

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Kristina Beggen for the degree of Master of Arts in Environmental Arts and Humanities presented on June 13, 2019.

Title: Chasing Tails: Stories for Refining Relationships Between Wolves & Humans

Abstract approved:

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As wolves return to their historic habitats both in Oregon and across the globe, emotions are running high between people either gladdened or disturbed by their homecoming. Prior to colonization, wolves occupied the entire Pacific Northwest alongside Indigenous peoples. However, European settlements that ultimately coalesced to form the state of Oregon were driven to eliminate wolves from the territory, ultimately succeeding in the 1940s. Despite these intentions, wolves have slowly been moving westward from Idaho, and as of 2019 Oregon now has over a hundred wolves and two new packs that have recently taken up residence in the Umpqua National Forest and in the Cascade Mountains. This research explores how individuals from various backgrounds relate to wolves through the realm of story in order to deepen our human and animal relationships in pursuit of compassionate cohabitation. These stories will explore the economic ramifications of wolf depredation on livestock, the cascading influence wolves have on their ecosystems, the deeply moral behavior of wolves towards their families, and the elements of restorative justice embedded within their return to Indigenous lands. This research, interwoven with history, science, policy and philosophy with a narrative flair, endeavors to create a more holistic understanding of what it means to be in relationship with our kin, the wolves.

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Chasing Tails: Stories for Refining Relationships Between Wolves & Humans

by  
Kristina Beggen

A THESIS

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Master of Arts thesis of Kristina Beggen presented on June 13, 2019

APPROVED:

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Major Professor, representing Environmental Arts and Humanities

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Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Kristina Beggen, Author

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin where all of our lives begin, with our first Mother. We are all children of our Earth and we would be nowhere without her soil, atmosphere, water, minerals, cycles, regulations, and relationships with our nearest celestial bodies; the Moon and Sun. I am indebted to the vegetative life of our Earth, as well as fungi and the microbiota we cannot see with the naked eye. I will extend a special sweep of gratitude for the animal life of our Earth who have captivated me from a very young age and continue to amaze and inspire me. This Earth would be a lonely place without your companionship, mystery, and lessons. I would also like to extend a very special thanks to wolfkind, and our dog companions they share ancestors with. You will forever have a special place in my heart, and I will forever fight for your space to be free.

I would also like to acknowledge the situatedness of this particular region, and the peoples who traditionally call this place home. Oregon State University is located on the homelands of the Champinefu band of Kalapuya people who were forcibly removed from their land to the Grand Ronde and Siletz Reservations in 1855. They have since become members of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. This land continues to hold their legacy, and I am truly grateful to be a guest here. However, I must also recognize that this entire continent, Turtle Island, is the traditional homelands of hundreds upon hundreds of different tribes and clans of people and I have lived almost my entire life on their ancestral land. I continue to be humbled and amazed by the Indigenous Americans continuing the heritage of their ancestors despite outright genocide. I would also like to give thanks to my own ancestors that live within me and have persisted through the hateful trials of colonization in our homeland of Ireland.

I have unlimited gratitude for my parents who have given me life and shown me what it means to be a loving, joyous, and honorable human being. I have an

incredibly supportive and doting family who has stood behind me every step of the way even if they didn't know exactly what I was writing about. To my Dad, who I will never find enough words to express gratitude, thank you so much for all of your sacrifices, and unconditional love. To my Mom, I thank you every day for the breath and blood you have given me, and I'm endlessly happy to know that you are within me even though I cannot see, touch, or hear you. To April, my step-Mom, you have taken up a maternal role in my life and I could not have gotten here without your persistent love and support. I would like to thank my Brother, Ian, for your love and especially your humor, and to my Sister, Ivy, for your enduring sweetness. I am so proud of you both. To my Grandmother, I thank you for your penchant for the written word that you have passed onto me as I follow in your footsteps towards publishing a book of my very own. And I must extend gratitude towards my dog Okie, my best friend and writing companion. You have kept me sane throughout this process, and I wish I could explain to you why I've spent so much time in bed staring at a mysterious screen while we could have been hiking in the woods, swimming in rivers, or laying in the sun. I promise we will get to do a lot of that in the near future. I have infinitely more thanks for my extended family and friends who have also served as a foundation for love and encouragement.

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enthusiastically serving as my graduate council representative. I would also like to thank the many other instructors here at OSU that have helped me along my academic journey. You have all served me so well, and in my future career I hope to serve students with the same dedication, vigor and enthusiasm for the scholarly work that fills me with passion.

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I would like to thank the Environmental Arts and Humanities program at Oregon State University, and I'm so grateful that I applied and ultimately accepted your invitation to be a part of this unique program. Thank you, Jake and Carly, for helping to create and lead such a wonderful program that has helped me to grow

and deepen my knowledge. I hope that this program persists and continues to serve aspiring scholars with an affinity for our world coupled with a disdain for disciplinary restriction. I would like to give a huge thank you to my graduate cohort for all of your love, encouragement and sympathy during this experience. I knew graduate school would be tough, but I didn't expect such an incredible support group that at times felt like a second family. You are all so inspiring and thoroughly dedicated to your work that is so vital in trying times like these. I am so proud of all of you, and I look forward to the amazing work you will continue to do after graduation. Our journey is not over. I would also like to thank our graduate student union, CGE, for fighting for my rights as a graduate employee and ensuring decent pay and comprehensive healthcare for my hard work.

I would like to extend gratitude towards all of the authors who have guided me through my academic career and beyond. Many of you have been recognized in my literature review or bibliography, yet many more have escaped mention. Thank you so much for shaping my mind and heart, and ultimately preparing me for this endeavor. I hope to follow in your footsteps and inspire change in future generations of readers.

And lastly, I would like to thank the humble coffee bean for energizing me through tough mornings, lethargic afternoons, and long nights.

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## DEDICATION

This publication is dedicated in memory of my Mom, Josephine Beggen, who always admired my writing and encouraged me to pursue what I love. You always knew this day was coming. Additionally, I would like to dedicate this piece to my dog Okie who has served as a continuing inspiration as I envisioned a social world that would embrace the flourishing of her canine cousins. Lastly, I would like to devote this work to the wolves of the world as they return to their ancestral territories and continue to heal the land.



## **Preface**

### **Prepare for Metaphors**

While preparing to write this thesis I envisioned a narrative style that will emotionally engage readers, especially given that storytelling is a method that I play with throughout the piece. The tone of this work is quite informal compared to other theses typically emerging from academia, although I am not alone in my resistance against the rigid academic form. My writing style is inspired by many scholarly authors that I admire, such as Robin Wall Kimmerer, Donna Haraway, Val Plumwood, Anna Tsing, Shawn Wilson, and the anthropologist Michael Jackson. I find it vital for this research to be easily conveyed to a broader audience, and academically oriented writing doesn't generally lend itself to public discourse.

During this process I've continually questioned why I am undertaking this project and for whom. Of course, this questioning would sometimes arise during existential angst regarding the rigors of graduate school, however, these questions have also been vital in keeping me centered in my intentions and true on my path. This publication is for the wolves making homes for themselves in this land now called Oregon. This publication is for the human beings struggling to find empathy either for each other or for the wolves themselves. This publication is about making the vital connection between colonization and the extirpation of species considered significant for Indigenous peoples. This publication is for myself and my own growth as a person. This publication is about narratives, and in seeking better stories to tell about ourselves and our wolf kin this publication will read like a story.

Throughout these pages I will be using pronouns typically reserved for human beings on other entities that I believe deserve them. Inspired by Robin Wall Kimmerer's grammar of animacy, I will be referring to animals as she, he or they if they elude gender (Kimmerer 2013). This new way of thinking may cause discomfort in some readers, and although I mean no ill will I understand that discomfort can aid in personal growth. When I can I will also be referring to wolves using more personal names that have been given to them by their admirers as opposed to the numerical names given to them by researchers. However, not all wolves have such personalized names, and in such cases I will be referring to them by their scientific names. I will also be referring to the Earth using feminine pronouns, yet I understand and respect that others

may not want to gender our Earth. I would like to recognize the social construction of binary genders, especially in a Western colonial sphere, and how limiting and even destructive binary gendering can be. However, harkening back to my pre-Christian European roots that I wish to connect with, the Earth has been traditionally considered feminine and I wish to honor that practice.

Readers may have noted already that I use capital letters in reference to the Earth and to the terms Indigenous and subsequently Native. If I am to capitalize a nation, like Ireland, why should I not reserve the same honor for our planet and only home? If I am to capitalize a nationality, like Irish, why should I not reserve the same honor for the terms Indigenous and Native? Indigeneity, like Native, refers directly to relationships with a particular landscape, and these relationships have persisted and will continue to persist long after the concept of a nation-state has dissipated.

## Introduction

### Stories Come in Circles

A male wolf with ashen black fur and keen unapologetic amber eyes arrived at the precipitous Wallowa Mountains flanked with resinous pines and deep blue winding waters. This was not exactly his ancestral home, but nevertheless his arrival marked a homecoming. He had crossed the Snake River into a new territory looking for a home to sire a family (Oregon Wild 2015). He followed the trail of another wolf, a female with a dusty grey coat closely resembling the alpine landscape she was born to thrive in. She's been called several numerical names by scientists in order to track her whereabouts, but Oregonian advocates who fell in love with her collectively christened her Sophie. Sophie and her mate, referred to as OR-4, had crossed into the state of Oregon in 2009, and their arrival was significant to say the least. According to state records, the last wolf to have lived in Oregon was killed by a bounty hunter in 1946 in the Umpqua National Forest in Southwestern Oregon (ODFW 2010). Other wolves had tiptoed into Oregon in the early 2000's, but most had met violent ends via bullets or vehicles. This fateful pair, however, successfully settled and bore many pups that repopulated this area that had not heard wolf howls in over 60 years. Preceding European colonization, wolves and Indigenous peoples had cohabited and coexisted within this region since time immemorial. Indigenous people of this region have broadly valued wolves as spiritual relatives, and these truths live on through the Indigenous people who continue their cultural legacy and cherish their traditional stories, despite the great upheaval they've endured through colonization.

In 2011, Nick Cady began working with Cascadia Wildlands, a grassroots conservation organization based out of Eugene, Oregon. Cady was fresh out of law school at the time, and one of his first assignments with the organization was to prevent the killing of two wolves, OR-4 and another yearling. Sophie, OR-4 and their progeny yielded the Imnaha pack, the first documented wolf pack living within the state of Oregon since their extermination in the 1940's. The small family, only four members at the time, were implicated in the loss of 14 cattle in the previous two years, which is considered chronic livestock depredation by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW 2010). The Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan calls for the elimination of wolves deemed problematic to the state, and on

September 23, 2011 ODFW announced its decision to cull half of the pack. The agency had already killed two other Imnaha members that May, but after subsequent depredations in June and September the pack was yet again caught in the state's crosshairs. Yet, this precarious position was not unusual for an Oregonian wolf to be in. The founding of "Oregon" as a state was premised on uniting settlers on the task of eliminating wolves. As settlers joined various "wolf meetings" to plot the demise of *Canis lupus*, they consequently became more amenable to the formation of a civil government. The first wolf bounty in Oregon was established in 1843, and hundreds of dead wolves were handed over to the state until there appeared to be none left 100 years later. This was the case across most of the continental United States as well.

Nick Cady and his co-workers worked through long nights drafting an appeal in their office fueled by takeout Thai food, copious amounts of caffeine, and a steadfast drive to protect Oregon's fledgling pack. Hunters had allegedly taken a shot at OR-4 while tracking him in the mountains. The hunter missed his shot, but Cascadia Wilds didn't miss theirs. On October 5<sup>th</sup>, almost two weeks after the kill order, the court of appeals successfully granted a temporary stay on ODFW's decision, triggering a temporary statewide injunction against culling wolves (ODFW 2011). It was a momentous day for Cady, Cascadia Wilds, and wolf advocates across the state, yet the Imnaha pack was spared for only a few more years. The Imnaha pack continued to be involved in the depredation of cattle, and in 2016 the entire family was gunned down aerially (Pacific Wolf Family 2017). OR-4, at the ripe old age of 10, was shot while being pursued by a roaring helicopter; a phenomenon his ancestors never could have conceived of. However, OR-4's more recent ancestors were no strangers to the churning engines and cold metals used by humans to regulate their presence. OR-4, Sophie, and all of their offspring can trace their roots to Canada and the passing of the Endangered Species Act (ODFW 2010). Dozens of wolves were tranquilized and transported by trucks from Alberta and eventually released into Yellowstone National Park and Central Idaho in 1995 and 1996. Wolves quickly gained a foothold in both regions and eventually began dispersing into areas like the Wallowa Mountains in Oregon. As of 2019, there are now approximately 136 wolves in Oregon, mostly in the Eastern half of the state, but there are now two newly confirmed packs in the Umpqua National Forest and in the shadow of Mount Hood in the Cascade Range.

Despite his untimely death in 2016, OR-4's legacy lives on through his descendants that have spread across Oregon, and subsequently into California through his renowned son OR-7, otherwise known as Journey. Journey is known for his remarkable trek across Oregon and into Northern California covering over 1000 miles looking for love. Wolf packs are comprised of an alpha male and female who are typically the only mating pair in a pack (Lopez 1978). When wolves reach maturity, they need to strike out on their own if they want to start a family. After much wandering, he finally found a mate and they established the Rogue pack in Southern Oregon while also garnering a decent following on twitter. Cady and the folks at Cascadia Wilds can attest to the social power of wolves through their social media metrics. Wolves get a good deal of attention; however, they also serve as a type of "gateway species" in getting the public involved in conservation matters. The people who show up in support of wolves or testify on their behalf, may also become inspired to do the same for marbled murrelets or old growth forests. Despite that advantageous draw that wolves have, Cady remains baffled that he must continue to fight the same old battles over wolves. He considers wolf reintroduction and recovery as a huge success story for the Endangered Species Act, yet celebrations have been stifled by the breadth of controversy that persists over this species. He acknowledges that the presence of wolves is a highly politicized issue that has evolved into a big symbolic battle over something that should be rather straightforward in his eyes. Although, what may be considered straightforward in his eyes will greatly differ from what is straightforward in another person's. Oregon itself maintains a state Wolf Conservation Plan, budgets for wolf related expenses, and employees who work with both pro-wolf and anti-wolf advocates. Yet fights continue to rage about wolves within Oregon and beyond. Why do we continue to experience such visceral and disparate responses to wolves?

The symbolic lives of animals are complex to say the least. Wolves especially hold a great deal of significance across the globe and throughout time inspiring both awe and ire. To understand the complexities of our relationships today we must go to the root of the stories we tell.

Consider a tapestry; woven threads tightly intermingled to create a cohesive fabric with a design envisioned by the artist. This research is a tapestry woven with stories from various

voices reacting to the return of wolves to lands they had previously occupied. Each viewpoint is situated with a certain relationship to wolves laden with meaning. As a weaver, I have connected these threads alongside my own research and perspectives to layout a larger fabric detailing the relationships between human beings and wolves, and how to move forward with insight and intention.

## Literature Review

After gaining inspiration from scholars who have embraced the art of storytelling in their own academic work, I would like to start off my research by situating myself within this thesis journey and delve into my motivations for this publication. Given that this research will be woven throughout with stories, it seems appropriate to begin with the threads of my own life and see what has gotten me here and where we shall go next.

In July of 2017, I packed up most of my belongings into my car, strapped my dog Okie into her co-pilot seat, and began my journey westward from my paternal home in North Carolina towards Oregon. That February I had been accepted into the Environmental Arts and Humanities Master's program at Oregon State University, and as my tires left the driveway, I began a new chapter in my life; the wayward daughter returns to academia. I received a rather unusual and interdisciplinary undergraduate education at Appalachian State University in the field of Sustainable Development. It was in those classrooms that I became inspired to work within the humanities and explore postmodernism, anthrozoology, ecofeminism, ecological justice and the power of cultural worldviews in constructing meaning and legitimizing individual action. While I thrived in the academic world, after graduating I felt the need to learn beyond fluorescently lit classrooms and I became an apprentice of the soil. I received training in the art of permaculture design and became a peripatetic wanderer moving across the country to work on various farms learning skills that have been denigrated in the modern consumer culture of the Western world. It was in this setting that I learned a great deal more about the true costs of growing food, and I felt the sting of losing crops to hungry herbivores; a background that aided me in building conceptual connections with ranchers experiencing wolf depredation. Although there was still a great deal more I could have learned amongst the tomato trellising and goat pastures, my return to academia was eminent and I found a new home for myself in the Environmental Humanities.

The Environmental Humanities emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in response to the multi-pronged crisis of our age; ecological turmoil, vast economic disparities and dire humanitarian disasters (Emmett and Nye 2017). I hesitate to use the word "discipline" in describing the Environmental Humanities because this work reaches beyond disciplinary

divides. The myriad of pressing issues we all face today cannot be alleviated by singular means, and transdisciplinary approaches are essential in exploring viable solutions. The Environmental Humanities deals greatly in the epistemological realm, considering that the roots of nebulous problems often begin in human cultural concepts. Something as tangible as acid rain can ultimately be traced back to social ideas that legitimize the burning of coal for economic production at the expense of environmental and public health. This particular research journey will critically assess the relations between human beings and our environments and take a solid whack at the Western notion of “nature” as separate from and inferior to human beings, an idea that has pervaded Western thought since the Enlightenment.

In the Environmental Humanities the notion of social problems versus environmental concerns is a myth, given that environmental and social problems are inextricable. In turn, I will be making connections between the genocide of Indigenous Americans and the extirpation of wolves in Oregon, and consequently the United States as a whole. Ultimately, I understand wolf reintroduction as not just a way to improve ecosystem health, but also a form of restorative justice for Indigenous Americans and living landscapes. I agree with David Suzuki, that one of the best hopes for reconciling with our dire social/environmental crises lies with empowering Indigenous peoples, recognizing Indigenous land rights, and legitimizing Indigenous Knowledges (Suzuki and Knudtson 1992). However, I must recognize my identity as a white woman living on land that is not ancestrally my own. My parents, both hailing from Ireland, sought a better life for their family in the United States. And yet, the Troubles have remained with us. While my ancestors certainly suffered under British colonization, as a white citizen of the United States I often benefit from the unjust colonial and white supremacist system that built this country. As such, I feel that it is my duty to recognize and illustrate the connections between environmental ills and colonization, and grind against oppressive regimes of power through the written word.

I arrived at Oregon State full of aspirations and energy, ready to use my narrative powers to tell a vital story necessary for our dire social and ecological situations; a story that I felt driven to tell. I just didn't know the subject yet. I met a professor of mine at a coffee shop on campus, so he could help me build my thesis proposal. I unloaded all of my ambitions, new insights, and old struggles. He told me to focus on what I love. He explained that writing a thesis

is an exhausting process that is extra draining when writing about something marginally interesting. I should pick something I could dwell within for months; something I could think about at the grocery store that wouldn't drive me mad while deciding on which carton of almond milk to buy. I stuck out my foot from below the table to show off my purple socks dotted with wolf faces.

I've loved wolves since I was a child, and I'm not even sure about where the obsession came from. In all honesty, it probably stemmed from romantic notions of wolves as the paragons of unmitigated wilderness and freedom; a mystical place for me to escape to in my mind while growing up in New York City. Whatever the origins, my love for wolves sends me forward, and my love for writing has given me the means to manifest my love on a page. I love how the narrative art can powerfully affect us humans as storytelling animals. I love catching the spider silk thin threads between seemingly disparate entities and lacing them through my fingers to pull closer and closer until we can see the reflection of every last jewel in Indra's net.

Ultimately, this is a love story, and perhaps the best way to begin a love story is to pay homage to the words that got me here.

Some of the publications in this review could be considered canon in the field of Environmental Humanities. One such publication that has really paved the way for a great deal of scholars, including myself, is "The Trouble with Wilderness" by William Cronon. As a college freshman, I did not want to have my concept of pristine and untrammelled wilderness to be challenged; however, once Cronon had me peek underneath the gilded mask of "the wilderness" I could never look away. As an environmental historian, Cronon backtracks through the historical relationship between European settlers and American ecosystems. Settlers initially viewed the land as a howling wilderness that needed to be tamed and transformed into an agrestic Eden to serve the needs of Europeans. While this view certainly stands today amongst some citizens, it now competes with a more romantic view of nature as a sacred place to visit and commune with sublime forces. More and more Americans began seeking God in the great outdoors, and visits to areas of astounding beauty, such as Yellowstone and Yosemite,

became a sort of national pilgrimage. However dreamy this viewpoint may be, there have been extremely destructive impacts stemming from this idea. Nature became something separate from humankind, and thus the purity of natural beauty was maintained by pushing both Indigenous people and poor settlers from land deemed too delicate for their subsistence. The natural world became a place for people, especially those with the financial backing, to visit, experience bliss, and then return to their cities. Cities became the antithesis of natural beauty, and the troubles of urban environments did not concern those focused on “true wilderness”. William Cronon has not advocated for the elimination of natural parks, and nor do I. Yet ideas of “nature” and “wilderness”, and their social and ecological impacts should be carefully critiqued in order to form healthier relationships with our fellow Earthlings, wolves being among them.

*The Death of Nature*, by Carolyn Merchant, is a book that has deeply affected my life, and has thoroughly shaped the foundation of this pursuit. This book has a special place near my bed, and it wiggles its way into practically everything I write. Carolyn Merchant, an environmental historian and ecofeminist philosopher, conducted meticulous research to construct a timeline that documents the transformation of the Western worldview from a more organic view of the cosmos to a more mechanistic one. This text chronicles the dawn of Enlightenment thinking and the scientific revolution through the experiences of the men guiding the reigns of the teleological transformation, and consequently highlighting those whose power was being dismantled and diminished; women, people of color, and the more-than-human world. Merchant guides readers through the early European mindset of a powerful natural world associated with feminine aspects, and deserving of respect, reverence, and even fear. However, as the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries progressed, the perceived natural world came to be viewed as something to be subdued in service to the civilized world of men. The Earth went from a living organic entity to an inert and mechanistic machine to be exploited through any means in the pursuit of capital gain. Accordingly, women and people of color had their social values diminished through their close associations with the natural world. For me, this text has served as a powerful critique of the modern Western worldview and Western science by delving into their origins steeped in oppression, superiority, and a dark hunger for power. These

origins explain the systems of domination that continue to persist through the elevation of whiteness, masculinity, and human domination over femininity, Indigeneity, people of color, and the non-human world. In order to understand inequality and injustice today we must first retrace the steps of those who justified the burning of witches, the genocide of Indigenous peoples, and the elimination of wolves.

However vital a critique of Western science is, I must also acknowledge the immense power of Western science to foster a deeper understanding of the phenomena that shape our cosmos. While I definitely think that Western science deserves to be carefully examined, indeed standing up to scrutiny is inherent in the scientific method, I am certainly not against ethically and holistically minded research. One scientific field I am very drawn to is ecology, and Paul Sears accurately summed up its social potential in his publication, "Ecology—A Subversive Subject". Ecology, as a more integrated science, certainly has a different approach to research when compared to more reductive sciences that Sears says tend to be more focused on solving "particulate" and "specialized" problems (Sears, 1964, pg 12). However, he notes that ecology also serves to remind humans that we are not mere observers of a system. Ecology as a discipline critiques the operations of human societies and stresses that blanket solutions seldom work in dynamic environments. Sears also noted that ecology can only be affective with widespread public understanding of the discipline; truly the people's science. It is in this spirit that I pledge myself to the holistic and humbling principals of ecology and all that it may subvert; including, but not limited to, falsehoods about wolves.

Paul Sears has gone to great lengths to extol the virtues of ecology, yet, it is important to note that ecological concepts are not new at all. While Western science is certainly vital, we must also recognize that Western science is but one lens through which to analyze phenomena. There are other iterations of science that have been practiced by human beings throughout time and across the globe. Like many Westerners, I grew up thinking that there was only one conceivable form of science, until I read *Native Science* by Gregory Cajete as an undergraduate student. This book helped to give me a general understanding of the Native science paradigm. Cajete, an Indigenous Tewa scholar hailing from Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, emphasizes that while the diversity of North American peoples is immense, they all maintain basic

principles that form the foundation of Native science. He describes Native science as essentially biophilic and its closest analog in the Western worldview is the field of ecology. However, Native science dives deeper than what some would call shallow ecology in insisting that science does not exist outside of morality. Native science is built upon responsibility to both humans and the more-than-human world. Native science is driven by relationality, reciprocity, and is rooted in personal experience and geography. Under the purview of Native science, wolves are not just keystone species, but they are relatives and teachers.

Greg Cajete does an excellent overview of Native science in his book; however, the practice of Native science comes alive in Robin Wall Kimmerer's book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*. In the beginning of the book, Kimmerer reveals her lifelong love for plants through a story from her youth explaining her interest in botany. As a child, she expressed a deep fondness for the beauty of goldenrod and aster in bloom together. Why do they make such an immaculate pair? When she conveyed the depths of her love and curiosity for the complementary plants during her first meeting with her college advisor, he scoffed and insisted that such notions were not scientific. *Braiding Sweetgrass* re-unites science, beauty, memory, and justice in a bond that was never meant to be broken in the first place. Indigenous knowledge is valid and burgeoning, and Robin Wall Kimmerer is living proof of the steadfastness and vitality of Native science. Kimmerer highlights the power of story by shaping each chapter after her own interactions with plants and the lessons they have to teach us. She recognizes the modern plight of species loneliness for some human beings, and how relationships with the non-human world can liberate us from that paralysis. She explains the virtues of an old growth culture amidst vacuous modern Western malaise, and even non-native settlers in the Americas like me can learn to be good naturalized citizens of the land like common plantain. I would like to breathe deeply and tread carefully as I weave together the stories that I have been gifted with the grace and aptitude expressed through the work of Robin Wall Kimmerer. As she has written about the lessons of plants, I would like to dedicate this paper to the lessons I have learned from wolves, humans, and everyone in between.

Amongst the spot lit publications concerning Environmental Humanities and Indigenous Knowledge, I will also be gazing towards the blossoming field of animal studies. When I first

learned about the concept of animal studies, I was thrilled that I could actually have a career writing about animals without having to do any math. I find that it is often assumed that the best way to understand animals is through the sciences, like biology and ecology. The natural sciences certainly do understand animals through the lenses of their research, but this lens is not nearly enough. In their book *Wild Justice*, philosopher Jessica Pierce and animal behaviorist Marc Bekoff elaborate on the moral agency of the animal world; an aspect of animal identity that has been historically denied to them in the eyes of Western science and philosophy. Their book seeks to disintegrate the perceived moral gap between humans and other animals that clearly demonstrate moral acuity. *Wild Justice* complements the sciences of cognitive ethology and evolutionary biology, yet it also utilizes the power of story in connecting with the lives of individual animals who have displayed traits that have often been considered exceptionally human. The authors deal with the scandalized practice of anthropomorphism and contend that the concept is often thrown around without any true understanding of the word. They assert that anthropomorphism is an all too human trait that is quite unavoidable; however, they strongly caution that it must be considered responsibly and respectfully. I wish to proceed carefully in my dealings with wolves as a human observer tempering my own mental projections onto wolves, while acknowledging our mutual aptitudes for compassion, morality and complexity.

I had never thought much about stepping out of the shower in the presence of a cat until I read “The Animal That Therefore I am” by Jacques Derrida. What is almost more remarkable than the publication itself is that fact that it was initially a speech. Only Derrida could write an almost 50-page speech about being naked in front of a cat. Initially, when configuring this literature review, I thought without question that I should elaborate on Derrida. When I mentioned this to a fellow philosopher friend of mine, they tilted their head sympathetically and asked pitifully *why?* I understand that Derrida’s writing is obtuse, but he is foundational in animal studies, right? Well, I will certainly be nodding to Derrida and his wide-eyed kitty, but I would rather orient myself closer towards another seminal figure concerned with our more than human relations. Derrida covered a great deal in his famous speech; however, Donna Haraway picks up on a facet he neglected to dive deeply into—the

philosopher's response to the animal gaze. Who do I gaze at when I look at a wolf? Who am I touching when I touch my dog? It is false to say that human beings create the world around us unaffected by our neighbors. In her book *When Species Meet* Haraway affirms that species co-create each other, and human beings are just as touched by wolves as they are by us. Haraway leads us down an agility track alongside dogs, lab rats, laptops, chickens, gut flora, and of course, wolves; in pursuit of deeper relations. An infinite tangle of complexity emerges when species meet, and Haraway encourages us to not only sit with that complexity, but dance with it and become more worldly through the motions. These pages I write will serve as a contact zones where wolves and humans meet in both kinship and profound difference. Throughout this dance with wolves and their stories, I seek to establish a co-flourishing with wolves and the people who share meaning with them.

Although all of the books above have heavily influenced my conception of this thesis, *Of Wolves and Men* by Barry Lopez has had the largest impact on my approach to this pursuit and the format and style of my writing. Originally published in 1978, this influential book is just as necessary then as it is now. Lopez chronicles the experiences and interactions between an assortment of cultures across time and the wolves that they have shared space with. Beginning with the field of biology, Lopez explains how Western scientists have come to know wolves through the lens of analytical science, and how wildlife biologists have done a great deal to dispel many of the dark European superstitions associated with them. Lopez then defers to the knowledge of Indigenous Americans and elaborates on the special relationships between many Native American peoples and wolves; especially those living in the frozen north. He later contrasts this more symbiotic relationship with wolves to the toxic outlook Europeans fostered towards wolves, and then exported that hatred to the Americas through colonization. He does make room for some more intimate connections between Europeans and wolves, but these relationships moved mostly underground with the spread of Christianity and notions of human superiority. He explains how these less-than-savory European attitudes towards wolves led to their extirpation in the majority of their homelands, and only recently have Westerners begun to alter their thinking. In this broad and interdisciplinary approach, Lopez paints many different pictures of wolves through a variety of cultural lenses, and it is through these lenses that a

more holistic picture is painted. I wish to follow this structure and gather a compendium of viewpoints arranged in such a manner to behold wolves more clearly. One main point of Lopez' that I will hold tight to is his critique of the Western worldview in its wish to divine an ultimate wolf reality. There is no ultimate wolf reality that humans can entirely capture and own. We have our gaze, our relationships, our responsibilities, and our similarities, yet wolves remain their own distinct entities with much to share and much to keep for themselves.

While a conventional literature review focuses on the written word, I would like to extend my review to include those with whom I have made relationships with throughout my research journey. These are the people that I have conversed with, shared stories with, and we have co-created this research together.

In the summer of 2018, I had the privilege of visiting the lands of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs through a program at Oregon State University. We attended presentations orchestrated by faculty that work for the OSU extension office, and that was where I met Scott Duggan. Duggan's line of work focuses mainly on livestock management, and his particular presentation that day pertained mostly to cattle ranching in Eastern Oregon, like on the Warm Springs Reservation. As an employee of the extension office, he helps to extend the insights of researchers at Oregon State towards ranchers living in Eastern Oregon. After his presentation I introduced myself and mentioned the focus of my research—what some ranchers consider a four-letter word (W-O-L-F). He laughed nervously, perhaps wary of the contentious subject matter, but after talking about our mutual love of the agrarian life, he agreed to participate in this research with me. I appreciate his perspective as someone searching for a middle ground concerning the needs of conservationists and ranchers. We conversed over the phone on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

I attended a panel discussion in the fall of 2018 about the "Ecologies of Science and Story" where Robert Beschta elaborated on his work in Yellowstone with his friend and fellow scientist William Ripple. While Beschta is a hydrologist by training, he told an engaging story about how the reintroduction of wolves to the park tempered the once exorbitantly harmful elk population, dramatically improving the biodiversity of the area, altering the flow of the rivers,

and ultimately changing the course of his research. Robert Beschta has since retired from his professorship at Oregon State University, yet he continues to extol the power of wolves to balance exhausted ecosystems. We met in my office on the Oregon State University campus on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to discuss his personal and professional relationships with wolves.

Cascadia Wildlands based out of Eugene, Oregon, is a regional conservation organization focused on the integrity of Cascadia's wildlands and the inhabitants that call those wild areas home. They combine the realms of policy, litigation and grassroots organizing to build a strong defense of what they cherish, wolves being among them. They are a founding member of the Pacific Wolf Coalition, which is geared entirely towards protecting the fledgling populations of wolves as they return to Cascadia. After reaching out to them on their website, I was introduced to Nick Cady, their Legal Director, who agreed to meet with me and discuss their ongoing struggle to protect wolves. Originally from Missouri, Cady attended law school at the University of Oregon, and has been litigating on behalf of the organization since 2011. I met with Nick Cady at the Cascadia Wildlands office in Eugene on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

I can still remember reading about the mythic tale of the wolves and moose of Isle Royale in my high school text books. The life and death dance between the moose and wolves of that island has enraptured researchers for decades and fueled my own burgeoning interest in ecology as a teenager. Years later, in the summer of 2017, I was able to meet and take a course with Michael Nelson, an ethicist who works with the wolves of Isle Royale as the resident philosopher amongst other more quantitatively inclined researchers. Wolves are of special concern for him; however, Nelson has written extensively about the fraught territory of conservation ethics, and challenges readers to critically assess our ideas concerning the wilderness and how we relate to it. Michael Nelson and I met in his office on the OSU campus on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and we spoke about his work in Isle Royale, and his own relationship with wolves.

Like any good professor of philosophy, the walls of my advisor's office are stacked with a dizzying array of books. One book he eventually loaned me, titled *Wild Justice* appealed to me right away, especially considering the wide yellow eyes of the wolf gracing the books cover. *Wild Justice*, as discussed above, is a collaboration between the prolific ethologist Marc Bekoff

and the bioethicist Jessica Pierce that seeks to challenge the moral gap between the human and animal worlds. I value Pierce's use of narrative ethology to appeal to the human affinity towards individual animals. She asserts that the stories and personalities of individual animals can connect human beings across the interspecies divide, and help humans better understand the plights of our fellow Earthlings. Pierce lives in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in the state of Colorado, and we were able to connect over the phone on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

Some people light up a room with their presence, and Valerie Goodness is such a person. She truly embodies her namesake. Goodness received her Master of Science in Natural Resource Stability from Oregon State University, her PhD at the University of Buffalo, and has strong connections with the power of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Harkening to her Indigenous roots, Goodness understands that the ecological ills that we face today cannot be assuaged with Western science alone and she affirms that through her engagement with Indigenous Knowledge. Goodness and I met on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at a Starbucks in Corvallis, Oregon. However, we quickly learned that the patio was far too noisy for our conversation to properly record, so after some scouting, we settled into her truck for our interview. I would like to extend a special thank you to her son for sitting patiently in the backseat listening to us discuss wolves for a nearly two hours.

## Methods and Methodologies

I have received a great deal of inspiration from the Indigenous and Decolonizing methodologies that have been generated through the hard work of Indigenous and feminist scholars, and I'm grateful for all that they have done and continue to do. Although they have done the work to legitimize these methodologies in academia within the past few decades, these approaches are by no means new. These methodologies have been denigrated and belittled through patriarchal colonization, and they are now experiencing a revival through endeavors like this one.

I am not Indigenous to the land I currently live on. My parents immigrated to Turtle Island from a much smaller island in the late 1980's. They didn't flee Ireland out of starvation, somehow our family rode out the famine, but they were driven instead by economic opportunity in a country that purportedly delivered it. Now I am planted here striving to become a better naturalized citizen to this land. Indigenous and Decolonial methodologies, coupled by an ecofeminist flair thickened by the power of emotion serve as the methodologies that inform this research. These methodologies have led me to utilize personal stories collected through semi-structured interviews as a method to inform the larger purpose of this research.

Margaret Kovach, a First Nations scholar, perceived that many non-Indigenous young people, like me, are becoming increasingly interested in Indigenous methodologies because we are seeking ways to understand the world without harming it (Kovach 2009). Academia, including the fields of anthropology and philosophy that I draw from, is steeped in an imperial history that should not be ignored (Smith 1999). The pursuit of research is never neutral, and the ways of knowing that inform Western research are deeply entrenched with dualisms and hierarchies that have been systemically used to oppress people, the Earth, and everyone in between. Western knowledge has proven to be a colonial tool to subjugate subaltern populations, wolves among them. After all, it was Western attitudes that condoned the slaughter of thousands upon thousands of wolves in the not so distant past.

However, decolonizing research does not entail a complete rejection of all Western theories, methods, or of research itself (Smith 1999). In the spirit of conducting research without harming the world, I would like to outline what this research will look like, beginning

with a crucial question: why do this research at all? This research is for wolves; for their betterment, and their flourishing in relationship with the humans adjusting to their return. In truth, one may say that relationships are all that we are and working with our relationships is the only way to generate societal change (Wilson 2008). Obtaining knowledge is not the primary goal of this research, but building better relationships is. Relationality manifests in the realm of story, which will be of primary focus on this journey.

Our perceptions of our world and our place within it, as both individuals and as whole communities, is reflected in our worldviews. Worldviews themselves are simply attitudes and values that we as individuals often take for granted (Wells 1999). Often, one is not acutely aware of a particular value that one possesses until encountering a different view of the cosmos. I had never before questioned my belief that “I” reside in my brain, until I learned different ways to relate to the “self”. Experiencing a new way to move within the world can be intriguing, exhilarating, or uncomfortable and sometimes deeply distressing. Worldviews, and the values that bolster them, explain the motivations behind our attitudes and behaviors ranging from single individuals to entire cultures (Schwartz 2012). Values are largely unconscious and find themselves intricately infused with emotions. These values are reified in the realm of story, and Indigenous scholars, like Thomas King, have long emphasized the importance of stories in making meaning and passing on cultural knowledge and values (King 2003). We continuously create stories, and they inform our actions and the actions of those around us. Stories may make up our reality, but we are not merely powerless characters caught in a nasty plot. If we want a better ethic, we must tell a better story.

On the TED stage, climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe discussed the most frustrating struggle she has faced as a climate scientist; climate change deniers. She laments that no matter how many valid facts we convey to climate change deniers they staunchly dig their heels into the ground and consider scientific evidence as a personal affront. Instead of communicating solely the dire scientific facts of climate change she encourages us to begin with the heart; to begin dialogue with values we genuinely share with people who profoundly disagree with us in other spheres. Increasingly in the world of natural resource management,

scholars and agencies are coming to understand that management practices depend greatly on social-political factors and are often more about societal values than they are about facts (Ives and Kendal 2014). When it comes to wolf management, many people may be clinging onto ideas of wolves that are misleading and even toxic. If scientific evidence is not sufficient in conveying truths and altering behavior and human values, then we must dig deeper into our more visceral experiences as living beings; the sphere of emotions.

Moral judgements in the Western tradition have been associated with rationalist psychological models based on logic (Haidt 2000). However, the social intuitionist model espoused by Jonathan Haidt, reveals that the moral judgements of people are rarely situated purely in logical terms. Instead, individuals often make a moral decision based on their deeper emotional convictions, and when questioned on their actions they will explain their logical reasoning post hoc. These deeper emotional convictions are fostered in childhood and exist both within individuals and beyond individuals in communal settings. Western philosophy has tended to venerate the virtues of reason, while ignoring the powerful forces of intuition that guide us most of the time. Psychologists are coming to appreciate that emotions are not entirely irrational, nor is reasoning entirely reliable. Haidt explains that role-playing by placing oneself in the shoes of another is a powerful way to engage emotionally with others as a principal pathway to moral reflection. Emotions themselves reveal personal experiences and stances on the world and considering them to be beneath seemingly “superior” logic has been one of the greatest absurdities of Western thought (Ahmed 2004). The false dichotomy between emotion and logic is crumbling, yet one steadfast safe haven for emotional exercise is in practice of storytelling.

Stories themselves are emotions put into a structure that can be shared, treasured, discarded, or amplified (Nussbaum 1992). Feminist political philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, poses that emotions provide access to intimate human values, and engaging with emotions is what stories do best. In fact, Nussbaum explicitly advocates using stories to illustrate moral problems and reach beyond the scope of our own human lives to conceptualize other ways of being. Although Nussbaum herself has written mostly about the power of the narrative art to investigate the inner workings of our emotional lives, I believe the power of oral accounts is just

as effective as the written word, and countless millennia of oral traditions can attest to that. Through conversations about our individual and communal experiences and relationships with wolves, we can understand why we feel the way that we do, and subsequently understand how to move in a direction that is more equitable and empathetic for two-legged beings and four-legged beings alike.

Revisiting the dualisms and hierarchies mentioned above, I would like to orient myself as approaching this work through an ecofeminist conceptual framework. As such, I will be making connections between the objectification of women, people of color, animals and the Earth (Warren 2000). The elevated and degraded binaries of human/animal, man/woman, culture/nature and white/non-white lie at the foundation of social/environmental ills, and delegitimizing these erroneous distinctions is a key component in moving towards a more just future. Given that emotions have been relegated to the more feminine sex and storytelling has been similarly denigrated in Western thought, ecofeminism feels like an appropriate way for me to approach building better relationships between human beings and wolves. I would like to stress, however, that I do not consider women or people of color as inherently closer to nature than any other entity. I believe that these associations between women, people of color, and nature are largely constructed in a social sphere, while still recognizing their subjugation shares a common root.

Given these methodological lenses that I'm approaching this process from, one particular method that I have settled on for this research is semi-structured interviews. Why do interviews? The majority of people I have had conversations with have published materials relevant to this work, and I will in fact be citing some of their publications. Well, harkening back to the work of Indigenous scholars, it is no secret that academia privileges the written word over oral accounts, especially in the realm of history (Smith 1999). Academic writing itself involves selecting and rearranging texts deemed significant to those operating within the academy. While I certainly will be arranging texts that I feel are salient to this work, I will be centralizing the stories and personal anecdotes that were given to me through the storytellers I spoke with. Their stories operate in a more personal realm of knowing, which is more effective

in appealing to the emotional constitutions of others. Meeting and speaking with people involved in the return of wolves to Oregon has provided me with more intimate insights about human/animal relationships more embedded within this space than a traditional academic approach could be.

Although the conversations I have had with participants do not fit the definition of a true oral history, they are inspired by the structure and philosophy behind conducting oral histories. Oral histories, as explained by Danielle Endres, are characterized by two main points: they focus on the life stories of individuals, and they will ultimately be housed in an archive (Endres 2011). I did not prompt participants to elucidate extensively on their personal histories, but naturally participants did reflect on their past experiences during our conversations together. I also initially planned to archive all of our interviews, however, some interviewees felt trepidation at the thought and did not want their words to be potentially skewed by future researchers. I honored their feelings over fitting a methodological definition. What I find most appealing about oral histories, and what gravitated me towards that particular method, is the more egalitarian power dynamic. Although I still retained more influence over the participants, our interviews progressed more organically as opposed to more structured interviewing. The directions of our exchanges were driven mostly by the stories of the participant, with some prompting on my end if the conversation ran quiet.

Similarly, I've been inspired by interpretive phenomenological qualitative analysis in revisiting the discussions I've had with participants. Stemming from both phenomenology and hermeneutics, interpretive phenomenological analysis seeks to understand the lived experiences of other human beings as they describe it (Pietkiewicz & Smith 2012). Rather than constructing a setting striving towards objectivity, I happily swam within the pools of the subjective experiences between myself and the storytellers. I appreciate the perspectives of each of the participants and I do not seek to comb through and analyze the minutiae of our conversations, nor do I seek to entirely discredit their experiences of the world. Ethically, I have been given the responsibility of treating each of these stories, and subsequently their tellers, with respect in our relationship (Kovach 2009). Instead I have sought larger interpretations of what it means to be in relationship with wolves from different human perspectives. I have

sought the emergent themes from within the stories of the participants, and how they interact with the stories of others. These themes are determined by me as a subjective listener with an admittedly lupine agenda. Ultimately, it is these broader themes that can be used to both understand how and why individuals relate to wolves the way that they do, while also demonstrating how better relationships can be built.

The interviewing process for this research was fairly straightforward, I contacted possible participants via email and made connections from there. I reached out to participants based on their proximity to both myself and to wolves in general. I had known Michael Nelson and Scott Duggan before this research officially started, I was introduced to Jessica Pierce through her book, I attended a presentation Robert Beschta made, and a mutual friend of ours put Valerie Goodness and myself in contact. Nick Cady was the only participant who actually reached out to me after I contacted Cascadia Wildlands through their website.

Given my interest in both storytelling and oral histories, it seemed appropriate for me to take a backseat during our conversations. I prompted each person with two basic conversation starters: I would ask them to share a wolf story (or two) and then elaborate on their own relationships with wolves. I would then follow up their stories with different tidbits of knowledge that I had come across during my own research into the world of wolves. My intention was to bring up points that may either prompt more discussion or gently push against something they had mentioned in their stories. Our conversations certainly did not carry on like a journalistic exposé, although conversations about wolves in Oregon can easily ruffle feathers. While I definitely could have pressed participants for this pursuit, I find discretion is the better part of valor.

After transcribing each interview, I read them through and searched for three components: their wolf stories, their relationships with wolves, and insights they provided during our conversations that I found unique or compelling. Again, the paintbrush I am using is broad, and I'll save the minute details to continue dwelling safely within their stories. I will be weaving together the stories of my participants with what I have gleaned from my own reading

and experiences in order to build a better story with which to understand wolves, ourselves, and the relationships between us all.

## **1: Wolves as a Threat**

**“The bottom line is, how much do you want to share?”**

### **-Scott Duggan on the economic costs of living with wolves**

Scott Duggan, as an employee for the OSU extension program, provides assistance and insight to ranchers living on the Warm Springs Reservation. During our conversation, he told me about two recent events that he found quite troubling. He received a field call from a client living on the reservation who had been losing adult cattle to a predator; something he considered a rare occurrence that pointed directly to wolf depredation. He also told me about some tribal employees who had been working on a fence line when they encountered several wolves circling a cow and calf. The employees were able to scare the wolves away and save the frightened pair, but the rancher that Duggan came to assist was very shaken by the situation. Duggan assured me that as part of his employment he strives for neutrality, yet I could tell from the timbre of his voice he was also deeply upset by the stories he had been hearing from his clients.

Duggan also told me about some research conducted by faculty at Oregon State University that piqued his interest. The study in question was conducted in 2013 and it measured how two different populations of cattle reacted to a simulated wolf encounter (Cooke et al. 2013). One group of cattle had been exposed to wolves in their past, while the other group had not, and the experiment involved attaching wolf urine-soaked plugs to their fencing, playing recordings of wolf sounds, and eventually running German shepherds between the two herds that were in separate corrals. The constructed environment was enough to startle the cattle who recalled their previous interactions with wolves demonstrated by their defensive stances and elevated cortisol levels. The unfamiliar cattle, however, carried on unperturbed. These findings illustrate the issue Duggan wished to convey; that even the presence of wolves negatively affects cattle. Even when no blood is shed, when wolves cause cortisol levels to spike cattle can experience weight loss and pregnant cows may even abort their calves.

As we will see in the next chapter, the return of wolves did change both the populations and behavior of elk and deer in Yellowstone National Park (Ripple and Beschta 2004). However,

wild ungulates hardly live a life paralyzed by fear. In fact, recent research from Yellowstone indicates that elk are generally not afraid of interactions with wolves and will often ignore them (Cusack et al. 2019). Compared to the crossbred beef cows in the aforementioned wolf simulation, it appears wild ungulates are not nearly as perturbed by wolves. Although I would definitely be intrigued to learn more about how different breeds of cattle may react differently to the presence of wolves, it appears to me that these situations demonstrate how domestication has removed the autonomy and mettle of cattle. Duggan and his colleagues would have a great deal of trouble herding headstrong aurochs into corrals, but it seems that their domesticated progeny can hardly cope with wolf urine, howls, and the pricked ears of a German shepherd.

**“Our whole existence is about making sure every last one of them lives.”**

**-Scott Duggan on the trials of keeping livestock safe**

A significant part of our conversation together focused on the economic costs that wolves pose to the cattle industry; obviously a salient issue for ranchers. Duggan estimated that every calf lost can cost a rancher between \$500 and \$1200. Although larger operations can withstand the loss of several cattle, for smaller ranches this can make the difference between persistence and solvency. However, the actual percentages of cattle lost to predation is actually quite slim compared to other factors. According to a report assembled by the USDA, in 2015 98% of all deaths in adult cattle and 89% in calves were caused by factors beyond predation (USDA 2017). Among non-predation related mortality between both adult cattle and calves, respiratory illness was by far the largest killer. Considering the predators involved in the loss of cattle, coyotes dwarfed other predators, by claiming about 40% of all predator related losses. However, this is a federal figure, which may not accurately portray the situation in Oregon. What can be said for Oregon is that confirmed wolf kills have remained fairly stable over the past several years despite an exponentially growing wolf population (ODFW 2017). Between 2009 and 2017, confirmed wolf depredations have generally been fewer than 20 events per year while the number of wolves has gone from about 20 individuals to 126 in that time.

According to the 2017 Annual Wolf Report for the state of Oregon, the department conducted 66 wolf depredation investigations with 17 cases being confirmed as wolves, 42 considered not wolves and 7 were deemed “unknown” (ODFW 2017). When I told Duggan about these statistics, he was rather dismayed. He considered the tight restrictions on proving a wolf kill to the state of Oregon responsible for the low number of confirmed cases when compared to the number of reports filed. Duggan explained that when a rancher comes across the carcass of one of his animals and suspects wolf depredation it can often take days for an official to inspect the kill and judge whether wolves were to blame or not. Carrion attracts myriads of other creatures interested in scavenging, and by the time the body is assessed the cause of death may be obfuscated by the work of other critters. For confirmed wolf kills, ranchers are guaranteed 100% of the market value for the loss in question; however, Duggan remains dubious as to how many ranchers will actually see compensation (ODFW 2010). I asked Duggan what could be done to help ranchers feel less threatened economically, and he suggests that having larger payouts and easier ways to report losses would be a huge help for ranchers. Similar sentiments were expressed by ranchers in Wisconsin, yet compensation did not ameliorate individual angst towards the presence of wolves, as was hoped (Treves 2003). Individuals with less land, less cattle, and fewer years of formal education were also less likely to report wolf depredations to the state of Wisconsin, indicating that class difference may indicate as to whether or not one may receive compensation for a loss.

**“It’s devastating emotionally to go out and see a pen full of dead animals.”**

**-Scott Duggan on the emotional loss of livestock**

Years ago, in North Carolina, I volunteered on a small farm that raised free range hogs in a rotating forested pasture. While feeding them their supplemental grain dinner, the massive pregnant sows would rush up to me and eagerly nose at my shins. I loved caring for these pigs, but as a vegetarian I felt highly conflicted. These pigs lived a beautiful life, but ultimately, they would be killed for meat and as a volunteer I contributed to that effort. I mentioned my inner conflict to my friend who ran the farm. He conceded to his own hypocrisy; he loved all of his pigs and loved to see them happy. Yet his love reached a seemingly logical limit, otherwise he

could not send them to slaughter. Duggan also mentioned the emotional factor in raising cattle; keeping them healthy, well fed, doctoring them when they're ill, and consequently experiencing anguish when seeing them suffer. Individuals in Wisconsin have reported similar feelings when experiencing or even imagining losing animals to wolves (Treves 2003). Livestock are not the only animal companions being lost to wolves, both hunting dogs and pets have been lost to wolves in Wisconsin. As one bear hunter lamented, "We are not losing a dog. We are losing a companion". It appears that money can hardly quench the anguish of an animal lost to a wolf attack, although states have offered claims to verified losses. While emotional loss certainly crosses state borders, it should be noted that I am drawing from the plethora of data about social attitudes towards wolves in Wisconsin due to the work of Adrian Treves and his co-authors. They have disseminated hundreds and hundreds of surveys over the years in the state, and although this work is certainly valuable outside of Wisconsin similar surveys in different locations and contexts could further our knowledge of wolf and human cohabitation.

Scott Duggan and I definitely come from different situations and backgrounds, yet we did find common ground in the vegetable patch. I can keenly remember my anger at the gophers, mice and woodchucks relentlessly attacking the produce that I helped grow on various small farms. From my own experiences, even the loss of a few pounds of certain products can be devastating to a small operation. One night in early spring of the piedmont region of North Carolina, deer hopped the electric fence guarding our flowering strawberry plants and devastated the patch. Any steadfast farmer's market aficionado can attest to the power of fresh strawberries at the market in May, and that season we missed out on that crop entirely because of the cloven hooved menace. When I told Duggan about my experiences, he resoundingly agreed and considered them essentially the same set of emotions when ranchers lose cattle. We bonded over the mutual losses of squash and pumpkins to munching mice, deer, and rabbits. Although I wouldn't exactly compare the death of a doe-eyed calf to a rodent bitten zucchini, Duggan and I found a mutual ground upon which to vent and share the sting and frustration of loss.

**“The theory that we just shoot and kill everything that comes through our properties is sadly amiss.”**

**-Scott Duggan on falsehoods about ranchers**

I asked Duggan about his own relationship with “nature” and what that entails. He was a bit perplexed by the question, but I assured him I had a viable direction to go in. Candidly, he responded that he loves nature, and seeing eagles or herons while working in the field gives him great pleasure. He assured me that most ranchers share his sentiments; there may be a few bad actors, but generally his associates enjoy being around wildlife and it is part of what they do as ranchers. Duggan told me that on his family ranch they had shot only one troublesome coyote in thirty years because they appreciated both the ecological importance and enjoyed the presence of coyotes. His family appreciated that coyotes consumed rodents like voles and marmots that would plague their hay crop. Despite his initial confusion, eventually Duggan knew exactly where I was going with my question, and plainly stated that ranchers who spend all of their time outdoors truly love their surroundings. When it comes to environmental conflict, disparate groups tend to characterize their opponents as “anti-environmentalist” while assuring themselves that their own party has the best interests of ecosystems in mind (Opotow & Brook 2003). In conservationist circles, it’s all too easy to pigeonhole farmers and ranchers as backcountry hicks who get kicks out of shooting everything unfortunate enough to land within their crosshairs. Conversely, those in the ranching community often find conservation pursuits ill-informed and irresponsible at times. While ranchers and farmers tend to view themselves as stewards of the land, they consider some conservation initiatives as both attacking their livelihood and inefficiently protecting wildlife. Duggan and I shared this sentiment often overlooked in oversimplified conversations about wildlife management, and when I asked how best to overcome that he suggested simply interacting with ranchers more can help humanize both sides on conservation issues.

Duggan told me another intriguing story from his youth that particularly struck him and made a lasting impression. A family friend of his had lost a calf, and while out feeding his herd he spotted the culprit; a cougar high up on a rim rock precipice from a distance. Instead of feeling anger, this man felt awe and claimed that he didn’t mind donating a calf or two to the

cougar as long as it didn't get excessive. Duggan later explained that he does understand the checks and balances at play in ecosystem dynamics and understands the importance of ruminants in preventing widespread fires, and predators like coyotes and cougars keeping herbivores in check. However, Duggan had not yet heard of the trophic cascades story detailed in the next chapter. Considering that he firmly grasps how beneficial predators are, it seems natural that sharing the role that wolves play as a keystone species is crucial to achieve better understanding. If sensible and compassionate individuals like Duggan heard about how wolves can drastically improve biodiversity and erosion that may alter how they relate to wolves. Duggan did say that he and his colleagues understand that wolves are here to stay considering how many other people are happy to see them return. He understands that an acceptable population in his mind will be far less than in a conservationist's point of view and dwelling in that disparity is the best we can achieve in this moment.

Duggan and I understand that although we do not see eye-to-eye on the positionality of wolves and what ideal coexistence could look like, we treaded on a good deal of common ground on a foundation of respect and empathy. Crossing ideological divides to refute stereotypes is important in navigating wolf management and beyond, yet it is also vital to draw boundaries. Much like the phenomenon of "himpathy", overly extending sympathy to powerful men at the expense of the people they dehumanize, my empathy is not indiscriminately shared (Manne 2018). There are many honest people like Duggan that deserve to do the work they love while flourishing economically, yet the hegemonic power of the cattle lobby in the United States is undeniable. Despite paltry angst related to the growing popularity of vegan alternatives to beef here in the United States, beef exports broke records in 2018 soaring to \$8.33 billion in profits (Daniels 2019). Although beef consumption within the United States has decreased, if slightly, the value of the cattle industry in the United States doubled between 2002 and 2015 (USDA). In 2014 the North American Meat Industry spent \$10.8 million in contributions to political campaigns, and the American National Cattlemen's Association has a history of objecting to legislation that stems the consumption of meat at the cost of public and environmental health (Shanker 2016). As someone deeply invested in the return of wolves, I can understand why many conservationists may harbor ill will towards ranchers in general.

However, I consider blaming small family ranchers for our problems akin to blaming individual emissions in the climate crisis. Yes, it is important for the average citizen to mitigate their carbon footprint, yet it is entirely unfair to compare my emissions to Jeff Bezos'. It is important to build connections and forge alliances with small ranching operations invested in the wellbeing of their communities, while recognizing the true behemoth we all face is the industrial cattle industry.

However, it also needs to be recognized that ranching in the United States, both local and corporate, is deeply embedded within the colonial agenda. Beginning with the British empire, the Scots-Irish settlers became the foot soldiers of colonization and they set up a culture of pioneering and western expansion (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). As the United States gained independence and continued to expand ever westward, they enticed white colonists to grab Indigenous land that had been carved by federal land grants to be used predominantly for agriculture. In order to render Indigenous peoples more dependent upon the federal government, the United States made it a priority to eliminate bison and replace them with more timid cattle. Indigenous people faced with losing their traditional lifeways in a physical and cultural genocide, were forced to assimilate with the plow and the bullwhip. As the bison population declined, railroads replaced their migration paths and carried frozen beef from the American West to the East coast for consumption and export (Steinberg 2000). The cattle themselves were viewed less as a food source and more of a means for producing wealth, let alone individual beings deserving respect. Since white settlers arrived in the Americas, the visages of Indigenous Americans and wolves have been fused and understood as a common enemy to progress (Lopez 1978). The bodies of both Native people and wolves were sought by bounty hunters, with the first wolf bounty law passing in 1630 followed by a bounty for the scalps of Indigenous people passed in 1641. In my life I have heard white Americans consider themselves disenfranchised compared to the privileges that Indigenous Americans receive. Similarly, some ranchers feel that endangered or threatened species retain more rights than they do (Opatow and Brook 2003). Both accounts are based on a one sided and shallow telling of history that favors white settlers. Untold thousands of wolves and Indigenous peoples were

wiped out on this continent by the unrelenting gears of colonization, and their rebounding presence is not one privileged by this country.

These joint elimination campaigns were driven by ideas of white male exceptionalism through the domination and domestication of the land and of Indigenous peoples. When Europeans settlers first arrived in the Americas, they considered this land to be a “hideous and desolate wilderness”, and civilizing this world was objectively a good deed (Wells 1999). Although this attitude as certainly shifted for many, when wilderness becomes inconvenient it is what is forced to change instead of human practices. However, this convention is shifting and there are scores of ranchers adopting more predator friendly approaches to ranching (Eisenberg 2014). The Mountain Livestock Cooperative in Alberta has found that mimicking wild ungulate behavior, such as bunching cattle closer together and moving across rangelands, greatly reduces or even eliminates depredation while also improving range conditions. Steve Clevidence, who homesteads in the Bitterroot Valley in Montana, tracks wolves using traditional tracking methods and adjusts the movement of his herd in accordance with the movements of wolves. Certain dog breeds like Sarplaninac shepherds and Maremmas have long been bred to protect herds from wolves, and this did not entail the totally annihilation of wolves. In my conversation with Nick Cady at Cascadia Wilds, he elaborated on how the Oregon Cattleman’s Association has gradually softened their stance on wolves and have claimed that coexistence with wolves is something they strive for. Predator friendly animal husbandry may sound like a strange juxtaposition, but it is not a new or far off phenomenon. Ranching undoubtedly has deep connections with the brutal colonization of the Americas, yet it has the potential to behave quite differently than it has. Academia itself has deep colonial ties, yet I have chosen to help it go down a different path. Although ranching in the United States has an unsavory past, the future can taste very different.

## 2: Wolves as Ecologically Significant

**“They have done more for riparian ecosystem recovery than anything I can imagine.”**

**-Robert Beschta on the ecological significance of wolves**

Robert Beschta was eating lunch one day in Yellowstone National Park on a terrace overlooking a magnificent view of the Northern Range when he caught sight of movement from the corner of his eye. As he turned to his left, he saw four wolves loping across the landscape. Jolted with excitement he grabbed his camera, leaned over the edge of the terrace, and then promptly broke his glasses. Despite the clamor, the wolves didn't notice him and continued their trek across the scenery. Although the encounter was a blurry 40 or 50 seconds, Beschta spoke of it as a moment frozen in time. This was just one wolf encounter out of many in his life.

One night, about three years into conducting continuous research in the park, he finally encountered a wolf in the wild. He was driving through the Northern Range at night, a risk he does not encourage others to take in the darkness, when he saw a figure up ahead in the road. As he slowed to a stop, he met the eyes of a big white wolf. They shared a minute or two of curious gazing; the wolf rather unperturbed and the man both impressed by the stature and confidence of this white wolf while also embarrassed by their meeting place. Beschta regretted being contained in a vehicle for his very first wolf encounter instead of meeting on mutual ground in the forest. Eventually, the wolf turned his head and walked back into the darkness. When Beschta caught up with a fellow wolf watcher the next day, he learned that this white wolf was the alpha male of the Druid Peak pack. Beschta had met wolf royalty on the road that night.

Beschta did not envision this life for himself given that his deepest academic interests lay with the workings of rivers and streams. However, in 1996 he journeyed to Yellowstone National Park with a crew of other scientists to assess plant communities, like aspen, living in the park. When he entered the Lamar Valley with his compatriots, he was struck dumb with grief and confusion. He saw a deeply scarred riparian ecosystem suffering from a lack of willows, shrubs, and other young plant life to keep erosion at bay. He could not fathom what was causing such a deep imbalance, but he affirmed that he would come back and seek to understand what was happening to these rivers and streams. He returned to Oregon State

University with pictures and ideas that caught the attention of William Ripple, another ecologist concerned with this disturbing development. Erik Larson, then a graduate student at Oregon State, began working on an aspen project within the park and after working through some data sets, he approached Beschta with an interesting notion. Could the disappearance of wolves have caused this ecological damage? Could the freshly reintroduced wolves restore what has been damaged? Frankly, Beschta told Larson he had no idea whether 40 wolves could influence 20,000 elk in such a way. Little did Beschta know that he would be working on the topic of trophic cascades for the rest of his career.

**“I was just blown away at the destruction I was seeing of riparian areas. It was just a mess and I was just; I was visibly upset.”**

**-Robert Beschta on the ecological dysfunction of Yellowstone National Park**

The extirpation of wolves in the United States by Euro-American settlers was intentional and systemic. Untold numbers of wolves were shot, trapped, poisoned, burned and sometimes sadistically tortured by settlers who generally did not question the morality of their actions (Lopez 1978). Although this pathological need was often hidden under the guise of “predator control”, in truth it was a violent compulsion to subdue wolves based on deep seated insecurities and superstitions. The conflation of wilderness with disorder and wilderness with wolves has old roots in the European continent, and these values travelled across the Atlantic Ocean with settlers. The Despotic Interpretation of the story of Genesis is a quintessential example of how human exceptionalism can be legitimized and carried out (Callicott 1994). In this particular perception of the Book of Genesis, mankind is awarded domination over the rest of creation through a divine right and can therefore do whatever they deem fit to subdue the rest of creation. I am quite intentional in my use of the word “mankind” in that women are customarily seen as property in this interpretation of Genesis, much like a sheep or a pillar of salt.

Although Europeans had never entirely nor fully vilified wolves throughout history, positive associations with wolves are few and far between. As Europeans began drifting farther from an organic view of the cosmos towards a more mechanistic one, the dynamic view of

nature as both a place of violence and respite was overshadowed by a dominating view of nature as an inhospitable place steeped in chaos (Merchant 1980). The wilderness became a refuge for wild beasts and witches and subduing a disorderly wilderness in the service of mankind became a divine crusade. The Garden of Eden, the antipode of the wilderness was a paradise that could be achieved through calculated control. When settlers brought these ideologies to the Americas, they considered this “new” world an opportunity to create a new paradise for themselves in their own image; a garden (Nash 2001). In reality, the Americas proved to be less hospitable and less temperate than the settlers imagined, yet they achieved a good deal of what they set out to do. Wilderness itself is a tricky concept, however, it is quite telling to understand that about 2% of the continental United States is considered to be “wilderness” under the purview of the 1964 Congressional Wilderness Act (The Wilderness Society). In the colonial expansion of the United States, wilderness was considered an obstacle and progress was God under the banner of Manifest Destiny (Nash 2001). Beyond Biblical rallying, pioneering itself was focused on the perceived usefulness of commodities; trees became lumber, prairies became farms, and wolves simply had to go. Wolves were considered useless, and useless things had no place in the Garden.

The particular bitterness directed towards wolves was based in the symbolic destruction of the wilderness to clear the way for orderly civilization, and wolves were killed for bounties, for revenge, for sport and for “healthful outdoor exercise” (Lopez 1978). These past times evolved into “predator control” as a scientific justification for the killing of wolves for ecological benefits. The U.S. federal government officially systematized predator control in the late 1800’s with the development of the new Office of Economic Ornithology and Mammalogy that aimed to perfect means to eliminate various pests like coyotes and wolves from the land altogether (Dunlap 1984). Quite often this involved filling a deer carcass with strychnine and waiting for scavengers like wolves and coyotes to meet untimely deaths attempting to eat poison (Lopez 1978). These developments met little to no opposition, and the Forest Service officially began hiring trappers specifically to kill wolves on National Forest lands beginning in 1905. One particular gunner for the Forest Service felt a revolutionary change of heart when he peered into the eyes of a wolf he had shot. Aldo Leopold, when he was young and full of trigger-itch,

worked on behalf of the Federal government to shoot predators like wolves that supposedly threatened ungulates considered more useful to settlers (Leopold 1949). Leopold and his colleagues spotted a mother wolf and her babies while out in the Gila Wilderness in New Mexico and shot the entire family. As he approached the dying mother and watched the green fire die within her eyes, he realized that he had been gravely mistaken in viewing her as a pest worthy of destruction. Despite the convictions of the Forest Service and the prevailing science at the time, neither the wolf nor the mountain nor Leopold agreed with the notion that wolves were useless.

**“and when I put those data sets together, that was one of these aha moments for me in science; it was like, holy smokes, this is a wolf issue.”**

**-Robert Beschta on his revelation about the ecological impacts that wolves have**

By the time Beschta returned to Yellowstone in 2001, five years after his sorrowful realizations, he returned with the quintessential tool of his trade: measuring tape. Beschta and his colleagues returned to the Lamar Valley and measured the diameter of what felt like every cottonwood in the area—about 700 trees. These trees told them their life histories; when they emerged from the ground, how their growth progressed, and how their neighbors fared. The stories these trees told, through the collection of data about their lives, illustrates the phenomenon of what is now called trophic cascades. A trophic cascade describes a powerful relationship between certain entities within an ecosystem that have wide implications in the rest of the ecosystem (Ripple and Beschta 2012). In other words, in a three-tiered relationship between predators (wolves), herbivores (elk) and vegetation, the presence of wolves has powerful ramifications throughout the rest of the ecosystem including a multiplicity of other species and even down to the soil and water.

When wolves returned to Yellowstone National Park they were returning after a 70-year absence. Yet, it's important to note that the 31 wolves that were eventually released into the Park between 1995 and 1996 had no direct ancestral ties to that land; they themselves were from Western Canada (NPS). However, this national distinction didn't matter to the elk in the Park. When the wolves reestablished themselves within the park, the dance between wolves

and deer that had been halted for seven decades could finally resume. But the ungulates had grown lazy. Wolves had been effectively eliminated from the park in 1926, and at the same time riparian cottonwood and aspen recruitment diminished (Ripple and Beschta 2004). In their co-authored publications, Beschta and Ripple pose that this lack of new growth was spurred by the indiscriminate browsing of elk on delicious cottonwood seedlings. Jointly, the disappearance of wolves also marked the dwindling of beaver, a keystone species that plays a large role in the dynamics of ecosystems. During the first thirty or so years of a wolf-less Yellowstone, the elk population in the park were kept in check by the both National Park Service and hunters due to concerns about overgrazing and overpopulation. However, in 1969 the park did away with its culling program in favor of a more “natural” regulation. Natural regulation, which Beschta called “let it go management” essentially entailed letting the ungulates of the park populate unchecked with very little predation. This devastated the flora of the park, leaving much of Yellowstone mowed like a suburban lawn. Beschta, quite elegantly remarked that we were hellbent on making a utopia by eliminating wolves from the continent, and even from our most valued of all lands—National Parks. However, this was not a utopia for ecosystems. In fact, it was a disaster.

When the wolves eventually returned to Yellowstone in the 1990’s, their predation on elk resumed like any ecologist hoped it would. However, one aspect that struck Beschta and Ripple particularly, was not just the change in ungulate population, but also their behavior. In the time that ungulate populations had been managed by people and not wolves, the aspen and cottonwood recruitment did not improve. However, when wolves returned to the park, the lives of these plants began steadily improving. The difference was not just how many elk were killed, but also how the elk behaved. When there were no wolves in the park deer and elk could browse what they wanted when they wanted. With wolves around, elk quickly learned to avoid browsing in certain areas that would lend them more vulnerable to predation, like riparian habitats. In a study conducted by both Beschta and Ripple fifteen years after the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone, their results understand wolves as a keystone species with dramatic impacts on their ecosystems (Ripple and Beschta 2012). The numbers of young aspen, cottonwood and willows began to flourish once again, and the population of beaver within the

park similarly began to rebound. Additionally, as riparian plant communities improve, eroding stream banks are also expected to stabilize, thus reducing the harmful impacts of erosion. While it takes longer for the effects of streams and eventually rivers to demonstrate themselves, Beschta asserts that wolves have the power to change rivers.

Beschta, while gladdened with the results of the wolf reintroduction effort has two caveats for us listeners; one to temper our jump for joy, and another to sober us into action. Beschta attests that wolves are not a perfect panacea for all of Yellowstone's problems. There are areas of the park that have not bounced back so gracefully, and he conjectures that this is because of the rampant presence of an increased bison population certain areas. As for the areas that did greatly benefit from the return of wolves, Beschta reminded me in our conversation that Yellowstone is a mere postage stamp compared to the rest of the public lands in the United States. He considers this research to be a wake-up call regarding how sick our other ecosystems are without apex predators. Beschta and I agree that the possible return of wolves to the Olympic Peninsula in Washington would do a great deal of good for that ecosystem, and we will both gladly lay down money on that bet. Although Beschta may not explicitly consider himself to be subversive, his role as an ecologist already sets him apart from reductive schools of thought. Despite his initial interest in streams, the holistic underpinnings of ecology insured he would be working with plants, ungulates, beaver, and ultimately wolves. However, he has grown to grasp the ecological value of wolves and now works to advocate on their behalf because as he shared with me, wolves are worth it.

**“I would love to see us develop a management plan in the state of Oregon where we learn to live with wolves as much as possible.”**

**-Robert Beschta on wolf management policy**

Yellowstone National Park is one of the few places in the world where traffic is a good thing. Driving towards traffic in the park invariably means driving towards wildlife, and Beschta told me about how much he loves the little interactions he has with people gazing at animals from the side of the road. One meeting that really struck Beschta was when he came across an older man from the Midwest. The man asked Beschta about seeing wolves, and Beschta told

him that if he drove down the curve of the highway a bit farther, he could pull over and look through the scopes of dedicated wolf watchers at the wolves across the valley before them. While Beschta was explaining this, however, the other man began visibly shaking. Beschta, thinking the other man was afraid, proceeded to assuage his fears. The other man explained that he was not at all afraid. He was quaking with joy. This man had always wanted to see a wolf, and now he finally had his chance. Individuals like that man from the Midwest hardly need to be convinced of the value of wolves. Some of us run with wolves in our dreams regardless of their ecological aptitude. However, others need some persuading.

Beschta sees great value in the revelations of trophic cascades in demonstrating the value of wolves to those who may not recognize it. The story of trophic cascades is a magnetizing one that enraptures listeners. One particular short film I'm quite fond of, titled "How Wolves Change Rivers" has garnered over 40,000,000 views on YouTube (Sustainable Human 2014). While the video is rather short and geared towards a popular audience, Beschta recognizes that particular avenue holds a great deal of merit in disseminating scientific findings. Beschta, Ripple, and others working in the realm of trophic cascades have certainly garnered criticism from others within the scientific community, Beschta has a strong conviction that their data and assertions are correct. When he and Ripple began this research journey together two decades ago, his biggest concern was getting the science right, and he is now surrounded by support from within and beyond the scientific community. The interest and support in the phenomenon of trophic cascades is spreading globally, and wolf reintroduction efforts are being considered in Scotland and Japan on the basis of ecosystem restoration (Hiroyuki 2018, Kenyon 2018). On their own terms, wolves are re-colonizing European lands where they had been eliminated, like France and Germany, and wolf supporters are touting the ecological capacity of wolves to regulate ungulates and protect delicate undergrowth (Kaste 2018).

Beschta sees a great potential for this story to highlight the importance of wolves and legitimize their return, especially towards people who may not be convinced of their merits. During our conversation he proposed that the phenomenon of trophic cascades has shed light on a dimension of wolves that people had not been cognizant of before. For instance, Beschta shares Duggan's sentiment that ranchers are often unfairly portrayed as unequivocal wolf

haters. However, like Duggan, Beschta recognizes that ranchers are hardly so one dimensional. Beschta considers that there are ranchers who are not quite so disturbed as their more vocal counterparts about the return of wolves, yet they are reluctant to speak out because of a fear of ostracism. He concludes that the trophic cascades story will help pro-wolf ranchers justify their appreciation of wolves to other people in their communities. It is almost trite to say that education is the answer to all of our social and environmental ills. However, to deny the central role of education in achieving mutual cohabitation with wolves is a disservice. Beschta aptly said that he is willing to let evolution run in our favor versus revolution. In other words, if we can teach younger generations about the ecological importance of wolves, we will eventually encounter more and more adults with open minds towards wolves. Spreading these scientific stories may help Oregonians understand their relationships with wolves in completely different way; from killers to life givers.

What does the story of trophic cascades mean for how we relate to wolves? The story is hailed as a tool for legitimizing wolves; however, it certainly has the ability to be misused to focus on ecological utilitarianism. In its endeavor to highlight the usefulness of wolves this mindset has a propensity to reduce wolves to a cog in an environmental machine. Given that wolves were eliminated based on their perceived lack of use, it makes a certain degree of sense to extol their ecosystem services to justify their reintroduction. However, comprehending natural forces in a mechanistic sense has a dark history. Western science was conceived out of a toxic need to subdue and control nature, and in turn women and people of color (Merchant 1980). This way of thinking, through the lens of human exceptionalism, has permitted a mechanical mindset that permits entities to be judged based solely on how it benefits the machine. These ideas come to fruition in the practice of quantifying the value of a tree through the amount of carbon it may sequester or oxygen it may produce in a given year. Quantifying a tree, quantifying wolf and quantifying a human fall under the same tragic schema of justifying mere existence through economics. In an extreme case, Nick Cady from Cascadia Wilds told me a story about instances in which they argued against appointing heavily biased scientists to decision making panels for Fish and Wildlife. One particularly disingenuous scientist supporting the de-listing of wolves from the Endangered Species List in Oregon, actually had no scientific

background in wolf biology. He studied butterflies. Scientists do not always live up to the paradigms they should. Ecology, as a science, is further away from the utilitarianism and reductive capacities of other fields. Ecologists, like Ripple and Beschta, have great respect for wolves, and this story of trophic cascades deserves to be shared and cherished. Wolves do fit into ecological rhythms. And yet, they should not be reduced to that. The story of trophic cascades is a wonderful tool, but the master's tools will never fully dismantle that master's house (Lorde 1984). Responsible science yields responsible relationships, and human values are inseparable from scientific methods.

### 3: Wolves as Inherently Valuable

**“it’d be interesting to have a wolf biologist and a rancher look at the same behavior and see what they say and see what the differences are”**

**-Jessica Pierce on differing perspectives of wolf behavior**

Isle Royale, a small sliver of land located in Lake Superior between Canada and the United States, is the site of a long running scientific study regarding the predator and prey relationship between wolves and moose (Vucetich, Nelson and Peterson 2012). The setting is unique in that the wolves and moose of the island are quite exclusive in their dealings; wolves are the sole predators of moose and moose are the sole prey for wolves. However, this arrangement took a turn when the population of wolves began to plummet, and by 2011 there were only 16 wolves left on this small island. Previously, their numbers had reached as high as 50 on Isle Royale, but various factors like conflict, disease and eventually inbreeding had reduced the population to two in 2017 (NPCA 2019).

At that time a debate raged as to what should be done. According to US wilderness policy, a wilderness area involves practically zero interference from human beings beyond the occasional camping trip (Vucetich, Nelson and Peterson 2012). Yet, if the wolves died off, given the ecological understanding of the key relationship wolves play in ecosystems, all of the biota of Isle Royale would be negatively affected. Additionally, it could be argued that humans did bring about the collapse of the wolf population through the incidental introduction of the virulent and deadly parvo virus in the 1980’s, while also making it impossible for more wolves to enter the territory via ice bridges due to a warming climate. In a landmark decision in 2018, the National Park Service agreed to relocate between 20-30 wolves to Isle Royale in a three to five year effort (NPS 2018). While more traditional ideas about conducting scientific research and preserving natural areas would focus on non-interference, the tides appear to be shifting towards what our duties are towards these systems.

What does it mean to be in relationship with wolves? What would an ethical exchange look like? Thus far we have explored the perspectives of both a rancher and an ecologist and delved into the different points they have made both in praise and in criticism about the return of wolves to areas they had been eliminated from. These voices tend to dominate the larger

discourse about wolf management policy, and consequently they are the most at odds. I would like to further expand into two topics that often surface during debates about wolf management: wolves as surplus killers, and humans as wolf hunters. Throughout this journey we will be complicating the perceived human/animal divide that dominates Western thinking in pursuit of a more equitable understanding of wolves accompanied with a healthy dose of mystery.

**“What’s happening from the wolf’s perspective is really private”**

**-Jessica Pierce on the question of whether wolves kill for fun.**

Michael Nelson, the philosopher in residence at the Isle Royale Wolf-Moose Project, did not visually encounter a wolf until at least five years into his position. And in this first encounter the wolf had died. Nelson and his colleagues lived on Isle Royale while collecting data about the local wolves and moose, and one evening while seated within their shed a ranger stopped in and informed them about a dead wolf that had washed up on the shore of the island. The crew promptly made their way to the site with bags, knives and gloves with which to dissect the body for their research. When they arrived at the long sandspit where the wolf’s body lay, they were met by a row of older men seated in lawn chairs surrounding the carcass. Nelson detailed to me that these men could easily have been labeled as having less than savory feelings towards wolves, and perhaps they may have harbored those sentiments. However, they initially called to report the incident and set up a perimeter around the wolf to protect his body from the scavenging birds that would have pecked at his exposed eyes.

During our conversation together, Michael and I agreed that human beings are generally pluralistic beings. As demonstrated previously, there are ranchers that appreciate wolves as well as scientists who will work against their conservation, albeit not in the best terms. The values of human beings are complex phenomena of great interest to storytellers determined to shift narratives, and these pursuits are by no means simple. Within the philosophy of value pluralism, values themselves are viewed as multifaceted, and cannot be boiled down into one simple concept that can be easily compared to others (Ives and Kendal 2013). Values serve as good predictors of individual judgements, yet they are by no means stagnant or rigid. And yet

values are not capricious either. Values are instilled in childhood and extend far beyond individuals and are shaped at multiple levels from communities, to cultures, and to biomes (Manfredo et al. 2017). Individual situations, like employment, also highly influence the values a person harbors, and it is no small task to convince someone that their livelihood is immoral. While deliberate efforts to entirely shift an individual's values are improbable, it is possible to work within the existing values that a person already has. Using particular facets of my conversation with Scott Duggan, I would like to layout a different approach one may take to understand their relationship with wolves in a more empathetic way.

My first interview for this endeavor was with Scott Duggan, and our conversation set the pace for all preceding interviews. About halfway through our conversation, he said something that struck me. Duggan explained to me that wolves are the only animals he encounters that kill for fun. The cruelty of their behavior was demonstrated to him by their propensity to kill more than they can eat and leave the rest of the grizzly scene for the forlorn rancher to find. He contrasted this behavior with a cougar that would take one animal at a time, and Duggan posed that wolves were eliminated for this very reason while cougars were not. My naivete at that time has dissipated since I have now heard of many similar ideas from those in the ranching community. When I broached this topic to Michael Nelson, he introduced me to the concept of partial prey consumption as a scientific means to understand this behavior.

Partial prey consumption is a frequent occurrence for many creatures ranging from spiders to weasels, and to canids in general (Vucetich J., Vucetich L., and Peterson 2012). In certain instances, this behavior can be hypothesized to stem from satiation or a limited rate of digestion. However, this phenomenon may also be characterized as a strategic behavior that has been honed through natural selection, which particularly rings true for wolves. The behavior itself also has a high degree of variance depending on different situations, for instance wolves may partake in more partial prey consumption in harsher winters. Location also appears to be a strong factor, given that wolves in Isle Royale exhibit less partial prey consumption than Scandinavian wolves. Whatever the reason for a particular instance of partial prey consumption, the words that humans attribute to the action bear strong connotations. According to Nelson's fellow Isle Royale researcher, John Vucetich, terms like "surplus killing"

that have been used by scientists to describe the same kind of behavior has roots in negative feelings towards wolves and is detrimental to conservation efforts.

While a rancher may come across several partially eaten calves and see waste, a wolf may see leftovers. Nelson explained to me that what we see as an unfinished meal is only part of the way through the consumptive period. Also, the feast does not cease when the wolves leave given that scavengers such as crows, ravens and foxes will frequent the partially consumed dinners of wolves (Vucetich J., Vucetich L., and Peterson 2012). Although the rancher and their herd are the parties definitely losing in this arrangement, this behavior is also demonstrated by human beings. Nelson theoretically transported me to a Costco in which all of the steaks are on sale for a dollar. An avid carnivore would obviously fill their cart with steaks only to waste a certain portion of them. While this practice is regrettable, it appears to be a flaw shared between taxa ranging from spiders to weasels to wolves, and to humans. Explaining this mutual trait between humans and wolves to a rancher experiencing a loss may not assuage their anger or melancholy, but perhaps they may experience some empathy when steaks are on sale.

Fun is another question entirely. There is no doubt that wolves partake in partial prey consumption for various reasons, but whether they receive enjoyment from predation is not an easy question to answer. I asked Nelson about this curious idea of wolves killing for fun, and although he didn't entirely refute it the notion of wolves killing purely out of enjoyment didn't sound very advantageous from an evolutionary standpoint. It is not unfathomable that chasing down prey involves a great deal of exhilaration and adrenaline. However, Nelson remarked that a wolf who might try to kill a moose out of pure enjoyment would get himself killed. Doug Smith, a biologist who leads the Wolf Restoration Project in Yellowstone, has found that only between 5-15 percent of wolf hunts are successful (Eisenberg 2014). Portland artist, Vanessa Renwick, elegantly expressed this struggle in her art installation titled *Hunting Requires Optimism*, in which she displayed ten refrigerators with television sets inside. Each of the ten screens display a wolf pack in pursuit of prey, yet in only one refrigerator scene are they successful. Put another way, Nelson asked me to imagine visiting McDonalds ten times in order to receive one happy meal; hardly favorable odds.

**“[wolves are] so socially intelligent and there’s so much evidence within wolf communities of moral integrity.”**

**-Jessica Pierce on her thoughts about wolves**

Science and philosophy have been perceived as entirely different subjects within Western culture for quite some time. As far back as 1952, scholar Philipp Frank wrote about the isolation between scientific and philosophic discourses, and decades later observations within this publication still hold true. For the ancient Greeks there was no great distinction between the terms “science” and “philosophy”, and even today a scholar who has dedicated years of research into microbiology would eventually be rewarded with the title of “Doctor of Philosophy” (Frank 1952). Leaping forward from Aristotle to Kant, there is a clearly observable rift between the goal of science in elaborating on the observable features of the cosmos, while philosophy was determined to ascribe value to human action. Subsequently, Kant also asserted that only rational beings possess moral worth, and our duties to the more than human world are merely indirect duties towards humankind (Kant 1873). It is this legacy of conceiving that human beings have no moral obligations towards animals that has justified invasive and often cruel scientific research on animals, as well as the miserable conditions of factory farming operations that view living creatures as products (Bekoff & Pierce 2009). Likewise, this type of thinking has justified cruel acts upon other human beings, like people of color, in the name of scientific advancement (Roothaan 2017). The medical field of gynecology itself was born from the suffering of black women through repetitive experimental surgeries (Zellars 2018). In response to various atrocities like those committed against both humans and animals inside the laboratory there is now a growing understanding that ethics will always need to be intimately connected in the pursuit of science, and vice versa. Jessica Pierce, as a bioethicist, understands that both science and ethics inform each other, and has written a great deal on the moral agency of animals and our own duties towards them as human subjects.

Pierce, as of 2019, has not yet seen a wild wolf, but she has been living vicariously through her daughter who has. Her daughter spent some time in Yellowstone National Park for a college course specifically about wolf and human interactions, and while Pierce did not tag alongside her daughter physically, she read all of the materials on the course syllabus. One

book she particularly gravitated towards is *American Wolf* by Nate Blakeslee. The book chronicles the life of O-six, a wolf renowned as the alpha female of the Lamar Canyon pack of Yellowstone (Blakeslee 2017). Her independence and grit set her apart from other wolves, and stories of her singularly bringing down adult elk add to her mythic presence. O-six had a devout following of wolf watchers who tracked her whereabouts daily and marveled at the trajectory of her life, which was eventually made into a documentary by National Geographic. Ultimately, she was legally hunted, and the reverberations of her death made lasting impacts on the power of personality in wildlife conservation. In our conversation together, Pierce holds out hope that viewing animals as individuals will alter the way the human beings relate to them, thus toying with the perceived human/animal divide. She elaborated that when we see animals as individuals with personalities, families and lives that matter to themselves, then oppression towards them can no longer be justified. Similarly, Val Plumwood has likened the oppression of humans, like women and people of color, to the subjugation of the natural world (Plumwood 1999). Logics of “othering” serve to belittle and essentialize the experiences of beings found on the degraded side of binary thought; i.e. rationalizing the subjugation of women, people of color and the natural world as inferior to whiteness, masculinity and civilization. When animals, like wolves, are determined to kill for pure enjoyment, this stereotype denies the complexity of their lives the same way a stereotype may harmfully typecast the experiences of women. Before O-six was filmed hunting and killing an adult elk by herself this feat was considered impossible by biologists (Blakeslee 2017). However, when others heard this story and witnessed her prowess, this challenged previously held ideas.

Additionally, Pierce articulated that science has the ability to alter ethics in a way that blurs the human/animal divide. Charles Darwin has famously emphasized that the differences between humans and animals are of degree and not kind, and the science of animal behavior, otherwise known as ethology, has revealed intimacies about animals that Western thought had denied for centuries (Bekoff and Pierce 2009). Pack life for wolves involves a hierarchical structure dictated by the alpha pair (Lopez 1978). As a highly social species, wolves have naturally had to develop highly nuanced forms of communication, especially through facial expressions. These facial expressions not only maintain order within family life, but also foster

empathy for each other when social transgressions occur (Bekoff and Pierce 2009). Philosopher Robert Solomon has written that wolves have a keen sense of justice within their packs and pay close attention to the needs of both their family units and the needs of individual members (Solomon 1995). The politics of play time also denote the complex moral lives of canines such as dogs, coyotes and wolves (Bekoff and Pierce 2009). Pierce's colleague, Mark Bekoff, has extensively studied the play habits of canines and has uncovered the true meaning of fair play in their worlds. When pups play, they will give themselves "handicaps" to keep the game fair and ensure that playtime will continue. Given the evolutionary advantage of play, it makes good sense for the game to continue for extended periods so pups can hone their skills and build bonds. Pups that play unfairly will have a harder time finding playmates until they learn to be more aware of the needs of their playmates.

Of course, the social lives of wolves culminate in the act of cooperative hunting that drives their very existence as obligate carnivores (Bekoff and Pierce 2009). The way wolves weave between running prey appears to be a highly choreographed dance, and when the hunt is successful wolves take turns eating according to individual rank. It is this highly organized social life that denotes the moral behavior within wolf communities, however, applying these ideas across species is not appropriate. The interactions between wolves and prey is not based on morality, but on survival. Despite the remarkable similarities between humans and animals like wolves, we are still vastly different and disintegrating our differences is merely another logic of Othering according to Val Plumwood (Plumwood 1999). Policing the morality of animals is a fool's errand, yet it is imperative for human beings to continuously examine our own lives and moral choices.

**"I'm not sure that killing as a form of hate therapy is acceptable"**

**-Michael Nelson on the topic of wolf trophy hunting**

Often within the realm of policy to reach a compromise between the disparate groups who either rejoice or revile wolves, the topic of wolf hunting surfaces. In the state of Oregon, someone who is protecting themselves, other people, their livestock, or their pets are legally permitted to shoot a wolf (ODFW 2010). As of 2019, the only other entity that can actively hunt

and kill a wolf is the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. However, there are other states, such as Idaho, Montana and Alaska, that permit recreational wolf hunting (Lee and Butler 2017). Opening wolves for trophy hunting has been viewed as a tactic for appeasing hunters and ranchers, with the possibility of increasing positive attitudes towards wolves. However, according to the many surveys distributed by Adrian Treves and his associates, this is not the case at all. After surveying hundreds of citizens in Wisconsin, admittedly mostly male-identifying hunters, both before and after recreational wolf hunting was legalized, their surveys found that overall tolerance for wolves declined (Browne-Nuñez 2015). One of the intentions of the hunt was to increase tolerance of wolves through hunting, much like the supposed respect that hunters have towards ungulates. When I mentioned this logic to Pierce, she was rather doubtful. She mentioned that hunting deer has not made people love deer, but rather belittle deer and view them as “wild livestock.” Since colonization, the viewpoint of settlers towards the more than human world has taken diverged into instrumental value or intrinsic value respectively (Eisenberg 2014). The instrumental approach espoused by conservationists like Gifford Pinchot, views the natural world as a stockpile of resources to be managed wisely in order to maintain supply. This contrasts greatly with an intrinsic value towards the natural world which values living entities on their own terms regardless of perceived economic use. Aldo Leopold espoused an intrinsic evaluation of nature in his *Land Ethic* by considering human beings as a citizen in biotic communities, neither above nor below the natural order of things. While the concept of intrinsic value lives on in the legacy of Aldo Leopold, the overall approach towards land management in the United States is overflowing with the instrumental view of nature.

The North American Model for conservation serves as the pinnacle example for the entrenchment of instrumental value in all things non-human. According to this model, wildlife is considered a public trust and should be managed by governments (Eisenberg 2014). This approach continues the idea of wildlife as a resource that can be killed for legitimate reasons. Under this purview, hunting is considered perfectly legitimate, and natural resource management is understood on the terms of hunters. In my conversation with Nick Cady from Cascadia Wilds, he bemoaned the North American Model, and claimed that it privileged

consumptive enjoyment of wildlife, i.e. hunting and fishing. He explained that wildlife management agencies have been historically funded by hunting and fishing license receipts, but less and less people are partaking in those activities. Some argue that allowing wolves to be hunted would be a boon for wildlife agencies, but that idea is ecologically and morally problematic. Killing wolves creates more problems than it solves.

The killing of wolves is legitimized on several fronts, but upon closer scrutiny these justifications fall apart. Oftentimes hunters will complain that the presence of wolves will threaten the populations of ungulates, however, there is no scientific evidence to substantiate that idea (Vucetich and Nelson 2014). There is also emerging evidence that killing wolves in retaliatory efforts against livestock loss actually increases livestock depredation in surrounding areas (Santiago-Avila et al. 2018). When a wolf is killed, especially an alpha member, pack dynamic is challenged and wolves may resort to easier means to obtain prey, such as livestock from surrounding areas. When O-six was killed, her family actually fell apart and her progeny split ways and resorted to killing easy to reach livestock, which resorted in their deaths (Eisenberg 2014). Claiming that wolves kill for fun is truly hypocritical considering that killing wolves for enjoyment is legally sanctioned and masqueraded as a consequence of their existence.

In our conversations together, Michael Nelson, Jessica Pierce and I agree that we need both instrumental and intrinsic values in our dealings with the more than human world. Trees are complex living entities with value in and of themselves, yet we humans still need lumber for housing, wood chips for mulch, and wood pulp for paper. However, I would like to consider that the need for intrinsic value is much greater considering the current imbalance in the Western approach towards land management. Even the term “management” portrays human beings as the masters of the natural world, without whom natural systems would collapse in on themselves. The hubris of anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism, in the words of Anna Tsing, has blinded us (Tsing 2011). However, when science and ethics come together and help us to better understand the world of wolves in our likeness and differences, the human/animal divide can disperse and humble us before our kin, the wolves.

Back in Isle Royale when Nelson and his crew came upon the dead wolf, the lawn chair audience dispersed to let the researchers get to work. They severed the wolf's body into different pieces and carried them back to their camp to be boiled. However, wolf stew was not on the menu. After smelling the effluence of boiling canid Nelson understood why humans typically don't eat carnivores. The wolf's remains were boiled to gain quick access to the creature's bones for inspection. As the canine's flesh sloughed off of the skeleton, the fumes began entering one of the sheds located on their site through the roof vent. The researchers inside, including Nelson, were slowly being inundated with greasy wolf vapor as they worked within the shed. Interestingly enough, no one noticed the scent until Nelson left the shed and returned to have the rancid scent knock him over the nostrils. He implored them all to exit the shed and let the area air out before they re-entered. The first wolf that Nelson encountered was deceased, yet the encounter was far more intimate than he could have imagined. Through steam, the boiled wolf had entered his lungs. The perceived human animal divide had been intimately crossed through breath.

#### 4: Wolves as Teachers

**“We have to think about what we’re walking on and that every species has value and we should consider that in everything that we do”.**

**-Valerie Goodness on the inherent value of life on Earth**

Thus far on this thesis journey we have delved into various different perspective about what it means to be in relationship with wolves. However, it needs to be recognized that so far, we have been firmly rooted within Western discourses. The human/animal divide identified in Western thought is not shared across human cultures (Roothaan 2017). This pursuit would be incomplete without the acknowledgement of Indigenous ways of knowing that were born on this continent, yet I can never fully attest to what it means to be Indigenous to this place. Moving forward, I would like to recount something Robin Wall Kimmerer discusses in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*. While seated under a Sitka spruce tree she ponders what it means to be Indigenous to a place (Kimmerer 2013). As an Indigenous scholar herself, she sees the immense value in Indigenous Knowledges, but these knowledges cannot be shared indiscriminately. As I will continue to reinforce in this chapter, Indigenous Knowledges do not exist to be exploited by Westerners. Knowledge comes entangled with relationships. In her time seated beneath the spruce tree, Kimmerer contemplates how immigrants to a place may become Indigenous, yet this runs counter to the very definition of the word. Indigeneity is bestowed upon birth and living in a place does not compare to the “soul-deep fusion with the land” characterized by Indigeneity. Her thoughts get tangled while seated in her pine needle nook, but the rustling of the Sitka’s branches frees her from her thoughts. As she rises from her seat and begins walking, she catches a glimpse of *Plantago major*, common plantain.

Plantain, also called White Man’s Footstep, was swift to colonize Turtle Island just like their namesake. However, their footprint is quite different. The entire plant is nourishing to the human body and serves as both medicine and food. Plantain is not so noxious as other invasive species that have colonized the land, and it fits so well with the landscape it is often mistaken for a Native species. She considers that common plantain has become a “naturalized” citizen within the landscape of the Americas. Becoming naturalized, as plantain has, means to become cognizant of the miraculous beauty and kindness of this land while also recognizing our duties

to cherish this place. This land is steeped with sacred knowledge that should be honored as such. Becoming naturalized means respecting the land, respecting the biota that call this place home, respecting the people who have such deep connections with the land, and respecting their knowledges and stories.

I do not speak on behalf of any Indigenous peoples, and I will not be dissecting their knowledge or stories. I will be honoring what they have said in their publications that I draw from. I am also extremely grateful for my time spent with Valerie Goodness who has shared some of her stories with me. She has stressed to me that she does not speak on behalf of any tribe; she spoke to me about her personal and familial experiences. The tribes located here in Oregon are the true experts on their knowledge with this land, and they have their own special relationships with wolves.

The Western worldview has maintained distinct value binaries at least since the Enlightenment in Europe (Merchant 1980) although other scholars contend that this binary thinking has more older roots in ancient Greece (Plumwood 1993). Regardless of the exact origins of this worldview, the West's insatiable need to control others is the source of our social/environmental crises, the source of the genocide of Indigenous peoples, and the source of the elimination of wolves. In Western thought nature is understood as an object that needs to be controlled and often improved upon (Watts 1958). Subsequently, when some romantically leaning Westerners realize the vast extent of human engineering of natural processes, they become depressed. In this way of thinking nature is viewed outside of the human self for better or worse, culminating in a sense of estrangement from the rest of the cosmos.

Even when Westerners deeply value the perceived natural world it gets reduced to only the wildest and most spectacular locations far away from human involvement (Cronon 1996). This can have terrible consequences for Indigenous people that occupy the lands that Westerners wish to preserve. The Enlightenment itself was rampantly racist and non-European peoples were likened to animals that deserved to be colonized (Roothaan 2017). Western science was at the forefront of justifying the objectification of women, people of color, animals

and of nature as a whole (Merchant 1980). Objective knowledge has been the only knowledge of value in the Western worldview, only adding to notions of superiority and isolation from entities considered inferior (Watts 1958). This worldview sounds quite dire, and in many ways, it is; however, these ideas make up the dominant Western worldview of which there has always been resistance (Williams 1977). There have been, and will always be, residual and emergent worldviews to challenge prevailing ones.

Blackfoot scholar, Leroy Little Bear, has the greatest familiarity with the philosophies of people Indigenous to the plains of North America, yet he contends that there is enough similarity between Indigenous American worldviews to derive a common structure (Little Bear 2000). Little Bear explains that for Indigenous Americans there is no separation between the Earth and her people. As opposed to dissecting the cosmos into sections, this worldview emphasizes the role of relationships in connecting all of us, much like a spider web. Noninterference also takes a central role in Indigenous American worldviews; however, not in the “noble savage” understanding of Rousseau. Indigenous Americans modified their home of Turtle Island through the use of fire and have carefully cultivated some of the major food staples of our global food system; corn, potatoes and squash (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). Noninterference, according to Little Bear, means respecting the wholeness, totality and knowledge of another being (Little Bear 2000). This means honoring diversity and working with natural cycles instead of imposing structures upon the land. Little Bears friend and colleague, Gregory Cajete, also acknowledges the diversity of Indigenous American Knowledge, but contends that there are threads that cross diverse cultural boundaries (Cajete 2000). Native Science understands that nature has the ability to teach us without the need to subdue and control the Earth. Native Science highly values the power of observation, much like Western Science, yet it also values subjective experience and the power of storytelling. It is also important to note that the idea of “nature” as a separate entity from human beings is foreign to the Indigenous American worldview. The natural world is simply our home, and the animals and plants we share space with are viewed as relatives and teachers; not as inferior beings. For many Indigenous Americans, wolves are a particularly important species with valuable lessons to convey.

**“We should always be cognizant of what nature is telling us because we learned everything that we know from nature. Nature was our first teacher. Humans were not first on the Earth.”**

**-Valerie Goodness on the myth of human superiority**

For our interview together, Valerie Goodness and I sat in her truck in the WinCo Foods parking lot sharing stories while observing people wheel their squeaky shopping carts back into their corrals. Her very patient son sat in the back seat and would occasionally get out, stretch his legs, and then very quietly close the car door as unobtrusively as possible. One story that Goodness shared I had heard before. She talked about the popular Western narrative of dog domestication involving scraggly wolves following bands of human hunters. As the story typically unfolds, the prodigious hunters, *Homo sapiens*, took pity on the friendliest wolves and shared their bountiful supply of meat with them. Thus, dogs were born from this relationship between competent master and needy scavenger. This narrative is prominent in Western popular culture, including in the recently released film, “Alpha”, in which a savvy prehistoric teen nurtures an injured wolf back to health and asserts dominance over the animal who ultimately becomes the first domesticated “dog” (Wilkinson 2018). And, for many people this story is rubbish.

Although Western scientists generally agree that grey wolves and dogs share a genetic ancestor, beyond that the genetic history of dogs is quite murky and full of disagreement within the Western scientific community (Handwerk 2018). Researchers cannot agree on the time frame or location of the domestication of dogs, and more recent evidence suggests that there could have been multiple instances of canine domestication. As far as how domestication happened, there is just as much debate amongst scientists. Brian Hare, the director of Duke University’s Canine Cognition Center, has noted that dogs may have domesticated themselves by warming up to hunter gatherers, thus giving the friendlier canines a greater advantage over more fearful ones. However, this Western scientific approach still feeds into the idea that canids followed peripatetic humans, and this narrative is not at all shared across cultural boundaries. Valerie Goodness explained an aha moment she had when discussing the cultural significance of wolves with her Father and his story turns the previous one on its head. He understood that humans would follow wolves around because they are ultimately the better

hunter, not the other way around. This idea explains the deep significance of wolves as teachers for human beings.

Harkening to the discussion of partial prey consumption in the previous chapter, Goodness also explained that wolves will not eat every part of their kill. She explained that wolves will take what they need for themselves and their families, and the rest of the carcass will feed other animals like crows, ravens, foxes, and humble human beings. In this narrative, human beings have taken the role of scavenger following along with the canid hunters who ultimately follow herds of ungulates. According to Goodness, the beings of our world all have roles, and the role of wolves is to feed others.

A study conducted in Scandinavia supports this claim by highlighting the plethora of species that will frequent wolf kills over time (Nodeland 2013). Researchers erected 49 cameras surrounding a moose that had been killed by wolves, and after the wolves had left the scene the cameras captured 15,000 pictures of different scavengers taking advantage of the feast, such as golden eagles, red foxes, jays, martens and bears. Although there is a certain amount of uncertainty regarding this study, especially regarding measuring populations of scavengers, there is no doubt even from the point of view of Western Science that wolves feed other creatures. Where would these relationships be if wolves killed for fun? Where would these relationships be if humans killed wolves for fun?

For many Indigenous Americans, wolves directly address how to live in the world as respectful ecological members of a greater whole (Pierotti and Wildcat 2000). While it is easy to witness the formidable teeth and claws wolves that wolves possess, they could not exist without endurance, patience and perseverance; values they can convey to societies when humans listen. Likewise, hunting other creatures for sustenance is not about domination, but sacrifice. In an Indigenous American worldview, an animal who was hunted is understood as having sacrificed themselves and humans who consumed the animal were empowered by that respectful relationship. Wolves are not heartless killers; they are fulfilling their roles as wolves. In this worldview, animals like wolves are just as knowledgeable as human elders, and just as unique as individuals. Western scientists have often remarked that Indigenous peoples have

greater understanding of wolf behavior and ecology than Western Science. Within this worldview the notion of wolves killing for fun is not only false but insulting.

**“We shouldn’t be taught to be afraid of who we are.”**

**-Valerie Goodness on Indigenous resiliency**

During our time together, Goodness told me about times Western scholars denigrated Indigenous Knowledge. While taking courses in fire ecology, professors would tell students that Native people would light fires and walk away without understanding the damage they were doing. She explained that the threshold for scientific rigor is held to a much higher standard for Native scholars as opposed to Western science conducted by the military or universities. This belittling of Indigenous Knowledge reaches far back into the archived Jesuit journals that Goodness read for her own research. Jesuit priests who colonized Haudenosaunee territory in the Northeast remarked at how foolish Indigenous people were for valuing species like wolves and beaver. The Jesuit colonizers valued nature that was domesticated to serve their own needs and considered themselves the experts in this knowledge. Goodness pointed out that hypocrisy considering that beaver populations had been severely decimated in Europe under the guidance of these “experts”. Goodness elaborated that Traditional Ecological Knowledge is based on scientific fact in its purest form. A value like the pH of water is not something that can be argued about. However, what can be applied with that information is of great significance.

Although Indigenous scholars, like Goodness, have experienced and continue to experience imperialist attitudes regarding Indigenous Knowledge, there is a growing sentiment regarding the significance and vitality of Indigenous Knowledge, particularly Traditional Ecological Knowledge. For Indigenous scholars, the recovery of Indigenous Knowledge is “an anticolonial project” (Wilson 2004). The devaluing of Indigenous ways of knowing was an inherent part of colonization and reviving and empowering this knowledge benefits Indigenous people and Native biota. Conversely, Indigenous Knowledge runs the risk of being exploited and used inappropriately by non-Native enthusiasts.

It is also worth noting that decolonizing is not at all a metaphor (Tuck and Yang 2012). The best way to restore ecological and social relationships is through the repatriation of

Indigenous lands to Indigenous people. However, this process is arduous in the face of ongoing colonization in the United States. Although there are heartening stories of individuals and organizations returning lands to Indigenous people, Native nations have had to work with state and federal agencies to get this vital work done. One example out of Idaho elaborates on the strategy one tribe has taken to restore wolves to the land.

There would be no wolves in Idaho without the efforts of the Nimi'ipuu people, who are also referred to as the Nez Perce Tribe since colonization (Cheater 1998). Consequently, there would also be no wolves in Oregon without the efforts of the Nimi'ipuu Tribe in their effort to restore a missing link to the land. In 1995 the federal government contracted the tribe to manage the recovery of wolves, and this work is viewed as both ecologically and culturally valuable given that wolves are traditionally viewed as teachers and kin. Idaho is a state that has entirely embraced the hunting of wolves, especially since they have opened up a \$1000 bounty for anyone who kills a wolf (Peacher 2019). However, the Nez Perce Reservation, located just Northeast of the border between Idaho and Oregon, has been characterized as an island in a wolf-hating state (Wilkinson 2014). However, it is important to note that since the beginning of the wolf recovery effort, the Nez Perce has justified their involvement through their 1855 federal treaty rights to harvest wolves (Donoghue 2010). Additionally, in constructing their wolf management plan, the tribe has chosen to rely heavily on Western science and in a Memorandum agreement with the state of Idaho, the document asserts that biology should drive wolf management. To an outsider, like myself, this may seem puzzling. Why would a culture that values wolves as kin justify their reintroduction on the basis of hunting, and why doesn't their management plan contain strong involvement with Traditional Ecological Knowledge? I would like to consider it a strategy well played. Tribal members involved in the wolf management program have asserted that the central role of Western science does not downplay the significance of their cultural knowledge, instead Traditional Ecological Knowledge is a personal skill to be fostered. In developing their wolf management plan, the Nimi'ipuu Tribe embraced the role of Western science, and kept their sacred knowledge close to home with the ultimate goal of returning a sacred species. The Tribe has not stopped with wolves, and also advocate on behalf of wolverine, lynx and free-range bison. Wolf reintroduction is far from

indelicate, but the Nez Perce Tribe has managed to work with state and federal systems for the benefit of wolves, ecosystems and their cultural heritage. Westerners seeking to become naturalized citizens of Turtle Island must value the power of stories that have the ability to be shared, and value the privacy of stories that are more intimate.

**“We have these oral stories and they’re taught generation after generation after generation, and they may seem silly or pagan to a colonizer, but they teach us the important lessons that nature has taught us.”**

**-Valerie Goodness on the value of stories**

An exemplary story that highlights the cultural role of wolves as caretakers is the creation story of the Kalapuya people upon whose ancestral land Oregon State University was built. Stories can often hold deep significance for individuals, communities and entire cultures. Some stories have sacred knowledge and should not be shared lightly. After receiving permission from one of the Kalapuyan story keepers, Esther Stutzman, I would like to share this story I heard told by her daughter, Shannin Stutzman, on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at the Majestic Theater in Corvallis, Oregon. I am re-telling this story using the notes I took from that night, while also fact checking the details using an online publication Ester Stutzman took part in (Stutzman).

In the very beginning, the world was made of stone. This was also a time of magic when animals and people could talk and understand each other. From high atop one stone mountain descended Le-lu, First Woman, with two babies clutched to her chest. Wherever she stepped plants grew and water flowed forth. She eventually encountered Quartux, Mother Wolf. Quartux asked Le-lu who she was and where her babies came from. Le-lu replied, “I am Le-lu and I dreamed of these babies and that is how they came to me”. Le-lu explained to Quartux that she wished to explore the rest of the world but needed someone to watch her children. Quartux smiled and said that she would watch them. Le-lu trusted Mother Wolf and created cradleboards to strap her babies onto Le-lu’s back. When Le-lu eventually returned, she saw that Quartux had taken great care of her children. When she released them from the

cradleboards their foreheads had become flattened, and she knew that it was beautiful. Pre-colonization, Kalapuyan people did traditionally flatten the foreheads of their babies to honor Mother Wolf, who also has a flattened forehead.

In this story, Quartux the wolf is understood as a protective mother who cared for the ancestors of human beings in their infancy. In our conversation together, Goodness pointedly remarked how this story resembles the story of the founding of Rome. Romulus and Remus, after being forsaken by their own family due to an ominous prophecy and left in the wilderness, were cared for by a benevolent Mother Wolf (Lopez 1978). There is also an early telling of the story of Siegfried, a Germanic hero, being nursed by a divine she-wolf as an infant (Walker 1983). There are wolf stories beyond the Americas that also portray wolves as nurturers, teachers, kin, friends, tricksters and everything in between. The Mongolian people were said to have descended from wolves (Roothaan 2017), as are the Ainu people of Hokkaido (Walker 2004) and from my own dabbling in my ancestral tongue I have learned that the Irish word for wolf, *mac tíre*, translates to son of the land. Certainly, other cultures are also rife with tales demonizing wolves, such as the tale of the murderous Greek king Lycaon who was turned into a wolf as a punishment for cannibalism, and the Norse apocalypse was foretold to begin with a wolf devouring the Sun (Lopez 1978). Conversely, it is also important to note that not all Indigenous Americans have the same relationships with wolves, given that Navajo people traditionally have negative associations with werewolves and witchcraft. Clearly, human relationships with wolves are as dynamic today as they have been over millennia.

One European story that I would like to re-tell with my own embellishments and agenda is the story of Saint Francis and the wolf of Gubbio. I retain my right to tell this story through my, albeit reluctant, Catholic education as a child coupled with my insistence on taking Francis' name for my sacrament of confirmation. Saint Francis, having lost his taste for worldly pleasures, took up a peripatetic life as a humble monk spreading the gospel of Jesus around Europe in the 1100's. Francis, truly a rebellious Christian, preached to birds and extolled the virtues of Brother Ant and Sister Fire (White 1967). Francis advocated for a more egalitarian and humble view of humankind within God's cosmos, not above or below the rest of creation.

One day, the Saint entered the town of Gubbio, located in central Italy, and was met with pleas of assistance from the people. The town was being ravaged by a wolf who had been preying on their sheep herds for months and months causing much devastation. Saint Francis, ever the pacifist, decided to make his way into the wilderness and sort out the situation himself.

Upon viewing the beatific visage of Francis, the wolf grew calm and allowed the Saint to approach. Saint Francis explained to the wolf that the people of Gubbio were suffering due to the loss of their sheep. The contrite wolf bowed his head and apologized, his evolutionary instincts propelled him to partake in what some may call partial prey consumption, and he had no family to discipline him away from his penchant for mutton. Saint Francis understood; domestic sheep are a fairly easy meal when times are tough. The Saint understood the importance of the wolf as an inherently valuable member of God's creation with an additionally vital role as a keystone species. However, Francis also expressed empathy for the people of Gubbio and wished for them to prosper economically. So, he struck a deal with the lonely wolf. Francis assured the wolf that he could visit the town of Gubbio whenever he hungered, and the people would feed him their own food to pacify him as long as he never hurt any livestock or people. The pact was sealed with a handshake and presumably a pat on the head or a scratch behind the ear. Saint Francis returned to Gubbio with the passive and remorseful wolf in tow, much to the shock and awe of the towns people who rejoiced at the miracle. Francis explained the new deal to the people of the town, and they heartily agreed; they did not mind donating some salami or pancetta to the wolf to sate his appetite and maintain their herds. From that day forward, the wolf and the people of Gubbio lived in harmony through their arrangement, and upon the wolf's death he was given an honorable burial in the cemetery.

While it is vitally important to recognize the validity of Indigenous Knowledge and promote its usage under the purview of Indigenous experts, it is also important for Westerners to reclaim some of our own overlooked knowledge. I find that the tale of Francis and the wolf highlights the deep interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, while still working with frameworks that many Westerners understand. We cannot simply apply Indigenous stories to Western mindsets because there is not always a clear translation that has the potential to get lost. While appreciating Indigenous stories, Westerners can also retrace our

own steps, rediscover and revise our own cultural stories in order to refine our relationships with the more than human world.

## Conclusion

### Stories Come in Circles

In this collection of accounts, we have traversed a lot of ground. I would like to again revisit the goal of this research; refining human relationships with the wolves who are returning. We have received insights from various sources that can be utilized in future endeavors pertaining to wolf management and far beyond.

We began with the story of Nick Cady, a legal advocate for Cascadia Wildlands, and the threads of his observations have resurfaced occasionally with extra tidbits of information to support our stories. He told a compelling story of his fledgling career as a lawyer successfully defending the Imnaha pack as they were being hunted, and he began to pique our curiosity as to why wolves are such a contentious topic in Oregon.

Then we transitioned to the perspective of Scott Duggan, a lifelong Oregonian rancher, who expressed his economic concerns coupled with his own emotional responses to losing livestock. However, he also indicated that he is quite fond of the natural world and is aware of ecological checks and balances. Duggan provides us with the incentive to get to know the struggles of individual ranchers and understand that many do possess ecological consciences.

The scientific works published by Robert Beschta and his colleagues help convey the truly remarkable impacts that wolves have on their ecosystems with the ability to heal landscapes suffering from deep imbalances. He also stressed the importance of disseminating this information to persuade others not entirely convinced of the vital role that wolves play ecologically.

Ethicists like Michael Nelson and Jessica Pierce serve to remind us of the inextricable nature of science and ethics, and when the two work in tandem they can be used to critically evaluate human decisions. Michael Nelson would have us closely look at the shortcomings of the North American Model for Conservation, and Jessica Pierce would have us view animals as individuals with their own complex lives. Both ethicists challenge us to consider the inherent value of all things in the more-than-human world that deserve our respect.

Indigenous scholars, like Valerie Goodness, continually demonstrate the validity of Indigenous Knowledges and the immense power of stories. Valerie Goodness reminds us that

the perceived human/animal divide is not shared across cultures, nor is the notion of human superiority. Indigenous Knowledges understands wolves, and other non-human entities, as valuable teachers.

One main pattern that runs throughout this tapestry is the intimate connection between the extirpation of wolves and the footprints of colonization on a global scale. Starting in my own ancestral homeland of Ireland, wolves were once so abundant the island was referred to as Wolfland (Hickey 2011). The subjugation of the Irish people alongside the elimination of wolves were inextricable goals during the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland in the mid 1600's. It was in Ireland that Britain perfected their colonial tactics, and these methods were likewise carried out on the myriad Indigenous peoples of the Americas and the wolves that were once abundant on Turtle Island (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, Lopez 1978). Although Japan was not settled per se by Western colonizers, Western ideas were imposed on the islands who sought to "modernize" at the expense of Indigenous people, specifically Ainu people. (Walker 2004). Japanese authorities hired a man from Ohio to visit their newly conceived nation-state and demonstrate how to eliminate wolves through poisoning deer carcasses. Ainu people have now garnered official recognition by the Japanese state, however one of their most sacred animals, the wolf, is still absent from their ancestral homes. The loss of a species is also a cultural loss. The voices of Indigenous peoples must be elevated in broader discourses about reintroduction and conservation on their own ancestral lands. The return of wolves to Oregon is not just a matter of ecological restoration, but also social justice and a decolonial reckoning.

This tapestry, however, would be incomplete without the presence of wolves themselves. To complete the circle of this story I needed to visit wolves and meet their own gaze. For this research I did not have the ability to voyage into the wilderness and meet wild wolves on their own terms. That is a pursuit for a later date. I did have the opportunity to visit a wolf sanctuary in Washington called Wolf Haven where I had the chance to encounter my muses and meet their amber eyes with mine.

When I arrived at Wolf Haven I was greeted by the warm smile of my guide and a host of croaking ravens. Wolf Haven International is a sanctuary for wolves who have been rescued from unfortunate circumstances that only human beings could have put them in (Wolf Haven International). Every wolf in the sanctuary was born in captivity under the purview of people who often did not have their best interests in mind. And often, despite the best of intentions of someone who wished to own a wolf, the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. Some wolves came from private owners who thought owning a wolf or a wolf dog would be a slick expression of vanity. Others were rescued from cruel roadside attractions or zoos that only exist for the shallow wants of human beings to gawk at a creature with more sapience than they can fathom. Wolf Haven has been in operation since 1982, and it exists solely for the canines it shelters. Although, just like any non-profit, Wolf Haven has to bring in some kind of income to feed their hungry occupants and pay their staff who keep the operation running. Wolf Haven offers tours to visitors, which brings both proceeds to fund the sanctuary and serves to inform the public.

I had visited Wolf Haven once before on a misty February day, but my most recent visit in May was bright, sunny, and almost warm for a spring day in Washington. I had been in contact with the organization after my first visit and I informed them of this research. They invited me back for another tour coupled with some behind the scenes action. The first thing they showed me upon my arrival was their new walk in refrigerator stocked with miscellaneous animal parts. The wolves receive bi-weekly meals to mimic their feeding habits in the wild; and these meals come in the form of 20-pound blocks of various meats complete with fish oil supplements and medication for the wolves that require it (Wolf Haven International). Of course, the wolves also receive enrichments like bones, pumpkins or “blood-sicles” as treats to keep them entertained. Tours are about 50-minutes long and are led by guides with extensive knowledge of wolf biology, wolf management, and the idiosyncrasies of the individual wolves living in the sanctuary. After my tour, I had the privilege of a private tour with an employee who works closely with the wolves. She told me one particularly poignant story of a resident named Lakota who had a rough beginning to his life.

Lakota was born in captivity to an owner who admired his beauty, but not his personality and intrinsic needs as a wolf. In October of 2013, Lakota escaped his enclosure to wander the surrounding town of Olympia, Washington and got into a fight with a German Shepherd. Thankfully the dog survived the fight and Lakota was apprehended shortly after the altercation. My guide showed me news footage of the ordeal that filmed Lakota desperately chewing on the crate he was captured in, eventually shot with a tranquilizing dart, and then seen drugged up while lying in his new enclosure (Eldridge 2013). His owner remarked on camera that he planned on breeding Lakota with a canine with more dog DNA than wolf in order to maintain his beautiful markings without his temperament. Of course, the term “owner” is used quite loosely considering no one can own a wolf but themselves. Only the miserable hubris of a human hell-bent on subduing nature would justify sacrificing the freedom of a wolf for ownership and vapid pride. My guide told me that shortly after his escape Lakota bit the man who claimed to own him, and the man planned on killing Lakota. Thankfully, he called a vet who recommended Lakota be re-housed at Wolf Haven, and he has lived there since.

One of the most salient features of Wolf Haven are their fences. Obviously, a wolf sanctuary needs fences for the safety of everyone involved. However, after my tour I took a moment to wax poetic on a small hill overlooking one of the enclosures. It was the home of Lakota and Sierra. Similarly, Sierra was sitting on a small hill in her enclosure looking at me while Lakota roamed around their home. Of course, it’s a small home for a wolf, but this is the best situation they could have been offered. Sierra, like her mate Lakota, was held by a private owner who could not control her mentally or physically. She continually escaped from her confinement to meander the Hollywood Hills in California, but as a lonely wolf raised in captivity that could only have ended in tragedy for her. They have both found sanctuary in their new home at the cost of their ability to roam and hunt.

We gazed at each other with soft eyes over the three fences dividing us. Barriers are prominent in all of our lives now, especially with the proposed wall at the national border between the United States and Mexico. The Oregon Wolf Plan itself divides the state into two sections that demarcate the protections of wolves according to highways (ODFW 2010). The

barriers that different cultures use to draw boundaries are pretty telling; rivers, mountain ranges, interstates, lines of latitude. Do we adhere to the alpine tree line or the asphalt? The pressures on a wolf can change dramatically when they cross from Idaho into the Wallowa's, across the Columbia Plateau and subsequently into the Cascade Range. In Idaho a wolf could be killed for \$1000 whereas in Western Oregon poaching a wolf is a Class A misdemeanor and "the first conviction could result in imprisonment of up to one year, and a fine of up to \$6,250. If I was to drive over the state line, across the Snake River and wind my way up to Mount Hood, that would be about 333 miles according to Google Maps. That trek is a walk in the park to the wolf, Journey, who traveled over 3000 miles across Oregon's border with California. My guide informed me that wolves do have borders made of scents generally invisible to our olfactory systems. During my stay many of the wolves rubbed against the chain link fences enclosing them both to remove their cumbersome winter coats and mark their territories. Hard borders they did not choose much like the walls imposed on human beings.

There was a great distance between Sierra and me in our gaze; both geographically and beyond. In our exchange there was room for similarities and room for difference; room for friendship and room for mystery; room for grief and room for reconciliation.

To her I can only offer thanks and my determination to share stories; love stories. Love for our Earth, love for the neighbors we share this land with, and love for our kin the wolves.

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