practice* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 64-69. James Treat identifies Logan as a Tonawanda Seneca chief in "Intertribal Traditionalism," 277.

⁶⁴ Brown, interview.

powerful, he shared, that even his neighbours could sense it when it came. Brown recalled approaching Matheson about this and, on his guidance, undertook a fast in a secluded location on Mount Rainier, where his dream returned and was transformed into what he described as “a nice and accepting and warm dream.” After this, Brown’s teachers encouraged him to fast annually. As he shared, “I’ve never had a vision. You know, in all the years that I fasted on the mountain. But one thing that usually happens to me, every time I go up, I would usually hear one or two sentences from my grandfather. Not a lot. But I usually refer to it as, ‘the teaching of the year.’”⁶⁵

Brown explained that it was in this period of fasting that he heard his grandfather telling him to ask Phil Lane for a book. Attuned to the agency of ancestors, and counsel from his grandfather especially, he acceded. When Brown called Lane at United Indians and shared what he had heard from his grandfather, Lane invited Brown to his home and gave him a box with nine (a significant number in the Baha’i Faith) books inside.⁶⁶ Brown recalled that when he asked Lane about the books, and heard that they had to do with the Baha’i Faith, he determined that he was not interested. He did read one of the books in the box, *Great Upon the Mountain*, a biography of Oglala leader Crazy Horse written by Baha’i Vinson Brown (also a co-author of *Warriors of the Rainbow*).⁶⁷ Brown put the rest of the books in a closet and, as he put it, “forgot about them, actually.” He explained that it took another prompt from his grandfather for him to revisit the readings:

⁶⁵ Brown, interview.

⁶⁶ The number nine is “equivalent,” Baha’i scholar Peter Smith notes, “to the word *Bahá* [glory]” in the abjad “system of letter-number equivalence” employed by Babís and early Baha’ís. Further, “As the highest single number, 9 is regarded as symbolizing perfection, unity and comprehensiveness,” symbolism applied in contexts such as the number of members of spiritual assemblies and the number of sides of Baha’i houses of worship. Peter Smith, *A Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá’í Faith* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 261.

⁶⁷ Vinson Brown, *Great Upon the Mountain: The Story of Crazy Horse, Legendary Mystic and Warrior* (New York: Macmillan, 1971). Lane mentioned in his own interview that he greatly admired Crazy Horse in his youth.

time went by and I was fasting on the mountain the following year, the Elders had put me up, and I don't know how many days I was doing, but I was increasing a couple of days each year. I got up to where I fasted for twenty days, without food, of which the four days on the mountain were without water. So I don't know how many days I was fasting that year, but I had fasted a few days and I went up to the mountain to go the four days without water and while I was up there I heard my grandfather's voice and he said, "Reconsider the Baha'i Faith."

Now, my grandfather was not really a member of any religion as far as I know. He was not a very strong Christian and I guess my grandmother, who was a strong Christian, would probably have said he was a Christian. My grandfather was a quiet person, but after his death became very powerful in the family's dreams. He said, "Reconsider the Baha'i Faith," so I finished the fast and I went down from the mountain and a few nights later I was laying in bed and I thought "Oh, reconsider the Baha'i Faith." I remembered that my grandfather had told me that. So I went to the closet and got out this box of books which had been sitting there for maybe a year. It could have been more than a year.

Brown began reading *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*, twin texts by Baha'u'llah that expound on mystical themes of dream and the "pilgrimage of the soul."⁶⁸ In the same way that several other narrators approached *Thief in the Night* (another book in the box from Lane) with the goal of proving it wrong, Brown set about reading *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys* until, as he recalled, "I find something I can disagree with and then I will have reconsidered the Baha'i Faith, but I know I'm not interested in it." Finding, instead, what he described as striking consonance with sweat-house teachings, Brown extended his investigation.⁶⁹

Describing himself, like other participants in this project, as "a person that, I guess you would say I was on a spiritual search," Brown explained that he had been reading other sacred writings – from the Hindu Bhagavad Gita and the Islamic Qur'an to the Taoist writings of Lao Tzu – in this period and was struck by the recognition of diverse spiritual traditions that the Baha'i teachings supplied. Closely echoing Joyce Shales, he explained:

the great thing about the Baha'i Faith, it was the first religion I came across that said, "Yeah, all the religions are from God." And I've read all these religious books and I like

⁶⁸ John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 1996), 150; Baha'u'llah, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1952), 32-33 (on dream).

⁶⁹ Brown, interview.

them all, and then the Baha'i Faith said, "Yeah, that's right, they're all from God." And I thought, "Yeah, that's right. Ours are too."

Brown's study also led him to revisit Christianity. The same way it did for Allison Healy, *Thief in the Night* prompted Brown to read the Bible and, eventually, accept the claim "that Baha'u'llah's life meets the biblical prophetic requirements for the return of Christ."⁷⁰ He also came to interpret the Baha'i Faith as the fulfillment of Indigenous prophecies from a host of tribal traditions.⁷¹

While activities like the 1970 seizure of Fort Lawton in Seattle (and, even more, the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz Island that inspired it) thrust urban Indigenous politics dramatically into the public eye, intertribal organizing had a much longer, and spiritual, history. In the wake of the Second World War, specifically, a group of Hopi traditionalists in the Southwest began to disseminate a prophetic message of impending apocalypse and potential peace. They hosted gatherings in the village of Hotevilla (at least one of which was organized in conjunction with Inuit Baha'i, and the other co-author of *Warriors of the Rainbow*, William Willoya) and, sending emissaries outside Hopiland as well, established broader intertribal and intercultural relationships.⁷² These intertribal ties were activated at gatherings like a 1967 "unity convention" hosted by Tonawanda Seneca leaders (including Beeman Logan, one of Brown's teachers). At

⁷⁰ Brown, interview. Hesquiaht narrator J.C. Lucas recalled, for his part, how becoming Baha'i helped him to address "my really deep sadness and confusion over Christianity and the whole residential school thing." J.C. Lucas, interview with the author, Nanaimo, British Columbia, 6 Oct 2004. Several narrators also spoke explicitly to a sense of coming to "love Christ more" and become more Christian through becoming Baha'i. For example, Klara Tyler, interview with the author, Neah Bay, Washington, 8 July 2008; Donald Addison, interview with the author, Eugene, Oregon, 23 June 2008.

⁷¹ Brown, interview.

⁷² James Treat emphasizes the intertribal dimension of this traditionalist Hopi movement in "Intertribal Traditionalism," 273-276. The religious studies scholar Armin Geertz attends more closely to intercultural context in *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). Lee Irwin notes William Willoya's presence at Hotevilla in 1961, but does not make the explicit connection that Willoya was also the "Eskimo (Inuit) Baha'i missionary" he describes: *Coming Down From Above*, 346-348. See also Shuichi Nagata, "Dan Kochhongva's Message: Myth, Ideology, and Political Action Among the Contemporary Hopi," in Erik Schwimmer, ed., *The Yearbook of Symbolic Anthropology* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 77-79; Willoya, "An Eskimo in Search of God," in Brown and Willoya, *Warriors of the Rainbow*, 75-76.

this particular event, religious studies scholar James Treat explains, “Iroquois and Hopi leaders took the lead during the proceedings, with Hopi elders recounting their warnings about the impending destruction of the ‘Fourth World’ and Iroquois chiefs offering their ‘Great Law of Peace’ as a model for regenerating social and environmental relations.”⁷³ Similar intertribal gatherings, and “travelling caravans” that they spawned, were held in this period and though Treat characterizes this movement predominantly as a reservation-based one, Brown’s history suggests a more dynamic composition and complicates any strict dichotomy of “reservation traditionalists” and “young urban radicals.”⁷⁴ As Brown elaborated regarding his study of the Baha’i Faith and Indigenous prophecy:

I started reading other books and I knew a lot about Native prophecies. I had listened carefully, I paid attention. I had listened to Thomas Banyacya, the Hopi Elder, many times. I went to these gatherings called the White Roots of Peace gatherings where Native prophecies were recited for seven days. The White Roots of Peace gatherings were sponsored by the Hopi and sometimes by the Six Nations Akwesasne people. And elders would gather and just share prophecies, in English. I went to these and I knew that Native prophecies also indicated the coming of a great prophet.⁷⁵

Brown came, through his process of Baha’i investigation, to embrace Baha’u’llah as this new prophet. Finding resonance with the forecast of Indigenous figures as diverse as Oglala visionary Black Elk, Paiute prophet Wovoka, Wanapum dreamer Smohalla, Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, and

⁷³ Treat, “Intertribal Traditionalism,” 277.

⁷⁴ Treat, “Intertribal Traditionalism,” 283.

⁷⁵ Banyacya was one of four “interpreter-spokesmen” appointed to disseminate the Hopi message. Treat, “Intertribal Traditionalism,” 273. Treat describes “White Roots of Peace” as a “communications collective,” led by traditionalist Tom Porter, which spent two months travelling the West Coast following a 1969 unity convention at Akwesasne. Treat, “Intertribal Traditionalism,” 287. Brown may be conflating the name of the “unity convention” gatherings with this more specific initiative. For another study that explicitly links these Hopi and Iroquois intertribal initiatives with earlier prophetic movements, emphasizing shared connections to and efforts to protect land bases, see Michelene Pensantubbee, “Native American Geopolitical, Georestorative Movements,” in Catherine Wessinger, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 457-473.

founder of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Peacemaker (or, as two Mohawk narrators called him, Deganawida), he made intertribal spiritual meaning of the Baha’i Faith.⁷⁶

In addition to his own personal study, Brown also described interaction with other Indigenous Baha’is as a strong source of attraction to the Faith. There was small but active corps of Indigenous Baha’is in Seattle during the 1970s and Brown recalled the comfort that he felt in the company of adherents like Lane and Choctaw musician and filmmaker, Phil Lucas.⁷⁷ Brown described being drawn, too, by Lane’s subtle but consistent incorporation of the Baha’i Faith into his cultural practice. Drawing on a revivalist discourse of Indigenous culture that I discuss in more detail in the next chapter, he explained:

Phil did a lot of things that were cultural, but also had a Baha’i aspect, and ceremonies. And Phil would do sweats and pipes and he would include Baha’i prayers and, he was never preaching about the Faith, but he always included it. And I know a lot of people that were not Baha’is just thought, “Well, Phil’s a Baha’i and so he says some Baha’i prayers,” and probably never thought too much about it. But he was really strong in keeping to it and continuing to do it. And especially the prayers for unity and I remember Phil used to say the Prayer for the Departed Loved Ones a lot. And I liked that. I liked the Native Baha’is.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Brown, interview. For context on these figures see Irwin, *Coming Down From Above*, 71-80 (Quetzalcoatl), 135-148 (Deganawida/the Peacemaker), 252-263 (Smohalla), 299-306 (Wovoka); Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*. Mohawk narrators on Deganawida: John Sargent, interview with the author, by telephone, 22 July 2008; Linda Loft, interview with the author, Meades Creek, British Columbia, 16 Aug 2004. Brown has more recently been developing a comparative analysis of the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace and Baha’u’llah’s *Kitab-i-Aqdas* and is planning a book on the subject. For other Baha’i studies that explore this specific intersection see Addison and Buck, “Messengers of God in North America Revisited: An Exegesis of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablet to Amír Khán,” 180-270 (esp. Appendix 2); Paula Bidwell, “Many Messengers of God: A Native American Perspective: Deganawida - The Peacemaker,” unpublished paper prepared for The Wilmette Institute Course on the Kitab-i-Iqan and Gems of Divine Mysteries, 2011, accessed online 16 March 2013, http://bahai-library.com/bidwell_many_messengers.

⁷⁷ For context on Lucas see Robert Weinberg, “Spinning the Myth Pool: An Interview with Phil Lucas” and David Delgado Shorter, “Promoting Understanding: The Celluloid Contributions of Phil Lucas,” *World Order* 35, no.1 (2003): 15-19, 21-25. A song by Lucas, titled “World Citizens,” is reprinted in Margit Warburg, *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha’is from a Globalisation Perspective* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2006), 517. Indicating the widespread circulation of material like this within the (Indigenous) Baha’i world, Warburg cites the song from a 1995 Alaskan Baha’i songbook. Further bearing out intertribal Indigenous Baha’i connections, two other narrators also mentioned interactions with Lucas: Donald Addison (reflecting on his time in Los Angeles), interview with the author, Eugene, Oregon, 23 June 2008 and John Sargent (speaking to Indigenous prophecy and *Warriors of the Rainbow*), interview with the author, by telephone, 22 July 2008.

⁷⁸ Brown, interview. For a selection of Baha’i prayers for the departed see Bahá’u’lláh, the Báb, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá’u’lláh, the Báb, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1991), 40-47, accessed online 17 March 2013, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/c/BP/>.

While such conduct and community appealed to Brown, Lane indicated in his own interview that there were other non-Baha'i Indigenous people in the city who bristled at his inclusion of Baha'i prayers within Indigenous spaces such as sweats.⁷⁹

Interactions with Indigenous Baha'is supported Brown's investigation of the Baha'i Faith, but his ultimate decision to declare, like his initial contact with the religion, came through spiritual inspiration received during a sweat. To contextualize this experience, Brown explained that after working with his sweathouse teachers for a time, he received their permission to build a lodge of his own, which he did in the backyard of his home in the northern Seattle suburb of Lake City. There were, Brown recalled, seven old growth cedars on his property and he emerged from his house one morning after a storm to find a significant amount of cedar blown down onto his yard. And some of it was shining. As he shared: "one of the things that happens to me in my life, I don't know if it happens to everyone or not, but I sometimes see a light around things. And I've learned, the hard way, that when something is shining, I ought to pay attention to it." Brown accordingly gathered the shining cedar and, after a telephone call from Lane, who was set to leave on a trip to Israel the next day, gave him the cedar to take with him. "I have a strange feeling," Brown recalled telling Lane, "that someone is going to mention cedar to you on this trip and if they do, give them this. It's for somebody I think. I don't know who." During Lane's visit to the Baha'i World Centre, someone (Hooper Dunbar, an American Baha'i who Lane met while pioneering in Bolivia and who was then serving in Haifa) did indeed mention cedar and Lane gave him the boughs that Brown had sent; Dunbar in turn gave him some sage to return to Brown back in Seattle. Some time later, as Brown was preparing for a sweat in his backyard he received a telephone call from his teacher, Andy Callicum, who asked if he could join him. Brown described the evening in rich detail:

⁷⁹ Lane, interview.

And so Andy was not actually that much older than me, but he was kind of considered to be an Elder and, I said, “Andy, just take it easy, just go in the sweat, I’ll get the rocks and everything ready.” So I was putting the rocks in, I had a fairly small sweat, only two or three guys could fit into it, so it was a tight squeeze, and it only took me like twelve rocks to have a really hot sweat. And so I put the four rocks in and I went in and I thought, “Well, I’ll do something special, I’ll use the sage from Israel. And I will put it on the rocks for Andy.” But I didn’t tell him that it was from Israel or anything about it. I just got in, and had the sage there, and I was putting it on the rocks.

Andy, Andy was quite a visionary. You know, he could see things that not everybody sees. He really had quite an unusual ability. And I had seen him do this many times, when people came for healing at Don’s sweat, Andy would tell them things about their self and their lives, he would tell them things about themselves he had no way of knowing, you know. And he would describe their homes, he would describe their friends, I mean, he had this incredible sense of vision.

So I really wasn’t that surprised as I put the sage on the rocks that Andy said, “The sage you’re using is from Israel.” And I said, “Yes, it is. It is from Israel.” He said, “A man sent it to you.” He said, “I see this man praying in,” I think he said house, “in a house with a golden dome.” And he started describing the Universal House of Justice. And I said, “Yeah.” I said, “That’s the Baha’i Centre.”

Brown paused at this point to emphasize that he had not told anyone that he had been investigating the Baha’i Faith and that Callicum, so far as he knew, had never heard of the religion. It was all the more moving, then, when Callicum spoke the sentence that after three years of quiet and careful study finally propelled Brown to declare as a Baha’i:

Andy said, “I see the prayers coming from this golden dome to your lodge, across the sky of the earth, as a stream of rose petals.” And you know that rose petals are an important symbol in the Baha’i Faith. He said, “I see the prayers coming as a stream of rose petals.” And I thought, “That’s it. I’ve got to be a Baha’i. This is it. This is it.” What Andy had said, the sentence hit me so hard, I thought, “Yeah, this is for real.” I mean, the prayers are coming as a stream of rose petals.⁸⁰

Attuned to symbolism, and having already come to find the Baha’i Faith the fulfillment of prophecies of return and renewal from a range of spiritual traditions, Brown signed his Baha’i declaration card the next day.

⁸⁰ Brown, interview.

He had hoped to do this with Lane, but when he was not available, Brown called the local Baha'i telephone number in Seattle and found someone else to assist him. "And that," he shared, "began the long process of being a Baha'i. Which has been a long and difficult road for me."⁸¹ A great part of this challenge, as we will see in coming chapters, stems from a lack of understanding and respect that Brown encountered within the Baha'i community towards the Indigenous spiritual beliefs and practices that were so critical to his process of becoming Baha'i. These were distinctly intertribal, taking in song, ceremony, and story from a range of different contexts, while activating ongoing relationship with his grandfather as well. Like Lane, interactions with whom closely informed his process of becoming Baha'i, Brown identified strongly as an Indigenous adherent from the time of his declaration. Jacob Bighorn, who became a Baha'i more than a decade later, likewise shared this sense of identification.

Symbolism and Synchronicity

Unlike Brown, Bighorn's initial contact with the Baha'i Faith did not come through an expressly spiritual medium. Nor did he declare immediately upon encountering the religion, as did Lane. Bighorn married Lane's sister, Deloria, whose declaration we considered in the last chapter, in 1978, so he knew something of the religion long before he enrolled eleven years later.⁸² Jacob and Deloria met through shared work in education, a field Bighorn chose to dedicate himself to in the wake of the American Indian Movement's 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee, on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. In 1986, Bighorn was pursuing graduate studies in Education at Eastern Washington University in Spokane, where he completed a Masters thesis on what he called "right-brain holistic thinking" (which he described as inherent

⁸¹ Brown, interview.

⁸² Bighorn also recalled having heard about the visit of several Baha'i teachers to his reservation in Montana in July 1977, just a few months before he met Deloria; after meeting her family, Bighorn learned Phil Lane had been among this group.

to traditional Indigenous ways of knowing and distinguished from left-brain linear analysis), when an experience with his young daughter compelled him to begin asking questions about the Baha'i Faith.⁸³ A dream three years later ultimately propelled him to join the religion. In narrating his declaration, Bighorn emphasized how he connected with the religion through an Indigenous appreciation of and attunement to symbolism, synchronicity, and metaphor. He also made meaning of the religion by way of Lakota spirituality, and Black Elk's vision specifically. In this section, I stitch together material from two separate interviews, conducted four years apart, the first of which featured Jacob Bighorn alone and the second of which included his wife, Deloria.⁸⁴ These two interviews offer compelling insight into stable *and* shifting articulations of declaration. Bighorn himself had strong self-awareness of his retrospective understanding of his declaration and explicitly framed his experience of becoming Baha'i as ongoing process. As he put this in our first interview together, "As long as the process of knowing who I am, of learning who I am is in process, is in action, then I become more and more Baha'i. I should be a Baha'i. The more I learn about myself, the more I know I should be Baha'i. And so I'm constantly looking for these clues."⁸⁵

Bighorn consciously sought out symbolic connections with the religion, an approach he attributed to his Indigenous worldview. During our first interview, for example, Bighorn explained how he was compelled to begin investigating the Baha'i Faith, and subsequently drew links to his pre-Baha'i life as well, by the story of a young Iranian Baha'i martyr, Mona. Bighorn recalled with thick detail and emotion one 1986 evening in Spokane:

My daughter Jelana was five years old then and I was not a Baha'i. I didn't declare as a Baha'i until 1989. One night, Deloria had taken the two kids, it was just Jordan and

⁸³ Jacob Bighorn, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 11 Aug 2004.

⁸⁴ Bighorn, interview, 11 Aug 2004; Jacob Bighorn, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 7 July 2008.

⁸⁵ Bighorn, interview.

Jelana then,⁸⁶ to Feast, a Baha'i [Nineteen Day] Feast, because Deloria's been a Baha'i since 1970. And naturally I stayed home, I wasn't allowed to go.⁸⁷ But when my daughter came home, that's when she burst through the living room crying, she said, "They can't do that to my sister! They can't do that to my sister!" I was so totally freaked out about who is her sister, she doesn't have a sister, what's going on here and so forth. And it turned out that she had witnessed the video of Mona. And she was claiming her to be her sister.

Well, during our period in Spokane there, a medicine woman, who had previous experience with Lori [Deloria] when Lori was young, a medicine woman came and was holding Jelana on her lap and this medicine woman looked at Jelana and she said, "This one knows her feelings." Which is to say, "this one knows who she is, beyond the feelings," the feelings are a door that hold the key to, gives this sense of the greater person. So, this one knows her feelings, she was just a little child. So here she is claiming, "They can't hurt my sister! They can't do that to my sister! My sister!" So it struck me, she's claiming this Persian girl as her sister.⁸⁸

The video of which Bighorn spoke was *Mona's Story*, a 1985 film about the making of a music video for "Mona with the Children," a song that tells the story of sixteen-year-old Mona Mahmudnizhad, the youngest of a group of ten Baha'i women executed in Shiraz, Iran in June 1983 for their unwillingness to recant their religion.⁸⁹ Struck by his daughter's strong reaction, Bighorn asked his wife more about Mona and the circumstances of her martyrdom.

⁸⁶ The Bighorns subsequently had another son, Kai.

⁸⁷ Deloria Bighorn dated her declaration 1969, not 1970. I discuss the Nineteen Day Feast, a gathering held at the start of each Baha'i month, in more detail in the next chapter. Until recently, non-Baha'is were not permitted to attend the administrative section of the Nineteen Day Feast (something I experienced at a Feast I attended with narrator Donald Addison in Eugene, Oregon; I was asked to leave the room for this portion of the gathering); alternatively, Baha'is were instructed to eliminate this portion of the Feast were non-Baha'is present. In 2009, the Universal House of Justice advised Baha'is to simply modify administrative consultation should non-Baha'is be in attendance. Letter from the Universal House of Justice to All National Spiritual Assemblies, 17 May 2009, National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

⁸⁸ Bighorn, interview, 11 Aug 2004.

⁸⁹ *Mona's Story* ([s.l.]: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985). The music video for "Mona with the Children" includes appearances by musician Dan Seals, brother of Jim Seals (both Baha'is) of the band Seals and Croft, Cree musician Buffy Sainte-Marie (who Baha'is often describe as "a friend of the Faith"), and early Ojibwa Baha'i Melba Loft and members of her family. On Sainte-Marie as a "friend of the Faith": Jane Grover, interview with the author, McMinnville, Oregon, 22 June 2008; Sargent, interview, 22 July 2008; David Michael Piff, *Bahá'í Lore* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2000), 375; "Music Video Pays Tribute to Young Martyr," *Bahá'í News* 651 (June 1985), 3; "300-plus at Pacific Youth Conference," "Song of Mona Moves Buffy Sainte-Marie," *Bahá'í Canada* 7, no.5 (Nov 1985), 15 and 46-47 (reprinted from Hawaiian newspaper, *The Garden Island*). On Loft and family, and a photo of Loft and Sainte-Marie: Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Bahá'í Pioneers* (Essex, MD: One Voice, 2011), 169-170, 172.

Bighorn described how after he learned the date of Mona's death, 18 June 1983, he reflected back on his own whereabouts at the time. He deduced that the day before Mona died he was aboard an airplane, on his way home from a conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The next morning, he recalled, at approximately the same time that Mona and the other nine women were being hanged in Iran, "I was presenting gifts to my father-in-law, my mother-in-law, my daughter, my wife, my children, and I was saying, 'The man that you saw here six days ago is not the same man, something happened.'" Bighorn had travelled to Minneapolis with three other teachers from Chemawa Indian School, the intertribal boarding school in Salem, Oregon, where he then worked, to attend a conference on youth addiction.⁹⁰ He explained that there were eighty-one participants from across the country and that during the course of the program, participants broke out into nine smaller groups of nine (a significant number, Bighorn noted, in the Baha'i Faith). In these smaller groups, Bighorn recalled, "what we were required to do was get rid of our stuff. If we were gonna help young kids addicted to this or that, we had to clean ourselves up." This process summoned, for him, sentiments of internalized racism, and an especially searing memory of his father being berated by an elderly White farmer: "my father sitting in a pickup at the wheel, and I'm sitting, I'm smaller, I'm beside him, there's my hero. But this man was really getting after my father and my father was sitting there." It was this image, Bighorn shared, that "broke the dam":

and the tears just came down. And the person who acknowledged this was the lady sitting next to me, the facilitator of our little group, she was a Black lady, and I heard her saying, "racial self-hatred," "racial self-hatred." And that was one of the terms that was developed during that period of time of how minority people were dealing with their self-perception. So I had hated myself because of my race. Well, that was being lifted, I felt that, that night I said a prayer of thanks and the next day it meant everything was beautiful.

⁹⁰ Chemawa opened in 1880 and is described on the school's website as "the oldest continuously operating boarding school in the United States." Accessed online 17 March 2013, <http://www.chemawa.bie.edu/History.html>.

As he learned more about Mona, and came to embrace his Indigeneity, Bighorn connected her death back to this cathartic moment of personal transformation:

As I learned to understand and appreciate my Indianness, I knew that the young woman who died on the eighteenth, her spirit was already out, she knew she was gonna die, and so her spirit had already taken off and according to her story, she asked to be last, she wanted to pray for the progress of the other women, she kissed the noose according to tradition, kissed the noose of the murderer, and put it around her neck and she was released. But she wanted to go to her death dancing, she said, for the children, for the youth, and if she could die a thousand times, if God would let her die a thousand times, she would, for her love of the Faith. Mona. So I interpreted it later, years later, that she was the one who released me, who took away from me that racial self-hatred. Because her love was for unity. Unity in diversity especially. And that's something according to my way of thinking that I could see, I could feel it.

On his flight back from Minneapolis, Bighorn had taken a number of photographs for his students at Chemawa – he took these, he explained, as his plane passed over the approximate locations of their reservations in North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington as a physical reminder of his frequent message that, “Your ancestors are watching you” – and, as he came to draw this connection with Mona, these photos took on deeper meaning as tangible evidence of this momentous day. Years later, Bighorn was also gifted a bracelet that had once belonged to Mona, another material connection with “the person who took that self-hatred off of my shoulders.”⁹¹ “So it’s all so symbolic to me,” Bighorn added elsewhere, “of healing, of completeness, of joy, of spiritual purpose.”⁹² Bighorn was not only inspired to begin investigating the Baha’i Faith by Mona’s story and his daughter’s strong reaction to it, but also continued to weave his and Mona’s histories together subsequent to becoming a Baha’i, a form of symbolic interpretation he explicitly identified as Indigenous.

While symbolism like the synchronicity of Mona’s death and the 1983 workshop that Bighorn attended in Minneapolis deeply informed his ongoing process of becoming Baha’i, it

⁹¹ This was another connection spurred by his daughter: Bighorn was given this bracelet by an Iranian Baha’i friend of Jelana’s whom she met while studying at the University of British Columbia.

⁹² Bighorn, interview, 11 Aug 2004.

was a dream, which Bighorn also characterized as an Indigenous experience, which ultimately moved him to declare. As he shared after his discussion of Mona, “I didn’t get the declaration or proclamation by reading or studying the Baha’i writings. It came from this dream.”⁹³ Like Mona, this dream was a consistent feature of Bighorn’s unfolding declaration story; he first described it to me during an unrecorded conversation following our introduction in 2004 and he elaborated upon it during both our subsequent interviews. Other studies of Indigenous Baha’i declaration have discussed dreams and visions that foretold the coming of a new message or messenger and featured unknown figures (Abdu’l-Baha, especially), images (like the “Greatest Name,” the invocation Ya Baha’u’l-Abha, “O Thou Glory of the All Glorious,” rendered in Arabic calligraphy), or places (like the Baha’i holy land) which dreamers subsequently recognized and responded to upon encountering the Baha’i Faith for the first time.⁹⁴ Bighorn, conversely, already knew of the religion when he dreamt, on 1 June 1989, that he was sitting on a sagging metal-frame bed opposite a Persian man who, he noted in our first interview, resembled Abdu’l-Baha. Wearing a “Mediterranean blue turban” and with facial hair not quite as thick as Abdu’l-Baha’s, this man, Bighorn added, also “somewhat resembled my grandfather.” Seated between them was Bighorn’s brother, a Christian missionary and, in Bighorn’s words, “my hero.” In this dream, Bighorn explained, the bearded and turbaned figure reached around his brother and

⁹³ Bighorn, interview, 11 Aug 2004.

⁹⁴ See, for example, Willoya, “An Eskimo in Search of God,” 68-69; Lynn Echevarria, “A New Skin for an Old Drum: Changing Contexts of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá’í Storytelling,” *The Northern Review* 29 (Fall 2008), 42-49; Carolyn Patterson Sawin, “Native Conversion, Native Identity: An Oral History of the Bahá’í Faith among First Nations People in the Southern Central Yukon Territory, Canada” (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2000), 130-135. Some of these dreams were so powerful that they were transformed from personal to collective stories and were remembered and shared in the immediate area and beyond, including by participants in this project. Joyce Shales, for example, spoke in multiple conversations with me about dreams from the Yukon, including a 1948 dream experienced by Dora Wedge that, as Lynn Echevarria explains, has become both a “familial/kinship story” and a narrative with wider regional resonance in the Yukon that has “been broadcast often on national Aboriginal television.” Echevarria, “A New Story for an Old Drum,” 47-48. John Sargent similarly spoke of the influence of dream and vision on Indigenous declaration on the Prairies, where he spent significant time Baha’i teaching in his youth: interview with the author, by telephone, 21 July 2008. Indigenous dreams and visions connecting to the religion are also among the “Baha’i lore” collected by sociologist David Piff: *Bahá’í Lore*, 77, 178, 213.

“looked at me right in the face and said, ‘You should be a Baha’i.’” This, Bighorn underlined, “was the most important part of my declaration as a Baha’i, that image”:

And the respectful way especially, because he didn’t say, “you have to be,” or “you must be,” “you will be,” he just made a casual [comment], like he wasn’t proselytizing, “I think that you should be a Baha’i.” But at the same time there was comfort because my brother was there as well. So the decision was all up to me.

Here, Bighorn found himself in what the historian Joel Martin has elsewhere called an “oneiric contact zone,” one that brought together Indigenous, Christian, and Baha’i influences.⁹⁵ As we saw in Chapter 3, Bighorn was raised in a strong Presbyterian context and when I asked him, in our second interview together, about the balance between Indigenous and Christian influences on his declaration, he responded:

It’s more Christian, it’s more Christian. I remember, the vision, the dream I had back in 1989 included my older brother. And he was located between myself and the Persian figure in my dream. And he wasn’t acknowledging me, he just looking straight ahead, we were all three sitting on his bed. But what he represented to me was not so much an obstacle, but a reminder of my Christian roots, and also my association with him as my hero. And that if I was going to declare as a Baha’i and if I believed what this man said about, “You should be a Baha’i,” if I accepted that, then I would have to contend with, my brother was still alive then, contend with my relationship that I had with my brother, him being a Christian missionary and so forth.

And I decided then that I was being called to be a Baha’i, but I was also still very attached as an Elder in a Presbyterian church, so it took me another five months before I officially separated from the church. And I believe that during that process I was separated from my brother. Because during the interim I did inform my family then that I was preparing to declare as a Baha’i and my brother was present at the time. And in the family there was certainly no chastisement, no question, silent acceptance. And I’m certain amongst some of them, my immediate family, there would be prayers, prayer for me because I was making a “grave, grave mistake.” Other than that, there’s never been any direct question of my decision to become a Baha’i. And then I have shared with them over the years the basis of that decision with this vision and other visions.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Martin, “Visions of Revitalization in the Eastern Woodlands,” 78.

⁹⁶ Jacob Bighorn, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 7 July 2008. Jacob did subsequently acknowledge, at Deloria’s prompting, that he did confront some moments of tension after becoming a Baha’i, as when he wanted, for example, to share a Baha’i prayer at his father’s funeral. Lakota values of personal autonomy and non-interference, something Deloria spoke to in the Dakota context in her own interview with me, likely informed the quiet reaction of Bighorn’s family to his declaration. Deloria Bighorn, interview.

Where narrators like Lane and Shales framed their declarations as explicit extensions of family histories of Christian combination and leadership, Bighorn noted the sense of separation that this process could also stimulate.⁹⁷ Still, as it was for Allison Healy, the sense that “the decision was all up to me” proved tremendously empowering for Bighorn and he signed his declaration card, in a nod to Mona, on 18 June 1989, the sixth anniversary of her death.⁹⁸

Bighorn explicitly narrated his declaration as ongoing process and stressed that his experience of becoming Baha’i extended well beyond his formal enrollment. In our first interview together, for example, he explained that he did not remove himself from Presbyterian church rolls immediately upon declaring due to his discomfort with Baha’i burial law, which stipulates that adherents are to be buried within a maximum of one hour’s travel from the place that they perish.⁹⁹ As Bighorn shared:

I didn’t clearly separate from my church until October, but again my daughter, Jelana, nine years old, initiated that, in a way. Because one of the last requirements that was an obstacle for me as far as becoming a Baha’i, the requirement was, when you die, you’re buried within an hour’s distance from where you died. Well, according to our old Lakota tradition, what happens is you die where my family came from. So I couldn’t justify dying as a Baha’i living in Oregon, possibly die on the West Coast someplace, and then I couldn’t be buried back in Montana.

My daughter told me that the earth is the same. I asked her when she was nine years old, I can go with you to your playground, your school playground and we’ll say prayers, we’ll put some tobacco down on the tree, at the tree on your playground and any time you need

⁹⁷ Other narrators echoed this sense of strain with family members after becoming Baha’i. For example, Allison Healy in Eleanora McDermott, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008; Addison, interview. In both these cases, the family members who Healy and Addison mentioned (their mothers) ended up becoming Baha’is.

⁹⁸ Bighorn explained that two other major events that month, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and the Tiananmen Square massacre in China, further added to this impulse to declare. Bighorn, interview, 11 Aug 2004.

⁹⁹ See Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and Universal House of Justice, “Burial, Baha’i,” in *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 1*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Mona Vale, NSW: Baha’i Publications Australia, 1991), 9-13. ‘Námigis narrator Chris Cook Jr. likewise expressed discomfort with the Baha’i burial law: interview with the author, West Vancouver, 7 June 2004. It has also generated tension in the Maori Baha’i context in Aotearoa/New Zealand. See National Spiritual Assembly of New Zealand, “Special Report on Baha’i Burial vs. Maori Custom,” 6 Oct 1989, accessed online 17 March 2013, http://bahai-library.com/nsa_maori_burial. Tensions over burial law are not limited to Indigenous contexts. See also anthropologist Charles Carnegie’s discussion of the subject in the Jamaican context: *Postnationalism Prefigured: Caribbean Borderlands* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 183, 216-217 (fn 2).

assistance or protection, you feel threatened, then you go to that tree and your ancestors will come and be with you. She didn't want to go to the school, it was in the evening, so she turned around and looked out the window and she said, "Well, let's just put the tobacco down back here." And I asked why, and she said, "Well, it's the same earth. It's the same earth here as it is over at the school." Fantastic! So this blew my mind. The earth here, wherever I die as a Baha'i, it's the same earth as in Montana. So, that was it. I was able to have peace in my mind and my transition was complete then.¹⁰⁰

Bighorn again addressed this reconfiguration of place in our second interview together:

Someone told me one time, "You must walk very carefully," he said, "and respectfully because underneath your feet are the bones of all your relatives." And sometimes it comes to mind. And then I took it further, took that image further when I did become a Baha'i and I hesitated because I wanted to be buried next to my mother in Montana. And the Baha'i teachings say within one hour. So I placed that in my mind, I said my mother's here, I'm here in Duncan, there's a curvature of the earth, and so it's the same earth. So it's just a straight line from Montana to Duncan and it's the same earth, and there's my mother. There's my mother, and we're connected. When I go in the ground then we'll be of the same. No problem. Thank you, Baha'u'llah.¹⁰¹

Bighorn did die on Vancouver Island, where he and his family moved in the early 1990s to work and study at Maxwell International Baha'i School located on the shore of Shawnigan Lake. He was buried in Duncan in October 2008, nineteen years to the month after he removed himself from Presbyterian rolls in Oregon. He did not officially separate from his childhood church in Fort Kipp, Montana until the year that he died. Christianity, here, marked a tie to home. And in reconciling with the Baha'i burial law, Bighorn articulated a global vision of earth and home through which he cultivated an expanded relationship to his Lakota ancestors.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Bighorn, interview, 11 Aug 2004. Continuing on from this, Bighorn recalled another exchange, roughly a month later, that further cemented his sense of declaration: "And then to further finish this process, my daughter at that age, I think it was about a month later, denied my request to help her in her school, of coming to assist in her school. And it turned out because she was ashamed of my being an Indian. She didn't want to, 'cause she looks like me, she and I have the same [dark] skin colour, so she didn't want to have that compounded, have the situation compounded by having her father come in. And I was the principal at a school, so socially I had some status, but to her I was, I wasn't welcome. And that hurt. That hurt *so* deeply. But I took that as the confirmation that, I had a flashback to 1983, when "I don't have to hate myself." It's not my problem, it's my daughter's problem. So, that was sort of the last reminder, I was a declared Bahá'í, a really declared Bahá'í then, 1989."

¹⁰¹ Bighorn, interview, 7 July 2008.

¹⁰² Another Lakota narrator, Kevin Locke, described similar discomfort with the Baha'i burial law, something he reconciled during the course of travels in West Africa not long after declaring as a Baha'i in 1979 on the Standing Rock Reservation, where there were few Baha'is in his immediate area. Though he was traveling in his capacity as a musician and performer, Locke also connected with Baha'is in various African countries that he visited and noted,

He was, in this way, not unlike the “rooted cosmopolitan” Black Elk, who, as the anthropologist James Clifford has observed, “took Harney Peak along with him” when he travelled to Europe with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show in the late 1880s.¹⁰³ Both Jacob and Deloria Bighorn spoke of Black Elk in separate interactions with me and I asked them, in our shared interview together, to elaborate on the connections they saw between his vision and the Baha’i Faith. After retrieving a copy of *Black Elk Speaks* from a bookshelf in their living room, Deloria proceeded to share the passage with which I opened this chapter. Like Lee Brown, who also described Black Elk’s daybreak star vision in his interview, the Bighorns connected the symbolism of the two men coming from the east, “head first like arrows flying,” with the twin messengers of the Baha’i Faith, the Bab and Baha’u’llah, and the “hoop of many hoops” and “herb of understanding” with the Baha’i vision of global peace and unity. Later in the interview, Deloria also read from the foreword to *Black Elk Speaks* (written, again, by her relative, Vine Deloria Jr.) that I cite above, commenting on his reflections about the influence of Neihardt’s text on her and Jacob’s generation, “I didn’t realize we were so influenced. I guess we are.” She also noted earlier in the conversation, though, that “Even, of course, before this book came out,

with a laugh, that “my first exposure to Baha’i community I think was the Wolof people, it’s a tribe, major ethnicity in Senegal. So as far as I knew all the Baha’is were Wolof.” As he elaborated on such interaction and the burial law: “it was fantastic, because the African Baha’is are a very dynamic group, they don’t sit around and say prayers, they sing their prayers, they dance their prayers, they do everything. The first place that I went, with each community, we always went to the cemeteries first. And we’d always go there and we’d sing and we’d say prayers for the departed, for the pioneers who went to establish Baha’i communities in those different places. [...] I was always of the opinion that when you die, no matter where you are, that’s the way they always do it around here [on Standing Rock], you are always buried back at your home, your home place. But the Baha’i burial law, as you know, you’re buried within an hour’s journey of wherever you pass away. And I know a lot of people have problems with that, but being that my first exposure to Baha’i communities was in Africa, I thought, what a horrible punishment to be buried there in your home place, because everybody’s just going to forget about you. You’ll never be remembered. And my experience over there was that, my gosh, those people get a lot of prayers, a lot of respect, a lot of attention, because they are the ones that arose and gave their lives to establish those Baha’i communities over there. So that’s never been a problem for me. I know it’s a problem for a lot of people, the burial laws. But I think that’s the best possible thing that could be.”

¹⁰³ James Clifford, “Indigenous Articulations,” *The Contemporary Pacific* vol.13 no.2 (Fall 2001), 470.

he was well-known.” Stories like Black Elk’s, she explained, were frequently shared in her family. Jacob, for his part, recalled meeting one of Black Elk’s sons in the Black Hills.¹⁰⁴

Bighorn also expanded his interpretation of Black Elk’s vision as he deepened his Baha’i knowledge. From the Baha’i writings, for example, which he described connecting with on account of their metaphorical language and presentation, he learned “that when Baha’u’llah declared his mission, that every molecule in the universe danced with joy at the return of God.” This meant, in his analysis, that “the molecules that were present in the fetus that would soon be born, from whom would be born Black Elk in November of 1863, they were affected and impacted by Baha’u’llah’s message of his return. Because Black Elk was in his mother’s womb in April of 1863, when Baha’u’llah first made his declaration.”¹⁰⁵ In addition to this synchronicity, Bighorn also shared a more recent reading he had made of the significance of the different colours of horses (white, red/sorrel, yellow/buckskin, and black, “representing the North, the East, the South, and the West”) that accompanied Black Elk as he rode towards “the highest mountain of them all” and gazed upon “the whole hoop of the world.”¹⁰⁶ Bighorn recalled that when he first arrived at Maxwell International Baha’i School in the early 1990s, he was surprised and put off to see an image of five intertwined hands – white, red, yellow, black, and brown – painted on a school wall. He initially interpreted this as a desecration of the four colours represented in Black Elk’s vision and found, also, in the medicine wheel. More recently, however, Bighorn came to recognize that Black Elk himself was seated on a bay (brown) horse during his vision. The image at Maxwell, he explained, “had the four different colours of the

¹⁰⁴ Jacob and Deloria Bighorn, interview, 7 July 2008.

¹⁰⁵ Jacob Bighorn interview, 7 July 2008. Neihardt gave Black Elk’s date of birth as 1863. The religious studies scholar Clyde Holler contends that he was more likely born in 1866. “Introduction,” in Holler, ed., *The Black Elk Reader*, xxii.

¹⁰⁶ Bighorn, interview, 7 July 2008. See Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, Chapter 3 (“The Great Vision”). For a reading of the role of horses in Black Elk’s vision see Julian Rice, “*Akicita* of the Thunder: Horses in Black Elk’s Vision,” in Holler, ed., *The Black Elk Reader*, 59-76.

racés, and then they had the brown colour. Brown was to signify the place of the people of the Middle East and South Asia. And to my way of thinking then, I realized that in Black Elk's vision he was at the centre of this vision of all these horses." Thus, as Bighorn elaborated elsewhere, "I was able to see then the place of all five colours of the races."¹⁰⁷ This was a very Baha'i reading of Black Elk, one that affirmed Indigenous spiritual power and presence, while stressing global relationship and unity.

This global perspective, however, did not extinguish Bighorn's sense of tribal connection to Black Elk and sacred Lakota space. Though illness kept him from frequent travel, Bighorn journeyed to the Black Hills with his eldest son, Jordan, in 2004. Harney Peak, he explained, is "the mountain where Black Elk is considered to have come down to earth. And that's where he saw the rest of the earth from. So we climbed that mountain." He continued with great emotion:

But halfway up, halfway up that mountain, my son Jordan in his beautiful singing voice began to chant, chant Persian prayers. And when we got to the top so many hours later, the wind was blowing and the sun was getting ready to go down, Jordan took off. He was jumping from rock to rock, far away, and I could hear his voice on the wind again. And he was chanting. And I knew, that those mountains, that those trees, had been waiting, they had been waiting and they were so joyous to hear the Baha'i prayers being chanted in their midst in such a beautiful place. Such a strong gesture. My son didn't care who was listening, who could hear, there were so many tourists around. But he had to chant these songs, these prayers, and he did. And the paths upon the Black Hills were blessed by these songs of the Persian chant.

This marked, for Bighorn, a moving moment of rapprochement:

And in this way, the Indian way and the Baha'i way came together. And I feel, as far as Lakota and Dakota are concerned, our relationship, our tie to the Baha'i way, to Baha'u'llah, was initiated and blessed by the birth of Black Elk and certainly the vision and the life that he lived, long lived afterwards. And all it takes is understanding. Understanding and appreciation for these words that I have just said.¹⁰⁸

This interpretation is hardly universal among Lakota and Dakota people and surely contested by some, particularly in view of an explicit "fulfillment theology" that some Catholic scholars have

¹⁰⁷ Bighorn, interview, 7 July 2008.

¹⁰⁸ Bighorn, interview, 7 July 2008.

advanced in relation to Black Elk.¹⁰⁹ Through such symbolic association, however, along with emplaced experience in the Black Hills, Bighorn himself articulated a strong sense of Lakota Baha'i identity.

Declaring Spirituality

Like Lane and Brown, Bighorn also reflected on the hurt he felt when he encountered, following his declaration, a lack of understanding and respect for his Indigenous worldview within the wider Baha'i community. Indeed, these men were among the most vocal narrators concerning intercultural tensions that they confronted among Baha'is following their declarations. Desire to open these issues to dialogue may well have informed their decisions to narrate their declarations in Indigenous spiritual terms. Having made meaning of the Baha'i Faith through such mediums as dream, vision, and prophecy, Lane, Brown, and Bighorn eagerly anticipated bringing their perspectives to bear within Baha'i community and were profoundly hurt when they encountered a lack of understanding and respect for their Indigenous worldviews among a number of non-Indigenous adherents. That it was men, in particular, who told these interlocking stories of spiritual declaration and subsequent disappointment points towards a gendered dimension of such pain and invites further investigation.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ As Dana Anderson explains of this "fulfillment theology": "No longer just a synecdoche of traditions passed, something of a Lakota last (holy) man standing, Black Elk instead becomes an argument for the *subordination* of Native tradition: as the representative 'genuine convert' of Native American Christianity, he becomes the 'touchstone' and 'prime example' of how Christianity *subsumes* traditional spirituality in fulfilling it – of how Lakota religion is 'an Old Testament reaching its fulfillment in Christ.'" Anderson, "Black Elk Speaks and Is Spoken," 154. This "Old Testament" quote is from Paul B. Steinmetz, S.J., "The New Missiology and Black Elk's Individuation," in Holler, ed., *The Black Elk Reader*, 281. Deloria Bighorn spoke to the flexibility of symbolic interpretation when she noted elsewhere in the same interview, "You can see it's related or you can not see it's related, I mean, it just depends on how you want to see it." Jacob made a similar statement in regards to his connection with Mona: "it may not be true, but it feels good to think that it might be, because I have now this physical connection to her." Jacob and Deloria Bighorn, interview, 7 July 2008.

¹¹⁰ Scholars are paying increasing attention to Indigenous men and masculinities in historical and contemporary contexts of colonialism in North America. See, for example, Brendan Hokowhitu, "Indigenous and First Nations Masculinities," in Michael Flood et al, eds., *International Encyclopedia of Men and Masculinities* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 331-335; Kim Anderson, Robert Alexander Innes, and John Swift, "Indigenous Masculinities:

Though tinged with a tone of pain and disappointment, Lane, Brown, and Bighorn's declaration stories at the same time conveyed the strong inspiration that they received through the Baha'i religion, a faith that they found both validated and fulfilled a range of Indigenous spiritual teachings. The composed declaration stories that these men shared illuminate the diverse Indigenous meanings that they made of the Baha'i Faith, both in historical time and subsequent memory. These stories are themselves expressions of Indigenous Baha'i identity and help refine our understanding of Indigenous spirituality and identification in urban and off-reservation contexts. They demonstrate the resilience and relevance of family and tribal story, while also positioning the Baha'i Faith in a dynamic context of intertribal spiritual exchange. And they hint at the dissemination of the Baha'i Faith between Indigenous people and the construction of Indigenous Baha'i community as well.

Lane, Brown, and Bighorn's intersecting stories point, further, to the articulation and activation of a shared Indigenous spirituality in this period. By "shared" I do not mean single or generic, though as we will see in more detail in the next chapter, some (particularly Plains) spiritual practices certainly spread widely in the decades Lane, Brown, and Bighorn became Baha'is.¹¹¹ (Plus, recall Black Elk in Seattle). What I am pointing to here, instead, is an effort to express certain common Indigenous spiritual principles such as relationship, respect, holism, and circularity. Lane, Brown, and Bighorn were not just situated in a context of shared Indigenous spirituality, they actively helped produce it, both before and after becoming Baha'is. All three,

Carrying the Bones of the Ancestors," in Christopher J. Grieg and Wayne J. Martino, eds., *Canadian Men and Masculinities: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012), 266-284; Sam McKegney, "Warriors, Healers, Lovers, and Leaders: Confronting Simulations of Indigenous Masculinity," in Jason A. Laker, ed. *Canadian Perspectives on Men and Masculinities: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2012), 241-268.

¹¹¹ To speak of a shared Indigenous spirituality is slippery. The same colonial history that produced resilient policies and assumptions of "authentic Indianness" contributed and continues to give rise to static portraits of a single "American Indian religion" as well. See Michael J. Zorgy, "Lost in Conflation: Visual Culture and Constructions of the Category of Religion," *American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2011), 1-55.

for example, worked and studied in the field of education, where they incorporated Indigenous philosophies like circle teachings.¹¹² Likewise, Lane and Brown were and remain active in the Indigenous healing movement and projects that have applied Indigenous spiritual teachings and ceremony to drug and alcohol treatment.¹¹³ These were not Baha’i projects per se.¹¹⁴ As I discuss in more detail in Chapter 8, however, Indigenous Baha’is frequently activated their faith through service in contexts like these. And, as I elaborate in the next, where Lane, Brown, and Bighorn became Baha’is by way of Indigenous spirituality, others came to connect with Indigenous community and cultural practice through Baha’i observance itself.

¹¹² Jacob Bighorn, interview, 11 Aug 2004. See, for example, Brown’s doctoral thesis in Education, in which he discusses his and Lane’s involvement with the Native Training Institute in Kamloops: Lee Brown, “Making the Classroom a Healthy Place: The Development of Affective Competency in Aboriginal Pedagogy (PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 2004). On Brown and Lane’s work with circle teachings see also Robert Regnier, “The Sacred Circle: An Aboriginal Approach to Healing Education at an Urban High School,” in Marie Battiste and Jean Barman, eds., *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 315, 317-318. In addition to Indigenous teachings, the pedagogical approaches of all three men are also informed by the Anisa Model developed by education scholar and Baha’i, Daniel C. Jordan.

¹¹³ Lane and Brown, for example, are among the co-authors (with Baha’is Judie and Michael Bopp and an intertribal team of Elders) of *The Sacred Tree: Reflections on Native American Spirituality*, a 1984 text, still in print, developed as “a handbook of Native Spirituality for indigenous peoples all over the Americas and the world” and applied in the context of drug and alcohol healing in tribal communities. Phil Lane Jr., Judie Bopp, Michael Bopp, Lee Brown, and Elders (with introduction by Jane Goodall), *The Sacred Tree: Reflections on Native American Spirituality*, Fourth Edition (Twin Lakes, WI: Lotus, 2004 [1984]). *The Sacred Tree* was produced by the Four Worlds Development Project, an institute affiliated with the University of Lethbridge where Lane and Judie and Michael Bopp all worked. Other resources produced by Four Worlds (now two separate organizations: the Four Worlds International Institute and the Four Worlds Center for Development Learning) likewise remain in circulation. Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred, for example, cites Four Worlds Development Project, *12 Principles of Indian Philosophy* (Lethbridge, AB: University of Lethbridge, 1982) in a discussion of “the basics” of the “Onkwehonwe [original people] spiritual and philosophical belief system.” Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005), 250, 285 (fn 42).

¹¹⁴ Indeed, I am reticent about replicating the same process of Baha’i “naming” or “claiming” that in part drove Lane, in particular, from active participation in the religion.

Chapter 6: Practicing Culture

Reflecting on his process of religious deepening, Quw'utsun' Baha'i Robert George articulated a sentiment echoed by a number of narrators: "So with the Faith," he shared, "the Baha'i Faith, what I've come to understand is that I can be a Baha'i and still belong to the culture, my culture." "So that's what I really like," George continued, "it's up to you, it doesn't matter what culture you come from, your background. So that's what I like about it. You know, if I'm drumming, nobody will say, 'that's not right.'" Comparing this flexibility with censure he has confronted from other faiths, he added, "I've experienced that with other religions, 'that's not the way we do it.'"¹ In contrast to many Christian churches that had and, in some cases, continued to suppress Indigenous cultural practice well into the second half of the twentieth century, the Baha'i Faith promoted its "preservation" (as the Universal House of Justice put this principle in a series of statements on cultural diversity in the 1980s and 90s).² Indigenous Baha'i histories, however, reveal something other than straightforward cultural preservation. They demonstrate, instead, how the practice of what narrators called "culture," by which they meant Indigenous practices such as drumming, dancing, and sweat lodge ceremony, contributed to the construction of Indigenous and Baha'i identities alike. And they reveal, further, how Baha'i observance itself encouraged some Indigenous adherents to connect with this cultural practice for the first time. Shifting from discussion of declaration to the terrain of practice, this chapter and the next both examine efforts to live the vision of unity in diversity. They illuminate how Baha'i observance brought Indigenous adherents into Indigenous and Baha'i communities alike, as well as

¹ Robert George, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 5 Oct 2004.

² See, for example, Letter Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 26 May 1982 and Letter Written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an Individual Believer, 28 Oct 1990, cited in Universal House of Justice, *Aspects of Traditional African Culture*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (1998), accessed online 12 May 13, http://bahai-library.com/compilation_traditional_african_culture.

explicitly intersectional spaces that were problematic but also incredibly rich. The Baha'i principle of the preservation of culture, it turns out, did not always secure it. But it also produced it. I begin this this chapter here, with a series of detailed individual histories that illuminate a process I call "conversion to culture." Through internal dialogue, as well as interaction with other Indigenous people and Baha'is, these narrators not only took up practices such as singing, powwow, and pipe ceremony, they also constructed wider identifications as Indigenous. And, as I elaborate in the second half of the chapter, these narrators, along with other Indigenous Baha'is, further practiced and produced their Indigeneity as they negotiated the place of Indigenous cultural practice within the Faith.

I am using the term "culture" in this chapter in the way narrators themselves did, to refer, again, to practices such as intertribal sweat lodge and pipe ceremonies as well as tribal song, drum, and dance.³ This understanding of culture (or "the culture," "my culture," or "being cultural," as narrators variously put it) is one I myself engaged in my interview questions. This was not a process of me putting words in narrators' mouths, but rather an engagement with relevant terminology that set the ground for exchange. This idiom of culture emerged out of the late 1960s and 70s context of Indigenous activism and cultural renewal outlined in Chapter 2 and further gained traction in arenas like the Indigenous healing movement discussed here.⁴ As Kirk Dombrowski and Aaron Glass have observed, for all their attention to the "predicament of culture," anthropologists have had much less to say about the question of "having" culture and

³ For ease of reading, I do not place "culture" in scare quotes throughout the remainder of the chapter; readers should recall that I am employing the term in this specific sense.

⁴ On cultural renewal see Joane Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 190. Borrowing from the language of musical composition, the religious studies scholar Dennis F. Kelley proposes the term "reprise" over "revival," "renewal," and "revitalization." Where this latter trio, he suggests, invoke cultural death and the image of the "vanishing Indian," reprise "alludes to the rearticulation of an earlier theme whose basic elements remained throughout." Dennis F. Kelley, "Alcohol Abuse Recovery and Prevention as Spiritual Practice," in Suzanne J. Crawford O'Brien, ed. *Religion and Healing in Native America: Pathways for Renewal* (Oxford: Praeger, 2008), 66.

how Indigenous peoples themselves deploy and engage the concept.⁵ Listening to the discourse of culture in the context of the life story interviews that compose this study offers insight into the historical development and deployment of this revivalist idiom and its ongoing resilience today.

In addition to culture, and the connections to wider Indigenous communities that such practice stimulated, narrators also reflected on the subject of Baha'i community and, in cases, on intercultural tensions that emerged over the place of Indigenous cultural practice within the faith. Considering the Baha'i prohibition on backbiting, the fact that narrators shared on such a sensitive subject is significant. In addition to attitudes of disrespect and dismissal that some Indigenous Baha'is met from other adherents, interviews also reveal differences of opinion and ongoing processes of interpretation on the part of narrators themselves.⁶

While some adherents took up culture as a result of their Baha'i practice, Robert George was far from alone in underscoring the support he found within the Baha'i Faith for his preexisting Indigenous practice.⁷ Yet the place of Indigenous cultural practice within the Baha'i

⁵ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Kirk Dombrowski, "The Politics of Native Culture," in Thomas Biolsi, ed. *A Companion to the Anthropology of American Indians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 360-361, 379; Aaron Glass, "The Intention of Tradition: Contemporary Contexts and Contests of the Hamat'sa Dance," in Marie Mauzé, Michael E. Harkin, and Sergei Kan, eds. *Coming to Shore: Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions, and Visions* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 279.

⁶ In both these ways, this chapter contributes critical texture to the overwhelmingly prescriptive literature on Baha'i ritual. See, for example, Denis MacEoin, *Rituals in Babism and Baha'ism* (London: British Academic Press, 1994); John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 1996).

⁷ See, for example, a strikingly similar statement to George's made by Diné Baha'i, Johnny Nelson, discussed in Linda S. Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í: Through the Lens of Ancient Prophecies" (MA thesis, Missouri State University, 2011), 105. Other existing literature on Indigenous Baha'is has likewise stressed this point, including: Lynn Echevarria, "A New Skin for an Old Drum: Changing Contexts of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá'í Storytelling," *The Northern Review* 29 (Fall 2008), 54; Pauline Tuttle, "The Hoop of Many Hoops: The Integration of Lakota Ancestral Knowledge and Bahá'í Teachings in the Performative Practices of Kevin Locke" (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2002). Writing about northern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea, Graeme Were similarly notes that, "Nalik followers of the Baha'i faith are regarded by other Naliks as arbiters of traditional knowledge and practices," or "kastom." This is an image Nalik Baha'is themselves promote; a banner hoisted outside a local Baha'i centre in honour of Naw Ruz, the Baha'i New Year, for example, declared in Nalik, "Proclaim the Baha'i Faith: church of ancestral ways." Graeme Were, "Thinking Through Images: Kastom and the Coming of the Baha'is to Northern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11 (2005), 662-663, 669. In addition to encouragement to keep up their Indigenous cultural practice, some narrators also spoke of striking salutary resonance that they found between Indigenous and Baha'i spiritual teachings, including prescriptions for

Faith was also a subject of active reflection and was, at times, contested. Baha'is, including narrators in this project, articulated a clear sense of historical consciousness that stressed the relative youth of their religion and saw space, at least in theory, for innovation as adherents built Baha'i culture over time.⁸ As a self-styled modern and rational religion, the Baha'i Faith cautioned against both ritual and superstition and called for all cultures to be brought in line with Baha'i law.⁹ If all peoples, however, were ostensibly subject to these instructions, uneven power relations within the North American Baha'i community also produced a normative baseline of non-Indigenous practice (read, ritual) that Indigenous adherents were required to negotiate. I am informed, in this chapter, by practice-based theories of ritual in the sense that, like Catherine Bell, I consider ritual "a central arena for cultural mediation" and am interested in "what rituals do, not just what they mean, particularly the way they construct and inscribe power relationships."¹⁰ Where religious studies scholars like Bell and Michael McNally, however, attend to an unconscious "logic of practice," and advocate attention to ritualization over ritual, I examine more direct expressions and debates over the contours of acceptable and appropriate Baha'i practice.¹¹ Culture and ritual were themselves explicit, sometimes fraught, terms of engagement within the Baha'i Faith itself.

daily prayer and regular fasting. For example, Kevin Locke, interview with the author, by telephone, 28 March 2008; Eleanora McDermott and Allison Healy, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008; Tina Kahn, interview with the author, Pine Springs, Arizona, 21 June 2009.

⁸ On Baha'i historical consciousness and sacred time see David Michael Piff, *Bahá'i Lore* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 2000), 34; Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*, 173.

⁹ On the rational (and, following Weber, rationalized) and non-ritualistic orientation of the Baha'i Faith see, for example, Michael McMullen, *The Bahá'í: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 7, 76-77, 201.

¹⁰ Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 82-83.

¹¹ Michael D. McNally, *Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and a Native Culture in Motion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5, 14-15, 121-122, 200-201; Bell, *Ritual*, 81-82.

Conversion to Culture

The process of Baha’i “conversion to culture” took place in a wide context of Indigenous cultural renewal and intertribal exchange in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Recall, for example, the declaration story of Allison Healy, discussed in Chapter 4, in which she intimately linked the empowering moment of signing her declaration card in 1972 with a confirming experience, two years later, in a sweat lodge ceremony. As another Blackfoot Baha’i, Beverly Knowlton, noted in her interview with me, this was a time of significant intertribal exchange and cultural renewal in southern Alberta. “I remember,” she shared, “in Morley there was a conference on teaching the culture again. And this conference, this attracted people from all over” (including, she noted, narrator Kevin Locke, who declared as a Baha’i a number of years later). This was the period, Knowlton explained, “when things changed and then we were able to go to sun dances,” the time when “the culture started,” when “the powwows started.”¹² It was in this broad context, and in specific support of her husband’s pursuit of sobriety, that Healy, then in her early thirties, attended her first sweat lodge ceremony. Culture was increasingly employed as a tool for reform and sobriety in this period, and as she elaborated on this connection:

after my husband went through his sobriety, he always said, what took over his drinking was the culture and he never looked back at his past, his drinking. Like he was reborn again, he was looking at a new way of living a good life. So he started dancing and we started to take part in dancing and in our cultural ways and that’s what brought us to take part at the Calgary Stampede, to camp there and practice our cultural ways for tourists. So we’ve been really happy with our new life and then passed on to our children.¹³

¹² Beverly Knowlton, interview with the author, between Calgary and Sylvan Lake, Alberta, 26 April 2008. Knowlton later confirmed that the gathering she referred to was an Indian Ecumenical Conference, indicating the place of Christianity (and the Baha’i Faith as well) in the process of Indigenous cultural renewal. On the Indian Ecumenical Conference see James Treat, *Around the Sacred Fire: Native Religious Activism in the Red Power Era: A Narrative Map of the Indian Ecumenical Conference* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). On Blackfoot (Siksika) epistemology and what author Betty Bastien describes in her introduction as “my journey of retraditionalization” see *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitstapi* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 6.

¹³ An article that includes photographs of the Healy family at the Calgary Stampede was published on the Baha’i Community of Canada website: “A World Citizen, Allison Healy is Proud of her First Nations Identity,” 30 July 2004, accessed online 22 April 2008, <http://www.ca.bahai.org>.

Her children grew up, Healy added, “knowing who they are” and “with both cultures,” Blackfoot and Baha’i.¹⁴ And as Healy’s declaration story, in which she underscored how “everything just came together as one,” makes abundantly clear, she understood her Baha’i observance and Indigenous cultural practice as tightly intertwined.¹⁵

Where Healy “converted to culture” at a time when such Indigenous practice was emergent, others did so once it was more established. Sonny Voyageur, for example, is a generation younger than Healy and though he did not attend residential school as she did, he described being impacted by its “residual effects” and the strict Christian context in which he was raised on Vancouver Island. Invoking a fluid idiom of culture, in which he tacked between using the term as a synonym for society and a more specific realm of practice, Voyageur explained that prior to becoming a Baha’i in 1988:

I wasn’t involved in my culture, really didn’t take an active role in my culture at that time. I remember that time, before I chose the Faith, being Native wasn’t really a good thing. It wasn’t really, there was no spiritual dimension to our culture. Well, from my own experience. It seemed like, I don’t like to say dominant culture, but the culture here, Western culture, that everyone seemed to have adopted, really prevailed at that time ... I mean, it just didn’t grab me. It didn’t grab my heart, right? Or my imagination, mainly. If anything, it seemed like a real burden. And at that, I’m gonna be upfront, I mean, before I became a Baha’i, culture, I was ashamed of it, you know? I really didn’t like the social or the economic conditions, you know? So, because I was Native, I still did my rounds. Meaning rounds as just, I still connected with Native people, but I wasn’t fully engaged in the cultural aspects, or the culture, the traditions, right? Just something to do. I hate to say it, get a free meal, and then go. But there was really no backdrop, there was no event that I really wanted to be a part of.¹⁶

Voyageur came to connect positively with culture, as he understands it, at the Round Lake Treatment Centre, located on the Okanagan Indian Reserve near Vernon in south-central British Columbia. Founded in 1979, Round Lake was among the first dedicated Indigenous drug and

¹⁴ Allison Healy, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 27 April 2008.

¹⁵ Allison Healy, interview with the author, North Vancouver, British Columbia, 16 Jan 2009.

¹⁶ Sonny Voyageur, interview with the author, North Vancouver, British Columbia, 12 Nov 2004.

alcohol treatment facilities in Canada and continues to operate according to a guiding vision of “Culture is Treatment.”¹⁷ As the religious studies scholar Dennis Kelley has detailed, many Indigenous treatment and recovery programs that emerged in North America during the last decades of the twentieth century were intertribal in orientation and incorporated Plains-inspired practices such as sweat lodge and pipe ceremonies and philosophy like the medicine wheel.¹⁸ Such teachings did not resonate with all Indigenous people, some of whom have rejected pan-Indigeneity on account of its homogenizing and deterritorializing implications.¹⁹ Voyageur, specifically, was introduced to what he called Native spirituality at Round Lake and actively participated in intertribal culture for a number of years after leaving treatment.

Like many others, he subsequently interwove this activity with the Baha’i Faith.

Voyageur was first introduced to the religion by Lee Brown, who moved from Seattle to work as the Treatment Supervisor at Round Lake in 1980.²⁰ This program was by no means Baha’i and Brown did not speak openly about the religion at Round Lake. He was not alone among Baha’is,

¹⁷ <http://roundlaketreatmentcentre.ca/>, accessed online 20 March 2013; Elizabeth Mary Furniss, “A Sobriety Movement Among the Shuswap Indians of Alkali Lake” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1987), 51-52, 151; Phil Lane Jr., Michael Bopp, Judie Bopp, and Julian Norris, Four Worlds International and the Four Worlds Center for Development Learning, “Mapping the Healing Journey: First Nations Research Project on Healing in Canadian Aboriginal Communities,” in Wanda D. McCaslin, ed., *Justice as Healing: Indigenous Ways: Writings on Community Peacemaking and Restorative Justice from the Native Law Centre* (St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, 2005), 375-376.

¹⁸ Kelley, “Alcohol Abuse Recovery and Prevention as Spiritual Practice,” 65-90.

¹⁹ Kelley, “Alcohol Abuse Recovery and Prevention as Spiritual Practice,” 68. For case studies that consider the sometimes uneasy fit of pan-Indigenous healing models within specific Indigenous contexts see Colin Samson, “A Colonial Double-Bind: Social and Historical Contexts of Innu Mental Health”; Adrian Tanner, “The Origins of Northern Aboriginal Social Pathologies and the Quebec Cree Healing Movement”; and Gregory M. Brass, “Respecting the Medicines: Narrating an Aboriginal Identity,” in Laurence J. Kirmayer and Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, eds., *Healing Traditions: The Mental Health of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 109-139, 249-271, 355-380. Anticipating, perhaps, similar concerns, the current Round Lake website explains the center’s program philosophy this way: “The Round Lake program presents a holistic approach to healing through the medicine wheel and its balance of the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional aspects of our lives to all cultures and nationalities. ‘Culture Is Treatment’ is the philosophy of the Round Lake Treatment Centre. The program is grounded in cultural teachings and practices facilitated by elders and staff. Out of respect for all belief systems, the spirituality components of the program will not interfere with, but enhance all of our clients’ spiritual beliefs” (spelling as it appears in original). Accessed online 19 May 2013, <http://roundlaketreatmentcentre.ca/about-us/Our-Program-Philosophy>.

²⁰ Voyageur, interview; Brown interview, 21 March 2008.

however, in working in this field; as I elaborate in further detail in Chapter 8, a number of Indigenous Baha'is worked in such areas as Indigenous health, education, and community development, where they simultaneously expressed and supported Indigenous culture and Baha'i service.²¹ Upon Voyageur's completion of the program at Round Lake, Brown provided him with a copy of William Sears' *Thief in the Night* and connected Voyageur with Saulteaux Baha'i Dorothy Maquabeak Francis in Vancouver.²² It was in a sweat lodge run by Francis that Voyageur came, with emotion, to embrace Baha'u'llah as, in his words, his "friend," "lord," and the new "Manifestation of God."²³ Over the next several years, Voyageur travelled widely with Brown to attend ceremonies and gatherings across the Plains and Prairies.

This three-way intersection of treatment, culture, and the Baha'i Faith was common. Donald Addison, for example, shared about his own experience that recovery has "helped me to appreciate not only the Faith, which I appreciated already, but being Native. And the support of Native American culture in my ability to stay clean, and stay sober."²⁴ A generation older than Voyageur, Addison was born in 1942 and became a Baha'i in 1960 as a teenager living in Eugene, Oregon. After a number of years as a Baha'i, he had his "administrative rights" removed on account of heavy drug use. Baha'i leaders regularly urged sensitivity and support for

²¹ As one prominent example, Indigenous Baha'is Phil Lane Jr. and Phil Lucas, together with the Baha'i-inspired Four Worlds Development Project, worked with the Secwepmec community of Alkali Lake (the Esketemc First Nation) to help document and continue the process of healing and community development following the community's dramatic shift from rampant alcoholism in the early 1970s to near total sobriety by the mid-1980s. "The Alkali Lake Community Story," Four Worlds International Institute, accessed online 23 Feb 2013, <http://www.4worlds.org/4w/ssr/Partiv.htm>; Lane et al., "Mapping the Healing Journey," 405-406; Phil Lucas et al, *The Honour of All: The Story of Alkali Lake* (Kelowna, BC: Filmwest Associates, 2004 [1986]). As Dennis Kelley notes, the Alkali Lake story has become "nearly iconic in the overall discourse on American Indians and alcohol abuse recovery" and these individuals and this organization are often cited in frequent references to Alkali Lake; the Baha'i inspirations behind their work, however, are less well known. Kelley, "Alcohol Abuse Recovery and Prevention as Spiritual Practice," 66-67. For a source that details the involvement of Four Worlds, and the pan-Indigenous orientation of its programming, in Alkali Lake see Furniss, "A Sobriety Movement Among the Shuswap Indians of Alkali Lake," 87, 90-93.

²² On Francis see Chelsea Horton, "Beyond Red Power: The Alternative Activism of Dorothy Maquabeak Francis," *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 14, no.3/4 (Sept-Dec 2004), 34-71.

²³ Voyageur, interview.

²⁴ Donald Addison, interview with the author, Eugene, Oregon, 23 June 2008.

adherents struggling with sobriety and the removal of administrative rights (which, as Linda Covey explains, deprives a Baha'i of "being 'in good standing' and includes the loss of privileges, such as voting in Bahá'í elections, giving to the Bahá'í funds, and attending the spiritual and business portions of Bahá'í Feasts") is a sanction that was not applied lightly.²⁵ Addison explained of his own experience that he received word from the National Spiritual Assembly "saying that if I were to get clean and sober, I could have my voting rights back." "And rather than get mad at them," he recalled, "I decided I would do anything it took to get clean and sober, and stay clean." He first attended treatment at a veteran's hospital in Vancouver, Washington and explained that when a counselor asked him, "Are you Native? Because if you are, we can put you in Red Willow," he responded with, "Well, why not? If being Native, I don't have to pay for it, I'll go there." Addison had hidden his "Indianness" following a scarring schoolyard encounter as a child and he carried this silence forward into his early Baha'i years. Though he interacted in Indigenous community, and with other Indigenous Baha'is, prior to entering treatment, this experience awoke in him a deepened sense of connection with Indigenous culture, and identity.²⁶ He recalled thinking, "'Oh, yeah, I can stay clean and sober because Native culture supports it.'" And, he elaborated:

I knew enough about our tribe, and I didn't speak Choctaw then, I learned subsequently. And as I was staying clean, I was getting very close to the Baha'i Faith, to return, get my voting rights, and really being involved in the Native community one hundred percent. And it was the Elders that took me in by the bucket loads. And so I became clean and sober twenty years ago and got my voting rights just a few years after I got clean.

While knowledgeable about his maternal Choctaw culture, Addison also connected with intertribal practices such as powwows on the West Coast and, through graduate study and

²⁵ Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í," 170; Helen Bassett Hornby, compiler, *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File* (New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2010 [1983]), 50-62.

²⁶ Addison, for example, recalled interaction with another Choctaw Baha'i, the late musician and filmmaker Phil Lucas, who he met in Los Angeles, California, where Addison attended graduate school. Addison, interview.

teaching in anthropology and linguistics, learned songs, stories, and prayers from a range of tribal traditions.²⁷ As he shared in contemporary context:

Today I get to be an Elder. And at all these powwows around here, it's so nice to be able to be called on to say a prayer in Native languages. Anywhere I want to. I'm sixty-five, and I know lots of prayers in Lakota, in Navajo, and it's so fun to get to do that, and sing, I've got hundreds of Native songs from memory, that I've learned from other Elders and things like that. And to get to say American Indian languages, use those languages in powwows, and say Baha'i prayers for huge powwows. I've been doing that for twenty years.

In having his Baha'i administrative rights reinstated and connecting with Indigenous culture, Addison explained, "finally, it all fit together for me."²⁸

Where a number of Indigenous Baha'is, like Addison, have participated primarily in intertribal cultural arenas, others have added this to existing tribal practice. Though he attended residential school, for example, J.C. Lucas was familiar with his Nuu-chah-nulth culture from childhood. Like Voyageur, he met Lee Brown at Round Lake and also participated in intertribal practice after he exited treatment. As Lucas recalled:

I went kinda insane when I sobered up, I prayed and fasted everywhere I went. In Vernon area, up in the Interior, on the Island, on the Prairies. I got a pipe from a Sioux friend 'cause I was having intense spiritual experiences and visions. Yeah, he said he would sponsor me at the Sun Dance in Sioux Valley, Manitoba.

Acknowledging the intertribal, and potentially contested, nature of this practice, he elaborated:

So I went to my father and asked for his blessing to go, you know, kinda asked permission. "I'd really like your blessing, permission to go." And I thought he was gonna say, "Son, that's not our way." 'Cause we're from the West Coast, we don't have the Sun Dance. But all he said was, "Oh, good son, good!" And he lit up like a Christmas tree. And he said, "There's only one God, it doesn't matter how you find him. There's lots of

²⁷ Originally a Plains practice, powwows spread widely throughout "Indian Country" during the second half of the twentieth century. See Clyde Ellis, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham, eds. *Powwow* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005). Addison has a PhD in Ethnomusicology from UCLA and is currently working on a second PhD in Linguistics at the University of Oregon. He teaches Ethnic Studies and Anthropology at Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon, and has taught at a number of other area schools as well. Addison, interview; Donald Addison and Christopher Buck, "Messengers of God in North America Revisited: An Exegesis of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to Amír Khán," *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 1 (2007), 181 (fn 5).

²⁸ Addison, interview.

ways in the world we don't know about, but only one God." He said, "You go, you find out, you're young."²⁹

Lucas has since continued to balance and combine both his Hesquiaht and intertribal practice.

And where he added intertribal culture and community to existing tribal connections, others moved from intertribal practice into tribal culture, through the Baha'i Faith. In contrast to Lucas, for example, who described receiving his father's blessing to take part in intertribal practice, Voyageur recalled being subtly called home in 1995 when he told a Kwakwaka'wakw uncle, himself a United Church minister, with whom he had a close relationship that he was off to another sweat lodge ceremony. His uncle, Voyageur recalled, told him:

"Son, you don't need to do that." I go, "Do what?" He goes, "You got a culture at home. You got our culture, you know? You should really come back to ours, I notice you haven't been around as much. You don't need to go out there. Your mom comes from a really good family, we're all family here," right? "Come back," right? Basically he was asking me to come back.³⁰

Voyageur described dismissing his uncle's call at the time, but explained how the next year, he and a group of Baha'i youth who were in Port McNeill, on northern Vancouver Island, for a Baha'i summer school ended up assisting in the kitchen for a feast being held by one of his relatives. Although Voyageur had attended his family potlatch in Kingcome Inlet every two years before this ("cause we had to renew our name, right?"), he explained that, "that was the beginning of getting back involved, through the service."³¹ For a number of years after that point, intercultural teams of Baha'is began assisting with cooking and other duties at potlatches in the nearby 'Namgis community of Alert Bay, where several non-Indigenous Baha'is were

²⁹ J.C. Lucas, interview with the author, Nanaimo, British Columbia, 6 Oct 2004.

³⁰ Voyageur, interview. As Aaron Glass notes, there is a strong contemporary idiom(s) of culture in Alert Bay; the commemorative 1993 t-shirt for the annual cultural celebration at the local elementary school, for example, was emblazoned with, "Alert Bay, Village of Culture." Glass, "The Intention of Tradition," 279.

³¹ Voyageur, interview.

subsequently adopted into local families.³² Where Voyageur's conversion to culture began through treatment and continued through subsequent intertribal activity, often in the company of other Baha'is, religious service later brought him home to tribal community and culture.

Others shared such experiences of tribal homecoming by way of explicitly Baha'i activity. Of Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Filipino heritage, for example, self-described "Indipino" Baha'i Mary Gubatayao-Hagen was born in 1954 and raised in the Seattle, Washington area.³³ Her grandmothers were among the first Indigenous women from Alaska to begin families with Filipino labourers who migrated to the Northwest Coast after the United States took possession of the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century. Her relatives helped build the Indipino community on Bainbridge Island, across Puget Sound from downtown Seattle, where Gubatayao-Hagen's mother, who introduced her to the Baha'i Faith, was born.³⁴ Like Jacob Bighorn, who saw significance in the timing of Black Elk's gestation, Gubatayao-Hagen linked her family's migration history to "Baha'u'llah revelation." As she explained:

the Baha'is, we believe that the Bab when he appeared, all these inventions and things were released, and it's those inventions that led to the world becoming a smaller place where the travel to and from the Philippines on steamships was much more reasonable than the sailing ships than they had before. You know, English in the Philippines had come a long way, so my grandfathers had some grounding in English before they came over, so that was kind of a helpful thing too. So I like that the Baha'i Faith, you know, in an everyday way just makes more sense out of my world for me and I don't have conflicts.

³² Voyageur, interview; Chris Cook Jr., interview with the author, West Vancouver, British Columbia, 7 June 2004; Patrick and Sandra Slobodian, interview with the author, Victoria, British Columbia, 20 July 2004; Steve Cook, conversation with the author, Alert Bay, British Columbia, 31 July 2004.

³³ "Indipino" is an appellation that emerged in the context of ethnic and urban Indigenous activism in Seattle in the 1960s and 70s. Some of the major players in the urban Indian movement in that city, including Bernie Whitebear and Bob Satiacum, were Indipino. See Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories From the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 156-157, 164.

³⁴ Indigenous-Filipino interactions on the Northwest Coast have not received close academic attention. For a brief discussion in the context of Puget Sound see Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 116-117.

Gubatayao-Hagen also linked her ancestors' liminality as intercultural couples and colonial subjects to her family's process of becoming Baha'i:

So that was kind of interesting, that whole thing about being really all pioneers in a sense to the United States and to the Lower 48 and the whole American dream stuff. Pretty much what we find is neither the Filipinos nor the Native people taught their children their traditional languages, you know, because of the nationality mix and it really was against them to do that. And so I kind of think that's a little bit why our family became Baha'i, because of the interracial thing. You know, not fitting in our group or another, and not fitting into US White mainstream either. And that my family, you know, all of them were pioneers. I mean, what kind of courage did it take those men to come to this country? What kind of courage did it take those women to leave their tribesmen too? And then they were ostracized, those women were when they married these Filipinos, and so that was another reason why they kind of all settled together in the same area because they all had married people outside, outsiders.

Expressing a characteristically Baha'i sense of historical consciousness attuned to the relative youth of the religion and the inevitable "rolling out" of a New World Order, she continued:

And that kind of goes along with being a Baha'i because in Baha'i at this stage there's not a large identifiable group and yet what I like about the Baha'i Faith is because it's so visionary and so global, it really met my needs on a lot of different levels. You know, to bring the whole world into it makes sense, it makes sense of why my grandparents were at the forefront of building this, "One Planet, One People, Please."³⁵

For Gubatayao-Hagen, the Baha'i Faith honoured and helped explain her hybrid heritage and history.

It also brought her into closer contact with culture. When I asked Gubatayao-Hagen whether she was exposed or connected to her Indigenous culture growing up, she replied "Not in a traditional way, no," and expanded by drawing a distinction between values and traditions.

Situating her family's history in the context of colonialism, she shared reflections worthy of lengthy citation:

it was really interesting, I mean, my grandmother was a traditional woman. On my mom's side, see, your identity among the Alaska Native people goes through your mother.

³⁵ Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interview with the author, by telephone, 11 July 2008. "One Planet, One People, Please," was a popular Baha'i catchphrase in the 1980s, when Gubatayao-Hagen declared.

And so because my mother was an orphan,³⁶ so she was cut off from her traditions, so then there was a huge breakdown for our family. Now on my dad's side, his mom, he grew up around his mom and his mom was a traditional person and her first language was Tlingit. And I think by the time they started sending kids to school and washing their mouths out with soap so they have to forget their religion, that my grandmother was already in her teenage years or something when that happened. So she didn't lose her language. She had to learn English, but she didn't lose her language. But she didn't teach it to her kids because they were in an interracial relationship and trying to live in America, so my dad's family didn't learn Filipino or Tlingit.

So I learned about being [pause], about being, Tlingit, I didn't learn a lot of direct things, I learned a lot of indirect things. But I was just amazed at how much tradition got passed on even though it was indirect instead of direct, because, you know, I didn't learn about regalia and I didn't learn all the stories and all those things, but because my grandmother had Tlingit values in our home, I was amazed at the values passed on, so that when I came back to Alaska, you know, I had all the same values but I didn't necessarily know all the traditions behind the values.³⁷

Here, Gubatayao-Hagen simultaneously articulated cultural loss, persistence, and flexibility in the face of colonialism and spoke implicitly to an idiom of culture-as-practices echoed by others of her generation as well. Her reflections on values underline how cultural practices were and are but one avenue through which Indigenous peoples practiced Indigeneity.

Gubatayao-Hagen came of age in the era of civil rights, urban Indigenous activism, and what she described as “the dawning of, ‘It’s okay to be not White.’”³⁸ In this context, she began to participate “in more traditional things,” but described how a sense of “wariness and confusion” stemming from her Catholic upbringing stultified this practice during her teenage years. While Gubatayao-Hagen acknowledged that Catholicism helped her to cultivate a “sense of the mystical,” she also described how Catholic teachings of exclusive religious truth, heathenism, and devil worship meant that she carried what she called “an uncomfortable attitude with me into

³⁶ Ruby Gubatayao was raised in an Italian Catholic orphanage in Seattle.

³⁷ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 11 July 2008.

³⁸ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 11 July 2008. For context on Indigenous activism in Seattle in this period see Thrush, *Native Seattle*, Chapter 9.

my journey into ceremonies and traditional ways of our people.”³⁹ It was through becoming a Baha’i in 1981 that Gubatayao-Hagen reconciled this rift and what she described as “a huge conflict between being Catholic and being Native.”⁴⁰ As she recalled, invoking Abdu’l-Baha’s message about Indigenous peoples, as well as the evolutionary teaching of progressive revelation:

when I became a Baha’i and then I learned about this vision of Native peoples by Abdu’l-Baha, it’s like this huge crack in my spiritual beliefs and attitudes were transformed and I could walk the path of loving Christ and accepting his teachings and know that it was all one with the ceremonies of our people.⁴¹

The Baha’i Faith, Gubatayao-Hagen further elaborated, instilled in her a new level of understanding that allowed her to move in Indigenous contexts with greater confidence and comfort. She explained that as a teenager, she was scared, “always worried about doing the wrong thing.”⁴² By contrast, she elaborated:

when you’re a Baha’i, when you’re following the example of Abdu’l-Baha, and you’re following the teachings of Baha’u’llah, there’s so much guidance on how to be in your heart, and to be a good person.⁴³ And more so than in Christianity, because there’s all these other layers to Christianity, you know? But through the teachings of Baha’u’llah you get that the core of religion and spirituality is to connect yourself to the heart, and connect your heart to the Creator, right? And through that you let everything go. So then, when you have this kind of confidence that comes from Baha’u’llah’s writings, like he says, “Yet noble have I created thee.” When you have your own sense of nobility, then when you go into a Native situation, any of those Native situations, because you understand the sacred and because you understand nobility, then you recognize where the nobility and the sacredness exist in traditional community. And letting you know how to walk that path with confidence.

³⁹ Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interview with the author, by telephone, 19 Aug 2008.

⁴⁰ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 19 Aug 2008.

⁴¹ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 19 Aug 2008.

⁴² Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 11 July 2008. Her reflections here are strongly reminiscent of the sociologist Eva Marie Garroutte’s discussion of Cheyenne-Arapahoe playwright Christina West’s piece, *Inner Circles*, in which a character concludes that displaying ignorance “is like admitting that you don’t know who you are ... If you are Native, then you should know your customs and all the rules about your tribe.” Cited by Garroutte in *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 80.

⁴³ In Baha’i theology, Abdu’l-Baha occupies the station of “the Perfect Exemplar,” a position bestowed upon him by Baha’u’llah.

Because, yeah, you're going to make mistakes and faux pas, right? But if you have pure motives, and you're striving for nobility and sacredness, you know, people overlook little indiscretions when purity is motive. And so, since I've become a Baha'i and I've been to more Native places, you know after I became a Baha'i, I was way more comfortable in all those places because I was in my heart, I could identify the sacred, and I could identify what brings dignity and nobility to myself and to another person. Then you kind of develop spiritual eyes and spiritual ears, and I think that's the key to comfortably walking in any Indigenous setting, is you have to develop spiritual eyes and spiritual ears.

This, Gubatayao-Hagen added in an expressive turn of phrase, is how “a little ghetto girl moves from being ghetto into a traditional circle. And it really is about really becoming in touch with your heart.”⁴⁴

Gubatayao-Hagen's move into this circle came by way of her Baha'i observance and pioneering activity. Not long after declaring as a Baha'i in San Jose, California, where she was then living, Gubatayao-Hagen and her young family pioneered to the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho and, subsequently, to Southeast Alaska. As she explained, “my path to getting to be a more Alaska Native woman was to first move to the Nez Perce Reservation and work with Lower 48 Indians and really becoming familiar with Indigenous ways of knowing, through Lower 48 Indians, and then when I moved up here among my own people.”⁴⁵ In Alaska, Gubatayao-Hagen has participated in many of the cultural practices she described being disconnected from in her youth:

You know, up here I've become much more involved in my culture, and in fact a couple years ago, I learned how to start speaking Tsimshian, and learned my first Baha'i prayer in Tsimshian, and my daughter and I have been able to take traditional weaving classes together up here.⁴⁶ I was able to learn the dances and to sing in my grandmother's

⁴⁴ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 11 July 2008.

⁴⁵ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 11 July 2008. Scott Tyler, son of narrator Klara Tyler, similarly described connecting with Indigenous cultural practice, including the sweat lodge, while living on the Nez Perce Reservation, where his family pioneered during his teenage years. Scott Tyler, interview with the author, Bellevue, Washington, 28 July 2008.

⁴⁶ Shoghi Effendi strongly urged the translation of Baha'i prayer into Indigenous languages and closely tracked the progress of this project throughout his ministry. As the anthropologist Charles Carnegie observes, Baha'is share in an established religious tradition “concerning the generative quality of sacred texts,” but “diverge from it by endorsing fully the notion that divine truth is translatable into any language.” Charles V. Carnegie, *Postnationalism Prefigured: Caribbean Borderlands* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 196.

longhouse, you know? By the path of becoming and following my life as a Baha'i. That was incredible. I mean, of all my brothers and sisters, three of us became Baha'i and three of us didn't. And this faith has taken me and my brother back to our grandmother's homeland. My brother works for the tribe in Ketchikan, you know, and I've been working for the tribe here in Juneau, and becoming part of Tlingit and Tsimshian community. And I really attribute this homecoming, and being able to come home to my grandmother, was made possible by Baha'u'llah.⁴⁷

Values of respect and hospitality instilled by her grandmother, Gubatayao-Hagen stressed, eased this homecoming. Her return to Alaska has not been without tension, however. The Baha'i Faith in general is a contested presence in some Indigenous communities in the state, particularly those with strong evangelical Christian populations.⁴⁸ And racism within the Baha'i community, a subject I take up more closely in the next chapter, has recently served as a source of great pain to Gubatayao-Hagen and her family. Still, she shared that, "for myself, as a person who grew up away from tradition, away from ceremony, grew up with Catholicism and some of its 'my way or the highway' attitude, have really found a lot of peace and healing in this revelation of Baha'u'llah."⁴⁹

She was not alone in connecting with culture through explicitly Baha'i activity. Where Gubatayao-Hagen came into the religion with a clear sense of Indigenous identity, however, for others like Jane Grover it was through Baha'i practice itself that they first came to cultivate and claim such affiliation. Grover, who is a generation older than Gubatayao-Hagen, was born in 1939 in Albany, New York. Raised in New Hampshire, she always knew that her mother had

⁴⁷ Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 11 July 2008.

⁴⁸ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 19 Aug 2008. Gubatayao-Hagen qualified a statement she made about "hesitancy" towards the Baha'i Faith on the part of Indigenous people by adding: "Just like there is in the world. I don't think that it's any more, you know. I think there's more receptivity among Native people than non-Native people just because Native people know the duality of Christian values always being in conflict with Native values. Not Christian, but Western I think more." On resistance from Pentecostals, in particular, see Kirk Dombrowski, *Against Culture: Development, Politics, and Religion in Indian Alaska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 166-168 who relates a story of strong opposition in a Southeastern Alaskan village to a Baha'i-sponsored alcohol healing program (quite possibly one offered by the Four Worlds Development Institute, or one of its later incarnations, discussed above).

⁴⁹ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 19 Aug 2008.

Abenaki (Pennacook, the family later learned) heritage, but explained that she and her siblings “really didn’t know, growing up, a lot about our culture.” Her mother committed suicide when

Grover was a young girl. After this, she shared:

Dad always made sure we stayed in touch with my grandparents, my mother’s family, and we spent periods of time with them during school vacations and so on and we always knew that we had Indian heritage. But nothing much was made of it and it wasn’t until I came to learn more about the Abenaki culture and things as an older person that I realized that much, you know, that there were things that happened in the household that were related to my grandfather’s heritage. You know, there’s gathering herbs and I remember my sister and I used to always arrange to get a tummy ache when we were there ‘cause we liked the checkerberry tea that grandpa would make for us. So he would gather those berries and leaves in the woods and serve those to us if we had tummy aches.⁵⁰

The disconnect that Grover described was the product of a long history and climate of Indian erasure in New England.⁵¹ Where Allison Healy “passed” as Chinese in Alberta (see Chapter 3), Grover described how many in the region where she was raised, where light skin and “mixed blood” were common, either hid their heritage outright or, often, “passed” as Italian.⁵² Grover herself recalled being denied her Indianness in the classroom as a child and explained that she did not know until her adult years that her Abenaki heritage “belonged to me to claim.” Residual issues from her mother’s death further meant that, “for a while I wanted nothing to do with the culture at all.” “And if I heard drumming or singing,” Grover elaborated with a laugh, “I would go away. Get out of there.”⁵³

This aversion initially extended to Indigenous cultural expression within the Baha’i Faith. As Grover recalled, “some of the Indian Baha’is would come to events and they maybe want to share, you know, Buffy Sainte-Marie did a wonderful piece, that [singing] “Oh God, my God,

⁵⁰ Jane Grover, interview with the author, McMinnville, Oregon, 22 June 2008.

⁵¹ See Jean M. O’Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650-1790* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

⁵² Grover, interview.

⁵³ Grover, interview.

my beloved, my heart's desire," that she had written and people were singing and oh, I didn't want to hear that, didn't want to be around that."⁵⁴ Like Donald Addison, Grover did not widely identify herself as Indigenous to other Baha'is upon first joining the community in 1965. She noted that, "early on I felt uncomfortable about mentioning, back east, that I was of Native background. Because people had discounted that, some of the Baha'is had discounted that in the past." She recalled, however, that as she began meeting more Indigenous Baha'is, "I didn't really identify myself to them at that time, but they recognized my heritage in me." One Abenaki Baha'i was especially encouraging, telling Grover "to really pursue it if I was interested and that I would be welcomed and accepted by people and so on. So he was a part of my drawing closer to the culture." Grover began taking part in powwows on the East Coast with her family; she was also given an "Indian name," which translates into English as Sparkling Eyes or She Whose Eyes Shine, by a Penobscot friend named Running Water who she met at a powwow at the University of New Hampshire.⁵⁵ Grover described being struck by the level of comfort that she felt in the context of culture: "as soon as I started going to events, powwows and talking circles and sweat lodges and so on, I immediately felt as if I'd been doing it all my life. That was a very interesting thing to me." "And I appreciated so much," Grover added, "the fact that as a Baha'i I was not discouraged from participating in ceremonies and so on."⁵⁶

Indicating how culture could open narrators to other markers and avenues of Indigenous identification as well, Grover also came to pursue tribal enrollment, an act she again connected to Baha'i community and practice.⁵⁷ Grover was encouraged to apply for enrollment by a

⁵⁴ Grover, interview. On Buffy Sainte-Marie as a "friend of the Faith" see Chapter 5 (fn 90).

⁵⁵ This was particularly resonant and meaningful for Grover as her mother used to call her a variation of this name, her "shiny-eyed girl," before she died.

⁵⁶ Grover, interview.

⁵⁷ On major markers of Indigenous identity – culture, law, blood, and self-identification – see Garrouette, *Real Indians*.

medicine man from Connecticut, who she met at a Baha'i gathering and who informed her of Abenaki pursuit of state and federal recognition. Though she decided to investigate her genealogy and submit an application, Grover recalled not being especially hopeful as the same friend who had encouraged her to embrace her Abenaki heritage, someone she described as having been "involved in the culture since he was quite young," had applied and was denied membership. She described it as somewhat a surprise, then, when one day, "this innocent little white envelope arrived" containing her tribal enrollment card. Grover characterized this as "just really thrilling," and healing:

I think that once I got my tribal enrolment and was given an Indian name, that it had a huge healing effect on me in relation to the issues around my mother's suicide and other things that I was struggling with at that time. So I think that we have to come to terms with who we are.⁵⁸

Grover spoke to this process further in discussing time she and her husband, Dick, spent at the Green Acre Baha'i School in Maine, recalling:

there were a number of times when Indian people from Maine came to Green Acre and shared and we had programs they were invited to and honoured and so on so that began to enter my life in that way, connecting the Baha'i Faith with the cultural background of the New Hampshire and Maine tribes and so on. And I suppose it eventually grew on me that it might be important, you know, for the healing of my ancestors for me to get connected back with my heritage in relation to being a Baha'i. I think that was one of the real motivations for me behind going to see my grandfather's cousin and doing all the legwork to get enrolled.⁵⁹

Similar to Gubatayao-Hagen, who tied her intercultural heritage to the Baha'i Faith and her Alaskan homecoming to her grandmother, Grover linked her growing Abenaki affiliation to family. She continued:

⁵⁸ Grover, interview. Not all narrators had or pursued tribal and other forms of enrollment. Nedra Greenaway, for example, explained that she has never felt compelled to apply for Métis membership or Indian status despite having received prompts to do so. Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 15 Aug 2008.

⁵⁹ Grover, interview.

Like I thought I owed that to my great-grandmother somehow. She had fifteen children who all lived. And she raised them all and there are lots of stories about her and how she did that and what she did, but marrying an Englishman, I get a sense maybe he wasn't always very nice to her and that her life was very hard and so I just like to think that my being connected with the Baha'i Faith and bringing the Abenaki Nation under that banner somehow for my own involvement, it's kind of a tribute to her maybe.⁶⁰

Healing, in this case, was not just individual, but shared with ancestors and ancestry.⁶¹

Like many others, Grover engaged simultaneous processes of tribally-specific and intertribal identification. While she developed strengthened Abenaki affiliation through her Baha'i adherence, she also cultivated and expressed in her interview with me a sense of what she called "intertribal citizenship."⁶² This, she posited, probably had to do with "being more of an urban Indian, never growing up on a reservation." Where Grover might have chosen to activate her culture through connection with local land-based practices such as the collection of herbs, berries, and leaves for the checkerberry tea she recalled from her childhood, she instead elected to focus her cultural activity within a largely intertribal realm. Grover and her husband moved as Baha'i pioneers to the West Coast (first to British Columbia, then Oregon) in the 1990s and much of the Indigenous cultural activity such as talking circles and sweat lodges that Grover described taking part in there was in the company of other Baha'is (including narrators Robert George and J.C. Lucas) as well.⁶³

⁶⁰ Grover, interview.

⁶¹ This is a formulation that dovetails with Indigenous and Baha'i perspectives alike: where many Indigenous cultures consider ancestors to be active spiritual agents, Baha'is believe in a "Supreme Concourse," the "gathering of the Prophets and holy souls in the next world or spiritual realm," and pray for the spiritual progress of "the departed." Wendi Momen, ed. *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 1989), 216, 65-66.

⁶² Renya Ramirez urges attention to urban and vernacular expressions of Indigenous citizenship in *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 14-15.

⁶³ Grover, interview. Jane and her husband, Dick, worked at Maxwell International Baha'i School (with the Bighorns) on Vancouver Island from 1992-1997, when they moved to McMinnville, Oregon where they still reside. They also pioneered to India, where Grover worked at the New Era Baha'i School in Panchgani, with their two children from 1972-1977.

While conversion to culture was a deeply personal process, narrators also tied it to collective Baha'i aims. Linda Covey, for example, described connecting with culture, and developing a strengthened sense of Indigenous identity, directly by way of Baha'i service and outreach. Like Grover, Covey, who declared as a Baha'i in 1970 at the age of twenty-four, did not become active in culture immediately upon becoming a Baha'i. It was a decade later, after she had divorced and her children were grown, that Covey began attending powwows in her hometown of Marshfield, Missouri. Prompted by Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy and a Baha'i system of Regional American Indian Teaching Committees then in place, Covey began hosting a Baha'i booth at the annual powwow in Marshfield. There, she screened videos (including a film about Kevin Locke and a movie about the Baha'i martyr, Mona Mahmudnizhad, that was so influential to Jacob Bighorn's declaration), distributed Baha'i literature, and spoke with those interested. "So I saw that," Covey recalled, "as an opportunity to teach the Faith in that context. I did not have a Baha'i booth, for instance, at the county fair, or at other things, you know, it was there at the Native American powwow." It was at the powwow that Covey received what she described as her "first exposure on a consistent basis, to Native American culture." "That was where I was taken out into the arena," she explained, "for the first time and danced with a shawl, and things like that. That's when it really began to grow." Another significant nudge (what Covey described as "a catalyst, a jumping board") came around 1990 when an Iranian Baha'i friend asked her, "Would you devote your life to Indian teaching?" Covey told him, "No, I don't want to do that." Recalling her family history of Indianness hidden and denied (see Chapter 3), she explained, "It was too painful for me. You know? 'I don't want to do that.'"⁶⁴ Invoking the common intertribal metaphor of the "red road," however, she continued, "once your feet is put on the red road, you go along for the ride. You know, once I was put on that path, there really wasn't any getting off

⁶⁴ Linda Covey, interview with the author, Evanston, Illinois, 10 June 2008.

of it or turning back. Things just kept progressing and progressing and happening.”⁶⁵ In 1993, a sacred pipe was passed to Covey. Three years later, she came under the tutelage of a group of Northern Cheyenne Elders and, through their mentorship and training, learned Plains culture and ceremony. Through volunteer work in corrections, one of several fields of Indigenous Baha’i service in which she has participated, Covey herself came to be called an Elder.⁶⁶

Covey recalled a period of intense pain and emotional unrest that she faced in the period after the pipe was passed to her and noted that it took a number of years of spiritual investigation and growth before this pain “began to dissipate and go away, and I began to find myself, because I really questioned my own identity for a long time, my own heritage.”⁶⁷ Covey spoke directly to the contested nature of Indianness in our interview together and underscored how the fractious politics of belonging informed, and for a long time circumscribed, her own search and sense of self. She explained, for example, that “for a long, long time,” she carried a lot of guilt about her identity as a “mixed blood” person:

But I had to really go back and look and said, “Look, it’s not my fault.” My grandmother is on the rolls in Oklahoma. She’s on the Dawes Rolls in Oklahoma. She was given land in Oklahoma, even though she didn’t take it. And so the history is all there. The grandmother, and the great-grandmother, and the great-grandmother in Cherokee County, Alabama, and so on and so forth. And, it’s not fair to make a person toss away that part of their heritage, just because, perhaps a segment of the larger society may not want to acknowledge that.⁶⁸

Covey elsewhere acknowledged, too, the divisive nature of Indianness among Indigenous people, noting that there are also “a lot of full bloods who zealously guard their Indianness against

⁶⁵ Dennis Kelley explains that “The overt reference [in the ‘red road’ metaphor] is to the southern direction in Black Elk’s vision, which the Lakota people are said to be traveling when they live in balance, peace, and harmony with the creation. With the emphasis of Plains imagery and ideologies in the development of pan-Indian concepts, the Red Road has come to mean a balanced and harmonious journey by all Indian people who adhere to it.” Kelley, “Alcohol Abuse Recovery and Prevention as Spiritual Practice,” 83.

⁶⁶ Covey, interview.

⁶⁷ Covey, interview. A chance meeting with Patricia Locke, mother of narrator Kevin Locke, at the Baha’i National Convention in 1994 contributed to this “growth process,” as Covey described it.

⁶⁸ Covey, interview. See Chapter 2 for discussion of the Dawes Rolls.

wannabes, people who claim to be.” Although she did not use the term colonialism, Covey described it when she pointed, too, to the fact that “here in the United States, and probably in Canada too, you have to have a card by the government – which is the conquering government of an oppressed people – that proves who you are.”⁶⁹ She continued her discussion above:

And so I had to work through all of that, come to grips with all of it, sort it out, think it through, accept it, and feel comfortable in my own skin. And it’s amazing, because this journey really started when I was born, you know? Because I grew up with that loss, and so to me, personally, to me, it’s not like saying, “Oh, well, I had a great-grandmother that was Indian, that had some Indian.”⁷⁰

Echoing other narrators, Covey explained, “I’ve found that it is so important to know who one is, and to claim one’s heritage.”⁷¹ As it did for Grover, this process, which was prompted and supported by her practice of the Baha’i Faith, helped Covey make sense of her family. While Covey’s cultural practice has focused primarily on Plains ceremony, she has also studied aspects of Cherokee culture and made connections with familial attitudes and expressions. As she shared with a laugh, “You know, it’s like once I understood my heritage, I understood my mother. She was a little old Indian woman who didn’t know she was a little old Indian woman. You know, because it wasn’t acceptable.” “And it really just healed my childhood,” Covey added elsewhere. “It healed the hurt that happened with my father and losing that side of the family over what I call the ‘Indian question’ and all that.”⁷²

Culture, then, could be a bridge to Indigenous identification more broadly. And the Baha’i Faith operated as a bridge to both. Some narrators connected with Indigenous cultural practice through the explicit contexts of Baha’i community and outreach. Others did so through related channels such as treatment and recovery. Indeed, Baha’i conversion to culture occurred in

⁶⁹ Covey, interview.

⁷⁰ Covey, interview.

⁷¹ Covey, interview. Donald Addison offered similar reflections on this process and how it helped resolve colonial articulations and exclusions of Indianness in his interview with me.

⁷² Covey, interview.

a broad context of Indigenous cultural renewal and the oral histories examined here demonstrate the deployment of a revivalist idiom of culture that stressed Indigenous practices, from intertribal powwows and pipe ceremonies to tribal language, song, and dance. Connection with culture, further, brought Baha'is into a variety of Indigenous communities. And Indigenous Baha'is, those newly converted to culture and not, also negotiated the place of Indigenous cultural practice within the contours of the Baha'i Faith itself.

Cultural Combination

As a religion explicitly framed as modern and rational, which called for the “preservation” of cultural diversity towards the goal of global unity, the Baha'i Faith is an especially rich site for probing processes and politics of religious combination. In her own recent religious studies thesis on Diné Baha'i declaration and practice, Linda Covey eschews what she calls Catherine Albanese's “combinative religions model,” arguing that “Close and objective observation shows that traditional and new remain independent of each other, while at the same time paralleling each other.”⁷³ Her reading of Albanese is rather rigid, however. Though Covey acknowledges the historical context in which the Baha'i Faith was born, and adds that “Diné traditional customs and Bahá'í religiosity obviously share an intermingling and overlapping of certain features,” she takes “combinative religion” to mean, quite literally, the creation of a new faith.⁷⁴ Indigenous

⁷³ The full sentence reads: “Close and objective observation shows that traditional and new remain independent of each other, while at the same time paralleling each other, as in Alfred Kahn, Jr.'s statement that he sees the Bahá'í Faith as ‘a continuation of Navajo belief,’ much as Christians consider Christianity a continuation of Judaism.” Covey, “Diné Becoming Bahá'í,” 143. Catherine Albanese, “Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls: Contact, Combination, and American Religious History,” in Thomas Tweed, ed., *Retelling U.S. Religious History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 200-226.

⁷⁴ Covey, “Diné Becoming Bahá'í,” 145. Covey elaborates on the issue of “intermingling” and “overlapping” elements with the example of a “Diné Prayer Hogan” located on the grounds of the Native American Baha'i Institute (NABI) on the Navajo Reservation. This structure (the inside walls of which are heavy hung with Baha'i imagery including prayers and the “Greatest Name” written in Arabic calligraphy), she argues, “is not considered a hybrid Diné-Bahá'í Prayer Hogan”; “although Bahá'is built it and pray within it,” she adds, “the Prayer Hogan remains uniquely Diné without producing a schism or division either within the religion or within Diné traditional customs.” Covey's assessment, however, is more theological than applied and something like the hogan at NABI can indeed be

Baha'i histories, including Covey's own and those of the Diné Baha'is whom she studies, by contrast, reveal multiple, often explicit, examples of what Albanese describes as "a natural cultural process that occurs whenever and wherever contact comes," a process through which religions (and their adherents) "let go and add on," "lose," "gain," and "exchange."⁷⁵ A 1998 statement from the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice outlined the official Baha'i stance on such exchange when it detailed:

Bahá'ís are encouraged to preserve their inherited cultural identities and practices, so long as the activities involved do not contravene the principles of the Faith. Two extremes are to be avoided: needless disassociation from harmless cultural observances and continued practice of abrogated observances of previous dispensations which will undermine the independence of the Bahá'í Faith. A distinctively Bahá'í culture will welcome an infinite diversity in regard to secondary characteristics, but also firmly uphold unity in relation to fundamental principles.⁷⁶

Just what constituted "harmless" versus "abrogated" observances, "secondary characteristics" versus "fundamental principles," were questions that Indigenous Baha'is themselves actively contemplated, both in historical time and their interviews with me. And they were, further, issues that were worked out in historical practice through interactions with other Baha'is.

Given how strongly discourses of superstition figured in Christian missionary contexts in colonial North America, I anticipated that Baha'i proscriptions against superstition, which warn against "idle fancies" and "vain imaginings" contrary to rational religion, would emerge as a subject of discussion in my interviews.⁷⁷ Interestingly, this was not something that many

considered combinatory in the sense that it directly brings together both Diné and Baha'i elements and influences. Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í," 145-146.

⁷⁵ Albanese, "Exchanging Selves, Exchanging Souls," 225.

⁷⁶ This statement appears as part of an introduction to a series of excerpts from writings by the Universal House of Justice on the subject of "Fostering Cultural Diversity," included in the larger compilation Universal House of Justice, *Aspects of Traditional African Culture*, 3. This compilation includes excerpts from a number of letters relating to Indigenous peoples and issues in North America, suggesting global Baha'i connection and conversation on these issues.

⁷⁷ Christian missionaries of diverse stripes deemed Indigenous spirituality a form of debased superstition in need of rooting out. The nineteenth-century Anglican Bishop of Caledonia, the Reverend George Hills, for example, aimed to "cleanse the Indians from the awful superstitions in which they were ... sunk." Cited in Robin Fisher, "Missions to

narrators themselves raised, suggesting that it was not a particular point of tension or connection for them. Linda Covey, for her part, did broach the subject in a discussion of intercultural tension within the Baha'i community. Speaking to the "jaundiced eye" through which non-Indigenous Baha'is not familiar with Indigenous cultural practices sometimes perceive them, Covey shared:

On one hand they have a right to do that, a good reason to do that, because Abdu'l-Baha and Baha'u'llah clearly talk about elimination of superstitions, you know? One of my lines that I've talked to myself over and over about for years is being watchful of vain imaginings, idle fancies and vain imaginings. So you have to distinguish out what is your idle fancies and vain imaginings. What is superstition?

Indigenous cultural practices such as pipe and sweat lodge ceremonies, she stressed, do not fall under this rubric.⁷⁸ Similarly, when I asked Mary Gubatayao-Hagen about the Baha'i teachings on superstition, she recalled, "I really worried about it when I first became a Baha'i. You know, about superstition and Native people and all these things right." "But," she added, "that's Western thinking again. And what the Western world has defined as superstition."⁷⁹ Gubatayao-Hagen noted that in Baha'u'llah's Tablet of Ahmad, "it says in there, 'superstitions have been veiled between them and their own hearts and kept them from the path of God.' So superstitions get between you and keep you from the path of God and so that's really changed my view of what superstitions are."⁸⁰ Like Covey, Gubatayao-Hagen did not subsume Indigenous culture under a savage or static rubric of superstition. Instead, she continued to revise her own

the Indians of British Columbia," in Peter Ward and Robert A.J. MacDonald, eds. *British Columbia: Historical Readings* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1981), 120-121 (emphasis in Fisher). On Baha'i proscriptions against superstition see, for example, Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), 57, 70, 104, accessed online 20 May 13, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/TB/>; 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by Abdu'l-Baha During his Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), 107, 455, accessed online 20 May 13, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/ab/PUP/>.

⁷⁸ Covey, interview.

⁷⁹ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 19 Aug 2008.

⁸⁰ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 19 Aug 2008. The Tablet of Ahmad is accessible online via the Bahá'í Reference Library: Bahá'u'lláh, "Tablet of Ahmad," in Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Wilmette, IL: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), 209-213.

interpretation of the latter, even in the context of our interview. As she shared, for example, in a discussion of cultural change:

And I think that superstition, I think maybe I'm just coming to decide on it as I'm talking to you, I think superstition is clinging to some knowledge, some belief that you had that doesn't make sense anymore, you know? Like if you find out something new and it's better and it's not harmful and you can do it and you reject it just because it's new, that seems like what superstition is about. So then racism is a superstition because you cling to this false idea that you have the right to have an attitude towards someone else based on the colour of their skin or the way they think, you know? That's what a superstition is.⁸¹

Nedra Greenaway echoed this characterization of racism as a superstition. She also spoke, further, about belief in “bad” or “evil spirits” as superstition, something Jane Grover similarly reflected on in relation to the subject of “bad medicine.”⁸² As Grover shared during a discussion of superstition:

I'm on the board of a group called Wisdom of the Elders that was founded by a Lakota medicine man and his wife and she was a Baha'i and is Athabaskan from Alaska, but took up the Lakota way for her spiritual practice and medicine men know a lot of shamanistic practices that are not part of ordinary reality and if they're not really ethical people, they will sometimes use that against one another if they get jealous of each other's medicine ways or following or whatever and even my Baha'i friend, who is married to this man, believes that people can hit you with bad medicine and make you sick. And I don't believe that and I think maybe if I had gotten more into my culture or grown up in it before becoming a Baha'i I might have had to wrestle with that but for me I'm very comfortable with extraordinary reality and I also believe that we're protected from ... I don't believe in evil as a Baha'i. Evil is absence of good according to the Baha'i Faith and so I don't believe that the Creator would give people those powers.⁸³

I did not speak with all narrators about “shamanistic practices,” as Grover put it, and it is indeed possible that there are some who wrestled to reconcile such practice with their Baha'i

⁸¹ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 19 Aug 2008.

⁸² Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 12 March 2008. Greenaway spoke about “bad” and “evil spirits,” in part, in relation to Inuit shamanism, something I return to in Chapter 8 in a discussion of Greenaway's pioneering in the Arctic.

⁸³ Grover, interview. On the Baha'i teachings on evil and evil spirits see Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, 513-514, 521-523. Joyce Shales similarly invoked the subjects of evil and fear in response to a question I posed about superstition: interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 30 July 2008.

observance.⁸⁴ Alternatively, there may well be other Indigenous Baha'is (like the friend Grover mentioned) who maintained such practice and belief and did not consider it superstitious or contradictory to the Baha'i teachings.

None of those who I interviewed described being explicitly accused of superstition by other Baha'is, though a number hinted at sentiments of suspicion, fear, and dismissal that they encountered among non-Indigenous adherents.⁸⁵ Lee Brown, for example, who was among the most forthcoming on intercultural tensions that he confronted within the Baha'i community, recalled the profound surprise and disappointment he felt following the first Nineteen Day Feast (a gathering held on the first day of each Baha'i month) that he attended after becoming a Baha'i in Seattle.⁸⁶ He described being approached by an elderly White woman who told him, ““Now that you're a Baha'i, I hope you quit that Indian singing nonsense. It's time to let that go and just be a Baha'i now.”” Brown further detailed his reaction: “I thought, ‘What?’ I thought the whole thing about the Baha'i Faith was unity in diversity and that our diversity was good and I'd sang at Baha'i gatherings and people had said, ‘Oh, that's cool.’ And now it was controversial.”⁸⁷ As other scholars have observed, and narrators Phil Lane Jr. and Deloria Bighorn also noted, there was a particular moment of pushback against such diversity in this period, the 1970s, as significantly more youth and people of colour came into the North American Baha'i

⁸⁴ For an evocative example of active negotiation, on the part of Diné Baha'i Alfred Kahn, in relation to superstition and Diné ideas about “ghost sickness” see Covey, “Diné Becoming Bahá'í,” 162.

⁸⁵ For example, Addison, interview; Deloria Bighorn, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 20 March 2008; Covey, interview; Grover, interview; Shales, interview.

⁸⁶ Shoghi Effendi deemed the Nineteen Day Feast the “foundation of the new World Order” and Brown described it in his second of two interviews with me as “the fundamental participatory reality for everyday Baha'i life.” Shoghi Effendi, cited in McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 87; Lee Brown, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 28 Oct 2008.

⁸⁷ Brown, interview, 21 March 2008. The flip (also problematic) side of this attitude, Brown noted, were non-Indigenous Baha'is who “went Native” (my term, not his).

community.⁸⁸ Tensions were not isolated to this time, however. Another narrator reported a more recent incident of outright surveillance: the morning after a gathering in this person's home, at which an Indigenous Baha'i friend drummed and sang, this individual received a telephone call from a local Auxiliary Board Member questioning this activity.⁸⁹ The anthropologist Carolyn Sawin, further, reports tensions in the Yukon, where non-Indigenous Baha'is regularly dismissed Indigenous cultural practice as entertainment, not worship.⁹⁰ Similarly, writings from the Universal House of Justice that spoke of the incorporation of "colourful characteristics of particular peoples and tribes" and which distinguished "festive and cultural events" from "religious ceremonies and rituals" may have primed Baha'is to overlook the spiritual orientation of Indigenous cultures that did and do not strictly parse the sacred and the profane.⁹¹

The same community context and composition that produced pushback towards Indigenous cultural practices like drumming and singing also contributed to a normative baseline of Baha'i practice that some narrators described as alienating. Baha'i writings on ritual caution against just this sort of baseline. Not unlike writings on superstition, which eschew empty, fear-based, repetitious form, writings on ritual urge Baha'is to avoid establishing "rigid rituals" in order that local Baha'i expression can flourish.⁹² As scholar and former Baha'i Linda Walbridge has observed, however, Baha'is have frequently anchored their focus and anxiety on the rigidity

⁸⁸ William Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America* (London: Praeger, 2005), 137-139; Juan R.I. Cole, "The Baha'i Faith in America as Panopticon, 1963-1997," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no.2 (1998): 234-248; Deloria Bighorn, interview; Phil Lane Jr., interview with the author, Whiterock, British Columbia, 3 Jan 2009.

⁸⁹ Interview. Baha'i Auxiliary Board Members (who are appointed by Continental Counsellors, who themselves report to the International Counsellors, themselves members of the International Teaching Centre at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa) belong to one of two branches: the Board for Protection or the Board for Propagation. This narrator did not specify which board the member in question belonged to, but based on the inquiry, it was most likely the former. Historian Juan R.I. Cole has argued that surveillance was a common practice on the part of the Baha'i administration in the United States. I suspect that the telephone call described above is not an entirely isolated incident, but do not have sufficient evidence to more fully evaluate Cole's (somewhat unsubstantiated) claim. Cole, "The Baha'i Faith in America as Panopticon."

⁹⁰ Sawin, "Native Conversion, Native Identity," 82-83, 117-120, 169-170, 179.

⁹¹ For example, Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 26 March 1982, cited in Universal House of Justice, *Aspects of Traditional African Cultures*, 10.

⁹² See, for example, Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, 477-478; McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 7-8, 76-77.

piece of the equation in a way that has militated against flexibility in Baha'i observance. At the same time, Baha'is have often failed to recognize how practices that have hardened into established form are themselves a kind of ritual, and a rigid one at that.⁹³ The format of the Nineteen Day Feast, for example, has changed over time but since Shoghi Effendi's ministry has consisted of three components: devotions, administration, and socialization.⁹⁴ Though Shoghi Effendi himself, and the Universal House of Justice after him, encouraged flexibility within this structure, a 1976 editorial in *Bahá'í Canada* captured a common established pattern: "A Feast," the author outlined in critique, "can only be a Feast if five or six prayers are followed by a 'consultation' which is followed by tea and cookies. In spite of the warnings which Shoghi Effendi wrote to us, we keep falling into the groove of conformity."⁹⁵ Lee Brown spoke to such conformity in the context of the devotional component of the Feast and what he personally has often experienced as a rushed period of prayer. "That's one thing that's happened to me many times," he explained:

including here in Vancouver, is you go to the Feast and you have the spiritual part, it's about fifteen minutes long, and three or four people stand up and say prayers, and then sometimes they say, "Well, if anybody wants to say a prayer, go ahead." Well, by the time I'm in a spiritual space, it's over.⁹⁶

Brown described being further turned off by what he called "church kind of energies" at the Feast. Speaking in contemporary context, he shared:

I think right now the Feast, you know, in British Columbia for the most part is a very Christian-based Feast, it follows church kind of energies, it has a kind of a church format to it and a church feeling to it sometimes. I think many White Christians who've become Baha'is want that, they wanna feel like it's for real and Christianity is for real. So, they

⁹³ Linda Walbridge, "Rituals: An American Bahá'í Dilemma," *Bahá'í Studies Review* 5, no.1 (1995): no page numbers. Accessed online 19 May 13, http://bahai-library.com/walbridge_rituals_american_dilemma.

⁹⁴ McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 85-87; Universal House of Justice, Introductory Letter, 27 Aug 1989, in Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and Universal House of Justice, "Nineteen Day Feast," in *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 1*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Mona Vale, NSW: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991), 420.

⁹⁵ *Bahá'í Canada* no.297 (Nov 1976), 2.

⁹⁶ Brown, interview, 28 Oct 2008.

bring out, like in the Feast here in Vancouver sometimes they light candles, it's like a Catholic church in a way. And it's uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable.⁹⁷

Such cultural discomfort is something Brown and other Baha'is on the Okanagan Indian Reserve strove to address and ameliorate when they chose at one point during the 1980s to hold pipe ceremonies as the devotional component of their Feast. As Brown recalled:

for awhile we were having Feast on the Vernon reserve, 'cause we had enough Baha'is to have a Feast. And the Feast would often be at our house. And what we would do, and we decided to do, was a pipe ceremony. We'd do a pipe ceremony as our prayer section. We'd have the social section and then we'd have the business section [...] And sometimes Baha'is from in town would come and participate. And they would say, "Well, this is a pipe ceremony, it's not a Feast."

Articulating a sense of intertribal Baha'i affiliation, Brown continued:

And I would say, "Well, I heard that on the Navajo reservation, the Feast is all day long." And here in Vernon, we go into Feast in town, it's an hour long, that's it, bam, you go home. But we sat down as a community and said, "How do we want to do Feast? This is how we want to do it." And it's very clear in the writings that different people around the world, different places, will do the Feast differently. You know, we wanted to do it that way.⁹⁸

In 1989, the Universal House of Justice explicitly called for the Nineteen Day Feast to incorporate "a salutary diversity, representative of the unique characteristics of the various societies in which it is held and therefore conducive to the upliftment and enjoyment of its participants."⁹⁹ Baha'is in Vernon, however, Brown recalled, simply "couldn't get their minds around the fact that it was a Feast."¹⁰⁰

Pipe ceremony figured into discussions about the place of Indigenous cultural practice within Baha'i ritual space in other communities as well. In a 1994 letter written on its behalf to

⁹⁷ Brown, interview, 21 March 2008. Brown noted that he has consulted with other Indigenous Baha'is in the city who reported a similar sense of discomfort (leading them to seldom attend).

⁹⁸ Brown, interview, 21 March 2008.

⁹⁹ Universal House of Justice, Introductory Letter, 27 Aug 1989, in Bahá'u'lláh et al, "Nineteen Day Feast," 420. In his sociological study of Baha'is in Atlanta, Michael McMullen offers an example of such diversity when he describes the incorporation of "elements of the 'black church experience'" into the Feast in certain areas of the city. *The Bahá'í*, 92.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, interview, 28 Oct 2008.

“a National Spiritual Assembly” (presumably, based on the content of the letter, the Alaskan one), for example, the Universal House of Justice responded to an inquiry concerning the place of “ceremonies from other cultures” at Baha’i events and gatherings. Speaking, without actually identifying it as such, to a process of intertribal exchange occurring among Indigenous Baha’is and others in this period, the letter observed:

You mention that the popularity of the “Pipe Ceremony” is part of the revival of native cultural values. While seeking out the spiritual roots of their own tradition, it is natural for Alaskan natives to view sympathetically symbols of the spiritual roots that once sustained the indigenous peoples of North America. Such a desire for the rediscovery of one’s culture is one in which Bahá’is rejoice. In this context, it would be acceptable occasionally to hold such cultural ceremonies at Bahá’í national events and local gatherings, so long as their features are not contrary to Bahá’í Teachings and they do not become customary. Moreover, these ceremonies should not be carried out during the formal part of a Bahá’í event, such as during the consultation at a National Convention, or in connection with the reading of prayers and passages from the Writings during a feast or Holy Day programme. Rather, such ceremonies may be included as an adjunct to the programme, and participation in them should be on a voluntary basis.¹⁰¹

Anxiety over the institution of repetitive and compulsory ritual, coupled with an established Baha’i baseline onto which cultural practices like pipe ceremony could be appended, is again apparent here.

Pipe ceremony, further, was also a point of reflection concerning the place of Indigenous cultural practice within the future unfolding Baha’i Faith. Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, for example, who began serving on the Alaskan National Spiritual Assembly not long after the above letter was penned, recalled discussions about pipe ceremony in this period and invoked Shoghi Effendi’s wife, Ruhiiyyih Khanum, a frequent commentator on Indigenous issues, on the subject. “Ruhiiyyih Khanum,” Gubatayao-Hagen explained, “referred to the pipe ceremony as being like communion. And that communion isn’t going to become a part of the Baha’i Faith and pipe

¹⁰¹ Letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 16 Nov 1994, in Bahá’u’lláh, Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and Universal House of Justice, “Cultural Diversity in the Age of Maturity,” *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 3*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Mona Vale, NSW: Bahá’í Publications Australia, 2000), 130.

ceremony isn't going to become a part of the Baha'i Faith, so those aren't going to be universal things." The practice of pipe ceremony by those Baha'is who observe it, however, is still, in Gubatayao-Hagen's evaluation, entirely appropriate and acceptable.¹⁰² Lee Brown similarly spoke to this question of combination, explaining that "there are Native Baha'is that I've had long discussions with who think, 'Well, the pipe's gonna go by the wayside, it's not part of the Baha'i thing. It's a different revelation.'" "And my response to that," he elaborated, "is 'That might be true. Time will tell. But right now, it's important. It's important to me.' And so, I don't know what it's gonna look like, but I don't think it's going to look like what it is now simply because we have not learned how to respect and integrate each other's values in a way that everyone is comfortable with."¹⁰³

In addition to institutional discussions and exchanges between Indigenous Baha'is, the place of Indigenous cultural practice within the Faith was also negotiated in intercultural Baha'i interactions, which were sometimes fraught. Where Brown spoke in our two interviews together to instances of outright dismissal of Indigenous culture (being told to do away with singing) and the contested place of Indigenous cultural practice within Baha'i space (not recognizing pipe ceremony as legitimate Feast practice), he also shared stories of more subtle ignorance and insensitivity. Recalling a gathering on the Peigan Indian Reserve in southern Alberta in 1986, for example, he shared:

I was at a pipe ceremony on the Peigan Reserve in Alberta, at the Baha'i Centre on the Peigan Reserve, many years ago, and Phil Lane was doing the pipe ceremony during a gathering and there was quite a few Persian Baha'is there and others, non-Native Baha'is, who were not being respectful. Who were talking during the ceremony, and that night

¹⁰² Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 19 Aug 2008. Though Gubatayao-Hagen did not mention it, it is also likely that there was discussion over the place of a Plains-inspired intertribal practice like pipe ceremony in Alaska, site of its own "culture movement." See Dombrowski, "The Politics of Native Culture." Other narrators likewise invoked Ruhyyih Khanum in discussing the construction of Baha'i culture over time. For example, Deloria Bighorn, interview; Greenaway, 12 March 2008.

¹⁰³ Brown, interview, 21 March 2008.

Ruhiyyih Khanum, the wife of Shoghi Effendi, was there and she was upset by the disrespect. And she stood up and gave a little talk. And she told the non-Natives there, she pointed at the pipe and she said, “In North America, that’s it.” She said, “In North America, that’s it,” and she pointed at the pipe. “You guys have to respect that here. This is an important thing in North America.” She actually sent a letter to all the Persian Baha’is in the world, every Persian Baha’i in the world, saying, “Respect the pipe. When you’re present with the pipe, respect it.”¹⁰⁴

Ruhiyyih Khanum, who had visited the same area and been given a Blackfoot name nearly twenty-five years earlier and is remembered by many Baha’is, Indigenous and not, as both an ally and a relative, followed this up, in October, with a letter to the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly.¹⁰⁵ In this meditation on her journey to Canada earlier that year and the ongoing imperative, in view of Abdu’l-Baha’s prophecy, of outreach to Indigenous people, Ruhiyyih Khanum again chastised Iranian Baha’is for the disrespect they demonstrated towards the pipe ceremony at Peigan. Invoking her late husband, she also wrote in this letter, “I remember Shoghi Effendi telling the American pilgrims at the dinner table in the Western Pilgrim House that the American Bahá’is were tainted with race prejudice; he said ‘they do not think they are, but they are.’” “I think this holds true,” Ruhiyyih Khanum continued, “also of the whole situation vis-à-vis the Indians in North America.”¹⁰⁶ Indeed, as I examine in further depth in the next chapter, the issue of “race prejudice” bore on the construction of Baha’i community beyond the bounds of Indigenous cultural practice as well.

¹⁰⁴ Brown, interview, 21 March 2008. What Brown is likely remembering here is a letter Ruhiyyih Khanum sent to Canadian Baha’is on the subject (cited below). An article about this gathering, the opening of the Naat Owa ‘Pii (Sacred Things) Baha’i Centre in Brocket was published in an area newspaper: “Peigans Open Welcome Baha’i Centre,” *Lethbridge Herald* (21 July 1986), 3. Suggesting a shared sense of Indigenous Baha’i memory and identification, Donald Addison, who was not in attendance at this gathering, also mentioned it in his interview with me (though he put it among the Blackfeet in Montana, not the Blackfoot in Alberta). Addison, interview.

¹⁰⁵ Ruyihhiy Khanum was given the Blackfoot name “Natu-Okcist,” or “Blessed Mother,” during a visit to the Peigan Reserve in 1960. Amatu’l-Baha Ruhiyyih Khanum, *A Message to the Indian and Eskimo Bahá’is of the Western Hemisphere* (Toronto: Bahá’i Canada Publications, 1969). Fond reflections about Ruhiyyih Khanum include Philip Lane Jr., interview with the author, Whiterock, British Columbia, 3 Jan 2009; Linda Loft, interview with the author, Meades Creek, British Columbia, 16 Aug 2004; Allison Healy and Eleanora McDermott, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008.

¹⁰⁶ Rúhiyyih Khánum, Letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’is of Canada, 28 Oct 1986, Chelsea Horton Personal Collection. Thank you to Littlebrave Beaston for providing me with a copy of this letter.

While it was White Baha'is who set the dominant cultural tone of the Baha'i community in Canada and the United States, this exchange at Peigan underscores how Baha'i intercultural relations were not a straightforward Indigenous-White issue. There was an Iranian flavour and presence in the North American Baha'i community from the start, something that was significantly amplified with the arrival of relatively large numbers of Baha'i migrants in the wake of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This demographic shift sometimes produced new intercultural tension.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, several narrators also stressed in their interviews a strong sense of connection that they shared with Iranian Baha'is on the basis of common histories of oppression.¹⁰⁸ Further, it is quite possible that at least some of the Iranian Baha'is in attendance at the gathering at Peigan were new to Canada and would thus have had little, if any, prior exposure to Indigenous cultural practices such as pipe ceremony. Their very presence at a gathering on reserve signals a first step, however shaky, towards intercultural learning and exchange.¹⁰⁹

Phil Lane Jr. himself did not make specific mention of the 1986 gathering at Peigan in our interview together, but spoke emphatically concerning a lack of cultural sensitivity he encountered among Baha'is. He extended this discussion to time he spent pioneering in Bolivia during the early 1970s, recalling, for example, his disappointment at the close of a national gathering held in the central Bolivian city of Cochabamba:

¹⁰⁷ For example, Brown, interview, 21 March 2008; Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008; Joyce Shales, interview 30 July 2008.

¹⁰⁸ For example, Lucas, interview; Lorintha Umtuch, interview with the author, Toppenish, Washington, 21 June 2008; Greenaway, interview. A similar connection was drawn in the Indigenous Baha'i teaching pamphlet, *Circle of Unity*: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, *Circle of Unity*, Revised Edition (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), Will van den Hoonaard Personal Collection. Diné Baha'is likewise draw a parallel between the Navajo "Long Walk" and Baha'u'llah's series of forced migrations across the Middle East. Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í," 54. Graeme Were further notes a sense of solidarity shared by Nalik Baha'is in New Ireland and Iranian adherents. Were, "Thinking Through Images," 666.

¹⁰⁹ Beverley Knowlton, in reflecting on intercultural Baha'i interactions at the Peigan Centre, stressed the positive. She also described the deep sadness of Baha'is at Peigan and elsewhere when the band council reclaimed the Centre after Baha'is had restored the building. Knowlton, interview.

I remember the first time we went to the National Centre in Cochabamba, Bolivia. It was a big teaching centre there. And we had a convention, or some big major event and the Native Baha'is were there. And afterwards, people were so excited and I was so excited, there is a Baha'i song called Allah'u'Abha and usually it's sang [singing] Allah'u'Abha, Allah'u'Abha, Allah'u'Abha, Allah'u'Abha. But people were so excited, we started singing, Allah'u'Abha, Allah'u'Abha, Allah'u'Abha [singing in a different key and tempo], and people were, you know, jumping and singing and just full of joy. And I remember one of the Persians came out and was just, "Whoa, stop. You're not supposed to sing it like that."

Shifting from memory to contemporary context, Lane added, "So one of the things I would say if I had to counsel Baha'is, I would say, 'Be careful that you don't bring your own particular cultural interpretations in and colour the Faith in that way.'" Lane had the chance to return to Bolivia in the mid-1980s as a member of a southbound "Trail of Light" Indigenous Baha'i travel teaching team, but disappointment dogged this visit as well. As he shared:

I remember by that time I had been given a headdress, I took my headdress there and I went back with my pipe and things that I wanted to share, these cultural things, and I remember the Baha'is along with me, they were Native Baha'is too, they didn't think it was appropriate. And right at Sucre, I saw Meletone [a close friend Lane had made while pioneering there], they were even blaming me because Meletone was talking about the Quechuas and we should return to the culture and all that, when he saw me, you know. And it was really a painful thing to come back there. So that night, I was supposed to be there on the stage with all the Quechua, being on the stage in Sucre, seeing all my friends, I couldn't do it. I was just too hurt. I just made a decision to leave the thing. And I left. I went to Cochabamba and stayed a few days and came home. It was too bad. I just felt like I was just totally discouraged. Totally discouraged, because I felt like, still, even the Indians didn't understand. Some of the Indians didn't understand the importance of the cultural dimensions of things.¹¹⁰

Lane's reflections vividly confirm that was no single Indigenous Baha'i perspective on the place of Indigenous culture within the Baha'i Faith. Looking back, Lane acknowledged that:

people can get hung up on the extra ornaments. So at this point in time, you know, to each their own. It's not going to be just the cultural thing that's going to do it. But I think, certainly, you've got to be able to give people that understanding that they can bring that part of them.

¹¹⁰ Lane, interview. Tensions are also apparent in a trip report by team member, Lakota Baha'i Jacqueline Delahunt (now Left Hand Bull) published in *Bahá'í News* no.699 (July 1989), 4.

For Lane, such lack of understanding contributed to a sustained estrangement from Baha’i community.¹¹¹

There are others, too, who pulled back from active Baha’i practice on account of tension over the place of Indigenous culture within the Baha’i Faith. The clearest limit in negotiating this relationship was Baha’i law. But as debate over another intertribal practice – the peyote religion – reveals, this line was likewise slippery. A “small, spineless cactus” native to what is now northern Mexico and southwestern Texas, peyote has a long history as a healing herb among Indigenous people in the Southwest and Plains regions but is typically associated, in the twentieth century, with the Native American Church, an explicitly combinative faith that was officially incorporated in Oklahoma in 1918.¹¹² The Peyote religion, institutionalized in the Native American Church, spread across the United States and into Canada in subsequent decades and Baha’i concern about use of the psychoactive plant is evident in official communications from mid-century. In a 1963 letter to the American National Spiritual Assembly, the Universal House of Justice stressed that “Anyone involved in the use of peyote should be told that in the Bahá’í Faith spiritual stimulation comes from turning one’s heart to Bahá’u’lláh and not through any physical means. They should therefore be encouraged to give up the use of peyote.”¹¹³ As with the use of alcohol, the House of Justice urged a patient and understanding approach towards peyote users, but reiterated four years later in another letter to the American NSA that, “Bahá’is

¹¹¹ Lane, interview. In an interview published in a 2003 issue of the Baha’i periodical, *World Order*, the late Choctaw musician and filmmaker Phil Lucas observed, for his part, that “Lately, within the Bahá’í community, I have come not to expound upon my Native roots, culture, or cultural beliefs, as what I have to say usually flies in the face of the Bahá’í myth pool and is, therefore, either misconstrued or dismissed out of hand.” Robert Weinberg, “Spinning the Myth Pool: An Interview with Phil Lucas,” *World Order* 35, no.1 (2003), 19.

¹¹² Daniel C. Swan, “The Native American Church,” in Garrick A. Bailey, ed., *Handbook of North American Indians: Indians in Contemporary Society*, Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2008), 317-326 (quote from 317).

¹¹³ Letter from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 9 Nov 1963, in cited Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, 354. This source notes that the letter was reprinted in the May 1972 issue of *Alaska Bahá’í News*, indicating (similar to the case of pipe ceremony) wide interest and communication on these issues.

should not use hallucinogenic agents, including LSD, peyote and similar substances, except when prescribed for medical treatment.”¹¹⁴ This last was a significant qualifier that gestured, intentionally or not, towards the potential healing function of peyote and blurred any straightforward ban based on the Baha’i prohibition on drugs and alcohol. Lee Brown spoke to this issue in our second of two interviews together. Characterizing peyote as a “healing medicine,” one that has helped him considerably throughout his own life, Brown observed that, “people see it as a drug, so they associate it with alcohol and drug addiction, but actually it’s a source of sobriety, and walking a good path.”¹¹⁵

The healing properties of peyote were an ongoing subject of discussion within the Baha’i community, as indicated by another letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the American NSA. This 1994 message was composed in response to a request for guidance “with respect to the permissibility of a Bahá’í’s using peyote, under the direction of a Native American medicine man, and whether such a practitioner ‘could be considered under some circumstances or by some people a legitimate practising physician’, in which case, presumably, his prescription to use peyote would represent the kind of professional guidance the Guardian referred to as ‘the advice of a competent and conscientious physician’.” The letter laid out that “The House of Justice does not wish to comment on the medical qualifications of such Native American healers,” but went on later to add:

The statement defining health practitioners from a Bahá’í point of view is given in a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer on 8 June 1948: ‘In His Most Holy Book (the ‘Aqdas’) Bahá’u’lláh says to consult the best physicians, in other words doctors who have studied a scientific system of medicine.’ It is clear from other statements made by the Guardian, as well as from the practice of Bahá’u’lláh, the Master and the Guardian himself, that by ‘a scientific system of medicine’ he was not limiting the choice to the medical theories currently dominant in western countries. The House of

¹¹⁴ From a letter dated 11 January 1967 written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, in Bahá’u’lláh et al, *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 1*, 55.

¹¹⁵ Brown, interview, 28 Oct 2008.

Justice, therefore, does not exclude the use of traditional native healers, who have often gone through a rigorous training in their craft. There is, nevertheless, an important borderline between unorthodox medical practice and sheer quackery or superstition, and this we should be careful not to cross.¹¹⁶

This statement simultaneously affirmed Indigenous knowledge systems (something Brown, specifically, recalled being substantially buoyed by) and invoked the ambiguous limit of superstition.¹¹⁷ It also set out two additional barriers: legal status and use of peyote as de-facto membership in the Native American Church. Although the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act legalized the possession of peyote for members of the Native American Church, a series of subsequent court and political challenges have made for a muddied legal context.¹¹⁸ The 1994 letter written on behalf of the House of Justice observed on the issue:

In the specific matter of the use of peyote, the House of Justice is given to understand that, in the United States at the present time, the use of peyote for any purpose is prohibited by law. If this is not so, or if in future it should become legally permissible for peyote to be prescribed for medicinal purposes, you should refer the matter to the House of Justice once again for further elucidation.¹¹⁹

While this statement articulates a certain systematic flexibility, the second rationale that the House of Justice supplied, that of Native American Church membership, effectively rendered the issue of illegality moot. As the letter clarified with implicit reference to Baha’i instructions banning membership in (or even, evidently, “acceptance of the doctrines of”) other religions:

[The House of Justice] is informed that peyote is customarily prescribed, not as a simple therapeutic remedy, but as a part of a religious ritual in which it plays the part of a sacrament, much as sacramental wine is used in the Roman Catholic mass. Indeed, it is said that those who follow this ritual not infrequently draw a comparison between the two practices. If this is so, it is clearly not permissible for a Baha’i to resort to the use of peyote in such a manner, no matter who prescribes it, since it would imply acceptance of the doctrines of the Native American Church.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’is of the United States, 17 June 1994, National Bahá’i Archives, United States.

¹¹⁷ Brown, interview, 28 Oct 2008.

¹¹⁸ See Swan, “The Native American Church,” 323-324.

¹¹⁹ Letter, 17 June 1994.

¹²⁰ Letter, 17 June 1994. As Michael McMullen has noted, the Baha’i boundary around membership in other religions hardened “toward the end of [Shoghi Effendi’s] ministry,” with Shoghi Effendi insisting that “upon

Peyote ceremonies vary in the degree to which they incorporate Christian influences, suggesting that the House of Justice's "sacrament" comparison was perhaps overdrawn.¹²¹ Still, the issue of Native American Church (NAC) affiliation could have concrete consequences for Baha'is. Phil Lane Jr., for example, expressed a strong sense of solidarity with a prominent Indigenous Baha'i couple that he described having been stripped of their Baha'i administrative rights on account of NAC attendance, something he characterized as a great injustice.¹²² Linda Covey speaks to the same incident in her thesis (she does not name names, but it is clear from the context that it is the same case, though she discusses only one person, not two), indicating instead that this individual "resigned from a prominent position in the religion to become a 'roadman' responsible for overseeing peyote ceremonies held in hogans."¹²³ Covey writes that the "details of what moved him to resign from his position remain confidential and closed." The deep emotion that this man conveyed in his interview with Covey, however, demonstrates that his decision to resign his Baha'i membership was a painful one and he made clear that he still considers himself a Baha'i.¹²⁴

becoming declared believers Bahá'ís should withdraw their membership from their church or other previous religious organization." McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 124.

¹²¹ Daniel Swan, "The Native American Church," 320-322; Brown, interview. At the same time, Swan notes that "Peyote is generally referred to as 'the medicine,' 'the sacrament,' or 'this holy herb' by members of the Native American Church." 317.

¹²² Lane, interview. This case was also the subject of online discussion among Baha'is. See David Piff, "The Globalization of Information: Bahá'í Constructions of the Internet," in Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind, eds., *Baha'i and Globalisation* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 205.

¹²³ In her own analysis of the Baha'i position on peyote, Covey focuses more closely on the Baha'i ban on drugs than the issue of Native American Church membership, arguing that "giving up the use of peyote, a drug that was classified as a Schedule I hallucinogen by the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act in 1970, should be held in no different light than Diné Bahá'ís giving up alcohol, and would not constitute a lack of Diné Bahá'ís practicing their traditional ways." Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í," 172.

¹²⁴ Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í," 169.

Practicing Culture

Peyote is precisely the sort of limit Covey was pointing to in her own interview with me when she emphasized that the Baha'i Faith supports *most* of "the Native outlook, or belief, or tradition."¹²⁵ And, indeed, the principle of cultural preservation that the Baha'i Faith promoted proved profoundly refreshing and inspiring for many, both those with preexisting ties to culture and others who took it up explicitly by way of their Baha'i practice. Though narrators frequently spoke of Indigenous culture as though it was self-evident, it was instead produced in a historical context of renewal and revitalization. This is not to say that "the culture" was invented in a spurious sense, but is rather to draw attention to one particular, and expansive, idiom of culture in use among Indigenous people themselves.¹²⁶ This revivalist discourse took in, for the subjects of this chapter, both tribal and intertribal practices and served, together with Baha'i observance, as an opening to broader Indigenous identification as well. This could be a deeply healing process that helped reconcile rifts in family history, instilled greater confidence and sense of self, and brought adherents into diverse Indigenous communities.

At the same time, the place of Indigenous cultural practice within the Baha'i Faith was far from clear and Baha'is themselves spoke of an unfolding process of building Baha'i culture over time. Indeed, the self-consciousness with which Baha'is approached, and continue to reflect on, this process and the balance of unity and diversity renders this an especially rich site of religious combination. Such self-consciousness, to be sure, has not always been in evidence, particularly on the part of some non-Indigenous Baha'is ill attuned to their own power and privilege (reflected both in normalized rituals and disrespectful dismissive attitudes). Indeed, there were moments, to reach back to Robert George's opening observation, when Baha'is did

¹²⁵ Covey, interview.

¹²⁶ On the risks and high stakes of constructivist analysis surrounding Indigenous culture and tradition see Glass, "The Intention of Tradition," 279-281, 299-300.

say, by word or deed, “that’s not the way we do it.” There were also limits in the way of Baha’i law and teachings like those on superstition, though this too is clearly an ongoing subject of reflection and divergent interpretation. That intertribal topics like pipe ceremony and peyote became particular touchstones for discussion and debate is effective reminder of the context of renewal and exchange in which culture was under construction. Rather than simply preserved, as the Baha’i principle put it, Indigenous cultural practice was produced through the process of Baha’i combination. And as we will see in the next chapter, this process of construction, and contestation, continued as Baha’is built both intercultural and Indigenous religious community.

Chapter 7: Building Baha'i Community

“That was my big eye opener,” Joyce Shales recalled, describing the international Baha'i conference she attended with her father in Palermo, Sicily in the summer of 1968. “I met people from Africa,” she continued, “from everywhere in the world. So it was like this was the epitome of everything that I thought I believed and now there it was right at your feet. And it was the real beginning of the Baha'i Faith as a global religion for me.”¹ As Baha'is, narrators in this project generated a global spiritual geography that took in, to paraphrase Baha'u'llah, the earth as one country and humanity its citizens.² Like Shales, many activated this vision, and an attendant sense of world citizenship, through travel and attendance at transnational Baha'i gatherings.³ And, as sociological studies of contemporary Baha'i community have signaled, they further forged “situated universalist” identities by working to build Baha'u'llah's promised “New World Order” at home.⁴ In the same way that Baha'i observance brought narrators into Indigenous communities, it brought them into Baha'i communities as well. Indeed, Baha'is were charged, as a core matter of faith, to build community with other adherents. As the sociologist Michael McMullen has explained in contemporary context, “religious salvation,” from a Baha'i perspective, is a collective two-pronged project incumbent upon internal assembly of the Baha'i

¹ Joyce Shales, interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 29 July 2008. On this gathering see “The First Oceanic Conference: Palermo, Sicily – August 23-25, 1968,” *The Bahá'í World: An International Record* Volume 15, 1968-1973 (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1976), 73-79.

² See Bahá'u'lláh, “Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd (Tablet of Maqṣúd),” in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), 167, accessed online 18 April 2012, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/TB/>.

³ Allison Healy, for example, reflected on her attendance at the 1977 international Baha'i conference in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico in terms strikingly similar to Shales on the Palermo gathering. Also like Shales, who traveled abroad with her father and other Indigenous Baha'is, Healy journeyed to Mexico in the company of a Blackfoot cousin and other Indigenous Baha'is. Allison Healy, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 27 April 2008.

⁴ Michael McMullen uses the term “situated universalists” in his study of the Atlanta Baha'i community: *The Bahá'í: The Religious Construction of a Global Identity* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 12. See also Lynn Echevarria, “The Canadian Baha'is 1938-2000: Constructions of Oneness in Personal and Collective Identity,” in Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind, eds, *Baha'i and Globalisation* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005), esp. 236-240. Margit Warburg dubs Baha'is “cosmolocals” in *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation Perspective* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2006), 108-111.

“Administrative Order,” considered the “bedrock” of future Baha’i civilization, and external dissemination of “the Cause.”⁵ Where existing literature on Baha’i community building has stressed the role of Baha’i institutions and considered their operation in specific contexts, I am interested here in interactions between adherents themselves and the Baha’i community as a broader space of both intercultural and Indigenous interaction.⁶ Like the question of culture, the process of Baha’i community building confirms that the vision of unity in diversity was very much a motivational factor in Indigenous Baha’i declaration and deepening. It simultaneously reveals, however, a disconnect between the theory and the practice of this core Baha’i teaching.⁷

Baha’is came together for regular worship and celebration structured by their religious calendar as well as for administrative functions and teaching and service projects. Encouraged to “live the life” in the everyday, many also cultivated relationships that carried beyond explicitly Baha’i space or activities.⁸ Indeed, in the ongoing colonial context of mid-to-late twentieth-century North America, the Baha’i Faith was a site of intercultural learning and exchange through which Indigenous and non-Indigenous adherents forged striking relationships of mutual

⁵ McMullen, *The Bahá’í*, 8.

⁶ I am joining here with scholarship that advocates attention to alternative sites of Indigenous contact and unexpected and unknown spaces of intercultural alliance building as well. See Paul Lai and Lindsay Claire Smith, “Introduction,” *American Quarterly*, “Special Issue: Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies” 62, no.3 (Sept 2010): 407-436; Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 231; Lynne Davis, ed., *Alliances: Re/envisoning Indigenous-Non-Indigenous Relationships* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). As Michael McMullen has explained, the term “Baha’i community” carries several connotations: “roughly analogous to the Christian term ‘congregation,’ referring to a local gathering of believers,” “Baha’i community” can also refer to the national or global scale. I employ the term primarily in this second sense throughout this chapter. McMullen, *The Bahá’í*, 13. For analysis of the “Administrative Order” in specific relation to Indigenous Baha’is see, for example, Pauline Tuttle, “The Hoop of Many Hoops: The Integration of Lakota Ancestral Knowledge and Bahá’í Teachings in the Performative Practices of Kevin Locke” (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2002), Chapter 5; Linda S. Covey, “Diné Becoming Bahá’í: Through the Lens of Ancient Prophecies” (MA thesis, Missouri State University, 2011), 113-115.

⁷ For discussion of disconnect between formal Baha’i writings and popular Baha’i perspectives on unity in diversity see Will C. van den Hoonaard, “Etching the Idea of ‘Unity in Diversity’ in the Baha’i Community: Popular Opinion and Organizing Principle,” in Warburg et al, *Baha’i and Globalisation*, 245-267.

⁸ On the concept of “living the life” see Shoghi Effendi, “Living the Life,” in *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 2*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Mona Vale, NSW: Baha’i Publications Australia, 1991), 1-28.

respect. Building Baha'i community, however, was neither easy nor automatic and was especially fraught for Indigenous adherents, who also confronted tensions of intercultural communication and understanding and sometimes outright racism. Given, again, the Baha'i prohibition on backbiting (see Chapter 3), the fact that narrators shared on this subject is significant.⁹ Their stories suggest that much as Baha'is aspired to build a "New World Order," they remained, through the twentieth century, still grounded in the old. The stories in this chapter, further, offer insight into this old (in the sense of living colonial) context outside the Baha'i community as they provide evidence of the debilitating effects of racism and obstacles to the process of reconciliation in society at large.

The broad framing of this study means I have limited insight into the construction and workings of specific Baha'i communities and institutions.¹⁰ But I can offer fresh perspective on patterns and connections flattened by studies confined to the local level. Indeed, while Indigenous Baha'is were relatively few in number and often geographically isolated from each other, they also constructed community of their own. Intercultural tensions themselves proved a

⁹ Existing Baha'i literature tends to gesture towards tension while dwelling on and celebrating positive features of Baha'i community life in substantially more detail. See, for example, Richard W. Thomas, *Racial Unity: An Imperative for Social Progress* (Ottawa: Bahá'í Studies Publications, 1993), esp.154-159; Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Bahá'í Pioneers* (Essex, MD: One Voice, 2011); Pauline Tuttle, "'Beyond Feathers and Beads': Interlocking Narratives in the Music and Dance of Tokeya Inajin (Kevin Locke)," in Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds, *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 107. The anthropologist Carolyn Patterson Sawin discusses racism explicitly in her study of the Yukon Baha'i community: "Native Conversion, Native Identity: An Oral History of the Bahá'í Faith among First Nations People in the Southern Central Yukon Territory, Canada" (PhD Thesis, University of Washington, 2000), esp. Chapter 5.

¹⁰ More research is needed, for example, on the histories of specific institutions like National Spiritual Assemblies in order to better evaluate accusations like surveillance leveled in the polarized literature on Baha'i fundamentalism. See Juan R.I. Cole, "The Baha'i Faith in North America as Panopticon," *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37 (June 1998): 234-248; Juan R.I. Cole, "Fundamentalism in the Contemporary Baha'i Community," *Review of Religious Research* 42 (March 2002): 195-217.

point of contact and consultation among dispersed Indigenous adherents, as did intertribal cultural exchange and Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy.¹¹

Building Intercultural Baha'i Community

Participation in Baha'i community frequently brought Indigenous adherents into a form of close intercultural interaction many had not experienced before. While Joyce Shales, for example, stressed how her global travels opened up what Manuel Vásquez and Marie Marquardt have called an expanded “cartography of belonging,” she likewise emphasized how engagement in the Baha'i community back home in Alaska involved a new form of “mixing” altogether.¹² As she recalled of her entry into the Baha'i community in the mid-1960s:

when I became Baha'i, I can tell you that from the background I came from, I came from a small Alaskan town [Sitka] that I had never left except maybe I travelled to Seattle once or twice with my family. Coming to the States was like coming to a foreign country. So I went away to the University of Alaska [in Fairbanks, in the Alaskan interior], got married, had one son and then became Baha'i. Okay. Never been around White people socially to speak of. That was a shock. Most of the people I've been around are my family, except for at school or having to do with some administrative organization of some sort. I worked in a hospital after high school and I really enjoyed my work. It was there that I had my first real interaction with the non-Native community in my hometown.¹³

Coming into the Baha'i community further extended such “real” interaction. Drawing on the metaphor of mixing, Shales explained that “when I became Baha'i I got mixed in with a bunch of people that I had never been mixed in with before. A whole new different kind of a group.” She contrasted this experience with her upbringing in the Presbyterian Church. “Even when I had gone to church,” she continued, “you don't mix in with people like you do in the Baha'i

¹¹ This analysis builds on recent literature on urban Indigenous history that is attuned to flexible, often intertribal and transnational, articulations of community. See, for example, Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007); Susan Applegate Krouse and Heather A. Howard, eds. *Keeping the Campfires Going: Native Women's Activism in Urban Communities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

¹² Manuel A. Vásquez and Marie F. Marquardt, *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 53 (see also 169, 225-226).

¹³ Joyce Shales, interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 29 July 2008.

community, it's a whole different thing. When you go to church, you go there on Sunday, you visit a little and you go home."¹⁴ The Baha'i Faith, by contrast, brought Shales quite literally into the homes (the gathering places for events such as Baha'i firesides and Feasts) of her coreligionists.

The novelty of Baha'i intercultural interaction was not limited to those in remote environments like Alaska. Entering Baha'i community, even the act of enrollment itself, presented new dynamics for adherents in urban areas as well. Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, for example, recalled the acute pain she confronted when she entered an unfamiliar White middle-class suburb of San Jose, California in order to sign her Baha'i declaration card in 1981. Gubatayao-Hagen was first introduced to the Baha'i Faith by her mother, Ruby Gubatayao, in Washington, but was encouraged by her (and her mother's close friend, narrator Klara Tyler) to formally enroll in the local community where she was living. As we saw in the last chapter, Gubatayao-Hagen came of age in the context of urban Indigenous activism in Seattle, a factor, she stressed, that firmly informed her declaration experience. As she recalled:

I was pretty radical and revolutionary. I wasn't exactly American Indian Movement, they were very militant, but I think that our family, and especially my mom, was a notch below that. And so for me with all this Indian activism, to have to go to this middle-class White neighbourhood, and I was just praying to Baha'u'llah, I said, you know, "Are you testing how much I love you? Are you testing that I believe in you?" Because I knew that Baha'u'llah was going to be the healing medicine for our people, I knew that already. And so I'm going, but oh my God, it took all this strength. I mean, I was crying, and I just, every step across the street and up the walk and up on the porch and knocking on the door and going into the house, the whole thing was extremely painful. But I said, you know, I would do this, but as I was crossing that street, I said, "Baha'u'llah, I'm going to do this." And I said, "But I am going to work my whole life to make sure that other Native people don't have to go to this extreme, and overcome these kind of hurdles to have access to you."¹⁵

¹⁴ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

¹⁵ Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interview with the author, by telephone, 11 July 2008. Ruby Gubatayao helped organize the takeover of Fort Lawton in Seattle (noted in Chapter 5) and was closely connected with leaders such as Bernie Whitebear and Bob Satiacum, who were also "Indipino."

Gubatayao-Hagen's reflections reveal a charged conversion process from Red Power to intercultural Baha'i community and suggest the sorts of structural barriers – class, as well as race – that Indigenous people sometimes confronted as they made such move.¹⁶ Her experience, at the same time, illustrates the lasting kinship that such contact could promote. Speaking to a sense of shared genealogy that Baha'is often cultivated with their religious teachers and those in whose company they signed their declaration cards, Gubatayao-Hagen explained that she remains connected with the non-Indigenous (and, it turned out, prominent Baha'i) family at whose home she enrolled and feels “really lucky to have them as these very close spiritual mentors in my life.”¹⁷

Other narrators likewise recalled key mentorship they received as early Baha'is. Deloria Bighorn, for example, spoke with great warmth about two elderly sisters, Dorothy Hayes and Emmalu McCandless, who served as key supports after she declared in Walla Walla, Washington in the late 1960s. Baha'i demographics, Bighorn noted, were shifting by generation as well as race at this time and youth often met for intense spiritual discussion and study with Emmalu: “her home was always open and the youth were there hanging out and she was just delighted. She treated us all as absolute equals.”¹⁸ Bighorn remained in contact with these

¹⁶ Andrea Smith employs the language of conversion “from Red Power to Christianity” in *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 99. Lorintha Umtuch, who became a Baha'i on the Yakama Reservation in Washington in 1966, likewise noted the class dimension of her declaration experience, in her case connecting with “poor Indian people from the coast” who had travelled to her reservation to teach the religion. Lorintha Umtuch, interview with the author, Toppenish, Washington, 21 June 2008.

¹⁷ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview. This genealogy sometimes intersected with physical descent. Thus Gubatayao-Hagen, who learned the religion from her mother, described Ruby Gubatayao as both her “biological mother” and her “spiritual mother.” For context on Ruby Gubatayao see “Ruby Gubatayao Served the Cause Among Native Peoples,” 28 March 2011, accessed online 3 Nov 2012, <http://www.bahai.us/2011/03/28/ruby-gubatayao-served-the-cause-among-native-peoples/>.

¹⁸ Deloria Bighorn, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 20 March 2008. There was a class dimension at work here too: Bighorn noted her own delight at being introduced to “exotic things” like Melba Toast and artichoke hearts; “I had never heard of such things,” she recalled, “I didn't even know such food existed.”

women after she moved away from Walla Walla and recalled being particularly moved, as she was as she shared the story with me, when she first introduced Emmalu and her husband, Jacob:

I remember she said to Jacob, when we first met and married, I wanted Jacob to meet her and the minute she took his hands in her hands she said, “This boy has been hurt.” And that really touched Jacob’s heart, because that’s really all he wanted anybody to recognize, is that he had been hurt. “This boy has been hurt.” She brought him in and she was such an amazing woman.¹⁹

Bighorn did not specify whether or to what degree Hayes and McCandless were aware of the colonial history that had caused this hurt. But the heart connections they cultivated, her reflections imply, worked on an intimate interpersonal scale to help heal it.

Like Shales, who distinguished between Sunday church attendance and more dynamic Baha’i “mixing,” many narrators likewise contrasted this kind of intra-Baha’i interaction with that of Christians of diverse denomination. Lorintha Umtuch, for example, who declared as a Baha’i on the Yakama Reservation in 1966, explained that she was first drawn to the religion by what she called a “transparency” on the part of Baha’is: “they were pleasant on the inside and they were pleasant on the outside and it was genuine.” Baha’is, she elaborated elsewhere, “didn’t cast no stones at you and they didn’t look down their noses at you.”²⁰ They also activated, as Umtuch told it, a sense of community in quiet everyday ways. Recalling, for example, a serious car accident that she suffered while living in Los Angeles, California in the 1970s, Umtuch explained how a Baha’i woman who lived on the opposite end of the city came “to help me take care of my house and my kids, every single day.” She elaborated:

I didn’t pay her to do that but out of the kindness of her heart she did that for me because she was a Baha’i ... she was a good Baha’i and she came over to help me. I didn’t know

¹⁹ Deloria Bighorn, interview.

²⁰ Umtuch, interview. Her initial exposure to Baha’i community came courtesy of non-Indigenous pioneers Janet and Edward Lindstrom, who sent Umtuch to a Baha’i gathering in Geyserville, California as a high school graduation gift; Umtuch explained that she followed the Yakama precept of honouring a gift by learning as much as she could about the faith while she was there. Umtuch’s words are strikingly reminiscent of Allison Healy, who, as we saw in Chapter 4, spoke of the “genuine love” demonstrated by Baha’is as a profound source of attraction to the religion.

her but I got to know her real well when she started doing that. And I didn't know that many people down there and I was really appreciative that she would do that for me.

Distinguishing such acts from discrimination that she had met from many Christians, Umtuch added that Baha'is "gave from the heart. They sacrificed. And Christians didn't do that for me."²¹ Others observed a similar sincerity and spirit of generosity on the part of Baha'is.²²

Narrators pointed to pioneers, in particular, as adherents with whom they forged meaningful and lasting bonds. They invariably spoke with great affection about non-Indigenous Baha'is who committed themselves to this activity over the long term. Narrators recognize that these Baha'is undertook intercultural teaching and learning voluntarily and appreciate the steps that they took to extend themselves beyond their own cultural comfort zones.²³ Peigan Baha'i Beverley Knowlton, for example, whose parents joined the religion when she was a young girl, stressed that the pioneers who made regular visits to her reserve in southern Alberta during the 1960s and 70s "came and they didn't take us different. They accepted us"; "through the years," she added, "we had all kinds of Baha'is come into our home. And Dale and Joyce [two non-Indigenous Baha'i women], well I just practically grew up with them."²⁴ Knowlton spoke to the indelible impact of these relationships when she recalled her hesitancy, as a teenager, around Indigenous activism brewing in Edmonton, where she attended high school. Youth in the city, she explained, were:

being really racist with White people. And having these protests and all this and I was right in with them. But the thing that always got me is I can never fully join them because

²¹ Umtuch, interview.

²² For example, Healy, interview; Kevin Locke, interview with the author, by telephone, 28 March 2008; Donald Addison, interview with the author, Eugene, Oregon, 23 June 2008. Narrators often connected this to the concept of world citizenship, noting their confidence that they could travel anywhere in the world and be welcomed by fellow Baha'is. For example, Beverley Knowlton, interview with the author, between Calgary and Sylvan Lake, Alberta, 26 April 2008.

²³ For example, Umtuch, interview; Kevin Locke, interview with the author, by telephone, 28 March 2008; Klara Tyler, interview with the author, Neah Bay, Washington, 8 July 2008; Allison Healy, interview.

²⁴ Knowlton, interview. For background on Dale Lillico and Joyce McGuffie see Patricia Verge, *Angus: From the Heart: The Life of Counsellor Angus Cowan* (Cochrane, AB: Springtide, 1999), 70-71, 82, 83, 177, 266, 310, 311.

I was raised as a Baha'i. And if I start calling White people down, then that would be just like calling Dale Lillico down and Joyce McGuffie, who were a very big part of my growing up.²⁵

An unwillingness to partake in what the anthropologist James Clifford has described as “exclusivist nativism” did not mean that Knowlton, or other Indigenous Baha'is, were passive.²⁶ Rather, as her expression of intercultural solidarity signals, Baha'is were working to realize their own vision of unity in diversity.

Where some Indigenous Baha'is, in the Yukon and on the Navajo reservation, for example, lived in areas with a certain concentration of Indigenous adherents, in the quotidian lives of many Indigenous Baha'is, engagement in Baha'i community meant engagement in intercultural community. The relative scarcity of Indigenous Baha'is, combined with common geographic isolation from each other, meant that in order to partake in community, they had to reach out and build intercultural bridges in a way not required of majority Baha'is. This could, as we have just seen, result in striking relationships. But it also produced strains. Most Baha'is did not participate in teaching or pioneering among Indigenous people. When they encountered Indigenous people and practices at Baha'i gatherings, then, it well likely marked the first time that they found themselves in any kind of close interaction with Indigenous people. This, of course, was precisely the sort of thing that the principle of unity in diversity promoted. Yet despite sincere commitment to this teaching, the power that attended (indeed, constituted) difference did not simply evaporate at Baha'i functions. The result was frequent intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding and sometimes outright racism. Such difficulties caused a number of Indigenous Baha'is to pull back from active community practice, a pattern

²⁵ Knowlton, interview.

²⁶ James Clifford, “Varieties of Indigenous Experience: Diasporas, Homelands, Sovereignties,” in Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn, eds, *Indigenous Experience Today* (NY: Berg, 2007), 200.

that in turn exacerbated demographic imbalance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Baha'is.²⁷

Participants in this project are, for the most part, still active adherents, but a number certainly reported confronting intercultural tensions over time. Joyce Shales, for her part, recalled her surprise when, after an initial honeymoon period during which she felt a strong acceptance and contentedness in the Baha'i community, "slowly these cross-cultural issues started cropping up." Though Shales subsequently dedicated much of her personal and professional life to precisely this field, she noted that "I didn't know anything about cross-cultural issues at that time, I didn't know what they were. So they were kind of hard for me to understand." These issues had much to do with communication, with the subtle unspoken cues that structured interaction. Shales, for example, recalled having difficulty understanding why Baha'is "wouldn't wait for me to speak," as Tlingit precepts of courtesy prescribed.²⁸ As she elaborated elsewhere, with a characteristic touch of humour:

I used to tell Clint [her husband] it took me ten years before I could look a White person in the eye. Ten years of work. It's just that we never looked people in the eye. That was a teaching. You don't look somebody in the eye, because when you look somebody in the eye, it meant you were angry. So, to then have White people constantly looking you in the eye, and they're walking right up to your face and then staring you in the eye – because some people really do that – was just unnerving. So you have to tell yourself, "They don't mean anything by it, they don't mean anything by it. Even if they back you into the refrigerator, they don't mean anything by it." So they have no clue, but you're always on the defensive, because you're trying to cope. Any Indian will tell you that. Or any minority, be it Mexican, Black, or whatever. I believe. Because the cultures are different. And it's not just that, it's eye contact and touching and space. And asking questions. And how close you get to somebody when you're talking to them. Like one guy used to back me into the corner all the time, because he'd get so close to me and I'd be backing up. But he'd keep walking forward until I was backed into the fridge, and all the time he'd be asking questions. Never failed. I'd still be backing up, he'd still be yakking away. And asking what would be to us inappropriate questions. Nothing harmful,

²⁷ As Lee Brown noted in his interview with me, many of these people continued to identify as Baha'is, but became "inactive," or what Phil Lane Jr. described as estranged, adherents. Brown, interview; Phil Lane Jr., interview with the author, Whiterock, British Columbia, 3 January 2009.

²⁸ Shales, interview.

just questions we would never ask somebody. Or questions we normally wouldn't ask people. That was cultural. If somebody wanted to tell you something, they'd tell you. That was it.²⁹

Speaking to her increased conversance in White communication styles (like the ability to “look a White person in the eye”), Shales added, “So the way I am today is not the way I was. I would say I'm a completely different person now than I was at that time.”³⁰ She and her family, as we have seen, did not sacrifice their sense of being Tlingit upon becoming Baha'i. And building unity in diversity, as several narrators stressed, demanded flexibility on all sides.³¹ Yet in practice, the process demanded something different – indeed, something more – from Indigenous adherents. Non-Indigenous ignorance of Indigenous teachings like the Tlingit interactional patterns Shales described produced a normative baseline of non-Indigenous Baha'i practice. This meant that it was Indigenous adherents, rather than non-Indigenous ones, who were more often than not required to negotiate and cross the cultural colour line.³²

Interacting in Baha'i community proved intensely painful for some Indigenous adherents. Jacob Bighorn, for example, spoke about the early enthusiasm that he brought to his employment at Maxwell International School, a Baha'i institution in Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia, where he and his wife, Deloria, began working in 1991.³³ Bighorn was inspired by intersections that he saw between Indigenous spiritual principles and Maxwell's pedagogic philosophy.

Everyday interactions at the school, though, proved a challenge. As he shared:

I would say something at a staff meeting, I remember one time distinctly, offering something in my style, I wasn't conscious that it was a style at the time, but I said what I

²⁹ Joyce Shales, interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 30 July 2008.

³⁰ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008.

³¹ For example, Shales, interviews, 29 and 30 July 2008; Gubatayao-Hagen, interview; Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 12 March 2008; Covey, interview.

³² On White normativity see, for example, Ruth Frankenburg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 192.

³³ Maxwell International School, named for early Canadian Baha'is May and William Sutherland Maxwell, the parents of Ruhyyih Khanum, was a co-ed school for students in grades seven through twelve; it opened in 1988 and closed in 2008.

said, and there was no response. I thought I was making a contribution. Well, I heard somebody else say something, say what I meant, the person said what I meant, the way I said it, so I thought we were speaking together, but when this person said it, everybody said, “Yeah, yeah, yeah! That’s a good idea!” And I reached around and I said, “I just said that!” And the person turned to me, “Jacob, you speak in metaphors!” And I got confused, is that a downer? Is that an upper? Or this person, is she frustrated? Is it her problem? Is it my problem? [...] And, I think that was the challenge then. That’s an aspect of being Baha’i, that’s the diversity ... in the end, I think that’s part of why I worked my way out [from teaching at the school]. It was too frustrating, it took its toll on my heart, my health. I think which is symbolic of suicides, the high rate of suicides amongst Natives, all the other emotional, psychological troubles, and health troubles. That this degree of low self-esteem and not caring, not being in charge of one’s own destiny, the sense of destiny is in someone else’s hands and so forth. So it’s diminishing, diminishes the spiritual strength.³⁴

Bighorn further addressed such tensions in relation to dreams and visions. Speaking in contemporary context, he explained how persistent patterns of cultural dominance lead people to keep their dreams and visions personal:

because for the most part, non-Native communities are left-brain thinkers, who dominate social scenes or processes, even in the Baha’i Faith, they tend to diminish or belittle, unconsciously, belittle the existence of such experiences held by Native people who have these dreams. So sometimes these unique experiences, experiences unique to the Native way of thinking, are discounted as meaningless, because nobody else, especially the people in authority, the legitimizers, if they don’t have these dreams, if they don’t think they’re important, then apparently, in my experience, my unique experience, [it’s] not significant, it’s not valuable. So it could be sometimes a daily battle, a daily process against energy to maintain a sense of value, of what one sees in your mind, or imagination, or a spiritual definition, is worth something. When all around, the social standards, the cultural values surrounding you do not acknowledge your existence. Or the existence of your unique way of seeing things.³⁵

As members of settler society, non-Indigenous Baha’is not only reaped the material benefits of a long history of Indigenous land dispossession, they were likewise inheritors of a less tangible form of self-assurance and privilege that derived from having one’s worldview and modes of

³⁴ Jacob Bighorn, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 11 August 2004.

³⁵ Jacob Bighorn, interview.

interaction consistently validated and reinforced by overarching social and cultural cues.³⁶ As

Hesquiaht Baha'i J.C. Lucas, also from Vancouver Island, observed of his own experience:

the culture, the mainstream culture, in some parts of the Baha'i community, people don't realize how strong it is. When Native people come in and there's a pressure, without really being pressurized. A lot of the stuff comes in. And it triggered me quite seriously some years ago and I just began to withdraw. And my old residential school things came to the fore. So I just kind of withdrew. I still teach, I still pray early in the morning, every day since 1980, actually.

Lucas took care to note that "I'm not mad at the Baha'is" and that he still "love[s] and honour[s] the Baha'i Faith."³⁷ His decision to pull back from active community participation seemingly stemmed not from specific actions on the part of particular Baha'is, but from the broader social context that he, as an Indigenous person, found particularly difficult to navigate. Simply operating in the environment of dominant culture, where non-Indigenous Baha'is and attendant social patterns predominated, for him invoked the legacies of such damaging colonial experiences as residential schools, and led to retreat from Baha'i community life. Stories like these underline just how deep colonial wounds continue to cut and suggest the serious obstacles that exist to building unity, even in a community explicitly committed to this cause.

Racism and paternalism further undermined the prospect of unity in diversity in practice. This could take crass form – like the time a White Baha'i at a public gathering in Alaska loudly deployed derogatory language to describe Indigenous people, insisting it was historical, despite being told directly otherwise – as well as more subtle iteration.³⁸ Mohawk Baha'i Linda Loft, for example, recalled the pain she experienced when, after offering to assist with preparation for an upcoming Baha'i gathering not long after moving to Victoria, British Columbia in the early 1970s, a detailed discussion pursued over décor. As she recounted, revealing a pattern of

³⁶ On settler society and the privilege that accrues to its members see, for example, Regan, *Unsettling Settler Society*.

³⁷ J.C. Lucas, interview with the author, Nanaimo, British Columbia, 6 October 2004.

³⁸ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008.

normative practice as well as prejudice, “the next thing was, well, ‘We have to sit down and really discuss this, because this is such an important occasion, we don’t want daffodils. We need to know here that roses are going to be needed.’” Loft recalled thinking:

“Well, what am I?” But I didn’t say anything. Being the way I am. But I was extremely hurt by that statement. But I saved face, I just put that behind me. But that just isn’t meant to happen. Of course I know it’s going to be roses. Of course I’m going to try and get the best of what we’ll have at the season, at this time, in this different place. And of course I’m going to have tablecloths on our tables.

She continued, elaborating on the pejorative implications of this exchange. “Take for instance, maybe I live on reserve” (Loft herself grew up on the Tyendinaga Reserve in southern Ontario):

Maybe I’ve never ever seen a rose. Maybe I’ve never ever seen a daffodil, you know? Maybe I’m so remote there’s no flowers growing around where I live [...] Now, I’ve got to set this here place up. Now I’m picturing myself, take myself out of that situation, put myself in a different situation such as the one I just explained, and, “Yeah sure, I’ll do that [volunteer to help set up].” A stick might be the most precious thing to me, that I would put in my most expensive container, and put it on the table. Maybe a cedar bough, maybe a circle of rocks might be the best thing, you know? Maybe to me that is really offering everything I could, from the heart, for my Creator. And I know that the people that are coming, that are going to be attending, are going to feel my joy of being able to do these things. Being able to put this event on to the best of my ability. Not judge me for what their standard is, being better than mine, or mine being better than theirs either.³⁹

Echoing an emphasis on process also articulated by other narrators, Loft, in sharing this story, stressed the relative youth of the Baha’i religion and framed moments like this as significant learning opportunities. Tension (what another narrator, Tina Kahn, described as “that rubbing off of the sharp edges” and Linda Covey called “growing pains”), she and other narrators underlined, was inevitable as the “embryonic” Baha’i community took new intercultural form.⁴⁰ “Comfort,”

³⁹ Linda Loft, interview with the author, Meades Creek, British Columbia, 16 August 2004.

⁴⁰ Kahn, interview; Covey, interview; Shales, interview; Loft, interview. Shoghi Effendi wrote often of the “embryonic World Order of Bahá’u’lláh.” See, for example, Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* Second Revised Edition (Wilmette: Bahá’i Publishing Trust, 1974 [1938]), 185.

Nedra Greenaway asserted in a clear expression of Baha'i historical consciousness, "isn't on the agenda in the next one hundred or so years."⁴¹

But comfort, of course, is relative. The exchange that Loft experienced as painful paternalism, for example, likely went unregistered by those insisting on roses. This was certainly the case at one gathering in Salmon Arm, a small town in the southern interior of British Columbia, described by Lee Brown. Brown explained that although the town of Vernon was closer to the Okanagan Indian Reserve where he and his family then resided, "the cool thing about Salmon Arm was that they had a community where when we came all four races were present. There was a Black person in the community, there was a couple of Asians, about twenty or thirty Whites."⁴² The dominant tenor of this community, though, was revealed during a consultation on Indigenous teaching held as part of a Nineteen Day Feast. As Brown recalled:

the consultation that night was on Native teaching, how to teach the Faith to Native Canadians. And my wife and I were taking issue with some of their thinking about what should be done and, I guess, the essence of our thinking was if you want to teach the Faith you have to become friends, you have to have longstanding friendships and relationships, you don't go into the community and have a one-week gathering or a one-weekend gathering and leave. And the fact is that many of the non-Native Baha'is didn't have any Native friends. And so it turned out, I just don't know how it say it, and it's a great sadness to me, but it turned really vicious, I mean vicious. And it went from being a consultation on Native teaching to what was wrong with me and my wife and how the community didn't like us. And what they didn't like about us.

Brown noted that the only person who seemed to pick up on this was a White Baha'i named Ed Hinman whose personal history (his mother and her African American partner had had to leave segregated Florida in order to be married) had afforded him "a very deep insight into race."

Other than this, Brown explained, "I don't think anybody really saw it. And it was very hurtful, I mean, we were stunned. We were stunned." That his children witnessed this exchange, which went on for roughly an hour, proved a particular source of sadness for Brown. On the direction

⁴¹ Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 15 August 2008.

⁴² Brown, interview.

of a dream, in which Abdu'l-Baha apologized for this experience and acknowledged the “sickness” of racism in the North American Baha’i community, he and his wife made a decision to retreat from the Baha’i community for a two-year period. Though his dream helped ease the sting of this event, a phone call appropriately six months later further intensified Brown’s disappointment. As he shared:

About six months later somebody from the Salmon Arm community called and said, “Hey, how come you guys aren’t coming to Feast anymore?” They didn’t realize how hurtful the experience was for us. They probably didn’t realize that because of the extreme segregation that happens in Vernon, that the Baha’i Faith was the only place where we interacted with non-Natives. Our life was totally in the Native world. We lived on a piece of cut-off land, but we lived within the reserve boundaries. We were involved in the reserve community, with my wife’s relatives. And our entire life was with Native people, except for our activity with the Baha’i Faith, that was about the only time that we interacted with non-Natives. And so I doubt if any of them realized, it would have been like them coming to the band hall with 100 Native people there all turning on them. You know, it would be a traumatic experience. That’s what it was for us, it was a traumatic experience. But they didn’t realize it. They said, “How come you quit coming to the Feast? You haven’t come in six months.” I thought, “Wow, they don’t even know what they did.” They were not conscious that it was really a traumatic event for us. That we felt attacked. And they probably didn’t feel that they had attacked us, maybe. They probably didn’t have an awareness of what a traumatic experience it was for us.⁴³

Such lack of awareness is testament to the degree to which to non-Indigenous, and particularly White, power and perspectives were normalized within the Baha’i community. At the same time, this story also speaks, again, to the high level of hurt and sensitivity that some Indigenous people carried into their interactions in the Baha’i community on account of the wider history of colonialism. Situations like this were difficult on all sides: it was not up to Brown to teach non-Indigenous Baha’is to be sensitive, but nor could non-Indigenous Baha’is have easily known just how hurtful their words would be. This indicates that even in contexts where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples were trying to build understanding (where most in settler society were not), it could still entirely break down.

⁴³ Brown, interview.

How Indigenous Baha'is themselves experienced and interacted in intercultural community had much to do with their own personal histories. What were painful incidents to some based on previous experiences of colonial violence or trauma, for example, may not have been taken this way by others without the same background. Where some narrators were accustomed, if not entirely comfortable, interacting in non-Indigenous society when they became Baha'is, for others partaking in this religious community required a more radical step.⁴⁴ Brown, for his part, shared that he takes some responsibility for the difficulties that he has had interacting in Baha'i community, noting that "I know because of the trauma of my youth I overreact to things." And despite painful interactions that continue to resonate in his life, and led to periodic retreat from the Baha'i community, he also stressed that he is pleased to be part of a community that is grappling with these issues: "I think that's very important. You know, it's difficult and it's hard, but we're doing something that's very hard – we're trying to bring human beings together, and that's not an easy thing. But I'm glad to be part of a community that's attempting to do that."⁴⁵

One of the key tools that Baha'is did and do employ in this process is "consultation." Baha'is are instructed, in their discussion and decision-making processes, to apply this method, which counsels "the 'subjugation of all egotism and unruly passions, the cultivation of frankness and freedom of thought as well as courtesy, openness of mind, and wholehearted acquiescence in a majority decision."⁴⁶ Several narrators noted consonance between Indigenous and Baha'i methods of consultation and noted that more flexible and responsive modes of communication have developed within the Baha'i community over time (owing, in part, to Indigenous

⁴⁴ Brown, interview; Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

⁴⁵ Brown, interview.

⁴⁶ Universal House of Justice, cited in Wendi Momen, ed. *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 1989), 58; Helen Bassett Hornby, compiler, *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File* (New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2010 [1983]), 176-180.

representation on Baha'i institutions like Local and National Spiritual Assemblies).⁴⁷ As Brown's description of the Salmon Arm Feast suggests, though, the focus and tone of consultation was frequently set by majority adherents who found their own cultural cues and assumptions silently confirmed in and by the Baha'i community. Strong emphasis on Baha'i expansion, as opposed to building internal community understanding, further exacerbated such tensions.⁴⁸

Despite sincere appetite for Indigenous difference within the Baha'i community, an overwhelming emphasis on unity similarly functioned to shut down necessary discussion of diversity. This was a key tension within the religion.⁴⁹ Respect for the Baha'i "Greater" and "Lesser Covenants" (discussed in Chapter 3), coupled with related Baha'i law that cast contention as an impediment to personal and collective spiritual growth, called for tolerance and kept Baha'is of diverse stripes from openly confronting such controversial subjects as racism within the Baha'i community.⁵⁰ As narrator Donald Addison, for example, shared in the present tense:

if a White Baha'i says something that's mean or out of place, and it happens all the time, my responsibility is to not pick that up and run with it. I may not even confront them. Well, confront, see, right there, is the wrong word. That shows that I still haven't cleaned it up entirely. What I mean, and what I should be doing is, conceptualizing it as, to love my fellow White Baha'i into freedom from their own prejudice.⁵¹

⁴⁷ For example, Jacob Bighorn, interview; Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 11 July 2008.

⁴⁸ Brown, interview; Lane Jr., interview. Teaching was sometimes offered as an explicit solution to internal tension. At the 1980 Continental Indigenous Council in Wilmette, Illinois, for example, Universal House of Justice member, and former pioneer to the Navajo Reservation, Amoz Gibson stressed, "If you have any problems in your community, solve them by making a sincere effort to teach. Invite the one whom you are having the most difficulty with to be the speaker at your fireside." "Mr. Gibson," the report continued, "urged the friends to shower a special love on an individual, adding that the love 'will return to you ten-fold.'" "Native Council," *Bahá'í News* (Sept 1980), 4.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Sen McGlenn, "Baha'i Meets Globalisation: A New Synergy?" in Warburg et al, *Baha'i and Globalisation*, 283.

⁵⁰ It likewise led to controversy and censorship in the field of Baha'i scholarship. For a useful review see Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America*, 162-166.

⁵¹ Donald Addison, interview with the author, Eugene, Oregon, 24 June 2008.

A report on a large Indigenous Baha'i gathering, a Continental Indigenous Council, held on the Blood (Kainai) Reserve in southern Alberta in the summer of 1982 recorded a similar impulse among attendees, noting that:

A frequent topic of frank consultation during the workshops, according to one observer, was the issue of dealing with a predominantly white society including non-Native Bahá'ís. During the consultation the indigenous friends spoke of their need to overcome fears and prejudices and to become one not only with other Native believers but with all of the friends. Participants offered one another strong encouragement to accomplish this.⁵²

In this formulation, the responsibility for overcoming fear and prejudice fell to Indigenous adherents. As Andrea Smith has observed in the context of the American Evangelical race reconciliation movement, "In essence, racism becomes articulated as a problem of personal prejudice from which both parties suffer rather than as an institutional set of practices from which one community benefits at the expense of the other."⁵³ Yet a focus on unity and tolerance did not mean passivity on the part of Indigenous Baha'is. As Deloria Bighorn, for example, shared in the context of discussing her own personal pattern of activity and retreat within the Baha'i community:

I remember the last time I left the [Nineteen Day] Feast and I thought, that's it, I'm not going back. It was when I was at Maxwell [International School] in '90, I'm going to say '95, '96, maybe sometime in there. I remember feeling so frustrated that I just got up out of the Feast and left. And that was the magic day. Because I went home and I prayed about it, I talked to my parents about it and I thought, why am I leaving? How is anything going to be different if I don't stay? How is anything ever going to change if I just keep leaving? Every time I leave, then that's one less voice to say something different. And it was a big "ah ha" moment, but that's what happened for me. I can see that it's different for different people, but I guess the only way I reconciled it is how I deal with it. How I deal with it is that, the basic teaching is the teaching of unity, right? And the basic law under that is contention and conflict are forbidden in the *Aqdas* [the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*], it says. They're forbidden. So, I got to do something about that. I cannot be in conflict with somebody else, to be right with my God. So I can certainly feel it, but I got to work on it, I got to do something about it. I can ask nobody else to be accountable for that but me. So that's when I quit leaving the table.⁵⁴

⁵² "Third North American Native Council," *Bahá'í News* no.620 (Nov 1982), 8.

⁵³ Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right*, 93.

⁵⁴ Deloria Bighorn, interview.

For Bighorn, then, aspiration towards unity itself proved a prompt for broaching internal Baha'i tension. She noted that there has been significant improvement in intercultural communication and understanding within the Baha'i community since she joined the religion in the late 1960s. At the same time, her reflections imply that the onus for raising issues of intercultural tension continues to fall on Indigenous adherents like her, as it largely did through the intervening period when many non-Indigenous Baha'is (White ones especially) proved ignorant of the scale of their own privilege and, reluctant to engage in "frank and full" consultation, were ill-prepared to fully plumb its implications.⁵⁵

Building Indigenous Baha'i Community

While uneven power dynamics within the Baha'i Faith, combined with the acute legacies of colonialism more generally, contributed to patterns of retreat on the part of a number of Indigenous Baha'is, more practical considerations of what Baha'is call "consolidation" also contributed to challenges of community building. As noted in Chapter 2, Baha'is lacked what narrator John Sargent described in the context of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), where he pioneered from 1965-1972 (but equally applicable to a place such as the southern Prairies, where he also spent time teaching among Indigenous people before and after this) as "a good follow up methodology."⁵⁶ There were a corps of Baha'is like Sargent, who were committed to the work of

⁵⁵ Deloria Bighorn employed the phrase "frank and full" consultation in our interview together. Consultation proved a challenging process outside the Indigenous context as well. Writing about the Atlanta Baha'i community, for example, Michael McMullen shared a joke he encountered several times in the course of his research: "although Shoghi Effendi counsels 'the spirit of frank and loving consultation,' (1974, 63) 'frank is often left out in the car when [a Local Spiritual Assembly] meeting begins.'" McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 45.

⁵⁶ John Sargent, interview with the author, by telephone, 21 July 2008. The southern Prairies were the site of a large influx of several hundred Indigenous people (primarily Blackfoot, Cree, and Saulteaux) into the Baha'i Faith during the early 1960s. By the end of the "Ten Year Crusade" in 1963, Indigenous members were said to compose close to one third of the Canadian Baha'i population. Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 90.

helping “deepen” (or educate), not just enroll, new Indigenous Baha’is.⁵⁷ Relatively few in number and with limited resources and experience, however, these Baha’is struggled in the effort, with the result that many of the Indigenous people who formally enrolled as Baha’is during the second half of the twentieth century did not in the end become active adherents. Like some of those who pulled back from community practice on account of intercultural tension, a number of these certainly continued to consider themselves Baha’is, but did not take a regular part in community life and Baha’i institutions such as Local Spiritual Assemblies.⁵⁸

As sociologists of the Baha’i Faith have observed, participation in the Baha’i “Administrative Order” is a key process through which adherents cultivate a Baha’i identity and narrators in this study, specifically, have served on a wide range of Baha’i institutions ranging from Local and National Spiritual Assemblies to Regional Councils and Auxiliary Boards.⁵⁹ Narrators, further, expressed a sense of shared Indigenous Baha’i identification when they recalled early Indigenous members of such institutions as National Spiritual Assemblies (NSAs). Several, for example, spoke in their interviews about early Indigenous members of the Canadian and American NSAs such as Thomas (Tommy) Anaquod (Saulteaux) and Franklin and Chester Kahn (Diné).⁶⁰ Allison Healy similarly recalled her delight at coming across a photograph of the

⁵⁷ For a study that discusses one such figure, non-Indigenous Baha’i Angus Cowan, as well as other Baha’is active in Indigenous teaching on the Prairies, see Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*.

⁵⁸ This is a pattern that I heard described repeatedly throughout the course of my research. Those who discussed it in interview context include: Sargent, interview; Jack Bastow, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 24 July 2004.

⁵⁹ Lynn Echevarria, *Life Histories of Bahá’i Women in Canada: Constructing Religious Identity in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 142-158; McMullen, *The Bahá’i*, 35, 111. Examples of such service are plentiful and include: Healy, interview (Baha’i Council of Alberta); Gubatayao-Hagen, interview (NSA of Alaska); John Sargent, interview with the author, by telephone, 22 July 2008 (Auxiliary Board); Kevin Locke, interview with the author, by telephone, 28 March 2008 (American NSA).

⁶⁰ Thomas Anaquod and Franklin Kahn, who were the first Indigenous members of the Canadian and American NSAs, respectively, were both voted in in 1968 by way of a Baha’i election provision that stipulates that, in the case of a tie vote, the position should go to the minority candidate. Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 130, 315 (fn 13); Linda S. Covey, “Diné Becoming Bahá’i: Through the Lens of Ancient Prophecies” (MA Thesis, Missouri State University, 2011), 114-115. Reflections on these figures include Umtuch, interview; Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008; Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

first all-Indigenous Local Spiritual Assembly in North America (which was elected among the Omaha in Macy, Nebraska in 1948) while visiting Shoghi Effendi's office, in Baha'u'llah's home in Bahji, while she was on pilgrimage in 2007.⁶¹

Baha'i institutes, which were established in several areas of Indigenous Baha'i concentration in Canada and the United States over time, also served as sites of Indigenous Baha'i community building. Institutes in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, for example, in Pine Springs, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation, and near Lake LaBerge, north of Whitehorse, in the Yukon were places of connection for Indigenous Baha'is not only in their immediate area but transnationally as well.⁶² While the institutes in Fort Qu'Appelle and the Yukon were relatively short lived and are now closed, the Native American Baha'i Institute (NABI) is ongoing and a number of narrators that I interviewed have spent time there.⁶³ Lorintha Umtuch, for example, served at NABI relatively recently, assisting with teaching and deepening activity. She also recalled processes of intertribal cultural exchange that she engaged in there and elsewhere, describing one especially dynamic exchange whereby she learned a Zuni sunrise song that Diné Baha'i Charlotte Kahn had translated into Navajo and Lakota Baha'i Kevin Locke had in turn translated into his language. Umtuch learned the song in Lakota then, when she returned home to

⁶¹ Allison Healy in Eleanora McDermott, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008. Healy noted that she originally thought, based on the dress of the women in the photograph, that they were Crow, but later recalled Shoghi Effendi's description of Macy LSA and made the connection. Ojibwa Baha'i Melba Loft described a strikingly similar experience of connecting with this photograph while on pilgrimage: Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Bahá'í Pioneers* (Essex, MD: One Voice, 2011), 136-137.

⁶² On the Fort Qu'Appelle Institute: Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 109-112, 128, 161-162, 318 (fn 7); Sargent, interview, 22 July 2008. On the Native American Baha'i Institute: accessed online 17 Nov 2012, <http://www.nativeamericanbi.org/about.asp>. At the July 1984 opening of the Yukon Baha'i House (whose hall, in a telling expression of Indigenous Baha'i affiliation, was named "Kinaaj-Kwe" in honour of early Ojibwa adherent, Melba Loft), for example, Alaskan Baha'is were informed, "It's your house, too." "Bahá'í House – Yukon is Opened," *Bahá'í News* no.643 (Oct 1984), 8; Loft Watts and Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga*, 167-168.

⁶³ Tina Kahn, interview with the author, Pine Springs, Arizona, 21 June 2009; Linda Covey, interview with the author, Evanston, Illinois, 10 June 2008; Addison, interview; Shales, interview.

the Yakama Reservation, was inspired by this and other songs she had learned to sing in Farsi and Arabic as well, to learn her own Yakama language.⁶⁴

Telling of such intertribal connections and mobility, Baha'is from the Navajo Reservation have also travelled to attend Indigenous Baha'i events elsewhere. Tina and Alfred Kahn, for example, are among those, along with other relatives, who attended the "Council Fire" at Neah Bay, an annual gathering held for many years on the Makah Reservation in Washington, beginning in 1962.⁶⁵ Events like these were conceived as opportunities for fellowship between Indigenous and other Baha'is, though sometimes served a teaching function as well. Lee Brown, for example, recalled one man, who had no prior knowledge of the religion, who declared as a Baha'i at the close of one of a series of "Unity Gatherings" hosted by Baha'is in the Cariboo region of British Columbia in the early 1980s. Brown described approaching the man and asking, "Tell me the one thing that really made you want to be a Baha'i. Why did you do this?" The new Baha'i's response was resonant: "This is the only place I've been in my entire life," Brown recalled him replying, "where Whites and Indians are trying to get along." Brown admitted that, "we weren't necessarily getting along":

We were having big arguments about how to conduct these gatherings. Sometimes we had to stop the gatherings and explain Native protocols and how things are done. And there was sometimes real bitternesses there. But we were trying, this guy said. In a world so racially divided even the effort to come together is admirable.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Umtuch, interview.

⁶⁵ Kahn, interview (as I discuss in a coming chapter, Tina Kahn is of Cherokee, Osage, and Hungarian heritage and married Alfred, member of a longstanding Diné Baha'i family, after she moved to the reservation as a pioneer). *Neah Bay Baha'i News*, Seventh Edition (March 23, 1963), poster insert, American Indian Service Committee Records, Local Spiritual Assembly USA Files, Spiritual Assembly, Makah Reservation, WA, 1963, 1967, National Bahá'í Archives, United States. For discussion of the role of "Council Fires" in the dissemination of the Baha'i Faith among the Diné people on the Navajo Reservation as well see Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í." And for discussion of Council Fires more generally see National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, *Circle of Unity*, Revised Edition (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), 12-13, Will van den Hoonaard Personal Collection.

⁶⁶ Lee Brown, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 21 March 2008.

The Cariboo Unity Gatherings, which placed intertribal practices of prayer, dance, story, and drum at their core, included not just “Whites and Indians,” but Asian, African, and Iranian Baha’is as well.⁶⁷ Moments like this again confirm the wider context of deep racial division in which Indigenous Baha’i interactions occurred and underline the significant impact that even such small steps towards understanding carried.

At the same time, intercultural tensions within the religion itself also stimulated a sense of solidarity and proved an incentive to interaction between Indigenous Baha’is.⁶⁸ As Deloria Bighorn, for example, reflected: “the Native people, the Native Baha’is, always helped each other, always tried to help each other. Always tried to reach out to each other. Always recognized that there was a desire to have more of us and that it was a hard go. That there were other people who were trying.”⁶⁹ Donald Addison echoed this theme of mutual support, observing that, “there’s a lot of American Indian Baha’is who are struggling to not leave the Faith because of the way White Baha’is treat them. And we help each other, we help each other to keep from leaving the Faith.”⁷⁰ In Alaska, Tlingit Baha’i Mary Brown, who was first elected to the National Spiritual Assembly there in 1970, played a key role in initiating “Native Councils,” gatherings conceived, according to a 1978 *Bahá’i News* article, “in response to the

⁶⁷ Brown, interview; *Bahá’i Canada* 3, nos.1 (Dec 1980-Jan 1981), 16; 3, no.4 (May-June 1981); 4, no.6 (Jan-Feb 1983), 33, 47; 5, no.1 (March-April 1983), 33; 5, no.3 (July-Aug 1983), 38; 7, no.2 (June-July 1985), 58; 6, no.3 (Oct 1984-Jan 1985), 77; 7, no.2 (June-July 1985), 58.

⁶⁸ As anthropologist Joan Weibel-Orlando has argued, community is at once “cognitive construct” and “international pattern”; it is “more than the sum of its institutional parts or individual parts – it is process, social interaction, and the dynamic intersection of its constitutive parts in the face of a shared threat or toward the accomplishment of a common goal.” Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, L.A.*, 2, 6.

⁶⁹ Deloria Bighorn, interview.

⁷⁰ Addison, interview. Addison articulated a sense of Indigenous Baha’i identification elsewhere as well. It was he, for example, who recalled, in addition to Lee Brown, the contested pipe ceremony at Peigan discussed in Chapter 6; a sense of shared slight also contributed, even in absentia, to an imagined Indigenous Baha’i community. See also Addison’s reflections on Baha’i community dynamics in Donald Addison and Christopher Buck, “Messengers of God in North America Revisited: An Exegesis of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablet to Amír Khán,” *Online Journal of Bahá’i Studies* 1 (2007): 180-270.

need to find an effective way for native Indian and Eskimo believers to express their concerns.”⁷¹ “Basically,” the article outlined, “the Native Council is a teaching [and deepening] conference conducted for natives within a native setting. The Native Council allows the native believers to participate fully and easily in their own unique way.”⁷² Hinting towards intercultural tension within the Baha’i community, author Marilyn Patterson added that while non-Indigenous adherents were welcome as observers and dignitaries were to be “acknowledged and given the freedom of the floor,” the intention of the Councils “is to encourage the participation of native peoples and avoid domination by non-natives.”⁷³ While heartening for Indigenous participants, however, separate gatherings like these were contested by some non-Indigenous Baha’is, who, reminiscent of critics of affirmative action, disputed the need for distinct Indigenous spaces within the community and countered what they saw as sectarian events undermining the principle of unity.⁷⁴

This was not a new charge, nor one limited to internal Baha’i affairs.⁷⁵ As early as mid-century, for example, White Baha’i Dorothy Baker recalled the mixed reaction that met a call from Shoghi Effendi for two new teaching committees, one to reach “the Negro minority of America” and the other “the Indian tribes of this continent.” As she described in a 1953 address:

some of us, to draw out further light on the subject, even questioned a great deal about the kind of psychology that might ensue if you had a committee just to reach the Negro, but he [Shoghi Effendi] rather scoffed at it in a precious kind of way, and firmly

⁷¹ Marilyn Patterson, “Alaska’s Native Councils: A New Mode of Expression,” *Bahá’i News* (July 1978), 11. Also Marilyn Patterson, “The Peoples of God, Part 2 -- Alaska,” *Bahá’i News* (July 1978), 9.

⁷² Patterson, “Alaska’s Native Councils,” 11. Separate planning committees for Northern and Southeast Alaska allowed for events specific and appropriate to each region (the first being populated more by “Eskimo” Baha’is and the second by “Indians”).

⁷³ Patterson, “Alaska’s Native Councils,” 11.

⁷⁴ Such tensions were addressed by non-Indigenous Baha’i Fletcher Bennett, who was active in Indigenous teaching on the Northwest Coast and was also involved in bringing Native Councils to British Columbia: interview with the author, Saanich, British Columbia, 21 July 2004. Also, Bastow, interview; John Sargent, conversation with the author, by telephone, 16 Feb 2005; Loft, interview; Sawin, “Native Conversion, Native Identity,” 108, 114.

⁷⁵ Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America*, 137-138.

reiterated that without special attention we simply had not done it, and that the important thing is to do it.⁷⁶

Dubbed by Shoghi Effendi “the most challenging issue,” Black-White relations were a longstanding area of concern for American Baha’is.⁷⁷ And Indigenous and Black Baha’is themselves sometimes made common cause, no doubt through a sense of racialized solidarity. Describing one Indigenous Baha’i gathering that she organized in Salem, Oregon, for example, Deloria Bighorn noted that, “We had the support of all the Black believers in the area, in the Portland area. They did the cooking, the childcare, so that we could be free to consult.”⁷⁸

Black people, who Baha’u’llah described as “the pupil of the eye” (“Thou art like unto the pupil of the eye,” Abdu’l-Baha elaborated in a letter to Robert Turner, the first Black Baha’i in North America, “which is dark in colour, yet it is the fount of light and revealer of the contingent world”) were the focus of specific Baha’i writings. Indigenous peoples, though, had the distinction of being the subject of the sole “racial” prophecy in the sacred Baha’i texts.⁷⁹ As such, although the prospect of forging community within Baha’i community was contested, Indigenous adherents had a unique impulse and justification for doing so. None of the Indigenous Baha’is whom I interviewed, interestingly, pointed to Abdu’l-Baha’s prophecy (or, as some alternately described it, “mandate,” “credo,” “promise,” “gift,” or “destiny”) as an initial

⁷⁶ Dorothy Baker, “Text of Taped Message by Hand of the Cause Dorothy Baker, Ridvan 1953,” 2, Kenneth Jeffers Papers, M-378, Box 15, National Bahá’í Archives, United States.

⁷⁷ See, for example, Garlington, *The Baha’i Faith in America*, 115-121; Louis E. Venters III, “‘Most Great Reconstruction’: The Baha’i Faith in Jim Crow South Carolina, 1898-1965” (PhD Thesis, University of South Carolina, 2010); Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis and Richard Thomas, eds., *Lights of the Spirit: Historical Portraits of Black Bahá’ís in North America, 1898-2000* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing, 2006).

⁷⁸ Deloria Bighorn, interview. This gathering, like many other Indigenous Baha’i events, evinced intertribal connections: Joyce Shales’ father, James Walton, for example, as well as Mary and Ruby Gubatayao were in attendance.

⁷⁹ Abdu’l-Baha, in Bonnie J. Taylor, compiler, *The Pupil of the Eye: African Americans in the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* (Riviera Beach, FL: Palabra, 1998), 3; Christopher Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy Studies in the Bábí and Bahá’í Religions*, vol.18 (Los Angeles: Kalimát, 2005), 42. On the sole “racial” prophecy see Andrew Pemberton-Piggot, “The Bahá’í Faith in Alberta; 1942-1992: The Ethic of Dispersion” (MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 1992), 34.

motivation for becoming Baha’i.⁸⁰ But they all identified it as an important, if indeterminate, subsequent mandate. A number struggled with the loaded language of savagery which the passage contains, but were similarly buoyed by what they read as recognition of the particular spiritual capacity of Indigenous people.⁸¹ Some narrators described the prophecy as specific to North America, while most saw it extending throughout the Americas or to the Indigenous world at large.⁸² Abdu’l-Baha’s statement was, and remains, an active subject of personal searching and shared deliberation among Indigenous Baha’is.⁸³ As Deloria Bighorn put this in the present tense, “we’re always pondering this.” “What did Abdu’l-Baha mean?,” she added, “What are we supposed to do about it?”⁸⁴

Queries like this both motivated and enabled Indigenous Baha’is to come together in community of their own. Workshops at the Continental Indigenous Council held on the Blood (Kainai) Reserve in August 1982, for example, were guided by the questions, “‘Who are we, as native Bahá’ís?,’ ‘Where are we heading?’ and ‘What is our responsibility?’”⁸⁵ Organized by an Indigenous Baha’i committee of the same name, with members appointed by the National Spiritual Assemblies of Canada, the United States, and Alaska, Continental Indigenous Councils

⁸⁰ Though none pointed to the prophecy as specific explanation for declaration, it did motivate Indigenous enrollment to the degree that it inspired Baha’i outreach to Indigenous peoples. Various characterizations of the prophecy include: Eleanora McDermott and Allison Healy, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008 (as “gift” and “destiny”); Gubatayao-Hagen, interview, 11 July 2008 (as “credo” and “mandate”); Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008 (as “mandate” and “promise”).

⁸¹ For example, Jacob Bighorn, interview; Grover, interview; Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interview with the author, by telephone, 19 Aug 2008. Despite official efforts on the part of the Universal House of Justice to standardize Shoghi Effendi’s translation that has Indigenous peoples being “like unto savages,” the earlier iteration that described Indigenous peoples being “treated as savages” remained in circulation, historically and at the time of my interviews. For example, Eleanora McDermott and Allison Healy, interview.

⁸² For example, Donald Addison applied the prophecy to the Indigenous peoples of the Western hemisphere: interview; Eleanora McDermott and Allison Healy applied it to North America: interview; and Nedra Greenaway applied it to the Indigenous peoples of the world: interview, 19 Aug 2008.

⁸³ As recently as 2008, for example, Indigenous Baha’is from diverse backgrounds came together in a series of regional gatherings on the West Coast to consult with Violette and Ali Nakhjavani, the first a close travel companion and confidant of Ruhiiyyih Khanum and the second a former member of the Universal House of Justice, on the subject.

⁸⁴ Deloria Bighorn, interview.

⁸⁵ *Bahá’i Canada* 4, no.1 (March/April/May 1982), 37.

were held in locations across North America beginning in 1978 on the Yakama Reservation in Washington.⁸⁶ At these gatherings, which drew the participation of hundreds of Indigenous Baha'is from across the Americas, participants pondered their specific roles in the religion, consulted on living legacies of colonialism in and outside the Baha'i community, and celebrated and enacted intertribal cultural exchange.⁸⁷ Though geared specifically to Indigenous Baha'is, the Councils were also open to non-Indigenous adherents; the Second Council, held in July 1980 on the grounds of the National Baha'i Center in Wilmette, in fact included separate sessions for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Baha'is. This gathering, at which narrator Phil Lane Jr. served as emcee, closed with a large powwow attended by upwards of one thousand, including non-Indigenous Baha'is as well as non-Baha'i Indigenous people from nearby Chicago.⁸⁸ Lee Brown described this Council as "one of the biggest events I ever went to, as far as Native Baha'is go, and one of the real highlights of my entire life."⁸⁹ Relationships forged at periodic events like

⁸⁶ *Bahá'í Canada* 4, no.3 (July/August 1982), 29; National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, "Circle of Unity," 10; "Native Council," *Bahá'í News* (Sept 1980), 2. The first Council was held in 1978 in White Swan, on the Yakama Reservation in Washington; the second in 1980 on the grounds of the National Baha'i Centre in Wilmette, Illinois; the third in 1982 on the Blood (Kainai) Reserve in Alberta; the fourth in 1985 in Fairbanks, Alaska; the fifth in 1988 on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in South Dakota; and the sixth in 1991 at Maxwell International School in Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia.

⁸⁷ The third Council on the Blood Reserve, for example, drew the participation of over four hundred Indigenous Baha'is from ten countries and sixty different tribes. "Third North American Native Council," *Bahá'í News* no.620 (November 1982), 8. Brown, interview; Deloria Bighorn, interview; Healy, interview; "Native Council," 2-7; "60 Tribes Represented at the Third Continental Indigenous Council," *Bahá'í Canada* 4, no.6 (July-Aug 1982), 29-32; "Indians Consult at Indigenous Council," *Bahá'í News* no.690 (September 1988), 6-9; "Notice of Fourth Continental Indigenous Council," *Bahá'í Canada* 6, no.4 (Feb-March 1985), 37; "Fourth Continental Indigenous Council: 'Blessed are the Nameless and Traceless Poor,'" *Bahá'í Canada* 7, no.5 (Nov 1985), 48; "Indians Consult at Indigenous Council," *Bahá'í News* (Sept 1988), 6-9. These Councils are reminiscent of the Tekakwitha Conference, both an organization (begun by White missionaries in 1939, but taken over by what the historian Allan Greer describes as "an increasingly militant Indian laity" in the 1970s) and an annual gathering of Indigenous Catholics from across North America dedicated to the canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk Catholic who died at a young age in the Jesuit mission of Kahnawake in 1680 (and who officially became a saint on 21 Oct 2012). Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 201-205. The gatherings likewise recall the "hub-making activities" that Renya Ramirez has considered in the more recent context of the Silicon Valley in California: Ramirez, *Native Hubs*, 8.

⁸⁸ This included a singing group from the Chicago Indian Center. "Native Council," 3-5.

⁸⁹ Lee Brown, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 28 October 2008. Another Continental Indigenous Council, the 1985 gathering in Fairbanks, where Brown shared on the subject of Indigenous prophecies, led to a source of great pain and disappointment for him; a video that was made of Brown sharing prophecies at the gathering was subsequently edited and disseminated widely without his permission; these edits took the particular

these in turn informed local Baha'i community life as well. It was, for example, after consulting with Diné Baha'is at the Council in Wilmette, where they shared that their Nineteen Day Feast could last an entire day, with many hours of prayer, that Brown and other Baha'is on the Okanagan Reserve in British Columbia made the decision to hold a pipe ceremony as the devotional component of their Feast (see Chapter 6).⁹⁰

These gatherings, which were held roughly every two years into the early 1990s, marked a high-tide moment in large-scale Indigenous Baha'i activity in North America.⁹¹ Shifts in institutional structure since that time have oriented Baha'i community life more regionally, with a related emphasis on building up active and sustained local communities and administrative bodies.⁹² Intended to counteract challenges of consolidation that dogged Baha'i community life in general, such changes have not fully resolved tensions of intercultural understanding that stymied Indigenous Baha'i activity specifically.⁹³ An overall downturn in official Baha'i attention to Indigenous issues similarly proved a source of disappointment to many Indigenous Baha'is. Contrasting the intense period of Indigenous Council activity with a current quiet, for example, Allison Healy observed:

prophecies Brown was discussing out of context, a process that continues in various iterations online, with excerpts from this edited talk being cited on a range of (often New Age) websites.

⁹⁰ Brown, interview, 28 October 2008.

⁹¹ In Canada (where there was always greater attention to Indigenous issues than in the United States, where Black-White relations dominated the "race" agenda) in the 1980s, for example, the national Baha'i community also experimented with the "Native Desk," a department at the National Baha'i Centre dedicated to Indigenous issues, and *Visions*, a supplement to the monthly national newsletter, *Bahá'í Canada*. As with the overall downturn in Indigenous Baha'i activity and the closure of Baha'i centers and institutes in places like Fort Qu'Appelle and Lake LaBerge, the discontinuation of these services was a source of intense disappointment to some Indigenous Baha'is. Sargent, interview, 22 July 2008; Loft, interview.

⁹² On these changes and the implementation of the "Ruhi system" (derived from an approach developed by the Ruhi Institute in Colombia) and the "Institute process" see Garlington, *The Baha'i Faith in America*, 145-147.

⁹³ The 2000 "Annual Report of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and its Agencies" acknowledged this explicitly, recording that "In some quarters, the [National American Indian Teaching] Committee observed disturbing evidence of continuing patterns of racism and/or of indifference to the challenges of diversity in the Bahá'í community." National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, "Annual Report of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and its Agencies," Ridván 2000, National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

I guess people are just too busy nowadays, that we have to help our own people. We have to try and get more resources to get things going. In the past, we used to have Indigenous Councils. And these were big gatherings, international gatherings for all the Native people, and I think that's what kept us going.⁹⁴

Healy added that the only comparable event of which she is aware is an Indigenous Baha'i gathering that has taken place annually since 2001 at Harper Mountain, in the southern interior region of British Columbia. "That's what they're trying to do in Harper," she explained, "is to get more Native people to get to understand what our role is in the Faith. We don't have to depend on somebody to come around telling us what to do. Or have you done this? We came in the Faith independently and so we should continue helping each other."⁹⁵

Building Baha'i Community

Healy's clear articulation of Indigenous Baha'i identification and agency suggests that we might think about gatherings like Indigenous Councils, and Harper Mountain more recently, as one expression of what the Cherokee literary scholar Jace Weaver has called "communitism." Combining (somewhat awkwardly, Weaver admits) "community" and "activism," communitism points towards "a proactive commitment to Native community," including what Weaver calls "the 'wider community' of Creation itself."⁹⁶ Where historians like Joel Martin have elucidated examples of Christian communitism, challenging the characterization of Indigenous converts as "individuals completely deracinated or estranged from their ancestral culture and communities," North American Baha'i history reveals the construction of a new religious iteration of

⁹⁴ Allison Healy in Eleanora McDermott, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008.

⁹⁵ Healy in McDermott, interview. At the time of this interview, Allison Healy and Eleanora McDermott were planning a similar gathering aimed to heighten Indigenous Baha'i activity in Alberta. And when I was in touch with Healy during the fall of 2012, she had just returned from that year's Harper Mountain gathering in British Columbia.

⁹⁶ Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), xiii.

Indigenous community altogether.⁹⁷ Indigenous Baha'is enacted communitist values, and also defied Baha'i convention concerning community within community, when they came together to celebrate and share cultural knowledge and consult on persistent colonial currents and their own prophesied place in the Baha'i religion. At the same time, the teaching of unity in diversity (combined with demographics, themselves informed by the dominant tenor of the Baha'i community) set down an imperative for intercultural relationship building that many Indigenous Baha'is also described as profoundly healing. Unity in diversity, to be sure, has yet to be achieved in practice. It was itself a contradiction in terms that had to be worked out in particular context over time. This process itself, however, reveals the Baha'i religion's role as a simultaneous space of intercultural *and* Indigenous contact, community building, and learning.

⁹⁷ Joel Martin, "Introduction," in Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas, eds. *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 12. See also Joel W. Martin, "Visions of Revitalization in the Eastern Woodlands: Can a Middle-Aged Theory Stretch to Embrace the First Cherokee Converts?" in Michael Harkin, ed. *Reassessing Revitalization Movements: Perspectives from North America and the Pacific Islands* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 84; Smith, *Native Americans and the Christian Right*, 108-109. Though Weaver writes in an Indigenous nationalist framework, he also acknowledges that contemporary Indigenous community takes diverse, sometimes intertribal (he uses "pan-Indian"), form. Communitism, he argues, is an accordingly flexible concept: "Community is a primary value, but today we exist in many different kinds of community – reservation, rural, urban, tribal, pan-Indian, traditional, Christian. Many move back and forth between a variety of these communities. Our different locations, physical, mental, and spiritual, will inevitably lead to different conceptions of what survival, liberation, and communitism require." Weaver, *That the People Might Live*, 44.

Chapter 8: Teaching and Traveling

It wasn't just Italy that Joyce Shales visited on her first journey abroad during the summer of 1968. Israel was also on the itinerary. In the Baha'i holy land, Shales, her father, James Walton, and their two Saulteaux travel mates, Thomas and Sophie Anaquod, had the chance to meet and lunch with the widow of Shoghi Effendi, Ruhyyih Khanum. "She wanted to meet with the four Indians that came to the conference," Shales recalled, "to tell us that we had a big job ahead of us. It was our job to do some of this teaching that my dad had been doing and would be doing. That my grandpa started off doing those long years ago."¹ Reminiscent of the "same road" metaphor that she drew elsewhere in our interviews together, Shales continued, "In a way we were continuing his journey. As far as I'm concerned, it's just one continuous thread [...] So that's where we picked it up and somebody who had never been out of her own little town and for whom going to the United States was like going to a foreign country, ended up going all over the world."² In places as close as coastal Alaska and as far distant as Greenland, the Philippines, and Panama, Shales and her Baha'i family members shared their religion among other Indigenous people. And in the process, they, like other Indigenous Baha'i teachers, simultaneously strengthened their Baha'i identities and cultivated a new sense of global Indigenous identification.

¹ Joyce Shales, interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 29 July 2008. Shales may be referring here to the Oceanic Baha'i Conference in Palermo, or to a subsequent 1968 gathering held in honour of the centenary of Baha'u'llah's arrival in Akka (Acre), Israel. Thomas Anaquod, then a member of the Canadian National Spiritual Assembly, represented this institution at the Akka gathering. See Patricia Verge, *Angus: From the Heart: The Life of Counsellor Angus Cowan* (Cochrane, Alberta: Springtide Publishing, 1999), 131. Ruhyyih Khanum made a common practice of meeting with Indigenous Baha'i teachers who visited Haifa. Another Saulteaux Baha'i, Dorothy Maquabeak Francis, for example, was similarly invited to meet with her while she was on pilgrimage. Chelsea Horton, "Beyond Red Power: The Alternative Activism of Dorothy Maquabeak Francis," *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 14, no.3/4 (Sept-Dec 2004), 44.

² Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

The idea that a Tlingit woman from the Northwest Coast of North America would come to generate a sense of connection with Indigenous people around the world by teaching a mid-nineteenth-century Iranian religion with global aspirations is, again, counterintuitive. Indigenous people in North America have long been cast as subjects, not agents, of mission, a portrait that historians of earlier Christian contact zones have begun to complicate by analyzing the activities and movement of Indigenous missionaries within the British empire and former colonies like Canada.³ Baha'is, for their part, proved deeply concerned to distinguish themselves from their colonial missionary forebears and akin to other new religious movements like Pentecostalism that spread in "Indian Country" during the second half of the twentieth century, actively encouraged Indigenous adherents to participate as "teachers" and "pioneers."⁴ Teaching was considered a sacred duty for all Baha'is and Indigenous adherents, like others, deepened their religious identification by way of this activity. At the same time, they situated themselves uniquely in relation to the teaching task on account of Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy. Outreach to Indigenous people was a core topic of consultation among Indigenous Baha'is and a primary way through which they activated the ambiguous mandate laid out by "the Master's" message.⁵

³ See, for example, Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012); Cecilia Morgan, "Missionaries and Celebrity within the Transatlantic World: The Ojibwa of Upper Canada, 1830-1860," in Robert Clarke, ed., *Celebrity Colonialism: Fame, Power and Representation in Colonial and Postcolonial Cultures* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars' Press, 2009), 15-36; Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 13. Though she writes from the perspective of literary criticism, not history, Kate Flint nevertheless usefully positions Indigenous missionaries like Anishinabe Methodists Peter Jones and George Copway within the transnational framework of the "Red Atlantic" in *The Transatlantic Indian, 1776-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), esp. Chapter 8.

⁴ John Webster Grant observes this willingness of more recent missionary movements to include Indigenous converts as teachers in *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 201-202. For a study that analyzes Diné Pentecostalism as an Indigenous movement and considers the shift in status from a "missionized" to "missionizing" people see Kimberly Jenkins Marshall, "Performing Conversion Among the Diné Oodlání (Navajo Believers)" (PhD thesis, Indiana University, 2011), esp. 46.

⁵ See, for example, reports relating to the Continental Indigenous Councils discussed in Chapter 7, including: "Native Council," *Bahá'í News* (Sept 1980), 2-5; *Bahá'í Canada* 4, no.1 (March/April/May 1982), 37; *Bahá'í Canada* 4, no.3 (July/August 1982), 29; "Third North American Native Council," *Bahá'í News* no.620 (November 1982), 8-9; "60 Tribes Represented at the Third Continental Indigenous Council," *Bahá'í Canada* 4, no.6 (July-Aug

Indigenous Baha'is travelled extensively for the purpose of such teaching and pioneering, thus unsettling the enduring image of what the anthropologist James Clifford has called the "homebody native."⁶ Contrary to conventional social scientific readings of globalization, however, which cast the process as one of Western homogenization, this mobility did not mark a flattening of Indigenous difference.⁷ Indigenous Baha'is frequently travelled to Indigenous communities elsewhere in North America and the world out of a sense of solidarity stemming from shared histories of colonialism, cultural congruence, and prophecy. They shared a message that promoted local cultural strength and specificity towards the goal of global unity.

This was one of many options available for Indigenous people to activate either global or Indigenous identities in this period. The "global sixties," the same time when Baha'i teaching on the part of Indigenous people took off, saw an unprecedented mobilization of people and politics "from below."⁸ This includes Indigenous political activism in North America, itself informed by international decolonization efforts and struggles for civil and human rights at home in Canada

1982), 29-32; "Notice of Fourth Continental Indigenous Council," *Bahá'í Canada* 6, no.4 (Feb-March 1985), 37; "Fourth Continental Indigenous Council: 'Blessed are the Nameless and Traceless Poor,'" *Bahá'í Canada* 7, no.5 (Nov 1985), 48; "Indians Consult at Indigenous Council," *Bahá'í News* no.690 (September 1988), 6-9.

⁶ James Clifford, "Indigenous Articulations," *The Contemporary Pacific* 13 no.2 (Fall 2001), 477. See also James Clifford, "Varieties of Indigenous Experience: Diasporas, Homelands, Sovereignities," in Marisol de la Cadena and Orin Starn, eds, *Indigenous Experience Today* (NY: Berg, 2007), 197-224.

⁷ For discussion of globalization and efforts to complicate in relation to religion see Thomas Csordas, ed., *Transnational Transcendence: Essays on Religion and Globalization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), esp. 61 where Tweed proposes the addition of "sacrosapes" to the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's influential formulation of "the 'five dimensions of global cultural flows'": ethno-, media-, techno-, finance-, and ideoscapes; Manuel A. Vásquez and Marie F. Marquardt, *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003). See also footnote 6, on James Clifford, above.

⁸ See, for example, Karen Dubinsky et al eds., *New World Coming: The Sixties and the Shaping of Global Consciousness* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2009); Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, and Greg Kealey, eds. *Debating Dissent: Canada and the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Sean Mills, *The Empire Within: Postcolonial Thought and Political Activism in Sixties Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). This literature includes Indigenous peoples marginally, and typically within a "Red Power" frame.

and the United States.⁹ In 1974, Secwepmec leader George Manuel coined the expression “the Fourth World” to describe the shared colonial histories and vibrant postcolonial potential connecting Indigenous peoples globally; a year later he and collaborators formally launched the World Council of Indigenous Peoples at a meeting held in Tseshaht territory in Port Alberni, British Columbia.¹⁰ More recent activism and academic literature has likewise attended to the articulation of a politicized category of global Indigeneity.¹¹ Indigenous Baha’i histories of teaching and travel, by contrast, reveal the construction of a sense of global Indigenous identification through an expressly religious channel.¹² Like Indigenous political activists, Indigenous Baha’is forged connections on the basis of common histories of colonialism.¹³ But they were also instructed to refrain from partisan politics and to be obedient to government.

Although Indigenous Baha’is did not share a single interpretation of this counsel, most did see themselves working for change in a different register than Indigenous political activists, both

⁹ As Daniel Cobb has recently argued, while Indigenous political activism is typically equated with the American Indian Movement, it well predated this organization (which was not formed until 1968) and marked much more than an anticipatory “road to Red Power.” Daniel Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America: The Struggle for Sovereignty* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008), 1-2. On the international orientation of the sovereignty movement see Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*, 204. For another collection that challenges the periodization and framework of Red Power see Daniel Cobb and Loretta Fowler, eds., *Beyond Red Power: American Indian Politics and Activism Since 1900* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007).

¹⁰ George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (Don Mills, ON: Collier-Macmillan Canada, 1974). See also Anthony J. Hall, *The American Empire and the Fourth World: The Bowl With One Spoon* Volume 1 (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 238-249. As Hall notes, Manuel first heard the term “the Fourth World” from secretary of the Tanzanian High Commission, Mbuto Milando. On Manuel and the World Council of Indigenous Peoples see Peter McFarlane, *Brotherhood to Nationhood: George Manuel and the Modern Indian Movement* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1993).

¹¹ See, for example, Sheryl Rae Lightfoot, “Global Indigenous Politics” (PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 2009); Roger Maaka and Chris Andersen, eds., *The Indigenous Experience: Global Perspectives* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2006); Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Ronald Niezen, *The Rediscovered Self: Indigenous Identity and Cultural Justice* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009).

¹² The historian Tolly Bradford has recently demonstrated how two nineteenth-century Anglican missionaries, Henry Budd, a Cree from Canada, and Tiyo Soga, a Xhosa from South Africa, developed a conceptual sense of pan-Indigenous affiliation by way of Christian networks and theology. Bradford, *Prophetic Identities*. Focusing on much more recent connections, Andrea Smith has called for attention to the unexpected (à la Philip Deloria) decolonizing space of Christian Evangelical mission: “Decolonization in Unexpected Spaces: Native Evangelicalism and the Rearticulation of Mission,” *American Quarterly* (Special Issue: Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies) 62, no.3 (Sept 2010), 569-590.

¹³ As Andrea Smith observes in relation to the decolonizing potential of Evangelical mission, this sense of solidarity stems, ironically enough, from shared histories of mission. Smith, “Decolonization in Unexpected Places,” 570.

nationalist and global.¹⁴ As the anthropologist Charles Carnegie has observed in contemporary context, the writings of Baha'u'llah nurture “an activist attitude toward the condition of global belonging.”¹⁵ Informed by the Baha'i teachings on politics and the paradox of being forbidden from proselytizing yet propelled, by prophecy and religious duty, to teach, Indigenous Baha'i outreach often took the subtle form of service in such fields as Indigenous education, health, community development, and cultural revitalization. Situated in the same context of postwar humanitarianism that also contributed to new Christian theologies of liberation, ecumenism, and aid-as-mission methods, Indigenous Baha'i teaching also edged into development work.¹⁶

Baha'is were called, from the religion's early days, to take up the teaching task. Abdu'l-Baha, for his part, observed just prior to his passing that:

It behooveth [Baha'is] not to rest for a moment, neither to seek repose. They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime, and travel throughout all regions. Bestirred, without rest, and steadfast to the end, they must raise in every land the triumphal cry Ya Bahá'u'l-Abhá! (O Thou the Glory of Glories).¹⁷

¹⁴ At the same time, Baha'is have historically been supportive of the United Nations and the “world order” thinking it is thought to represent. In a 1995 article, Jeff Corntassel and Tomas Primeau ask, “Why has the Bahai community sent an observer to participate in the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples?” The authors imply that this move may have stemmed from Iranian Baha'is seeking self-identification as Indigenous. More likely, however, the Baha'i International Community (BIC), which was formed in 1948 and recognized as a non-governmental organization with consultative status by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in 1970, was present out of concern and interest in global Indigenous affairs. Indeed, narrator John Sargent is among Indigenous Baha'is who have attended meetings of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples on behalf of the BIC. See also the 1988 statement, “Rights of Indigenous Populations,” sent by the BIC to the chairperson of the Working Group, accessed online 14 May 2013, <http://statements.bahai.org/88-0801.htm>. Jeff J. Corntassel and Tomas Hopkins Primeau, “Indigenous ‘Sovereignty’ and International Law: Revised Strategies for Pursuing ‘Self-Determination,’” *Human Right Quarterly* 17, no.2 (May 1995), 350. On the Baha'i International Community see Margit Warburg, *Citizens of the World: A History and Sociology of the Baha'is from a Globalisation Perspective* (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2006), 501.

¹⁵ Carnegie, *Postnationalism Prefigured: Caribbean Borderlands* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 191.

¹⁶ This was particularly the case after 1983 when the Universal House of Justice endorsed a formal shift to Baha'i social and economic development work. See Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 478 and Chapter 11; “New Social, Economic Office Created,” *Bahá'í News* no.634 (January 1984), 1-2. On postwar reorientation of Christian mission see Ruth Compton Brouwer, “When Missions Became Development: Ironies of ‘NGOization’ in Mainstream Canadian Churches in the 1960s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no.4 (Dec 2010), 661-693. For a more general discussion of humanitarianism in this period see Matthew Barnett, *The Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), Parts 2 and 3.

¹⁷ Abdu'l-Baha cited by Shoghi Effendi, “Paramount Duty of Every Bahá'í [1924],” in *Bahá'í Administration* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), 69, accessed online 15 Dec 2012, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/se/BA/>.

Shoghi Effendi reiterated and routinized this call, pressing in the wake of his grandfather's death:

let us arise to teach [Baha'u'llah's] Cause with righteousness, conviction, understanding and vigor. Let this be the paramount and most urgent duty of every Bahá'í. Let us make it the dominating passion of our life. Let us scatter to the uttermost corners of the earth; sacrifice our personal interests, comforts, tastes and pleasures; mingle with the divers kindreds and peoples of the world; familiarize ourselves with their manners, traditions, thoughts and customs; arouse, stimulate and maintain universal interest in the Movement, and at the same time endeavor by all means in our power, by concentrated and persistent attention to enlist the unreserved allegiance and the active support of the more hopeful and receptive among our hearers.¹⁸

As Chapter 2 detailed, teaching methods changed over time and took in, in the context of outreach to and by Indigenous people, tactics ranging from organized public proclamation campaigns to more spontaneous fireside gatherings and subtle expressions of service. Baha'is were encouraged to "live the life" in the everyday and did not have to leave home in order to participate in teaching.¹⁹ A strong "ethic of dispersion," inspired by the religion's global orientation and formalized in official plans that set specific numeric and spatial target goals for expansion, however, placed a particular priority on what Baha'is call "travel teaching" and "homefront" and "international pioneering."²⁰ For Indigenous people who had long been cast as exotic objects of exploration and whose mobility had been curbed and criminalized in service of colonial land dispossession and assimilation, the prospect of contributing to this project as full and valued participants was both enticing and empowering. (Conversely, the frequency with which Indigenous Baha'is traveled outside of their home communities for the purpose of

¹⁸ Shoghi Effendi, "Paramount Duty," 69. Partially cited in McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 126.

¹⁹ On the concept of "living the life" see Shoghi Effendi, "Living the Life," in *Compilation of Compilations: Volume 2*, compiled by Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Mona Vale, NSW: Baha'i Publications Australia, 1991), 1-28.

²⁰ And as Michael McMullen adds, though many adherents "would deny it," status also accrues within the Baha'i community to active and "successful" teachers and pioneers. McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 150-151. "Ethic of dispersion" is historian Andrew Pemberton-Piggot's term: Andrew Pemberton-Piggot, "The Bahá'í Faith in Alberta; 1942-1992: The Ethic of Dispersion" (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1992). Shoghi Effendi launched the first global Baha'i teaching plan in 1937. For a timeline of these plans from the 1953-1963 "Ten Year Crusade" onward see Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 213-214.

teaching is also an indication that this activity could be contested).²¹ While some Indigenous Baha'is had travel experience prior to joining the religion, for others the religions's call to teach opened up a new spiritual geography.²² Like other adherents, Indigenous Baha'is were generally responsible for funding their own travels and many made significant personal sacrifices in order to participate.²³ Were money no object, it is entirely likely Indigenous Baha'is would have travelled more often and even further afield than they did.²⁴

Desire to teach and pioneer sometimes inspired sudden and dramatic movement.

Recalling the process through which he and his non-Indigenous Baha'i wife pioneered in 1970, for example, Phil Lane Jr. explained that they moved from Walla Walla, Washington to Sucre, Bolivia within three weeks of learning about a call for "Indian pioneers" included as part of the "Nine Year Plan" (1964-1973).²⁵ Lane brought a singular intensity to this task. He spoke to this in the context of his current, more critical, understanding of the term "pioneer" (itself informed by a narrative of colonialism's history that emerged in this period, in part through activism in which Baha'is were involved):

²¹ Nedra Greenaway, for example, recalled that Ditiidaht Baha'i John Thomas travelled extensively throughout British Columbia teaching the religion, "But not to his own reserve," where there was already a Catholic, Pentecostal, and Shaker Church presence. Speaking to Baha'i commitment to unity, she added, "I think he felt that his reserve was so divided by religion that he didn't want to put another one in, what could be perceived as another division." Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, 15 Aug 2008.

²² In a statement closely echoed by narrators Beverley Knowlton and Joyce Shales, for example, Blackfoot Baha'i Allison Healy stressed that "it was unheard of to be travelling so far and wide" at the time she became a Baha'i. Indeed, for a woman who spent the better part of her childhood in a Catholic residential school and whose relatives just one generation older were likely subject to the Canadian "pass system" that monitored Indian mobility on the Prairies into the 1930s, the prospect of wide travel surely presented a significant departure. Allison Healy, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 27 April 2008; Beverley Knowlton, interview with the author, between Calgary and Sylvan Lake, Alberta, 26 April 2008; Shales, interview. On the pass system see Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 111-113, 155.

²³ For example, Shales, interview; Knowlton, interview; Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, interview with the author, by telephone, 11 July 2008; Klara Tyler, interview with the author, Neah Bay, Washington, 8 July 2008.

²⁴ Of the twenty-five narrators in this project, all travelled and taught in North America and fifteen globally (and most more than once); twelve pioneered in North America and seven globally. The majority of this travel teaching and pioneering was among other Indigenous people.

²⁵ Phil Lane Jr., interview with the author, Whiterock, British Columbia, 3 January 2009.

Now when I think of the term pioneer today, I mean, pioneer, it's kind of like the Western pioneers. It's a little colonialist. It has a colonial taste to me now. At the time, I didn't think about it. I guess this is where certain levels of intergenerational trauma, that word, for some people, would not have the same connotation as it does to me. A pioneer. Because you think of the early American pioneers who went out and pioneered this land that nobody had been to. Well, bullshit. People were already there. But to me at the time, I was so into this, there wasn't any questions about pioneering or whatever.²⁶

Letters that Lane wrote home to his family in Washington further detail the spiritual ardor he cultivated as a pioneer. In these letters, which he shared with me, he gave such trying and traumatic experiences as his struggle with hepatitis, and even the rape of his wife by the son of a wealthy landowner, a positive gloss, framing them as tests, lessons, and bounties from God.²⁷ He also connected his efforts in Bolivia with those of his great-grandfather, Episcopalian Yankton Sioux minister Tipi Sapa/Philip J. Deloria (see Chapter 5), before him. He wrote to his father in October 1970 a letter that merits lengthy citation:

I know that many times you must wonder why I'm here working in a foreign country when there is so much work to be done with the Indian people in the U.S. and many times my heart is very sad that I can't be there working with you, but you must remember Teepee Sapa who in the 1860's became a minister, even though by doing so he must have gone through an unbelievable struggle within himself for this was the time that every Sioux was fighting the white man for their sacred lands. He cut his hair and gave up all things for his belief, but after the fighting was over it was P.J. who held many of Souix together when they were beaten and all hope seemed to be gone. It must have been an unbelievable sacrifice for a him to leave his people to go to seminary and become a Christian when it seemed his people needed him so in their fight against the whiteman. This is something really to ponder because it took a courage and faith that few men on this earth ever have. He was truly a saint. If in our lives we attain a small part of the qualities of justice, courage, faith, etc. that P.J. Deloria had, we could feel we had done a good job in this life. I've thought about this very much. Teepee Sapa must have had a vision of the future and then had the faith to follow that vision, even though, it might have seemed at the first that he was letting his people down, but when the time came that they needed him, he was prepared and he brought them through that most difficult period. As I mentioned, if I accomplish but a small part of what P.J. Deloria accomplished I will have contributed a great deal to mankind. I too, see a vision of a world united, a 'Heaven on Earth' and I pray that God gives me the strength to follow this vision that becomes clearer everyday. I know that you don't understand or agree with a lot of the things about

²⁶ Lane, interview.

²⁷ Phil Lane Jr., Letter to his father, Sucre, Bolivia, 3 July 1970; Letter to his parents, Sucre, Bolivia, 25 December 1970; Letter to his parents, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, 22 May 1971. Phil Lane Jr. Personal Collection.

Bahai, but since I've been down here the truth that Baha'u'llah is the Spirit of Truth promised by Jesus Christ has become daily more of a reality. To follow the Cause of God is not easy and every day my respect grows more for Teepee Sapa and you and mom for all the unbelievable suffering you must have gone through as you tried to follow those things you believe in, in life. More than once it seemed I couldn't go on, but through prayer and a little sacrifice God has lead me on to greater heights of His infinite glory. Since I believe that the Bahai Faith is God's instrument for the unity of all mankind and for bringing the promised 'Heaven on Earth' it is my responsibility to do the most I can to see that it is established.²⁸

Building on the Baha'i declarations of thousands of Quechua and Aymara people that began in Bolivia during the "Ten Year Crusade" (1953-1963), Lane understood his goal as nothing short of "spiritual revolution."²⁹

As his reflections readily reveal, teaching impacted pioneer as well as pupil. Scholars have demonstrated in several different contexts how the practice of teaching and pioneering contributes to the construction of Baha'i identity, a process further borne out by the experiences of Indigenous adherents including 'Namgis Baha'i Chris Cook Jr.³⁰ Where Lane pioneered to Bolivia in response to a formal call for teachers, Cook selected his own teaching destinations, travelling from his home in Alert Bay, British Columbia, to Whitehorse, in the Yukon, and twice to New Zealand and Vanuatu, in the South Pacific, within a few years of becoming a Baha'i in 1991.³¹ Speaking to the process of Baha'i identification that such experience promoted, he observed that "something happens to you" through travel teaching. "There's a light," Cook

²⁸ Phil Lane Jr., letter to his father, Sucre, Bolivia, 10 October 1970 (spelling as appears in original). Phil Lane Jr. Personal Collection.

²⁹ Lane, interview. Peter Smith, *An Introduction to the Baha'i Faith* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 92. Though Baha'is faced significant challenges in "consolidating" the thousands of Indigenous declarations that occurred between the 1950s and 70s, there remains a relatively substantial Indigenous Baha'i population in Bolivia. Baha'is accounted in 1985 for roughly three percent of the country's population (just one percentage point below the population claimed by Protestants). Merlin B. Brinkerhoff and Reginald W. Bibby, "Circulation of the Saints in South America: A Comparative Study," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 24, no.1 (March 1985), 41. A Baha'i university, Universidad Nur, was opened in Santa Cruz, Bolivia in 1985.

³⁰ See, for example, Lynn Echevarria, *Life Histories of Bahá'í Women in Canada: Constructing Religious Identity in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), Chapters 4 and 5, esp. 99-118, 119-143; McMullen, *The Bahá'í*, 126.

³¹ Chris Cook Jr., interview with the author, West Vancouver, British Columbia, 7 June 2004; Patrick Slobodian, interview with the author, Victoria, British Columbia, 20 July 2004.

continued, “that you pack.”³² This light lent him, in many cases, a sense of peace that inspired powerful Baha’i oratory on his part.³³ And, in Vanuatu, it led him to fully “accept Baha’u’llah.” Speaking to the first of two moving journeys that he made to Vanuatu with non-Indigenous Baha’i friend (and former pioneer to Alert Bay), Patrick Slobodian, Cook shared, “I believe that was a stepping stone to another plateau in my life or another phase, another Chris appeared.”³⁴ Recalling the great emotion he felt as he and Slobodian sat on a high hilltop on the island of Tanna near the end of their month in the remote Pacific archipelago, Cook explained:

I started to cry because it was so overwhelming, it was so powerful. I said, “I’ve never met people like this in my life.” I said, “I don’t really want to go back home. I don’t want to go back. It’s like we’re in a bubble, we’re in a place, like Shan-gri-la, we’re in a place, for me, that I’ve built around in this month, so safe, so much love, so much caring, and the Baha’i Faith, it was all Baha’i Faith, 24:7.” And we talked about it, and we talked about it, and we talked about it and I came to know Baha’u’llah, I came to believe in Baha’u’llah. I don’t know how or what it’s all about, but I did come to believe. You know, before it was, I was a Baha’i, I didn’t understand. I understand a little bit more about a Messenger of God and I believe in Baha’u’llah the Messenger of God, and I accepted it. So, I guess I accepted Baha’u’llah on that trip, although I’d been a Baha’i for awhile. I never even thought about that until we’re talking here now.³⁵

³² Cook, interview.

³³ Cook, interview. Other Indigenous Baha’is echoed this impact. See, for example, Saulteaux Baha’i Dorothy Maquabeak Francis as cited in Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 76; Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Bahá’i Pioneers* (Essex, MD: One Voice, 2011), 155.

³⁴ Cook, interview. Cook and Slobodian were joined on their second visit to Vanuatu and New Zealand in 1997 by several others including Hesquiaht Baha’i J.C. Lucas and Cook’s cousin, ‘Nāmgis Baha’i Steve Cook; this trip was initiated by an invitation from Maori Baha’is during a visit on their part to British Columbia. Steve Cook, conversation with the author, Alert Bay, British Columbia, 31 July 2004; J.C. Lucas, interview with the author, Nanaimo, British Columbia, 6 Oct 2004. The Baha’i Faith was first introduced to Vanuatu in the same time period (1953-1963) as Bolivia and maintains a Baha’i population of roughly the same size. According to John Patrick Taylor, who puts national Baha’i numbers near one and a half percent of the total population, Baha’i adherence is on the rise in Vanuatu. John Patrick Taylor, *The Other Side: Ways of Being and Place in Vanuatu* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), 12. See also Graham Hassall, “The Bahá’i Faith in the Asia Pacific: Issues and Prospects,” *The Bahá’i Studies Review* 6 (1996), 2.

³⁵ Cook, interview. Cook noted that the power of this visit also extended to strong connections made with local residents. He recalled one particular exchange during which an elderly man approached him and shared, “You know, Chief, the words that you bring us, and the things that you share with us, are so beautiful and so enlightening. And, you will now have changed our lives. We have been waiting for you for so long.” Cook noted that there was a prophecy on Tanna, and in Vanuatu more broadly, stating that “when a Red Indian first comes to their island, that things will change.” He was likely referring to the John Frum cargo cult or “custom” religion: Stewart Firth, “The War in the Pacific” and Jocelyn Linnekin, “The Ideological World Remade,” in Donald Denoon and Malama Meleisea, et al, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 315, 411-413. The anthropologist Joël Bonnemaïson recorded after a 1985 visit to Tanna that some former members of John Frum “have joined the Baha’i Church but remain ‘half John Frum, half Baha’i.’” Joël Bonnemaïson, *The Tree and the Canoe: History and Ethnography of Tanna*, translated and adapted by Josée Pénot-

This was, for Cook, an “epiphanal moment,” what the oral historian Lynn Abrams describes as an episode of “acute self recognition which marked [his] transition in real time but also, in the moment of the interview.”³⁶ While Cook was especially explicit in articulating his process of becoming Baha’i through teaching, others certainly echoed the strengthened sense of religious identification that he expressed.³⁷ Given that many Indigenous Baha’is travel taught and pioneered quite swiftly following their declarations, this ongoing process of Baha’i learning, or “deepening,” was, in a way, necessary. But it was also, according to Tagish Baha’i Clara Schinkel, consonant with Indigenous pedagogy. Speaking to the “on-the-job training” she received after being elected to her Local Spiritual Assembly just two months after joining the Baha’i Faith, Schinkel shared in conversation with the sociologist Lynn Echevarria: “And that’s the best way, because it’s good to learn by books, but by doing it – that’s the way the Indian people learn, by doing things. That’s how they teach, by doing things. And when I became a Bahá’í and this is the Bahá’í law ... to teach ... I accepted it just wholeheartedly.”³⁸

Baha’is did not necessarily need to travel great distances in order to feel the effects, and the test, of teaching. Joyce Shales, for example, recalled her own sense of being overwhelmed after returning to Sitka from the 1968 journey during which she and her father met Ruhiyyih

Demetry (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994 [1986]), 326. Likewise, Baha’i scholar Graham Hassall notes that “a number of custom chiefs” on Tanna “have been attracted to the Baha’i community on the basis on its respect for and compatibility with *kastom*.” Hassall, “The Bahá’í Faith in the Asia Pacific: Issues and Prospects,” 10. On the relationship of the Baha’i Faith and *kastom* in Papua New Guinea see Graeme Were, “Thinking Through Images: *Kastom* and the Coming of the Baha’is to Northern New Ireland, Papua New Guinea,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11 (2005): 659-676.

³⁶ Lynn Abrams, abstract for talk, “Epiphanal Moments: Narrating a Path to the Individualised Self in Post-War Women’s Lives,” delivered at the Centre for Women’s and Gender Studies, University of British Columbia, 9 February 2011.

³⁷ For example, Deloria Bighorn, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 20 March 2008; Eleanora McDermott, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008; Klara Tyler, interview.

³⁸ Lynn Echevarria, “A New Skin for an Old Drum: Changing Contexts of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá’í Storytelling,” *The Northern Review* 29 (Fall 2008), 53. Schinkel was the first member of the Johns family (who, according to Lynn Echevarria, made up 104 of the 204 Indigenous people who became Baha’is in the Yukon between 1960 and 1975) to declare as a Baha’i; she was introduced to the religion by Joyce Shales’ father, Jim Walton. Echevarria, “A New Skin for an Old Drum,” 39.

Khanum in Haifa. “So I came back,” Shales shared, “and I thought, ‘Oh my God. What in the world did I get myself into?’”:

Because what did I know? Nothing. So then I wrote to the Baha’i National Assembly in Anchorage and I told them that I’d been to Haifa and what we had been told, my dad and I, that we had a job to do and what was I supposed to do. So they told me to take a trip and so I said, “Where?” So they said, “To Hoonah.” So what am I supposed to do? So I had to figure out what to do. I had to get it all together. So I did. It was pretty scary.³⁹

That the prospect of travelling to another Tlingit village, located less than one hundred miles north of Sitka, instilled such trepidation in Shales suggests the significant challenge that teaching could present (and further contextualizes the departure that her transnational travels represented as well). I asked Shales how she proceeded. “Well,” she replied, “I did things one at a time”:

I bought a ticket, I made an arrangement and a plan for a family to meet me, house me, and then I would go and I would give a talk to some group of people and so I bought a ticket and I went and I gave a talk about something, I have no clue what, but that was it. That was the beginning. But it took every ounce of courage I had to do it. Because I sure as heck had never even read in front of a group of people, except for prayers, up to that point. Even saying a prayer aloud was a stretch at that point.⁴⁰

“I had to make myself do the things I did,” Shales elaborated elsewhere. “And I did that because I believed that it was necessary to do those things. Because we wanted to work for peace and a better world.” “And,” she added humbly, “we felt that maybe we could play our small part.”⁴¹

This, for Shales and her family, was an entirely Baha’i (if not, as suggested by the spiritual genealogy she repeatedly drew to her grandfather, brand new) endeavour. As she emphasized, linking her family’s journey back to her father’s first introduction to the Baha’i Faith (see Chapter 4), “we’ve traveled the world because of that old couple on that dock somewhere in Juneau, all of us.”⁴²

³⁹ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

⁴⁰ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

⁴¹ Joyce Shales, interview with the author, Seabeck, Washington, 30 July 2008.

⁴² Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

Baha'i teaching stimulated Indigenous mobility and interaction within North America as well as abroad. Lorintha Umtuch, who became a Baha'i on the Yakama Reservation as a teenager in 1966, began travelling later in life, after she had established her career as a tribal judge and her children were grown.⁴³ Describing the empowering effect of this activity, Umtuch explained:

I was more of a rez girl than I thought. I limited myself because of that. It wasn't until I started working for other tribes and the Baha'i Faith that I brought my horizon much more [open]. And that renaissance didn't happen until 1999. Yeah, the past nine years or eight years that I've made the changes in my life and realized that, you know, all my kids are grown up, I've got the empty nest and I can travel more and I did travel a lot for the Faith. In fact, my goal was, I said, "Okay." 'Cause I had a whole houseful of stuff like I do right now and I had a girlfriend and her name was Gita and she had a house and I said, I just rented a room, "Okay, my life is in this room," and so that was all I had and I said, "Well, that's fine 'cause I'm traveling a lot so this room is fine 'cause it's just where I sleep."

With this base, she elaborated:

I would travel for the Faith and then after a while I would travel as a judge too. I worked for Fort McDowell, Fort Mojave, worked for Gila River, I worked for Cocopah. I worked for different tribes and it was a lot of fun and I lived out of a suitcase but I was a very active Baha'i too so I ran around all over, all over California, all over Arizona, all over New Mexico. I ran around all over the place and I made a lot of friends and it was good. I met a lot of people in different tribes and that was fun too. It just broadened my horizons quite a bit as an individual and next year I'm going to make a pilgrimage to Haifa.⁴⁴

⁴³ Another female narrator, Linda Covey, made a similar choice to wait until her children were grown before undertaking extensive travel. Linda Covey, interview with the author, Evanston, Illinois, 10 June 2008. While Umtuch did not travel until later in life, archival records demonstrate that she actively encouraged and contributed to Baha'i community life during her early days as a Baha'i on her reservation. American Indian Service Committee Group Files, Yakima Reservation, Washington, 1965, National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

⁴⁴ Lorintha Umtuch, interview with the author, Toppenish, Washington, 21 June 2008. This travel included periods of service at the Native American Baha'i Institute on the Navajo Reservation. *Navajo-Hopi Bahá'í Newsletter* 1, no.2 (March 2006) and 1, no.2 (June/July 2006). Pilgrimage was another major way that adherents deepened their Baha'i identities and a number of narrators shared pilgrimage stories with me. For example, Covey, interview; Jane Grover, interview with the author, McMinnville, Oregon, 22 June 2008; Deloria Bighorn, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 7 July 2008; John Sargent, interview with the author, by telephone, 21 July 2008; Klara Tyler, interview with the author, Neah Bay, Washington, 8 July 2008.

After returning to her hometown of Toppenish following this intensive period of travel, Umtuch dedicated herself to teaching and service among the Yakama people, something she characterized as her twin “renaissance,” “Indian” and Baha’i.⁴⁵

Umtuch’s reflections indicate not just the coproduction of Indigenous and Baha’i identities, but also intimate the core calling that Baha’i teaching constituted for adherents. While teaching was an activity that could and often did occur spontaneously, it was also a responsibility, to use Lane’s term, to which Baha’is put careful prior planning. Joyce Shales spoke to this in the context of her own extensive travels, emphasizing that, “In just about every place that I ever went, I made preparation in ways that helped me.”⁴⁶ As she elaborated in relation to repeat visits that she made to Russia:

First, the Baha’i teachings say that you should get an education. So I got an education. It said that you should get an education, if you can, that will help people. So I got an education that I thought would help people. I read somewhere Alaska was the back door to Russia. And at that time, of course, there was the Iron Curtain, and then the Ice Curtain. There was no crossing between Alaska and Russia, and there hadn’t been for seven decades.

But the Alaskans have a long history of connections to Russia. We had Russian America, my grandfather was born when the last Russians who went back to Russia left Alaska. However, many Alaskans including myself are part Russian. And there was also another quote about Alaska, about the connection between China and Russia that meant a lot to me, that I connected with. It said that someday those doors would open again, that there would be opportunities that would come about in the future.

So, this was in the ‘60s and ‘70s, well before anybody ever dreamt that the Berlin Wall would come down or any of those things would happen. But I just thought if Baha’u’llah is who he says he is, if these things are going to happen, if what we’re talking about is that we’re going to be working for world peace, it’s going to be a step-by-step process. And then if Alaska’s going to be the back door to Russia, that means that someday, maybe not in my lifetime, but someday, there’s going to be an opportunity for Alaskans to go to Russia. Obviously that’s what that means. So, if I want to be ready for that opportunity, I should prepare myself for that opportunity.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Umtuch, interview.

⁴⁶ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008.

⁴⁷ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008. On the Baha’i teachings on education see, for example, *A Compilation on Bahá’í Education*, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (Haifa: Bahá’í World Centre,

Shales, accordingly, studied Russian language, history, and literature, preparation, she stressed, that served her in good stead when opportunities to visit Russia did present themselves. The first of these came during the course of her university studies (she travelled to Western Russia, including Moscow, in 1975 on a fieldtrip) and the second as a result of the education that she explicitly pursued with the goal of contributing to the construction of the Baha'i New World Order (Shales was invited to the Russian Far East, a region she subsequently visited multiple times, in the early 1990s through her work in Indigenous and cross-cultural education).⁴⁸ And she was not alone in tying her education to Baha'i goals: many narrators were encouraged by the Baha'i teachings to pursue a formal education and subsequently deployed their training in such fields as health, education, community development, and social work towards the Baha'i goals of peace and unity in diversity.⁴⁹

Indeed, work, according to the Baha'i writings, is worship, and teaching too.⁵⁰ As the Lakota musician, performer, and knowledge keeper Kevin Locke explained to the ethnomusicologist Pauline Tuttle, "You see, in the Bahá'í Faith Bahá'u'lláh has elevated work to the station of worship when done in the spirit of service to humankind."⁵¹ Locke thus considers his performance program, which combines Lakota and Baha'i themes and through which he has travelled to over eighty countries worldwide, a simultaneous expression of service and the

1976), accessed online 15 Dec 2012, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/c/BE/>. The reference to Russia as the back door to Alaska that Shales was referring to may be a statement attributed to Shoghi Effendi that appears in Ben Levy, "Pilgrim's Notes," 1953, accessed online 15 Dec 2012 http://bahai-library.com/levy_pilgrims_1953.

⁴⁸ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008. Shales also visited China in 1990 for a women's conference. She likewise stressed that she made similar preparation in the way of language and historical study prior to other travels like her time pioneering in Panama (discussed below).

⁴⁹ For example, Covey, interview; Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 12 March 2008; Deloria Bighorn, interview; Scott Tyler, interview with the author, Bellevue, Washington, 28 July 2008.

⁵⁰ See Helen Bassett Hornby, compiler, *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File* (New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2010 [1983]), 624-626.

⁵¹ Pauline Tuttle, "Beyond Feathers and Beads": Interlocking Narratives in the Music and Dance of Tokeya Inajin (Kevin Locke)," in Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds, *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 116.

sacred.⁵² Likewise, for narrator Tina Kahn, who pioneered to the Navajo Reservation from Nevada roughly thirty years ago, service is the central frame through which she has taught the Baha'i Faith. Kahn spent her first year on the Navajo Reservation listening and observing; as she explained, "That's what I understood would be the good way to come here."⁵³ After this, she elaborated:

I tried to see, I'm here not to take a job away from any of my brothers and sisters, I'm here to serve, so how can I work? And how can I demonstrate there again in my life that I'm here as a Baha'i to be of service? So I would take jobs that might be good – you know, nobody else had taken yet and they're saying, "We're desperate. Would you take this job," you know? So I did community organizing. Counseling is my background. First it was all counseling. You know, re-evaluation, co-counseling in alcohol recovery, New Directions, Four Worlds, you know? We did real strong, know who you are, know where you come from, know where you're going, find your strength and your balance and find your ceremony that will help you with your healing, your art, your animal therapy, your work therapy – whatever it is that was going to help you keep going.⁵⁴

In addition to work with various organizations in the fields of recovery and youth leadership, Kahn and her family (she married Alfred Kahn, member of a longstanding Diné Baha'i family, and had two children there) have likewise served in the specifically Baha'i space of the Native American Baha'i Institute located not far from their home in Pine Springs, Arizona.⁵⁵ They have, further, participated in teaching initiatives outside Dinétah (the Diné homeland) as well; this includes several iterations of the "Trail of Light," a travel teaching project that began spontaneously in the wake of the first Continental Indigenous Council held on the Yakama

⁵² Kevin Locke, interview with the author, by telephone, 28 March 2008. As Pauline Tuttle observes, while Locke considers his performance a form of worship, he does not include spiritual content inappropriate for public consumption or dissemination in his program. Tuttle, "Beyond Feathers and Beads," 116. On Locke's life and work see also Pauline Tuttle, "The Hoop of Many Hoops: The Integration of Lakota Ancestral Knowledge and Bahá'í Teachings in the Performative Practices of Kevin Locke" (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2002).

⁵³ Tina Kahn, interview with the author, Pine Springs, Arizona, 21 June 2009.

⁵⁴ Kahn, interview. Kahn's reference to siblings can be read in several keys: she forged Diné family ties through her marriage to Alfred Kahn, had prior adoptive connections to his family (having met some of his relatives in Nevada, where they attended boarding school), and also engaged a broader Indigenous framework of relationship.

⁵⁵ Kahn, interview. For detail on the Kahn family and their relationship to the Baha'i Faith see Linda S. Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í: Through the Lens of Ancient Prophecies" (MA thesis, Missouri State University, 2011).

Reservation in 1978 and subsequently saw intertribal teams of Baha'is from North, Central, and South America journey within and between these regions.⁵⁶

While teaching was a task for which all Baha'is were deemed responsible, Indigenous adherents were motivated by the additional propulsion of Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy. Baha'i leaders and dignitaries regularly pointed to this passage in their writings and interactions with Indigenous Baha'is. It was Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy, and Shoghi Effendi's promotion of it after him, for example, that prompted Ruhiiyih Khanum to so vigorously encourage Shales and other Indigenous Baha'is to concentrate their efforts on outreach to other Indigenous people.⁵⁷ And at gatherings like the Continental Indigenous Councils held through the 1980s, the prophecy and plans to activate it (like the "Trail of Light" teaching projects) was a central subject of consultation.⁵⁸ Individual adherents likewise identified Abdu'l-Baha's words as a key source of inspiration. Mary Gubatayao-Hagen, for example, who pioneered with her young family from San Jose, California to the Nez Perce reservation in Idaho not long after declaring as a Baha'i in 1981, explained that her mother, Ruby Gubatayao (who, like narrators Klara and Scott Tyler,

⁵⁶ Tina Kahn, specifically, was a member of one of several "Trail of Light" teams that fanned out (to Alaska in her case) from the 1980 Continental Indigenous Council in Wilmette, Illinois. She and her husband Alfred also supported the 1982 Trail of Light (or, Camino del Sol) by caring for the cattle of family members who travelled to South America. They have also participated in more recent "Trails" to Neah Bay, Washington and across the Navajo Nation. Kahn, interview; "Trail of Light," *Bahá'í News* (Sept 1980), 6-7; "Third North American Native Council," *Bahá'í News* no.620 (Nov 1982), 8-9. For more on the Trail of Light, some iterations of which also included the participation of narrators Kevin Locke and Phil Lane Jr., see: "El Camino del Sol' – The Trail of Light Blazes Through Latin America," *Bahá'í Canada* 4, no.4 (Sept/Oct 1982), 22-24; "Camino del Sol' Coming to Canada," *Bahá'í Canada* 4, no.6 (Jan/Feb 1983), 25; "Trail of Light Visits the United States," *Bahá'í News* (June 1984), 3-13; *Bahá'í Canada* 6, no.4 (Feb-March 1985), 38; "Trail of Light' Visits Indigenous Peoples," *Bahá'í News* no.649 (April 1985), 7; "Trail of Light' in Bolivia, Peru," *Bahá'í News* no.699 (July 1989), 2-9; "Trail of Light' Completes Successful Visit," *Bahá'í News* no.656 (Nov 1985), 1-3.

⁵⁷ This was a message Ruhiiyih Khanum delivered not just in Haifa, but in written communications and personal interactions with Indigenous Baha'is in North America as well. See, for example, Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiiyih Khanum, *A Message to the Indian and Eskimo Bahá'ís of the Western Hemisphere* (Toronto: Bahá'í Canada Publications, 1969); and report of her participation at the 1982 Continental Indigenous Council on the Blood Reserve: "Third North American Native Council," *Bahá'í News* no.620 (November 1982), 8-9.

⁵⁸ See, for example, "Native Council," *Bahá'í News* (Sept 1980), 1-5; "Third North American Native Council"; "Indians Consult at Indigenous Council," *Bahá'í News* no.690 (September 1988), 6-9.

also spent time pioneering among the Nez Perce), impressed upon her the significance of this statement:

And my mom, that's like a credo to her along with other things, but that's what she really passed onto me, and we studied that quite a bit together, and our passion was always working with Indigenous people and moving, travelling throughout the United States, Canada, and Alaska, now working with Indigenous Baha'i communities.⁵⁹

Nedra Greenaway similarly characterized Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy as the mandate that motivated her and her non-Indigenous Baha'i husband to pioneer, also with their young children, from Surrey, British Columbia to Frobisher Bay (now Iqaluit, Nunavut), in the Arctic, in 1969. As she explained, echoing Abdu'l-Baha's wording (or, more accurately, Shoghi Effendi's English translation of it), "that's his promise to the Indigenous people, specifically to Indigenous Baha'is, if they catch this universal faith and this faith that can give them so much, if they can incorporate it into their own culture and build on that, then they can enlighten the world."⁶⁰

Suggesting how teaching contributed to the production of expanded Indigenous as well as deepened Baha'i identities, Greenaway expressly positioned this statement and Indigenous Baha'i teaching efforts in global context. Speaking about the Inuit, who, she noted, also received specific mention by Abdu'l-Baha in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (the title, recall, subsequently given to the set of letters in which his "Indian" prophecy appears), Greenaway invoked the concept of the Fourth World. Elaborating on Abdu'l-Baha's reference to "the Eskimo" and his forecast that "The country will become like a garden," Greenaway explained that Abdu'l-Baha was referring to more than climate change:

what he really indicated, it was a metaphor for the spiritual potential of the Inuit. Because Indigenous people, you might say they're the Fourth World. We have the First World, we have what we call the Third World, but the Fourth World are Indigenous people and they're all over. All over the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, even the

⁵⁹ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview. The Tyler family pioneered from Seattle, Washington to Lapwai, Idaho from 1964-1968. Klara Tyler, interview; Scott Tyler, interview with the author, Bellevue, Washington, 28 July 2008.

⁶⁰ Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 12 March 2008.

Lapps [the Saami] in Northern Europe. In China there's a lot of what the Han Chinese (ninety percent of the population) call little peoples or minorities. They have fifty-seven minorities that could be Indigenous people too. And the Indigenous peoples of the world have been at the bottom rung, I mean, they've all been colonized, they've all been taken over, their numbers have been decimated, we know that with the Northwest Coast Indians ninety percent died, through smallpox and whatnot and whatnot. Maybe that wasn't the fault of the colonizer, maybe they didn't know that they were going to bring these diseases, but they have, it's history. Not only are they looked on as savages, but looked on as worthless. Worthless people, a dying people. Even the great anthropologist Franz Boas came to the Northwest Coast to minutely document the way of life of many Northwest Coast Indians because he thought their days were numbered, they would soon disappear into history. And Abdu'l-Baha said that they, because of their history and how they were treated, must become divinely educated, then they will enlighten the world.⁶¹

Greenaway speaks here, as she did at several other points in our interviews, with the detached personal pronoun "they," not a collective "we," distancing herself somewhat from the Fourth World history she describes.⁶² But for other narrators, shared histories of colonialism proved a potent, and personal, point of connection with other Indigenous people, in North America and elsewhere.

It was through the Baha'i Faith itself that some narrators first made such connections.

Allison Healy, for example, noted at several points during our time together that she did not know there were Indigenous people elsewhere in the world prior to becoming a Baha'i. She was an active teacher in her own Blackfoot territory from the time she declared in 1972, but did not

⁶¹ Greenaway, interview. Abdu'l-Baha's 5 April 1916 letter to the Baha'is of Canada and Greenland includes the following passage: "God willing, the call of the Kingdom may reach the ears of the Eskimos, the inhabitants of the Islands of Franklin in the north of Canada, as well as Greenland. Should the fire of the love of God be kindled in Greenland, all the ice of that country will be melted, and its cold weather become temperate – that is, if the hearts be touched with the heat of the love of God, that territory will become a divine rose garden and a heavenly paradise, and the souls, even as fruitful trees, will acquire the utmost freshness and beauty. Effort, the utmost effort, is required. Should you display an effort, so that the fragrances of God may be diffused among the Eskimos, its effect will be very great and far-reaching. God says in the great Qur'an: A day will come wherein the lights of unity will enlighten all the world. 'The earth will be irradiated with the light of its Lord.' In other words, the earth will become illumined with the light of God. That light is the light of unity. 'There is no God but God.' The continent and the islands of Eskimos are also parts of this earth. They must similarly receive a portion of the bestowals of the Most Great Guidance." 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993 [1916]), 28. In another letter, dated 21 February 1917, Abdu'l-Baha also instructs the Baha'is of Canada and Greenland to "dispatch ye teachers to Greenland and the home of the Eskimos." 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, 96.

⁶² For analysis of the significance of personal pronouns in oral history narratives see Alessandro Portelli, "As Though it Were a Story: Versions of Vietnam," in *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), Chapter 11.

travel internationally for the first time until five years later, when she attended an international Baha’i conference in Merida, Mexico.⁶³ Indigenous Baha’is often taught and traveled together and Healy’s first international travel teaching trip came about after she mentioned to Lakota adherent Jacqueline Delahunt (now Left Hand Bull), who Healy met at a Baha’i gathering on the Blood reserve when Delahunt was serving as a Baha’i Counselor for the area, that she would be interested in joining her on her next journey abroad.⁶⁴ In 1990, the two women travelled to Scandinavia, then Healy continued on to Greenland.⁶⁵ She subsequently journeyed with her husband, Earl, to Aotearoa/New Zealand and twice to the Russian Far East. As she recalled, Indigenous people of diverse background, from the Saami in Scandinavia (those she jokingly dubbed the “White Indians”) to the Maori of Aotearoa, inquired about prejudice against Indigenous people in North America:

Like, “Do you face prejudice where you come from?” ‘Cause they also face prejudice. And similar ways of, you know, losing our culture. Because in Scandinavia it was the Lutheran Church. Were very dominant over them and it was still like that when we were there. A lot of them wanting to become Baha’is but they have to go through so much red tape. They have to meet with the clergy. They’re no longer going to [be a member of the church]. Yeah. So it’s such a drag. And they don’t want to do that. You know, go through all that. So there’s a lot of things that prevent them and they had been persecuted too. All their drums and things they use would be burnt up and destroyed away from them. They went through a lot too. They suffered. In similar ways like we suffered too. Even the Russia people, the Indigenous people there. The Yakuti people, they went through lots too, a lot of suffering. Yeah. Everywhere we go, even among the Maori people in New

⁶³ Healy, interview. This conference was attended by a number of Indigenous Baha’is from Canada including Healy’s cousin, Diane Melting Tallow, Saulteaux Baha’i Dorothy Maquabeak Francis, and Ojibwa Baha’i Melba Loft. See, for example, Evelyn Loft Watts and Patricia Verge, *Return to Tyendinaga: The Story of Jim and Melba Loft, Bahá’í Pioneers* (Essex, MD: One Voice, 2011), 140-143.

⁶⁴ Healy, interview. Jacqueline Delahunt/Left Hand Bull became a Baha’i in 1981 and was appointed a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors (part of the Baha’i “Institutions of the Learned”) in 1988. She was elected to the American National Spiritual Assembly in 2001 and served as Chair of the NSA from 2007-2011; she served as co-chair in 2012. Left Hand Bull also participated in several Trail of Light teaching projects, including two to Latin America. On these journeys see “‘Trail of Light’ Visits Indigenous Peoples”; “‘Trail of Light’ in Bolivia, Peru.” On Left Hand Bull’s introduction to and interpretation of the Baha’i Faith see, for example, Patricia Locke, “The Return of the ‘White Buffalo Calf Woman’ – Prophecy of the Lakota,” interview with Jacqueline Left Hand Bull, 1989, accessed online 13 May 2013, <http://bci.org/prophecy-fulfilled/wbcalf.htm>.

⁶⁵ Healy, interview; *Bahá’í News* no.714 (Oct 1990), 17.

Zealand. Everywhere it was like that among the Indigenous people. So we had a lot of things in common. So I was amazed, there's Indigenous people all over the world.⁶⁶

It was the Baha'i Faith, and her desire to help teach it, that opened Healy up to this broad perspective and through which she, her husband, and other Indigenous travel mates connected with various Indigenous peoples on the intersecting bases of colonialism and culture.

Despite this sense of solidarity, however, the affiliations that Indigenous Baha'is forged were not political (if they were, nevertheless, politicized). Baha'u'llah urged his followers to, “Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.”⁶⁷ Shoghi Effendi, though, also instructed “obedience to government” and called Baha'is to abstain from “partisan politics,” which he framed as inherently divisive and thus counter to the Baha'i goal of unity.⁶⁸ Indigenous Baha'is themselves interpreted these teachings in various ways and a number partook in Indigenous governance, both as hereditary and elected leaders. Joyce Shales' father, James Walton, for example, was a leader of the Kaagwaantaan Wolf House, Eagle/Wolf Moiety, of Sitka, Alaska and Chris Cook Jr. has served on the 'Nāmgis band council and as president of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, a longstanding political organization in the province.⁶⁹ Samson Knowlton, the father

⁶⁶ Allison Healy, interview with the author, North Vancouver, British Columbia, 16 Jan 2009. Healy made strikingly similar statements in interview, 27 April 2008. In a special series on Indigenous peoples titled “The Peoples of God,” *Bahá'í World* counted “the Lapps” (Saami) as Indigenous. Jorunn Hagan, “The Peoples of God: Part 4: The Lapps,” *Bahá'í World* no.570 (Sept 1978), 2-5.

⁶⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), 213, accessed online 16 Dec 2012, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/GWB/>.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Shoghi Effendi, *Directives from the Guardian* (India/Hawaii, 1973), 55-57, accessed online 16 Dec 2012, <http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/se/DG/>. Baha'i teachings on political participation changed, and hardened, over time. See Margit Warburg, “The Dual Global Field: A Model for Transnational Religions and Globalisation,” in *Baha'i and Globalisation*, ed. Margit Warburg, Annika Hvithamar, and Morten Warmind (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 165.

⁶⁹ “James Wilbur Walton – Obituary,” *Juneau Empire* (23 Nov 2003), accessed online 16 May 2013, http://juneauempire.com/stories/112303/obi_obit1.shtml; Cook, interview. For context on the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia see Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), 116-121. And for further discussion of Indigenous Baha'is and politics in British Columbia see Chelsea Horton, “‘According to your faith so shall your power and blessings be’: The Aboriginal-Bahá'í Encounter in British Columbia (MA Thesis, Simon Fraser

of narrators Eleanora McDermott and Beverley Knowlton, was a lifetime Peigan councilor and frequently combined Baha'i travel and teaching with his work on behalf of the Blackfoot, efforts that included petitioning for the federal franchise and elimination of restrictions on Indigenous mobility off-reserve.⁷⁰ When I asked McDermott about her own position on politics, she recalled approaching her Local Spiritual Assembly in Calgary for clarification regarding her membership on the city's Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee:

And I asked the LSA if I would be able to, because it's a political, we're a liaison between the Natives, the mayor, and city council. So I asked if I could join them. They said, "Yes, you can. Even though it's political, you're being of service." To both sides. So that they would understand each other. And, yes, you can do things like that. But pure politics, no, we can't get involved in.⁷¹

Kevin Locke, for his part, described himself as "pretty much just totally apolitical," while Lorintha Umutch conversely characterized her stance as "semi-activist."⁷² Recalling a 1996 trip that she made to Chile, for example, Umtuch shared:

One of my friends, he works for the Lummi tribe and he had arranged for a tour for the Pehuenche Indians, they had land and they lived on this land all their life but their government said, "You don't have title to that land so we don't recognize your rights." Sound typical? So they asked me, "Lorintha, can you go down there to the Pehuenche Indians and tell them about how your lands on the Columbia River got taken away from you? I said, "I can talk about being flooded out. I can do that." So I went down there and told them what happened to our people. We lost our fishing sites on the Columbia River.

University, 2005), 104-112. The question of political participation, and relationship with traditional forms of governance, has been a subject of active negotiation in the Pacific region as well: Hassall, "The Bahá'í Faith in the Asia Pacific," 9.

⁷⁰ Beverley Knowlton, interview with the author, between Calgary and Sylvan Lake, Alberta, 26 April 2008; Eleanora McDermott, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 25 April 2008; "Samson Knowlton, 1902-1985," in *The Bahá'í World: An International Record*, Volume 19, 1983-1986 (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1994), 668-669.
⁷¹ McDermott, interview.

⁷² Locke, interview; Umtuch interview. Locke's mother, Patricia Locke, became a Baha'i late in her life and, by her son's description, "redirected her energies" from her prior political activism (which included contributions to such major American legislation as the Indian Postsecondary Education Act, the Indian Child Welfare Act, and the Indian Freedom of Religion Act) to Baha'i service. This, in Kevin Locke's estimation, "didn't undermine her previous efforts, but I think it was like the exclamation point at the end of her life." Locke, interview. On Patricia Locke's activism see the following obituary: Matt Sedensky, "Patricia Locke, 73, Champion of American Indians," *New York Times* (9 Nov 2001), accessed online 16 Dec 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/11/09/business/patricia-locke-73-champion-of-american-indians.html>. For a Baha'i-authored biography see John E. Kolstoe, *Compassionate Woman: The Life and Legacy of Patricia Locke* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2011).

Or, it got modified, you know. So I talked to the Pehuenche Indians, the Mapuche Indians and the people in Chile too, the government officials in Chile.⁷³

When I asked about her take on the Baha'i teachings on politics, Umtuch elaborated:

Well, I believe education is important. And I believe education of the government officials is important. I believe education of the Indian people is important too. Let them learn from our mistakes so they cannot make the same mistakes. I was there for education purposes and to share. It was highly political. The people that brought us there were very political and the Indians were highly political. You had the World Bank, who was there 'cause they were there to fund it. They believed in forced removal of people. The Chilean government believed in forced removal of people. They didn't believe in the rights of the people that lived there all their lives. They didn't believe in that. Again, the similarities are still there. Forced removal by government, by World Bank, by economic power, you know, that theme is still there. They had a march on the capital, in Chile, in Santiago. I went to it and I heard them talk and some of the Indians wanted to get involved and I'm sitting there going, "I'm a judge, I'm a visiting judge, I'm the visiting person. I'm here on visa." This is the government that Pinochet had before. People took airplane rides on the government planes and took a long walk over the Pacific Ocean and were never found again. No, these people are brutal, they can be brutal. I don't want to experience that, I will watch from the sidelines because I am a visitor, I am on a visa, I am supposed to obey their laws. As a Baha'i, I am supposed to obey the laws. These other Indians are not Baha'is and it's okay for them 'cause you know, they're activists. You know, I'm kind of semi-activist but do believe in sharing information and sharing knowledge with them so they know what to expect and what to do and saying, "Yes, yes, I'm a judge. Yes, I'm college educated, yes." You know, that kind of stuff. But I couldn't break no laws. I'm a judge, I'm supposed to uphold the law. So I only went so far.⁷⁴

Reminiscent of Joyce Shales' experience, Umtuch clearly linked her education to Baha'i service and positioned her professional and teaching activities as entirely conjoined, both on "the road" and "the rez."⁷⁵

In Canada, a 1969 teaching project titled "The Right to an Identity" clearly distinguished itself from contemporary political activism. In the same year that many Indigenous leaders across

⁷³ Umtuch, interview. On flooding and fishing on the Columbia see Roberta Ulrich, *Empty Nets: Indians, Dams, and the Columbia River* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2007). On Mapuche activism and identification see, for example, Mario Sznajder, "Ethnodevelopment and Democratic Consolidation in Chile: The Mapuche Question," in Erick D. Langer and Elena Muñoz, eds., *Contemporary Indigenous Movements in Latin America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2003), 17-36.

⁷⁴ Umtuch, interview. On Pinochet and the practice of disappearance in Chile see Roger Burbach, *The Pinochet Affair: State Terrorism and Global Justice* (London: Zed, 2003); Thomas C. Wright, *State Terrorism in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and International Human Rights* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), esp. Chapter 3.

⁷⁵ Umtuch, interview.

Canada were forcefully responding to the Trudeau government's White Paper (see Chapter 2), a handful of Indigenous Baha'is fanned out across the country to disseminate the pamphlet, "The Right to an Identity." A twenty-page colour brochure emblazoned with images of West Coast totem poles on the cover, this publication critiqued what it called the theft of Indian identity, asserting that current conditions of apathy, "poverty, illness, inadequate education, and broken families" in Indigenous Canada stemmed not from "nature," but instead "a spiritual injustice: the systematic destruction of the Indian's sense of his own identity."⁷⁶ Looking back at "The Right to an Identity," participant Nedra Greenaway positioned the campaign in the context of the global sixties:

At this time, you know, late '60s, there was a lot of ferment, there was a lot of cultural change happening, the youth movement, we knew later on about the Cultural Revolution in China, which was a disaster, but nevertheless it was a youth movement. But it was a time where I think minorities around the world were being given a hearing. They didn't have a voice yet. But at least people were becoming aware, you know, we do have this group of people, the Indigenous peoples of the Americas and Australia, New Zealand, all of a sudden it seemed, you know, the Inuit, that they wanted a voice.⁷⁷

Greenaway similarly situated the project in relation to contemporary activism in North America.

Speaking to the reception that "The Right to an Identity" received, she observed:

I think one thing it did was percolate to the top of the agenda. I think people heard it for the first time. Besides, you know, the AIM movement [American Indian Movement], which was happening just across the border, they were hearing something different. Which was just as strident, in a way, but to say, "Look, we're here. And what are we going to do about the founding peoples of Canada? What are we going to do about them? Because you're not the founding people." You know? "The French and English, you want to say that, but you aren't. There were people here before. And so what are we going to do about them?" Are you going to give us an identity? And respect? So we got a lot press. It was in the newspaper, the front pages of some of the newspapers. In Winnipeg, in Brandon, in Calgary, Lethbridge, it got a lot of good press.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Bahá'í Community of Canada, "The Right to an Identity," (n.d. [1968/69]), 5-6, Will van den Hoonaard Personal Collection. The main Indigenous participants in this campaign were Nedra Greenaway (Métis and Chinese), Dorothy Maquabeak Francis (Saulteaux), Thomas Anaquod (Saulteaux), John Thomas (Ditidaht), and Modelle Mudd (Cherokee).

⁷⁷ Nedra Greenaway, interview with the author, Robert's Creek, British Columbia, 15 Aug 2008.

⁷⁸ Greenaway, interview, 15 Aug 2008. A selection of this press coverage was reproduced in *Canadian Bahá'í News* no.228 (April 1969, insert) and no.231 (July 1969), insert. "The Right to an Identity" was part of a larger campaign

Greenaway was joking when she added with a laugh, “Maybe they were happy we weren’t shooting.” But her comment aptly distinguishes the Baha’i project not just from the more militant tactics of the American Indian Movement, but also the politics of contemporary activists like Cree leader Harold Cardinal. The tone of “The Right to an Identity” remains, for a Baha’i publication, forthright (leading to concern, Greenaway recalled, on the part of some in the Canadian Baha’i administration that it was “too political”).⁷⁹ It was, at the same time, decidedly more conciliatory (and, from the perspective of settler society, no doubt more palatable) than that of contemporary Indigenous publications like Cardinal’s *The Unjust Society*, which took colonial Canada directly to task for its ongoing history of land dispossession and assimilation.⁸⁰ “The Right to an Identity” framed colonial injustice as fundamentally spiritual in nature and proffered the Baha’i Faith, including Abdu’l-Baha’s prophecy, as an explicit solution.⁸¹

Much more common than public campaigns like “The Right to an Identity” were the quiet yet activist ways in which Indigenous Baha’is lived and taught their faith. Emphasizing and enacting the importance of what another “Right to an Identity” participant, Ditadaht Baha’i John Thomas, described as “knowing your root,” Indigenous Baha’is made contributions to such fields as Indigenous education, arts, culture, language revitalization, drug and alcohol counseling and recovery, prison reform, community development, and residential school trauma and

called “Human Rights are God-Given Rights” which included the presentation of a Baha’i brief (from which “The Right to an Identity” pamphlet was distilled) to Minister of Indian Affairs, Jean Chrétien, and the December 1968 Canadian Conference on Human Rights. See *Canadian Bahá’í News* no.226 (Jan 1969), 2; no.228 (April 1969), 6-7, insert; no.231 (July 1969), 6; Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 132-133.

⁷⁹ Greenaway, interview, 15 Aug 2008.

⁸⁰ Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1999 [1969]).

⁸¹ Bahá’í Community of Canada, “The Right to an Identity.” This publication is one that included the early English translation of Abdu’l-Baha’s prophecy which has Indigenous people being “treated as savages,” not “like unto” them.

reconciliation disproportionate to their small numbers.⁸² And they intimately connected these efforts to the Baha’i Faith. Reflecting on her own work in the Yukon, for example, Clara Schinkel explained to Lynn Echevarria:

...The language, like, is dying out – the Tagish language. I told Auntie Angela [Sidney] about what the Guardian [Shoghi Effendi, head of the religion 1921-1957] said about our culture and things ... and the language. So we got it started. We started language in Carcross and then it went into dancing ... It was mostly my family that was there. We were all Bahá’ís. We started using the Bahá’í principles to teach. And like I say, the clan system was very, very, very familiar [congruent] with the Bahá’í teachings ... the Bahá’í laws. So it was easy to teach them. And that’s how the dance group got started. Just because Shoghi Effendi said that we should encourage the people to keep their cultural ways. [Later] when I first went to work for Council of the Yukon Indians [Council for Yukon Indians, now Council of Yukon First Nations], it was in cultural education. And we had tried to reintroduce the people to their culture. And I was the Director of Cultural Education then, so I got a lot of traditional camps started.⁸³

Illustrating, further, how service could also cross over into more explicitly politicized terrain, Schinkel also contributed to the settlement of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation land claim.⁸⁴

Others worked in more urban and intertribal arenas. Dorothy Francis, for example, together with a number of other Indigenous and non-Indigenous Baha’is, was active with several early Friendship Centres in Western Canada and Baha’is have continued to contribute to these

⁸² Nedra Greenaway, whose Masters thesis in anthropology was a life history of John Thomas, discussed his “know your root” expression in interview, 12 March 2008. Examples of Indigenous Baha’is engaged in such service work are legion and include: J.C. Lucas, interview with the author, Nanaimo, British Columbia, 6 Oct 2004; Robert George, interview with the author, Duncan, British Columbia, 5 Oct 2004; Knowlton, interview; Deloria Bighorn, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 20 March 2008; John Sargent, interview with the author, by telephone, 22 July 2008.

⁸³ Cited in Echevarria, “A New Skin for an Old Drum,” 54 (additions in square brackets are Echevarria’s). On Schinkel’s “Auntie Angela” see Julie Cruikshank, in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), Part I. And on congruence between the Tagish and Tlingit clan systems and Baha’i law see Echevarria, “A New Skin for an Old Drum,” 46-47; Carolyn Patterson Sawin, “Native Conversion, Native Identity: An Oral History of the Bahá’í Faith among First Nations People in the Southern Central Yukon Territory, Canada” (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2000), 138, 165.

⁸⁴ Genesee Keevil, “Don’t forget to go dancing now and then,” *Yukon News* (16 Oct 2006), accessed online 15 Dec 2012, <http://www.yukon-news.com/life/5896/>. While participation in this arena is something Schinkel herself evidently reconciled with the Baha’i teachings on politics, the anthropologist Carolyn Sawin has also indicated that it was an issue of active contemplation, and sometimes contestation, among Baha’is in the Yukon. Sawin, “Native Conversion, Native Identity,” 121-123.

urban Indigenous service and support centres in cities across the country.⁸⁵ More recently in the Pacific Northwest, Donald Addison, Jane Grover, and Lorintha Umtuch have all contributed to Wisdom of the Elders, a Portland-based project dedicated to “Native American cultural sustainability, multimedia education and race reconciliation.”⁸⁶ For Linda Covey, much of her extensive travel over the past thirty years has been for the purpose of supporting and conducting intertribal service and ceremony, including work with Indigenous inmates in the correctional system.⁸⁷ Reflecting on her intersecting travel and service, she noted that in addition to activity across much of the central and southwestern United States:

I have been to Europe, and India, and Canada, and the Yucatan, and Israel, and I’ve done that on a very, very limited budget. You know, just, in a very simple way. And it’s all been for, basically, it’s all been for the Faith. To me, it just doesn’t seem, it’s not appealing to me to travel somewhere just to be there, or just to see it. It’s always in light of being in service of or of teaching the Faith. Whether it’s Baha’i or American Indian. And when I say being of service, like the women in prison, for instance. Just to give them

⁸⁵ See, for example, Horton, “Beyond Red Power,” 11, 22-23; Arthur Irwin, “Early Native Teaching in Canada,” unpublished memoir (1983), Will van den Hoonaard Personal Collection, 12; Pemberton-Piggot, “The Bahá’í Faith in Alberta,” 36, 41; Sawin, “Native Conversion, Native Identity,” 91-92, 154; Verge, *Angus: From the Heart*, 198; Elinor and Fletcher Bennett, interview with the author, Saanich, British Columbia, 21 July 2004; George, interview; Gretchen Jordan-Bastow, interview with the author, Vancouver, British Columbia, 26 Sept 2004. On the Friendship Centre movement more generally see M.G. Evans, “Fellowship Centres for Urban Canadian Cities: A Comparative Assessment of the Coqualeetza Movement in Vancouver and Other Comparable Movements in Eight Canadian Cities” (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1961); Heather A. Howard, “The Friendship Centre: Native People and the Organization of Community in Cities,” in *Aboriginal Peoples in Canadian Cities: Transformations and Continuities*, ed. Craig Proulx and Heather A. Howard (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 87-107; William G. Lindsay, “A History of the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre in an Age of Aboriginal Migration and Urbanization” (M.A. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1998).

⁸⁶ Accessed online 16 Dec 12, <http://wisdomoftheelders.org/>. Addison has contributed a segment called “Speaking Native” to the organization’s “Wisdom Radio” series. One episode of the series features Lorintha Umtuch speaking about her experience with the Shaker Church as a child on the Yakama Reservation: accessed online 16 Dec 12, <http://wisdomoftheelders.org/2011/06/17/program-304-tribal-rhythms/>. At the time of our interview together, Jane Grover was a member of the Wisdom of the Elders board: Grover, interview. Speaking to the group’s intertribal composition and orientation, she noted that Wisdom of the Elders “was founded by a Lakota medicine man [Martin High Bear] and his wife [Rose High Bear] and she was a Baha’i and is Athabascan [Deg Hitan Dine] from Alaska, but took up the Lakota way for her spiritual practice.”

⁸⁷ Covey’s volunteer work in corrections in Missouri focused on sharing intertribal practices like Native circles and medicine wheels. Covey explained that “We were never able to achieve building sweat lodges, because of state law, regulations.” Saulteaux Baha’i Dorothy Maquabeak Francis, for her part, played a key role in having practices like smudges and sweats accepted within the penal system in British Columbia. Horton, “Beyond Red Power,” 53. Narrator Phil Lane Jr. similarly initiated an Indigenous prison support program before he pioneered to Bolivia in 1970. He kept up a connection with the program, which his father kept going in his absence, by way of correspondence. For example, Phil Lane Jr., Letter to his father, from Bolivia, 3 July 1970, Phil Lane Jr. Personal Collection; Lane, interview.

some hope, or some of these ideals, or a sense of their own nobility no matter what they've done, or a sense of prayer, or how to pray, or a sense of purpose for their life. It didn't have to be saying, "Baha'i, Baha'i, Baha'i," you know. But that's where my fountain of information comes from. My inspiration and my knowledge. And I always go back to the writings as my basis.⁸⁸

Covey's words effectively capture and communicate the truly subtle form that Baha'i teaching could take. Initiatives like prison reform were not billed as Baha'i and adherents typically made no mention of their religion to the Indigenous people with whom they were interacting. This was not duplicitous strategy. Rather, for Baha'is, work in support of Indigenous peoples, and intercultural learning as well, constituted successful teaching in and of itself.

Consider, further, Joyce Shales' travels to the Russian Far East. Shales explained that she was invited to the Sakha Republic in the early 1990s "as a consultant for cross-cultural and American Indian education" (training, as we just saw, that she had pursued per Baha'i teaching).⁸⁹ The circumstances of her first trip, she stressed, were somewhat strange. She received an invitation to travel to Russia when someone phoned her home in Vancouver, where Shales was pursuing her doctorate in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia, looking for her cousin; her cousin, who happened to be there, turned down the invite, but passed the caller from the University of Washington on to Shales instead. Shales saw this as an opening to exercise the Baha'i preparation she had begun making two decades earlier. When she ended up, then, in a context of intense political instability and insecurity upon arriving in Moscow, she felt compelled to press on to the Far East. Flights were not flying and communications were down, but, Shales explained, "I decided that I was there and I might as well just stick it out because the strange way I ended up there made me think that it was one of those things that I

⁸⁸ Covey, interview. Since the time of our interview together in Evanston, Illinois, Covey has since pioneered to Dalian, China, where she is teaching psychology at the university level.

⁸⁹ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008.

consider a meant-to-be kind of thing which happen every once in a while.”⁹⁰ When Shales eventually made it to Yakutsk, the capital of the Sakha Republic, she was greeted by a man, “some Native looking guy,” who, she later learned, had been meeting every plane for the previous three days in hopes and anticipation of her arrival. As she recalled in rich detail:

when I got off the plane he said, “Okay, Joyce.” And here I was, up for hours and hours, I don’t know how many hours, and then on this long flight with no food and when I was on the flight they had slapped a dead chicken on the table in front of me and it looked like it had been in a freezer for a week and that was the food they served you. I didn’t dare eat it. And a cup of this yucky stuff they had served in Soviet times. And so I hadn’t eaten and I hadn’t slept and he said, “Do you want to sleep or do you want to meet the people?” And I said, “I want to meet the people.” And he took me to this traditional place, looked like a hogan. And I had just come from the Southwest so I knew what a Southwest hogan was because I’d just come from the Navajo Baha’i School [the Native American Baha’i Institute]. Just come from down there before I went to Russia. And so it was really fresh in my mind. And it looked exactly like it, the stove in it and everything. It just blew my mind. And inside, all along the wall, sitting on a shelf along the wall, were all these Elders. And I came in one door and they were sitting, with this low ceiling and lamps, little lamps in there, and there was little stoves, so they were pouring chai.

So I got in the door and they said, “Okay, Joyce, tell us about yourself.” That was the first thing they said, so I thought, “Oh, good grief. What am I supposed to say here?” So I just started talking. I didn’t know what to say, so I just started talking and I talked about Southeast [Alaska], culture, and about the raven, the eagle and I can’t remember all of it. And so when I got done they said, “Okay, let us tell you about ours.” Then they gave me the whole story about their cycles and their whole traditions, all their traditions. And they had it all lined out and they had a poster with their creation story on it and everything. It was really pretty awesome. But they were all grins and smiles when I talked about raven and all of that stuff. “Tell us about yourself.” And then I started talking about all that stuff, and it was translated, right? But I talked slow enough so they could translate it. And when it was translated and the people just started grinning, it was just like, right connection, right connection right there. That was the right connection, all of it.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. For a concise introduction to Russian history, including the context of Soviet collapse into which Shales travelled see Geoffery Hosking, *Russian History: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. Chapter 7.

⁹¹ Shales, interview, 29 July 2008. Allison Healy, who first visited the Far East in 1993, encountered a similar context of cultural strength and connection as described by Shales. Healy, interview, 27 April 2008. For context on the Sakha Republic/Yakutia see Dmitry N. Zakharvo, “The Example of Sakha (Yakutia),” in Kathrin Wessendorf, ed., *An Indigenous Parliament? Realities and Perspectives in Russia and the Circumpolar North* (Copenhagen: Iwgia, 2005), 88-97. For an ethnographic study of an Evenki community in central Siberia that echoes with Indigenous experiences in the Far East see Alexia Bloch, *Red Ties and Residential Schools: Indigenous Siberians in a Post-Soviet State* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

Encounters like this were meaningful moments of Indigenous connection that sparked lasting relationships. Reflecting back on this period, Shales remarked:

it was lucky I went because if I had chosen not to go, I'd have missed so much. It would have been such a sad thing. And we'd all have missed so much, my dad and I both, because it opened all kinds of doors and it was just amazing in every which way. They were so open to everybody. It was an amazing thing.

This was a time of political transition in Russia and Shales emphasized how eager people in the Sakha Republic were to interact.⁹² She recalled that in return:

we just gave them everything we had to give, as much as we could. By that I don't mean gifts, I mean we gave them all we had. We talked about who we were, talked about Indians in America, we arranged exchanges, we did everything we could to arrange exchanges with the States and Canada, especially the Yukon because we had a lot of Yukon connections. And we arranged to have the Unity Gatherings and actually, I guess a lot of things came out of that. And so we made a lot of different trips in there. And to this day have friends from there that I guess we'll never forget. And loving, just lovely people.⁹³

In addition to seeing them as friends, Shales further characterized the Indigenous people with whom she forged such deep connections as family.

Baha'i teaching and travel, then, could also prove a process of "finding relatives."

Invoking humour, a site of Indigenous identification that she and other narrators spoke to elsewhere as well, for example, Shales shared another story about her time in Sakha as an educational consultant:

So when I was there and when I had to talk to them and they wanted me to talk to groups of a thousand people, I would just talk to them like I would be talking to a group of

⁹² This point, too, was echoed by Healy. Healy, interview, 27 April 2008.

⁹³ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008. Some of this activity is detailed in Jim Walton's (d. 18 November 2003) obituary in the 2003-2004 issue of *The Bahá'í World*: "After becoming a Bahá'í in 1953, he traveled, as a Bahá'í teacher, throughout Alaska, North America, Europe, and the Russian Far East, working primarily with indigenous people. He established an International Cross-Cultural Alcohol Program to create a cross-cultural approach to alcohol recovery and spearheaded more than 25 Spiritual Unity of Tribes Gatherings, held from New Zealand to the Sakha Republic, Russia. In response to social problems he perceived in the Sakha Republic, he worked to establish alcohol recovery programs there and promoted cultural and health care exchanges between indigenous people of the Sakha Republic and Alaska. He actively promoted education among Native people and helped broaden understanding of the Tlingit culture." Ann Boyles, ed., *The Bahá'í World: 2003-2004: An International Record* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2005), 239.

people here, Native people. It wasn't I was talking as a Baha'i, I was talking as an educator. One time I felt like I got their attention when I talked, it was just silent and there was a huge roomful of people, a room full of educators, all waiting for me to say something, and people would say, "Joyce, say something." "Well, what?" You know? So I got up there and I said, "Well, I came here and I was so amazed by these dynamic people and their industriousness and their intelligence." And I just went on and on and on and on with all these adjectives about how handsome and [laughs] everybody was, and then I said, "You know, I thought about it and I thought about it..." And of course this is all being translated, I'm talking very slow so I'm thinking, and then I said, "You know, and then I finally figured it out. They must be my relatives." [laughs] And I got standing ovations. Because they were all Native people. It's something my cousin would do too. But it was that kind of a thing. It was like family. And they were like long-lost family, so you love them immediately.⁹⁴

Pointing to recent DNA research, Shales added that, "Actually everybody is a relative, if you go back far enough." "But," she elaborated:

from Central Asia to here, we're all relatives, more closely. So when you look at us from the Middle East through Central Asia to the people in Siberia, to here, through Mongolians to here, we're relatives. You even look at the traditions and the way people do things. There's no doubt, there's no doubt in my mind. The second time I went there we went to this UNESCO meeting [on Indigenous education] and people came in their tribal dress. And there were people there who looked like Navajos. And then there were people who looked like they came from some other parts of the American Indian landscape. When you look at DNA and you see it spread out, then it's reasonable to believe that we would look like some of these people. And I swear they look like our cousins. Some of those people I looked twice, they looked just like my cousin. Or somebody else's, just people I knew. It was that resemblance, it was that close. It was just amazing. And I wasn't the only one that had that reaction. Lots of people that went over there had the same reaction that I had. We took double-takes all the time. "Whoa," it'd just knock you over, it was so amazing.⁹⁵

Indigenous kinship, for Shales, took on a specific geographic and biological imprint. It also connected to story. Allison Healy, for example, described one especially potent moment of connection during her and her husband's first visit to the Russian Far East in 1993, a trip

⁹⁴ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008. Shales similarly spoke about her use of humour as a way to relieve tension when she and her family were living in the small Inupiat village of Shishmaref in northern Alaska. On the subject of Indigenous humour see Drew Hayden Taylor, ed., *Me Funny* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005). This collection includes a chapter by Na-Cho Nyak Dun storyteller and Baha'i, Louise Profeit-Leblanc.

⁹⁵ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008.

precipitated by an invitation from an Evenki leader for Indigenous Baha'is to attend an annual reindeer festival. "At that reindeer festival," Healy recalled:

they had a gathering that evening and we were going to present so we had our traditional dress and we were up on the stage and we could see down at the people and during the talk the translator and some of the people were wiping their eyes and then the interpreter told us that they got so emotional to see us up there and especially to know, 'cause that is their belief that at one time we were all together and then as the ice melted into different countries we all separated along with the ice and they were so happy to see us that it was so emotional. Their belief is that their people are coming back. Yeah. And that's what the interpreter was telling us. They were crying with joy, you know, to see us up there. These are our people who have drifted away. And so that's their belief.⁹⁶

Healy's husband, Earl, similarly declared that he found "his people" in Sakha.⁹⁷ The Healys visited the Russian Far East in the same time period and context of cultural revitalization as Shales and, like her, cultivated an expanded sense of Indigenous kinship on the basis of cultural exchange.

Indigenous Baha'is who journeyed in the more defined religious role of pioneer similarly forged a strong sense of Indigenous fellowship. Phil Lane Jr., for example, registered this connection in letters home to his family from his pioneer post in Bolivia. As he wrote not long after he and his wife's 1970 arrival in Sucre:

Even though I can't speak Spanish very well, travelling teachers and Indian Baha'is from the country come by with their problems and to visit. Cynthia [Lane's wife] serves tea and I sit and listen and nod my head to those things I understand and every so often say a few things, but mostly I listen and have fellowship with them. They call me Hermano

⁹⁶ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008. This is particularly striking in view of strong critiques that have been leveled against the Bering Strait theory by a number of Indigenous people and scholars in North America. See, for example, Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, *Remember This! Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives*, with translations from the Dakota text by Wahpetunwin Carolynn Schommer (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 45-46; Vine Deloria Jr., "Low Bridge – Everybody Cross," in Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta, eds., *Spirit and Reason, The Vine Deloria Jr., Reader* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999), 78-100.

⁹⁷ Healy, interview, 27 April 2008. Healy explained that her husband had been on a quest to find "his people" since a trip he took to India to visit their daughter, who attended a Baha'i high school there for a year. Similar to Earl Healy, narrator Jane Grover was surprised to find a lack of interest in her Indigenous heritage when she and her family pioneered in Panchgani, India (where Grover worked at the Baha'i New Era High School) from 1972-1977. Grover, interview.

Philipe and I can't describe in words the great unity I feel with the people here, especially Indian Baha'is from the country.⁹⁸

He reiterated this sentiment in another letter two months later: "Thanks be to God and your wonderful upbringing," Lane wrote in November 1970, "I seem to have a repore with the Indians here that is most deep and moving. We feel the love we have for one another and I feel very much of a oneness with them."⁹⁹ Reflecting back, Lane characterized the year and several months he spent in Bolivia as "the spiritual highlight of my life."¹⁰⁰ "I'm almost 65 years old," he shared at the time of our interview together, "I'd say that was the spiritual highlight":

I lived an absolutely dedicated life. I'd get up every morning and I'd sit on the porch that we had and I'd pray for an hour. My whole life was centered around serving the needs of the Indigenous people there and seeing the potentiality within the people. Seeing that it was going to be one of the first Baha'i countries in the hemisphere, that was one thing, but seeing also the empowerment of the Indigenous people. And how important the culture was to them.¹⁰¹

Lane's letters home document repeated requests to his family to send "some Indian things" for him to wear; as Lane wrote in anticipation of one Baha'i conference set to be attended by "representatives from Indian tribes all over South America," "it would be a real honor to reflect a bit of the Sioux there."¹⁰² Lane also studied Incan history and made what he described as an especially moving pilgrimage to Lake Titicaca, "where the original Inca was born." "We had put our little money together," he recalled:

⁹⁸ Phil Lane Jr., Letter to his parents, Sucre, Bolivia, 9 Sept 1970, Phil Lane Jr. Personal Collection. Lane quickly learned Spanish and was studying Quechua before his return to the United States the following year. He further expressed a sense of relational identity in another letter in which he compared energetic and dedicated Quechua Baha'i teacher Meletone Gallardo to his great-grandfather, Philip Deloria. Phil Lane Jr., Letter to his parents, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, 17 May 1971, Phil Lane Jr. Personal Collection. An obituary for Gallardo (with his first name spelled differently than Lane renders it in his letters) appears in: Athos Costas, "Melitón Saavedra Gallardo, 1910-1988," in *The Bahá'í World: An International Record*, Volume 20, 1986-1992 (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1998), 921-923.

⁹⁹ Phil Lane Jr., Letter to his parents, Sucre, Bolivia, 14 Nov 1970 (spelling as appears in original). Phil Lane Jr. Personal Collection.

¹⁰⁰ Lane, interview.

¹⁰¹ Lane, interview.

¹⁰² Phil Lane Jr., letter to his father, Cochabamba, Bolivia, 14 June 1971. Also, Phil Lane Jr., letter to his father, Bolivia, 3 July 1970. Phil Lane Jr. Personal Collection.

I remember this, Richard Hatch [another pioneer] and I, put our little money together and we got this boat to take us out to Island of the Sun. And I remember getting there and Meletone and some of the other [Indigenous Baha'is] got off and they kissed the earth where we were. Kissed the earth where we were. And then we went to see the house of the Incas and there's three springs that come out and there's a saying that one's Spanish, one's Quechua, and one's Aymara, and the one from the Spanish had dried up, so it was just the two coming out. And we went by the Island of the Moon, we didn't stop there, and we went and landed back, someone was going back. And they took me back to this place and, again, it was off the beaten track, and it was carved into the stone and it was incredible. There was a seat, and below it were three seats, and then below it were some more, and below it were some more. And it was just right for our group, so they gave me the honour of sitting on the top of that whole thing and I remember when we prayed that night along that Lake Titicaca. And I swear to God that night, I could feel the rustling of this awakening happening across the Americas. I could feel it. This whole coming together and this unifying, this reunion of the condor and the eagle [Indigenous peoples of South and North America], the fourth way, and all that. And these prophecies that I so deeply believe in.¹⁰³

For Lane, it was not just Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy that inspired his teaching and expanded sense of Indigenous identification, but also Indigenous stories that foretold the coming together of Indigenous peoples across the Americas and globally.¹⁰⁴ Lane left Bolivia not long after this (and, as we saw in Chapter 5, retreated from active Baha'i life the following decade), but the strong sense of spiritual kinship that he cultivated with Indigenous people while there continued, and continues, to inspire his work in the field of global Indigenous community development.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Lane, interview.

¹⁰⁴ Anthropologist Renya Ramirez illustrates that prophecies, including that foretelling the reunion of the eagle and the condor, have prompted recent transnational Indigenous dialogue and organizing outside the Baha'i community as well. Renya Ramirez, *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 9 and Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁵ Lane's return to the United States was precipitated by the rape of his wife, a traumatic event that he described as deepening his own identification with local Indigenous Baha'is, who gave him a Quechua name meaning, "Of the Same Blood." Lane, interview. Lane's current work is focused on the articulation and activation of what he and colleagues have called "the Fourth Way," a series of guiding principles "for building a sustainable and harmonious world community." As the website of the Four Worlds International Institute attests, these principles "emerged from a 36-year process of reflection, consultation and action within Indigenous communities across the Americas. They are rooted in the concerns of hundreds of aboriginal elders and leaders and thinkers, as well as in the best thinking of many non-aboriginal scholars, researchers and human and community development practitioners." These guiding principles hold that, "Starting from within, working in a circle, in a sacred manner, we heal ourselves, our relationships and our world." Phil Lane Jr., "The Fourth Way: Guiding Principles for Building a Sustainable and Harmonious Community," accessed online 16 Dec 2012, <http://www.fwii.net/forum/topics/the-fourth-way-guiding>. The Four Worlds International Institute opened an "International Indigenous Training and Communications Hub" in Panama City in May 2013.

Baha'i teaching was not simply situated in the context of Indigenous cultural revitalization, but rather actively helped produce it. In Panama, for example, where Joyce Shales pioneered in the mid-1980s, development projects among the Guaymí Baha'i community focused closely on education and culture.¹⁰⁶ In addition to working as a school principal, Shales, along with several other family members, also contributed to the establishment of a Baha'i radio station and cultural center in the small town of Boca de Soloy in the western Panamanian province of Chiriquí.¹⁰⁷ Communication in this mountainous jungle region, Shales explained, was complicated by geography and poverty, which prevented scattered and isolated Guaymí family units from easily interacting or attending Baha'i gatherings. As she explained of the "Radio Baha'i" project, itself modeled on an earlier effort in Ecuador:

Through consultation the people decided the best way for them to communicate was through radio. They wanted to build a radio station for that purpose. As they were getting it ready they then had to figure out what the programming was going to be composed of. One of the things they said was they should try and preserve Guaymí culture, and resurrect Guaymí traditions. But they question was, "What?" Because they had never danced in years until they danced at Baha'i conferences and other meetings. In decades nobody had danced traditional Guaymí dances, until they had danced at that school [the Guaymí Cultural Center]. And we danced traditional North American dances, because we brought dancers like Kevin Locke with us. Anyway, we showed them our dances to encourage them in their dances and celebrations. It was the most amazing thing I have ever witnessed.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ For a review of these projects see "Social/Economic Development: Number of Projects Growing Rapidly," *Bahá'í News* no.660 (March 1986), 11-12; "Institute trains tutorial school teachers," *Bahá'í News*, no.640 (July 1984), 8-9; Warburg, *Citizens of the World*, 481-485. Baha'i expansion among Panama's Indigenous population began in the same period (the "Ten Year Crusade" of 1953-1963) as Bolivia. "The Peoples of God: Part 5: Panama," *Bahá'í News* no.572 (Nov 1978), 8-11. Where Baha'i sources regularly claim a Guaymí population of 8,000, Molly Marie Rhodenbaugh put numbers closer to 2,000 in her 1999 study, "The Ngöbe Bahá'ís of Panama" (MA thesis, Texas Tech University, 1999), 22-23, 88-94. Abdu'l-Baha identified Panama as a site of particular significance to Baha'is; a House of Worship was erected in the capital of Panama City in 1972. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, 33, 105.

¹⁰⁷ The "Radio Station Transmitter Link" was included among the facilities of the Guaymí Cultural Center (or Ju Ngäbere) in Boca de Soloy; the radio tower itself was erected in another small town, Boca del Monte. "Guaymi Cultural Center Opens," *Bahá'í News* no.675 (June 1987), 1. The Center opened in February 1987. In 1995, the Indigenous peoples formerly identified as Guaymí were officially recognized as the Ngöbe-Buglé; the Ngöbe, speakers of Ngawbere, are the people among whom Baha'is were most active. In keeping with Shales' usage, I continue here to employ "Guaymí." Rhodenbaugh, "The Ngöbe Bahá'ís of Panama," 10.

¹⁰⁸ Shales, interview, 30 July 2008. "Guaymi Cultural Center Opens." Ruhyyih Khanum laid the cornerstone for the Center in 1985. "Guaymi Cultural Center is Dedicated," *Bahá'í News* no.656 (Nov 1985), 12-13. For context on

The presence of Kevin Locke (who also took part in the Trail of Light project and travelled to Russia with the Healys in 1999) illustrates how such teaching efforts activated intertribal networks and relationships between Indigenous Baha'is from North America as well.¹⁰⁹ In a 1993 study of the Guaymí Baha'i community, the anthropologist Whitney Lyn White also observed the impact of such transnational exchange, citing a Panamanian Baha'i who "described a visit from three North American Indians as a 'turning point' for the Guaymís."¹¹⁰ In addition to the revitalization of dance, White posited that this interaction also contributed to a wider process of Guaymí ethnogenesis; where the Guaymí were formerly identified according to kin group, they came to forge a stronger sense of "Guaymí-ness, as a single 'culture.'"¹¹¹ Shales herself spoke to this process when she recalled asking a Guaymí woman after Kevin Locke's performance if she had enjoyed the dancing and the woman responded by asking, "Is Kevin a Guaymí?" This suggests that the sense of Indigenous identification that narrators themselves

Radio Baha'i see Helen Hornby, "Inauguration of Radio Bahá'í," *Bahá'í News* (Jan 1979), 10-13; Kurt Hein, *Radio Bahá'í, Ecuador: A Bahá'í Development Project* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1988). And for context on broadcasting and mission in Central America see Vásquez and Marquardt, "'Blitzing' Central America: The Politics of Transnational Religious Broadcasting," in *Globalizing the Sacred*, 197-222. The kind of "first return" that Shales describes was echoed by other narrators as well. Discussing her family's time pioneering in Frobisher Bay, for example, Nedra Greenaway recalled that "One of the first conferences that we had in the early 70's, was the first time that the Inuit drum was used again after 15-20 years." Whether these in fact marked the very first returns as narrators claimed is less relevant here than the sense of identification that they cultivated through this activity. In her 1993 Masters thesis, Whitney Lyn White (now White Kazemipour) records that, "The Bahá'ís have revitalized a Guaymí dance, the *jeki*, and are innovating non-traditional steps to it." Whitney Lyn White, "Binding Together: Guaymí Resistance and Construction of Religious Identity through the Bahá'í Faith" (MA thesis, University of California Los Angeles, 1993), 50.

¹⁰⁹ A photo of Locke performing a Lakota hoop dance appears in the report, "Guaymí Cultural Center Opens," 2. Another photo of him performing in Panama at a gathering organized in collaboration with the Kuna University Association appears in *Bahá'í News* no.699 (July 1989), 14. An email journal that Locke kept during his 1999 travels in Yakutia, a source that readily confirms the underlying Baha'i orientation of such travels, is available online, accessed 3 May 2013, <http://www.kevinlocke.com/kevin/journal/yakutia/yakutia.html>.

¹¹⁰ White, "Binding Together," 49. White seems to be referring to a different group of North American Indigenous Baha'is than Shales and Locke were a part of, indicating a larger pattern of interaction and connection.

¹¹¹ White, "Binding Together," 50. Also White, "Binding Together," 41-45. Consonant with the core argument of this study, White argues that Guaymí Baha'i conversion represents a form of resistance to subordination and a space of what she calls "high-order identity" (including religion, tradition, and ethnicity) construction. Writing six years after White, Marie Molly Rhodenburgh claimed that, "Ngöbe ethnicity and tradition are validated, but hold little symbolic power in the Ngöbe community. The emphasis is on the future." Conversely, she also observed the presence of "Alaskan Inuit, Miskito, and Kuna" people at an Indigenous Congress hosted by Guaymí Baha'is in Soley. Rhodenburgh, "The Ngöbe Bahá'ís of Panama," 126, 2.

cultivated through such travel was not necessarily shared or understood in the same way by those with whom they interacted.

This interaction, though, also contributed to the formulation of novel intertribal relationships within Panama. Speaking to another major take-away from her time in Central America, Shales observed, “what I learned there was that people had the same kinds of misconceptions about Indians that they have up here.”¹¹² She recalled, in particular, resistance from non-Indigenous Baha’is in Panama to the prospect of holding a gathering to bring together Guaymí people from the interior and Kuna people from the San Blas Islands off the country’s Caribbean coast. As she explained:

we thought it would be great to have a conference, and then people could exchange their ideas about the Baha’i Faith, language and cultural issues and whatever they wanted. And the non-Native Baha’is told us, “Oh no, those people used to fight each other.” Well, sure, they probably did. Some lived on the islands, and some lived inland. Of course they did, but now we wanted to get them together, but the non-Natives really resisted it. But we insisted that, “We think it’ll be alright.”

The gathering did occur and was, by Shales’ account, a great success, with Guaymí and Kuna participants easily and energetically interacting. She added, though, that when time came for participants to be seated, the spatial configuration at the Guaymí Cultural Center presented an obstacle:

So when we had everybody together and they were going to sit down, somebody had managed to put all the benches in a row, like pews in a church. And put a mic up front like a podium. And when Loretta [Shales’ cousin] and I saw that we just looked at each other and shook our heads, and we weren’t in charge of the meeting so we just sat back and we sat there for a good half of the day, and they were trying to get the Guaymí women and other people to talk and nobody would say one word. So, finally at noon Loretta went and talked to the organizers and said, “Look, why don’t you put the seating in a circle and see what happens? Because we are not getting anywhere this way.” The reason for the conference was for people to get to know one another and to consult about issues that concerned them as a whole body.

The result, Shales recalled, “was like magic”:

¹¹² Shales, interview, 30 July 2008.

It started everybody talking. The women, who traditionally don't speak up, started talking, and you couldn't get them quiet. They knew what they were talking about and they were just right in there, it was just like magic. It was a breakthrough. One can't assume everyone else consults like Westerners do, in a Western-oriented meeting. So when I say we learned things, that's what I mean. We learned that you have to be very careful in how you organize something, when you're going into somebody else's backyard, especially if it's a Western model, and expect it to work. All we did was what we knew Native Americans like to do, which is sit in a circle. And that worked. And it blew my mind. I mean, we were just like, "Whoa." That was magical! Because from then on the people just didn't stop talking.¹¹³

Experience with intertribal organizing, including the Continental Indigenous Councils discussed in the last chapter, contributed to this outcome and the formulation of a broader sense of identification and solidarity between Indigenous Baha'is within Panama and across the hemisphere.¹¹⁴

Indeed, though Indigenous Baha'is actively supported the strength of Indigenous culture, their understandings of tradition were not static. This is vividly illustrated in another story from Panama that calls for lengthy citation. Continuing on from her discussion of radio programming and the pressing imperative of cultural renewal, Joyce Shales shared:

One day I was sitting out on the sidewalk, sort of like a step. It was cool out there, and I was just sitting out there by myself when a young man came out and sat beside me. "Joyce," he said, "When you try to save Guaymí culture, what should you save?" Because, you hear the story about how a bogeyman did some evil thing, a man down the stream, people were talking about other versions of such things. "Is that what we try to save? What is it we're trying to save?" Because they had all these stories about bogeymen in the forest, just like the Tlingits had. So he said, "So what is it we're trying to save?" Because he had no idea. And I said, "I don't know. Let me think about it for a minute." So I thought about it and thought about it. "Well, what is it that makes a good Guaymí?" And he said to me, "Well, you mean like when a man walks in the forest and he sees a beautiful flower, he should think about his sister? You mean like that?" And I said, "Yeah, that's what you should save." That's all. I almost wept, when he said that to

¹¹³ Shales, interview, 30 July 12. White similarly observed limited contact between non-Indigenous and Guaymí Baha'is and changes in women's status and the construction of pan-Indigenous connections by way of Baha'i observance. White, "Binding Together," 9, 19-20, 24-26, 56. Shales' cousin, Loretta King, has served on a number of international Baha'i institutions and spent over a decade serving at the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa.

¹¹⁴ A report on the 1980 Continental Indigenous Council in Wilmette makes specific mention of the circular seating formation adopted in aid of consultation. "Native Council," 3.

me. Who would think of that? [pause] So it's sometimes simple, and sometimes complex. So it's what makes a good Guaymí!

Shales continued, tying the query to her own Tlingit history:

And that satisfied him. At least for that time. What is it that makes a good Guaymí? Probably somebody who's honourable. And what else do you need to save? Some of the other things, I suppose just like we did. "You should always listen," that's what my dad would tell me. He didn't say, "Be proud you're a Tlingit because the Tlingits could beat everybody on the West Coast." No, he didn't say that. He said, "Listen. Ask three times, so that you know that you're really wanting to know about something." Things like that, that's what he emphasized. What makes a good Tlingit? That's what came to me.¹¹⁵

This exchange offers a compelling glimpse into the intense searching that Indigenous people faced as they sought to not just to carry, but construct their cultures in and for the future. And it indicates how Indigenous Baha'is were not afraid to evaluate tradition according to their own religious vision.

The vision that Indigenous Baha'i teachers activated was locally grounded, while geared, ultimately, to the global. Speaking to her family's twin mandate in the Arctic, for example, Nedra Greenaway explained that they aimed to function as a "window to the world" and encourage Inuit cultural revitalization.¹¹⁶ This did not, significantly, mean maintaining or reviving all aspects of Inuit culture; Greenaway spoke, for example, about what she called "superstitious" elements of Inuit shamanism, such as fear of bad spirits, as something that has no place in the "scientific" Baha'i religion.¹¹⁷ Indeed, Greenaway connected teaching efforts to the

¹¹⁵ Shales, interview, 30 July 12.

¹¹⁶ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008. "Window to the world" refers here not just to the global perspective Baha'is aimed to cultivate, but is also the name given to a trio of "Baha'i Houses" established in the North (Baker Lake, Frobisher Bay, and Yellowknife) in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

¹¹⁷ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008. Greenaway observed that the Anglican Church in the Arctic had amplified such "superstitious" fears. "Bad spirits," she explained, "became for the Christianized Inuit 'the devil.' Somebody could come from the devil, and mislead you, cause you harm. Christianity was couched in the words, 'You're from the devil,' so you can harm a person, you can influence them in a negative way. Sympathetic bad magic." The church, she explained, also applied such ideas to (and encyclicals against) the Baha'is in the Arctic, instilling a great amount of initial trepidation and fear towards the religion among the Inuit. As noted in Chapter 6, not all Indigenous Baha'is necessarily share the interpretation that belief in "bad spirits" qualifies as superstition. For a nuanced recent reading of Inuit shamanism and Christianity see Frédéric B. Laugrand and Jarich G. Oosten,

elaboration of a worldwide Baha'i culture and civilization. "We don't yet have a Baha'i culture," she explained, "we're inventing it. And because of that, everybody's going to bring in their own culture." As she continued, channeling Abdu'l-Baha:

Another concept is, Abdu'l-Baha said that, "Each culture has a particular genius," something that is good that they can contribute to the world. And so the Indigenous peoples have to discover their genius that they can contribute to the world, to a world culture that we're building. And so that's why, when we went to the Arctic, it was, you know, it was to find their particular genius.¹¹⁸

Greenaway and her husband, who joined in our interview, identified Inuit methods of consultation, along with "their tenacity, resilience and endurance in the face of extreme hardship," as genius qualities that they might gift to the world.¹¹⁹ Other narrators echoed this perspective and the global Indigenous identification that it implied. Kevin Locke, for example, observed that:

I think that's the beautiful thing about the Baha'i Faith is that what Baha'u'llah has brought is the divine standard, this brilliant light, and I think this is maybe a process that many people go through, they are able to use that light and shine it on their cultural or spiritual heritage and that way they can identify those universal elements of their heritage. And I found that a lot of the Native people all over the world, not just in North and South America, they're able to see the beautiful aspects of their heritage and to realize that those beautiful aspects, they're like gifts that we can offer as a people towards this emerging global civilization.¹²⁰

Locke stressed that in his own performance program, which features Lakota story, song, and dance, his goal is not "to indoctrinate or to convert or to try and accentuate a cultural or tribal-specific interpretation":

The only thing I do, my goal is just to celebrate, well really, Baha'i themes. The oneness of the human family, the universality of the human spirit. So really, my program, all I do is I use my own cultural lens to accentuate universal themes.¹²¹

Inuit Shamanism and Christianity: Transitions and Transformations in the Twentieth Century (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010).

¹¹⁸ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

¹¹⁹ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008.

¹²⁰ Locke, interview.

¹²¹ Locke, interview.

Like Baha'i community building, teaching was fundamentally aligned towards this religious vision of global rapprochement.

Yet teaching, and the global Indigenous perspective that it helped to produce, did not negate tribal identities. Locke explained in our interview together, for example, that “the main identity that I have is as a world citizen,” but he also introduced himself as “a citizen of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe or the Lakota Nation.”¹²² As the examples of Shales and Lane attest, travel teaching and pioneering could extend specific family histories and Indigenous missionary identities. And sometimes, it could even bring people back to tribal territory. The Alaskan “homecoming” that Mary Gubatayao-Hagen described so vividly in Chapter 6, for example, was propelled by the urge to pioneer among her own people.¹²³ Klara Tyler, for her part, not only pioneered to the Nez Perce reservation in Idaho; she also travel taught on Vancouver Island, where she reconnected with her Nuu-chah-nulth relatives.¹²⁴ For Nedra Greenaway, conversely, pioneering also offered the chance to “dig her root” in China. After moving south from Frobisher Bay to the Winnipeg area in 1977, she and her husband twice pioneered to China, first in 1987-1991 and again, after returning for four years to the town then called Iqaluit, in 1998-2005.¹²⁵

Teaching, then, was another avenue through which adherents strengthened their own specific tribal (and, in cases like Greenaway's, also other) identities. But it was also an activity through which Baha'is cultivated a much wider global formulation of Indigeneity as well. Called, as a matter of core religious duty, to disseminate their religion, adherents deepened their Baha'i identities through teaching. Much of the teaching that Indigenous Baha'is carried out took place

¹²² Locke, interview.

¹²³ Gubatayao-Hagen, interview.

¹²⁴ Klara Tyler, interview. Ditidaht Baha'i John Thomas travelled in the reverse direction, from Vancouver Island to Neah Bay. See Horton, “According to your faith so shall your power and blessings be,” 109.

¹²⁵ Greenaway, interview, 12 March 2008 and 15 Aug 2008. These two pioneering paths sometimes directly intersected. On one occasion, for example, a Greenlandic Inuk Baha'i who the Greenaways met in the Arctic visited them in China, where he forged connections based on a sense of shared relationship.

in quiet everyday ways through service that made significant contributions to the strength and health of Indigenous peoples, in North America and elsewhere. Operating, both physically and conceptually, within a global framework, teachers fostered an activist sense of Indigenous identification on the basis of prophecy, common colonial history, and cultural resonance and renewal. And in the process, they became both Indigenous and Baha'i.

Chapter 9: Closing

Blessed is the spot, and the house,
and the place, and the city,
and the heart, and the mountain,
and the refuge, and the cave,
and the valley, and the land,
and the sea, and the island,
and the meadow where mention
of God hath been made,
and His praise glorified.

- Baha'u'llah

At Ogden Point in Victoria, British Columbia, where the breakwater holds back the sea, this Baha'i prayer is inscribed in the local Lekwungen language. This is Na'Tsa'Maht, the Unity Wall, another product of the hidden, and living, history of Indigenous Baha'i activism. Led by Esquimalt Baha'i artist and author Darlene Gait and Songhees artist and educator Butch Dick, the Na'Tsa'Maht project has brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth to produce a large mural lining the inside wall of the breakwater, thus, as the project website attests, "Bridging cultures, honouring history and celebrating resiliency through the art of the Coast Salish Nations."¹ And Jacob Bighorn, to bring us back to where we started, is here too. Gait designed one of the mural panels to memorialize the many eagles that were seen circling a hospital in Victoria when Bighorn passed away there in the fall of 2008.² The idea, again, that a

¹ Accessed online 21 May 2013, <http://www.theunitywall.ca/>. The project was launched in 2009 and has thus far included two phases, sponsored by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority; donations and sponsorships are being solicited to further extend the mural.

² On an interpretive sign accompanying the mural, Gait shares the story of the panel titled, "Jacob's Eagles (Darlene's Story)": "In October 2008, my father lay dying of cancer in a Victoria hospital. Across from his room lay Jacob Bighorn from the Lakota tribe, a man of strong spiritual beliefs and Native Baha'i. Jacob often told those for whom he cared 'if you live a life of service to your people, the eagles will come to guide your spirit when it's time to leave this earth.' One morning, as my mother headed to the hospital, she noticed dozens of bald eagles flying across the water and over the highway. We too, on our way to Victoria, noticed many eagles circling the hospital. When we arrived, my father told us Jacob had passed on. Many people called the hospital asking if a Holy man had passed away." This passage also appears on the Unity Wall website, accessed online 21 May 2013, http://www.theunitywall.ca/phase_1.php.

Lakota man of Presbyterian background from Montana would come to be buried as a Baha'i on Vancouver Island, then memorialized in a project that affirms, through Baha'i prayer and practice, both intercultural learning and local Indigenous ties to land and sea is, according to conventional understandings of Indigenous identity and conversion, unexpected. But as this study has born out, Bighorn's story is part of a broader history that unsettles this very idea of unexpectedness.

From Bighorn on the breakwater, to a Tlingit Baha'i from Sitka among the Guaymí in Panama, or an Indipino adherent from the Seattle area returning home to Alaska as a Baha'i pioneer, Indigenous Baha'i histories offer multitudinous examples of what the Dakota Sioux cultural historian Philip J. Deloria has called "Indians in unexpected places."³ This idea of unexpectedness derives from static assumptions of tradition that cast Indigenous peoples and modernity as mutually exclusive. And that see Indigenous conversion to other faiths as assimilation or capitulation. Indians and cars, Indians and pizza, Indians and casinos, Indians and Christianity – colonial politics of savagery and authenticity paint such pairings as incompatible yet, as Deloria and others have demonstrated, they are instead charged, and historically specific, sites of negotiation.⁴ We ought not, of course, lose sight of the very real, very damaging, work that such colonial expectations and attendant exclusions continue to produce. Rather, in starting from a new place of expectation, one that takes the potential of Indigenous modernities, and mobility, as a given and seeks, subsequently, to their illuminate their specific production, historians can help undo such unexpectedness altogether.

³ Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004).

⁴ For example, Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*; Alexandra Harmon, *Rich Indians: Native People and the Problem of Wealth in American History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

I situate and offer this study in this spirit. Indeed, Indigenous Baha’i histories are a particularly rich site in which to plumb the simultaneous production of modern Indigenous and religious identities. The Baha’i Faith itself emerged in a context of mid-nineteenth-century modernism and millenarian expectation in Iran and was, and still is, frequently framed as a rational faith free from the fetters of empty repetitious ritual and fear-based superstition. The religion did not arrive in North America at the turn of the twentieth century readymade, but was instead constructed in specific contexts of combination. Abdu’l-Baha’s prophecy concerning the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, in particular, underwent a series of literal and figurative translations as it made its way to the Indigenous teaching field. And “Indianness” too, a category itself born of colonialism, was produced in specific contexts of power and exchange. Colonial policy in North America throughout the twentieth century erected sharp and shifting parameters of Indigenous identity and, in the process, contributed to the cultivation of a sense of shared identification among diverse Indigenous peoples on the basis of common experiences of colonialism. Narrators in this study inherited these intersecting genealogies of “Indianness” and the Baha’i Faith. And in adopting a broad transnational framework that captures the contours of current Indigenous Baha’i community, this study illustrates that there was no fixed pathway towards becoming Indigenous and Baha’i. The Baha’i Faith was a religion that “made sense” (or, better, which Indigenous people who declared as Baha’is made sense, and meaning, of) in light of diverse experiences and interpretations of colonialism, Christianity, and Indigenous spirituality alike.

In the ongoing context of colonialism in Canada and the United States, the opportunity for independent religious investigation and choice proved deeply empowering for a number of narrators. Further, progressive revelation and unity in diversity, teachings that narrators

described as rational, helped reconcile what many had experienced as hypocrisy and prejudice from Christian churches, and settler society at large. A number of narrators came to investigate and connect with the Baha'i Faith through a Christian lens and eschatological expectations concerning the return of Christ. For some, becoming Baha'i was likewise an explicit extension of family histories of Indigenous Christian leadership. Indigenous spiritual influences such as dream, vision, and prophecy also proved a strong inspiration for declaration. I examined rational and spiritual declaration stories separately in this study in order to underline their distinctions. Overlap, however, between these paths simultaneously reveals that explanation for declaration cannot be reduced to either pole alone.

Declaration, in the context of this study, was not only a statement of faith, but an expression of Indigeneity as well and narrators assembled a wide range of identifications under the Baha'i umbrella. For some, the process of becoming Baha'i served to strengthen an existing sense of Indigenous (often tribal) self, outside of colonial strictures. For others, conversely, the religion proved a supportive space and structure in which they came to cultivate and openly claim an Indigenous identity for the first time. Many articulated and activated such identification immediately upon their declarations. For some others, this came by way of later Baha'i practice. Indeed, "living the life" as a Baha'i brought narrators into new formulations of community as well. Calling on a revivalist idiom of Indigenous culture that emerged in the period that narrators became Baha'is (and which Baha'is themselves helped produce), some narrators described coming to participate in cultural practices such as sweat lodge and pipe ceremony and drumming, singing, and dancing directly by way of their Baha'i observance. And with this activity, and the wider community life that it typically brought Baha'is into, they further deepened both tribal and intertribal identities. Personal religious practice, in turn, often intersected closely (indeed,

inseparably) with Baha'i teaching activity. Motivated by a general Baha'i call to teach, and the additional propulsion of Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy, Indigenous Baha'is participated in a wide range of teaching initiatives among other Indigenous peoples, in North America and elsewhere, producing, in the process, a sense of global Indigenous identification. This teaching work often took the subtle form of service in such areas as Indigenous cultural revitalization, community development, education, social work, and health. Indigenous (and other) Baha'is have made contributions to such fields disproportionate to their small numbers. This history deserves attention unto itself and should alert scholars to the religious motivations possibly underpinning other expressions of Indigenous activism in this period as well.

The explicitly global orientation and aspiration of the Baha'i Faith prompts questions concerning the place of place in this story. Existing local and regional studies of Indigenous Baha'is illustrate that Baha'i declaration and practice, including transnational travel, did not extinguish specific tribal identities (as Diné, for example, or Lakota, Tagish, or Tlingit) or ties to particular place.⁵ This study, too, has illuminated how some narrators strengthened their tribal identities, even returned to tribal territory, by way of becoming Baha'i. Not all narrators, however, had or centered such specific ties and land was not a subject that emerged in detail in my interviews overall. There is a need for more nuanced and nimble frameworks and vocabulary for analyzing varied Indigenous articulations like these. Emerging concepts of Indigenous transnationalism are helpful for unsettling the settler state and taking in mobility and connections between, say, urban and reservation settings. Yet nationalism in any key is a somewhat uneasy fit

⁵ See Linda S. Covey, "Diné Becoming Bahá'í: Through the Lens of Ancient Prophecies" (MA thesis, Missouri State University, 2011); Lynn Echevarria, "A New Skin for an Old Drum: Changing Contexts of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá'í Storytelling," *The Northern Review* 29 (Fall 2008), 39-62; Carolyn Patterson Sawin, "Native Conversion, Native Identity: An Oral History of the Bahá'í Faith among First Nations People in the Southern Central Yukon Territory, Canada" (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2000); Pauline Tuttle, "The Hoop of Many Hoops: The Integration of Lakota Ancestral Knowledge and Bahá'í Teachings in the Performative Practices of Kevin Locke" (PhD thesis, University of Washington, 2002).

with the global Baha'i vision. Going forward, this apparent tension, and the related question of how rooted expressions of specific Indigenous peoplehood have been articulated with Baha'u'llah's routed vision of the earth as one country and humanity its citizens, bears further investigation.⁶

The specific oral histories that I explore in this study are the product of intersubjective interactions between narrators and I. More than simply sources of data about the past, these interviews are themselves active expressions of Indigenous Baha'i identity. They offer rich, often intimate, insight into the ways that narrators themselves plot their lives and I have created space in this study to allow these stories room to breathe. Narrators shared composed declaration stories, in particular, in which they called on their contemporary Baha'i vocabulary to recall and reconstruct their personal "paths of search" that led them to the Baha'i Faith. Some likewise expressed ongoing interpretation of Indigenous spiritual connections that inspired their declarations and drew on contemporary discourse surrounding residential schools, and a related narrative of colonialism's history, to articulate their experiences. The declaration stories that narrators shared were, by and large, narratives of empowerment. Interviews also reveal narratives of disappointment as well, however, as some narrators described encountering dismissive and disrespectful attitudes within the Baha'i community towards the Indigenous perspectives and practices that were central to their experiences of becoming Baha'i. The Baha'i prohibition on backbiting, coupled, quite likely, with Indigenous teachings on silence and respect, contributed to a significant quiet surrounding intra-Baha'i tension. Yet hints, and some explicit examples, of such dynamics did emerge.

⁶ For a recent study that reflects thoughtfully on the place of place in articulations of Māori Indigeneity in New Zealand, while uniquely tracking Māori maritime connections with Pacific peoples, see Alice Te Punga Somerville, *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

For narrators in this study, the process of becoming Baha'i was more than just a project of personal "salvation," in the sense of deepening their own individual, and even shared, Indigenous identities. It was also, and remains, a project of intercultural learning, relationship building, and reconciliation (a term that Baha'is tend to use more often than decolonization). Some narrators were first drawn to the Baha'i Faith by the conduct of non-Indigenous adherents, as much as abstract religious principle, and many have forged lasting relationships of mutual respect with other Baha'is. Unity in diversity, to be sure, has yet to be fully achieved within the Baha'i community. Colonial tensions of intercultural communication and normative patterns of non-Indigenous practice and privilege have caused pain, and retreat, for a number of Indigenous Baha'is. In speaking to such tensions, which most did subtly, a number of narrators framed them as "learning opportunities" and inevitable ruts along what they considered a fresh path towards peace. This emphasis on process is striking and revealing of a clear sense of historical consciousness through which Baha'is take a long view of their task of building a New World Order. Though relatively few in number, Indigenous Baha'is themselves continue to work, in many ways, towards the global Baha'i goal of unity in diversity. Abdu'l-Baha's prophecy remains, in this way, a strong inspiration and in reflecting on the particular gifts that Indigenous peoples have to share with the world, many narrators pointed to Indigenous teachings of relationship that connect humanity, and the nonhuman world as well, in sacred kinship. Indeed, in a world where all is one.

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Appendix 1: The Narrators

The following offers brief background sketches of narrators, situating when and where they grew up and became Baha'is and their Indigenous heritage. To convey the generational scope of the study, these sketches are organized chronologically based on year of birth. These sketches draw on details that narrators shared in their interviews with me and during follow up communication; in cases where I do not know a narrator's specific year of birth, I have situated their sketch based on other contextual details shared in the interview.

Klara Tyler was of Ehattesaht (Nuu-chah-nulth) and German heritage and was born 8 May 1923 on the Puyallup Indian Reservation near Tacoma, Washington. She was raised in an intercultural community on the Puyallup Reservation and in Port Angeles and Pysht on the Olympic Peninsula. She declared as a Baha'i on the Makah Reservation in Neah Bay in 1956. Our interview took place at her home in Neah Bay, Washington. Tyler passed away in Lewiston, Idaho on 25 May 2013.

Jane Grover was born 17 August 1939 in Albany, New York. She is of Abenaki and White heritage and grew up in New Hampshire. She declared as a Baha'i in Peterborough, New Hampshire in January 1965. Our interview took place at her home in McMinnville, Oregon.

Eleanora McDermott is Peigan and was born 28 September 1939 on the Peigan Reserve in southern Alberta, where she attended the Anglican St. Cyprian Residential School. She attended high school in Pincher Creek, then St. Paul Residential School on the Blood Reserve, then Alberta College in Edmonton. McDermott's parents, Samson and Rose Knowlton, became Baha'is during the time that she was attending Alberta College and McDermott declared a number of years later, at a 1983 birthday party for her father; she did not become active in the religion until several years later. Our interview took place in the company of two other narrators – McDermott's sister, Beverley Knowlton, and Allison Healy – at McDermott's home in Calgary.

Nedra Greenaway is of Chinese and Métis heritage. She was born 12 February 1941 and grew up in the town of Bowness, on the outskirts of Calgary, Alberta. She declared as a Baha'i in 1964 while living in Kitimat, British Columbia. Our two interviews took place at Greenaway's home in Robert's Creek, on the Sunshine Coast in British Columbia, and included her husband, Don.

Allison Healy is Blackfoot (Siksika and Kainai) and was born in 1942 on the Siksika Indian Reserve in southern Alberta. She attended a Catholic residential school in Cluny for much of her childhood, then spent time at school and work in Red Deer, Edmonton, and Calgary. She declared as a Baha'i at her home on the Blood (Kainai) Reserve in February 1972. Our first interview took place on the campus of Mount Royal College in Calgary; the second took place at my home when I was living in North Vancouver, British Columbia.

Donald Addison was born 13 November 1942 in Klamath Falls, Oregon. He is of Choctaw and White heritage and grew up in Eugene, Oregon, where he became a Baha'i in 1960. Our interview took place at Addison's home in Eugene.

Chris Cook Jr. is 'Namgis (Kwakwaka'wakw) and was born 25 December 1942. He grew up in Alert Bay, located off the northeastern tip of Vancouver Island, and also spent time living in Vancouver, British Columbia in his youth. He declared as a Baha'i in 1991 at the home of Patrick and Sandra Slobodian, friends he met during their time as Baha'i pioneers in Alert Bay during the early 1980s. Our interview took place at the offices of the Native Fishing Association in West Vancouver, British Columbia.

Philip Lane Jr. is of Chickasaw and Yankton Sioux heritage. He was born at Haskell Indian School on 3 July 1944 and lived with his parents for a period in the Canal Zone in Panama before the family settled in Walla Walla, Washington. He declared as a Baha'i around 1967 in Pendleton, Oregon. Our interview took place at Lane's home in Whiterock, British Columbia.

Joyce Shales is Tlingit, and has Haida and Jewish ancestry as well, and grew up in the southeastern Alaskan town of Sitka. She declared as a Baha'i in 1964, around the age of twenty, while living in Fairbanks, Alaska. Our interviews took place at her home in Seabeck, Washington.

Jacob Bighorn was Lakota. He was born 19 November 1945 and grew up on the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana. Bighorn declared as a Baha'i in 1998 while living in Salem, Oregon. Our interviews took place at Bighorn's homes in Duncan, British Columbia (he and his family moved between the time of our two interviews; our second interview included his wife, Deloria). Bighorn passed away in Victoria, British Columbia on 4 October 2008.

Linda Covey is of Cherokee, Southern Cheyenne, and German heritage; she also has French and English ancestry. She was born in Fort Sumner, New Mexico and grew up in the Ozark region of Missouri. Covey declared as a Baha'i in Missouri in 1970. Our interview took place at a home in Evanston, Illinois, where Covey was then working in the field of elder care.

Steve Cook is 'Namgis (Kwakwaka'wakw) and grew up in Alert Bay, British Columbia, where he declared as a Baha'i in 1995. Our research conversation (we did not do a formal recorded interview) took place at Cook's home in Alert Bay.

J.C. Lucas is Hesquiaht (Nuu-chah-nulth). Lucas grew up on the west coast of Vancouver Island and attended residential school until the age of sixteen. He declared as a Baha'i in 1982 at a gathering in Bowser, on Vancouver Island. Our interview took place at a restaurant in Nanaimo, British Columbia.

Lee Brown is of Cherokee heritage and was born in 1947. He grew up in the small town of Washougal, Washington and declared as a Baha'i in Seattle in the mid-1970s. Our interviews took place at Brown's home in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Lorintha Umtuch is Yakama. She was born 26 March 1947 and grew up on the Yakama Reservation in south-central Washington, where she declared as a Baha'i in 1966. Our interview took place at Umtuch's home in Toppenish, on the Yakama Reservation.

John Sargent is of Mohawk and White heritage. He was born 1 January 1949 and spent portions of his childhood living with his maternal grandparents on the Six Nations Reserve in southern Ontario and in Rochester, New York and with his paternal grandparents in Windsor Locks, Connecticut. He moved to Casper, Wyoming with his parents at the age of nine or ten and became a Baha'i there several years later. Our interviews took place by telephone, with Sargent at his home in Kamloops, British Columbia.

Beverley Knowlton is Peigan and grew up on the Peigan Reserve in southern Alberta. Her parents, Samson and Rose Knowlton, became Baha'is when she was about seven or eight years old and Knowlton declared as a Baha'i at the age of fifteen, the Baha'i "age of maturity." Our interview took place in a vehicle en route from Calgary to a gathering at the Sylvan Lake Baha'i School located in Sylvan Lake, Alberta.

Deloria Bighorn is of Chickasaw and Yankton Sioux heritage. She was born 15 July 1952 and grew up in Walla Walla, Washington, where she declared as a Baha'i on 28 August 1969. Our first of two interviews took place at her daughter's home in Vancouver, British Columbia; our second interview, which included her husband, Jacob, took place at the couple's home in Duncan, British Columbia.

Tina Rainwater Kahn is of Cherokee, Osage, and Hungarian heritage. She was born 23 June 1953 on the Fort Ord navy base in Monterey, California and grew up in the northeastern California town of Truckee. Kahn became a Baha'i in 1966 after hearing about the religion from a travelling encyclopedia salesman; she formally declared at the age of fifteen. Our interview took place at the home of Tina and her husband, Alfred, located in Pine Springs, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation.

Mary Gubatayao-Hagen is of Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Filipino heritage. She was born 11 February 1954 and grew up in the "Indipino" community in the greater Seattle area. She declared as a Baha'i in 1981 in San Jose, California. Our interviews took place by telephone, with Mary at her home in Juneau, Alaska.

Scott Tyler (son of narrator Klara Tyler) is of Ehattesaht, Makah, German, and English heritage. He was born 2 March 1954 in Port Angeles, Washington and grew up in Neah Bay and Seattle. Tyler also spent six years of his youth living with his family as Baha'i pioneers on the Nez Perce Reservation in Idaho. He declared as a Baha'i in 1969. Our interview took place at Tyler's medical office (he is a family doctor) in Bellevue, Washington.

Kevin Locke is Lakota and Anishinabe. He was born in 1954 and was introduced to the Baha'i Faith by pioneers on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation where he declared as a Baha'i in 1979. Our interview took place by telephone, with Locke at his home in Wakpala, South Dakota, on the Standing Rock Reservation.

Linda Loft is of Mohawk and Ojibwa heritage. She grew up in a Baha'i family on the Tyendinaga reserve in Ontario and formally declared as a Baha'i in 1972. Our interview took place at Loft's home in Meade's Creek, on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

Robert George is Quw'utsun' and grew up in Duncan, British Columbia, where he declared as a Baha'i in 1979 at the age of nineteen. Our interview took place at the Hiiye'yu Lelum House of Friendship in Duncan.

Sonny Voyageur is Kwakwaka'wakw, on his mother's side; his father is also Indigenous, from Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. Voyageur grew up in Victoria, British Columbia and declared as a Baha'i in 1988. Our interview took place at a restaurant in North Vancouver, British Columbia.