



AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Oppression from Within: AIM, Heteropatriarchy, Settler Colonialism, and the Death of Anna Mae Aquash.

Abstract approved:

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This thesis describes how heteropatriarchal, settler colonialism impacted Indigenous communities' systems in power and control, particularly with the American Indian Movement during the 1960s-1970s. Further, the gendered divides this created within the American Indian Movement are described. The murder of Anna Mae Aquash is revisited as an act of gendered violence within the American Indian Movement. The implications of her murder and ensuing trial had on Native communities as upholding a heteropatriarchal model of control and dominance are also discussed. My personal connection to this story is woven into this thesis using Indigenous based methodology. The purpose of this study was to re-read our recent histories through Indigenous epistemologies to learn how to heal from historical trauma as Indigenous communities.

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Oppression from Within: AIM, Heteropatriarchy, Settler Colonialism, and the Death  
of Anna Mae Aquash

by  
Luhui Whitebear-Cupp

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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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Luhui Whitebear-Cupp, Author

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“The past is more than memory.” – John Trudell

## **Chapter I: Introduction: The American Indian Movement, Anna Mae Aquash, and Heteropatriarchy**

### ***Background***

Growing up in a Native community in the mountains of Southern California, I was afforded a unique opportunity to learn about our history from a different perspective than what was taught in the mainstream public schools. All three of my parents were heavily involved with the American Indian Movement during the 1960's-1970's. They made a point that I, along with my siblings, learned about the struggles our people endured and continue to face. We learned about our ancestral history as well as the contemporary histories that were being formed. Being partially homeschooled allowed us to travel all along the west coast to different Native communities and learn about their ceremonies as well as injustices they face. These experiences impacted me deeply and as I grew older I began to learn that my parents were part of something larger than our small community.

While growing up, I knew my parents had resisted something and found a way for us to be able to pray and hunt and gather, but I did not know what they were resisting. I knew that there was still a lot that our Indigenous communities sought to overcome, but did not know why. It was not until I began my undergraduate endeavors in Anthropology and Ethnic Studies that I learned about historic trauma, colonization, and internalized oppression. I was able to look at our communities and know what the books and professors were talking about. I began to understand the complexity of the systems of oppressions that my parents sought refuge. It is from

this lens that I approach my thesis project as I reexamine part of the American Indian Movement's history and legacy.

Although the American Indian Movement (AIM) was a collective movement comprised of people from all walks of life, a few key people (all men) became recognized as the national leaders of the movement. It has been argued that these leaders displayed the behavior of the oppressor. Lee Maracle (1996) writes that the leadership of the American Indian Movement was sexist and lost sight of the people they represented. Maracle (1996) states, "...The AIM leadership looked at the reward of 'serving the people' with European eyes" (p. 100). Her words remind us that our communities are not immune to internalized oppression and that this type of oppression can have disastrous results that can be felt across the generations. The choices the leadership of the American Indian Movement made, as described by Maracle, had long lasting effects in Native communities that can be felt to this day. They aren't something that can just be ignored and moved on from. Rather, they must be faced and understood as a part of our collective history in a way that is connected to who we are today. We must remember those who were involved and understand the pieces of this history they filled.

One activist in the resistance movement was a woman named Anna Mae Pictou Aquash. She became a prominent figure in the American Indian Movement after she immigrated to the United States from Canada and began a path towards advocating for her local Indigenous community. In current times, Anna Mae has become a symbol of the Indigenous women's resistance movement through her contributions to AIM as well as her murder that was a result of her participation. By

examining the depth of her involvement along with the complexities of her murder investigation, this thesis addresses two central points: 1) Pivotal moments in our contemporary histories serve to further oppress Indigenous women by adopting power structures of dominance from the colonizers and 2) This heteropatriarchal model the American Indian Movement leaders mirrored affect the current generations of Indigenous people that continue to express homophobia and misogyny. We can look towards existing literature to begin this journey.

### ***AIM and Anna Mae in Existing Literature***

In regards to the American Indian Movement, there is a large body of literature that has been published. Examples of this literature include: *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* by Peter Mattheissen, *Ojibwa Warrior: Dennis Banks and the Rise of the American Indian Movement* by Dennis Banks and Richard Erdoes, *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Means* by Russell Means, *Prison Writings: My Life is My Sun Dance* by Leonard Peltier and Harvey Arden, *American Indian Mafia: An FBI Agent's True Story About Wounded Knee, Leonard Peltier, and the American Indian Movement* by Joseph H. Trimbach, and *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* by Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall. The list of existing literature can certainly continue. The texts I use for the purposes of this project will be introduced in different parts of this thesis. However, it is important to point out that the material out there is heavily dominated by male subjects as the focus. There is also a theme historicizing the narrative of AIM although these stories are still very much a part of

our living histories. Rather than place these stories in a contemporary time, they are shaped as a part of the past separate from our lived realities.

Much of the literature about Anna Mae is also situated as history. While there is not nearly the amount of literature available regarding Anna Mae as a central point as there is of the American Indian Movement in general, her story is often a piece of the stories told. Examples of the existing literature where she is a central component include *The Life and Death of Anna Mae Aquash* by Johanna Brand, *Who Would Unbraid Her Hair: The Legend of Annie Mae* by Antoinette Nora Claypoole and Anne Pearse Hocker, and *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism* by Devon Abbott Mihesuah. While the first two books listed give a historical lens, the third does incorporate more of a contemporary lens through an interview with Anna Mae's daughters. Because of her untimely death, the accounts of Anna Mae that exist are also in context that reminds us that she was a victim of violence.

The existing literature is also complimented by references in books and articles, countless newspaper articles, numerous blogs, court documents, and thousands of pages in FBI files. There is not a lack of written material on the subject of AIM. My research will add to the existing literature but in a way that that centers on healing not only from historic trauma, but also from the injury we have inflicted on our own communities. It will also serve as an example of how our histories cannot be separated from who we are as Native people and that there is value in revisiting these histories to not only retell them with our own voices, but to also help unravel the trauma and oppression colonization has taught us to live as our realities.

### *What Anna Mae's Death Tells Us*

Anna Mae's murder sparked a national outcry among the American Indian Movement (Brand 1978). Anna Mae became a symbol of the Indigenous women's movement with her death symbolizing the voice of Native women being silenced. However, her death also serves as a constant reminder of what still needs to change. Veena Das (2008) states, "Some studies ask if the obligation of women to convert bad deaths into good deaths through mourning and lamentation moves from the spheres of kinship to that of politics so that women are seen as specially obligated to contest the forgetfulness imposed by dominant political actors (especially the state) and to demand justice on behalf of the dead" (p. 293). By refocusing Anna Mae's death as an example of the persistent injustices Indigenous women faced, her death served as a reminder of the changes that were, and are, still necessary. Anna Mae's murder and the poorly executed investigation that followed became a central point of focus of AIM in seeking justice for the years immediately following her death. Joy Harjo describes both the poor investigation and the sentiments of AIM at the time of her murder well stating:

In February 1976, an unidentified body of a young woman was found on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The official autopsy attributed death to exposure. The FBI agent present at the autopsy ordered her hands severed and sent to Washington for fingerprinting. John Trudell, rightly, called this mutilation an act of war. Her unnamed body was buried. When Anna Mae Aquash, a young Micmac woman who was an active American Indian Movement member, was

discovered missing by her friends and relatives, a second autopsy was demanded. It was then discovered that she had been killed by a bullet fired at close range to the back of her head. (Harjo 1990, pg. 7)

While there was a central focus to identify what happened to Anna Mae initially, the momentum eventually faded. Understanding her involvement with AIM helps us understand the ways in which male dominance was expressed both within and outside of AIM both in life and in death.

Anna Mae was not the only woman in the American Indian Movement, but she was one of the more vocal. Her murder itself was also used as a scare tactic with other Native women during this time period. Mrytle Poor Bear disclosed that she was shown pictures of Anna Mae's body by the FBI to coerce her into testifying against Leonard Peltier telling her that she would end up like Anna Mae if she did not cooperate (Weyler 1982). Even in death, Anna Mae was used as a commodity to support the continuation of colonial oppression supporting the idea that Indigenous women's bodies, both in life and death, are something to be controlled and used as those in power see fit. In this case those in power were governmental officials, which were primarily white men.

The message this sent to Native women, and continues to send to Native women, is that these types of voices can and will be silenced. At the time of her death, Anna Mae was well known as part of the American Indian Movement's national leaders. However, her murder went unsolved for over thirty years. Lack of involvement both by the United States and Canada led her case to become dormant. This follows a national trend that continues on to this day of Native American issues

being pushed to the back of the list of priorities. This out of site out of mind mentality has supported the continued colonization and exploitation of Indigenous bodies and lands.

Over the course of seven years, four former members of the American Indian Movement were indicted and tried for the murder of Anna Mae Aquash (Gease 2010). Throughout the trials, testimonies arose and a story of internalized hostility came to light. The FBI tactics had worked and two people, Arlo Looking Cloud and John Graham, were convicted of her murder in 2004 and 2010 respectively. Additionally, Thelma Rios accepted a plea bargain in 2009 for her involvement and knowledge of Anna Mae's planned murder. However, no one was convicted of her rape.

While it took nearly thirty-five years for the actual people responsible for killing Anna Mae to come to light, the question of who ordered her death has yet to be answered. Nonetheless, her murder remains a powerful reminder to Indigenous women. There is a long ways to go to seek justice for the generations of trauma felt by Native women. Violence against Native women is as prevalent as it has ever been. The staggering statistics offered by the National Congress of American Indians show us that when compared to all other races, Native women are "2.5 times as likely to experience violent crimes" as follows: "61 percent...have been assaulted in their lifetime", "34 percent...will be raped in their lifetime", "39 percent...will be subjected to violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime", and "17 percent...reported being stalked in their lifetime" with "an average of 67 percent of the offender as non-Native" (ncai.org). The healing that needs to take place runs deep and requires the involvement of all. This violence is part of a larger history of

violence and control of Native bodies and lands, yet its place in this history is further complicated by the ways in which Native communities have integrated attributes of the colonizing society. This integration was not by chance and is best explained through governmental policies.

### ***Political Background & Context***

For Native people in the United States, the 1960's was a time that followed the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009), marking the beginning of the incorporation of identity and the shift to individuality, which was, in essence, a further effort of government policy to assimilate Native communities to reflect the dominant society. By developing an identity that could be distinct and marketed moved away from a more communal way of living. The 1960's was also shortly after House Resolution Act of 1954, more commonly referred to as the Indian Termination Act, was passed which was an effort to end the sovereign identity of federally recognized Tribes that were deemed to be ready for full immersion into the dominant society (Walch 1983). This ultimately terminated the identity of approximately 110 Tribes and Bands leaving them with a sense of identity diaspora and culture shock.

Concurrently Public Law 280 was introduced to give states certain jurisdictional authority over Tribal matters and was passed in 1953 which further solidified the stripping of cultural identity as well as imposed regulation by granting states jurisdiction of Native bodies and lands. Prior to Public Law 280, states held no jurisdiction whatsoever over federal Tribes. This was based on the Chief Justice Marshall trilogy of 1823-1832 that served a critical role in defining Tribes as

“domestic, dependent nations” as well as barring states from imposing state law over Tribal lands (Bordewich 1996). This changed with the passage of Public Law 280 when jurisdiction could be transferred from federal to state jurisdiction. The primary purpose of these governmental acts was to further assimilate Native communities into the dominant culture based on their standards. Additionally, this dominance is reliant on positioning itself as dominant of all others in society and acquiring control over land.

Comaroff and Comaroff describe the necessity of a dominating culture to push “others” to conform to their standards of identity:

Euro-nationhood is “...always compromised by the presence of ‘others’ within, others whose primordial identities have been taken to threaten civic unity-and have had, therefore, to be confined to the ‘private’ interiors of home, congregation, association, community. Still, the idyll of a citizenry founded on sameness has been willfully sustained, at times, by violent means”. (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009, p. 46)

Being “othered” has been a way to justify many atrocious acts of violence and coercion throughout history. Native people were the “others” in this case and the nationhood was indeed Euro-centric. Andrea Smith (2005) points out that this “othering” is necessary for the capitalistic society the United States is built upon. Smith goes on to argue that the continued genocide is more about material goods than anything else. Oppression of Indigenous people is carried on because the lands occupied are desired as a commodity. As the above passage by Comaroff and

Comaroff explains, one way to deal with the threat of the “other” is to create an ideal nation based on homogeneity.

This attempt to absorb Indigenous people into the dominant society is reflected in government policy towards Indigenous people. Through the Indian Reorganization Act, federally recognized Tribes created their own government structures and laws. The majority of these Tribal government systems ran under the same democratic process as the United States. After the Termination Act, the need to reorganize into a solidified body to create change resulted in the creation of the American Indian Movement. In order to fully understand not only the structure of AIM, but also the implications their decisions and actions have on current generations, we must dig deeper with intentional approaches that challenge the ways in which our stories have been historicized.

### ***Incorporating an Indigenous Lens***

This thesis is informed by very specific Indigenous methodological approaches. Understanding that research is its own type of ceremony is central to my research (Wilson 2009). I take ceremony very seriously. Each component of ceremony has purpose and approaching my research with this in mind has helped me understand the impact this work has on not only how we as Native people view our histories, but how others view our voices in reclaiming our histories. Although the word research holds a particular meaning in the academy, Shawn Wilson (2009) shows us it also holds the potential to lead us on a type of ceremony, which my thesis is as an example of. By reclaiming our histories we begin a healing ceremony that

serves to heal from the trauma that has faced generations of Native communities at the hands of the colonizers.

While we can use research as ceremony, we must also know what to do with what is found in order for it to truly serve as healing. Aurora Levins Morales offers medicinal histories a process to use when revisiting our histories. Part of this process is learning to ask questions of what we find. While researching, I often asked myself what purpose would discussing what I found serve. Would it help us reimagine our communities, or would it serve to play a role in the further oppression of our communities? Understanding the healing that comes from our histories gives a less historicized view of them and instead gives us the ability to build a connection to them that helps us understand who we are. When applied to the story of AIM and Anna Mae, we can ask ourselves how we can break free of the learned behaviors from the colonizers that we incorporated into our communities.

Dian Million (2013) also offers an approach to healing from historic trauma from a decolonial lens. Knowing how healing is defined in Indigenous communities is paramount to this approach. As Million (2013) explains, “The term *healing* is often associated in a trauma economy as the afterward, as the culmination or satisfactory resolution of illness or, for the Indigenous, a promised safety and revitalization from prior colonial violence” (p. 8). Incorporating this approach and acknowledging that colonization has impacted Indigenous communities in ways other communities have not been is important to recognize. If I used a historical lens that is informed by a colonial approach, this thesis would fail to hold the healing aspect that it displays. We cannot tell our stories in the same historicized way they have been told and expect our

communities to fully understand how these histories impact them today. We must use our own lens that is based on who we are as Indigenous people.

Indigenous work that has focused on creating our own narratives and approaches to research is a basis for my theoretical groundwork. There is healing that comes from this type of research and the ways in which these histories will be interpreted as well as approached will be one that is based on Indigenous thought and philosophy. As explained, in order to honor the lives and experiences that are researched in way that does not rely on the same histories that have oppressed them, Indigenous feminist methodologies as well as decolonial methodologies are used. Shawn Wilson explains how Indigenous methodology is multifaceted through connections related to our way of being:

“Every individual thing you see is just a huge knot – a point where thousands and millions of relationships come together. These relationships come to you from the past, from the present, and from your future. This is what surrounds us, and what forms us, our world, our cosmos, and our reality. We could not *be* without *being in relationship* with everything that surrounds us and is within us. Our reality, our ontology is the relationships.” (Wilson 2009, p. 76)

Each piece researched for this thesis becomes part of an interconnected fabric much like Wilson describes. My words are the central core that ties them together to tell the story of how oppression from within can look and, by extension, how that day in 1975 touches our lives today. The story is the medicine. As Aurora Levins Morales (1999) describes it, “Medicinal history must find ways to show the continual exercise

of choice by people who appear powerless” (p. 32). It is about showing us as more than powerless and as a people capable of healing the traumas that were inflicted upon us.

Part of the dialogue about what happened must look at the ways in which spaces are occupied. By being a part of the American Indian Movement, the perception can be made that this was a safe circle to belong to. However, it can be argued that this sense of safety is based on assumptions. Louis Esme Cruz (2011) points out that the notion of “safe spaces” becomes a process of asserting power and privilege that in turn creates a hostile space instead in his article “Medicine Bundle of Contradictions”. As Cruz (2011) explains, “‘safety’ is a value worth looking at. Being a ‘safe place’ implies that harm will not happen while people are sharing that space” (p. 53). AIM can be viewed as an avenue in which a “safe space” was created to resist a society that systematically oppresses Indigenous people. Even with the best intentions, there was still hostility felt and power used in a manner that oppressed some within the circle of AIM. Andrea Smith (2013) challenges us to look beyond the notion of “safe spaces” because “The problem with safe space is the presumption that a safe space is even possible” (np). This presumption can leave individuals in very dangerous, sometimes lethal, situations as can be seen with Anna Mae.

Although the time period being discussed happened over forty years ago, the ripple effects of what happened were and are significant. During the 1960s Indigenous populations of the Americas were still suffering the effects of removal, boarding schools, and termination. The American Indian Movement was an avenue to gain religious freedom to practice our ceremonies again, gain jurisdiction over our

children, and regain a sense of sovereignty. Wilson (2009) describes the Indigenous research paradigm as a circle in which “Its entities are inseparable and blend from one into the next. The whole paradigm is greater than the sums of its parts” (p. 70). The journey that began with this thesis is part of a larger story about healing. It is a necessary part of the discussion that must happen to help a new ceremony begin in which we look not only at where we came from and where we are, but also the ways in which it is all connected. As Dion Million (2013) explains, “Trauma and healing is a spiral narrative from personal fragmentation to national organization” (p. 150). The healing comes from facing the pain that was systematically inflicted upon us and acknowledging our part in it so we as Indigenous people can move forward from it.

To further understand the implications of the ways in which government policy affected Tribal communities in a way that was met with radical resistance, specific methods were used. The primary methods for my work centers on archival and theoretical research. Archival research includes newspaper articles, historical writings, biographies, court and other legal documents, and Indigenous writings. The theoretical framework that informs my research is based on historic trauma and internalized oppression. The connection to land and body as well as the intentional use of power to disrupt Indigenous ways of life will also be used. In order to show how the continued internal conflicts and self-perpetuated oppression fuels the heteropatriarchal system of power, the concept of complacency comes into play. Each of these theories is necessary to create a solid framework that supports the research this thesis is built upon. Without them, part of the story will be missing. All work together and build upon each other in the continued oppression of our communities. If

they are not examined in each of the following chapters, we will not fully tell the healing story that needs to be told.

### *Positioning the Chapters*

The following chapters analyze Anna Mae Pictou Aquash's murder as well as how it is situated in the narrative about gendered violence within the American Indian Movement. Perceived gendered roles expressed within the Movement are discussed as well as their contribution to upholding a heteropatriarchal model of control. The ways in which internalized oppression further supported gendered violence is also explored and developed to help us better understand how these systems worked together to lead to her untimely death. The remaining chapters outlined below give further context to the necessity of this thesis for our communities in understanding how reexamining our histories can lead to healing.

Chapter Two examines the leadership roles of the American Indian Movement during the 1960s-1970s, the time period Anna Mae was involved with AIM. The purpose of this chapter is not to belittle the leadership or the significant contributions that AIM made towards societal change. Rather, this chapter focuses on the structure of the AIM leadership and its replication of the system of power it sought to resist. Critical race theorist Homi Bhabha (2002) calls this cycle mimicry and we can use this model to illustrate how it keeps power structures in place. Although unlikely intentional, by mimicking a structure that oppressed Indigenous people, this same oppression was seen within the AIM leadership and, in turn, continue to oppress our communities.

Chapter Three specifically discusses Anna Mae's early life and her involvement in the American Indian Movement. This chapter shows us how the treatment of Indigenous bodies is directly related to land acquisition in a way that places them beneath heterosexual, white men. The ways in which this violence became a learned behavior in Native communities is also discussed. The foundation that was laid in chapter two will be actualized through Anna Mae's murder in this chapter. By examining Anna Mae's life and death, we see how fundamental her murder was in upholding a heteropatriarchal model of power and control as well as the implications this has on our communities today.

The final chapter ties all of this together and addresses the study questions that were earlier posed: how does this all exemplify ways in which Indigenous women are continued to be oppressed? Equally important, how did this internalized and horizontal oppression impact the identity of Native people today? As we examine these questions, we begin to find answers and see a path towards healing that we can build upon within our communities. As stated in the beginning of this chapter, this is a starting point to a longer process we must take part in to fully understand the impact of Anna Mae's murder that was tied to her involvement in AIM on our lives as Indigenous people today.

I introduce these ideas with the intent of further study and in a manner that not only respects her legacy, but also respects the traumatic space from which Native communities were recovering from and continue to recover from. I also recognize that this thesis is much bigger than me as an individual as well. As Dian Million explains:

...I acknowledge the space of telling I undertake from my position as an Indigenous academic writer to be no less complex than one in the community; both are bound up by a necessary politic of speech we have established. I cannot claim mine as a community voice, while I also acknowledge that I have a responsibility to more than my own interest. (Million 2013, p. 25)

These pages and my words are part of a larger discourse about Indigenous healing. They are a beginning of my journey in the academy that is also an extension of my family and my ancestors. The story of Indigenous women, and Anna Mae, began before me and will continue on after me, yet I am connected as a part of the story that will remain a part of our communities and society.

Revisiting Anna Mae's story and the American Indian Movement leadership of this time is part of the healing. It is all connected. As Shawn Wilson (2009) puts it, "...relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality" (p. 6). These relationships cannot be separated from each other and understanding them is embedded in the communal healing that needs to happen. By looking towards our history and revisiting it with a different lens than we have been taught to use, we have an opportunity pull it all together not only in resistance to the dominant narrative, but also in a way that is relevant for our communities. Using this approach allows up to recognize the ways heteropatriarchy became embedded in our communities and unravel the damage it has done to our identities as Native people. This concept follows Aurora Levins Morale's (1999) words: "If the purpose of medicinal history is to transform the way we see ourselves historically, to change our sense of what's

possible, then making history available to those who need it most is not a separate process from the researching and interpreting” (p. 41). With this thesis, the research is the ceremony and the words are part of the medicine.

## **Chapter II: Mimicking Heteropatriarchy in the American Indian Movement**

### ***Introducing Power Structures***

Growing up in a small, mostly isolated Native community allowed me to learn how a community can function in a manner that maintains a positive environment as well as gives everyone a sense of place and contribution. Many of the adults I grew up around were active in the collective effort of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and had retained the sense of community that came from this involvement. This is not to say it was a utopian setting, but rather to illustrate the ways in which Indigenous community could be expressed. It was quite apparent, however, that there was structure in place that ensured decisions were made and people in the community filled certain roles. I did not know where this structure came from nor did I question my place in it. As I grew older, I did begin to wonder how these structures were developed and who made the decisions. The community I grew up was not unlike many other communities in the ways in which a hierarchal power plays out. Additionally, it was certainly influenced by the ways in which power was expressed in AIM. Looking deeper into how this power structure in AIM was developed helps to better understand the ways in which Native communities function and interact with each other.

In order for a system of power to retain its position of dominance and control, it must position itself as superior and as an ideal. One way for this to happen is through establishing a method of being the desired entity. This position is strengthened when others strive to become part of this system and in an effort to reach this place, mimic those who are in the position of control. An example of this

process can be seen through the actions of the AIM during the 1960s-1970s. Without a leadership system that exists outside of the dominant narrative, it is hard to not repeat some of the same oppressive characteristics that come along with it. This dominance is what kept the system in place as well as the behaviors that kept others in a subordinate role. Maracle discusses how the AIM leadership was, in some ways, self-appointed and became corrupt:

In 1973, at the juncture of the lowest ebb in the movement, the Wounded Knee siege broke out. The American Indian Movement was propelled to the fore of the siege by a biased and sensationalist press. The most vocal and articulate males, those who conducted themselves the most like arrogant white men, were interviewed and reported on over and over again. Touted as leaders, these men overshadowed the issue. The real goals of the occupation were lost in the shuffle. The leadership clique entrenched itself. These leaders began to hire themselves out for speaking tours, initially to raise money for the Wounded Knee trials. Later they began to live off the movement rather than for it. (Maracle 1996, p. 98)

This statement may be considered bold by some but really gets to the heart of the matter; the leadership of the American Indian Movement began to mimic the same type of oppressive system that can be seen with the United States government. Rather than be a source of liberation, it became a source of contention within the movement. Additionally, this behavior further supported a system of power and control that they strove to resist.

This chapter will discuss the ways in which mimicry further maintained the position of power held by the colonizers by specifically looking at tribal government structures that resulted from the Indian Reorganization Act. By revisiting AIM through an analysis of these structures, we will begin to see how a heteropatriarchal model of control was adopted by AIM as well as the repercussions of this outcome. However, before we can focus in on this time period, it is important to see how Tribal communities had already begun to mimic the dominant group.

### ***Mimicry, Government Policy, & Tribal Governments***

In critical race theory, the process of replicating dominant power structures is known as mimicry. Homi Bhabha (2002) states, "...colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (p. 114). By creating tribal government structures that mimic the United States government structures, yet within the authority to determine what these structures will in fact look like, there will be recognizable similarities. However, there will also be distinct differences because each tribe will have their own method of self-governance that will keep them as the "other" in comparison with the authoritative power and control of the United States government. Although a sense of autonomy is established, the power dynamic is not changed. The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) used tribal government systems as a tool of colonization to homogenize tribal communities with the dominant society. Because the standard model of control in dominant society is based upon heteropatriarchy, this is the structure that carried over into the tribal government systems. This does not mean that all tribal government systems are solely a tool of colonization. Rather, it is one example of the ways in

which government policy attempted to control the direction tribes were heading in regards to assimilation into dominant culture.

The recent history of Native America has not been a pleasant one. Numerous accounts of atrocities can be seen since the time of contact and saturate journals, government documents, religious records, tribal histories, and various other avenues. Many times these actions were based on governmental law and policy. At times there were acts of extreme violence and other times there were more systematic approaches that eroded the lands that Natives held. Looking back at the history, one of the governmental acts stands out for how it changed the ways in which tribal communities are shaped and how they operate. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was developed in response to the adverse conditions that existed on reservations as well as to the effects of parceling out of lands deemed to be surplus under the Dawes Allotment Act (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). One of the main points of the act was the recognition of tribal governments by the United States government and the promotion of the development of tribal constitutions. The thought was to establish governing systems amongst the tribes with constitutions and laws that reflected the dominant colonial systems in place. Tribal governments would have "...vested authority exclusively in an elected council and chairman" (Bordewich 1996, p. 72). This democratic process mirrored the governmental structure of the United States government and removed existing forms of government structures such as inherited positions from tribal communities. This was a process that had already been underway for some tribes as a result of colonization and was further solidified through the IRA.

While tribes have viewed themselves as sovereign nations that operate under tribal laws and structures, the formal recognition of tribal governments by the United States government is important for several reasons. One of these reasons is because it encouraged tribes to create government structures that may or may not have been a part of their existing cultures. Because the ways in which Chief Justice Marshall's supreme court decisions impacted tribal sovereignty, the United States government was viewed as superior to tribal government (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). In summary, the Marshall trilogy provided three main points that define tribal sovereignty. The first declared that states do not have jurisdiction on tribal matters. The second declared that tribes will always be nations yet dependent and not a foreign nation. The third declared that tribal lands could only be transferred directly through the United States government since tribes only occupy the lands that belong to the United States via the doctrine of discovery.<sup>1</sup> While this is a simplified version of a very complicated part of tribal history, it is important to understand the ways in which tribal lands are governed as well as the self-proclaimed authority the United States government has over tribal matters. The Marshall trilogy also describes the limitations that exist with tribal sovereignty. These limitations are due to the establishment of the reliance on the United States government as their dependent, or in other words, their wards.

Because the United States government holds such a dominant role in all matters related to Native America, power and control began to change in tribal communities to more closely align with the ways in which the dominant society

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<sup>1</sup> The Marshall Trilogy is quite complex yet very important in the ways in which the federal government interacts with federally recognized tribes. However, an in depth discussion does not fit within the scope of this project.

deemed as relevant and official. This is not to say that this way of living did not already exist. There are also plenty of other examples of the assimilation in to the dominant culture, such as boarding schools and military enlistment. While these experiences were sometimes voluntary and resulted in the betterment of their communities, it is important to remember that there were times this was a choice made out of a survival as well as force.

Even with the violent narrative the surrounds United States governmental relations with tribes, it became a choice, either voluntarily or under pressure, for the tribes to replicate a similar system of governance that was used to destroy Native lives and acquire Native lands through several waves of government policy. However, the shift to have government structures that mirrored the dominant government structure was monumental in the continued development of tribal communities as well as the ways in which they moved through society and upheld the current structures of power. In this context, that structure is a heteropatriarchal system of power and dominance. While not all tribes participated in the Indian Reorganization Act, many did. By choosing to do so, they created a shift in the ways in which tribal communities existed within the dominant society.

While it is hard to say if it was known during the process, in more recent times, it was not unknown to tribal communities that the IRA served as a colonial tool. In regards to the Wounded Knee siege in the 1970's, Mary Crow Dog refers to the ways it was used in South Dakota. Crow Dog states:

The trouble stated with Dicky Wilson, or rather it started long ago with the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. At that time a government

lawyer decided to do something for ‘Lo, the poor Indian,’ and wrote a constitution for all the tribes. Indians were to have their own little governments patterned after that of the Great White Father in Washington...Sometimes I think that the do-gooders do us more harm than the General Custer types. There were two things very wrong with this sudden gift of democracy. The most important was that the Reorganization Act destroyed the old, traditional form of Indian self-government. (Crow Dog & Erdoes 1990, p. 113)

This passage is an example of the very real, structural impact the IRA had on tribal communities. Crow Dog was among those who resisted this form of government through her involvement with the American Indian Movement. However, there were other factors that had also disrupted traditional community structures that created an event more embedded cycle of replication of oppressive behavior.

To further push tribal communities towards assimilation to a dominant societal system, another governmental act was established. This act is known as House Resolution Act of 1954, more commonly referred to as the Indian Termination Act. “The Eisenhower administration initiated a policy of ‘termination,’ initially discussed during the final years of the Truman administration, designed to eliminate the reservation and assimilate the Indians into the mainstream of the white social and economic systems” (Deloria & Lytle 1983, p. 102). By dismantling the reservation systems, tribal communities were forced to scatter across various urban and rural communities. Tribal identity in a communal sense was replaced with the

individualized sense of identity that existed in the dominant society. This displacement had two main effects on identity with the first being the further push to mimic the dominant society as a means of survival. The second is that tribal peoples became more conscientious of the structural ways in which they were being dominated. This was in part from accessing a higher education as a result of their displacement into cities through termination.

### ***The Formative Years of AIM***

It is important to understand how the Indian Reorganization Act and the Termination Act impacted tribal communities because they set a precedent for the cycle of mimicry that became engrained in the communities. Along with this came an oppressive force from those in power within the tribes, for those who retained their tribal communities and governmental systems. Following the heteropatriarchal systems that the United States operates under, as described in the previous section, brought this type of system into tribal communities as well. However, this did not mean that there was no opposition to the incorporation of a heteropatriarchal model into tribal communities. In fact, because of this type of behavior, as well as in resistance to the police brutality in urban settings against Native people (which still exists to this day), the American Indian Movement was formed in Minneapolis in 1968 (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014).

The establishment of the American Indian Movement stood out as an example of the reclamation of tribal roles and protection of communities in the urban setting that had increased when tribal people were displaced due to the Termination Act. In 1969, Alcatraz Island was occupied by the Indians of All Tribes for 19 months

(Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). The Indians of All Tribes cited the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868 as a basis to reclaim the lands no longer occupied as outlined via treaty rights. While both groups materialized in urban settings, the biggest difference between these two organizations is that the American Indian Movement followed the direction of the Black Panther Party as a form of foot patrol protection, and the Indians of All Tribes consisted primarily of college students and other tribal people in the San Francisco area as a movement to occupy and reclaim space (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014).

1968 and 1969 was a time of great change in the United States. Through the Civil Rights Movement, several political movements were formed as a way to resist the oppressive state of the country that was based on a sense of heteropatriarchal, white supremacy and the domination of all others. The American Indian Movement was a part of this political movement. While AIM was formed during the Civil Rights era, the ways in which it impacted identity was unique due to the governmental relationships with tribes. Deloria and Lytle (1983) argue that, “With the rise of Indian activism in the early 1970s, particularly the American Indian Movement (AIM), traditionalism became very popular and many people began to question the basis for their IRA constitutions and governments” (p. 159). Cultural revitalization became an important part of recognizing the ways in which tribal governments were part of the oppressive system. The process also became a way to relearn who we are as Native people and how our identities fit within the circle as well as the focus of the Movement.

While the Movement was centered on the reclaiming of Indigenous identity and lands, it did not go without its own set of issues such as various forms of

gendered violence and discrimination that interfered with the work being done. The sexism that existed within AIM was not something that was unknown. Mihesuah (2003) explains:

Women who participated in the volatile events of the 1970s in South Dakota may have had a common desire to eradicate problems facing Native peoples, but they had serious problems of their own: mixed-blood and identity confusions, reservation poverty, misogynist male AIM leaders, often lack of cultural knowledge, and the AIM men's continuing threats to make the women remain quiet about events that transpired during that time period. (Mihesuah 2003, p. xviii)

As this passage explains, it was known that there were power dynamics that placed the men in a dominant role, yet the environment of the time made it hard to change this. As a result, the oppression began to be internalized within the communities.

### ***The Emergence of Internalized Oppression within AIM***

Internalized racism refers to the ways in which an oppressed group begins to believe the stereotypes and oppression that the dominant group establishes. This form of racism creates not only a deep seeded sense of despair, it also creates the mentality that the group is deserving of the treatment and that there is no other way to be.

Internalized racism is a systematic tool of control that helps keep a dominant group in a position of power since the oppressive behavior is reinforced by the group being dominated. Because there is the belief that certain members the circle deserve a certain sense of power, it creates a sense of hierarchy. When these positions are maintained by those who become consumed with the power that comes with this

position, a cycle of oppression emerges. This cycle can create division within the group.

Internalized racism can be seen in resistance movements as well. In regards to the American Indian Movement, Lee Maracle states:

We all had the same beginning. The fork in the road was the juncture of conduct, that great cultural separator, rooted in the philosophical logic of two separate peoples. In our world today there are only two points of view: the view of the colonizer and the view of those who would effect liberation.

(Maracle 1996, p. 101)

The division Maracle speaks of is the oppressive ways that the leadership of AIM, much like the Black Panther Party, displayed by adopting the dominating characteristics of the colonizer in their leadership structure. Looking towards the dominant system of control as a model of how to be a leader that is based on a heteropatriarchal model is one of the ways that the AIM leadership exemplified mimicry. Rather than adhere to an ancestral leadership model, or one created on their own, they used the same model that was in place by those who oppressed them. Additionally, the male leaders benefited in many ways from their position of power that others did not. Many times the media played a major role in the reinforcement of their positionality as what a Native leader was.

The use of media to assert positionality was not a new tactic used by the AIM leadership. It could also be seen as a way to draw attention during the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) headquarters takeover in Washington D.C. Specifically, “The BIA takeover was less a revolution than a conference planner’s nightmare... Leaders

of AIM, especially, seized the moment and cast themselves in starring roles of what had started as a multiorganizational effort” (Smith & Warrior 1996, 158). By centering heterosexual men in a position of power in the media, the power dynamics within AIM reflected this same heteropatriarchal system that oppressed the very communities they sought to liberate. As a result, internal organizing began to occur.

The Women of All Red Nations (WARN) is an example of this:

Winona LaDuke, one of the founders of WARN, described the organization as growing out of a recognition that more women needed to be involved in the American Indian Movement. She added that WARN also sought to ‘bring back the traditional role of women in the Indian Nations and in the leadership and guidance of [the American Indian Movement]’. (Janda 2007, p. 178)

The work WARN began was much needed and resulted in helping bring awareness to issues Indigenous women faced such as forced sterilizations. They also helped challenge the heteropatriarchal approach AIM had adopted in terms of power and control. This adopted structure, however, did not become changed and further manifested into Native communities. It remains a reinforcement of the colonizer’s power.

The ways in which the American Indian Movement leadership mirrored the leadership of the dominant society served as a reflection of the power this dominant system held. Bhabha (2002) describes this type of dynamic as the menace of mimicry which is its ability to create a partial vision and gaze of otherness that is controlled by the colonial force. It creates a double vision that also compromises its own authority.

Those who are being mimicked do not hold the authority to restructure the gaze towards themselves. With AIM, they may have reflected the dominant heteropatriarchal model of control, but they did not have the same level of power as the colonial force to acquire the same level of control over the larger narrative. Their power and control was limited to their own communities.

Bhabha (2002) explains that the double gaze also works to impact identity. When those who are marginalized attempt to mimic those in power, they become under a form of surveillance in which the colonial power sees its own power reflected. It is a partial gaze. The othering that was created by the colonial force to obtain their power creates a structure where AIM strove to be like those in power, yet never quite got there, or as Bhabha (2002) describes it they are “almost the same but not quite” (p. 118). While the mimicry that the American Indian Movement leadership displayed was not necessarily intentional, it was present. This only further validated the colonial systems of control and dominance that were in place through their investment in recreating a similar structure within their resistance.

Because the power structure in this country is based on white supremacy, race becomes a foundation component of the “othering”. Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2015) describe the ways that the concept of race affects the power in this country. They tell us that “*race is a master category* –a fundamental concept that has profoundly shaped, and continues to shape, the history, policy, economic structure, and culture of the United States” (Omi & Winant 2015, p. 106). This does not, however, mean that our other identities do not play a part. Power is a process in which Omi and Winant describe as a transformational process, and one in which our

identities dictate our place in both the process and the structure of this power. They also challenge us to look beyond race as a master category and rethink how race intersects with these identities in a way that not only create categories of power, but also replicate them (Omi & Winant 2015). As we see with the American Indian Movement, gender and sexuality also influenced the ways in which this replication occurred with their systems of control and power.

### *The Necessity of Paradigm Shifts*

Omi and Winant (2015) argue that paradigm shifts and new social movements are the two changes that underline postwar racial politics. They argue that without a paradigm shift, the same oppressive climates will exist that support a racist society. New social movements serve as a vehicle to mobilize racial minorities and connect them in ways that lead to social change as well as transform the ways in which we construct the social meaning of race (Omi & Winant 2015). Without both paradigm shifts and new social movements occurring concurrently, creating systematic change is difficult. Because AIM did not shift the dominant paradigm of power and control, this left the same people in positions that upheld white supremacy which were the colonizers. Maintaining a static meaning of race, as well as race relations, risks continuing a narrative that was socially constructed in ways that keep whites at the top of the power structure and everyone else beneath them. AIM following this model, whether deliberate or not, served to reinforce this very power structure they strove to resist.

As Omi and Winant point out, paradigm shifts and new social movements work together to help deconstruct this structure. They examine the ways in which the

Civil Rights movements did not use these strategies simultaneously. Because AIM was part of the larger Civil Rights Movement, this concept is important to understand when reflecting back to the ways in which power and control became an instrument of oppression within the American Indian Movement. Their perspective on the end result of creating systematic change is most evident in the following passage:

All these tendencies were at best partial assaults on the U.S. racial system and on white supremacy. All failed to grasp the comprehensive manner by which race is structured into the U.S. social fabric. All *reduced* race: to interest group/cultural identity, class inequality, or nationality. Perhaps most importantly, all these currents lacked adequate conceptions of racial politics and the racial state. In their radical as much as in their moderate phases, anti-racist movements neglected the state's capacity for adaption under political pressure.

(Omi & Winant 2015, p.179)

This passage really looks at the ways in which race was addressed at a surface level that was based on equality rather than addressing the foundational components that held the power dynamics in place. The new social movement was definitely there, but the paradigm shift did not occur. Omi and Winant (2015) by no means sought to discredit the Civil Rights Movements. Rather, they sought to point out that creating social change is multifaceted and takes multiple angles to make it possible. Most importantly, they point out the fact that the power structures can remain in place through adaptation that give the appearance of change when they only shift in ways

that keep the same structures in place. In this context, AIM created change, but while doing so, also reinforced the dominant colonial power structures that were in place.

The division between the feminist movement and the American Indian Movement did not help address the power dynamics that were occurring in AIM either. The contention between the feminist movement and Indigenous women was apparent. As O'Sullivan explains,

Mary Crow Dog of the American Indian Movement (AIM) dismissed such organizations: 'women's lib was a white, middle-class thing.' Above all else, Indian women gave their political allegiance to their tribes. According to Crow Dog, as soon as the men in her tribe got 'their rights and their balls back,' she and other Indian women 'might start arguing with them about who should do the dishes.' (O'Sullivan 2007, p. 16)

However, this view point was counterproductive to dismantling the heteropatriarchal system AIM was operating under. Rather than focus on the sexism and heteronormativity that existed and challenge the dominant leadership structure that was being replicated as it occurred, the need for WARN arose. Further, this passage illustrates the ways in which women played a role in maintaining a prescribed definition of Indigenous masculinity that is based on hypermasculinity. As O'Sullivan (2007) points out, women did work alongside men in the efforts of AIM and in some cases assumed a leadership role. However, their contributions and voices were often overshadowed or erased from the coverage of AIM's efforts.

The heterosexual men in the forefront of AIM as represented in the media reinforced hypermasculinity and a heteropatriarchal model of control. As seen with the emergence of WARN to combat Indigenous women's issues, groups that focused on the needs of Two-Spirit people also developed. Scott Morgensen (2011) describes the ways in which land and settler colonialism are linked to the erasure of traditional Indigenous identity in modern times. To resist this, Indigenous queer political movements emerged. Morgensen explains:

Beginning in the 1970s, Native gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people met in new networks formed in the wake of migration to cities that supported both urban Native and radical gender/sexual politics.

While offering mutual support, they also asserted their belonging in Native and queer politics and in the histories of Native societies.

(Morgensen 2011, p. 78)

Homophobia and heteronormativity did not allow for inclusion of reclaiming queer identity within AIM, and racism within national LGBTQ movements did not allow for the reclaiming of Indigenous queer identities either. Morgensen (2011) states, "...Native GLBTQ people claiming historical traditions as their 'continuity' also organize to critique the effects of settler colonialism, in 'poverty, poor education, and unemployment,' and racism in queer communities, and homophobia in Native communities" (p. 79). The reclaiming of traditional queer identity and efforts to work on issues facing Two-Spirit identity branched out to their own political bodies, much like seen with the ways in which WARN branched out to reclaim Indigenous women's roles in leadership. Rather than work collectively, divisions began due to

the ways in which women and Two-Spirit efforts challenged of the heteropatriarchal system of power within the AIM leadership.

### ***A Beginning to an End to the Movement***

Omi and Winant's analysis holds relevant for the work the American Indian Movement did under the leadership of the time as it was part of the larger Civil Rights Movements. While there was much change that occurred in governmental policy such as the end of the termination era, educational shifts, The Indian Reorganization Act, the Indian Child Welfare Act, and the Indian Religious Freedom Act due to their collective efforts, there was not much change in the climate of Native communities. Omi and Winant (2015) point out how the use of code words are a way keep the power dynamics in place by giving people the illusion that change has occurred. Governmental policy and acts can give the appearance of change due to the ways in which their authoritative words represent a commitment of change and support. This does not mean that the changes would be enough to truly impact the communities in a way that creates meaningful, lasting change.

There were paradigm shifts in federal relationships with tribes as well as the reemergence of traditionalism resulted from the work AIM did, but there was not a shift in paradigm in heteropatriarchal systems of control within Native communities while the social movement was occurring. This can be viewed in part by the replication of power dynamics that the leadership of the American Indian Movement. Although there was much work being done and movement towards creating change, the moment was not fully realized and acted upon. Maracle (1996) states, "This was the fertile soil in which AIM could plant its seed, flourish and flower. The flower was

neither lovely nor sturdy. In fact, it was barren, unable to produce new seeds” (p. 106). Maintaining the existing dominant society’s power structures in place by not challenging them fully and replicating them was only part of the issue. The ways in which the leadership replicated the oppressive ideologies of the dominant society also played a major role in preventing the movement from creating a long lasting, systematic change. As Maracle describes it:

The American Indian Movement brought a strange sort of corruption and immorality to our militant youth. These activists became branded with the opportunist, hustle-media politics that characterized the movement of the ‘70s. Sexism, racism’s younger brother, was inherent in the character of the American Indian Movement. (Maracle 1996, p. 107)

The sexism that existed can be seen with the ways in which Anna Mae was treated by the AIM leadership once she became more vocal within the Movement as well as with her death that stemmed from her involvement. The result was stagnation on shifting the paradigm of heteropatriarchy within Native communities.

### ***Reinforcing Oppression through AIM’s Leadership Positions***

In addition to the scrutiny and violence Anna Mae faced, other examples show the sexism that existed within the Movement. The recognized and highlighted leadership of the American Indian Movement is comprised of all heterosexual men. They all display a hypermasculine image of what the Native warrior is that was reinforced through the media: militant, stoic, spiritual, among others. There is danger in this. It keeps the communities in a position that places the male voice at the

forefront. Sam McKegney (2014) discusses the process that masculinity develops in Indigenous communities in the following passage:

The “arbitrary process” of masculinity is, of course, complicated in contemporary Indigenous contexts by the layering of racialized, patriarchal gender systems over preexisting tribally specific cosmologies of gender – impositions conducted through colonial technologies like the residential and boarding school systems, legislative alterations to Indigenous structures of governance by the Indian Act in Canada and the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the U.S., and the forced removal of Indigenous communities from traditional hunting and fishing grounds to reserved and reservations.” (McKegney 2014, p. 2)

Not all communities were traditionally structured in a way that positioned males at the head of leadership. By not including others to the forefront, the image of a heteropatriarchal structure was reinforced. This mimics the same structure of the oppressor and does not allow necessary changes to happen.

Recorded histories of the American Indian Movement are dominated by straight men. Even the AIM history page on the official website of the AIM Grand Governing Council only lists men as recognized leaders: “At the core of the movement is Indian leadership under the direction of NeeGawNwayWeeDun, Clyde H. Bellecourt, and others” (Whittstock and Salinas n.d.). In mainstream descriptions, the Minnesota History Center’s Gale Family Library lists Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellcourt, and George Mitchell as the founders of AIM with Russell Means as a

prominent spokesperson whom emerged shortly after AIM was founded. (libguides.mnhs.org). Women are missing entirely. Popular imagery is also heavily representative of men, primarily the same men. Imagery is important to help reflect the story being told. People look towards imagery for a source of representation of themselves to determine where they fit into the story. The type of story told by the representation of who AIM is, especially with the leadership, tells us that straight Native men have the voice of power and authority in Native communities.

What this narrative says is that there is a part of the history and story missing. If there is only representation of men in the history, we are missing too much. The priorities, needs, and contributions of others need to be included. However, as previously mentioned by Maracle, the media was biased towards certain people in the Movement. There was no room for anyone else let alone their stories. It is because of her death that Anna Mae has become one of the most recognized women of the movement. There were several other women that helped create change for Native communities yet their stories are highly overshadowed by those of the men who were at the forefront of the movement. While this is connected to media representation, these men benefited from this representation greatly.

Women were certainly a part of the movement in multiple roles. Crow Dog (1990) discusses the roles women held during more combative situations as well as hostility that arose because of it. While reflecting on the Wounded Knee siege, she states:

As the siege went on our women became stronger...During a firefight there was one woman in particular who held off seven marshals while

some of the men got behind shelter...she was really good with a gun. I guess some of the men did not like her because of that. Especially, I think, those who scrambled to safety while she covered them. (Crow Dog 1990, p. 137)

Even with this example that illustrates a very specific moment of the combative side of AIM, the erasure of the woman's name is also present. The woman is described by Crow Dog (1990) as "Grey Fox's wife" (p. 137) and as a nameless woman even though her participation was significant to the protection of lives.

Crow Dog's example shows the ways in which women participated fully in all aspects of AIM. It also shows that when they did, it threatened the concept of masculinity and power that had been established. Innes and Anderson (2015) describe how masculinity has been embedded in Indigenous identity. They assert:

...that Indigenous men are more often viewed as victimizers, not as victims; as protectors rather than those who need protection; or as supporters, but no ones who need support. We see this as resulting from the hegemonic masculinity that is perpetuated through white supremacist patriarchy and conveyed by education, news, and entertainment institutions. The hegemonic nature of these perceptions leads them to become normalized and perpetuated through everyday interactions. These perceptions are so pervasive, it is next to impossible for Indigenous men not to be exposed to them. As a result of the colonization of their lands, minds, and bodies, many Indigenous

men not only come to accept these perceptions but also come to internalize them. (Innes and Anderson 2015, p. 9)

Men hold power and authority. They are the protectors, the warriors. Anything that threatened this positionality had the potential to impact the authority of their voice. The example of the actions of Grey Fox's wife challenged this masculinity and, as we seen, was met with resistance from the very men she helped protect.

Also left out of the written histories are the names of Two-Spirit activists that were involved with AIM. During the 1970s Maurice Kenny was publishing literature that paralleled with the efforts of AIM yet not in cohesion with them. His work strove to reclaim Indigenous Two-Spirit identity within tribal communities, although the term Two-Spirit was not introduced until a later time. Lisa Tatonetti (2014) describes the impact Kenny strove to make.

By highlighting the inclusion, acceptance, and importance of Two-Spirit people, who... 'had power with the people' and were 'good for the Nation,' Kenny points to the heterocentricism and homophobia that, in some cases had since elided or driven underground those traditions. Thus 'Wintke' disrupts heteronormative representations of Indigenous masculinity while still fulfilling the expected narrative of cultural recovery in American Indian renaissance-era literature by calling for a return to historically recognized tribal traditions.

(Tatonetti 2014, p. 35)

While AIM represented a return to many forms of traditionalism, the heteronormative approach they took in building a resistance movement based on cultural revitalization

did not support the return to Two-Spirit traditions during this time. This is reflected in the void of Two-Spirit voices and name in the recorded histories of AIM.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding the homophobia within AIM helps us understand the divides that existed and continue to exist within the communities. Sabine Lang (1998) points out that, “While the American Indian Movement has been instrumental in reestablishing Native Americans’ ethnic consciousness and pride, it has the reputation of not being gay-friendly itself...” (p. 119). This division manifested into the identities of Indigenous people. The Gay American Indian liberation organization resulted from the exclusion in Native communities during the political movements. Co-leader Barbara Cameron is quoted as saying, “I was really alienated. I felt trapped between my culture and the society. That’s the position of most gay Indians because it’s the position of Indians as a whole. I really align myself with Indians first and gay people second” (outhistory.org n.d.). Similarly to Kenny’s work, Cameron’s quote reflects the lack of cohesion in the work being done. Cameron’s co-leader Randy Burns also spoke to the division in Native communities stating:

We are really trying to break down stereotypes in both directions. In the Indian community, we are trying to realign ourselves with the trampled traditions of our people...In the gay community, we’re trying to break down the image of the Indian as a macho militant that gay white people have. (outhistory.org n.d.)

What also stands out in Burns’ quote is the work towards challenging the popular image of Native men of the time. This image as described earlier in this chapter was

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<sup>2</sup> This void was very apparent in the recorded histories researched through this project and will be returned to in future projects.

heavily formed by media representation. As also discussed, representation also creates a place within a community its members.

With the lack of representation of Native women and queer Natives, they are also left out of the histories as well. When many people think of the origins of the American Indian Movement the names Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt, and Russell Means come to mind as does the city of Minneapolis. The name that does not come to mind for many is Mary Jane Wilson. This is likely due to the lack of publicity about her and the limited information documented about her involvement with the American Indian Movement. Despite this, Wilson is cited as a cofounder of AIM alongside Dennis Banks (Langston 2006). Web, archival, and library searches result in minimal information about her prior to her death. Even after her death, there was little coverage about her involvement in AIM. Jason Elias is quoted in an article that surfaced after her death stating, “She wasn’t afraid of anyone, she would pull men aside and set them straight” (Roman Nose 2012, n.p.). Being a woman with a strong voice did not fit in with the male dominated leadership structure that was in place for the American Indian Movement.

Maracle (1996) was vocal in her criticism of the sexism that the AIM leadership displayed. However, she was not the only one who made this observation and discussed it. Donna Langston states:

The issue of sexism was raised at Wounded Knee amid criticism of male dominance and opportunism. One response was the founding of WARN shortly afterwards in 1974. While the media remained fascinated with the stereotype of male warriors, many of the male

leaders, such as Dennis Banks, acknowledged that women were the real warriors. John Trudell has reflected on the times, saying, "We got lost in our manhood." Mary Crow Dog/Brave Bird said that women were honored for having children and doing good beading. But she also recalls, "It is to AIM's everlasting credit that it tried to change men's attitudes toward women. In the movement we were all equal." Moreover, Indian women had an interesting way of calling men on sexism that was not open to white women. They argued that acting sexist was a sign of being assimilated. Acting sexist was a way of exhibiting ignorance of Indian traditions. (Langston 2006, np)

These observations touch on several points. Most notably it shows that there was sexism that occurred and was acknowledged by AIM members as they reflected back. However, the recognition of what was occurring did not happen at the time nor was it addressed. While the quote states that women called men out on their sexism, it does not change the fact that it was the men who rose to the forefront of the Movement and benefited from it a great deal. It may have been due to the biased media representation which also sent a message of what the definition of a true warrior was. This can be argued as a way that the dominant culture shaped the way the American Indian Movement leadership was structured. The media reinforced what was the expected behavior and representation while the leadership replicated what was shown in actuality. This example shows the power that mimicry has in shaping identity and systems of power and dominance.

### *Impacts of Replicating Heteropatriarchal Violence*

Replicating the heteropatriarchal system of dominance within AIM gave more value to those who fit the hypermasculine model that was established. The effects of this can still be seen in Native communities to this day. The mimicking of oppressive roles and systems as described in this chapter lead to oppressive behavior. Because the power dynamic did not change, there was no one to oppress other than themselves. Johanna Brand (1993) describes some of what Anna Mae had communicated prior to her murder. Anna Mae had expressed concern about the AIM membership beginning to inflict harm within the organization. As described by Brand, this sentiment was expressed after the siege at Wounded Knee which showed the American Indian Movement that the United States military and government was equipped to outlast the efforts of the Movement. The death of the FBI agents represented an end to the ways in which the Movement was able to organize and negotiate. With no one to band together against, oppression arose within.

This is not to say that the Movement replicating the behavior and models of control were done on purpose. However, this replication was difficult to avoid. This chapter asserts that colonial power and control were replicated and describes effects it had on AIM leadership. As discussed with the Indian Reorganization Act, Tribes were set up to replicate the United States government. The Termination Act was set up to encourage Native people to replicate the dominant society as a way to become a part of a self-proclaimed superior society. Precedent was set for what was acceptable models of control as well as who held the authority (men). Even while the American Indian Movement leadership recognized there was error in the decision to go this

route, they still mirrored the oppressive system they sought to resist. This is not to say that good did not come from their efforts as there were many changes that occurred because of them. Rather it is a way to acknowledge that there is more that can be done. It is also about looking back to find ways to heal from the pain our own communities have caused from within.

In the next chapter I will discuss Anna Mae's involvement in AIM as well as some of her personal history that led her to become involved more in depth. The ways in which gendered violence was actualized within AIM will also be discussed. The implications of the systems of power and control that were discussed in this chapter will be reflected in not only Anna Mae's murder, but also in the ways in which her death impacted others in Native communities.

### **Chapter III: Anna Mae, AIM, and a Story of Heteropatriarchal Violence**

#### ***Introducing the Power of Story***

Indigenous histories are saturated with painful stories from the time of contact with the colonizing force of Europeans up until today. Recounting these stories is not something that comes easily, nor is it something that many people like to talk about. What is important to remember when retelling our stories is that they are part of why we are the way we are. They have shaped us into who we are today and cannot be separated from our continued existence. The stories are woven together with tears and with strength. Any attempt to separate them destroys the beauty of who we are as a people and the display of strength we have shown. Indigenous people of these lands have shown the true meaning of resiliency. Even through the attempts to eliminate our very existence to the ways in which our struggles are continually silenced in these times, we remain.

The power of story is both very strong and very important to Native peoples. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) points out that we, as indigenous people, need to reposition ourselves in history. Smith states, “It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore spirit, to bring back a world fragmented and dying” (Smith 1999, p. 28). This perception is the basis from which I approach this chapter. The American Indian Movement and Anna Mae together hold a very multilayered part of our history. Their stories are interwoven with our existence and must be retold in order to help us learn

where we are as a people. They must be approached from a place of healing and a place of remembering.

In the previous chapter I introduced the ways in which internalized oppression manifested in the American Indian Movement. The repercussions of the ways in which this type of oppression was expressed coupled with strategic government policy resulted in an environment that began to erode the American Indian Movement from within. In this chapter I discuss ways in which gendered violence evolved in Native communities as well as introduce some of Anna Mae's background. Additionally, the climate of the American Indian Movement related to gender differences surrounding the time of her murder is examined further. Understanding the ways in which heteropatriarchy impacted the American Indian Movement will illustrate the significance of Anna Mae's murder on current generations.

### ***Land Acquisition and a Legacy of Oppression***

Part of the trauma indigenous women have faced has to do with land acquisition. In *Conquest*, Andrea Smith (2005) argues that there is a direct link to gendered violence against Native women and land acquisition. She states, "The connection between the colonization of Native people's bodies – particularly Native women's bodies – and Native lands is not simply metaphorical" (Smith 2005, p. 55). The ravaging of land and bodies of Indigenous people cannot be separated. It is an entangled process that was an attempt to completely colonize these lands. This process is exemplified through "The colonial/patriarchal mind that seeks to control the sexuality of women and indigenous peoples also seeks to control nature" (Smith 2005, p. 55). Once this control is established, it must be maintained. Whether it is at

the hands of colonizer or the colonized, the control of Native women's bodies further supports the colonial power not only over them, but also over the lands that are being occupied.

Smith explains the severity of this process through legal actions that justified the control of Native lands and bodies. The landmark case *Johnson v. McIntosh* set the tone for the ways in which Native lands are managed specifically by implying, "The title by conquest is acquired and maintained by force. The conqueror prescribes its limits" (Smith 2005, p. 56). This type of mentality requires a system of dominance that reinforces the power dynamics that established the control. The generations of federal legislation that promoted violence against Indigenous people to justify the land theft took a toll as evidenced by the drastic decline in Indigenous populations as well as Indigenous ways of being. Native women, as well as Two-Spirit individuals, took the brunt of this type of control.

As Debora Miranda (2013) points out in *Bad Indians*, this was a very strategic process to take away the identity of indigenous people and replace it with a heteropatriarchal model of control. In her description of the Spanish view of *Neofito* (newly converted to Catholicism), Miranda (2013) states, "Like very young children, Indians lived by instinct and desire, not knowing what was best for them. Priests regarded themselves *in loco parentis*, fatherly overseers with the responsibility to instruct and guide them in both temporal and spiritual matters" (p. 17). She describes the process in which the gendered roles of Native Californians were disrupted and forcibly replaced by those in which the conquistadores found suitable. Miranda

(2013) tells a story about that shows how violence became a learned behavior with the indigenous people, practiced in the homes, and passed down generationally:

Flogging. Whipping. Belt. Whatever you call it, this beating, this punishment, is as much a part of our inheritance, our legacy, our culture, as any bowl of acorn mush, any wild salmon fillet, *pilillis* fried and dipped in cinnamon and sugar, cactus fruit in a basket. More than anything else we brought with us of the missions, we carry the violence we were given along with baptism, confession, last rites. More than our black hair, brown eyes, various hues of brown skin flecked with black beauty marks, our short stubby finger, our wide feet and palms, our sweet voices and tendency to sing, to dance, to make music and tell stories. (Miranda 2013, p. 35)

Miranda's passage illustrates the depth of the integration of what was passed down generationally from the experiences with the Spanish Missionaries. The violence that was taught spilled over into Native communities and continues to be felt in the current generations. Through her accounts of the Spanish conquistadores and missionaries, it is clear that Indigenous women were becoming an object to be controlled and used. She includes an account of Fernando Librado about the ways in which the priests raped the women:

The priest would pass by the bed of the superior [maestro] and tap her on the shoulder, and she would commence singing. All the girls would join in...when the singing was going on, the priest would have time to

select the girl he wanted, carry out his desires...in this way the priest had sex with all of them. (Miranda 2013, p. 24)

This account shows not only the ways in which women's bodies were used and controlled by those in power, which in this case were priests, but also the ways in which they were used to assist the priests in these atrocities.

Additionally, Two-Spirit people were pushed to the margins and nearly erased from our histories. Miranda (2013) describes this through a story about the process the Spanish missionaries used:

In the missions, we were stripped bare, whipped, made to sweep the plaza for days, pointed at, cursed. 'In the south, we fed your kind to our dogs,' soldiers grinned, and stroked the heads of their mastiffs. Worst of all, threatened with beatings, our own husbands disowned us, children grew to fear us, and our sisters, oh, our sisters turned us away. Some of us fled into the mountains, died alone. Some found new homes in bands not yet captured by soldiers or starvation, tried to forget to violations. Some of us, unable to escape the missions, hid amongst the men, passed as *just* men, tried to whisper our knowledge to a few survivors, pass on the negotiations with death which life requires. (Miranda 2013, p. 31)

Their persecution from the colonizers as well as the rejection from their own communities led them to be hidden from their communities as well as from written histories. This rejection was influenced from fear of the colonizers as any deviation from their ways resulted in violence. While Miranda's descriptions focus on the

Spanish missionaries, it should not be assumed that these types of acts were limited to the regions in which the missionaries impacted.

It is from these histories and contemporary realities that Indigenous women have had to live through and heal from. Part of this healing includes resisting a system that was designed to attack every part of Native women's existence. Whether it is from the boarding schools, missions, rancherias, trading routes, or even their own communities, Indigenous women have had to persevere and find a way to survive a continual force of oppression. Among the resistance was Anna Mae Pictou Aquash, more commonly referred to in Native communities simply as Anna Mae. To fully understand her involvement in the American Indian Movement, as well as her untimely death that resulted from her involvement, it is important to understand where she came from and the complex systems of oppression she sought escape.

Indigenous communities did not rely solely upon a male dominated system of control, especially one that uses violence to exemplify masculinity. M. Annette Jamies (1992) argues that "There is no record of *any* American Indian society, even after the invasion, requiring a man to kill in war before he could marry. To the contrary, military activity – including being in a literal warrior – was never an exclusively male sphere of endeavor" (p. 316). In other words, Native communities relied on a balance rather than a system of conquest. The concept of proving oneself as a man through dominance and war was a learned behavior from the colonizers. Women were traditionally held in higher regard and many communities led a more peaceful lifestyle. By incorporating this type of learned behavior based on dominance and control, a shift occurred in the accepted culture of Native communities. It became

normalized and a part of what was considered traditional. This unfortunate shift is also discussed in Lee Maracle's writings. The ways in which this normalization occurs in Native communities can be contextualized in the following passage:

We are expected to not only accept this scorn in place of love, but to bear untold suffering at the hands of men. That there is violence in North American homes is taken for granted: 'Everyone knocks the wife around once in a while.' And does anyone want to admit that very often after a beating on a drunken Friday, a woman is expected to open up to further scorn by moaning and groaning happy sounds while the man who beat her helps himself to her body? (Maracle 1996, p. 23)

Not only has gendered violence become silenced by the dominant society it has been silenced in Native communities as well. It is something that isn't talked about in the open and has led to other disparities such as domestic violence, sexual violence, and high suicide rates.

The silence around gendered violence, especially rape, is prevalent in Native communities. Part of this silence has to do with the ways in which the legal system has played itself out in the communities (Deer 2015). When there is no one to go to for help due to fear of further violence and lack of prosecution, or when there are no consequences to this type of violence, those who experience it have to find ways to cope and get through it on their own. In *The Beginning and End of Rape*, Sarah Deer (2015) describes how sexual violence is not only a tool of colonization, but a cycle that replicates itself with very damaging generational effects by cycles of colonizers

conquering the bodies of women alongside the conquering of lands in a manner that becomes normalized. She explains:

I listened to women as they realized they represented the fifth generation in their family to be victims of sexual assault – a realization that slowly emerged in a woman’s eyes, casting a shadow across her face. *This happened to my grandma when she was my age. No one helped her. She was always sad and she never talked about it. Now I know the source of the sadness.* The eyes of these women then looked into the future, emptying out into a hollow vacancy as they considered the next generation, still girls or babies. *My niece. My baby sister. My daughter.* Native women experience the trauma of rape as an enduring violence that spans generations. (Deer 2015, p. xi)

This type of trauma does not start from nowhere; it has roots that become embedded in communities with intentional motives. Understanding where and why gendered violence has become so prevalent helps us begin to address the root causes. While much of this thesis focuses on gendered violence as experienced by a Native woman (Anna Mae), it is important to note that these types of violence do not occur in isolation with women, nor do the silences that surround them.

Veena Das (2008) explains the ways in which gendered violence is normalized and affects the realities of people who live them in “Gender, Violence, and Subjectivity.” Her article explains that the state and nation work together to support a system that places men in a dominant role. As Das points out, this concept is constructed as a part of nature as demonstrated in the following passage:

...The state of nature as that in which every man is in a state of war with every other man should be modified to read as that in which every father as the head of the family is in war against every other father. The members of each individual family "consent" not to the sovereign's but to the father's absolute rule... (Das 2008, p. 286)

Further, this system is used as a way to create a gendered role of men to express their masculinity through contemporary warfare, which has also been used as a tool to normalize rape and other forms of violence against women. These ways of defining what a warrior is as expressed through warfare were not necessarily part of Indigenous societies prior to colonization. It was also a learned and self-imposed definition that became imbedded in AIM.

While there were many people involved with the American Indian Movement of different genders, the men were placed in a position of power through influence of media and other outside forces, such as the FBI. Being viewed as a warrior in this sense meant that masculinity was expressed in a manner that was reflective of the colonial definition of what a warrior is. Although women may have played crucial roles in the endeavors of AIM, they held a position of submissiveness in a structural sense. Hypermasculine men that fit the mold of a warlike warrior were the ones who held the structural power. Anna Mae challenged this dynamic and suffered at the expense of her life.

Das (2008) states, "The stitching together of the state with the nation makes demands on men to exercise heroic virtues in war to protect the nation" (p. 286). By instilling an identity of warlike into the minds of men, actions involved in war, such

as rape and torture, are viewed as acceptable even if they would otherwise be condemned. Anna Mae's involvement with the American Indian Movement took place during the tail end of the Civil Rights movements. This time period was viewed by both Native communities and, partially, by the federal government as a time of war. As a result, violence against Native women was viewed as acceptable during this time. As Das (2008) points out, the ways in which men are viewed as heroes is rooted in acts of war that protect the nation. Because Anna Mae was labeled as an informant, her murder could be viewed as protecting AIM and therefore viewed, although wrongly, as justifiable in the eyes of those responsible.

Gendered violence is described by Qwo-Li Driskill (2004) as a colonizing tool in "Stolen from our Bodies." They state:

It is no accident that white masculinity is constructed the way it is in the United States, as European invasion of the Americas required masculinity that murders, rapes, and enslaves Native and African peoples. It is a masculinity that requires men to be soldiers and conquerors in every aspect of their lives. (Driskill 2004, p. 53)

If gender is not expressed in ways that support this dominant narrative of masculinity, one is not considered part of the narrative. Further, they are viewed as subordinate rather than dominant if they do not uphold these behaviors and mentalities.

Expressing what it means to be a Native man under these constructs was, and is, very damaging to Native communities. There is no room for women and Two-Spirit people to be in a position that is valued in the same manner as men that follow this

behavior. It was a well thought out form of control that the dominant, colonizing force brought with them.

This type of gendered violence was not unknown in the American Indian Movement, nor was the influence of dominant society in creating an atmosphere of hostility. In particular, the FBI was fully aware of the implications of targeting Anna Mae as a false informant. Coupled with her leadership within the women's circles of AIM, she threatened the form of masculinity that had become adopted by the American Indian Movement from dominant, white culture in the United States.

Dominant society has constructed a structure built upon:

The ways in which hegemonic masculinity has acted to subordinate Indigenous men encourages them to similarly assert power and control by subordinating Indigenous women and women of colour, as well as white women (where circumstances allow), other Indigenous men who are considered physically and intellectually weak, and those who do not express a heteronormative identity. The ideals of the current hegemonic masculinity are what all men must strive to achieve and uphold in order to be recipients of male privilege to its fullest extent. As a result, many Indigenous men abide by these ideals, even though doing so contributes to their own subordination as a group. (Innes & Anderson 2015, p. 11)

Following this model, a way to conquer Anna Mae was to rape and murder her so the threat is no longer there. As Joy Harjo expresses in a letter to the Indigenous Women for Justice group, "Bottom line Anna Mae was murdered because she was a strong

woman. She was made an example for the rest of us to keep quiet” (indigenouwomenforjustice.org n.d.). In the process, this type of masculinity is reinforced through exerting a dominating presence. What also occurs in the process is the continued oppression of the community they strove to protect.

Lee Maracle describes how this learned behavior directly impacted Native communities in *I Am Woman*:

If the State won't kill us

We will have to kill ourselves.

It is no longer good etiquette to head-hunt savages

We'll just have to do it ourselves.

It's not polite to violate "squaws"

We'll have to find

An Indian to oblige us.

It's poor form to starve an Indian

We will have to

Deprive our young.

Blinded by niceties and polite liberality

We can't see our enemy,

So, we'll just have to kill each other. (Maracle 1998, p. 11)

This impactful passage clearly shows how this behavior was strategically taught as another form of colonial control. When it no longer became socially acceptable and supported by laws to inflict acts of genocide upon indigenous communities, society was then constructed to lead these same communities to continue to oppress

themselves. This cycle of internalized oppression is fueled by the societal norms in which we live. Andrea Smith explains the type of systems that result from these cycles:

[Hetero]patriarchal society is a dysfunctional system based on domination and violence. Dysfunctional systems are often maintained through systematic denial, a failure or inability to see the reality of a situation. This denial need not be conscious, intentional, or malicious; it only needs to be pervasive to be effective. (Smith 2005, p. 17)

Native communities became engrained with this type of system. When a system is built through pain, fear, oppression, and control, it has a foundation that is dysfunctional. In turn, it continues to self-replicate the dysfunction. Although it created a strong, unified sense of Indigenous belonging and community, the American Indian Movement was not immune to internalized oppression. Being part of marginalized and oppressed communities that remain in a place of trauma meant that all of these experiences spilled over into AIM. This does not mean that good did not come from the work that AIM did during the 1960s-1970s. Rather it is an opportunity to acknowledge that there was and still is much healing that needs to happen in our communities. It is also an opportunity to acknowledge that this behavior was one that was learned and can be unlearned.

Anna Mae, along with many other Indigenous women, lived through heteropatriarchal violence first hand. It is a deep rooted, societal problem that has been festering for the past few hundred years. Andrea Smith (2005) describes how in order to fully address issues around sovereignty, issues around gendered violence,

particularly around violence against Native women, must be addressed. Otherwise, the same system of power will continue to be in place. Fortunately, more indigenous women have been recognized in rising up and actively resisting this heteropatriarchal system of control. Further, M. Annette Jaimes (1992) points out that Native women have always been resisting. They have been resisting colonization all along. In particular,

...women have always formed the backbone of indigenous nations on this continent...it is the women who have formed the very core of indigenous resistance to genocide and colonization since the first moment of conflict between Indians and invaders. In contemporary terms, this heritage has informed and guided generations of native women... (Jaimes 1992, p. 311)

However, this resistance did not come without consequences. The consequences were experienced in different ways depending on the community that they were from. In Anna Mae's case, her experiences with colonization and resistance began in Canada and continued to her time in the United States.

### ***Anna Mae's Experience with Colonization***

Anna Mae Aquash was born in Nova Scotia, Canada and lived much of her life on her Miq'mak Reserve (Brand 1993). While there is sometimes a romanticized view of what Native communities look like, it is important to note that many Native communities live in extreme poverty and under intense situations that stem from their isolation from the general public. Anna Mae and her siblings were not immune from the poverty and lifestyle that accompanied it. Johannah Brand (1993) described Anna Mae's mother as having addiction issues revolving around alcohol and gambling.

Much of her childhood was spent house hopping while staying with relatives or people her mother cleaned houses for in exchange for boarding.

In addition to experiencing extreme poverty, Brand (1993) points out that Anna Mae and her siblings experienced health disparities that nearly cost them their lives with life-threatening illnesses and/or injuries. Even when they lived in a home with their mother's partner, there were simply not enough resources to support their home and maintain proper medical care. To have to balance necessities is not something new to Native communities and leaves families facing very difficult situations. In some instances, there is not a choice on seeking care. In Anna Mae's situation, "There was only one car on the reserve and trips to the nearby towns were infrequent" (Brand 1993, p. 49). The expense of travel from remote locations can be the biggest barrier that prevents families from being able to access the care they need, especially in instances where there is not a working vehicle available to take them to the health care facility.

Facing health disparities was only part of the conditions that Anna Mae faced growing up. Anna Mae's experience with school was not one that encouraged her to complete her education. Racism in school settings are part of an institutionalized process to keep oppressed groups from moving forward in life with similar opportunities as those in control. Historically residential schools have been a big part of the destruction of self-worth amongst First Nations children. In 2015 Canadian officials launched a truth and reconciliation effort to address the trauma inflicted upon First Nations children through the residential schools. The effects of this colonial

effort were tremendous and long lasting. There are countless stories of the atrocities inflicted upon the children who attended these schools. As described in this passage:

Canadian governments and churches pursued a policy of ‘cultural genocide’ against the country’s aboriginal people throughout the 20th century, according to an investigation into a long-suppressed history that saw 150,000 Native, or First Nations, children forcibly removed from their families and incarcerated in residential schools rife with abuse. (Barber 2015, np)

The role education systems have in shaping the future of children cannot be taken lightly nor can the effects of trauma they faced. Residential schools were part of the systematic racism and systematic efforts to eradicate Indigenous presence and memory from the minds and hearts of the children that were taken from their communities to the schools.

As a comparison with experiences in the United States education system, we can look towards the Kennedy Special Subcommittee on Indian Education report of 1969. The report called for the reform of Indian education referring to its state as national tragedy (Deloria and Lytle 1983). Given the history of Indigenous children’s experiences with schools in Canada, it is not farfetched to use this as a comparison to the state of Indian education in Nova Scotia as well. The subcommittee report, however, falls short of addressing the reason behind the disparities that existed as described by Deloria and Lytle:

But even this report, wholly sympathetic to Indian aspirations, failed to provide a philosophical-historical framework in which people could

understand *why* Indian education was such a disaster and disgrace. Although emphasizing the cultural differences that exist between Indian people and other groups in American society, the report assumed without further critical reflection that, given the same opportunities of access to educational institutions as the white majority, Indian would adopt the same values and come to achieve the same results. Culture, in this context, was merely the trappings of costume, music, and dance and did not include fundamental differences in perspectives about the world. (Deloria and Lytle 1983, p. 240)

Lack of access was only part of the problem. Lack of acceptance and understanding of cultural differences is a barrier that Native students face in predominately white schools. Going from her reserve to this type of setting did not set Anna Mae up for academic success in this sense.

Brand (1993) discusses that as a result of the prejudices Anna Mae's family faced in school off the reserve, she just stopped going to school. The climate is described as one that:

Indian children were never particularly welcome in schools off the reserve...The schoolyard taunts and racial slurs against lazy drunken Indians were a shocking forewarning of the life awaiting them...Anna Mae's response to the conflicts was, increasingly silence and withdrawn. (Brand 1993, p. 52)

A hostile environment such as this does not support academic achievement nor does it set up future generations for communities that embrace one another. This same hostility followed her to high school. Brand (1993) points out “When in 1961 at the age of 16 she enrolled in Grade 9 at Milford High School, she was just one more of the faceless Micmac students who didn’t achieve academically and didn’t participate in extracurricular activities” (p. 53). Anna Mae lacked a place of belonging amongst her peers which, coupled with a turbulent home life, led her to drop out. While it is unclear whether or not there was an infrastructure in place to support First Nations students in schools outside the reserve, it is clear that they failed to address the systematic issues that drove Indigenous students out of the schools.

Limited opportunities on the reserve did not encourage her to stay either. Rather, Anna Mae sought out a means to support herself which led to joining the migrant workforce that traveled from Nova Scotia to New York and Massachusetts each year (Brand 1993). She became a potato picker where she met her first husband and started her life in the United States. Transitioning from the reserve in Canada to an urban setting caused a number of families to band together to form a community within the cities. Anna Mae witnessed the culture shock that occurred when many of her fellow Natives moved to the city and the role alcohol played in their coping with this transition. Along with alcohol abuse followed its effects of crime, domestic violence, death, incarceration, and homelessness. In response, Anna Mae helped create programs, such as the Boston Indian Council, to support the urban community. Her actions showed her love of her people and the care she held in ensuring they did not fall victim to the cycles of self-destruction.

While many Indigenous people face similar adversities, there is a sense of resiliency that has emerged. It may have been easy to be swallowed by the life of poverty and addiction given her circumstances, but Anna Mae sought a different life that was not restricted by the boundaries of her reserve. However, she did have a system to face that did not value the life of Indigenous people, particularly Indigenous women. The ripple effect of historic and generational trauma runs deep and Anna Mae was not invulnerable to this.

### *Anna Mae's Transition to Resistance and AIM*

Anna Mae was viewed as a warrior woman through her actions not only alongside the men in combat, but also her dedication to her communities. Johanna Brand (1993) describes the way Anna Mae was able to inspire the other women in the Movement to rise up stating, “She was able to reach the women and move them to fight against the hardships of reservation life in a way the male leaders of AIM were not able” (p. 122). As a result of her mobilization of the women, she faced something that the male leadership did not. She was quickly labeled as an informant for the FBI and interrogated at the AIM headquarters (Brand 1993). Prior to her work on the empowerment of the women, Anna Mae did not face these accusations. It can be argued that this was indeed because of her gender and/or because of her ability to bring unity and voice to the women of the Movement. Even with the male leadership experiencing contact with the FBI, they were not interrogated by the other members of the leadership in the ways in which Anna Mae was. If they were interrogated, their level of interrogation did not lead to substantiated fear for their lives which ended in murder.

What becomes another point to consider is that Anna Mae was being targeted by both the FBI and the American Indian Movement simultaneously. The first edition of Johanna Brand's book *The Life and Death of Anna Mae* was published in 1978, nearly three years after Anna Mae's murder. Brand states, "The suspicion remains that Anna Mae was killed by an AIM member, who was convinced she was an informer and murdered her in a desperate attempt to stem the flow of information to the FBI and protect the hunted leaders" (Brand 1993, p. 144). The reason this observation is so important is that it is one that AIM has contested since the word of her murder arose. While the FBI had used tactics of creating "snitch jackets" in both the American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party through their COINTELPRO program as a way to create suspicion and division within the movements, Dennis Banks was quoted as denying AIM was responsible for her death (Brand 1993). There was no denial in the fact that she was a suspected informant though, and the suspicion that it was an inside job did not go away.

While the American Indian Movement had made a priority of seeking justice for Anna Mae's family, this focus faded over time. It was not until the trials of John Graham and Arlo Looking Cloud in 2001 that the truth of her murder came to light. Anna Mae's murder was indeed an inside job (Donnelly 2006). The reason behind her murder has yet to be revealed, but it is important to note that her mobilization of women occurred not long before her death. She challenged the ways in which gender roles in AIM were being constructed that placed women in background. The message her murder sent is deep and one that exemplifies the power dynamics the men in the Movement held:

Among some AIM members, particularly the women who had been Anna Mae's friends, the death created a desire to get as far away from AIM as possible. Some felt it was dangerous to defend the dead woman, fearing that anyone who did so would be labeled an informant. Thus the already battered movement suffered another severe blow. According to Paula Gise, 'Anna Mae's death did not destroy AIM. What it did was show that AIM was dead.' (Brand 1993, p. 143)

The purpose of AIM was to liberate the people and reclaim culture as well as lands. Through the murder of Anna Mae, it was clear that the Movement was losing focus. Rather than focus on the intent and issues at hand, scrutiny of those within became a focus, likely due to the COINTELPRO tactics. The silencing of Anna Mae through murder further exemplified the control men held in the movement that was discussed in chapter two. Two men from within the American Indian Movement murdered her and evaded persecution as well as suspicion for over thirty years. The absence of attention towards violence against Indigenous women is one that is still felt today.

### ***Heteropatriarchy and Control in AIM***

Lee Maracle (1996) discusses the complexity of the leadership of the American Indian Movement in its absorption of a heteropatriarchal leadership style. This acquisition of power and control is not one that many tribal communities followed pre-contact. Maracle argues:

Leaders were not selected on the basis used by our ancestors:  
selflessness, wisdom, courage and responsiveness to the interests of the

people. Instead, verbosity, arrogance and arbitrariness became standards for selection. The media and white liberals became the judges. (Maracle 1996, p. 106)

Certain men of the American Indian Movement rose to the center stage reinforcing the media's depiction of what a warrior was. Even with my own experience growing up learning about AIM, the people who would come to mind when it was mentioned tended to be men. I knew women were involved, but did not necessarily know them as a symbol of what AIM was.

While the heterosexual men became the fixed image of the AIM warrior, there were others who were overlooked that also assumed the role of the warrior. Upon Anna Mae's entry to the occupation at Wounded Knee, she made her role and intentions of being there clear. "On her first night in South Dakota, [Dennis] Banks told her that newcomers were needed on kitchen duty. 'Mr. Banks,' she replied, 'I didn't come here to wash dishes. I came here to fight.'" (Konigsberg 2014, np). This statement was one that lasted with her throughout her time with the Movement. Anna Mae represented not only a warrior woman, but also the resistance to being defined by gender in what we are capable of. There is much strength that comes from this type of resistance and is not one that is always welcome.

Had Anna Mae's life not been ended, there may have been further strides to disrupt the sexism that existed within AIM. There were many women who went, and continue to go, unmentioned in the American Indian Movement history. Some of these same women helped reinforce the ways in which the men were positioned in leadership roles. Keeping in mind that misogyny was likely justified by looking for

ways to label it as traditional, an article with Margo Thunderbird describes this process well:

It was not lost on Aquash that while women made up roughly half of the movement's ranks, Banks, Means and a handful of men got all the attention. 'we were doing what Indian women did for thousands of years, which was stand behind the men and prop them up,' says Margo Thunderbird, who worked with Aquash in St. Paul and California, writing speeches for AIM's leaders. 'We wanted to present an image, and angry Indian man was better than angry Indian women.'

(Konigsberg 2014, np)

Imagery is a powerful tool. It has the ability to define our identities as well as the ways in which others perceive us. By creating and supporting the image of the modern 'strong, Indian, male warrior', the image of the modern 'quite, submissive, Indian woman' was also created and reinforced. These images became the ways in which the AIM structure was defined and as new members joined, these gendered roles were replicated and further supported.

Anna Mae's story is further complicated through her romantic involvement the year of her disappearance and murder with Dennis Banks, whom was in a common law marriage with Kamook Nichols (Brand 1996). Oftentimes sexuality is used a way to judge a person's worth as a leader. Because of this affair, it is not farfetched to assume that Anna Mae's leadership was questioned. Heterosexual men were the forefront of AIM. Women such as Anna Mae and others, as well as Two-Spirit members of AIM, did not have a place in the prescribed leadership as it was.

Women were not in control of their sexuality and men could use women as they saw fit. Yet women were judged by situations like this. As reflected by the void of queer voices in documented AIM history, queer AIM members were erased from the conversation altogether. Anna Mae's affair with Dennis Banks did come with heavy scrutiny by other women known as the Pie Patrol in AIM (Konigsberg 2014). It did not support the heteronormative behavior that they too participated in upholding by place the men in leadership in a place above them, and she was interrogated by some of the women of AIM as a result. Women were expected to fill certain roles and maintain a positions subordinate to the men, especially in the public eye. This behavior is one that can still be seen today in many Native communities.

It is important to note that after the focus of AIM on Anna Mae's murder faded, there was one person who took a huge risk to seek answers. That person was Kamook Nichols. Over the course of several years Nichols wore a wiretap to collaborate with the FBI in effort to find out who was responsible for Anna Mae's death (Konigsberg 2014). While the recordings played a significant role in the extradition and trials, they did not come without a cost. Nichols was quickly labeled as a traitor and a collaborator with the government, a view that had emerged much earlier but was reinforced through these actions (Konigsberg 2014). This dialogue became a larger debate than the fact that two AIM members had been responsible for her death. Nichols, a woman, was ostracized from the communities while defense committees were set up to fight the extradition of John Graham. This in itself shows the sexism that exists as a continuation of what was occurring during the time of Anna Mae's murder.

While Anna Mae had an affair with Banks while he was with Nichols, this did not end the friendship between the women. In an account of their time in jail together, Nichols is quoted as saying, “I was over it by now...I mean, why should I lose a friend because of Dennis? We never talked about him. We read a lot of magazines” (Koinsberg 2014, np). This affair, however, did not stop people from questioning her intentions for seeking justice for Anna Mae. The scrutiny around sexuality that was described earlier in this chapter was also applied to Nichols. In her case, this scrutiny was used a way to question her motives in working with investigators to learn the truth. As Nichols states, “But more than anything, I just wanted to get to the bottom of it, to find out what happened...So many people have tried so hard to make it go away” (Koinsberg, 2014, np). Among those who do not question her motives are Anna Mae’s family. Her daughter Denise Maloney-Pictou issued the following statement to acknowledge their understanding of how Nichols’ motives have been questioned as well as appreciation for others who have stood up for their mother:

Men in AIM who still claim to be leaders today accused our mother of being an informant, and their accusations and orders resulted in her murder. Now Ka-Mook Nichols is being castigated. Our family honors Ka-Mook's courage, strength and integrity. We thank Ka-Mook, and we thank the IWJ [Indigenous Women for Justice] for all that they have done for our mother. To all those who support us in our quest and who have stepped forward and asked the difficult questions -- Robert Branscombe, Robert Ecoffey, Paul DeMain, Bob Robideau, John Trudell, and Dino Butler -- and to all those who support our quest for

justice behind the scenes for our mother – a sister, friend and visionary

- we honor and thank you. (Maloney-Pictou nd, np)

By revisiting the ways in which sexuality was used as a tool of control and validity with not only Anna Mae, but also in more recent times, we can see a pattern that has been upheld. Women have certain expectations that they must live up to in regards to their relationship with men. If this is not followed, their integrity is questioned as seen through the examples given in this chapter.

### *Anna Mae's Legacy*

Anna Mae has long been viewed as a victim of violence. While it is true that she was abducted, raped, then dumped off a ledge after she was murdered, she brought to the dialogue things that Native communities have not been as open to talking about in the past. Homophobia and misogyny have been viewed as normal, and perhaps even more troubling, as traditional in Native communities once they were instilled by the colonizers. Discussing the ways in which our own communities have incorporated these oppressive behaviors as well as the ways in which our resistance movements reinforced them is important. Internalized oppression is not an easy topic to talk about, yet it must be talked about. In order to move into a space of healing, we must talk about it. Sarah Deer (2015) points out the way that Native communities are locked in a cycle of victimization. She states, “Native communities are too often portrayed as traumatized, broken, and dysfunctional – all stereotypes of inferiority that neglect to honor the resilience and survival of the people by focusing on the bad rather than the good” (Deer 2015, p. 10). I argue that there is room for both. Yes, we should talk about the trauma, the shattered spirits, and the dysfunction,

but we cannot stop there. We must recognize where we are as a people and why we are here. Otherwise it will be difficult to understand how to begin on a path towards healing our communities. The stories of resiliency are what keep us going and are evidence that we can heal.

Anna Mae's murder represents more than a loss of life. Anna Mae represents the reemergence of women warriors in Native communities. Her life challenged the heteropatriarchal patterns AIM was following. As Brand describes,

Anna Mae roused the other women's anger, indignation and fighting spirit. She was able to reach the women and move them to fight against the hardships of reservation life in a way the male leaders of AIM were not able to do. The women knew Anna Mae had experienced hardships similar to their own and that she now shared their life. (Brand 1993, p. 122)

While her death was an attempt to silence her, Anna Mae's spirit lives on in current generations. Even though she was not listed among those who formed the Women of All Red Nations (WARN), this group was formed shortly before her death and was followed by others in response to the same power structures Anna Mae resisted within AIM. Through this,

The AIM women's response to the sexism internalized by their male counterparts as part of the colonizing process was to resume the time-honored practice of establishing the political equivalent of traditional women's societies. WARN was the first, initiated in 1974. It was followed by [Barbara] McCloud's Northwest Indian Women's Circle

in 1981 and, more lately, the Indigenous Women's Network (IWN).

(Jamies 1992, p. 329)

Rather than be viewed as victims, the women resisted the dominant heteropatriarchal systems AIM was following not to create further division, but as Jamies (1992) quotes Phyllis Young, to "...work in tandem with them as partners in a common struggle for the liberation of our people and our land...instead of dividing away from the men, what we are doing is building strength and unity in the traditional way" (p. 329). As it has been described throughout this chapter, Anna Mae also strove to resist the heteropatriarchal control and work more collectively with women being in a position of strength and resistance. Although it is easy to place Anna Mae in a place that positions her as a symbol, we must not lose sight of the fact that she was a living person, a mother, and a warrior. Her children live on as a living testimony to who she truly was. The people honor her because of the work she did for the people, a reminder of the power of community.

The following chapter will look deeper at ways in which Anna Mae's murder impacts Native communities today. I will bring in information from the previous chapters to describe how systems of dominance and control continue to reinforce oppressive behaviors within Native communities. It is all tied together in how our communities continue to self-replicate the cycles we seen with the ways in which Anna Mae was treated by AIM. Without understanding how these cycles work and what they mean, we cannot fully move forward to a place of lasting healing.

#### **Chapter IV: Conclusion: We Have to Understand Our History to Heal**

Indigenous people are at point in our histories to change the course of a cycle of internalized oppression. In the wake of mass disenrollments, government policy serving to pacify efforts for justice, statistics that most people cannot comprehend, and a world that is completely immersed in consumerism, there is also an awakening occurring. Languages are being spoken again, ceremonies are being revitalized, lands are being protected, and we are learning to reclaim who we truly are. We are at a moment that can begin to unravel the story the colonizers told us about who we are as Native people. My late uncle, John Trudell, spoke about getting past the believing, a word that holds the word 'lie' in the middle of it. As a child and young adult, I did not fully understand what he meant by this. While I am still on a path of learning, I now have a better understanding of what he meant. Part of how I understand his words can be applied to this thesis. To me, he meant that we must move past the uncertainty of believing and move towards being. It is about the memories that are passed down to us through our ancestral memories. He always spoke of how we are connected to both our descendants and our ancestors, that it is part of our DNA. Recognizing our place between the two in a way that passes the memories of who we are keeps us connected to both. Returning to being rather than believing will help us return to these memories. It is then that we can begin the healing that needs to happen in our communities. Looking at our histories and contemporary experiences with this in mind has allowed me reanalyze the impact they had on our communities.

Sarah Deer (2015) asks an important question in the conclusion of her book that can be applied to what happened to Anna Mae. She asks, "How can you help

someone navigate a broken system?” (Deer 2015, p. 158). Rather than approach our communities as broken, we must look at the systems that are not meant for us, systems that are broken. Asking ourselves the role our own resistance played in upholding this same system becomes equally important. Would life played itself out differently for Anna Mae if someone was there to help guide her through these broken systems? It is hard to say. However, we must continue to recognize that the way that Anna Mae was treated is a direct reflection to the ways in which these systems have treated our communities and lands. It is not us that are broken.

The impact of the American Indian Movement on current generations of Native communities is great. They shaped the ways in which we view ourselves as Native people and called upon the return to traditions to help us understand who we are. The Movement in general, as well as individuals in particular, are continued to be looked up to quite a bit. The behavior and way of doing things that occurred during the 1960s-1970s is also looked towards as the ideal of returning to a more traditional way of living. Since there was so much replication of the dominant culture in the leadership, this has implications on the process continuing on today. Following a heteropatriarchal model of power and control normalized this mindset in Native communities. When coupled with a return to culture and ceremony, it became embedded in the ways in which our communities are shaped. Misogyny and homophobia, as well as the normalization of the violence that often accompanies them, within our communities were among the repercussions of this process. Whether it is stemmed from the leadership itself, or the murder of Anna Mae, we can look at the ways the cycle of oppression from within continues on. By realizing this and

stepping back to see how to break the cycle of mimicking the same dominating systems of control that center around a modernized view of Native masculinity, we can move forward in a way of healing. It is from this place of healing that we can approach our stories and histories. Returning to this process of medicinal histories is how I approach this chapter.

Aurora Levins Morales (1999) describes medicinal histories as a process of reexamining our histories in a way in which our connections to them can be used to rewrite the narrative the colonizers have placed upon us. Morales (1999) describes how colonizers reshape the reality of indigenous peoples stating, “One of the first things a colonizing power or regime does is to attack the sense of history of those they wish to dominate, by attempting to take over and control their relationships to their own past” (p. 22). By stripping all that we know of ourselves, our connection to our histories is disrupted. This type of violence leaves a void that must be filled, many times with what we are told about ourselves. In Native communities, statistical rates are the highest in the nation in regards to suicide, poverty, domestic violence, sexual assault, police inflicted deaths, among others. We have been conditioned to tell ourselves this is what and who we are. Medicinal histories strives to rewrite the story we tell of ourselves in a way that not only tells our history with our own voices, but also uses this process as a way to heal.

Using medicinal histories alongside decolonial methodologies has been a basis upon which this thesis was built. By employing this approach rather than using a colonial based, historical lens, I was able to weave our modern histories into contemporary experiences to show their interconnectedness as well as the ways in

which they can be used to move towards a place of healing in our communities.

Morales helps us understand this process in the following passage:

Taking full responsibility for the legacy of relationships that our ancestors have left us is empowering and radical. Guilt and denial and the urgently defensive pull to avoid blame require immense amounts of energy and are profoundly immobilizing. Giving them up can be a great relief. Deciding that we are in fact accountable frees us to act. Acknowledging our ancestors' participation in the oppression of others (and this is ultimately true of everyone if you really dig) and deciding to balance the accounts on their behalf leads to greater integrity and less shame, less self-righteousness and more righteousness, humility and compassion and a sense of proportion. (Morales 1999, p. 76)

By facing our histories, both far removed and recent, in a manner that does not discount their involvement with the ways in which our communities are oppressed can lead towards a place where we are liberated from fulfilling a legacy of subjugation. As Morales points out, looking at the place from which our ancestors were acting upon helps us understand why certain things happened rather than live in imbalance.

In relation to the American Indian Movement, much has been written about its development and work during the 1960s-1970s, yet it has largely been written in a lens of a historical approach that has been influenced by settler colonialism. Chapter two of this thesis examines the role outside influence has in the story of AIM that has been told as well as the ways in which settler colonial presence influenced the way

AIM was structured. It is through this structure we could see how internalized oppression resulted from replicating the heteropatriarchal systems of oppression they endeavored to resist. While AIM changed the course of governmental relations with tribes, they did not change the way in which power and control was expressed in Native communities. Rather, they reinforced the oppressive power structures that were in place. Although there were models of leading, such as matriarchal societies and clan structures among others, that could have been reclaimed, AIM followed a heteropatriarchal model of power and control much like that of the colonizers. By doing so, they helped solidify the ways in which the colonial power strove to discredit and dismantle Indigenous power structures that existed prior to colonization.<sup>3</sup>

AIM brought much cultural awakening in Native communities as well, yet only brought part of this history with them. Homophobia and misogyny prevented the reclamation of certain roles in the communities that may have helped reshape entire communities. While we cannot say how Native communities would be had this shift occurred, we can look at ways in which incorporating a more inclusive approach can build upon the legacy AIM started. We live in spaces which continue to be occupied, and as a consequence, our concepts of who we are continue to be occupied. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1998) reminds us that the concept of postcolonialism is based upon the notion that we are beyond colonial times. However, if this were truly the case, there would not be the need to justify our continued existence as Indigenous people. Smith writes:

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<sup>3</sup> This is an important issue that I cannot address in the context of this project.

To acquiesce is to lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us. To resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve what we were and remake ourselves. The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices – all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope. (Smith 1998, p. 4)

Rather than leave pieces of our communities in the margins, we can collectively reclaim our spaces and identities. In order to do this, we must build communities that embrace each other for who we are. This cannot happen until we address the ways in which colonization redefined our identities in ways that we now consider a part of who we truly are. Remembering that much of this is based on a colonial view of male/female binaries can help us reclaim spaces that were once occupied that exist beyond these adopted roles. Remembering that we all have a place within our communities will help create spaces for these roles to return to. We can continue the work AIM started in revitalizing our cultural memories. However, in order to begin this work, we must look to our past to move forward towards collective healing.

The ways in which internalized oppression played itself out within AIM was actualized by looking more closely at Anna Mae Aquash and her murder in chapter three. This chapter helps us see how deep rooted this learned behavior became. There was a clear message that was sent through Anna Mae's murder: Native women's voices continue to be silenced, even within our own communities. Additionally, we saw that heteropatriarchal power has become a normalized existence within Native communities to a point that those who challenge this dynamic do not have a place

within it. Anna Mae's story remains highly complex and this is just one part of it. Telling this piece of her story from a medicinal history stand offers an understanding of her death that will allow us to move forward in a way that seeks healing rather than a closed case.

A part of the healing that needs to take place is from the oppression we have faced from our own communities. Surviving a genocidal history that completely disrupted Indigenous ways of being left many scars in our communities. Some of these scars grew over parts of our identities as Native people leaving a void to be filled. Without a connection to these pieces of ourselves, influence from those in power was looked at for a source to fill this void. Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill discuss the process in which settler colonialism interferes with our state of being. They state:

...as settler nations sought to disappear Indigenous peoples' complex structures of government and kinship, the management of Indigenous peoples' gender roles and sexuality was also key in remaking Indigenous peoples into settler state citizens...The imposition of heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism does much to interrupt Indigenous nations' very 'sense of being a people', with serious material consequences for Indigenous nations' futures. (Arvin et al. 2013, p. 14-15)

This multilayered and violent infusion of colonial ideals into Indigenous communities had very real consequences. As Arvin, et al. point out, the goal was to replace Indigenous identity with that of the colonizer. The ways in which AIM maintained a

heteropatriarchal model of leadership and control served as a reinforcement of the colonial power. Knowing this, we must move forward in a manner that seeks to reclaim who we are. Breaking free of the colonizers definitions of who we are as a people can help us remember who we truly are. Reclaiming gender roles in ways that reject the heteronormative, patriarchal narratives can help us move closer to our traditional ways of living as well as traditions that may have been nearly lost. We must remember, and we must bring back to life the collective strength we have when our people are whole.

Morales (1998) tells us that part of medicinal histories is following a path that can raise questions that guide community towards looking for alternative outcomes. Researching AIM and Anna Mae has led me to several questions that serve more to guide communities to a place where they reimagine ways of being rather than actual answers. Specifically, had a paradigm shift occurred that challenged heteropatriarchal power rather than embrace it, where would our communities be now? Would they be in the same state they are now, or would the communities be more uplifted to change our entire courses of existence? Would we live in balance with more love for all members of our communities? This is hard to determine, but we can use this framework to imagine and actualize ways our communities can begin to heal from settler colonial violence while rewriting the histories of who we are. In this process we can bring new meaning to our existence. It is our time to do this now. AIM was many things and was not many things. They were an awakening of the spirit and an example of the power of collective community. They brought about changes in governmental policy that make it possible for many of the rights we have as Native

people today. Yet, they were also trying to find their way during a time period where our existence as Native people was being terminated in a political and literal sense. While they did what they could with what they had, they did not fully challenge the power dynamics that were oppressing them. Rather, they replicated it in the areas of the most influence which was the leadership. That being said, the work they did laid the foundation of who we are as Native people in current times. By revisiting this time period, we can begin a process to heal our communities.

While the time period in this thesis focused on the 1960s-1970s, we cannot overlook the impact Anna Mae's murder has on contemporary times. Much controversy resulted during the murder trials as well as the time period leading up to them. A division in the movement became very apparent to the public eye. In 1999 the first public statement was issued about AIM's involvement with Anna Mae's murder (Weller 1999). During this press conference, Russell Means speaks up about perception of what happened as well as the silence around it. Means is paraphrased in Weller's (1999) article as saying, "...it has been long suspected within AIM that its own members had killed Pictou-Aquash but no one wanted the information to get out because it would discredit the movement" (np). Using a medicinal histories approach allows us to look at this statement and ask how bringing this information to light would have in fact strengthened AIM by taking ownership of its own histories and learning from them. Rather, maintaining such silence around her murder maintained the oppressive structure that was adopted and implemented as well as shaped the entire course of the American Indian Movement. The ripple effect of this can be felt throughout Native communities.

The silence allowed Anna Mae's murder to remain a reminder of the repercussions of challenging the existing power structure. Further, the division it created within the leadership was apparent. Means is quoted as accusing Clyde and Vernon Bellecourt as responsible for the order of Anna Mae's murder, and the Bellecourts are in turn quoted as accusing Means of saying this to take attention away from his involvement in her murder (Weller 1999). This division between key leadership of the American Indian Movement created confusion amongst younger generations as well. Following Morale's approach of using questions to reimagine our communities is especially helpful with addressing this confusion. How can we, as Indigenous communities, look past complexity of what happened to Anna Mae when it is so connected to our lives now? In response to her murder Joy Harjo wrote a poem titled "For Anna Mae Pictou Aquash, Whose Spirit is Present Here and in the Dappled Stars (for we remember the story and must tell it again so we may all live)". In the poem, Harjo expresses:

I heard about it in Oklahoma, or New Mexico,  
how the wind howled and pulled everything down  
in a righteous anger.

(It was the women who told me) and we understood wordlessly  
the ripe meaning of your murder. (Harjo 1990, pg. 8)

If we do not accept what happened as part of our recent histories in a full sense, we can never really heal from it.

Shawn Wilson has shown us how using an Indigenous lens to research is infusing our traditions into them. Reading articles, watching videos, and listening to

speeches about Anna Mae's murder are all connected to a type of personal research. Keeping in mind the concept that Wilson introduces that research is truly ceremony, we can ask ourselves what we hope to gain by engaging with the historical and contemporary stories that arise. How do we approach this tragic piece of AIM's history in a way that does not erase it or continue to divide our communities? Wilson offers a reminder of what ceremony woven into this type of research can look like in the following passage:

The importance of the spiritual in ceremony as well as everyday life was stressed to me by one of my Elders. He always said that part of a ceremony that people see, like the sweat lodge, the communion or whatever, is only the period at the end of a long sentence. There is a lot of work, dedication and time spent in building up the relationships with the cosmos that allow the visible ceremony to happen. In our research ceremony, the sacred nature of not only our grand and noble topics and methodologies need to be upheld, but the seemingly mundane relationships that we hold with our everyday world. (Wilson 2008, p. 89-90)

Remembering that we are all connected to this story when we engage with it, and that research extends beyond academia, can help us continue to maintain a connection to our Indigenous ways of knowing while we interact with our histories. What we learn about ourselves and our communities through the everyday interactions we participate in reflects the ways in which research exists beyond academia. Much can be learned from each other as well as our stories that hold as much value as a published piece.

Applying this same approach in academia can help ethnic, feminist, and queer studies as we revisit AIM and this time period giving them a deeper meaning to the work being done. It will help others understand that we are our histories and that both our identities as well as our histories are more than books and theories. We live our theories and feel them deeply. Understanding that the past cannot be separated from the present and that we must heal our histories has the power to impact both academia and social movements to imagine beyond their present moments. It is all connected to the ways in which we work together collectively. There may have been a separation that was influenced by heteropatriarchy and settler colonialism that divides the work of Native, feminist, and queer movements, but we must remember that it was not always this way. Remembering our places in circles as sacred will help us move closer to the healing we so desperately need. It is a type of ceremony that is based on our ancestral memories, that our very being is scared. This is what will help keep our stories alive and present in understanding our identities and our communities inside and outside academia.

During an interview with Richie Richards (2015), Anna Mae's daughter Denise Pictou-Maloney discusses her mother's views of AIM's connection to community, as well as her own view of how AIM evolved. Pictou-Maloney is quoted in the article as stating, "My mother was a member of AIM. She loved what they represented. It was about the whole collective and their desire to bring changes to Indian Country, but they lost their way along the way" (Richards 2015, np). While it is not fair to lump the entirety of every person involved with AIM into the statement of losing their way based on the actions of some, we know that this can be said of

individuals, especially since we know that leadership has the power to shape communities. Pictou-Maloney's description of her mother's sentiments coupled with her own shows the connection of this piece of our contemporary histories in our current times. Additionally, in her poem dedicated to Anna Mae, Joy Harjo writes:

Anna Mae, everything changes and nothing changes.

You are the shimmering young woman

who found her voice,

when you warned to be silent, or have your body cut away from you

like an elegant weed.

You are the one whose spirit is present in the dappled stars. (Harjo

1990, pg. 7)

Viewing these words as interwoven fabrics of our communal and individual identities can allow us to realize the impact our histories have on our lives today. As Wilson suggests, it is how we maintain that ceremonial connection to these histories that will give them a relationship to them.

Understanding how research is a ceremony of itself that can help lead us to healing is what will separate us from the internalized oppression we continue to inflict upon each other. Following Morales' concept of medicinal histories will help us unravel this part of our learned and practiced behaviors that have become incorporated into who we are as Native people. This thesis and the research that was done for it truly showed me what is meant by using story to heal when approaching our histories in a ceremonial way. My words are not meant to solve the complexities of our continued existence and the multiple oppressions that we face as Indigenous

people. Rather, they are meant to help show how we can look back in a way that acknowledges the roles we have played, specifically the integration and maintaining of heteropatriarchy, in locking ourselves in these cycles of oppression. My words are offered as a form of ceremony to understand where these cycles came from and how they became embedded into our identities. They are not meant to discredit or disrespect the work the American Indian Movement did and the accomplishments they collectively made. Rather, they are to understand the complexity of our modern histories in a way that honors Anna Mae while helping us understand the healing that needs to take place, and that this healing cannot take place without taking ownership of all the complexities of our histories.

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