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George Greenia

College of William and Mary, gxgree@wm.edu

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11 The Future Generations Ride of the Lakota Sioux

George D. Greenia*

The College of William & Mary in Virginia University, Williamsburg, Virginia, USA

On 29 December 1890, an unanticipated but malicious massacre of Lakota Sioux took place near Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota. In advance of the centenary of this tragedy in 1990, a commemorative midwinter horseback ride was organized by members of the Lakota Nation who are now largely confined to reservations and suffer from a poverty rate of 50% and an unemployment rate of 70%. The modern trek was staged intuitively from the outset as a pilgrimage event, commemorative in nature and as a solemn procession to a site of mourning, much as secular pilgrims visit sites like the Atocha train station in Madrid, Guernica in the north of Spain or Ground Zero in New York. The Big Foot Memorial Ride concluded annually on the anniversary of the tragedy and covered some 200–300 miles, the approximate number of Indian deaths in 1890. The 1990 mourning ritual has been supplanted by a redesigned communal event enlarged and deepened in scope, the Future Generations Ride. Crafted as a youth event, it teaches Lakota history, values and prayer forms to a new generation of teenagers who make this difficult trip as a rite of passage, often in deep snow and freezing temperatures. The Future Generations Ride has become an iconic event that draws the attention and solidarity of many thousands who follow it through the news media. Across modern America, journeys of exile and tragedy forge identity through remembrance, the Future Generations Ride converging with the Underground Railroad, the Trail of Tears and a score of other memorial pilgrimages (Greenia, 2014a, b).

Introduction

Every nation and people require their foundational fictions, and tales of travel to an origin site or turning point in their history are a persistent, almost required, element. The journey that gives rise to a nation may be as secular as Aeneas drawn towards Rome, or as sacred as the Exodus Event that forged the Hebrew nation on its way to a Promised Land. Survival of slaughter is often a key part of the myth. Troy was in flames, Egypt awash with plagues, and even the modern Holocaust of Eastern Europe is part of the explanatory energy that pushed Jews towards

establishing a new state of Israel. The American experience is densely mythicized by the arrival of its first colonists who called themselves, conveniently enough, pilgrims.

Pilgrimage is a universal phenomenon documented in every known time, territory and tradition. Its modern expressions are both sacred and secular, and undeniably fluctuate between a reverent gaze and a gawking tourism. Pilgrimage includes travels to Jerusalem, Rome and Mecca, of course, but also journeys to be physically present at Ground Zero and Graceland, at the ironic leftovers of Soviet self-congratulation, and at the graves of Princess Diana, Jim Morrison and

* Address for correspondence: gxgree@wm.edu

Mother Teresa of Calcutta. On the contemporary world scene, Christian pilgrimage, for all its steady history and recent resurgence, is a bit player compared with the millions surging to the holy sites of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and other faiths. Indigenous populations of the New World, especially those with nomadic customs, sought the sacred on their annual circuits past water courses, mountain peaks and distinctive topographic features endowed with powers that peaked at specific seasons (Prorok, 2003, pp. 286–287; Ostler, 2010). All maps are obedient witnesses to conceptual designs of space and reality, and the Lakota on North America's central Great Plains, as much as any tribe did, knew their world as a tracery of intersections of worlds seen and unseen.¹

Mythic travel tends to embed itself in origin narratives, epics and a generalized national nostalgia. Such myths equip a people with honoured places to visit and travel circuits for commemorative tourism. Not infrequently, journeys of deep communal importance may be redefined, rewritten and re-enacted, as corporate identity morphs over time and new generations retell the old stories and journey to sites declared sacred in fresh ways. The very claim that one's community emerged from dislocation and heroic survival becomes part of the foundational fiction that many groups desire, if only to keep up with the Joneses – especially if those Joneses are more powerful 'Others' with origin journeys of their own (Davidson and Gitlitz, 2002; Greenia, 2014b). The indigenous Indians of the USA have endured and survived much. Their history is a patchwork of tales recalling timeless free-range freedom followed by oppression and confinement. Some journeys were genocidal in intent, forced on them by American cavalrymen bristling with guns and commissioned by a nation state insatiable for land. The Trail of Tears is the best known example of forced exile, but hundreds of Native American tribes were pushed to abandon ancestral homes and lands, journeys that stamped on them entirely new identities and imposed new foundational fictions. These 'reverse epics' – narratives of expulsion rather than voluntary questing – are crafted by insider oral tradition and are not infrequently complemented by their victors' sentimental, nostalgic tributes long after the damage is done.² These are myths of a mournful sort, and their homeless

heroes are monumental even when crushed, noble in defeat, and tenacious visionaries for their sorrowful remnant nation.

Remembering the past as pilgrimage is both edifying and useful. In the case of the Lakota and their 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee, a pre-history of habitual pilgrimage provides a mythic backdrop that defines and unites plains tribes. Without permanent settlements to defend, they expressed their valour through random confrontations and opportunistic raiding with neighbouring tribes as roving scouts made contact and retreated in a bloodless feint or as a strategic retreat before returning with a larger force. The surge and counter-surge of violence along the routes of the tribes' cyclical itineraries gave a pulse to their pilgrimage. Conflict was endemic but low grade; it took place in tolerable, even somewhat predictable, measures.

The appearance of whites changed every equation. Mere contact with them brought death in forms previously unknown. Just meeting with them, in peace or in war, meant the prompt arrival of withering sickness, fever, convulsions and death. Across the continent millions died, and on the open plains entire villages fell ill and perished. The guns and horses the Lakota obtained could not even the contest, and the slaughter at Wounded Knee was simply a final and conclusive blow in a struggle lost long before. The late 20th-century invention of a memorial ride provided an apt gesture that recovered a key element of the Lakota's mythic prehistory to help knit an eroded nation back together. They described their ride in terms of repairing a ritual artefact, as 'mending the sacred hoop' (Fedarko, 2004).³

The Myth of the Lakota

In oral cultures, communal memory can be powerful without reaching far into the past.⁴ The greater Sioux nations were forest and riverside dwellers in north-central Minnesota until endemic tribal warfare drove them towards the North and South Dakota plains in the middle of 17th century. The Sioux who spread furthest west acquired the name of Lakota or Teton Sioux and their own distinct dialect; they adapted their lifestyle to unforested savannahs rich with buffalo herds that probably numbered around

30 million across the heartland of the continent. Their culture changed not only its accent and diet but also in its more sedentary, agricultural ways, which were traded for distinctly nomadic routines. They ranged over broad landscapes in imitation of the migratory habits of their principal food source. That same culture of movement associated with the hunt was reinforced by territorial disputes with neighbouring plains tribes who were in pursuit of the same game and the same migratory paths that were defined for them by the buffalo. Horses were incorporated into their culture only after around 1730 and became the other great beast that sustained, defended and defined them. The Sioux quickly came to see themselves as a horse nation.

Movement and iconic animal companions became wedded to religious practice. The buffalo became part of a mythic identity, a religious icon of sustenance and prosperity, survival and courage. It was absorbed into their origin story, which recounted the apparition of a woman who announced their identity and destiny along with the promise of a white buffalo calf that would lead them to a sort of Promised Land. After the devastating small pox plagues brought by white settlers, the need for messianism, even apocalyptic intervention, may have become more acute for tribes whose lands were confiscated and whose herds were hunted to near extinction by powerful invaders.

For all nomadic peoples, cyclical movements across familiar landmarks become communal ritual. Sacred sites are identified; in the case of the Lakota, one thinks of features like Standing Rock, Harney Peak, Devil's Tower, Hot Springs, Bear Butte and more. White traders and settlers – with a highly mobile US Army to back them up – could only perceive of religious practice in historically Christian terms. They came to the plains and saw no churches. They could not imagine a lived religion that sought the transcendent on a sacred geography that no one could own, let alone sell off or lose in battle. When nomadic peoples are stripped of their freedom of movement, they lose the ability to pray. The literally nourishing march among sites that gave spiritual sustenance and food was halted at the borders of their reservations, borders that were drawn by those who were in complete ignorance of ritual locale or performance.

As their sacred lands contracted and were eventually deeded to others, so too was their

ability to navigate the transcendent across a landscape marked with vision quests, feasting and the burial of their dead. Memory replaced movement, and a regretful immobilized silence ensued. History itself stopped (Taylor, 2007).⁵ The eventual incorporation of Wounded Knee on to a nostalgic landscape of visions and suffering was nearly inevitable.

The Massacre at Wounded Knee of 1890

One of the concluding chapters of the Indian wars on the Great Plains took place after the Lakota had been defeated. The most decisive Indian victory took place in 1876 at Little Bighorn when Sioux and Cheyenne warriors surrounded and destroyed General George Custer and his military force. The backlash was inevitable and inexorable. Seven months later, the US government confiscated more than 7 million acres in the Black Hills. Remnant bands of indigenous locals fled to Canada or surrendered in Nebraska and the Dakotas. In September of 1877, Chief Crazy Horse was bayoneted to death at Fort Robinson, and in 1881 Chief Sitting Bull submitted to his enemies. By 1885, he was a feature attraction of Buffalo Bill Cody's travelling spectacle. The succession of duplicitous treaties to seize the open ranges that the Plains Indians once enjoyed culminated in the General Allotment Act of 1887 which conceded a scant 186 acres to heads of Native American households.

Apocalyptic literature often swells up when a nation faces ultimate catastrophe and prays for a sudden, even convulsive, reversal of fortune. The collapse of their world – for example, the extermination of their principal food source, which also gave clothing and shelter, and the erasure of their sacred geographies – spawned the emergence of an apocalyptic visionary for the Sioux and their companion tribes. At the start of 1889, Wovoka, a Paiute shaman in Nevada, claimed to be instructed by heavenly apparitions that the performance of a Ghost Dance would resurrect slain Indian warriors, expel white settlers and restore the buffalo and the old ways of life.⁶ Lakota chiefs visited Wovoka and learn the ritual, took hope from it and actively participated in Ghost Dances, spreading

the practice among fellow survivors in the course of the following year. The intent was to seek redemption through ritual, but it only heightened the destruction. The cryptic rite served to reignite white suspicions of renewed Indian militancy, and more troops were mustered to reinforce the palisade forts that marked the crossroads and river junctions in the upper Midwest. Chief Sitting Bull of the Hunkpapa Sioux was accosted by Indian police and killed at Standing Rock on 15 December 1890. His tribesmen scattered to join up with renegade Ghost Dancers in the Badlands or sought leadership under Chief Big Foot, who himself concluded that surrender was their last hope of safe haven on an assigned reservation.

Escorted by mounted cavalry, a band of perhaps 350 Indians marched towards their designated confinement on relatively useless land at Pine Ridge. They encamped on the night spanning 28–29 December 1890 on a snowy open stretch near the creek at Wounded Knee. The first morning daylight was shrouded by fog and winter mist. Some soldiers had been drinking and tried to forcibly disarm the already subdued Lakota. When gunfire rang out, neither the prisoners nor the army regulars knew who was firing. About 30 soldiers ended up dead, some likely from friendly fire; however, some 250 Lakota died. Many of them had fled on foot and were chased for up to a distance of 3 miles by those on horseback. Those gunned down on the snow included Chief Big Foot.

Protracted warfare, even before the arrival of white men, had bred an 'ecology of genocide'. The US Army had virtually accepted the elimination of native tribes as part of its domestic mission, especially after the expulsion of the Creek Indians along their Trail of Tears from Florida and other south-eastern territories in 1838–1839. The programme of expulsion had become a habit all too obvious in illegal seizure of the Black Hills during the gold rush of 1874. Bloodied by Custer's decimation and other costly skirmishes, and all too aware of the courage of a desperate enemy, soldiers at Wounded Knee eradicated Lakota men, women and children and buried them in a common trench grave.⁷ The few left alive were herded to the reservation at Pine Ridge and forced to leave behind their dead. Grieving, too, has its ritual movements and gestures. Here they were, left undone.

The Lakota Pilgrimage of 1990

The latest incarnation of a Lakota visionary seer seems to have appeared in 1986.

Birgil Kills Straight had a recurring dream. He and other community members were envisioning modern people riding horses down the Big Foot trail in South Dakota. In 1986, Kills Straight decided to make a journey along the trail on horseback to honor the Lakota people who died in the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. Once word of his ride got around, others asked to join him. Nineteen riders and two support vehicles made that inaugural trek. . . . According to reports, these rides are not for the weak. The days are long with a fast pace and limited rest periods. While support vehicles follow the riders to set up camp and cook meals, it is expected that the riders feel hardships. These hardships connect the community of riders and sponsor a sense of cultural pride.

(Indian Country Today Media Network, 2003)

More news coverage has appeared on an annual basis, always with an appreciation of the trek and its power as a transgenerational experience.

Honoring those who lost their lives at the Wounded Knee massacre, Badlands National Park and Buffalo Gap National Grasslands ended 2010 by hosting an annual ride that is now renamed to connect with future generations. Known for the past 23 years as the Bigfoot Memorial Ride, made up Lakota Sioux from the Pine Ridge, Standing Rock, and Cheyenne River Reservations, the new name from the annual ride is now the Future Generations ride (Omaka Tokatakiya). . . .

[The new name would] accurately reflect the multiple goals and mission: Commemorating the 1890 ride over the same route, providing a time for prayer and spiritual connection, and building a bridge to the next generation.

'We finished our time of mourning for our ancestors,' said organizer Jeremiah Young Bull Bear, 'and it's time to move on and celebrate life with a new generation.'

Participants said that the ride is a way of practicing their culture, renewing cultural heritage values, and learning to work with others in the challenging natural environment of the northern plains winter.

(Old West News, 2011)

And again in another account:

Kim Cameron has set off on a nearly 300 mile journey into the past. She and other American Indian horseback riders began the annual Big Foot Memorial Ride on Dec. 15 at Sitting Bull's grave site. They hope to finish at Wounded Knee battle site in two weeks. . . . Cameron, who has done the ride before, said it has taught her patience, respect and discipline. She also has learned about horses, her Lakota culture and how to work with other people on the ride, which the young people call the Future Generations Ride. . . . About eight out of 10 of the riders are young people who want to experience the ride for themselves and learn more about their traditions, said Ron His Horse Is Thunder, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe chairman and a descendant of Sitting Bull. "This has become a ride for them. A way of renewing, if you will, cultural values," he said. "It's become a rite of passage for those young kids to be able to say, "I've done that and in doing so have practiced my culture and have learned the values." . . . "Riding for my ancestors is a really big thing for me," Cameron, of Wakpala, said of the challenge.

(Walker, 2008a)

The invention of a Big Foot Memorial Ride leading up to the centenary observances of 1990 was generally not named as pilgrimage, a category of practice commonly defined in the West as Christian, antique, traditionally performed on foot and certainly not mournful, much less political. The Big Foot Memorial Ride was staged from its first tentative rehearsals in the late 1980s as commemorative in nature and as a solemn visit to a site of tragedy, much as people venerate sites like the concentration camps of Eastern Europe, the Atocha train station in Madrid, Guernica in northern Spain or Ground Zero in New York. Even after it garnered a certain measure of publicity and even *cachet* in the media, the Ride was open only to the Sioux themselves, who erected a sort of social firewall by their explicit disapproval of participation even by sympathetic whites and by their insistence on daily prayer circles at dawn and dusk in the Lakota language.

The Lakota are certainly not alone in crafting memorial gestures and rites of passage that converge with classic forms of pilgrimage. In recent times, the renewal of travel for transformation has become a social and political strategy

for minority groups within the USA and their avatars in other societies around the world. They adopt ritualized travel, especially on foot, as a universal gesture of embodied spirituality and lived religion, often without traditional dogmatic baggage. In the USA various groups have restored stretches of the Underground Railroad or the Freedom Marches of the civil rights movements. The commemorative aspect is endowed with fresh meaning and a commitment to communal values. There are journeys designed as penitential marches of solidarity among those anxious to promote a national resolve to avoid the abuses of the past and in a symbolic way to make amends for them. These include outfitting recovered sections of the Trail of Tears with historical markers detailing the forced exile of native populations.⁸ Similar efforts by Matthew Anderson and others will reconstruct the North West Mounted Police Trail as an act of reconciliation for the expulsion of First Nation residents in Canada.⁹ Many regard this as a welcome expression of solidarity from outside the mistreated communities as well as an act of reparation on the part of those who feel that they inherit a portion of the shame.¹⁰

For the Lakota Sioux in 1990, 100 years after the massacre at Wounded Knee, a commemorative midwinter horseback ride created a visible source of pride. Now mostly confined to their reservations and suffering from a poverty rate of 50% and an unemployment rate of 70%, residents on the neighbouring reservations and from among the greater North and South Dakota communities have repurposed the original Big Foot Memorial Ride into a trek which replaces and expands it, and also changes its vision to be more forward looking. The Future Generations Ride always concludes on 29 December (the anniversary of the tragedy); it covers some 300 miles (the approximate number of Indian deaths in 1890). It is designed as a youth event to teach the history and values of the Sioux nation to teenagers who make this difficult trip as a rite of passage, often in deep snow and freezing temperatures. The pilgrimage aspect of the trek across the Dakotas is underscored by the presence of tribal volunteers who become travelling *hospitaleros* to tend the needs of those riding on horseback. This Future Generations Ride has become an iconic event that draws the attention and solidarity of many thousands of Americans who follow it through the news media.

Its unique characteristics are its performance as a ceremonial journey staged as a community event and its careful selection of symbols whose use is only permitted to qualified participants. Unlike journeys to Canterbury, Santiago, Rome or Jerusalem, which are available to all – true believers and tourists alike – the Lakota Rides are a closed pilgrimage reserved exclusively for members of the community that created it. Although freshly refashioned, these rides recover cultural and spiritual traditions that had been as frozen in place as the graves of those slaughtered at Wounded Knee. That transcendent quality is, to date, still apolitical, detached from any exercise of leverage aimed at the Bureau of Indian Affairs or other government agencies. Neither is it intended as a performance that explains Lakota identity to outsiders, nor does it plead for their approval or even understanding. The non-utilitarian, even hermetic nature of the enterprise is part of the appeal. The Future Generations Ride is both a new creation and a recovery of lost prayer forms which restore agency. It is also deliberately and strategically transgenerational, meant to endow Lakota youth with a rite of passage into adulthood.

Native Spiritualities

Despite the overarching themes of this collection of studies, I am not labelling the Future Generations Ride a 'pilgrimage' to force it into a foreign paradigm. Pilgrimage is often considered a charming, slightly odd bit of religious history, something romantic, adventurous and quirky. Most obviously it is a form of spirituality, a practice meant to sanctify the traveller. The most flexible and accommodating definition is still 'travel for transformation'. I keenly feel the dangers of cultural appropriation in labelling the modern Lakota winter trek a 'pilgrimage', especially when one considers the baggage that that term carries from traditional Christian practices and how it has been used to filter sacred travel in Eastern traditions, including the Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu traditions. Yet they are all forms of travel for transformation with similar spiritual resonance.

Medieval European pilgrimages had their roots in Eastern traditions but also built on a universal human need to give deeper meaning to

physical displacement and its mirror opposite, mysticism, which expresses inner changes through the common metaphor of having travelled far. Pilgrimage is also a recurrent form of migration justified by an ideology, such as completing a symbolic cycle of life or finding – or returning to – a true home. Christian pilgrimage helped build the highways of Europe and performed its ethnic, religious, linguistic, military and cultural borders, seeking religious constants but also exposing travellers to unfamiliar societies beyond neighbouring mountains or over trackless seas. The emergence of a repertoire of revered destinations is one index of the Europeanization of outlying districts and a means of peacefully erasing clan or territorial boundaries. When one's world is defined as a map of sites of potential pilgrimage and worshipful visitation, this 'conceptual cartography' imposes itself on the landscapes of one's physical world. The shrine on the mountaintop comes to represent a spiritual height; the hills overlooking a hero's tomb become his silent sentinels.

Some of the essential elements of pilgrimage most often underscored by researchers include the celebration of a physical location as a site of symbolic or real access to powers beyond the human realm; displacement from one's customary locale, daily routines and social position; and ritualized, non-utilitarian behaviours undertaken in the course of one's travel or while savouring the goal of the trek. Discomforts and ordeals are not just tolerated but may be welcome and embraced as essential components of the quest. Pilgrims desire to be present at a site that others have designated as significant for non-material reasons. The experience of pilgrimage is seen *in advance* as capable of creating an enduring memory one returns to later in life (Greenia, 2014a, pp. 15–17).

Voices from within the field of Native American religious studies have been fighting a rear-guard – and an apparently losing – battle against neocolonialism. Surveying the 'present efforts to revive traditional tribal religions', Vine Deloria asks point blank: 'Is religion possible?' He concludes that 'Indian Traditional religious affairs are a complete disaster area' (Deloria, 1992, p. 35). Intrusive hucksters of 'the New Age–Indian medicine man circuit' step forward with costumes, beads and marketable made-up rituals. Deloria details some crucial differences between traditional Native lived religions and more recent

self-ordained exponents that claim continuity and authenticity (Deloria, 1992, p. 36). Apocalyptic, 'save the Earth now' rhetoric so common among New Age 'Native American' gurus was late to appear in Siouan religious discourse, entering from outside (most recognizably from the Paiute shaman Wovoka) and only generalized during the genocidal crisis of the late 19th century when unprecedented alliances, violence and societal – even biological – collapse shocked indigenous peoples. The Ghost Dance was the most obvious expression of this, but so was the suppression of sustaining practices like the Sun Dance and white prohibition of travel to sacred sites like Harney Peak, Devil's Tower and Bear Butte. These holy places were not just appropriated but sold off and desecrated by mining and commercial development.¹¹ Unregulated spiritualists nowadays proclaim their mission to preach and recruit among those shopping for undemanding values, but Native tribes embrace their own heartfelt traditions without needing to impose them on anyone else. There was never inter-tribal proselytizing and there were never wars of religion among the First Nations of the USA or Canada (Deloria, 1992, p. 36). Even well-intentioned and supposedly respectful contemporary white folks who gladly join in on Indian ceremonies can be more than irksome:

The non-Indian appropriator conveys the message that Indians are indeed a conquered people and that there is nothing that Indians possess, *absolutely nothing* – pipes, dances, land, water, feathers, drums, and even prayers – that non-Indians cannot take whenever and wherever they wish.

(emphasis in original) (Deloria, 1992, p. 37)

Christopher Ronwanièn:te Jocks, a researcher and member of the Iroquois Longhouse and Mohawk communities, pointedly lays bare other betrayals of indigenous American Indian cultures (Jocks, 1996, pp. 415–431).¹² In Jocks' view, fellow academics have participated in deliberate falsifications; he singles out Carlos Castaneda's *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, which Jocks denounces as 'distortions occasioned by the assumed congruence between American Indian religious understandings and European religious categories such as "the supernatural," "Supreme Being," "evil," and even such borrowings as the northern Eurasian "shamanism."' These distortions are a result of

a violation of context, the disclosure of privileged information about rites and meanings, a disruption of community relationships that are nested within mediations of the sacred, and trivialization of belief systems into suburban pastimes. Jocks dubs these 'white shamanism' (1996, pp. 418–419). The hermeneutic challenge Jocks poses to scholars is even more trenchant and involves 'issues . . . epistemological and ontological . . . [which] concern the very nature of knowledge, and the reality enacted or enhanced by American Indian ceremonies' (Jocks, 1996, p. 416). Other scholars take exception to Jocks' refusal to dialogue. Sam Gill (1997, p. 177) wrote a rejoinder in which he affirmed:

The study of religion, as I envision it, is not some merely academic work; it is the work of the interaction among peoples, or at least their perspectives, whose ontological, theological, and epistemological groundings in some senses are irreconcilable and irreducible. The work of the ASR [academic study of religion] is the work of being a responsible, sensitive, and caring citizen of the contemporary world.

Gill goes on to observe that:

For Jocks, despite his several efforts to qualify his position, the academic issue he is arguing comes down finally to the issue of 'us' against 'them,' Native American (and other indigenous peoples) against non-Native Americans. Jocks fails to acknowledge that he is both 'us' and 'them,' an acknowledgment that would breathe much needed vitality into the whole situation.

(Gill, 1997)

Competent scholars within professional religious studies are not always hopeful, some announcing that the field is hopelessly clogged with imperious Western paradigms, others retreating to arenas like Australia where native spiritual practices can, in some instances, be examined without the cloying merchandizing of the American scene. A negotiated middle ground would emphasize, first of all, a respectful insistence on Native American religions in the plural and second, a deference to authoritative senior voices from within indigenous communities (Grimes, 1996).¹³

Matthew Anderson notes insightfully that:

Properly understood, pilgrimage is always indigenous. . . . Inescapably, perhaps unconsciously, the landscape of the route makes its claims on the pilgrim. . . . For a pilgrimage about land to be effective, the land must speak,

and be listened to. It will speak slowly, through soil, stone and grass, and through all those other aesthetic and physical factors that prairie naturalist Trevor Herriot calls 'the givens of place'.

(Anderson, Chapter 12, this volume, citing Trevor Herriot, 2014, p. 18)

The original trails that marked a territory and gave native peoples a spatial as well as linguistic and cultural identity were erased by subsequent settlers or appropriated by them for commercial purposes. Many now lay beneath broad bands of asphalt as interstate highways. Some are hiking trails subsumed by the tourist industry, even when they lay on tribal lands. Yet a memory of their earlier character as spiritual pathways persists. Peter Nabakov comments on how Native Americans 'undertook collective pilgrimages to contact their mythological beings on their own grounds and noted places where moral or religious teachings were first given to them' (Nabakov, 2006, p. xii). Nicholas Deyo and others registered the persistent disappointment felt by some descendants:

A representative from the Rocky Boy's Reservation in Montana expressed the frustrations derived from fragmented ownership when he spoke of accessing an important sacred site: 'Before we can get to the Sweetgrass Hills, we have to ask private owners if we can go through their land to get over there. I often wonder, they say 'freedom of religion,' but we have to ask to get to these places....[T]hat makes it hard on us Native Americans.... If it was up to me, I'd make sure there was a [trail] that goes directly up there so we wouldn't be harassed by anybody when we want to pray to the creator in the places where our elders [prayed] before the coming of the visitors that come from different parts of the world.... [T]hey should respect [our] sacred sites'.

(Deyo, 2014, p. 137)

Conclusion

The Lakota Future Generations Ride is an instructive example of the spontaneous recovery

of traditional spiritual expressions tailored for a new generation. It is a demonstration of cultural unanimity which deliberately sets aside disagreements and the disparate points of view that dynamic societies otherwise thrive on, crafting consensus about symbolic gestures to express core values. Pilgrimage enjoys a nearly universal reputation as a benign form of religious expression which relies on and perhaps indulges in certain modes of crowd psychology that leave participants flushed with a feeling of solidarity. It is a 'natural' form of religion that appropriates a universal physiological experience. The long walk, with its voluntary surrender to internal rhythm, heightened energy, nutritional need, emotional focus, concentration on visually distant landmarks and goals (rather than on tasks and objects close to one's body), forges an inevitably convergent choreography among strangers, unrehearsed, yet spontaneously parallel in expression.

Apocalyptic terror understandably seized Plains Indians as they saw their communities all but exterminated by disease and the near extinction of their principal food source. The recent recapitulation of journeys of exile and tragedy, which forged new communities, are being re-expressed through freshly invented pilgrimages that express identity and remembrance. A persistent tone of millenarianism, even an 'apocalyptic peace', may help the Lakota and others achieve their goal for a renewal of hope.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. Matthew Anderson's 'Pilgrimage and the Challenging of a Canadian Foundational Myth' (Chapter 12, this volume) deals brilliantly with the Lakota and neighbouring First Nations in Canadian territories.
2. Within a few decades of 1492 and the fall of Spain's last Moorish kingdom in Granada, a new genre of frontier ballads about vanished enemies, valiant in battle and noble in sentiment, flowered in Spanish song

and courtly songbooks, which were called *cancioneros*. The sentimentalization of the American Indian followed a similar pattern starting in the 1950s.

3. Popular attention was focused on the Lakota Future Generations Ride by a cover photo essay in a widely distributed Sunday *Parade* article by Kevin Fedarko. The article helped popularize the idea of 'mending the sacred hoop'.

4. This is opposed to Zionism, which carries a self-conscious communal memory of ownership of certain lands dating back 5000 years, thanks in part to the continuity of written Hebrew scriptural records.

5. Taylor (2007, p. 7) notes that, from within traditional communities, many experienced the suspension of Plains Indians' culture as a cessation of time and history:

A culture's disappearance means that a people's situation is so changed that the actions that had crucial significance are no longer possible. . . . It is not just that you may be forbidden to try them and may be severely punished for attempting to do so; but worse, you can no longer even try them. You can't draw lines and die while trying to defend them. . . . This is the explanation of [Crow Chief] Plenty Coups: "After this nothing happened".

6. A second Plains Indian visionary, Black Elk, was saved from general slaughter during his employment as another 'Indian on display' in Buffalo Bill's travelling Wild West Show. In later years on the reservation, his bilingual son and ethnographer, John Neihardt, crafted *Black Elk Speaks* (2008), which is the English transcription of their conversations. It has become a sort of scripture for all Native Americans, most of whom left no written record of their religious practices for their descendants. For critiques of the reliability of Neihardt's field methods and interpretation of Black Elk's visions, see Arnold (1999) and Cajete (2010). Special note should be taken of Witkin-New Holy's (2000) appreciation of geography and spirituality in her chapter 'Black Elk and the Spiritual Significance of *Paha Sapa* (the Black Hills)'.

7. Primary sources were collected by Martin Gitlin (2011). For the most recent account, see Greene (2014).

8. The Trail of Tears is an episode of American history steeped in lore that now inspires shame. President Andrew Jackson ordered the forced exile to reservations in Oklahoma of thousands of Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Chickasaw and Choctaw, who were displaced from their traditional homelands and who merged haphazardly with unrelated tribes. Great numbers died en route and were buried without traditional rites along the roadside. Over 800 miles of the original trails have been identified as National Historic Trails by the US National Park Service. Some stretches have official interpretive centres, such as that of the Cherokee Heritage Center in Park Hill, Oklahoma. Ron Cooper notes that Woodhall's Depot in Westville, Oklahoma, is the:

farm where most of the Cherokee detachments dispersed after their long walk. Nothing remains of the farm and historians are actually still trying to pinpoint its location. But in many people's minds, this town is the official end of the Northern Route of the Cherokee Trail of Tears. The National Park Service measures all of the National Historic Trail's mileage to this point as well.

(Cooper, 2011)

For more on the local chapters of the Trail of Tears Association, see Bender (2011).

9. Matthew Anderson, in his 'Pilgrimage and the Challenging of a Canadian Foundational Myth' (Chapter 12, this volume) examines the ongoing recovery of the North West Mounted Police Trail as a newly created journey of repentance, reconciliation and historical memory.

10. There are also journeys crafted for their therapeutic benefit, like the 'Walk Off the War' initiative on the Appalachian Trail. That iconic American trek has been adapted for US military veterans who return from Iraq and Afghanistan with post-traumatic stress disorders and other psychic wounds. Many modern travellers on the Camino de Santiago in Spain are either living through some personal crisis or are just world weary and anxious for the healing and spontaneous community that this increasingly secularized medieval trek has become famous for.

11. This debate is far from over. The annual Harley-Davidson motorcycle rally in Sturgis doubles the population of the state of South Dakota every August and revives endemic disputes over recreational use of traditional sacred sites suddenly teeming with vacationing bikers. These moneyed tourists enjoy a sort of roving costume party, complete with 'authentic Wild West' fast food, plenty of alcohol, gambling, porn stars, noise and trash strewn around places once dedicated to ritual and vision quests. See Sundstrum (1996) and Freedman (2007).

12. See also Jocks (2003).

13. See also Innes (2009) and Helton (2010).

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