Becoming Warriors
The Practice of Deep and Meaningful Learning

Sandra J. Wolf

This chapter presents the ways in which the social practice of education in a public American Indian magnet school in a city on the edge of the Great Plains produced a surprisingly salient and robust identification of warriorship. The Warrior identity produced at Medicine Wheel School[1] served to provide American Indian children and adults at the research site with a design for living according to community and cultural values of respect, harmony, balance and cohesion. Utilizing critical ethnographic methods, this study produced a rich array of evidence of social and cultural practices of "struggling for peace" at the school. Evidence-based methods included the collection of fieldnotes and artifacts, gathering of reflections on lived experience in ethnographic interviews and reflexive narrative maintained in an ethnographer's journal. Qualitative analysis methods produced findings that described ways that cultural productions and situated learning influenced identification and agency at the school. Highlighting the work of three seventh graders through the process of becoming junior ethnographers as they researched a history project, this chapter traces the processes through which Buffalo, Skip and Alex Hawk began their work tentatively and with ambiguity through four clearly identifiable stages to emerge months later recognized by their community as History Warriors.

In early spring of 2001, I was given an opportunity to mentor a team of three seventh graders initiating work on their History Day project, a study of events at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973. The work with the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day team eventually became the central focus of my work in the middle school. I will discuss in this chapter the data collected during that work, and reflections about my experience with the History Day team.

Sophie, the middle school history teacher at a school I will call Medicine Wheel School, annually organizes work in preparation for National History Day, a co-curricular research project in which thousands of students in middle schools and high schools across the United States participate each year:

> National History Day is a year-long educational program that engages students in grades 6–12 in the process of discovery and interpretation of historical topics. Students produce dramatic performances, imaginative exhibits, multimedia documentaries and research papers based on research related to an annual theme. These projects are then evaluated at local, regional, state, and national competitions. (*National History Day*, 2000)

---

[1]The name of the school and all of the participants, except the author, in this study are pseudonyms chosen by the participants.

Cite as from J. Reyhner, W.S. Gilbert & L. Lockard (Eds.). (2011). *Honoring Our Heritage: Culturally Appropriate Approaches to Indigenous Education* (pp. 115-139). Flagstaff, AZ: Northern Arizona University.

Co-curricular means that National History Day participation is available to every school in the United States, but participation is not typically a state or local requirement for schools. In some schools, participation in National History Day is an option; at Medicine Wheel School, History Day had become part of the curriculum each year.

In February of 2001, Sophie asked me to mentor the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day team because the team was struggling to identify the requisite before the event, during the event and after the event sequence. I did not have particular expertise in the topic of Wounded Knee in 1973. I had collaborated with Sophie on other projects, and I was confident that I understood the instructional principles behind the History Day work. I looked forward to working with the seventh graders.

The initial goal of the three seventh graders, Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk was simply to complete a class assignment. They had not aspired to develop a project that would be competitive with other projects from schools throughout the state. In March of 2001, the Wounded Knee team advanced from the local competition to the regional History Day meet. Eventually, they would present their work at the state History Day competition. As the seventh graders and I explored various critical dimensions of events at Wounded Knee in 1973, establishing cause and effect, for example, Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk developed expertise and were recognized for that. Further, as they interviewed community members with memories and knowledge of that event and others in American Indian history, a salient metaphor for the intense study of that history began to emerge as warriorship within the body of knowledge acquired by the Wounded Knee team.

As all of the regional-entry teams from Medicine Wheel School worked to refine various aspects of their research and exhibit boards, the Wounded Knee in 1973 team began to draft an essay documenting the steps in the process of developing their project. In that essay they would explain their reasons for choosing their particular topic. They would also describe their research process and write an annotated bibliography of their primary and secondary data sources. On March 26, 2001, Alex Hawk took the lead in interviewing Buffalo and Skip about the origins of their work on the topic of Wounded Knee in 1973:

Alex Hawk: Why did you decide to work on a project about Wounded Knee?

Buffalo: We watched that movie about Wounded Knee in Sophie's class. It's called Lakota Woman. It just seemed to me that Wounded Knee would be a good one to choose. Then you guys came along, and I just said, "OK, then let's go for Wounded Knee." And Eagle Charge was there at Wounded Knee. He could tell us about it.

Alex Hawk: Did you think that we would take the project to the regionals?

Skip: No. I just wanted to get a good grade in Sophie's class.

> Buffalo: No, I just wanted to finish the project. (Both boys laugh.) I didn't think we would take it anywhere, but I wanted it to be a good project on Wounded Knee because my relatives were there [in 1890]. (March 26, 2001)

As Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk formed the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day team, identifying critical relationships between events in time that took place at Wounded Knee, they occupied several roles. First, they were students in Sophie's middle school history class earning class credit for completion of an assignment. Second, they became ethnographers as they engaged in processes of interviewing, gathering artifacts and interpreting meaning of the interviews and other material they collected. Third, they became representatives of the American Indian community in the city in which Medicine Wheel School is located. They comprised the only History Day team originating within an Indigenous perspective school participating in the state History Day event. As such, they received a level of public attention with which few adolescents might feel comfortable. Fourth, they formed a community of practice in warriorship as they studied the discourse and practice of adults whose warriorship was publicly acknowledged, both nationally and locally.

Warrior imagery found in media and in popular culture bears little similarity to warriorship in practice (Lave, 1996) that I found in my work at Medicine Wheel School. Warriorship in practice, as described by the participants in my ethnographic research, is an identity that may be produced by persons who are male or female. Warriors, I found, may be children, youth, adults or elders. They may be soldiers, but they may also be peacemakers. I further found that the practice of being a Warrior is not only a matter of action, but also is an issue of principles, worldview and positionality within a community.

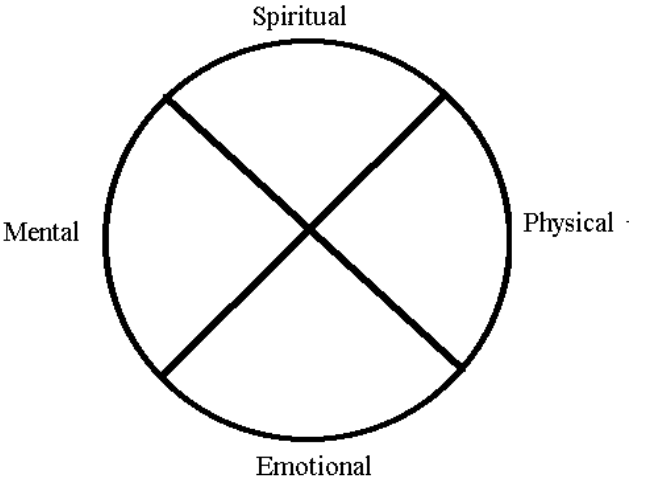
In the context of my study, I found that the production of a Warrior identity was more tightly linked to the purpose of Indigenous schooling than it was to the production of achievement. As I planned my study at Medicine Wheel School, I expected to find ways that the social practice of education in an American Indian school would support academic achievement. Instead, I found that social practice at Medicine Wheel School produced Warriors who are expected to fulfill their human potential in a variety of ways that serve the needs, values and beliefs of their community, which may include academic achievement. The purpose of school for the American Indian community in which Medicine Wheel School was located, was not a singular goal of producing high achievers, but was intended by the community to develop human beings who would support one another and have the capacity to grow into adulthood with not only skills, but also beliefs that affirm community and cultural values of balance, harmony, and cohesion.

Teachings of the Medicine Wheel

The Medicine Wheel is a visual symbol, in a broad sense, for the universe. It represents all that is. As a symbol for living as a human being, it represents those things in creation that are cyclical and come in sets of four. One such rep-

resentation is the four interconnected aspects of a human being. The four aspects of living as a true human being are the physical, the emotional, the mental or intellectual and the spiritual (see Figure 1 below). To ignore or deny the existence of any aspect of a human being is to live out of balance with the system that was designed by the Creator.

Figure 1: Medicine Wheel symbolism



The Medicine Wheel is a visual representation of pictographs and petroglyphs that take this form, and of large Medicine Wheels formations found on the ground in high places, usually made of rocks placed in a pattern on high ground. The original Medicine Wheels are linked to healing and hunting practices of early Indigenous peoples. The Old Ones placed them there.

There are over fifty thousand Medicine Wheels formations found in North America (McCartney, 1994). These stone structures and rock markings are located throughout the northern Great Plains, and are concentrated in several areas including Alberta and South Dakota. The southernmost of the stone Medicine Wheel structures is located in Wyoming.

The distinct pattern of a Medicine Wheel consists of a circular rim with spokes radiating out from the center of the circle. In stone Medicine Wheels laid out on the earth, there is often a stone cairn at the center, designed to provide a small amount of shelter from wind or rain to someone engaged in a vision quest at that place. Painted or carved Medicine Wheels are placed on prominent outcrops, or entry points to caves or other shelters, to communicate the potential for wellbeing and safety. The website of the Royal Museum of Alberta contains an array of images of Medicine Wheels found in that area, with interpretations of meaning. They exhibit a consistent pattern of the circle with lines radiating outward, and a central cairn or central orientation to the four cardinal directions (Royal Museum of Alberta, 2005).

Medicine Wheels, as symbols, represent a variety of concepts to Native people of the Great Plains. We can only speculate regarding the extent of purpose or meaning of the Medicine Wheel to those who originally created them. They are not a universal symbol for Native people, though Elders among people of the Great Plains and the northern woodlands articulate meanings that bear remarkable similarity from one First Nation, tribal, band, and community to another within the specific region of the Great Plains (Buswa & Shawana, 1992; Goodman, 1992; Vickers, 1992). In naming the school after one of the concepts embedded in the Medicine Wheel, the community intended the school to be a healing place for children. One way in which the school effected healing for children was through the production of a pro-active and agency-producing Warrior identity. The Warrior identity not only served as a metaphor for a person engaged in counter-oppression, but also served to describe the character of a person who is a true human being, fully exercising all aspects of personhood, as those are represented on the Medicine Wheel.

Physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual contexts of the study

Medicine Wheel School is an Indigenous perspective school located in a city center on the edge of the Great Plains. The origins and history of Medicine Wheel School are well-known to students, parents, teachers and other community members who participate in learning at the school. Students regularly hear of the early struggles, the dreams and the solidarity of purpose for creation of an Indigenous-perspective school among members of the American Indian community in the urban city center in which the school is located. In the midst of intense conservative school reform efforts initiated after the publication of *A Nation At Risk* (NCEE, 1984), American Indian parents and other community members across the state were able to convince the state's legislative body that intensification and accountability measures (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) in place within state schools were contributing to, and not alleviating, the well-documented high levels of school failure and drop-out rates among American Indian youth, particularly in urban areas, leading to what has been described as a school to prison pipeline (NAACP Legal Defense Fund, 2007?; Advancement Project, 2010).

Beginning in 1985, American Indian parents and other community members challenged the state legislature and the school districts in the urban center to allow the American Indian community to make important decisions about curriculum content, staffing and organizational and governance structures. During the four-year period in which intense efforts by the American Indian community in the city sought funding for the school, an Ojibwe Elder and her husband sat in the balcony of the state legislature with a pipe in a pipe bag, always present. The ceremonial pipe had been given to the school in the city for American Indian children. Since that school had not yet been physically manifested, the pipe was held for safekeeping by the Elder. The Elder spoke to the pipe each day, promising that each day would bring the pipe closer to home.

On the last day of the state legislative session, the Elder had left the building to return home when community members ran to find her to tell her that the bill

funding the school was about to be introduced and discussed. Within hours, the bill received a close, but positive, vote and the school had passed from dream mode to creation phase in the spring of 1989. Two additional years passed as the district sought an appropriate site for the school. A lovely garden-like site was chosen, and then was soon deemed so desirable that it was appropriated by another school district program. Eventually, the district purchased space in an industrial site in the heart of the neighborhood occupied by Native families, Native health and community development agencies and near both the American Indian Center and the Peace Center operated by the American Indian Movement (AIM). During the time that the search for a site was ongoing, American Indian community leaders, primarily Ojibwe, Lakota and Dakota, met to decide on a name for the school and to develop a mission statement. Led by Elders, school district administrators and tribal representatives, the community developed in 1990 the following mission statement:

> We, the students, families, staff and community, are working together in a warm and caring atmosphere.
>
> While learning about the past, and understanding the present, we are building a bright, healthy, safe, and strong tomorrow.
>
> We seek balance and harmony, excellence and pride in ourselves.
>
> Together we are responsible for and respectful of ourselves, each other, our school, our community and our environment.
>
> We belong here and we are unique.
>
> We are created for a purpose and we are part of the circle.

While funding as an American Indian Magnet School by the state legislature did not relieve Medicine Wheel School of the burden of accountability in the form of standardized tests, much of the curriculum organized at the school was designed to support, rather than subvert, Indigenous identity. Thus, the oral history of the school's origins has served as a representation of the warriorship practice of Indigenous parents, grandparents, and other community members who have remained in active involvement within the school's daily operations.

Organized for Kindergarten through Grade Eight, the school served 400 students during the first year of operation, in 1991–1992. By the fall of 1994, student enrollment had grown to nearly 800 students. Ninety-six percent of the student body was Native, largely Ojibwe, Lakota and Dakota. The remaining student body was African American from families living near the school. Representatives of the American Indian community involved in early decisions regarding the building design had chosen the model of a Kindergarten through Grade 8 school because that model allowed older siblings of younger children to

look after the younger siblings on buses and in hallways. For some of the early families at the school, there were never fewer than four siblings in the school at any given time. American Indian teachers, staff and administrators comprised 40% of school employees. In addition, the school was home to several district-funded programs for American Indian children, youth and their families. Elders, parents, babies, toddlers and other community members not frequently seen in school buildings were present in the building on a daily basis. In many ways, aspects of the school resembled those of a pre-colonial social order upon which an educational institution in the late twentieth century was based.

When I began my work at the school, Sophie organized a naming ceremony during Reflection Circle for the seventh graders, who by that time had each returned appropriate consent and assent forms. All proper names used in the study, including Medicine Wheel School, are pseudonyms or "research names." As I have done in the past, I asked research participants to choose their own "research name" or pseudonym. For Medicine Wheel School, however, the name given to each student by their classmates would serve as their "research name" during the research process. Buffalo, a tall Lakota youth with wide shoulders, was named first. Buffalo was a good name, he agreed, and he would accept that name. Alex was given the name Hawk because he was always able to notice things that others were not able to see. His skills as a keen observer would prove useful during the research process as he and his team members served as junior ethnographers. Alex accepted the name, but asked for permission to use his uncle's name, as well, and the class agreed. Hawk became Alex Hawk. Skip was absent on the day of the naming ceremony. His classmates in the seventh grade gave him a name that represented the most significant feature of his day, which was his absence from the Circle. Thus, Skip was named. Alex Hawk and Skip are both Ojibwe. Buffalo, as I indicated, is Lakota. The young men had been classmates at Medicine Wheel School for years. Buffalo's family was one of the first to enroll children in the school during the somewhat tentative first years nine years earlier.

Several of the adults in the study objected to being asked, or being assigned, to use a research name. They told me that they were proud of the work they were doing and wanted their actual names publically used. Further, they asserted that the practice of being required to use a new name was far too reminiscent of the same practice that had originated in boarding schools generations ago. I explained that the use of "research names" would allow us all to avoid any compromise of the confidentiality of the children in the study and for that reason, all participants would need a research name. I further explained that I would also need to use pseudonyms for place names for the same reason. With that explanation, the research practice of using pseudonyms became acceptable to some of the adults in the study, and grudgingly acceptable to the others. Some adults requested, or accepted, the use of research names that reflected clan membership or resembled "Indian names" given to them by students also involved in the study. Eagle Charge, the principal, and Eagle Horse, the Bigfoot Rider, received research

names given by Buffalo. Some adult participants, including Sophie, chose names of relatives to use as research names.

All adults and children who were participants in the study are referenced with research names, and all adults and children in this discussion are American Indian. As I noted earlier, as I planned my study at Medicine Wheel School, I expected to find ways that the social practice of education in an American Indian school would support academic achievement. Medicine Wheel School was well-known for years as an academy for high-achieving American Indian students. My study was planned as a process through which I could document and interpret the ways that the scholarship of high-achieving American Indian children and youth was supported by the American Indian teachers, administrators and other adults with whom they interacted on a daily basis. I found scholarship, but in the discourse and practice of the youth and adults, scholarship was a way to achieve something else, which was service to the community in the form of warriorship. Tribal affiliations of Native adults in the school reflected those of the Native children and youth in the school; they were Ojibwe, Lakota and Dakota. Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, Eagle Charge, Sophie, and I are Ojibwe from bands whose homelands are located across the northern woodlands and Great Plains. Eagle Horse and Moto Bloke are Lakota from Grand River.

The apprenticeship of Warriors

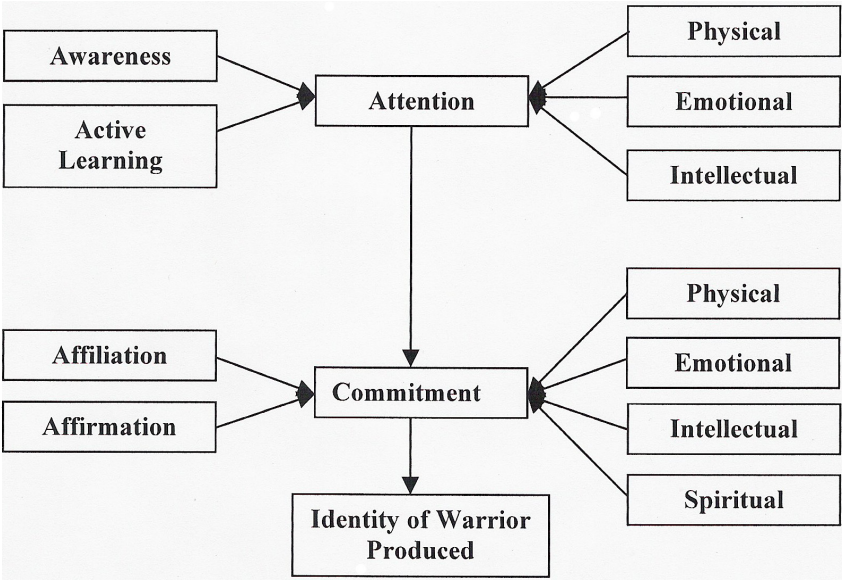
In addition to translation of tacit and explicit culture (Spradley, 1980) in order to identify specific practices and discourses of warriorship, I examined ways that membership in a community of practice of warriorship became available and desirable for Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk. Therefore, I looked for "stages" (Spradley, 1980, p. 149) of increasingly committed membership that was culturally patterned, not random or haphazard. I sought to identify stages of warriorship that represented a progression that might be broadly replicated within apprenticeships for young people in similar ways to the Warrior apprenticeship experienced by the History Day team.

Awareness and active learning, two cognitive processes, are components of a larger cognitive process of attention. These processes are supported by the physical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of human learning prior to identity formation, but moving toward a particular identity. Affiliation and affirmation, two additional social processes, are components of a larger social process of commitment. The processes involved in commitment are supported not only by the physical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of human social and individual identification, but in addition require the presence of a spiritual component, as I see this learning/identification process.

In the diagram for the stages of becoming a warrior in Figure 2, cognitive processes are represented in text boxes aligned in the left column. Social processes are represented in text boxes aligned in the center column. The aspects of a human being that are employed during, and contribute to, either the cognitive processes or social processes are in text boxes in the right column. The identity

produced by this interaction of learning about warriorship, social influences of warriorship and personal choices to pursue warriorship is a Warrior Identity.

Figure 2: Stages of becoming a Warrior



In the discussion that follows, I explain the ways that the learning/identification processes represented in this paradigm were experienced and articulated by the participants in the research I conducted at Medicine Wheel School. A number of adult participants were able to articulate their own understanding about the cultural meanings of being a Warrior, and were able to either self-identify as a Warrior or were identified by others as Warriors. However, I will limit this discussion to the small group of seventh graders and three of the individuals who supported them early in the process as they worked together on the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day exhibit. The discourse and cultural displays of Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk, as well as Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, Eagle Charge, and Eagle Horse provide a sufficient source of evidence for explicating the paradigm of "Stages of Becoming a Warrior" that I developed.

Awareness of warriorship

Awareness is the first stage in becoming a Warrior. It occurs when we begin to focus our attention on a specific aspect of a social pattern or natural phenomenon. Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung was aware, growing up in Waabaabigan, that circumstances of living and learning were not right for his people. His people were forbidden to speak the Ojibwe language. Ceremonies were banned. Schools were harsh and punitive to him and other children. As an adolescent, he began to display concentrated resistance to the social processes that he was experiencing, particularly schooling:

> I've spent a good portion of my life in jail, from the time when I was your age. I went to prison when I was only twelve years old. I went to the state training school for truancy. I didn't like school. I ran away from it. I ran away from school. And off and on, before we got the American Indian Movement going, I spent close to sixteen years of my life in jail. (Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, March 28, 2001)

Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung's awareness of the need to resist schooling as it existed for his generation, and those of his parents, led to his avoidance of school. Since truancy is frequently the opening to the school to jail pipeline, Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung's truancy was followed by years of involvement with juvenile justice systems.

Almost a generation later, Eagle Charge became aware, growing up in the city, that injustice was occurring for Native people living on reservations, particularly at Pine Ridge. "We had heard about the activities that were going on in South Dakota" (Eagle Charge, March 21, 2001). His awareness was fostered by the growing movement of American Indian activism:

> And in the city, at the time, we had a chapter of the American Indian Movement. I belonged to that chapter of the American Indian Movement Youth. We had a drum that we would use at our meetings and other occasions. (Eagle Charge, March 21, 2001)

Eagle Charge, a university student in the city in 1973, had grown up in an environment quite different from that of Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, who grew up on the reservation. However, the informal social and communication networks typically maintained by American Indian people (Smith & Warrior, 1996, p. 128) made it possible for Eagle Charge, in the city, to be aware of the oppressive conditions on reservations in the region, particularly at Pine Ridge, in South Dakota.

Eagle Horse, on the other hand, grew up hearing stories about the history of the Hunkpapa people of Grand River:

> So, when I was a child, I didn't have access to a lot of the same technology that we have now: television, radios, stereos, and those things. A lot of our entertainment came from sitting around and telling stories. I was able to learn a lot about this history of the reservation and how the people were affected by that history. (Eagle Horse, May 2, 2001)

He heard about the death of Sitting Bull at the hands of the U.S. federal government. He heard about events at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, when nearly 300 unarmed men, women, children, and elders were killed by the U.S. Cavalry in 1890. Eagle Charge also became aware, as a young man, of his own experience of oppression:

> In the early days, before the American Indian Movement, there were a lot of discrepancies in civil rights granted to Native American people and other people. We suffered a lot of depression and oppression. That wasn't good. It was difficult to be proud of being Indian because people believed that it was not a good thing to be Indian. (Eagle Charge, March 21, 2001)

It is interesting to note that both Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung and Eagle Charge date their description of the character of oppression on reservations in the upper Great Plains to "before the American Indian Movement" (Eagle Charge, March 21, 2001) and "before we got the American Indian Movement going" (Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, March 28, 2001). Their awareness of oppressive conditions on the reservations occurred prior to the formation of AIM, but the formation of the Movement serves as a marker between two time periods; awareness of oppression before the Movement and social action to end oppression after the Movement was formed.

Buffalo also grew up hearing stories about the history of the Hunkpapa people of Grand River. He heard stories about his ancestors who were killed at Wounded Knee in 1890. "My uncle always told me what he knew about Wounded Knee [in 1890]. I would always ask my uncle to tell me what he knew about Wounded Knee. He knows about Wounded Knee and he told me about it" (Buffalo, July 19, 2002). Buffalo had also watched the film Lakota Woman (Pierson et al., 1994) with great interest when Sophie showed the film in class. Content of the film about events at Wounded Knee in 1973 helped Buffalo focus his interest on the topic of Wounded Knee. "It just popped into my head, once they said it in class and we watched Lakota Woman in Sophie's class. And I just started picking up ideas about it. It was Wounded Knee in 1973 [that I would study]" (Buffalo, July 19, 2002). Buffalo was working alone at this point.

Skip and Alex Hawk were interested in researching various History Day topics, but were not interested in working on a research project about Wounded Knee in 1973. They both explored a number of possible topics each, but could not decide on a topic. They were also working alone at this point. When Skip saw how interested and informed Buffalo was about events at Wounded Knee in 1890 and 1973, he began to talk about those events with Buffalo. Eventually Skip decided to work with Buffalo to develop a History Day project on the topic of Wounded Knee in 1973. Alex Hawk was still not convinced that he wanted to work on a History Day project about Wounded Knee in 1973. For that reason, he did not participate in the interview of Eagle Charge. Alex Hawk wanted to develop a History Day project about either the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 or the Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. Finally, when Buffalo convinced him that the study of the Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 would be a part of the study of events at Wounded Knee in 1973, as background, Alex Hawk decided to work with Buffalo and Skip on their project.

On Thursday, March 29, 2001, Sandra interviewed all three of the team members to support their efforts to articulate their ideas and defend their thesis

during judging at the Regional History Day competition. Next, Alex Hawk decided to interview Buffalo and Skip about their reasons for deciding to study events at Wounded Knee in 1973. Those insights would be needed so that the team could complete their History Day process paper:

> Alex Hawk: Buffalo, what made you decide to study Wounded Knee?
> Buffalo: … And, my family, my uncle has always told me about the old ones at Wounded Knee and I wanted to learn more about that.
> Alex Hawk: Skip, why did you decide to study Wounded Knee?
> Skip: Well, I wasn't going to, but Buffalo kept talking to me about it, and he was really interested. He was kind of happy every time he found something on the Internet. I started reading things for him on the Internet and I just decided to go ahead and work with him on Wounded Knee.
> Alex Hawk: Thank you. (March 29, 2001)

Buffalo's interest and his movement from awareness of Wounded Knee to active learning about warriorship at Wounded Knee had drawn two others to his project. The three team members continued their work together through preparation for the Regional History Day competition:

> Sandra: How did you and your work partners, Skip and Alex Hawk, get ready for the Regional contest?
> Buffalo: We started talking about it, talking about Wounded Knee. We started telling each other our different stories about what we were reading. We started telling each other our ideas about the artifacts and what they mean. We started sharing our ideas about artifacts. (March 29, 2001)

Buffalo's awareness and interest in active learning about events at Wounded Knee were always just ahead of those of Skip and Alex Hawk, but Buffalo was also interested in sharing ideas with his team mates, so he occasionally led, but did not dominate the team discourse about their project.

Active learning about warriorship

Active learning appears to serve as the next stage in becoming a Warrior. Active learning involves movement from awareness to activity toward learning. Active learning is a function of personal agency to a greater degree than awareness, although both involve choices to some degree. Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dunginitiated this stage of his warriorship when he chose to engage in active learning about warriorship at Wounded Knee when he decided to read about the history of oppression of American Indian people:

> There was a book out at that time. It was called *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. It was written by a guy named Dee Brown. And every-

> where it was on the top best-selling list. Very little, in the world, was known about Indian people before that. (Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, March 28, 2001)

He remembered what he had read and when a decision was needed at Pine Ridge in 1973, Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung chose Wounded Knee as the site of the planned occupation by AIM, the Oglala traditional leaders and other activists.In addition, prior to the occupation at Wounded Knee, he organized active learning on the Pine Ridge reservation about circumstances on the reservation. He did that in order to learn directly from those most affected by those circumstances:

> So we sent word back to this medicine man at Pine Ridge to tell the people that we were coming on the 25th, and that we would hold two days of hearings. We wanted to take affidavits. And that's what we did.
>
> So, on the 25th of February in 1973, we came from all over to the reservation. We gathered at a little place called Oglala, on the Pine Ridge Reservation. And we had two days of hearings there. People would come up and tell us things. We made it clear that we didn't want to hear rumors. We didn't want to hear funny stories. We wanted to hear the truth. We wanted affidavits, we wanted witnesses. We had affidavits. In two days, we had over fifteen individual accounts of brutality, rape. (March 28, 2001)

At the end of the two days of hearings, Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung was challenged by an elder woman sitting in the back of the room where the hearings had been held. She challenged him to take swift action and not simply return to the city to think about things while additional murders and rapes were taking place on Pine Ridge. At that point, he began to actively plan and mobilize AIM in anticipation of the occupation at Wounded Knee. His experience at the hearings and his exchange with the elder woman led him to an understanding that he shared with Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk, that "the women are Warriors, too. In fact, they are our Warriors. They are our Warriors" (Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, March 28, 2001).

Eagle Charge also decided to read about the history of oppression of American Indian people. While his early awareness of the role of warriorship in opposition to oppression was the result of direct and experienced oppression of others, Eagle Charge became aware that he had inherited subtle historical forms of oppression and deculturalization:

> I had read a book called *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. This book was a history of the American Indian people written by American Indians. It was a sad historical story. When I read it, I was seventeen years old. I cried at nights, reading it, because of the horror that had been inflicted on Indian people throughout history… (March 21, 2001)

Eagle Charge's awareness of the sad historical story of American Indian people became focused when he began reading about the specifics of deculturalization and extermination policies in Brown's landmark 1970 text.

Eagle Horse actively learned about the Big Foot Rides from Grand River to Wounded Knee, South Dakota, while he was teaching mathematics at the tribal college on the Grand River reservation. He supported the students and others who wished to participate in the Rides by providing horses and gear for the Riders from the college:

> I was working at a community college on my reservation, and we sponsored five riders to go down to Wakpa Heta to participate in the ride. Originally, the Bigfoot Ride started from the Pa Kola Reservation, south of Grand River. Five of our students wanted to participate in that, so we pooled some money. We got them some horses and they were able to go down to Wakpa Heta and participate in that ride. We did that in 1985. (Eagle Horse, May 2, 2001)

Five years after learning about the Big Foot Rides and supporting them materially, Eagle Horse became a Big Foot Rider when he rode on December 15th and 16th in 1990.

Buffalo, Skip and Alex Hawk at various points decided to learn more about events at Wounded Knee in 1973; they read books and excerpts from books, including *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* by Dee Brown (1970), which was loaned to them by Eagle Charge. They searched for information on the Internet. "Sandra: What were the first steps that you took in researching your History Day topic? Buffalo: We found artifacts and readings. We did a lot of reading. We looked up a lot of things on the Internet" (Buffalo, July 19, 2002). Eventually, the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day team would come to read dozens of pages of text in book chapters and web pages, In addition, they viewed films. Skip would often read to Buffalo and Alex Hawk since he was the strongest reader and had the least patience for the miscues of the others.

Affiliation with Warriors

Affiliation proved to the next stage in becoming a Warrior. Affiliation is the first step toward commitment. As noted in the discussion above, commitment requires the additional resource of the spiritual component of human being, as well as the physical, intellectual, and emotional. The spiritual component of human being allows us to see the unseen, give to others what we have, in some cases, not been given, and exercise hopefulness. Affiliation requires taking a stand, standing for something or with someone. Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung participated in the formation of AIM as a young man in the city in the late 1960s. He is firm in his conviction that the Movement was formed as a Warrior Society, not as a militant group, as he asserted to Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk during their interview with him. "I know who I am. I know what the Movement is. The Movement is a Warrior Society. Our elders look at us that way, as a Warrior Society, free of

alcohol, free of drugs, fighting for what is right" (Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, March 28, 2001).

At Wounded Knee in 1973, Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung affiliated not only with other American Indian activists, but also with Lakota traditional leaders and elders:

> Buffalo: Was there a medicine man there with you at Wounded Knee in 1973? If so, did he tell you stories?
>
> Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung: At that time, we had a young man named Leonard Crow Dog. He was a spiritual leader. He was very powerful man; in fact, he was a prophet. He could actually prophesize things that were going to happen, two days from now, a week from now, six months or a year from now. He was also a healer.
>
> And we had another man named Wallace Black Elk. He was one of the distant relatives of the famed Black Elk. They conducted ceremonies all the time, all the time. And of course, we had a lot of storytellers there. They told stories of what happened at Wounded Knee in 1890, and how we had to protect the women and children, and how to conduct our behavior. They guided us. We listened to our elders. We listened to our medicine men and spiritual leaders. (March 28, 2001).

The affiliation with Oglala traditional leaders and elders was important because the affiliation made unlikely the possibility that Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, Eagle Charge and the others engaged in warriorship at Wounded Knee could be dismissed by the press, by the U.S. federal government, or by the American public, at least in Indian Country, as a band of hoodlums or unruly dissidents.

Eagle Charge joined the AIM Youth group in the city in the early 1970s, just before the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973. As a young college student and member of that youth organization at that time, he was learning how to sing and sit at a drum. When Eagle Charge heard the call to go to Wounded Knee in 1973, he decided to go there because of his affiliation with AIM:

> Buffalo: What made you want to go to Wounded Knee in 1973?
>
> Eagle Charge: Well, it was the idea of the American Indian Movement. AIM was a real part of my life. I think that some people during that time of their life will join the Army or join another part of the armed forces, like the Marines or the Navy. But I was a member of AIM already, and I felt that I was a part of something. Being a part of AIM was really my inspiration. We were going to go and fight injustice…. That's really what drove me. (March 21, 2001).

Eagle Charge made the transition from being a young university student in a youth group to a front-line Warrior through his affiliation with Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung and the others who also heard and heeded the call to go to Wounded

Knee in 1973. Eagle Charge decided that he was willing to risk his life for his belief that injustice could not be ignored and unchallenged (Eagle Charge, March 21, 2001).

Eagle Horse affiliated himself with warriorship when he made the transition from supporter of Big Foot Riders to an active participant in the Big Foot Ride in 1990. After years of supporting other Big Foot Riders, Eagle Horse decided to participate in the 1990 ride as a Rider:

> I rode in support of the belief in healing the generations. That was the basis of how this ride evolved. Also, I wanted to be part of the group of Grand River Sioux people who were riding, because Grand River is where the original ride started. So, I rode for two days. (Eagle Horse, May 2, 2001)

Eagle Horse rode during the first two days of the Ride, from December 15th to December 16th, in 1990. Eagle Horse also traveled to Wounded Knee to welcome the other Riders when they arrived at the Wounded Knee gravesite on December 29th, 1990. He experienced bitter cold during the time that he participated as a Big Foot Rider:

> Skip: What did you think about while you were riding?
> Eagle Horse: Well, I thought about the mission of the Ride, and I thought about the plight of the people who had been on the march, the ride, 100 years ago. I prayed while I was riding. At times, I visited with other riders. At times, we just rode in silence. We tried to be a part of the surroundings. (May 2, 2001)

Eagle Horse spent many hours riding in silence thinking about the hardships that his ancestors had experienced in their struggle to remain alive and remain Lakota. He was, thus, able to affiliate himself with Warriors, and warriorship practices, of past generations.

Members of the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day team initiated their affiliation with Warriors and warriorship when they began the process of interviewing adults who had already established themselves as Warriors. Each time the young ethnographers interviewed an adult, they gave that person tobacco, as a ceremonial gift, to show that they had come in a good way and that whatever they took away from the interview, they would use in a good way. The giving of tobacco thus formalizes a relationship between people and binds them together in common purpose. Just as Eagle Horse symbolically affiliated himself with his ancestors during the Big Foot Ride, Buffalo, in particular, felt that he grew closer to his ancestors as he continued the study of Wounded Knee in 1973:

> Studying Wounded Knee, I can go back for a time and get to know my culture and my ancestors. I can learn about my culture and how they did things a long time ago. You can get to know your ancestors from a long

> time ago, to know how the Indians grew up before us. You can get to know how it was in the time of our ancestors. (Buffalo, July 19, 2002)

Both Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung and Eagle Charge had shared with Buffalo, Skip and Alex Hawk that their belief in life after death and the potential for reunion with departed relatives had strengthened them as they considered the consequences of their decision to go to Wounded Knee in 1973 (Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, March 28, 2001; Eagle Charge, March 21, 2001). It may be that Buffalo's reunion with his departed relatives as he studied events at Wounded Knee in 1890 gave him the strength to take the lead in articulating the thesis, background, and implications of the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day project at the regional competition. "First, I saw Buffalo pointing first to the Medicine Wheel, then to the timeline, and then to several of the maps on the exhibit. He was nodding his head and smiling at the judge, and the judge was smiling back. I knew then that things were going well for them" (Personal Communication, Sophie, March 31, 2001). The project advanced further to the state competition after the well-defended project was first chosen to advance from the local to the regional competition.

Affirmation of warriorship

Affirmation is the last stage in becoming a Warrior. Affirmation is part of an induction process, of entering into a particular community of practice. Affirmation requires commitment to change. Affirmation of changed Indigenous social and personal identity frequently takes the form of gift-giving, such as that which takes place for tribal college graduates when they receive a feather for graduating from college. Their identity has changed and they are no longer a student. They have touched the enemy and have become a Warrior (Personal Communication, His Horse is Thunder, May 8, 2003). Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung was given an eagle feather because he had risked his life numerous times in the interest of what he believed must happen for Indian people. Eagle feathers are typically given to commemorate a significant deed. In addition, he was given an Indian name that he uses today. Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung currently directs the Peace Center located blocks away from Medicine Wheel School. He has continued to serve his people in Indian Country (Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, March 28, 2001)

Eagle Charge was not given a material gift at Wounded Knee in 1973. He was given increasing responsibility for protecting the leadership of AIM at Wounded Knee. He traveled with the leadership wherever they went. He carried and used a gun:

> I think that my role was to be on the lookout, to be a security person. I always felt myself to be a bodyguard to the leadership. Whenever they moved somewhere, either to Rapid City or Oglala or the Badlands, I went with them. I traveled with them. I kept a lookout. I kept a lookout for people who would try to harm them. So, in that respect, that's how I participated at Wounded Knee in 1973. (March 21, 2001)

Eagle Charge was also given responsibility for leading small groups of other young people outside of the perimeters of the occupied area of Wounded Knee on forays to secure food and other supplies. Affirmation of Eagle Charge's warriorship came to him in the form of increasing responsibility for the direction, safety, well-being and even the lives of others at Wounded Knee in 1973. After his participation as a Big Foot Rider in 1990, Eagle Horse was given a red jacket with embroidered words that say, "Big Foot Rider:"

> Skip: How did your experience as a Bigfoot Rider influence your feelings about yourself as a Leader or as a Warrior?
> Eagle Horse: Among the people who rode from my reservation, there were people who did some fundraising. They bought everybody who rode a Bigfoot Rider jacket. I have that jacket today. It's red with an emblem on the back of it that says, "Bigfoot Rider." I cherish that jacket. People, when see me wearing it, give me the thumbs up sign. Although I didn't ride the whole ride, I was definitely proud to be a part of the ride. (May 2, 2001)

Wherever he goes when he wears that jacket, people acknowledge Eagle Horse and let him know that they appreciate what he did when he participated in the Big Foot Ride.

After the state History Day competition, Buffalo, Skip and Alex Hawk earned honors from the local university and from the state historical society for the quality of their work on the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day exhibit. They also earned honors from their own community at the Honor the Children Powwow held at Medicine Wheel School on May 17, 2001. They were given a variety of gifts from community members. The Medicine Wheel drum played an honor song for them. Skip, Alex Hawk and their families danced in a circle around the drum. Then, students and other community members came forward to shake hands with Skip, Alex Hawk and their families. Further, students and other community members formed a line of dancers behind Skip and Alex Hawk, and their families, to share in the act of honoring the young people. At this time, Buffalo was no longer in the city. He had traveled to Grand River with his family after the death of a family member.

A reporter from a local American Indian newspaper interviewed Skip and Alex Hawk. A story about the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day exhibit and about the three seventh graders appeared in the newspaper *Native News* (May 30, 2001) the following week, with a photo of Skip and Alex Hawk:

> **Honor the Children Pow Wow at Medicine Wheel School**
>
> Medicine Wheel School was founded in 1990 as a public magnet school emphasizing American Indian cultural heritage. At first, the facility drew its students largely from the surrounding south-central

neighborhood which has long been a center of Lakota and Ojibwe settlement in the city.

As neighborhood demographics have changed in recent years, the population at Medicine Wheel has reflected a growing diversity. There is currently a mix of American Indian, African American, Ethiopian and Somali students. At Medicine Wheel School, all students receive instruction in Lakota and Ojibwe language and culture. In addition, all courses utilize what principal Eagle Charge calls an "American Indian perspective," which promotes living in harmony with the human community and the natural world.

During the May 17 Honor the Youth Pow Wow at Medicine Wheel, the school honored role models from within the school. Three Medicine Wheel youth were celebrated for their work in documenting and analyzing events at Wounded Knee, in South Dakota, when the town was seized by followers of the American Indian Movement (AIM) on February 27, 1973. AIM and local Oglala Lakota (Oglala Sioux) of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation opposed Oglala tribal chairman Richard A. "Dick" Wilson. The occupiers controlled the town for 71 days while the United States Marshals Service, the U.S. military and government officers, including the FBI, cordoned off the town. AIM and local Oglala Lakota (Oglala Sioux) of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, who opposed Oglala tribal chairman Richard A. "Dick" Wilson, seized the town of Wounded Knee. The U.S. military and government officers, including the FBI, surrounded Wounded Knee the same day.

The seventh grade youth from Medicine Wheel School have spent months interviewing elders, local educators, and others who were present at Pine Ridge in 1973. "We tried to interview the FBI guys but they wanted to frisk us and would not let us take pens into the building or take notes. We have to take notes so we can use the exact words of the eyewitness. Sophie wouldn't let us go to the FBI Headquarters. She did not want us to be treated like thugs" said Alex Hawk, with animated enthusiasm. "I wanted to go anyway. We can take care of ourselves," he added.

During the annual Honor the Children Pow Wow, school officials and community members presented gifts to Alex Hawk and Skip. Gifts for Buffalo, who is with his family in South Dakota after a death in the family, will be transported by Mato Bloka, the Lakota language instructor at the school.

"These young man are courageous, to take this project on. There are still hard feelings about those events," noted community elder Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung. "We've given them some sweetgrass and tee shirts, but they have given important knowledge to this community."

The Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day exhibit was placed in the Medicine Wheel School Media Center as part of a permanent collection of resources for

younger students who would, in coming years, develop a History Day exhibit. Copies of videotapes of Buffalo, Skip and Alex Hawk completing interviews with Eagle Charge, Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, Mato Bloka and Eagle Horse were also placed in the Media Center along with printed copies of interview transcripts.

I would suggest that the phases of becoming a Warrior do not always happen in a strictly linear manner. Elements of each phase may happen concurrently with other elements of other phases. For example, when Eagle Charge began his active learning about warriorship by joining the AIM Youth group, he was also affiliating himself with warriorship of emerging American Indian activists prior to the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973. Thus, when the call went out, his affiliation with AIM also offered him an opportunity to advance his active learning about warriorship in a concrete experiential way as a security person for AIM leadership. He also participated in active learning about the full exercise of Indigenous spiritual practice at Wounded Knee before he was fully aware of those practices (Eagle Charge, March 21, 2001).

Eagle Charge's initial decision to affiliate with AIM influenced his opportunities for learning, in a general sense, about not only historical oppression of Indigenous people, but also about the capacity for resilience in the face of that oppression. What he learned at Wounded Knee in 1973 further confirmed for him the necessity for him to engage in warriorship in his own community and according to his own capacity. As a result, he has become a prominent American Indian educator in the city (Eagle Charge, March 21, 2001).

The stages of becoming a Warrior that Buffalo, Skip and Alex Hawk passed through replicated, in many ways, the stages described in discourse by Nee-Gon-Nway-Wee-Dung, Eagle Charge and Eagle Horse. In addition to the four clearly identifiable stages, I believe that there were several key features of the experience of the History Day work that served to produce warriorship in Buffalo, Skip and Alex Hawk, including the significant uncovering and application of historical memory on the part of the junior ethnographer and their supporters. Alertness to injustice fades as historical memory fades. My nephew keeps a small plaque on a wall in his home that says, "Our strength is in remembering." Some people will say that historical memory has the power to allow us to remember events that we have not directly experienced. We indirectly experience those historical events through the oral tradition. We maintain Indigenous history through storytelling. In any event, Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk shared the indirect experience of events of significance to their personal and social identity as Indigenous youth as they participated in the learning and telling of oral and written history of events at Wounded Knee in 1890, 1973, and 1990. Their direct experience of warriorship took place when they stood next to their exhibit and piece-by-piece on three occasions defended their thesis and their assertions about events in American Indian history to judges who were university professors of history in the city.

Learning within the context of critical consciousness

In large measure, National History Day had become a kind of rite of passage for adolescents at Medicine Wheel School. Students anticipated the beginning of the process with enthusiasm. They spoke of the History Day activities throughout the course of the year. Each topic that was studied in Sophie's history class brought new possibilities for interesting History Day projects. With rare exception, the topics that were chosen by each History Day team reflected the emerging social and critical consciousness of adolescents.

In addition, the structural features of the National History Day research and knowledge construction processes encouraged critical consciousness because the emphasis on the use of primary sources that are uninterpreted, with limitations on secondary sources (already interpreted) required students to do their own thinking about truth, power, and the implications of events in history. Without being able to rely on secondary sources and the historical interpretations of others, students engaged in History Day research were not vulnerable to the influences of cultural values and misinformation often present in secondary sources such as history texts (Loewen, 1995). Such secondary sources might also contain biases that would, if taken as fact, serve to colonize the research process for Indigenous students. Further, the limit on the number of words of student-written interpretation that was allowable tended to support the learning style of Indigenous youth for whom photos, maps, drawing, symbols, and diagrams truly speak for themselves.

I observed with great interest that each of the limits set for History Day exhibits, for example, on size, number of words, and character of evidence were viewed as an interesting challenge to the middle school students at Medicine Wheel School. Those challenges were seen as a puzzle to be solved, not as a barrier. In addition, the solution to the puzzle was not seen as unavailable to the students working on their History Day projects. The students all knew the rules. They also knew that the rules were equally applied to all participants across the city, the state, and the nation. There were no trick questions and no exceptions to the rules. While the process of construction of the History Day projects was rigorous, the process was also fair.

The pedagogical features of their work in completing History Day projects at Medicine Wheel School provided students with an opportunity to function within a Freirean framework, in a sense. Members of oppressed groups, the American Indian and African American students at Medicine Wheel School, came together to critically reflect on the source of their oppression by using "coded existential situations," or artifacts in the form of primary source documents, to articulate "generative themes" (Freire, 1997, pp. 77 & 87) that served as their central and secondary theses. Through the process of forming and framing their arguments within events in history, the middle school students supported their own praxis needs and the praxis needs of others, including classmates, family members, and members of the school district and university history faculties.

While the History Day projects produced at other schools in the district and state may have been technically accurate in regard to use of sources and limitations on ready-made interpretation, the critical pedagogical features of

the work produced at other sites were not the same as those represented in the work produced at Medicine Wheel School. Each of the History Day exhibits that advanced in 2001 from the local level at Medicine Wheel School to the regional competition addressed some aspect of oppression, which was typical of History Day projects produced at the school in the past. That was not the case for projects produced at other schools, as I observed. At the regional level of competition, technologically-based theses and American/patriotic themes were prominent. The invention of the railroad, the telephone, and the telegraph, for example, were cited as Frontiers in History in projects from other city, region, and state projects. In addition, the impact of federal laws such as the Homestead Act, for instance, was explored as a Frontier in History that allowed immigrants to the United States to settle in the American West. A handful of feminist projects and projects featuring issues of religious persecution, however, represented articulation of anti-oppressive values similar to those addressed in projects originating at Medicine Wheel School.

Sophie was aware of the implicit disadvantage that students from Medicine Wheel School faced in the judging process for History Day projects. "Other schools bring projects that might or might not present issues of oppression, but our students always do what seems like an 'in your face' kind of thesis to the dominant culture judges," Sophie pointed this out to me as we were waiting for the judging to take place at the Regional meet. "Our students aren't always evaluated as having a balanced approach, but we keep trying, and they keep improving. Besides, just the experience of being judged is good for our students," she asserted. "They need to learn how to use words to defend their ideas. They have good ideas. This is good real-world practice for them" (Personal Communication, Sophie, March 31, 2001).

Just as I had understood, when told by one of my dissertation (Wolf, 2004) committee members, that a dissertation is always about the writer or some issue in the writer's life, I believe, in large measure, that middle school students at Medicine Wheel School selected topics that were about their own lives in some way. For that reason and others, it was difficult for some of the Medicine Wheel School students to find "balancing" evidence. Though they sought such input, Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk did not find anyone from the U.S. federal government who would freely speak to them about events at Wounded Knee in 1973. They had planned to build a balancing argument based on a thesis that the FBI agents at Wounded Knee were just ordinary people doing a job that they were assigned to do.

Other seventh graders at Medicine Wheel School who had developed History Day projects exploring historical events such as the Holocaust in Germany and the My Lai Massacre in Vietnam, for example, also had difficulty forming a balancing argument about those events. The students reasoned that some events in history present such egregious wrongdoing that a balancing argument cannot be formed. Those events are the ones to which students at Medicine Wheel School were drawn. They tended not to explore events related to modernization or what might be seen as the development of progress, such as the invention of

television or frozen food, as other students across the city elected to explore. Students at Medicine Wheel School typically gravitated toward issues of social justice involving oppression and abuse of power. Consequently, they often fared less well in competition than their peers across the city when the Native students could not, or did not, develop a counter-balancing argument.

Conversely, the young researchers from another city school who presented the creation of a transcontinental railroad system as an important pro-national Frontier in History presented not only a balancing argument and, in fact, a counterbalancing argument. Yes, they argued, the creation of the transcontinental railroad had cut the vast buffalo herds of the Great Plains in half and decreased their size as breeding patterns were disrupted. In addition, the railroad mechanized the mass slaughter of the remaining herds as buffalo hunters fired on the herds from the safely of railroad cars. But social progress was inevitable and those events ultimately led to the signing of treaties with the Lakota, Cheyenne and other nomadic tribes. The youngsters from a neighboring school argued that the loss of the buffalo required the tribes to seek other food sources and the treaties provided the tribes with the means for securing farming land and implements needed for farming. Farming provides a much more stable source of income and food. Their balancing argument made perfect sense from a colonizing perspective, but served to diminish the personhood of both the buffalo and the people of the Plains tribes who hunted them and considered the buffalo to be older relatives.

As I read the text on the exhibit board of the railroad project team, with the young team members standing nearby waiting to answer questions, my face must have flushed because Sophie leaned over, touched my arm, and said softly, "Remember, they're just kids." I nodded, thanked the students for their hard work and went on to the next exhibit. Later, I suggested to Sophie that we should have placed the Wounded Knee exhibit next to the railroad exhibit and the two exhibits could have balanced one another since the Wounded Knee exhibit featured a black and white photo of the dead bison to which the other students referred in their railroad exhibit. In their Wounded Knee exhibit, Buffalo, Skip and Alex Hawk had argued that the creation of the railroad served as a contributing historical event leading to the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890. They asserted that the Hunkpapa people of Grand River and the Minniconjou Lakota from Wakpa Heta traveled on foot, on horseback and in open wagons in December of 1890 seeking refuge at Pine Ridge. They were hungry and knew that there were U.S. government rations available from Red Cloud's people, the Oglala. Under the authority of Big Foot, who was Sitting Bull's younger half brother, they had gone seeking food. They had not gone to Pine Ridge seeking trouble, but the U.S. Seventh Cavalry could only see them as a threat and they were killed. I cannot imagine what prize or what recognition might have induced the Wounded Knee History Day team to present a balancing argument in favor of the decimation of the bison on the Great Plains. Doing so would have been contrary to the ethics of their warriorship, which required them to respect and value the lives of their older relatives.

The salient metaphor of warriorship has emerged in texts and other discourses since that cultural production first began to take shape and significantly influence my work and the work of the Wounded Knee in 1973 History Day team. Most recently, one of my graduate students at Lakehead University had included the words of Chief Dan George in a forward to her thesis. As she began to read the words to me, she smiled and said, "You'll like this" (S. Bebonang, Personal Communication, July 6, 2008):

> There is a longing in the heart of my people to reach out and grasp that which is needed for our survival. There is a longing among the young of my nation to secure for themselves and their people the skills that will provide them with a sense of worth and purpose. They will be our new Warriors. Their training will be much longer and demanding than it was in olden days. The long years of study will demand more determination, separation from home and family will demand endurance. But they will emerge with their hands held forward not to receive welfare, but to grasp the place in society that is rightly ours. (George & Hirnschall, 1994, p. 91)

The young people will be our Warriors. In some cases, they already are our Warriors. Indigenous scholarship is the path that young people will take to exercise and display warriorship. That is a path that they must take. The issues facing Aboriginal communities at the end of the first decade of the 21st Century will require not only expertise in Western science and economics, but will also require a kind of wisdom that, up to now, has been displayed by few Western thinker. Those of us in the position to influence the direction of Aboriginal schooling and the education of American Indian children and youth must see that all possible opportunities are set in place for our young Warriors to begin their path to warriorship through the practice of deep, sustained, and meaningful learning of Indigenous history, science, languages, and social sciences including the study of the social dynamics of peace-making and conflict resolution.

Though Buffalo, Skip and Alex Hawk were not at Wounded Knee in 1973 and or carry a gun or packs of food as other young Warriors did back then, in 2001 they carried a video camera, a tape recorder, and several still cameras. They also carried paint and rubber cement for their History Day exhibit. In addition, they brought (and read) dozens of books. They studied, they wrote and revised,and revised again. Through the four stages I have described above, they became History Warriors. It was good to be at Medicine Wheel School and to do the History Day work with them. I thank you for reading the words of Buffalo, Skip, and Alex Hawk and the words of those who nurtured their warriorship. *Gakina Indinawemaaganag. Mitakuye Oyasin.* All my relations.

References

Advancement Project. (2010). *Test, punish, and push out: How "zero tolerance" and high-stakes testing funnel youth into the school-to-prison pipeline*. Re-

trieved Feb. 12, 2010 at http://www.advancementproject.org/sites/default/files/publications/01-EducationReport-2009v8-HiRes.pdf

Berliner, D., & Biddle, B. (1995). *The manufactured crisis: Myths, fraud, and the attack on America's public school.* Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Brown, D. (1970). *Bury my heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian history of the American west.* New York: Henry Holt.

Buswa, E., & Shawana, J. (1992). *Nishnaabe bimaadziwin kinoomaadwinan: Teachings of the medicine wheel*. West Bay, ON: Ojibwe Cultural Foundation.

Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Continuum.

George, D., & Hirnschall, H. (1994). *My heart soars*. Surrey, BC: Hancock House.

Goodman, R. (1992). *Lakota star knowledge: Studies in Lakota stellar theology.* Mission, SD: Sinte Gleska University.

Lave, J. (1996). The practice of learning. In S. Chaiklin & J. Lave (Eds.). *Understanding practice: perspectives on activity and context* (pp. 3-32). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loewen, J. (1995). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbooks got wrong*. New York: Touchstone.

McCartney, M. (1994). *The last of the medicine men.* Las Vegas, NV: KLVX-TV.

NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Educational Fund, Inc. (2007?). *Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline.* Retrieved Feb. 13, 2010 at http://www.naacpldf.org/content/pdf/pipeline/Dismantling_the_School_to_Prison_Pipeline.pdf

National History Day. (2000). *National History Day student contest guide*. College Park, MD: University of Maryland.

NCEE (National Commission on Excellence in Education). (1984). *A nation at risk.* Washington: U.S. Department of Education.

Pierson, F. (Director), Kerby, B. (Writer), Berner, F. (Producer), & Geiogamah, H. (Co-Producer) (1994). *Lakota woman: Siege at Wounded Knee* [Film]. Atlanta, GA: Turner Pictures.

Royal Albert Museum. (2005). *What is a Medicine Wheel?* Retrived February 18, 2010 at http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/human/archaeo/faq/medwhls.htm

Smith, P.C., & Warrior, R.A. (1996). *Like a hurricane: The Indian movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee*. New York: The New Press.

Spradley, J.P. (1980). *Participant observation.* Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.

Wolf, S. J. (2004). *Warriorship in practice: Identity and learning in an American Indian school.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado, Boulder.