NATIVE AMERICA SPEAKS: BLACKFEET COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

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NATIVE AMERICA SPEAKS: BLACKFEET COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE
IN GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

A Dissertation Presented

by

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To my advisor, Donal Carbaugh, thank you for guiding me along the path to finish this dissertation but most importantly, thank you for the conversations and the time well spent in the company of one another, and at times our families. I will certainly miss our walks along the side of Mt. Tom and the Norwottuck trail.

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for your support, encouragement, patience, and love. A special thanks to my mother Kris Grimshaw, her mother Jacqueline Nicholes, and her mother Edith Anderson, there are few gifts as cherished and valued as a mother’s love. I am who I am because of the love and support of generations of mothers. I know not how I would have gotten here without your encouragement, as Mamie used to say “jeg elsker dig”.
This study is a description and interpretation of a Blackfeet (Amskapi Piikuni) discourse of identity as expressed by Blackfeet presenters as part of the Native America Speaks (NAS) program in Glacier National Park, the longest-running Indigenous speaker series in the National Park Service. The study is based on what Blackfeet identify as being important parts of Blackfeet identity within this particular scene, as well as how they participate in that scene. Primary data include a corpus of 30 Blackfeet programs recorded during the summers of 2018 and 2019. Data were analyzed in response to an overarching research question which guides this study: How do Blackfeet presenters in NAS programs create and use discourses about their identity as Blackfeet people? The study is situated within the ethnography of communication research program and more specifically, the framework of cultural discourse analysis. The study employs cultural discourse analysis methods and concepts to describe and develop interpretations of how participants render their being “Blackfeet” symbolically meaningful, and of beliefs and values underpinning such meanings.
One finding of the study is discovery of a prominent discourse of Blackfeet identity which is comprised of two major symbolic units: one about who we (Blackfeet) are, another about who we are not. Major descriptive and interpretive findings within each, respectively, include (1) the use of the Blackfoot language as both demonstrative and an enactment of being “Blackfeet” but also as provides context for other things to be said including who they are, how they are related, where they are from, and how they interact with others; and, (2) as in contrast to their non-Native and Euro-American audience at NAS, juxtaposing the above with what they are called, who has control over them, where they are allowed to live, and how to interact with others.

This research demonstrates that Blackfeet talk about their being “Blackfeet” in deeply cultural ways, whose symbolic communicative means and meaning shape and are shaped by tangible social and material realities as evidenced in their communication with Euro-American others in attendance at NAS programs. This research too suggests how cultural discourses as created and used in a contemporary and intercultural scenes are rooted in historical and ongoing relationships as between the Blackfeet and their Euro-American audience.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | vii  |
| ABSTRACT | vi  |
| CHAPTER |  |
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1  |
| A. The Blackfeet and Glacier National Park | 5  |
| B. Native America Speaks | 8  |
| C. A brief history of my relationship with the Blackfeet/Piikuni | 13  |
| D. Focus and relevance of this dissertation | 20  |
| II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES | 25  |
| A. Native American communication and culture | 26  |
| B. Ethnography of communication on Euro/Native relations | 34  |
| C. Other Blackfeet literatures | 39  |
| III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY | 44  |
| A. Ethnography of Communication | 44  |
| B. Cultural Communication and Speech Codes Theory | 47  |
| C. Cultural Discourse Analysis | 50  |
| D. Research questions in theoretical context | 54  |
| E. Data collection | 59  |
| F. Data analysis | 63  |
| G. Preview of Chapters | 68  |
| H. Forthcoming chapters | 71  |
| IV. NATIVE AMERICA SPEAKS: A BLACKFEET SPEECH EVENT | 74  |
| A. Setting | 75  |
| B. Participants | 79  |
| C. Ends | 86  |
| D. Act topics and sequence | 90  |
| E. Key | 98  |
| F. Instruments | 100  |
| G. Norms | 102  |
| H. Genre | 107  |
| I. Summary of findings in relation to forthcoming analyses | 108  |

viii
V. “I’M PIIKUNI AND PIIKUNI JUST MEANS ME”: AN EXPLICIT DISCOURSE OF BLACKFEET IDENTITY .......................................................................................................................... 111

A. Introductions and self-identification .............................................................. 112

1. Rising Sun 7/5/18 (RS070518) ........................................................................ 113
2. Two Medicine 6/29/19 (TM062919) ................................................................. 117
3. Two Medicine 7/17/19 (TM071719) ................................................................. 119
4. Two Medicine 7/10/19 (TM071019) ................................................................. 123
5. Lake McDonald Lodge 7/13/18 (LM071318) .................................................. 125

B. Summary analysis: Identity as a central hub of concern ............................... 127

VI. “WE THINK ABOUT OURSELVES IN VERY NUANCED WAYS”: A DISCOURSE OF BLACKFEET IDENTITY ALONG THREE RADIANTS ....... 135

A. The Nitsitapi and the Blackfoot Confederacy .................................................. 138

1. Two Medicine 7/7/18 (TM070718) ................................................................. 138
2. Two Medicine 6/29/19 (TM062919) ................................................................. 141
3. “All Blackfeet are Blackfoot but not all Blackfoot are Blackfeet”..... 149

B. Blackfeet connections to a homeland ............................................................. 151

1. Two Medicine 7/4/18 (TM070418) ................................................................. 151
2. Lake McDonald Lodge 7/13/18 (LM071318) ............................................... 153
3. “We were always here”.................................................................................... 156

C. Speaking niitsii•po’•sin (the Blackfoot language)
and telling Blackfeet stories ............................................................................. 159

1. Rising Sun 6/27/19 (RS062719) ................................................................. 159
2. Two Medicine 7/7/18 (TM070718) ................................................................. 162
3. “Whether you’re asking em a name it has an origin or where they’re from, you’re asking of their story” ......................................................... 165

D. Summary analysis: Identity, kinship, place, and stories in hubs and radiants 167

VII. “WE WERE NEVER INDIANS”: A DISCOURSE OF BLACKFEET INDENTITY IN VACILLATING FORM ........................................................................................................... 172

A. The Blackfoot language (niitsii•po’•sin) and cultures in conversation....... 174
1. Rising Sun 6/27/19 (RS062719) .............................................................. 175
2. “The Piikuni were never Indians” ....................................................... 206

VIII. CONCLUSION .................................................................................. 213

A. Nature, scope, and limitations of the study ........................................... 213
B. Central findings .................................................................................... 216
C. Potential implications and contributions ............................................... 219
D. Future research ..................................................................................... 225

BIBLIOGRAPHY ....................................................................................... 229
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In July of 2018, while gathering pilot data for this study, I was staying with my close friend Robert Hall at his place in Browning, Montana on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. Having arranged previously to stay with Robert for the better part of a week I arrived on the 3rd, knowing Robert had a scheduled program for Native America Speaks with the Āasāisstṯ Language Society the following evening. Having never actually been to Browning before and knowing how busy the week would yet be attending NAS programs all over the Glacier National Park, we spent that first day driving around, getting acquainted with the reservation. Robert drove and spoke, oftentimes at great length about specific places and landmarks both within Browning and across the reservation as it extends north towards Canada and west towards Glacier National Park. As it was my first time seeing the reservation I did my best to listen carefully to what he was saying, asking questions about things he pointed out as well as others that he did not. All the while, trying to soak up everything I was hearing and observing, Buffalo roaming the plains between the stretch of road from East Glacier and Browning, the Museum of the Plains Indian, the powwow grounds, where Robert teaches, the high school, and my favorite the sheer magnificence of the image looking west across the plains back at the Rocky Mountains, which the Blackfeet call the ‘Backbone of the World’.

The next morning, Robert told me that we would be meeting up with his Blackfoot language teacher/mentor William Big Bull, who was coming down from Alberta, Canada, for dinner before their program at the Two Medicine campground amphitheater at 8 pm. The drive from Robert’s place in Browning to the St. Mary Village
lodge took a little over one and a half hours, we spent the time talking about how Robert had come to know and work with William Big Bull. At this point, Robert informed me that William would be giving the presentation that night and not himself. The two, along with Sterling HolyWhiteMountain had recently established the Āasāisst·tō Language Society which was scheduled as part of Native America Speaks programs for that summer. Sometimes Robert would present and at other times it was William, the latter mainly depending on when/if William could get down and back across the border. We got to the lodge in good time and met up with William for dinner. He talked about what had been going on in Alberta recently including his recent attendance at the Calgary Stampede, an annual rodeo, exhibition, and festival held every July in Alberta. Before we knew it, it was almost 8 pm, Robert and I raced back down the western edge of the Blackfeet reservation into Glacier National Park and up to the Two Medicine campground. Arriving a little bit late and knowing he needed to kill some time before William Big Bull would arrive Robert prepared to speak to the audience that had gathered.

Following brief remarks from National Park Service ranger Pat Hagan, he introduced Robert Hall and William Big Bull to the gathered audience. My first experience with Native America Speaks, the longest-running Indigenous people’s speaker series in the National Park Service system, began as I would later come to recognize, in a patterned way. Robert spoke first in niitsii•po’•”sin before translating:

Oki
Oki nistowinika Piikuni
I’m Piikuni
and Piikuni just means me

1 As will later be explained by actual Blackfeet in the course of this dissertation, niitsii•po’•”sin means ‘the real talk’. It is the Blackfoot language belonging to the people of the Blackfoot confederacy.
I laughed, as did the rest of the audience, as did Robert chuckling at what he had just said before elaborating on what he meant by Piikuni including who they are. What appears at first as a short and curt expression of his identity will later be shown to be a rich source of cultural meaning including what such terms like Piikuni mean to those Blackfeet, like Robert, who present themselves as such.

A little over a year later having attended more than a dozen NAS programs and well on my way to attending and recording some thirty NAS programs I was back in Montana attending another of Robert’s NAS programs. He began as he did in 2018 speaking first in niitsii•po’•”sin2 before translating, this time speaking more directly about who he is and what it means:

Oki
Oki nistooeshencasomonokikasts stonokapipikuni oketo
to amskapi piikuni nitsatota pisanikasoko ah
nitsitapota ni teskinimatiokiop ah tawestamatoskiyo ah
nitsitapoksins
so hello
my name is onokaikasts
it kinda means holy elk shirt
I’m Piikuni
and I’ll hopefully get to what that means if I
don’t forget
I’m from the rez here
the Amskapi Piikuni
that means the Southern Piikuni
we’re not Blackfeet
we’re Blackfeet in English

2 Furthermore, as there is of yet a lack of agreement on a consistent orthography for writing the Blackfoot language I have chosen to write, whenever possible, using the system created by William Big Bull as it is argued by some Blackfeet to be the only orthography that can accurately represent the sounds of niitsii•po’•”sin. Unfortunately, many words in niitsii•po’•”sin were unable to be correctly written in the course of this dissertation due to constraints prohibiting me from acquiring a dictionary of Blackfoot words using the Big Bull orthography. That is, the ongoing pandemic has prohibited William Big Bull from safely traveling from the reserves in Canada into the U.S. or from allowing Robert Hall to travel into Canada from the reservation in Montana, USA. I fully intend to fix any spellings according to the Big Bull spelling system as soon as possible and before any kind of publication of materials from the dissertation.
but in our language we call ourselves Piikuni
doesn’t even mean Blackfeet
I’ll tell you what it means later but you gotta stick around

Those unfamiliar with these ways of speaking might hear what appears to be a
contradiction of sorts amongst identity terms as Robert proclaims his being Piikuni,
Amskapi Piikuni, not Blackfeet, but Blackfeet in English. Yet, to those familiar with
these ways of speaking, particularly other Blackfeet/Piikuni, this kind of introduction and
means of self-identification is sensible and to be expected in such social scenes as Native
America Speaks. The introductions above are perhaps a fitting introduction to this
dissertation then as they ask us to ponder when Blackfeet say “I’m Piikuni,” what does it
mean to be “Piikuni?”; and relatedly, what does it mean to be “Blackfeet?”.

Answering these and related questions would prove strikingly difficult without
engaging with and studying the actual communication practices of Blackfeet/Piikuni. To
be sure, these ways of speaking about being Blackfeet/Piikuni are a product, at least in
part, of the particular socio-cultural scene in which they are produced, the Native
America Speaks program. Perhaps an important first question for many readers is: “who
are the Blackfeet?” but, for the moment, let us overlook that question. To be clear, this
dissertation is not about who is or is not Blackfeet/Piikuni. Such discussions of
Indigenous/Native American/American Indian identity and any criteria used to assess
who qualifies as having claim to those identities are better discussed in other places (but
see Pratt, Pratt & Dixon, 2014 for an investigation of communicating Indian-ness).

Rather, my interest in this study lies in demonstrating that these and other ways of
speaking about Blackfeet/Piikuni identity are part of complex, coherent, distinctly
patterned, and historically rooted expressive systems. To that end, I describe and interpret
several prominent ways of speaking about how Blackfeet/Piikuni people communicate their identity within the socio-cultural context of Native America Speaks. Put another way, my interest in this study is how/what do Blackfeet identify as being important parts of their selves within this particular socio-cultural scene, and how do they participate in this scene given that communication practices themselves are always situated within specific scenes? In other words, my efforts in this dissertation are focused upon describing and interpreting the common symbols, symbolic forms, and meanings that Blackfeet/Piikuni employ when spoken in the Native America Speaks program including what these symbols and symbolic forms say about being Blackfeet/Piikuni, and what they say is not Blackfeet/Piikuni.

**A. The Blackfeet and Glacier National Park**

As chapters IV-VII will later describe and interpret in much deeper ways what it means to be Blackfeet, readers who are unfamiliar with the Blackfeet will likely benefit from some additional general context about them, including Blackfeet relationships with Glacier National Park and, in the following section, the Native America Speaks program. While Blackfeet can be found across the United States and internationally, most reside on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Northern Montana, just east of present-day Glacier National Park, and just south of the Canadian border. Prior to 1895 and following the 1855 Lame Bull Treaty, Blackfeet boundaries on its western edge included lands south of the forty-ninth parallel going from peak to peak through the Rocky Mountains (Farr, 2001). Unfortunately but perhaps unsurprisingly, the land which now constitutes the eastern half of Glacier National Park was acquired through the forceful encouragement of
the Blackfeet in 1895 to sell over one million acres of their reservation lands, fearing a starvation winter the likes of which had decimated 1/3rd of the Blackfeet tribe less than a decade earlier (Foley, 1974; Rosier, 1999).

While Blackfeet initially retained rights of use and access they were later stripped of these rights with the 1910 Glacier National Park Act, which superseded the 1895 agreement that provided for the Blackfeet rights of use of ‘public lands’³. Such claims as to the treaty rights of Blackfeet are more fully explored elsewhere (see Ashby, 1985; Kipp, 2002; and Presti, 2005). Despite their legal removal, the Blackfeet remained a necessary component for the publicity of Glacier National Park. Referring to them originally as the “Glacier Park Indians” and describing them as “vanishing” made the Blackfeet an important part of any vacation to Glacier National Park (Spence, 1996).

Indeed, Americans have long celebrated the uninhabited landscapes of national parks as remnants of a nature untouched by humanity. However, national parks remain more representative of old fantasies about a continent awaiting ‘discovery’ than the actual conditions and peoples who knew these places. National parks and preserve areas did not become uninhabited until after the Indigenous peoples who called them home had been confined to their reservations (Keller & Turek, 1999; Spence, 1996). Whereas national parks and other protected areas are generally viewed by Euro-Americans as places separated from everyday life, Indigenous people like the Blackfeet view themselves as inextricably linked and an integral part of specific park landscapes (McAvoy, McDonald & Carlson, 2003).

³ In recent years, the National Park Service has begun allowing the Blackfeet with varying degrees to assert certain rights of use from the 1895 agreement.
Often called the “Crown of the Continent,” Glacier National Park with its pristine forests, alpine meadows, rugged mountains, and spectacular lakes has its own complicated history with the Blackfeet Nation in northern Montana. In part, because landscapes can represent different things to different people, parklands are oftentimes contested terrain, home to competing stories and discourses, sites of struggles over power and the rights of Indigenous peoples (Feld & Basso, 1996; Yung, Freimund & Belsky, 2003; Carbaugh & Rudnick, 2006). According to Basso (1996, p. 53), “attachments to geographic localities contribute fundamentally to the formation of personal and social identities”. Culturally then, non-Native Euro-Americans come to see and hear locations within Glacier National Park as they consist mainly of geographic facts and white characters and as produced through a discourse of discovery and development (Carbaugh & Rudnick, 2006). In contrast, Blackfeet identity is inextricably linked to parklands through the use of social memory and storytelling and includes a discourse about their homeland and its places (Carbaugh & Rudnick, 2006; Craig, 2008; Craig, Yung & Borrie, 2012).

Returning to the matter at hand, let us fast forward several decades to 1984 with the foundation of the Native America Speaks program in Glacier National Park as the only national park sponsored program to actively solicit engagement with the Indigenous people who maintain connections to that land since time immemorial. According to current superintendent of Glacier National Park Jeff Mow4, “The Native America Speaks program is an opportunity for our tribal neighbors to tell their own story about their

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4 In the course of writing this dissertation since my time in the field in 2018-19 Jeff Mow has announced that his eight-year tenure will end at the end of 2021 with his retirement as superintendent of Glacier National Park
relationship to Glacier National Park and its landscape” (National Park Service, 2019). As one of the most popular programs in Glacier National Park, the Native America Speaks program has helped to develop and repair relationships with the Blackfeet as well as the Salish, Kootenai, and Kalispell. Accordingly, tourist destinations like Glacier National Park have become a key place where vacationers and sightseers have an opportunity to see and interact with Native Americans and listen to their stories.

B. Native America Speaks

According to estimates of the number of visitors from 2008-2020, Glacier National Park attracted approximately 3.05 million visitors in 2019 during the time primary fieldwork for this dissertation took place. According to the Glacier National Park Conservancy, which not only funds over 100 events in Glacier each year for Native America Speaks but also employs a full-time ranger to enhance relationships with local tribal communities, approximately 7,500 visitors attend NAS programs each year. Celebrating its 35th year as of summer 2019 Native America Speaks remains unique as it is the longest consecutively running Indigenous people’s speaker series in the National Park Service system. Native America Speaks programs provide a window into the meaning and history of Glacier National Park from the perspectives of the Blackfeet, Salish, Kootenai, and Kalispell peoples at locations both within park boundaries and, as of 2016, on the Blackfeet Reservation. Native America Speaks programs are promoted as an opportunity for local tribal members to share their rich knowledge of the history and culture of Native America with Glacier National Park visitors through singing, storytelling, presentations, and hands-on learning.
In recent years the Native America Speaks program has become a rich educational resource for those interested in listening to and sharing knowledge from Indigenous peoples about their specific tribal connections with what is now called Glacier National Park. During the Summer of 2018 as part of a pilot study for this dissertation, I spent two weeks living on the Blackfeet reservation with a Blackfeet host and attended six NAS programs on both the west and east sides of Glacier National Park. When it comes to the Blackfeet, whose presentations mostly occur on the eastern side of the park in addition to those on their reservation, visitors to Glacier National Park like myself might hear Blackfeet speak of their kinship to the greater Blackfoot Confederacy and their three sister tribal groups (the Siksika, Kainai, and Apatohsi Piikuni) who live north of the border in what is now Alberta, Canada as in the following:

our traditional name is amskapi piikuni so we’re part of the Blackfoot Confederacy we got our relatives across the border we got three tribes across the border

These Blackfeet might mention too that tribes in the Blackfoot confederacy speak the same language niitsii•po’•”sin, and recognize one another and call themselves Nitsitapi, the real people. Those who speak it might share some of their Blackfoot language including the names of places, animals, and material things in niitsii•po’•”sin. Such as in the following:

just to to give you a little about who we are um there’s uh Sikisiksitapis uh Sikisiksitapi and that’s like the Blackfoot Confederacy and in the Blackfoot Confederacy historically there were six bands out of those six bands two of em don’t speak niitsii•po’•”sin four of em do niitsii•po’•”sin is the word for our language and it kind of means like the real talk
Blackfeet will likely say they have always been here upon these lands, since time
immemorial, and that every fiber and cell of their being comes from this landscape. These
Blackfeet might also say that archeological sites place their people in these areas for at
least 13,000 years and that mitochondrial DNA analysis reveals that Blackfeet people
have been here for at least 25,000 years. Most Blackfeet will share a story or two or three
about the Blackfeet trickster Napi, or about Star myths or other Cultural origins (see
Howe, 2019 for a discussion of Napi stories but also LaPier, 2017; Thompson, Kootenai
Culture Committee and Pikunni Traditional Association, 2015; and Bullchild, 1985 for
their discussion and sharing of Star myths and other origins). These Blackfeet stories
have been told for thousands of years and some relate explicitly to spaces that can still be
visited today. For example, consider the following:

what I’ll be sharing with you are stories of- that
Blackfeet people have told for the better part of
fourteen thousand years uhm we have archeological
evidence that puts us here in this landscape uh since
that period of time and also uh traces our stories to
this landscape

Oftentimes Blackfeet connect such stories to a discussion of current parklands including
the trail system or place names like Two Medicine. An overarching thread across such
voices suggests that being Blackfeet is about knowing who you are, your relations, where
you come from, and what you are doing.

In this study, I show that these and other ways of speaking about what it means to
be Blackfeet are part of complex, coherent, distinctly patterned, and historically rooted
expressive systems used by Blackfeet presenters within the communication event that is
Native America Speaks programs. That is, although there are certainly other discourses
about what it means to be Blackfeet throughout the tribe and within the greater Blackfoot
Confederacy, I argue that a majority of those discourses are inaccessible to non-Blackfeet persons. Thus, given the prominence of Native America Speaks as the longest consecutively running Indigenous speaker series in the National Park System and the opportunity it provides visiting tourists and vacationers to listen to tribal stories about Glacier National Park and its landscape, I argue that there exists a coherent discourse which is recognized as “Blackfeet” by the visiting tourists and vacationers who attend such programs. In part, I call and recognize this discourse as “Blackfeet” given Blackfeet presenters are also always introduced as such by GNP interpretive rangers before their NAS programs.

All of this is to say that the Native America Speaks program is a rich site for the examination of not only Blackfeet discourses about who they are and the place now called Glacier National Park, but of intercultural encounters that occur between Blackfeet presenters and their mostly non-Native Euro-American audience. When the Blackfeet speak about who they are and their relation to the park, both historically and contemporarily, they do so in a way that is rich with deep cultural meaning and values that are indicative of a “Blackfeet” way of being, acting, relating, feeling, and dwelling. As is discussed in greater detail in Chapter III this way of conceptualizing the communication and construction of being, acting, relations, dwelling, and feeling is theoretically based (Carbaugh, 2007). However, such encounters are even further complicated given the cultural differences that exist between the Blackfeet, who can share a profoundly different worldview than that of their non-Native audience (Bear, 2000). To reiterate, my primary interest lies in answering how Blackfeet/Piikuni people communicate their identity, and what it is they have to say about who they are, how they
are related, what they are doing together, how they feel about what is going on, and about the nature of things within the social scene of Native America Speaks.

To accomplish this, I describe and interpret what the Blackfeet identify as being important parts of themselves within NAS, and how, these Blackfeet participate in NAS given that communication practices themselves are situated within specific scenes making certain practices like discussing who one is and what that means, constrained or otherwise impacted by the demands and/or limitations of the intercultural scene between the Blackfeet and their non-Native audience. Thus, this dissertation examines by employing an ethnographic and culturally communicative approach, the nature and meaning of Blackfeet communication in the Native America Speaks program. My focus is on explicating cultural premises of value and belief regarding discourses of “Blackfeet” identity insofar as Blackfeet construct and share them with their audiences. Utilizing cultural discourse theory, the following questions will be posed: in this Native America Speaks communication, how do Blackfeet/Piikuni people communicate their identity? That is what do they have to say about who they are, how they are related, what they are doing together, how they feel about what is going on, and about the nature of things. Put another way, what do Blackfeet identify as being important parts of themselves within this particular social scene, and how do they participate in this scene given that communication practices are situated within specific scenes? And, subsequently, what do these discourses reveal about Blackfeet connection to the land now called Glacier National Park, and how might insight into these discourses provide a greater understanding of the Blackfeet in particular and Native American discourses in general as when they engage in intercultural exchange. A secondary point of inquiry asks how the
communication of Blackfeet Native America Speaks programs manage Native and non-Native cultures in conversation given the unique opportunity these programs provide.

C. A brief history of my relationship with the Blackfeet/Piikuni

Before going much further it seems pertinent to comment as to my beginnings with this project, including my relationships with specific Blackfeet without whom I might otherwise not be writing this dissertation, today. Again, this dissertation is first and foremost about an investigation and analysis of Blackfeet communication practices about “Blackfeet” identity within the scene of Native America Speaks programs. As a scholar who is non-Native but interested in Blackfeet and Native American communication practices, it is important to recognize that I too engage in a type of intercultural contact by writing about the Blackfeet as someone who is not Blackfeet. If this kind of work is not done carefully and correctly this dissertation could further contribute to the kind of incorrect and stereotypical understandings of Native American peoples that are a hallmark of settler colonialism in the United States of America (see Wolfe, 2006).

As an ethnographer of communication, I am interested in the actual communication practices that occur in a given scene. That is if participants “say” (implicitly and/or explicitly) that their identities rely on particular features, then cultural analyses should take up that lead, at least for a time. By focusing on a particular scene of Blackfeet communication practices I want to draw attention to the communicative practices used in those setting and participants’ sense of the communicative practices used there. That is, both how and what Blackfeet have to say about themselves. In turn, my ethnographic interpretations are creatively formulated, by describing Blackfeet
communicative practices in NAS, and by being aware of participants’ reports about those practices and scenes.

However, at a broader level, there is also the cultural scene of the Blackfeet to consider. For this dissertation, that meant a kind of investigation whereby I familiarized myself to the extent possible with the larger Blackfeet system of communication of which any particular situated practice is a part. That is, whether or not participants say it is relevant or not, there is an expectation and obligation to know something about Blackfeet history, society, economy, politics, educational system, culture, and language. Ideally, I would want to know all possible scenes in the community and the communicative practices and social identities which make those practices what they are. While several texts are mentioned in Chapter II which further developed my understanding of the Blackfeet, I also lean upon my personal experiences with Blackfeet while attending the University of Montana, and, in the course of this dissertation, living for a short time on the Blackfeet reservation and visiting Glacier National Park. These experiences and more inform my general understanding of the Blackfeet. Yet, I recognize the limits of my knowledge of the Blackfeet and acknowledge accordingly that any mistakes made in the course of my ethnographic work describing and interpreting Blackfoot communication practices are solely my own. However, the opportunities I have had to learn from and about Blackfeet culture including learning to speak some words and phrases in niitsii•po’•’sin (Blackfoot language), have become an indispensable general resource with which to aid in my description and interpretation of Blackfeet communication in Native America Speaks.
Perhaps it was the exclusion of Indigenous people in my general education which initially encouraged me to seek out a B.A. in Native American Studies while attending the University of Montana. During those first years in Missoula, I benefitted immensely from the kindness, generosity, and inclusivity of Montana’s diverse tribal populations. The friendships I developed at the University of Montana specifically with Blackfeet, Crow, Arapaho, and other Native American peoples affected me profoundly, perhaps none more so integral as the opportunity I had to learn to speak Arapaho with S. Neyooxet Greymorning (Arapaho) and meeting Robert Hall (Blackfeet). Together with our classmates, Robert and I bonded and built a friendship based on our learning to speak and see the world around us much as an Arapaho child would have in the days before European contact (see Greymorning, Hall & HolyWhiteMountain 2018 for a discussion about his method for teaching students Arapaho and working with Robert). At the time Robert and I were learning Arapaho from Neyooxet, Robert was beginning to take note of Neyooxet’s method of instruction as a means to aid in revitalizing his own Indigenous Blackfoot language (see Hall, 2018 for a discussion of literacy and revitalizing endangered languages).

In those days, Robert and I would often talk for hours at a time about what we were learning with Neyooxet including the ramifications of what I was having my eyes opened to. In learning about Neyooxet’s Arapaho culture through learning to speak Arapaho something fundamentally changed in my understanding of the limits of the English language and, too, of the Western worldview (see also Bear, 2000; Bear & Head, 2004). That is, in the process of learning Arapaho with Robert and having the kinds of discussions we were having, I felt a sense of waking up, *listening* to what the Arapaho
language was telling me. At the same time, I was recognizing the limits of the English language to accurately translate what the Arapaho language itself was making inherently clear (see also Bear & Head, 2004 for their discussion of the conceptual anatomy of the Blackfoot word).

As but one example, especially since that feature is present in the Blackfoot language as well, I remember around the time we were learning colors we had to listen very carefully to how words were conjugated differently depending on what it was we were describing as having that particular color. To make a long story short the feature I noticed is often called a grammar of animacy (see also Kimmerer, 2017). That is, depending on the kind of thing being described, the word for that descriptor would be given in one form if the item being described was considered to be inanimate, and that word would be different if the item was considered as animate. Ever since, it has not been lost on me how different the relationship between humans and nature and, between humans and other-than-human beings, must be for a culture and people who recognize animacy in their language versus my English language which has no such concept. To ensure I do not propagate an incorrect misunderstanding here, this is not to say that the Blackfeet who for example treat the word for a car as having animacy, think that cars are alive, but rather that those old Blackfeet people who created a word for car saw how it could make itself run and as such accounted for that ability/energy when they called it “for some reason it runs”. My point is that I wondered then as I do now how different other human’s relationships might be with mother nature, and one another if only their languages accounted for the life energy that flows through all living things, and the life force that binds those things together.
It was about this time I first considered what it would mean for Indigenous children to grow up only speaking English and to not know or be able to learn their heritage mother tongue and the impact that could have on their sense of self and self-worth. I think too I was beginning to recognize the role of communication in identity formation and the role of communicative practices for producing and reifying sociocultural identities that would eventually bring me to pursuing a masters and now doctorate in communication studies, focusing on communication practices both by and about Native American and other Indigenous peoples.

After Robert graduated and he moved back to the reservation we remained close friends, although our discussions mostly focused on his efforts to aid in revitalizing niitsii•po’•”sin and his struggles with that. At times, Robert would find his way back to Missoula, whatever the occasion, and we would make sure to get together for a meal and to chat each other up as we had years prior. When Robert began pursuing an Interdisciplinary Masters in Indigenous Language Revitalization at the University of Montana he would send me pieces of his thesis. I would immediately read them and make sure to talk his ear off about it the next time we had a chance. I think something about Robert’s going back to the University, and my lack of intellectual challenges while waiting tables, pushed me to pursue post-secondary education in communication studies. Once more I found myself in beautiful Missoula, Montana and although many of the Natives I knew had graduated and moved back to their reservations like Robert, or elsewhere, some of them remained involved with higher education and insofar as it was immediately relevant to me were assisting other Native American students to succeed at...
the University despite the challenges many face being away from their home communities and being another minoritized group in a predominantly white setting.

Back in Missoula, I found myself teaching Native American students in my public speaking classroom, some of whom were Blackfeet, doing my best to be responsive and culturally sensitive to their challenges at the University. In my studies, I began learning as much as I could about theories of communication and trying to pinpoint my place in the field. I found myself becoming interested in the communication of identity and culturally communicative practices related to identity, both my own and others. Despite a lack of coursework offerings in intercultural communication, I sought out as much as I could about Native American communication practices; culture, education, language revitalization, whatever I could get my hands on. I remember reading, for example, about razzing as a form of collective membering amongst Native Americans on college campuses (Pratt, 1996) and reflecting on my own experience witnessing this practice during my time building relationships with Blackfeet students during my undergrad. My interest in Native American and Indigenous Studies continued in my pursuit of a masters and I found myself writing about, at different times; reports of professors of Native American studies and their interactions with students who challenged their ability and/or right to teach Native American studies; the symbolic representations in National Geographic’s Indian Country map; and, my thesis which examined how synecdoche and ideographs function in the competing discourses around the “Change the Name” campaign and the now mascot-less Washington Football Team (see Grimshaw, 2016).

In hindsight, I believe, in part, what drove my inquiry was a realization that as I was learning more about other people I came to better understand myself. And, as I came
to better understand my communication practices through theory and praxis I would also
come to better understand those of others. When I got to the University of Massachusetts-
Amherst, to begin pursuit of a Ph.D. I was still in the process of trying to figure out what
exactly I wanted to do for my dissertation and how I would approach that project. Around
the time that I began studying in Massachusetts, Robert informed me that he had begun
giving cultural presentations to tourists in Glacier National Park as part of a program
called Native America Speaks. He explained that these programs were done primarily
during the summers when he was otherwise free of his duties as the coordinator for
Native Studies for the Browning Public Schools System. I had been working on a project
about the use of metaphor by some Blackfeet, including Robert’s work with
niitsii•po’•”sin, dealing with what Carbaugh called “native realism,” (2001) but was
struggling to organize the somewhat sparse data I had into a strong enough and explicit
argument. Sometime in the spring of 2018, I reached out to Robert about wanting to visit
him on the reservation for a bit of time and visit Glacier to see just what exactly he was
getting up to with this Native America Speaks program.

Although I had visited Glacier National Park before, my 2018 trip provided me
the opportunity to observe and record six programs from a variety of Blackfeet
individuals including one from Robert and another from his mentor, William Big Bull. I
also met an aunty of Robert’s, Darnell Rides At The Door, and her husband Smokey
Rides At The Door, whom both give programs as part of NAS. Upon meeting Darnell
and letting her know I was staying with Robert she asked if I was going to be around all
summer. In the course of her program that she gave that night, Darnell commented not
only on my visiting from Massachusetts but also ‘razzed’ me in a way that was both
warm and welcoming. I was happy enough of course to assist the audience in giving them something to laugh about. I too met other presenters during that trip including NAS co-founder Jack Gladstone and his daughter Mariah Gladstone. While most of my days were spent exploring Glacier and driving to and from the specific campgrounds where I attended programs in the early evenings, the nights were equally long heading back to the reservation to stay up until the early morning hours conversing with Robert until his partner would tell him to come to bed.

As mentioned above, I heard a variety of things from Blackfeet presenters about who they are and what it means to be Blackfeet. I talked with Robert and other Blackfeet about some of my observations and left the reservation after a ten-day visit thoroughly exhausted, humbled, and grateful for the experience. Upon returning to Massachusetts and working with some of my pilot data I had what felt like a million ideas of what was going on in these NAS programs. I knew that I wanted to return to the Blackfeet reservation for the summer of 2019 and for a longer period of time, as long as I could, to record more Blackfeet presentations for this dissertation.

D. Focus and relevance of this dissertation

Although I knew where I wanted to conduct my ethnographic work, it became painstakingly clear to me that, for this study to be practical and doable, I would need to narrow down the scope of my project. My committee members pushed and encouraged me to narrow it down even further than I initially did. I feel that while I eventually took their advice I probably could have heeded it earlier from the get-go. I ended up deciding to focus my research on Blackfeet discourses about themselves. That is, I heard Blackfeet
presenters express the importance and weight of the symbols, symbolic forms, and meanings that were active as when Blackfeet say “I’m Blackfeet” or “I’m Piikuni”. Again, I argue that these ways of speaking about Blackfeet identity are understood and commonly heard as a “Blackfeet” identity by those attending Native America Speaks programs. My reasons for doing so are explained in greater detail below.

First, however, I want to make an emphatic note: in choosing this focus, although it will occasionally not appear to be the case, I am not interested in exclusively focusing on the various identity terms used by Blackfeet presenters and their specific interrelationships. That is, although the Blackfeet sometimes talk about their identity using a myriad of terms including Piikuni, Blackfeet, Amskapi Piikuni, Nitsitapi, Blackfeet Indian, and South Piegan, I am not exclusively concerned with a programmatic analysis of key identity terms and their relationships. As it will be shown, Blackfeet think about themselves in very nuanced ways, however, rarely do they do so explicitly insofar as their audience would come to understand their being informed of these things.

I choose to focus on discourses of “Blackfeet” identity after listening to what Blackfeet voices readily audible in NAS programs. In discussing this “Blackfeet” identity, I emphasize those communicative acts specific to the communicative scene of Native America Speaks. By focusing on the communicative scene of NAS programs I hope to demonstrate how/what Blackfeet identify as being important parts of their selves within this specific social scene, and, in turn, to show what/how the Blackfeet participate in this scene, by enacting their identities. This discourse-oriented approach led me to focus, not only on what discourses of “Blackfeet” identity have to say about who they are, but also how they are related, what they are doing, how they feel about what is going
on, and the nature of things. As will be shown, this includes investigations along several radiants of meaning that coalesce around this dissertation’s central focus on a hub of “Blackfeet” identity but, also make relevant discourses of dwelling, relations, and action (see Chapters V and VI, respectively). I would also come to recognize that “Blackfeet” identity was also expressed in a vacillating form such as encompasses the above by being juxtaposed to it. Thus, I also investigated what comments such as “that’s not Blackfeet” and “that’s not us” meant for further developing an understanding of what it means to be “Blackfeet” (see Chapter VII).

In part, I chose these foci because Blackfeet voices in NAS made clear these radiants of meaning were integral to what they (Blackfeet) identify as being important parts of their being “Blackfeet/Piikuni”. As a result, it became necessary to also engage with Blackfeet discourses about place, relationships, and action insofar as they were linked to the communication practices of Blackfeet in NAS. For example, this meant engaging with some of the stories that Blackfeet share with their audiences as they (Blackfeet) suggest these stories, both specifically and in their general form, is an important part of Blackfeet sense of self including their participation within the scene of NAS. That is, it became apparent from listening to these Blackfeet voices that use of key identity terms like “Blackfeet” and “Piikuni” are closely related to a Blackfeet discourse about where they are (their traditional homelands), how they interact with one another and others (sharing stories), and relationships (Blackfeet kinship as Nitsitapi).

In part, I chose to focus on a discourse of Blackfeet identity because of the common cultural stereotypes of Native Americans, as vanishing, savages, extinct, conquered, and assimilated. Such stereotypes are frequently perpetuated at least in part
due to the media’s influence and transmission of images of Native American/Indigenous peoples as are too often based primarily on misinformation. As a result, most people hold a flawed understanding of actual Native American people. That is, at a general level most Euro-Americans know little to nothing about actual Native American peoples beyond whatever images the media might have them consume. I knew from Blackfeet acquaintances and friends, in particular, that they think about and understand themselves in nuanced ways. In choosing to conduct this study, I aimed to illuminate such diversity and make it otherwise audible and accessible.

Moreover, despite Native American people like the Blackfeet being a focus of study for disciplines like anthropology, sociology, and linguistics, little research has been devoted to identifying or describing the communicative behavior of those peoples including forms of public oratory, humor, listening, singing, and uses of hedging (but see Chapter II for a discussion of several that do). By way of this project, I hope to contribute to this growing area of study. That is, I want to demonstrate how “Blackfeet” can be understood within the scene of Native America Speaks programs by looking not only at what it is they have to say about who they are but how they communicate such within this scene.

I also want to encourage similar kinds of projects concerning Native American communicative practices specifically, and Indigenous communication practices more generally. Although such projects come with additional risks and responsibilities, I firmly believe that increased interpretive study and collaboration in such instances will provide for greater and more accurate contributions from the social sciences, especially regarding Indigenous people like the Blackfeet. I should also like to demonstrate that such projects
need to be approached in a specific way and afforded additional considerations as were briefly mentioned above. I too want to encourage greater inclusion of Indigenous scholars to share their understandings of their communicative behavior and everyday experiences.

In their discussion of American Indian identity which emphasized the communicative acts and contexts specific to the American Indian experience Pratt, Pratt, and Dixon (2014) suggest that although there are criteria that one might use to assess someone’s being Indian, “culturally competent Indians,… express their identities through communicative patterns,” which can attest to how “Indian people tacitly define themselves in their everyday interactions, thus communicating their Indian-ness” (p. 4, emphasis original). That is, the “doing, being, and becoming” an Indian or culturally competent tribal member “is not something one can simply be, but is something one becomes and/or is, in and as the doing of being and becoming a real Indian” (Weider & Pratt, 1990).

My overarching hope and aim in doing this research and writing this dissertation are to thus help people hear “Blackfeet” more deeply and understand their ways of speaking and thinking, so that we may, perhaps, begin to engage with the Blackfeet, and others, in more responsible and hopefully more respectful terms. Such may, perhaps loftily, open up the possibility of bridging common ground and better understanding cultures in conversation. If this project helps others to gain similar insight and understandings, I will be grateful.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

This dissertation is related topically to a variety of literature but perhaps most explicitly those on Native American communication and culture, particularly those regarding communicative practices related to cultural identity, and intercultural encounters. Yet, these literatures are themselves diverse in content and form, finding homes in assorted disciplines including but not limited to Communication studies, Anthropology, Museum studies, Environmental studies, and Native American and Indigenous studies. This dissertation too is theoretically and methodologically related to a growing body of literature focused on cultural communication, sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, and cultural discourse analysis.

This review focuses on several sets of literature most closely related to this study, especially valuable are those which share both topical concerns and methodological approaches. These sets of literature have origins in ethnographic investigations of Euro-American and Native American (especially Blackfeet) communication about who they are, how they are related, what they are doing together, how they feel about what is going on, and about the nature of things; and in ethnographic investigations of intercultural interactions (especially those between Euro-Americans and Native Americans). However, insofar as these literatures are presented as somewhat distinct bodies of scholarship they oftentimes overlap and intersect with one other. At a somewhat broader level, there is also abundant literature that deals directly with the Blackfeet people as both a subject (see Dempsey & Moir, 1989 for their Bibliography of the Blackfoot) and from the Blackfeet
perspective. The broader theoretical and methodological literatures related to this
dissertation, specifically in the ethnography of communication (EC) and cultural
discourse analysis (CuDA), is discussed in Chapter III where I address the dissertation’s
conceptual framework.

A. Native American communication and culture

This dissertation is linked and indeed indebted to EC investigations of Native
American communication and culture, in situ (e.g. Basso, 1970, 1976, 1979, 1992, 1996;
Braithwaite, 1997a, 1997b; Carbaugh, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002; Carbaugh & Grimshaw,
2021a, 2021b; Cerulli 2016a, 2016b; Covarrubias, 2007; Darnell, 1974; Hill & Lujan,
1984; Kennan, Pratt & Lujan, 1991; Leighter, Grimshaw & Braithwaite, 2018; Lindsley,
Braithwaite & Ahlberg, 2002; Modaff, 2004, 2019; Philipsen, 1972; Philips, 1974, 1992;
Pratt, 1985, 1996; Pratt & Buchanan, 2004; Pratt & Pratt, 2017; Pratt & Wieder, 1993;
Pratt, Pratt & Dixon, 2014; Shaver, 1997; Shutiva, 1994; Wieder & Pratt, 1990). Among
these, several studies are in a sense foundational to the heart and core of this dissertation
which warrant discussion given their exploration of subjects most closely related to this
study.

Of primary interest are those scholars who studied Native American
communicative practices and cultural identities. Indeed, several EC scholars have spent a
considerable part of their careers, examining the specific communicative practices of
Native American people such as the Western Apache (see Basso), Osage (see Pratt), and
Blackfeet (see Carbaugh). Generally speaking, the investigations of these authors and
their various co-authors contribute to the growing number of EC analyses of various
Native American communication practices, their uses, and meanings. Yet, given the sheer number of studies across academic disciplines which focus on Native Americans, comparatively little research has been devoted to understanding Native American communication practices.

Several scholars have, for example, examined the use of narrative by Native American people. In one early study, Darnell (1974) discussed the traditional manner and structure in which the performance of Cree cultural material is patterned and speaks to making adaptions to a secondary audience of non-Natives. Concerned that their stories would not be taken seriously by the younger generation of Crees and whites alike, Darnell found that prior to the telling of stories and sharing songs there are preliminaries that traditional Cree people make relevant prior to their telling. Discussing a single detailed instance of creative performance Darnell notes how the Old Cree Man positioned his own life in the context of traditional Cree culture and discussed how different things were today as an affirmation of his right to speak these things and tell these stories, prior to actually singing a song or sharing a story. Thus, Darnell found that the organization and patterning of such performances including preliminaries were necessary to transition from and breakthrough from the natural world to the supernatural one, from a mythological time to contemporary living via narrative.

In a related study Carbaugh (2001) analyzed Blackfeet narrative as it pertains to understanding their worldview and ontology. Carbaugh found oral texts difficult to comprehend initially because Blackfeet people inhabit and create a cultural world of objects that is largely unfamiliar to non-Blackfeet. However, Blackfeet narrative reveals something about how Blackfeet construct their world and live within it, as an integration
of spiritual and natural concerns in communication. Noting that cultural plots are present, and problems are solved in traditional Blackfeet ways, Carbaugh found semantic inversions in Blackfeet narrative where what is often deemed as unreal in ‘Whiteman’s lore’ is very much real in traditional Blackfeet lore. Carbaugh evidences what he calls a grammar of “reality,” a native “realism” amongst the Blackfeet, and suggests that understanding these stories begins with knowing something of the local world the story is about, and which it reconstructs.

Taken together, Darnell (1974) and Carbaugh (2001) evidence how narrative reveals something about the traditional worldview of these Native American people. Moreover, these scholars demonstrate how the narrative form is used to bridge the gap between ancient times and contemporary living, both as a way of noting the very real goings-on of Cree and Blackfeet worldviews respectively; and as an enactment of their identity which makes such narratives not only appropriate but expected as a way of contextualizing traditional cultures, particularly for those non-Natives who are otherwise confused or dismissive about what is real according to Indigenous worldviews.

Other scholars have focused on understanding the role of particular communication practices amongst Native American people that, at times, serve as “membering” discourses. In one related study, Carbaugh (2002) explored Blackfeet, Pawnee, and Otoe texts to investigate shared cultural terms for nonverbal communicative action such as “dream,” “sleep” and “listen”. Carbaugh suggests how such terms demonstrate “cultural philosophies of communication,” whereby a philosophy of communication is expressed linguistically yet practiced non-linguistically. Carbaugh considers how this Native American cultural practice of communicative action invites
membering in a particular way that suggests this form of discourse is universally particular. That is, the discourse at once exists everywhere around the world but is specifically manifest in particular places, most commonly those with ancestral connections, and serves as a specific means of membering for tribal groups.

As a precursor to the above study, Carbaugh (1999) investigated the communicative practice of Blackfeet “listening,” as a means of situating yourself in the environment, and in tandem to research about communicative silences. He found that “listening” served as a means of a particularizing discourse for the Blackfeet regarding how to both live and learn about how to be human that is unique to them. When enacted in its special way “listening” further connects Blackfeet intimately to a specific physical place, thus providing for them a deep way of being, acting, and dwelling in place. Specifically, Carbaugh noted that Blackfeet “listening” is a highly reflective and revelatory mode of communication that can open one to the mysteries of unity between the physical and the spiritual, relationships between natural and human forms, and links between places and persons; all the while providing protection, power, and enhanced knowledge of one’s small place in the world. Noting that ultimately these culturally based forms give birth to different cultural realities, different linguistic and communicative practices, a different sense of dwelling in places, of acting and feeling there, of identity and location, Carbaugh suggests how “listening” asks us to reconsider the intimate relations between linguistic and nonlinguistic discourses including the ways these are linked to cultures and places.

While investigating the use of another communicative practice for membering, Pratt (1996) examined the use of ritualized humor as a form of identification amongst
“contact Indians”. Focusing on the communicative behaviors of those Indians who have frequent contact with members of different tribal groups and with members of other cultures, Pratt argued that razzing is a distinct type of Indian humor directed toward the divergent behavior of an individual, group, or tribe. However, razzing explicitly excludes topics such as family members, disabilities, or socioeconomic status. Pratt found razzing serves multiple functions; as a collective form of storytelling, as a membering practice for cultural identity, and as a test of insider-outsider relationships. As a means of establishing cultural identity, Pratt found the “closed-groupness” of razzing is often difficult for non-Indians to understand given the “high context” of razzing, that is, where background information and explicit verbal codes are purposefully omitted.

In the above, note the similarities in how identity work for these Native American peoples is performed through specific communicative acts such as “dreaming,” “listening,” and “razzing”. Understood together such communicative practices serve not only to provide a means of relating to one another amongst Native American people but also demonstrate the kind of culturally based forms of communication that contribute to the kinds of varying cultural realities as described by Darnell (1974) and Carbaugh (2001) above. That is, these practices of “listening,” “dreaming,” and “razzing” not only reveal key aspects for establishing cultural identity but to note how the “high context” of these practices makes them difficult for non-Natives to understand and appreciate.

Yet, other scholars of Native American communication and culture have concerned themselves more generally with examining the relationship between specific Native American communication forms and practices, choosing to focus on those cultural particulars that evidence a given cultural identity (i.e. Osage) as distinct from other
cultural groups. In one related study, Pratt and Wieder (1993) explored *public speaking*
and the act of “talking for another” amongst the Osage. They note how the same type of
general speech situation (e.g. public speaking) in different cultures may be organized
based on different involvement obligations. For Osage and the I-lon-shka, Pratt and
Wieder examined how expressions making up a typical speech are highly context-
dependent, much is left out for insiders to know, and to adequately understand the speech
one must possess and see the relevance of the knowledge of an elaborate complex of
Osage ways. Combined with culturally competent listening, Pratt and Wieder note how
speakers and audience come to know one another through their overlapping and
intersecting biographies, that speaker and hearers are “mutually involved in one another’s
biography; they are growing older together” (ibid, p.390). One consequence is that it is
easier to maintain one’s competence if one resides in and around the reservation.

In another study, Braithwaite (1997) examined Navajo educational
communication practices. He found that in the context of educational communication
practices observed at the Navajo community college all instructional practices have a
cultural component in keeping with the four elements of their educational philosophy
Sa’ah Naagháí Bik’eh Házhóón: place, duality, Dine identity, and rhetorical enactment.
Braithwaite explored how each element is incorporated, noting the importance and focus
on Navajo cultural identity given the struggle of many Native people to find an identity.
Braithwaite also notes that in conflict situations between Native Indians and those that
are not, Native voices are often muted or even avoided when compared to Anglo
standards. Thus, he argues that communication between the two is not only necessary but
must be encouraged insofar as it addresses stereotyping, differences in credibility, and respect as expressed by Natives.

In another study, Cerulli (2016a) analyzed cultural discourses amongst the Ojibwe and their relationship with wolves as “brothers”. Cerulli showed when Ojibwe speak about the wolf there is a contrast between talk of creation and spirituality and talk of science. This contrast is often heard and understood by outsiders as indicative of a conflict between cultural-religious and scientific views. However, Cerulli reminds us that many of us are accustomed to dominant discourses rooted in culturally specific views of communication, models of personhood, and renderings of history which leave little room for interpretations outside of our own morally infused ways of speaking. Cerulli suggests that with the aid of interpretive approaches such as CuDA we can listen closely and think imaginatively about other distinct and morally infused ways of speaking such as when the Ojibwe talk of the wolf as a brother.

The literature above makes clear a noticeable effort by these scholars to better understand the communicative practices and meanings of Native American people, particularly those with an ear toward hearing how cultural identity is communicated and enacted. That is, these ethnographic examinations of communication demonstrate some of the culturally potent communication practices, forms, and symbolic terms which focus on Native American cultural identity as a kind of organizing thread for the above scholarship. Relevant to this dissertation are the kinds of investigative work of these scholars, specifically their findings as to how such communicative practices enact a kind of cultural identity for these Native American people and as often occur in contrast to dominant discourses with which non-Natives are more familiar and accepting.
Although this dissertation diverges in notable ways from the above studies their general focus has resonance with this dissertation insofar as both variously deal with Native American communication practice, meaning, form, and cultural identity. That said, the most comparable line of scholarship to this dissertation comes from Pratt (1985) who undertook for his doctoral dissertation an investigation of the struggle to develop and maintain an Indian identity in contemporary Indian culture. Concerned with his struggles to maintain an Osage identity and the frequency with which American Indians are often still misrepresented as to who is Indian, Pratt discusses American Indian identity by emphasizing the communicative acts and contexts specific to the American Indian experience. Specifically, Pratt identified several areas of “Indian-ness” such as how one is defined, some problematics in the research on Indians, and some contemporary issues of American Indian identity.

In a follow-up to Pratt’s dissertation, Wieder and Pratt (1990) focused on answering the question “Who is an Indian?”. A particularly consequential and problematic issue for Indians themselves, the authors note that being a real Indian is not something one can simply be, but is something that one becomes and/or is, in and as “the doing” of being and becoming a real Indian. They note prominent modes of communicative behavior that are “criterial” such as reticence concerning an interaction with strangers, razzing, attaining harmony in face-to-face interactions, and others to name a few. Demonstrating that one knows and respects Indian ways precisely parallels demonstrating one’s competence as a member of society if it is demonstrated in visible and recognizable ways that one behaves and is implicated in every choice that one makes. There is thus a never-ending processual character in these situations of realizing ones
Indianness. In a subsequent study Pratt, Pratt, and Dixon (2014) discuss several areas of how being an Indian is defined, noting that culturally competent Indians are those who express their identities through communicative patterns thus communicating their *Indian-ness*. Focusing on identity negotiation as well as what it means to be Indian in contemporary society the authors find that although each American Indian tribe is divergent and unique, the existence and overlap of communicative commonalities create a unified indigenous worldview that they refer to as *Indian-ness*.

Accordingly, Pratt’s focus on American Indian identity, specifically the formulation of what it means to identify and what constitutes an Indian identity is immediately relevant to this dissertation. However, where the two vary is while Pratt focused on *Indian-ness* as a social identity that is based on communicative commonalities across American Indian tribal groups that the dominant culture often treat as one homogeneous whole, this dissertation is focused on a specific tribal identity, Blackfeet/Piikuni, and how that identity is communicatively constructed. Moreover, this dissertation is less concerned with answering questions like, “who is Blackfeet?” and “who is Piikuni?” and is wholly more interested in answering “what does it mean to be Blackfeet?” and “what does it mean to be Piikuni?” within the scene of Native America Speaks programs including how those meanings are expressed or communicated, in situ.

**B. Ethnography of communication on Euro/Native relations**

This dissertation is also linked to a growing number of EC investigations of intercultural interactions between Euro-Americans and Native Americans (e.g. Braithwaite, 1997a, 1999, 2000; Carbaugh & Rudnick, 2006; Covarrubias, 2008;
Covarrubias & Windchief, 2009; Hall, 1994; Philips, 1974, 1992, 2005; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1990). In one related study, Hall (1994) explored the conflict between Ojibwe and Euro-Americans given the assertion of treaty rights by the Ojibwe related to fishing in the western Great Lakes region. Hall found that while “rights” functioned as a key term in both communities amongst whites, Ojibwe practices were constructed in terms of an inequality: that whites were being denied their individual rights while the Ojibwe were not. On the other hand, amongst the Ojibwe, Hall found that their fishing and treaty rights were constructed in terms of their identity as Ojibwe people and an affirmation of their collective rights, constructed as a matter of a collective way of life involving various relationships and responsibilities.

Somewhat similarly, Carbaugh and Rudnick (2006) analyzed competing cultural discourses of “tour talk” between scenic and Blackfeet interpretive tours of Glacier National Park. Paying special attention to the use of place names and how stories are used within this genre the authors identify how non-Native guides couch their discourse in natural splendor, focusing on parklike lands, wild animals, and visual scenery of an unoccupied territory. Conversely, Blackfeet discourse is expressed in their people’s history, traditional places, a troubling history of contact with white settlers, and an enduring relationship of distrust with “white men” and government officials based on prior wrongs. The authors note that the importance of place-naming and stories need to be amplified in our theories of talk, that place naming is a massively deep symbolic expression, and any reference to place is inevitably partial as there is an ambiguity in references to places. Thus, discursive identity boundaries are presumed and created as
they are mapped onto symbolically constructed landscapes, producing divergent understandings of places and their meanings.

In an earlier study, Philips (1974) examined how the regulation of participation affects the progress of events on the Warm Springs Indian reservation, specifically as related to the oft popularized phrase “Indian time”. Concerned with the fact that many Indians are aware that non-Indians are confused and sometimes disturbed by experiences with “Indian time,” Philips found the term itself holds various meanings and interpretations depending on who is using the phrase for what purpose, and what positive or negative moral value is assigned to it. Indeed, while non-Indians expressed feeling less comfortable with the unpredictable flow of activity, one explanation for “Indian time” from the Warms Springs community emphasizes the value of treating everyone as equal and in the avoidance of putting oneself above another. Put another way, “Indian time” positively used acts as a key term that reflects a cultural understanding and valuation of the regulation and importance of participation.

Other scholars have focused more specifically on intercultural encounters between Euro-Americans and Native Americans within the context of educational situations. In one related study, Scollon and Wong-Scollon (1990) examined Athabaskan-English interethnic communication, noting that such is a source of frustration for Native people who feel that their legitimate and urgent needs are being ignored or misunderstood. Tied closely to an individual’s concept of identity the authors examine four areas of discourse study: presentation of self, distribution of talk, information structure, and content organization. They note that in these instances what is often true or the norm for English speakers is often reversed for Athabaskans. To name a few, English
speakers often feel that Athabaskans talk too little or not at all, deny planning, play down their abilities, expect things to be given them, and avoid direct questions. Due to these confusions, much ethnic stereotyping develops and tensions can increase down interethnic lines.

In a similar study, Philips (2005) compared Indian and Anglo communicative behaviors in the classroom, considering the implications of those differences for the child’s learning experience. They note that comparatively, Anglo students make more effort to get the floor and compete more with one another for the teacher’s attention. Conversely, Indian students generally participate less as speakers and do not self-select as next speakers as often. However, the most striking difference Philips found is that Indian students greatly take advantage of one on one encounters with the teacher, while their Anglo peers do not. These encounters allow Indian students much more control over their contribution to the interaction and that speakers can better control their organization of interaction and talk. An unfortunate implication for many Indian students is that the system for regulating talk in the classroom is not compatible with many of the socialization practices with the Warm Springs community itself.

Also employing ethnographic methods and drawing on EC, Covarrubias (2008) examined “masked silence sequences” as consisting of a discriminatory statement followed by a dismissive silence which she argues advances predominantly white college students ethnocentric attitudes towards American Indian students cultural orientation in the classroom. By combining EC and critical whiteness theories Covarrubias focused on the discursive strategies which result in the perpetuated marginalization of a particular people of color. She notes that these communicative silences on the part of professors
who fail to address discriminatory statements constitute radically cultural phenomena and as such bear the potential for engendering misunderstandings across various groups. In a subsequent study Covarrubias and Windchief (2009) explore how American Indian students themselves actualize “silence practices” in direct service of particularizing, perpetuating, and protecting culture. The authors reveal that silence makes available opportunities for American Indian students to maintain traditional cultural practices, to distinguish cultural practices from those of non-Indians, and to protect cultural elements from ideological and pragmatic threats. As a point of overlap, both studies demonstrate that there are serious consequences that result from misunderstandings of culturally communicative silence.

These studies in particular have resonance with this dissertation insofar as they too deal with intercultural encounters between Euro-Americans and Native Americans, albeit mostly within educational settings. Most valuable and closely related to this dissertation are those studies that reveal divergent or dramatically opposed symbolic understandings of specific communication practices, key terms, meanings, and the oftentimes dueling cultural discourses that result from such misunderstandings of symbolic values. In combination with the above literature on Native American communication and culture, such scholarship is equally beneficial to this dissertation in that they often employ the same methodological and theoretical frameworks. What is perhaps most relevant for this dissertation is the focus of such studies on communicative practices and the intersection of those practices with various facets of the enactment of a cultural identity. Yet, the literature above also makes abundantly clear that such studies of Native American communication practices and cultural identity are perhaps all too
often addressed within the context of intercultural encounters. There is of course good reason for that being the case that makes such studies all the more relevant to this dissertation given my focus on the Native America Speaks program as a key site for intercultural exchange.

**C. Other Blackfeet literatures**

Also relevant to this dissertation are those writings which focus on the Blackfeet specifically, including those from Blackfeet authors. The former include ethnographies from the early 19th century which many Blackfeet profess are nevertheless important resources (e.g. Dempsey, 1979, 1988, 1996, 2018; Dempsey & Moir, 2003; Grinnell, 1892, 2003; McClintock, 1910, 1923; Schultz, 1907, 1916, 1919, 1962). Similarly relevant are social science literatures which concern themselves with the Blackfeet (e.g. Ashby, 1985; Craig, 2008; Craig, Yung & Borrie, 2012; Farr, 1993; Keller & Turek, 1999; Lokensgard, 2013; Oniciul, 2015; Peat, 1994; Presti, 2005; Reeves & Peacock, 2001; Rogers, 2015; Spence, 1996, 1999; Thompson, Kootenai Culture Committee & Pikunni Traditional Association, 2015) as well as a growing body of texts written by Blackfeet authors from both scholarly and biographical perspectives (e.g. Bastien & Kremer, 2004; Bear, 2000; Bear & Head, 2004; Bullchild, 1985; Kipp, 2002; Greymorning, Hall & HolyWhiteMountain, 2018; Ground & Runner 1978; Hall, 2018; Howe, 2019; LaPier, 2017; Noether & LaFromboise, 1979; Rides at the Door, 1979). Though some of this broader literature on the Blackfeet is beyond the scope of this review when these literatures overlap directly with this dissertation’s central concerns they are referred to and considered.
Of particular relevance are those writings concerning Blackfeet identity. Bastien and Kremer’s (2004) seminal book describes being Niitsitapi (i.e. a real person) as understanding the ontological responsibilities of Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot) identity. Bastien shares her understanding of Siksikaitsitapi ways of knowing to help reaffirm and reconstruct traditional Siksikaitsitapi ways of knowing within a Western Eurocentric educational environment. To that end, Bastien identifies the responsibilities that make up Siksikaitsitapi identity, the most foundational of these being those responsibilities that maintain the connection to ancestral ways of knowing. According to Bastien (2004) “the responsibility to seek knowledge is fundamental to the identity of Niitsitapi” (p.2). Specifically, Bastien (2004) is referring to such knowledge as are generated to maintain the relationships that strengthen and protect the well-being of the people and of the collective in a cosmic universe. Accordingly balance, as the natural law of the cosmic universe, is seen as the mission of Siksikaitsitapi culture as manifested in the values, norms, and roles of the people. As Bastien (2004) states that her book is a document of her personal retraditionalization she too expresses that being Niitsitapi “is not a given, but is attained through the journey of life,” specifically insofar as she defines the “real” part of the word Niitsitapi as referring to “a state of being in connection with the purpose of life,” or “journeying with the nature of life” (p.49). To that end, Bastien views being Niitsitapi as understanding their relationship to a cosmic universe through knowing the ways of Niitsitapi. In other words, knowing for Bastien means recognizing how relationships are the ways in which we come to know, where knowing is a circular and reciprocal process ever oriented towards maintaining the natural balance of things.
Overlapping with some of what Bastien details in her book, Howe (2019) examines some of the features and uses of Blackfoot language in the context of Naapi stories which connect land to the People\(^5\). In her study of Naapi stories, Howe (2019) explains that not only does the use of Blackfoot language assist in expressing core values that emerge from the land-based experiences of the People, but too in re-creating and reaffirming the connections between the People and these places as these spaces are re-created in a place, a homeland. Although Howe is most interested in the use of non-verbal signs as a form of communication used by all living Beings, she notes how Naapi stories, like Trickster stories generally, are at their core about place. To that end, a sense of who the People are is defined in great part by where they are and accordingly, the telling of such stories “affirm entire Peoples’ long-standing orientations vis-à-vis the landscape and thus of knowing what to is to be Blackfoot” (Howe, 2019 p. xiii). Thus, these stories re-create a homeland specificity through Naapi’s experiences as traced all over the land. Accordingly, Blackfoot identity is presented as intertwined with the land, specifically those areas which accentuate points of reference for the People as often referenced in the course of Naapi stories.

For Bear (2000), the underlying differences between Aboriginal and Eurocentric worldviews make relationships between the two questionable at best. Bear chooses to highlight the importance of Plains Indian philosophy of certain events, patterns, and happenings that take place in certain places as a primary means of ways of knowing and observing the cycles, phases, and patterns of creation. According to Bear, under this

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\(^5\) Howe uses Blackfoot People/the People to refer to all divisions of bands known collectively as Siksiyakitsitapiiksì: Kainaa (Blood), Siksiyà (Blackfoot), Aapatohsipikani/Skinipiikani (North Peigan), and Aamskaapipikani (Southern Peigan/Blackfeet).
philosophy teaching occurs through lived experience which often includes storytelling as a particularly important part of the educational process. The stories act, at least in part, to share and demonstrate customs and values including the “why” of creation and the consequences of unacceptable behaviors as in the case of Naapi/Trickster stories. Such actual experiencing of real-world events and the stories of real-life experiences lead to certain Aboriginal values which flow from this worldview such as the value of wholeness, “the group as opposed to the individual, the forest as to the individual trees” (Bear, 2000, p. 2). Such a perspective resonates with Bastien, although Bear contrasts such ways of knowing and values with Eurocentric ones like objectivity and a static way of thinking about things that make it hard for that kind of person to appreciate any alternative way of thinking and behaving.

Although somewhat brief in nature the above provides a glimpse into how some Blackfeet authors think about and describe foundational components of their Indigenous identity. What is perhaps most relevant is to point out those comments above as to the importance of storytelling as not only an educational practice but also as a means of connecting with and re-creating a homeland. Equally powerful and relevant are those comments about the Blackfoot language and how such assists Blackfeet in not only expressing core cultural values but also as an embodiment of re-creating and reaffirming the connections between people, place, and language including the intersecting relationships between them.

Finally, I hope that this study will contribute something of value back to these literatures and people who have nonetheless directed the development and focus of this dissertation. Where this study most directly aligns with the literatures mentioned above is
our shared interest and focus on communicative practice, especially the use of the narrative form as a means for talking about identity and discourses of identity more generally. Where this study diverges from those mentioned above is the particular scene of concern. Although this study shares a focus on intercultural encounters between Native Americans and Euro-American others the above are primarily concerned as such occurs within educational scenes like the college classroom. However, this study leaves the traditional Western sense of the classroom behind and heads into the “natural world” as some Blackfeet would describe it, albeit within the setting of Glacier National Park to see what can be made of intercultural encounters there. In drawing together these related literatures I too hope that future scholars interested in similar topics such as Indigenous identities and their construction through communicative practice might find here a helpful thread of intersecting foci about Native American communication and culture, as well as somewhat more generally about Intercultural encounters between Euro-Americans and Native Americans.
CHAPTER III
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter lays out the theoretical and methodological framework that serves as the foundation upon which this dissertation is based and conducted. While this study was conceptualized primarily within the framework of cultural discourse analysis (CuDA) the following first addresses the foundations from which CuDA was developed including the ethnography of communication (EC) and its advancements including cultural communication and speech codes theory. Next, the chapter discusses the research questions guiding this study and contextualizes them within the theoretical and methodological framework mentioned above. Then, I discuss how/where the primary data of concern to this dissertation come from, including the method of their collection and the identification of excerpts about Blackfeet identity; and subsequently how they were analyzed according to the framework of CuDA. The chapter ends with a preview of the forthcoming chapters, including their content and the subject of their interpretive analyses.

A. Ethnography of Communication

The approach to this dissertation is based in the ethnography of communication (EC) as a theoretical stance towards the analysis of culture as a complex system of communicative practices. As a general theory of language and social life the ethnography of communication, “must encompass the multiple relations between linguistic means and social meaning,” sometimes conscious, often unconscious, that enables persons to use language (Hymes, 1972, p. 39). The ethnography of communication was born of a
breadth of intellectual traditions including approaches concerned with exploring the 
relationship between language, culture, social interaction, and meaning. A shared focus 
amongst these perspectives was a commitment to the situatedness of communication; that 
is, how communication is always situated both within systems and within particular 
social contexts and scenes. Understanding those social systems relied first on 
understanding their constitutive parts including the use of symbols, their meanings, and 
the situated social contexts where they find use (Carbaugh, Gibson and Milburn, 1997).

As first proposed by Hymes (1962, 1972), the ethnography of communication 
meant to address the need for studies that are “ethnographic in basis, and communicative 
in the range and kind of patterned complexity with which they deal” (Hymes, 1980, p. 3). 
Drawing together diverse perspectives Hymes aimed to produce a programmatic study of 
speaking. Specifically, an examination of “the use of language in contexts of situations, 
so as to discern patterns proper to speech activity, patterns that escape separate studies of 
grammar, of personality, of social structure, religion, and the like” (Hymes, 1980, p. 3). 
Based on previous ethnographies that show communities differ significantly in their ways 
of speaking, in patterns of repertoire and switching, and the roles and meanings of 
speech, Hymes set out to develop specific notions with which the ethnographer might 
guide their descriptive analyses towards understanding the place of language in culture 
and social interaction.

According to Hymes (1974) each set of ‘ways of speaking,’ and as invoked by a 
given speech community, defined as a community sharing rules for the conduct and 
interpretation of speech, is representative of the communicative behavior within that 
community including their beliefs, values, reference groups, and norms, that are a product
of such systems of language use. Language is not everywhere equivalent in role and value and as such, Hymes saw a need for etics, theoretical frameworks, that had descriptive adequacy of terms, types, and schema, in an attempt to achieve “observational adequacy” from which an ethnography of speaking can discover and explicate “the competence that enable members of a community to conduct and interpret speech” (1972, p. 51-52).

In assessing the role of language in thought and culture, an ethnographer of communication should or can, as one tact, take as context a community or network of persons and thereby investigate their communicative activities as a whole (see Philipsen & Carbaugh, 1986 for a bibliography of over 250 EC related fieldwork). Only through such a frame of reference can the place of language in culture and society be adequately addressed. The EC as a theory then stands in relation to some general perspective of human behavior, “a science that would approach language neither as abstracted form nor as an abstract correlate of a community, but as situated in the flux and pattern of communicative events” (Hymes, 1980, p. 5). Initially, Hymes (1972) offered a set of social units; speech community, speech situation, speech event, speech act, speech styles, and ways of speaking; and the SPEAKING model as a schematic vocabulary and set of components for analysis and comparison: (S) the physical setting and psychological scene, (P) participants, (E) ends both intended and achieved, (A) acts and their sequence, (K) key or tone, (I) instruments or channels, (N) norms both for interaction and interpretation, and (G) genre. However, the components and set of social units are to function more appropriately as a heuristic, both to be used negatively and positively.
Thus, there is a degree of flexibility that allows for a focus on what is necessary for analyses and what may not be, in a given case.

More recently, the EC has developed given the production, evaluation, and comparison of ethnographic reports which share foundations in Hymes’ seminal works. Accordingly, EC has become more comprehensive in terms of its guiding philosophy, theory, and methodology (e.g. Philipsen, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2002; Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias, 2005; Carbaugh 1989, 1993, 1995, 2007; Carbaugh & Hastings 1992; Carbaugh, Gibson and Milburn 1997). However, the types of questions that guide the ethnographer of communication remain fundamentally investigative, exploratory, and interpretive. Questions such as: what are the culturally distinctive means of communication in a given context? and, what are the meanings of such communicative practices to the participants themselves? are informed by utilizing a culturally discursive theory of communication as is further explicated below (e.g. Carbaugh, 2007).

B. Cultural Communication and Speech Codes Theory

Principal to this dissertation, are the developments of cultural communication, speech codes theory, and cultural discourse analysis (e.g. Philipsen, 1987; Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias 2005; and, Carbaugh, 2007 respectively). As with the EC generally, these developments share an approach and commitment to the distinctive means of communication as used in specific contexts of socio-cultural life, and on the means and meaning-making practices of participants. Such expansions of Hymes’ initial work neither refute nor deny any of his original conceptualizations but rather make strides toward a refined theory of language, social interaction, and culture.
Cultural communication as proposed by Philipsen was initially concerned with the tension between an individual’s desire to be free and the constraints of communal life (1987). For Philipsen, communication theory would benefit from focusing its attention on cultural communication, specifically, “the nature, forms and function, variations in styles, and prospects of cultural communication in contemporary society” (1987, p. 248). This included Philipsen’s perspective of culture as code, as conversation, and as community. As a code, culture emphasizes the fixed and ordered system “of cognitive and moral constraints represented in a world view or value system” (ibid, p. 249). As conversation, culture emphasizes “a patterned representation of a people’s lived experiences of work, play, and worship” (ibid, p.249). Lastly, as community, culture stresses an attention towards human groupings whose members claim some shared identity, “grounded in a communal ordering of memories” (ibid, p. 249). In turn, communities are the tangible settings where particular codes are learned, and communal conversations are played out. For Philipsen, the function of communication in cultural communication then is to “maintain a healthy balance between the competing forces of individuality and community” (ibid, p. 249).

Accordingly, cultural communication refers to a process of activity in which individuals in a society act to produce and regulate shared understandings about social life that will serve as a warrant for shared meaning and coordinated activity among the members of that society. This process includes the enactment, creation, adaptation, and transformation of a specific code (Philipsen, 1987). Given prevalent forms of cultural communication; ritual, myth, and social drama (e.g. Turner, 1980), Philipsen sought to explicate these concepts as a way to understand particular communicative practices by
bringing these concepts into conversation with his perspective on culture as code, conversation, and community respectively. In this way, ritual provides a way to affirm a community’s moral boundaries, myth a way to articulate and apply them, and social drama a way to transform and change them (Philipsen, 1987).

Carbaugh (1995) notes three basic guiding assumptions about cultural communication from an EC perspective: (1) when communication occurs, it exhibits, or instantiates, not randomness, but some kind of systemic patterns; (2) systemic patterns of communication implicate social organization; and, (3) communication is thus partly constitutive of sociocultural life. Thus, a commitment to studying both society (including norms, rules for action, and social relations) and to culture (including symbols, symbolic forms, their patterned use, and the interpretations of those symbols, forms, and uses) is necessary for investigating how symbols and meanings are to be understood as historically grounded, culturally accessible, socially negotiated, and individually applied.

Philipsen’s development of speech codes theory (1992) and its subsequent revisions (1997, 2002; including Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005) represent his work to further explicate his formulation of culture as code, building upon both EC and cultural communication. Speech codes theory is concerned with interpreting and/or explaining observed communicative conduct about situated codes of meaning and value. Of primary focus is the formulation and development of local codes of interpretation and conduct, in turn using those codes to interpret and explain situated communicative conduct (e.g. Philipsen, 1992). Philipsen (1992, 1997, including Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias, 2005) argues that people use speech codes to interpret the meanings of communicative conduct. However, speech codes are constructs that observer-analysts
formulate explicitly to interpret and explain communicative conduct in a particular speech community.

In its most recent iteration (e.g. Philipsen, Coutu & Covarrubias 2005), speech codes theory is based on six propositions: (1) wherever there is a distinctive culture, there is to be found a distinctive speech code; (2) in any speech community multiple speech codes are deployed; (3) a speech code implicates a culturally distinctive psychology, sociology, and rhetoric; (4) the significance of speaking is contingent upon the speech codes used; (5) the terms, rules, and premises of a speech code are inextricably woven into speaking itself; and, (6) the artful use of a shared speech code is a sufficient condition for predicting, explaining, and controlling the form of discourse. Such propositions underlie Philipsen’s conceptualization of code as a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises, and rules, about communicative conduct.

Employing this theoretical model, Carbaugh (2005) provided a detailed examination of such discursive codes in multiple cultures, focusing on codes revolving around a focal symbol of the “self” and “self-expression” in American scenes (see Carbaugh, 1996), “silence” and quietude in Finnish culture (see Carbaugh, Berry, & Nurmikari-Berry, 2006 and Carbaugh & Berry, 2016), “soul” and “self” in Russian culture (see Carbaugh, 1993), and “spirit” in Blackfeet culture. With each case, Carbaugh shows how the focal symbol is tied to particular forms of communicative action and conversation, and also to various cultural premises and values created and presumed in such actions and social interactions.

C. Cultural Discourse Analysis
In turn, Carbaugh’s development of cultural discourse analysis (2007) emerged out of research produced both by and in response to Philipsen’s cultural communication and speech codes theory. Building on these frameworks, Cultural discourse analysis (CuDA) focuses on communication as a practice, and culture as emergent in practices with special attention given to interpreting the deeply meaningful commentary that is intelligible to participants as part of their ongoing social life (ibid). As an approach, CuDA assumes the following; 1) that people create and use localized communicative means and meanings, 2) that these vary cross-culturally, 3) that these should be investigated on their own terms, 4) that social life is formed and shaped by communicative practices, and 5) that these expressive practices are rooted in historically transmitted resources and use these resources to create new practices.

CuDA encompasses five distinct but interrelated modes of inquiry, of which three are required (theoretical, descriptive, and interpretive) and of which two are optional (comparative and critical). That is, answering such questions as posed in Chapter III.A are thus formulated by making distinct moves beginning with a descriptive report of the communicative means as used and shaped by the context of a particular case. The second move is interpretive, making those meanings that were previously enigmatic and imperceptible more readily available for analysis and consideration. The third move then is a comparative one, how is this communication like and unlike similar others in other cultural discourses. A fourth yet sometimes relegated move is critical, does this practice advantage some more than others. It is important to note that the critical move is made following a standing commitment to appraisal by participants themselves (see Carbaugh, 1989).
However, a necessary first step grounded in the theoretical mode requires the analyst to formulate and explicate the conceptual framework guiding their particular study. The descriptive mode thus finds the analyst investigating, recording, and then presenting as a matter of record multiple instances of the communication practices relevant to their study. In the interpretive mode, the analyst identifies and explicates the taken-for-granted meanings and beliefs active for those participating in the communicative practice evidenced in the descriptive mode. Sometimes the analyst embarks on the comparative mode, examining and thus accounting for the similarities and differences in communicative practices and underlying meanings and beliefs with other cultural discourses, or in other speech communities. At other times the analyst considers the critical mode, having already described and interpreted communication practices from participants’ viewpoints the analyst evaluates those practices from some explicitly articulated ethical standpoint (Carbaugh, 2007 but also see Carbaugh, 1989).

As a model for interpretation, CuDA presumes that as people communicate with one another they say things literally about the subject of discussion, but that they too are saying things culturally and perhaps implicitly about who they are, how they are related, what they are doing together, how they feel about what is going on, and about the nature of things. That is, these cultural meanings are deeply rooted in often-unspoken premises about the world and what constitutes proper action in the world, including beliefs and values concerning people, nature, place, feelings, and their interrelations. Carbaugh (2007) conceptualizes these foci as hubs of cultural meaning about which interpretive analyses seek to reveal meanings about identity/being, about relating/relationships, about action/acting, about emotions/feelings, and about dwelling/place.
Interpreting such meanings precludes employing a conceptual model of five discursive hubs and radiants of meaning: identity, relationship, action, feeling, and dwelling. Given that in any communicative practice, at any particular moment, one or more of these hubs may be verbally explicit, analysts attend to examining the relationship between specific hubs and their radiants (Carbaugh, 2007). That is, in attending to what is made explicit in the discourse, analysts can treat a word or phrase as a cultural or key term, considering the oft taken-for-granted implicit meanings activated and invoked by such communication in a given speech community (see Carbaugh, Gibson & Millburn, 1997; and Carbaugh & Grimshaw, 2021a). For example, given a focus on explicit discourses about identity, various implicit meanings might radiate from it relating to such meanings as to how one acts or feels, or should act or feel, as a certain kind of person. That is, messages about identity can be explicitly coded into communication through various identity terms but can also be explored insofar as they might radiate from other cultural hubs of meaning such as when identifying a kind of communication or activity that is explicitly about the kind of activity they are doing but also codes implicitly the kind of person who engages in the activity.

Using this conceptual model, CuDA analysts can examine participants’ communicative practices for cultural terms (symbolic key terms), particularly as they appear in clusters of words that are rich with local meaning, used routinely, prominently, or are potent in their meaning. In examining discursive practices for such terms, cultural terms can be combined into cultural propositions that attempt to capture participants’ taken-for-granted views, definitions, concepts, premises, beliefs, or values (Carbaugh, 2007). Cultural propositions typically serve to help ground the analysis as close as
possible to participants’ views. In turn, analysts formulate cultural premises which are their own formulations about participants’ beliefs about the significance and importance of what is going on, both as a condition for that practice of communication, and as expressed in that very practice (Carbaugh, Gibson & Millburn, 1997). That is, cultural premises can include premises of existence, beliefs about what exists, and premises of value, beliefs about what is better or worse (Carbaugh, 2007). Cultural premises thus draw our attention to the fact that, in communicating, we make systematic statements about our beliefs and values.

Put another way, cultural discourses are morally infused thus serving as a record for a pattern to tell ourselves and each other how we should be, relate, feel, act, and dwell (Carbaugh, 2007). From these, norms can productively be formulated to relate to participants the general form, in context C if one wants to do some task, one ought/not to do X (a specific action) (ibid). Varying cultural discourses, of course, underlie different ethics of value and belief. Again, this dissertation engages with the happenings of cultural discourses, specifically, the cultural goings-on of a Blackfeet discourse, and the ethics and cultural foundations upon which they are rooted.

D. Research questions in theoretical context

As mentioned in Chapter I, the main question guiding this research which focuses on Blackfeet communication practices in the Native America Speaks program, is: How do Blackfeet/Piikuni people communicate their identity? That is, what do they have to say about who they are, how they are related, what they are doing together, how they feel about what is going on, and about the nature of things. Or, put another way: How/what do
Blackfeet identify as being important parts of their selves within the social scene of Native America Speaks programs? and; What does it mean to be Blackfeet?

What, for instance, does it mean when some Blackfeet introduce themselves first in their Blackfoot language (niitsii•po’•”sin) before translating what was said into English for their audience? What does it mean when those same Blackfeet say that “we call ourselves the Nitsitapi and that means the real people”? What about when a Blackfeet says “we are one of the few tribes that is lucky enough to occupy our original homeland so our stories that I am sharing with you, you know we have been telling these stories for thousands of years”?

As I began to think about these questions in more detail, they suggested others: In these ways of speaking, who are the Blackfeet? That is, how do Blackfeet discuss who they are including how they enact those identities through communicative practices? In what ways does a Blackfeet discourse of identity occur in the vacillating form (Carbaugh, 1996), such as contrast a “Blackfeet” identity with those identities of the non-Native Euro-Americans who attend NAS programs? What principles and ethics are said to best guide the Blackfeet, especially in interactions with non-Native Euro-Americans in NAS? And, what implications might insight into these discourses and premises have for scholarly and popular understandings of “Blackfeet” and Native American/Indigenous discourses about who they are, how they are related, what they are doing, how they feel about what is going on, and the nature of things?

Guided by the conceptual framework of EC and CuDA, this study examines: (1) a distinctive means of communication used in relation to the “Blackfeet” within the specific socio-cultural context of Native America Speaks programs; and (2) the meanings
of such communication practices for participants. In particular, this study describes and interprets specific instances of these means and meanings among those Blackfeet who participate in Native America Speaks, explores their historical roots and intersections around a focal hub of identity but which also includes radiants of dwelling, relations, and action.

This study’s primary research questions thus reflect the middle front of CuDA’s five modes of inquiry: theoretical, descriptive, interpretive, comparative, and critical (Carbaugh, 2007). The starting point is a descriptive question: How is “Blackfeet” discussed and verbally represented by those Blackfeet who give NAS programs? The next question is interpretive: How do various communicative means render the Blackfeet—and their world—meaningful? What links are drawn between discussing Blackfeet identity and other topics and terms? What cultural logic is used in and created by these discourses? What beliefs and values underpin such logic? What historical roots of discourse are explicitly or implicitly referenced? And, what must be presumed for participants’ communicative actions to be coherent? In other words, in terms of CuDA’s model of five hubs and radiants, additional interpretive questions include the following:

- Who are the Blackfeet said to be? Who are the participants said to be? [identity]
- What kind of relationships is it said to exist between the Blackfeet and the Piikuni? the Nitsitapi? What kind of relationships is it said to exist between the Blackfeet and their audience? [relationship]
- What kind of (inter)actions are said to occur between the Blackfeet and their audience? What kinds should occur? [action]
- How are Blackfeet said to feel about who they are? as Piikuni? as Nitsitapi? [emotion]
- What parts is it said the Blackfeet play in the natural world? [dwelling]
Generally speaking, these questions orient this dissertation toward the explication of the cultural logic of the discourse through the investigation of their communicative means and meanings. By attending to a specific hub and its radiants, these questions tune the analysis to a range of dimensions, assuring that the distinction of one does not obscure the role and importance of others. That is, insofar as Blackfeet themselves speak about their identity as “Blackfeet” they too invoke radiants of meaning which were attended to. This hopefully assures, for example, that despite the prominence of certain identity terms and specific language (e.g., “Blackfeet,” “I’m Piikuni”) heard in Blackfeet NAS programs, the study also attends (1) to how such discourse is rooted in other, sometimes implicitly so, less immediately audible ideas (e.g., about the identity of the Blackfeet being tied to land, kinship, or in speaking niitsii•po’•sin and sharing stories) and (2) how these discourses are rooted in fundamentally different central concerns and ideas (e.g., about what it means to be “Blackfeet” or “Piikuni”). Guided by these questions, the overall study—framed by CuDA—adds new dimensions of cultural voice(s) and analyses to the aforementioned literatures on Native American communication and culture, on Euro/Native relations, and Blackfeet identity. By attending to cultural discourses as historically transmitted expressive systems, this study puts distinct Blackfeet ways of speaking in larger contexts, within the scene of Native America Speaks, and in relation to similar kinds of intercultural encounters between Euro-Americans and Indigenous people.

More specifically, each set of hub/radiant-focused questions detailed above serves particular purposes related to this dissertation’s focus on a discourse of Blackfeet identity in Native America Speaks programs including the following:
• Asking who the Blackfeet are draws our attention to a frequently under-discussed dimension of Native American/Indigenous identity and analyses thereof: the identity of specific tribal people like the Blackfeet. Asking who participants are said to be draws our attention not only to social and cultural identity (which is sometimes present in vacillating form) but also more particularly to the ways identity is communicatively created and shaped: how the Blackfeet self-identify and those communicative behaviors which Blackfeet use to demonstrate that identity. In this study, our attention is drawn to these ideas as part of multiple, distinctive webs, each commonly encompassing the other four hubs and radiants.

• Asking what kind of relationships it is said to exist between the Blackfeet and the Nitsitapi, and between the Blackfeet and their audience, draws our attention to conceptualizations made explicit in some discourses (e.g., concerning Blackfeet kinship with those who also call themselves Nitsitapi) and left largely implicit in others (e.g., concerning Euro-Americans/whites/Caucasians).

• Asking what kinds of (interactions) are said to occur, and should occur, between the Blackfeet and their audience draws our attention to actions by Blackfeet, interactions between the Blackfeet and their audiences, and related cultural understandings and beliefs as they are communicated. These culturally-specific understandings and beliefs (e.g., about “sharing stories”; about what “Native America Speaks” means as a program of action) are sometimes but not always made explicit in these Blackfeet discourses.

• Asking how Blackfeet are said to feel about who they are draws our attention to emotional dimensions of Blackfeet discourses of identity. These dimensions play critical often complex roles in these discourses, sometimes in ways more subtle than are made explicit (e.g., concerning what it means for Blackfeet to call themselves Nitsitapi, the real people).

• Asking what parts it is the Blackfeet play in the natural world draws our attention to the broad ideas sometimes investigated in literatures concerning the importance of place and dwelling in Native American/Indigenous discourses of identity.

Although it perhaps seems otherwise, asking these questions, is particularly productive insofar as this dissertation is focused on a discourse of Blackfeet identity. That is, these questions about communicative means, meanings, beliefs, and values are in part derived from Blackfeet voices active in NAS and a discourse of Blackfeet identity that they create and use there. This sort of interpretation and analysis, particularly across Blackfeet voices
active in Native America Speaks, is a new addition to the aforementioned literatures. It will, I hope, provide helpful insight and suggest new avenues and possibilities for participants and scholars alike.

**E. Data collection**

Again, my inquiry in this dissertation is focused on the actual communicative practices of Blackfeet presenters as part of the Native America Speaks program, situated within Glacier National Park, and as will be discussed later, on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The study’s primary data are instances of verbal communication about Blackfeet identity as they occur: the things people actually say. I am first and foremost concerned with what and how Blackfeet people communicate their identity to tourists/vacationers, including the deeply meaningful cultural commentary that is prevalent in their speech. More specifically, this dissertation is focused on how/what Blackfeet identify as being important parts of their “Blackfeet” identity within the specific scene of Native America Speaks programs. Primary data are thus (1) the moments Blackfeet speak about who they are, and (2) as these are recorded the recordings of actual programs of Blackfeet presenters. However, secondary materials to some degree include promotional resources which advertise the Native America Speaks program generally as well as specifically concern a select number of programs; and, promotional materials made available at certain performance sites (i.e. the Museum of the Plains Indian and the Blackfeet Heritage Center).
Data collection began with my first trip to the Blackfeet Reservation and Glacier National Park in July of 2018. As part of a pilot program for this dissertation, I spent ten days in the field while living with a Blackfeet tribal member just outside the town of Browning on the Blackfeet reservation. During this time, I attended and recorded six presentations of the Native America Speaks program from 5 different Blackfeet presenters. Of those programs recorded, they range between one hour and one hour and twenty minutes long and were recorded using an H4nPro ZOOM recorder. As previously discussed in Chapter I, while meeting individuals and forming new connections I further built upon and continued past relationships with tribal members whom I have known for over a decade. Based on those data, I decided that I would return to the Blackfeet Reservation and Glacier National Park during the summer of 2019 to gather more data.

When I returned for my second trip in the summer of 2019 I spent six weeks from June 21st until August 2nd living on the Blackfeet reservation. During this second trip I recorded 25 additional NAS programs, this time from 11 Blackfeet presenters for analysis in this dissertation. Some of the programs I attended were simultaneously recorded by Glacier National Park and can be found on their website (nps.gov/glac/planyourvisit/nas.htm), including presentations by Treyace Yellow Owl, Ernie Heavy Runner, Don Fish, and Mariah Gladstone. An observant individual will notice that my red jacket and long curly hair can be seen in some of these recorded programs. I also attended several community events including Browning’s 68th annual North American Indian Days from July 11th through 14th. During this trip, I brought both

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6 This was graciously funded by the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the Department of Communication’s O’Leary gift fund predissertation fellowship for the study of Native American communication and culture.
my H4nPro ZOOM recorder as well as a video camera for the recording of audio/visual data when possible and permissible. Recordings of programs from the summer of 2019 range from forty-two minutes to two hours and fifteen minutes long. Informal interviews were conducted with half of the Blackfeet presenters as they were made available, willing\(^7\) and interested in hearing more about this dissertation. However, I consider these informal interviews as secondary in nature to aid in better understanding the primary data, Blackfeet Native America Speaks programs.

Although a return to the field was scheduled to occur during the summer of 2020 to share some of my findings with Blackfeet presenters and Glacier National Park interpretive rangers, the coronavirus pandemic made such a trip impossible. Indeed, NAS programming was more or less put on hold during the summer of 2020 in part respecting the Blackfeet Nation’s decision to close their reservation to travelers. The decision of the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council to protect the tribal community was respected by Glacier National Park and accordingly tourists visiting the park during the summer of 2020 could not access locations that are at other times only accessible from first traveling onto the Blackfeet reservation.

Included in my complete corpus of data are the 25 presentations I recorded during 2019 in addition to the six presentations recorded during the summer of 2018. Totaling 31 programs in all, some 39 hours and 39 minutes of audio/visual recordings were made while attending Native America Speaks programs. While presentations are open access and thus not subject to IRB regulations, when possible permission was confirmed with presenters themselves, many of whom expressed interest in this project, and thus

\(^7\) Interviews were unlikely to occur following an evening presentation. Thus, if they occurred it was usually days or weeks later in both summer 2018 and 2019.
provided additional background information as to their involvement with the program, some having been presenters for decades while others had only been involved for several months. Except as in the case of one specific presenter all others expressed a willingness and desire to be identified and have excerpts from their programs be a subject of discussion in this dissertation.

Field notes produced during the summer of 2019 number approximately 75 pages single spaced and include personal, methodological, observational, theoretical, and interpretive notes. Personal notes include my general reflections of being in the field, the program, and promotional materials. Such notes might also include mistakes and other errors encountered in the field such as running out of batteries in the camera or not budgeting enough time for travel. At other times, these notes include deep reflections about my attendance at particular Blackfeet community events. Methodological notes, while small in number include thoughts as to how to refine my approach to gathering and recording data, including my own production of observational and interpretive field notes. Observational notes include my most immediate reflections on each program, usually written immediately following a program otherwise the subsequent morning. These notes detail program specifics as include topics addressed and further contain comments as to my immediate reflections on each program and presenter. Theoretical notes include my ruminating about how Blackfeet ontology and cosmology might impact existing communication theory. Lastly, interpretive notes include reflections from the field at semi-regular intervals about patterns noticed within specific Blackfeet programs and presenters as well as across them.

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8 Mainly, I focused on how ontology and cosmology impact our understanding of metaphorical communication. A subject best addressed outside of the dissertation.
In particular, the observational notes produced in the field were made both in terms of the general content of Blackfeet NAS programs as well as in accordance with Hymes’ (1972) SPEAKING mnemonic to sharpen and guide my attention to components of the presentations I observed. Other pertinent secondary materials gathered, as briefly mentioned above, include available promotional materials for NAS programing, including but not limited to pamphlets, brochures, maps, and park newspapers which made mention of the NAS program in particular, the Blackfeet in general, or in some cases the two alongside one another.

F. Data analysis

The sheer volume of these data often felt overwhelming and when it came to their content, even more so. As previously mentioned, I could not help but notice the potential for several projects based on these data. Yet, as I began listening/watching recordings from the field it became clear that I should focus on what Blackfeet participants wanted to talk about in their NAS presentations. That is, I turned my attention towards what Blackfeet presenters would prioritize amongst all the terms, phrases, symbols, symbolic forms, ideas, and meanings that they employ. This became my guiding principle, giving Blackfeet views and interpretations their due diligence. Insofar as all the data described here contributed to my understanding of NAS and Blackfeet communication practices within that cultural scene, not all programs are directly used or quoted in the chapters that follow. Specifically, when it came to those Blackfeet presenters who only gave a handful of presentations over the course of the summer months, I considered those presentations in relation to the greater whole of Blackfeet programs. What would later become apparent
was that a significant part of these presentations was the communication by Blackfeet as to who they are as a presenter and who they are - as Blackfeet. As mentioned previously, I argue that such communication by Blackfeet given their focus on who they are as “Blackfeet” as presented in these NAS programs assists in the construction of a commonly understood “Blackfeet” identity for visiting tourists/vacationers to Glacier National Park and the Blackfeet reservation.

The initial task of any ethnographer of communication, and any cultural discourse analyst is to describe the particular communicative practices under examination. For this dissertation, that meant transcribing those parts central to this study, the communication of Blackfeet identity. As a result, nearly all recorded programs were at least partially transcribed to some extent. Too, I created outlines and tables for most programs, noting topics that were discussed and key areas of focus for later analysis. While still in a descriptive mode, I used Hymes’ (1972) mnemonic and relevant components of SPEAKING, to identify and make note of apparent patterns of communicative practice and in relation to specific topics they discussed (see Chapter IV). As I began to shift towards interpretation, I reviewed my transcripts and descriptive notes, hoping to better explicate the recurrent themes and meanings in these patterns of practice. Over too many months, I watched, listened, and reviewed my recordings and transcripts (producing some 384 pages of transcription). I sometimes found myself playing back recordings in my mind before going to bed, laughing at the same Blackfeet jokes again and again, or, practicing my pronunciation of Blackfoot words. Eventually, I began to recognize the recurrence of certain patterns of talk and meaning. That is, I noticed the repeated use of certain key words, symbolic terms, phrases, and forms related to what the Blackfeet had
to say about who they are, how they are related, what they are doing together, how they feel about what is going on, and about the nature of things.

While I considered the diversity of Blackfeet voices present in NAS programs, I decided that an important step toward understanding these patterns was to conceptualize certain practices and meanings as being clustered around themes that were central and explicitly present in participants’ talk, primarily Blackfeet identity. I began identifying particular segments where Blackfeet speech patterns appeared to coalesce around such themes and began to examine these segments for specific terms which appeared to play key symbolic roles. Identification of these terms, however readily apparent they might seem now, helped to refine my tentative focus on specific prominent themes apparent in Blackfeet NAS programs.

For example, in reviewing transcripts and recordings, I described and noted how a Blackfeet discourse of identity was made explicit in their NAS programs, and how the terms “Blackfeet,” but also, “Piikuni,” “Amskapi Piikuni,” and “Nitsitapi” were employed. Moving towards interpretation, I noted other terms, phrases, and clusters of terms and phrases that often co-occurred with those previous terms. I also noted such terms as Blackfeet would employ when talking explicitly about who they are not, that is, in regards to the identity of their non-Native Euro-American audience (e.g., “that’s not Blackfeet,” “that border separated us into North and South… in our worldview there is no North and South Piikuni, here you’re just Piikuni,” “the Piikuni were never Indians we were just Piikuni”). Continuing my interpretation, I investigated how various uses of “Blackfeet” and “Piikuni” were, in specific instances of communication, linked to these and other central terms and phrases and used to shape and express value and meanings.
central to how/what it means to be Blackfeet/Piikuni. As was sometimes the case, I
returned to the descriptive mode when I needed to produce more comprehensive
transcriptions of the most relevant segments of audio/video recordings.

For all spoken excerpts which are analyzed in any depth in this dissertation, I
employ a transcription style informed by ethnopoetics (Hymes, 2003, 2004 but see also
Webster & Kroskrity, 2013). Such excerpts are easily identified, as they appear in
Courier New font and not in typical paragraph form. The aim in doing so is to draw
attention to cultural features and meanings which are readily presented with line breaks
typically indicating pauses, though sometimes longer utterances are wrapped onto the
next line out of necessity. Indentations help draw attention to parallel constructions and
illustrate both narrative and conceptual structures. Stanza breaks draw attention to larger
shifts (e.g., in time, setting, character, or topic). The intent and purpose of presenting
excerpts in this manner are to give the reader a sense of the rhythms and patterns of
speech and to make certain features more readily available for consideration and analysis.
Sometimes, brief spoken excerpts, primarily those analyzed in less depth, are presented
as in-text quotes without the use of this ethnopoetic transcription style.

Using both detailed transcripts and my descriptive notes, I began to formulate a
more specifically detailed articulation of the range of meanings audible in the clusters of
terms and phrases identified, and the relationships within and across these clusters.
Paying attention to the discursive process by which Blackfeet say something about who
they are, but, also, the discursive process which casts Blackfeet identity as a negation of
other identities (e.g., Euro-American) I began to formulate cultural propositions using
Blackfeet participants’ own words. Indeed, this dissertation makes extensive use of
quotation marks, indicating that a term, phrase, or excerpt comes directly from a primary data source.

Subsequently, I began to ask myself what must be presumed, for instance, about Blackfeet notions of being, relating, acting, feeling, or dwelling, for their speech to be coherent and understandable. The aim was to formulate cultural premises, abstract statements that the analyst formulates that capture the essence of the terms and propositions identified. I kept in mind, too, how this Blackfeet discourse invoked history, actively employing it in the discourse, and how their talk might be part of a “historically transmitted expressive system” (Carbaugh 2007, p. 169) both within a larger Blackfeet cultural scene and the specific scene under examination in this dissertation, Native America Speaks.

Based on my detailed analyses of terms, propositions, and premises; I formulated a model of a single discourse of two major symbolic units; one about who we (Blackfeet) are, another about who we are not. That is, I recognized that within a single discourse of “Blackfeet” identity two ways of doing so; the first concerns how/what Blackfeet have to say about who they are and what they identify as being important parts of their Blackfeet identity within the scene of NAS; and, the second which concerns who they are not. Insofar as cultural premises of belief attempt to make sense of the taken for granted or sometimes unspoken beliefs of meaning and value about what it means to be “Blackfeet,” as evidenced in Blackfeet communication practices, I also recognized that the Blackfeet were using their own premises about persons, emotions, actions, relations, and dwelling when communicating about cultural others and to also say, they are not us. As a result, the discourse is a vacillating form, the symbolic units are contrastive (Carbaugh, 1996),
which treats being “Blackfeet” at once as something unique to the Blackfeet/Piikuni but also in contrast to non-Native and Euro-American people as a negative reflection of Blackfeet identity.

As part of the cyclical process which guides ethnographic analyses of communication, I regularly returned to my primary data to look at transcriptions, as well as, watch and listen to recorded programs. I continuously asked myself whether my interpretive analyses might require improvement to keep close and remain faithful to the patterns of meaning apparent in Blackfeet participants’ own meanings and interactional contexts.

I eventually recognized that this discourse as focuses on the hub of “Blackfeet” identity explicitly, was also made relevant along three radiants of meaning; dwelling, relationships, and action. That is, Blackfeet communication practices within the scene of NAS made explicit that each of these radiants also readily concern what the Blackfeet identity as being important parts of their identity when speaking at Native America Speaks programs (e.g., telling stories (action), being on their traditional homelands (dwelling), kinship (relations)). I realized too that the vacillating form which contrasts “Blackfeet” identity with a non-Native Euro-American identity and who they are not, also made relevant these radiants of meaning.

G. Preview of Chapters

In the five chapters that follow, three examine the discourse described above (Chapters V-VII). Apart from the immediately subsequent chapter which deals with using Hymes’ (1972) components of SPEAKING as a means to help familiarize readers of this
dissertation more generally with the Native America Speaks program (Chapter IV), the following three chapters examine a discourse of “Blackfeet” identity. The first of these data-based chapters concerns an explicit discourse of what it means to be “Blackfeet” by focusing on the hub of identity (Chapter V). The succeeding chapter then addresses how what it means to be “Blackfeet” is also made relevant along three radiants, which coalesces around the intersection of Blackfeet identity, kinship, place, and (inter)action (Chapter VI). The last chapter of analysis concerns an implicit discourse of “Blackfeet” identity that is presented in vacillating form and deals readily with Blackfeet and non-Native Euro-American cultures in conversation including that which the Blackfeet say they are not (Chapter VII). Though not inclusive of every possible way of speaking about Blackfeet identity, again, the scene is limited to Native America Speaks, the discourse provides what I hope is a useful framework for better understanding (1) how Blackfeet identity is demonstrated through an explicit discourse of identity but also along radiants of dwelling, action, and relations, (2) use of the vacillating form in a discourse about what it means to be Blackfeet in particular, and to a lesser extent Native American in general; and (3) how the communication of Blackfeet Native America Speaks programs manage Blackfeet and non-Blackfeet cultures in conversation.

In each of these data-based chapters, I employ careful analysis to show how my understanding of this Blackfeet way of speaking developed. In each, I use a variety of data to demonstrate both the patterns of communication that came to my attention as well as the meaningfulness of those patterns to participants. I occasionally make comparative observations insofar as they are topically relevant to what participants are saying. Although this dissertation is not primarily concerned with the comparative or critical
mode Chapter VII analyses on who we (Blackfeet) are not is itself a form of natural criticism as defined by Carbaugh (1989). Moreover, readers of this study might hear such comparisons and critiques as evidenced in participants’ explicit discourse which is analyzed here. Finally, I move on to some concluding remarks in Chapter VIII.

In the process of writing these chapters and completing the dissertation, I often found it necessary, and perhaps frustratingly so, to return to and revise prior analyses and previous chapters to better align with the overall shape and format of this project. Although I have been able to share drafts of some of these chapters with select Blackfeet, primarily Robert Hall, the ongoing pandemic made engaging in such conversations with other Blackfeet and Glacier National Park interpretive rangers, more generally, difficult if not impossible. I hope that at a later date when it is safe to do so, I can return to the Blackfeet Reservation and Glacier National Park to have such conversations about my descriptions and interpretations of Blackfeet discourse. I believe that such is necessary and will prove invaluable in future efforts to publish from this dissertation for academics and laypersons alike and to discuss and interpret Blackfeet communication practices and Blackfeet identity.

Ultimately, I hope that I have articulated all of the above in a coherent and meaningful way for readers to understand how this study was conducted and the conceptual moves I made in the process. The discourse identified here is my formulation, that is; they are artifacts of my analysis. Although I hope that my conceptualizations are useful and productive of other ways to think about Blackfeet, Native American, and Indigenous identity from within the scene of a specific kind of intercultural encounter, I encourage readers of this dissertation to utilize them only to the degree they help deepen
understandings. That is, as with other ethnographies of communication, my articulations here should only be used to the degree that they are helpful as a heuristic to guide similar kinds of ethnographic work.

**H. Forthcoming chapters**

As noted before, this dissertation focuses on ways of speaking that address what Blackfeet identify as being important parts of their selves within the scene of Native America Speaks, how they participate communicatively in that scene and how the Blackfeet manage Native and non-Native cultures in conversation. As will be mentioned in the course of the immediately forthcoming chapter, these include voices from twelve different Blackfeet who gave NAS programs during the summers of 2018 and 2019. Early stages of data analysis were driven in part by the production of a descriptive account of Blackfeet NAS programs, treating these programs as a kind of speech event. As such, Chapter IV presents this descriptive report using Hymes’ (1972) SPEAKING mnemonic to familiarize readers with Blackfeet NAS programs, treating such as a communication event and the primary social unit of concern. Accordingly, Chapter IV should help draw the reader’s attention to how NAS programs as a communication event primarily concern the use of narrative and storytelling as a communicative form from which Blackfeet can communicate about who they are as “Blackfeet” as a symbolic term for analysis in Chapter’s V-VII.

As mentioned above, analyses driven by this descriptive account helped me formulate a model of a single discourse of two major symbolic units; one about who we (Blackfeet) are, another about who we are not. That is, I recognized that within a single
discourse of “Blackfeet” identity two ways of doing so; the first concerns how/what Blackfeet have to say about who they are and what they identify as being important parts of their Blackfeet identity within the scene of NAS; and, the second which concerns who they are not. The first of these major symbolic units is explicit about Blackfeet identity and concerns a cluster of terms including Blackfeet, Piikuni, and Nitsitapi (Chapter V). As will be made clear in Chapter VI, this discourse of Blackfeet identity also occurs along and concerns the intersection of radiants of dwelling, action, and relations insofar as Blackfeet presenters communicative practices make clear their being “Blackfeet” means communicating with their audience in noticeably Blackfeet ways. The second major symbolic unit, however, introduces the first and the second as a vacillating form (Carbaugh, 1996). That is, in Chapter VII Blackfeet identity is spoken about implicitly by playing off of and against another cluster of terms (e.g., “Indian,” “white,” “Caucasian”).

As a result, the two major symbolic units are presented as follows: (1a) *I’m Piikuni and Piikuni just means*: an explicit discourse of Blackfeet identity, which also includes: (1b) *We think about ourselves in very nuanced ways*: a discourse of Blackfeet identity along three radiants; and (2) *We were never Indians*: a discourse of Blackfeet identity in vacillating form, which encompasses the prior by being juxtaposed to it. In other words, not only do Blackfeet communicate what it means to be “Blackfeet” by discussing who they are, but also where they are, how they are interacting, and how they are related. Too, Blackfeet communicate that sometimes speaking as to what is “Blackfeet”, requires saying: we are not like you (non-Native Euro-Americans); and, we are not like what you think we are (e.g., Indians).
Given the general familiarity, readers should have following Chapter IV, Chapters V-VII describe and interpret the discourse of Blackfeet identity presented above. In the course of these chapters, my scope narrows significantly as I focus on interpreting how a model of a single discourse of two major symbolic units; one about who we (Blackfeet) are, another about who we are not, cooperatively construct a sense of what/how the Blackfeet/Piikuni communicate their identity as well as what that says about what it means to be Blackfeet/Piikuni. I arranged these three chapters of data-based analyses in order of what I perceive as decreasing importance to participants’ own communication practices. That is, I do not believe the vacillating form is less interesting or worthy; on the contrary, I think the vacillating form is more revealing of the tensions and dynamics facing Indigenous peoples who have to manage cultures in conversation when talking to non-Native Euro-Americans about who they are as Indigenous people within a cultural scene that they were forcibly removed from and denied access to. But, among the data I have, the vacillating form was less common. However, the presence and use of the vacillating form supports its power to conceptually embrace this dynamic and is undoubtedly a key finding.
CHAPTER IV

NATIVE AMERICA SPEAKS: A BLACKFEET SPEECH EVENT

Before interpreting the deep meanings that radiate from Blackfeet discourse at Native America Speaks (NAS) programs I’ve found it beneficial to first, generally, familiarize readers with Native America Speaks by providing a descriptive account of these programs. Again, it should be noted that while NAS programming includes Salish (Selis), Kootenai, and Kalispell (Qlispe) peoples in addition to the Blackfeet (Amskapi Piikuni), the focus in the dissertation is explicitly on Blackfeet NAS programs, and thus, I treat these programs as a speech event. As a speech event, Blackfeet NAS programs can be understood, as it will be shown from the point of participants themselves, to be a patterned part of social life on the part of Blackfeet presenters. That is, these kinds of cultural presentations by Blackfeet will be shown to involve a sequential structuring of specific acts, can be understood by formulating norms or rules about these programs, and involve culturally bounded aspects of social life that have a beginning and an end.

To do so I employ Hymes’ (1972) descriptive theory and explicate each component of his SPEAKING mnemonic: setting/scene (S), participants (P), ends (E), act topics and sequence (A), key (K), instrumentalities (I), norms (N), and genre (G). This descriptive report is based primarily on data that were gathered for this dissertation including my observations and field notes, but also by revisiting and relistening to recorded programs. Following a presentation of findings, I discuss the interplay of several components of NAS which I argue have particular relevance for better understanding the kind of Blackfeet discourse analyzed in Chapters V-VII.
The purpose of laying out the present chapter according to the SPEAKING mnemonic is twofold. First, for readers, the descriptive report should assist in familiarizing them at a general level with the variable components of NAS. And, second is to demonstrate the event as an integral experience, by exploring the interplay of specific components (i.e. setting, participants, ends, act topics, and genre). The latter should orient the reader towards understanding why we are interested in the Blackfeet discourse of identity under analysis in the subsequent chapters. That is, following this descriptive report I discuss how understanding a Blackfeet discourse of identity as is analyzed in Chapters V-VII is aided by first understanding the importance of the scene/setting, participants, ends/goals, and genre of NAS on the kind of discourse produced by Blackfeet presenters (i.e. act topics and sequences). I hope such will demonstrate that the discourse produced by Blackfeet NAS programs draws our attention to focus on the narrative form, that is, on a special type of story about Blackfeet identity. Or, in other words, on those stories and storytelling about who the Blackfeet are.

**A. Setting**

As mentioned previously, setting refers to the time and place and, in general, to the physical circumstances of a speech event (Hymes, 1972). At a physical level Native America Speaks programs are offered at several park campgrounds and historic lodges throughout Glacier National Park (GNP). However, beginning in 2016 NAS programs were also scheduled on the Blackfeet reservation. Thus the setting for Blackfeet NAS programs is sometimes within parklands and at other times on reservation lands. It is worth noting that as of 2019 rangers began giving land acknowledgments prior to NAS
programs which recognize that parklands on the eastern side are the traditional
homelands of the Blackfeet people. So, although it was not necessarily the case for the
last 34 years of NAS programs, they are now being introduced as occurring on the
traditional lands of the Amskapi Piikuni/Blackfeet people. Although this point is likely
lost on visitors to GNP it does mean there is a discourse that presents Blackfeet NAS
programs as occurring at all times on the traditional lands of Blackfeet people.

Back to the matter at hand, there are a total of nine locations at which Blackfeet
presenters give programs on the eastern side of Glacier National Park including three
locations on the Blackfeet reservation. These include three campground amphitheater
locations at Two Medicine Lake, Many Glacier, and Rising Sun; one lodge, Many
Glacier hotel Lucerne room; one ranger station, 1913 Ranger Station St. Mary; and one
interpretive visitor center, St. Mary visitor center auditorium. Of the latter two locations,
the 1913 ranger station is only used sparingly for longer two-hour cultural presentations
of which there only occurred three during the summer of 2019. The St. Mary visitor
center auditorium is only used for NAS Blackfeet Singers and Dancers presentations
which occur once a week.

As noted above some programming does take place on the Blackfeet reservation.
Programs are scheduled at the tribal-owned Chewing Black Bones campground, the
Museum of the Plains Indian, and the Blackfeet Heritage Center. The latter two locations
are both located in Browning, the so-called capital of the Blackfeet reservation, a
breathtaking 30-minute drive onto the plains from the East Glacier Lodge nestled in the
shadow of the Rocky Mountains. However, the Heritage Center hosted only three
presentations during the 2019 season with the Museum of the Plains Indian hosting a total
of eight presentations. Of note, programs at both Browning locations were held in the early afternoon around one or two as opposed to the evening campground programs which usually occurred at 8 pm. Also, the three indoor locations of the Museum of the Plains Indian, the Heritage Center, and Many Glacier hotel allow for multi-media presentations meaning NAS programs at these locations may include PowerPoint slides and/or other visual aids.

Still, the most typical locations for NAS programming are at locations within the park. While the most common setting for Blackfeet Native America Speaks programs are the four campground amphitheater locations more often than not this usually means the three locations within park boundaries on the eastern side of GNP (i.e., Rising Sun, Two Medicine, Many Glacier). These campground amphitheaters are otherwise exposed to the elements but provide wooden benches upon which attendees may sit during programs. However, it was not uncommon for visitors to bring their own camp chairs, especially when programs were heavily attended beyond the capacity of the benches. Most campground amphitheaters have a podium that presenters could use for giving their presentations. However, few Blackfeet choose to use the podium preferring to position themselves in front of it and closer to their audience. If the podium was used it was often for displaying cultural items including, for example, a Blackfeet headdress, or other culturally valuable plants, foods, and hides to pass around and share with a crowd of attendees.

Since amphitheaters are each located within their respective campgrounds they provide attendees the ability to easily walk from their campsite to listen to programs. As will be elaborated upon further in the act sequence and topics section, the proximity of
amphitheaters to campgrounds meant that an interpretive ranger would usually “walk around like a talking billboard” prior to NAS programs to remind campers, hikers, and visitors about the program offered that night. The general proximity of campground amphitheaters to nature itself is also worth mentioning. All of the campground amphitheater locations are near a body of water, usually a neighboring lake as in the case of Two Medicine and Rising Sun campgrounds. Additionally, these locations are heavily wooded and home to a variety of alpine trees and plant species. These features help set the stage as a ‘naturally’ appropriate place for Blackfeet to speak about parklands and their relationship to them as Blackfeet people.

However, such majestic and ‘natural’ locations mean campgrounds are simultaneously open to being battered by the elements. None of the campgrounds are prepared for inclement weather, which on occasion impacts the ability for certain programs to occur as intended. Heavy rain at several programs caused presentations to be cut short and/or for attendees to leave mid-program seeking refuge in camp tents or vehicles. Another impactful weather phenomenon is the extreme winds known to whip down from nearby mountain tops and across the plains at upwards of 70 mph gusts during the winter months.

It is also not entirely uncommon for nearby wildlife to make themselves apparent either before or during programs and at nearby campsites. At several programs, whilst driving to the campground amphitheater from the Blackfeet reservation I witnessed bears near to or on the road which was often later addressed by both interpretive rangers and Blackfeet presenters. Other wildlife seen nearby or during programs included fox, mink, a variety of birds, and perhaps most problematic of all, mosquitoes. Given campground
locations were often near bodies of water, the mosquitoes were annoying enough that at several programs several attendees got up and left, either unable or unprepared to deal with the mosquitoes.

Scene, however, is distinct from setting and designates the psychological setting or the definition of an occasion as a type of scene (Hymes, 1972). That is, the scene makes relevant and appropriate or inappropriate the use of particular kinds of speech acts. Although it will be elaborated later in my discussion of act topics and sequences, the scene of NAS programs makes relevant the telling of particular kinds of stories about the Blackfeet and their relationship to Glacier National Park and its landscape (e.g. stories related to specific places within the park). As will also be elaborated in my discussion of the end/goals of NAS, the educational and informative goals of NAS make relevant too, stories that attempt to correct false narratives about the Blackfeet in particular and Native Americans more generally. Thus, the psychological scene is complex insofar as the physical setting is at one point the lands of Glacier National Park but is simultaneously recognized as the traditional lands of the Amskapi Piikuni/Blackfeet on the eastern side. As but one example, the scene makes appropriate stories about the Blackfeet and their historical relationship with Glacier National Park. Yet, Blackfeet sometimes express difficulty in navigating the contradictions between stating that the lands of Glacier National Park are Blackfeet lands while also advocating for the continued protection of GNP lands for the benefit of all travelers to the park including the Blackfeet.

**B. Participants**
There are three general groups of participants in NAS programs: the interpretive ranger(s), the Blackfeet presenter, and the audience (Hymes, 1972). Although I discuss each of these groups, generally speaking, there is additional specificity present in the section on Blackfeet presenters to the extent it helps introduced the diversity of Blackfeet voices in NAS.

Interpretive rangers, dressed in their National Park Service green and grey with accompanying tan hats, have the job of introducing NAS programs as well as whomever the Blackfeet presenter is for that scheduled event. However, the position of interpretive ranger is primarily of a seasonal nature meaning these rangers may or may not return for consecutive summers working in GNP. Perhaps unsurprisingly, I noticed less than a half dozen interpretive rangers as the most common introducers of NAS programs on the eastern side of GNP. Most of these rangers were white women, approximately between twenty to thirty years of age. However, I did note several female interpretive rangers aged closer to fifty, who were usually retirees of some kind. In the programs I attended during the summer of 2019 there was only one male interpretive ranger who introduced programs, who is also white and roughly 45 years of age. At times, overlapping with the audience, I noticed other rangers in attendance at Native America Speaks programs while not acting as the presenting ranger. That is, I noticed both rangers whom I recognized as being out of uniform as well as working rangers who were in uniform and were sometimes seen at NAS programs if they had other business to attend to in the area.

The small number of interpretive rangers meant that, at least to some extent, these rangers became familiar with specific Blackfeet presenters over the course of a season or insofar as they might already know some of them from having attended NAS programs.
themselves in the past. Generally speaking, these handful of interpretive rangers were the most common introducers of Blackfeet NAS programs within GNP boundaries.

However, at programs occurring on the Blackfeet reservation, speakers were introduced by Ranger Kelly Lynch. Ms. Lynch is the head of Tribal Community Engagement for Glacier National Park and organizer of the Native America Speaks program, positions she has held for several years now\(^9\). Given her tenure, it seems highly appropriate that given her familiarity with various NAS presenters and tribal community outreach, generally, to be the one in charge of facilitating programs on the Blackfeet reservation. During the summer of 2019, she was often accompanied by Andy David, an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer who was beginning his two years of service working with Kelly on a tribal community outreach and jobs program.

Turning now to address Blackfeet presenters, in 2019 there were twelve different scheduled Blackfeet presenters. While NAS boasts the involvement of seventeen different Native American presenters, in 2019, the majority of these were Blackfeet. For the 2019 season, this specifically included; Mariah Gladstone, Marvin Weatherwax Sr., Jack Gladstone, Āasāisst·tò Language Society, Robert Hall, Ernie Heavy Runner, Edwin “Sooney” Little Plume Sr., Donald Fish, Treyace Yellow Owl, Danielle Antelope, Smokey Rides at the Door and Darnell Rides at the Door. However, presentations made by the Āasāisst·tò Language Society included at times several Blackfeet including Robert Hall as otherwise scheduled and William Big Bull. Occasionally, Blackfeet presenters were unavailable to or otherwise prevented from making scheduled appearances. As a result, programs were sometimes ‘covered’ by other Native America Speaks presenters.

\(^9\) Unfortunately, amidst the ongoing pandemic Ms. Lynch’s contract as such was not renewed by the Glacier Park Conservancy which previously funded her position.
At times, featured ‘new’ presenters like Joey Running Crane who had not previously actively participated in the Native American Speaks program were given the opportunity to present during such absences. With Joey that makes thirteen Blackfeet presenters during the 2019 season.

Of the thirteen Blackfeet presenters listed here only four are women, the remaining nine are men. It is my understanding from discussions with presenters that in the past there was very little involvement or opportunity provided for female presenters to become involved in NAS. However, it appears that opportunities are increasing and there is an effort being made to include more young Blackfeet generally, and young Blackfeet women more specifically. In terms of age, there is a mixture of young adults as well as more elderly presenters. The youngest presenter I met was a woman in her early 20s while the oldest was a man nearer to 80 years of age. Again, of the thirteen presenters, only four were of this younger 20 to mid 30’s year-old range with the remainder significantly older than that by several decades, the most common perhaps being 50+ years old. However, there is a general trend towards including more young Blackfeet presenters as confirmed by presenters and rangers. This is due in part given the involvement of younger Blackfeet to learn and know their traditional ways. In the case of older Blackfeet presenters, these traditional ways were experienced to varying degrees by them in their youth.

Again, although not mentioned in detail here, these Blackfeet presenters have extensive knowledge about the history, language, and culture of the Blackfeet/Piikuni people. Furthermore, all Blackfeet presenters know with varying degrees something of the Blackfoot language and usually demonstrate such as speaking some of it during their
NAS programs. As will be further elaborated in the instruments section, speaking niitsii•po’•”sin (Blackfoot language) codes Blackfeet presenters as noticeably distinct and increasingly unique from the primarily English speaking audience and interpretive ranger(s). It should also be noted that it was not uncommon for Blackfeet to dress the part while presenting for NAS. That is, Blackfeet presenters were often seen sporting ribbon skirts, ribbon shirts, moccasins, and beadwork including earrings, hatbands, and hand drumsticks. Although this was not always the case, it was more common than not for Blackfeet to present themselves in material ways which enhance or otherwise reify their Native American identity for attendees at NAS programs.

As somewhat of an aside, while interpretive rangers and those in attendance at Native America Speaks programs often reside within respective campgrounds, even if only temporarily as ‘campers’, Blackfeet presenters usually had to drive themselves or were otherwise driven into the park for their specific campground presentations. Depending on where on the reservation the specific Blackfeet presenter lived this meant that on occasion presenters had to drive anywhere from 30 minutes to upwards of over an hour both to and from the site for their programs at certain park locations. In some instances, this meant they were compensated in addition to their usual payment for programs for their extended travel.

Turning now to address attendees at NAS programs, these participants are best thought of as audience members. Although this goes without saying, as audience members they are primarily receivers of Blackfeet discourse. However, there are those audience members who actively participate in NAS programs by asking questions of Blackfeet presenters, usually, at the end of their programs, or are otherwise engaged by
Blackfeet presenters in the course of their programs (i.e., asking the audience questions, teaching them some Plains Indian sign language, singing along with songs known to them). Perhaps unsurprisingly, within the context of this dissertation, the audience can be best described as tourists camping within the park and as mostly white European Americans. In accounting for the more commonly passive program attendee I can only speculate as to their racial/ethnic identity based on how they were phenotypically presented. Perhaps most importantly for the dissertation is that except on rare occasions the audience was entirely non-Native. At most outdoor amphitheater locations audience members would commonly arrive in pairs, suggestive of two people traveling together to explore GNP. However, children were also a common enough occurrence as seen camping with their families and attending NAS programs. Sometimes attendees brought food or snacks with them, and blankets were regularly taken to outdoor programs given the potential for inclement weather mentioned above.

Audience members at the three indoor locations for NAS programs were often of a similar demographic background as those seen at the campsites mentioned above. However, given the location of the Museum of the Plains Indian and the Blackfeet Heritage Center in the town of Browning, it was less clear if these attendees were staying in the park or passing through the area. While attending programs at the two locations in Browning I occasionally overheard attendees confirm they’re staying in the park and as having made the drive over to explore the museum and attend the program being offered. At other times, however, it appeared that because both Browning locations were otherwise open to tourists and general visitors to the area people would unknowingly
stumble upon a given NAS program while otherwise visiting the museum or heritage center.

Generally speaking, attendance at both Browning locations was much lower than it was at all park locations except in the case of inclement weather. It was also to some extent more common for people at the Museum location to join late or leave early, except again in the case of severe weather at the campground amphitheaters. It should be noted that in the case of the St. Mary Hotel those in attendance are somewhat safely assumed to also be guests staying at the hotel and might have just as easily wandered downstairs following dinner at the hotel restaurant rather than sought out the program intentionally. In all cases, there appears generally to be a trend for evening NAS programs to coordinate around some kind of post-dinner entertainment.

It is worth mentioning a few things about borderline or partial attendees who were encountered most commonly at the Museum of the Plains Indian. The Museum of the Plains Indian offers multiple historical and contemporary exhibits as well as a gift store and working artists space. As a result, there were often people visiting the museum who were otherwise unaware or seemingly uninterested in attending Native America Speaks programs. These individuals would otherwise peruse the museum in the usual way, sometimes looking in on the program being offered but usually turning instead to leave and continue their self-guided tour rather than join in and attend. This also meant that for those attendees who chose to attend a program at the museum or heritage center, they also had the occasion to learn about the Blackfeet either pre or post-presentation in accordance with their exploring of the museum or heritage center.
Before shifting gears to address the ends/goals of NAS programs, as self-evident as it may seem, it is important to note I am an active participant at these programs in as much as presenters were made aware of my purpose in attending and recording their programs. That said, I did my best while attending programs to focus on listening, appreciating, and enjoying each presentation as a member of the audience. Except in rare instances when I would sometimes be called upon by presenters to become involved in their presentations, as in the answering of a question or the translation of Blackfoot words for the audience, I did my best to otherwise blend in with the audience and go about being unnoticed. That is, I did not ask questions of Blackfeet presenters or otherwise actively engage in Blackfeet NAS programs between the beginning and end of each program.

C. Ends

Concerning outcomes and goals, those which are expected must be distinguished from those that are unintended (Hymes, 1972). In the course of discussing expected outcomes, it is worth mentioning what constitutes culturally appropriate behavior. As best can be gathered from my attendance and interactions with presenters and interpretive rangers there are two main foci of NAS programs that overlap to varying degrees. The first and primary being educational/informative purposes and, the second being to provide entertainment. That is, as most campground presentations occur around seven to eight at night, they made for great post-dinner entertainment before turning in for the night. In other words, the goals of NAS programs are to inform and entertain.
The primary intended purpose, as promoted explicitly by park personnel, ranger introductions, and various promotional materials is that Native America Speaks programs offer a unique opportunity to hear from Native Americans (i.e. Blackfeet) about their relationship to GNP and its landscape, their culture, and who they are as Native people. Moreover, interpretive rangers would usually comment as to the general popularity of Native America Speaks programs amongst visitors to GNP as well as NAS being an award-winning and the longest consecutively running Indigenous people’s speaker series in the National Park Service. Understandably, Glacier National Park and their rangers focus primarily on the educational opportunity that exists in learning about parklands from the original inhabitants of those landscapes, but also the entertainment factor that NAS provides visiting tourists. That is, park rangers were commonly overheard advocating with potential attendees by suggesting NAS programs as a kind of post-dinner activity offered to those in attendance at several campground locations. Thus, programs have as their primary purpose to inform/educate, yet as programs are also suggested as a kind of after-dinner activity, they serve a dual purpose to entertain. We find that in the following there are many ways of doing so and that each presenter does so according to their own preferences although there are certain themes which are discussed in the following section.

As it concerns the Blackfeet, presenters would often comment as to their intentions, with varying degrees of specificity, and to the educational purpose that their programs are meant to offer. However, the individual doings of that kind of education took on a variety of forms as will be elaborated below in the act topics and sequence section. That is, it was strikingly evident that Blackfeet presenters shared a commitment
to and would comment upon their hope that in sharing some of their culture and being as Blackfeet people, visitors to the park could come to a greater appreciation and understanding of the importance of protecting Glacier National Park for tourists to enjoy as well as for the Blackfeet and their traditional practices. For example, that meant multiple Blackfeet presenters made explicit that they hoped those in attendance would renew their commitments to protecting the plants, lands, and animals of the park. These Blackfeet maintained that in sharing stories, singing songs, and speaking about what it means to be Blackfeet they hoped that Native and non-Native people alike could better join together in support of the continued stewardship of parklands, and perhaps come to better appreciate the Blackfeet and their connection to these places. In other words, Blackfeet presenters at NAS, by and large, intend their programs to be educational and informative. However, their intent is not purely educational and informational in a static sense but rather that Blackfeet believe there is a holistic benefit to learning about the Blackfeet and thus coming to understand those people and share in their commitment to protecting GNP lands.

That is, while some Blackfeet presenters commented that although it would be easy to complain about the history between the Blackfeet and white Euro-American colonizers, including the often still complicated contemporary realities between them, they would rather focus on moving discussions forward positively for the benefit of everyone. At times, Blackfeet presenters commented upon the fact that they likely represented the first opportunity that many attendees had had to interact with a Native American. A point to be elaborated upon in the next section, act topics and sequence, is
that such commitments to ‘making things better for the future of everyone’ were most often explicitly addressed during the question and answer portion of NAS programs.

It is perhaps worth noting that on occasion Blackfeet presenters were asked ignorant and offensive things that they chose to navigate in as positive a manner as possible. Children were more often to be excused for their insensitive comments as they were less likely to have been taught otherwise while adults were often treated in a way that expected them with varying degrees to be more aware of their ignorance. Oftentimes such was negotiated through the use of humor by Blackfeet presenters, pointing out the silliness or triviality of the question in an attempt to suggest that it was not a good question to be asked rather than to reprimand them and draw potentially more attention to the ignorance of their question. Thus, despite their intent at being primarily educational and informative, the Blackfeet also intend for their programs, for those willing, to be a source of intercultural community building. That is, notwithstanding the potential for further damaging intercultural relationships between Natives and non-Natives, these Blackfeet choose to focus on building relationships as best as possible, which of course necessitates learning about the Blackfeet history of land theft and dispossession.

As to the actual outcomes of Blackfeet NAS programs, the following is based upon my observations of presenters with audience members following the completion of their programs. Based on those observations it appears that most visitors appreciated the stories and knowledge shared with them by Blackfeet presenters. For example, this was often expressed by audience members thanking presenters for their time while returning to their campsites. Rangers, it appears, felt likewise and would sometimes be seen taking notes on what was being said by Blackfeet to allow them to more accurately relay such
information to other park guests in the future and at similar occasions. While the tone between attendees and Blackfeet presenters appeared generally appreciative, some members of the audience would occasionally ask how they could become involved in assisting their own local Native communities or what they could do to help the Blackfeet. The answers to such questions are more than can be focused upon in-depth here however I mention them generally as a means of highlighting the intercultural engagement that Blackfeet programs provided to some of those in attendance. Any negative outcomes either intended or otherwise are difficult to assess given that, if such comments were made they were neither commented upon by presenters to me nor otherwise expressed by rangers in my conversations with them.

**D. Act topics and sequence**

Act topics and sequence draws our attention to the content of messages as well as their forms and how they are highly interdependent (Hymes, 1972). That is, how something is said, its form and style is an integral part of what is said (i.e. the content of the message). Considering what topics Blackfeet presenters discuss will be proceeded first by a discussion of the general forms these topics take and their sequencing. Following that, the topics themselves will be considered at a general level with occasional specifics to better demonstrate the weight of particular topics. Before discussing the message forms that are most prevalent in NAS it is worth mentioning the sequence of communicative acts that organize Blackfeet NAS programs. To that end, there is something of a sequence of four speech acts that help organize this speech event, the first of which occurs as a pre-program interaction both throughout the
campground and the actual site of the NAS program: 1) prior interaction and promotions most typically performed by a Park Ranger; 2) an introduction to Native America Speaks, in general, as well as the Blackfeet presenter, in particular also typically performed by a Park Ranger; 3) the ‘actual’ NAS program itself by the Blackfeet presenter; and, 4) audience questions directed primarily at the Blackfeet presenter and consequently their responses.

Discussing the first of these acts, in the time prior to the formal NAS communicative event there is usually an informal introduction made between the interpretive ranger and the presenter unless they are already otherwise acquainted with one another. As was previously mentioned and is sometimes the case, while waiting for a program to begin ranger(s) might walk about the campground and remind those there about the NAS program being offered that evening and that it will soon be starting. Occasionally, if Blackfeet presenters are early enough they might engage in some light conversation with audience members. It was fairly common, for example, to hear Blackfeet presenters asking where their audience is visiting from.

As this first preliminary act ends, a second begins with the interpretive ranger on location introducing his/herself and telling those gathered that there is a Native America Speaks program being offered tonight. More often than not, the introduction of the Native American Speaks program itself and the presenter for that program are prefaced with any campground announcements. These announcements usually included a reminder about not feeding the bears and making sure to have all food locked up and appropriately stored. However, such announcements might also include any upcoming ranger-led hikes or events being offered during the next few days. After such comments were addressed
and any questions were answered, the ranger introduces the Native America Speaks program including its award-winning status and its being in its 35th year (as of 2019). What follows next is an introduction for the specific Blackfeet presenter. As is also discussed in the norms section, presenter introductions were oftentimes provided ahead of time to Ranger Kelly Lynch, NAS program coordinator, and then forwarded to those interpretive rangers who would need to perform the actual introductions. However, it was noted by some Blackfeet that several of their introductions have not been updated since they began presenting for NAS.

Following the act of ranger-led introductions and shifting to address the NAS program proper, Blackfeet presenters usually begin by introducing themselves in a traditional way as is discussed and analyzed in depth in Chapter V. That is, by first speaking in the Blackfoot language to introduce who they are, who they are addressing as their audience, as well as their Blackfoot name. As is mentioned above, this introduction commonly occurs both in English and Blackfoot with the Blackfoot introduction usually preceding its English translation. Next, there is usually some indication from the Blackfeet presenter as to what they plan to talk about for their program. This might include, as is further elaborated below, talking about the four main time periods of the Blackfeet, sharing Napi stories, singing songs, and on occasion a kind of show and tell where presenters have brought culturally important plants, animal skins, and other items of cultural value to share with their audience. As also mentioned in the norms section, the general sharing that constitutes these programs proceeds without interruption from the audience unless otherwise encouraged by the presenter or in bizarre circumstances as discussed below. That is, some Blackfeet choose to actively engage the audience
throughout their program in a variety of ways. Most commonly, this meant the teaching of some Blackfoot language (niitsi•po’•”sin) to visitors while other presenters might encourage the audience to learn some American Indian Plains sign language. I also observed some presenters, when signing songs, would ask attendees to sing along with them when it concerned certain contemporary songs which might be popularly known. At other times presenters might ask non-rhetorical questions of their audience to engage them before continuing with their program. On occasion, questions were also asked of the interpretive ranger(s) and were mostly serious, at other times they could be quite playful.

At such time as Blackfeet presenters believed they had spoken for long enough or would otherwise ask the ranger present to confirm that they must be out of time the fourth act mentioned above might proceed. That is, upon the completion of their formal program Blackfeet presenters would themselves sometimes begin the time for answering questions. On other occasions, the ranger(s) would remind those in attendance about the opportunity to ask questions, and at other occasions still, ranger(s) would confirm with presenters that they would be around to answer individual questions if attendees had them before otherwise dismissing those in attendance. As my observations and recordings were of NAS programs in proper I cannot comment upon any questioning that may have occurred one on one after the event as described had otherwise formally ended.

However, question and answer act sequences appeared to be somewhat hit or miss. At some programs, questioning lasted for quite a while with many individuals asking questions. At other programs, few if any questions were asked which sometimes meant the program was more or less formally over after the Blackfeet presentation itself. As also mentioned below questions were generally responded to in one of two ways.
either with as brief an answer as could be afforded while sufficiently long enough to answer the question, or by deeming the question otherwise too complicated or rich with which they did not have the time to adequately attempt an answer. The questioning sequence was usually ended when there were no more questions to be asked but sometimes this occurred as when a ranger moved to end the speech event and commented that further discussions could occur if the presenter was willing to stay around. Sometimes this was possible, and at other times as when presenters had for example to make it back across the Canadian border before customs was closed, this was not.

Having discussed with some detail the general sequence of communicative acts that structure our understanding of NAS programs and having addressed some of what occurs in each of these acts, it makes sense to next discuss the general form that otherwise structures the NAS program in proper. That is, there is a generally noticeable form that organizes Blackfeet discourse as produced in NAS programs, storytelling. Before discussing the specific topics that these stories and their telling might address, it is worth noting that across Blackfeet NAS programs the most common feature present is the act of telling stories about the Blackfeet. For although there are likely ways we could add additional specificity to the kinds of stories being told, the form that these stories take is altogether familiar and can best be described as storytelling, albeit with a Blackfeet folk sense of the word. As will be better discussed in depth at the end of this chapter recognizing that storytelling is an integral speech act for understanding the course of Blackfeet NAS programs, I argue that such also helps address the importance that these stories in particular and storytelling in general have for understanding how the Blackfeet
communicate their identity and what they identify as being important parts of their selves within NAS programs.

Given a discussion, albeit a brief one, of the general forms and speech acts that structure NAS programs (i.e. telling stories) let us now shift to discuss some of the topics addressed in these stories. While a comprehensive list of all topics discussed is not entirely possible at this time I can comment upon topics that were frequently mentioned. Addressing them in no particular order: first, is the topic of the Blackfoot language (niitsi•po’•”sin). As previously mentioned, multiple presenters either already speak the language or are in the process of learning to speak it. Thus, the Blackfoot language itself was often something discussed at a general level with those in attendance. In such cases, Blackfeet might also speak as to the value and relationship of the Blackfoot language to Blackfeet people and share stories about how the language maintains a connection between Blackfeet ancestors long past, including how they came to know the world in a long-ago time, and how it provides similar connections for younger Blackfeet who are now choosing to learn the language. Occasionally, presenters would go into deeper detail regarding the language as in when they would discuss the state of the Blackfoot language as being highly endangered or the translation and production of specific words in Blackfoot and how those might help to demonstrate key beliefs and values of Blackfeet people.

Another topic frequently addressed by Blackfeet presenters is the telling of Napi stories. Recognized as the Blackfeet trickster, Napi, and his mischief is often given as the cause of a great many things being the way they are today. Specific tales might include the reason for the formation of a particular rock structure, why dogs sniff each other’s
bottoms, and how the Blackfeet came to practice the harvesting of traditional plants in a specific way. Relatedly, Blackfeet presenters might share other cultural stories which explain or otherwise relate the teachings of other-than-human beings, as the Blackfeet came to know them. For example, these might include how and why Beaver medicines came to be shared with the Blackfeet as well as to explain the well-known weather phenomena of the Chinook winds which accounts for the much warmer temperatures than otherwise possible as sweep through the plains and down from the mountains during the extreme winter months. In most circumstances, the telling’s of these stories were generally concerned with either Napi or other cultural phenomena.

It was also fairly common to hear about the four main time periods as the Blackfeet have named them. Specifically, this meant talking about the days of the rock, the dog days, the horse culture, and the days of iron (the current period). Although all four time periods were not always discussed there was usually some mention by most presenters as to at least one of the four periods and usually a story to go with it. As but one example this might include talking about how the Blackfeet came to have the horse which might include the traditional story as well as the Blackfoot word for horse and what that word means to the Blackfeet in a culturally salient way. Other stories might include discussions about the dog days, the importance of dogs as the Blackfeet’s beast of burden before the horse, or jokes about dogs and reflections about the existence of ‘rez dogs’ that roam more or less unimpeded across the Blackfeet reservation including parts of GNP. A third animal that was usually addressed to some extent was the buffalo (iinii). Sometimes that meant talking about the rock days and the iniskim (buffalo calling stones), at other times this might include sharing a buffalo hoof or hide for attendees to
pass around and touch/feel. Yet at other times this meant commenting upon the traditional way of killing inii before the dog by driving them over a cliff called a piksun (the appropriately named blood fence).

As was sometimes the case and is also mentioned in the norms section, presenters might talk about some of the more horrifying aspects of the history of the Blackfeet including the Marias Massacre or the starvation winter where 1/3rd of the Blackfeet population died. More contemporarily, the Blackfeet might discuss anthropologists, scientists, and the like coming to ‘steal’ knowledges from the Blackfeet and market it as their own. Yet still, they might discuss MMIWC (missing and murdered indigenous women and children), issues of mascots (both for and against), environmental concerns like mining in the nearby Badger-Two Medicine wilderness, and at times even issues of tribal enrollment like blood quantum. However, as I mention below these more serious topics were altogether less frequent and if they were brought up it was sometimes done in a way to mitigate the reality of making those in attendance feel bad for what their own ancestors might have done or at the very least have benefited from in allowing such things to be committed against the Blackfeet and other Native American people generally.

Less commonly shared were personal stories as experienced by specific presenters. Rather Blackfeet chose to tell frequently heard and well-known stories that most Blackfeet know how to tell or could tell in more or less similar ways and would recognize as Blackfeet stories generally speaking. As also mentioned below presenters did not frequently detail the nature of their relationship either past or present with the National Park Service or Glacier National Park specifically. As such stories represent a
complicated history, to say the least, presenters would rather comment on the natural landscapes and animals that continue to live in the park. That is, Blackfeet would rarely explicitly discuss the tribal relationship with the park and its history. In most instances, this meant the Blackfeet would mention that the Piikuni have always been here and continue to come to the park for ceremonial and traditional purposes including the gathering of certain plants and medicines.

**E. Key**

Key is introduced to provide for the tone, manner, or spirit in which NAS programs are both given and received (Hymes, 1972). Moreover, the significance of key is underlined by the fact that the signaling of key, when in conflict with the overt content, often overrides the latter.

Blackfeet NAS programs were often keyed with a mixture of being both serious and playful. That is, sometimes the topics being discussed could be quite morbid like the rate of suicide and abuse amongst Native peoples. In these instances, and others mentioned in the act topics section, the audience and presenters were both very serious. This meant the audience was usually very quiet and somber, but this also meant that attendees would sometimes appear quite uncomfortable at hearing about the plights of the Blackfeet and other Native peoples.

The serious keying of topics was often expressed early on in NAS programs and usually followed with more lighthearted topics or upon topics that Blackfeet presenters and non-Native attendees could agree upon. For example, in discussing the natural beauty of the park the Blackfeet might explain why they appreciated these things, culturally
speaking, while non-Native tourists often shared a different yet complementary position of support. To some degree, and as a result of such conversations some Blackfeet saw fit to lighten the mood with jokes and in making fun with their audience.

These opportunities for laughter and lighthearted conversation allowed for a greater sense of engagement between those in attendance and Blackfeet presenters. That is, rather than feeling like the non-Native audience was being blamed in some way for the current happenings of the Blackfeet, as is often the claim made by those who refuse to acknowledge the impact of manifest destiny on Native peoples, Blackfeet humor kept audience members laughing and smiling. Such lighthearted keying was often included in ridiculous storytelling as in one case about Napi stealing dog tails as the reason why dogs sniff each other’s rear ends, trying to find their original tail.

However, there were those programs that never really discussed anything particularly bad or negative about the Blackfeet and their history with Euro-Americans and in these instances, the tone was altogether wholly positive, informative, and respectful. Such presentations were most commonly the case when singing or storytelling was the predominant communicative act being performed. As mentioned earlier it was frequently the case that regardless of there being a serious tone, a humorous tone, or some combination of the two that the general keying of Native America Speaks programs was one of appreciation. Never were voices raised nor did I observe any kind of yelling by presenters, audience members, or otherwise. Moreover, Blackfeet presenters usually expressed their delight at having been afforded the opportunity by the park to share stories and knowledges with those in the audience. Accordingly, attendees frequently thanked presenters for what they had to share. At a general level, I expect that most in
attendance returned to their campsites pleased for having gone to a NAS program and grateful for the experience and what they heard.

**F. Instruments**

Channels and forms of speech are of central concern when addressing instrumentalities (Hymes, 1972). That is, our interest lies in how the transmission of speech occurs and the kind of language which organizes the various forms of speech. This of course can include multiple mediums of transmission and the use of specific kinds of English that while not recognized as a specific dialect, represents what I would call speaking with a ‘rez’ accent.

Regarding transmission, as mentioned briefly above some locations provided Blackfeet presenters the opportunity to use a microphone to enhance the quality and loudness of their voice. As was sometimes the case, the heavy rain did not allow for such affordances. At other times, the extreme winds would have made the use of a microphone almost required. However, the general trend amongst presenters what that most of them did not like to use the microphone choosing rather to simply speak loudly. At multiple programs, this ended up being an issue with some of those in attendance complaining that they could not hear the speaker. As rangers did not make the use of the microphone mandatory, sometimes programs were unintelligible to those seated in the back. At programs held in indoor locations, microphones were usually made available, but their use was even less than otherwise given the differences between a comfortably sized indoor room and a wide-open campground amphitheater. On the occasion that certain presenters would choose to sing songs as either part of or for the majority of their
presentation these Blackfeet usually brought with them their choice of instrument. Most commonly this meant the use of a guitar as with the singing of contemporary songs. At other times as singing would occur without the help of instruments or in the case of traditional Blackfeet songs, there was occasionally a small hand drum beat in accordance with the song.

It should also be noted that with locations at the St. Mary hotel, Museum of the Plains Indian, the Blackfeet Heritage Center, and mainly at Lake McDonald Lodge there were oftentimes other audio-visual aids in addition to Blackfeet presenters themselves. As mentioned above this most commonly was done in the form of various images presented through a PowerPoint slide show. However, in the case of the museum and heritage center, this might also include dioramas as Ernie Heavy Runner would use to guide his presentations at the Blackfeet Heritage Center. As in the case of some campground presentations, Blackfeet presenters might also bring physical objects that they would share with those in attendance including passing around smudge materials like sweetgrass, sage, and cedar. At other times this meant smelling peppermint leaves, touching a buffalo tail, or eating huckleberries. Although such might not be thought of strictly in terms of how the transmission of speech is occurring I would argue these nonverbal ‘sharings’ should nonetheless be accounted for in terms of how they too communicate things from the Blackfeet to their audience.

At a spoken level, most presentations were given either entirely in English or mostly in English. However, depending on the Blackfeet presenter you might hear anywhere from several words of the spoken Blackfoot language (niitsi•po’•sin) up to quite a sizeable amount of the language. Sometimes this occurred through a call and
response with the audience in which case those in attendance would ‘learn’ some
Blackfoot and then produce it for the presenter. Several Blackfeet would also
demonstrate the use of American Indian Plains sign language, that is, with their hands
although it was usually accompanied by English and Blackfoot translations. Although it
might surprise some readers, the use of a ‘rez’ accent by Blackfeet presenters was a fairly
common occurrence. By that I mean, the use of particular words and phrases (i.e. ‘plum,’
‘innit,’ ‘smudge,’ ‘houngey,’ etc.) which while intelligible to other Blackfeet, sometimes
myself, and perhaps occasionally some of the rangers, are mostly unintelligible to outside
audience members. When it appeared that such a miscommunication was occurring
Blackfeet would sometimes comment on the misunderstanding that they could read on
audience faces and explain, “I don’t speak English very well but I talk rez good”.

G. Norms

Norms draw our attention both to the norms of interpretation for the event as well
as the norms of behavior that occur therein (Hymes, 1972). Addressing the latter first, as
with Blackfeet NAS programs there are certain norms of interaction that come to be
expected of the event. In other words, certain norms as a routine of normalcy, and a
moral standard of what ought/not occur. Generally, this meant having a locally assigned
interpretive ranger who would introduce the program, sit in attendance while the
Blackfeet presenter gave their program for 45 or so minutes, at which time the presenter
might field questions for another ten to fifteen minutes before ending the program
whereby those in attendance would leave.
As mentioned above, the introduction portion by rangers usually included some discussion of campground-related topics if there were any to mention. This usually meant addressing bear safety concerns and then, an introduction of the NAS program including a land acknowledgment appropriate to the Amskapi Piikuni/Blackfeet. The latter is a preferred way to begin and set the stage for the Blackfeet presenter. Such was followed by an individual introduction for Blackfeet presenters which were sometimes read from a handout produced beforehand and shared with interpretive rangers. Rangers would sometimes comment that there would be time for questions following each NAS program.

Once given the floor, Blackfeet presenters usually preferred to reintroduce themselves, in many cases this took the form of an introduction in Blackfoot followed by an English translation. Depending on the program, Blackfeet presenters would also thank the ranger and those in attendance for coming at either the beginning of their presentation or at its end, or sometimes both before and after. While Blackfeet programs were going on, the audience was usually quiet and listened to what was being said. That is, unless as previously mentioned the Blackfeet presenter asked for the audience’s engagement or to answer a question that they posed to the audience. However, it was not uncommon for those in attendance to laugh at jokes and witty quips as produced by Blackfeet presenters. It was not always the case that a majority of the audience appeared to understand the joke, as their mixed laughter would suggest and as Blackfeet presenters would sometimes comment upon. At the end of a given NAS program, applause was most appropriate insofar as it usually aided the closing of programs. Concerning those programs where
music was played (i.e. those by Jack Gladstone), applause was common enough following the performance of each song.

Although it happened infrequently enough to suggest that it is not a norm of interaction at NAS programs, at a select few, an occasional attendee chose to disrupt the ongoing program by asking a question even though they had been told there would be time to ask questions following the program. These kinds of dispreferred actions on occasion derailed the Blackfeet presenter and even though none of these attendees ever got up and left amid an ongoing program, witnessing such interactions were bizarre enough to warrant commenting upon them here. However, as mentioned when discussing the setting and the participants, there were occasions when some in attendance would get up and leave partway through a program. While it appeared that such was permissible if it had to do with inclement weather, this was not always the case. It was often quite clear to some in attendance and especially the Blackfeet who was presenting, that this otherwise permissible action was not preferred. In certain instances, Blackfeet might comment upon whether or not they should continue their presentation by inquiring with the ranger or would otherwise appear to lose their train of thought for a moment or two.

At the end of most NAS programs, the ranger and sometimes the presenter would remind the audience that they could ask questions if they had any. On the whole, while some presenters appeared to welcome these interactions as between themselves and their audience others seemed to prefer answering any questions in a dialogue rather than with the rest of the audience listening in. I hypothesize that some of this has to do with the content of the presentations themselves in terms of what they offered or perhaps suggested that those in attendance should follow up with their questions. In terms of the
kinds of questions being asked, I have not yet been able to produce an exhaustive analysis of their content or the extent to which they were responded to by presenters. Commenting upon them generally, some questions had an answer while others could otherwise not be answered. As briefly mentioned earlier, on occasions when questions were considered as ignorant, disparaging, or otherwise treated as prohibited in nature Blackfeet responses were carefully negotiated and/or the question itself was made fun of as a means mitigating an otherwise potentially negative tone (i.e., as when one woman asked Robert “what is your most sacred word?”). Again, it should be noted that in none of the programs that I attended did I witness an interaction that became so extreme that someone was told off or asked to leave.

Having discussed the norms of behavior the question of norms of interpretation is altogether more complicated. I argue that part of what makes these programs so very interesting is their intercultural nature, given that non-Natives are often asking questions and learning about Native people from actual Native Americans (i.e. Blackfeet). As such, the norms of interpretation discussed here are hard to pinpoint. That is, norms of interpretation implicate the belief system of a community (Hymes, 1972) and insofar as NAS programs are a specific kind of intercultural encounter an appropriate next question is: which community and which belief system? There is thus the matter of norms of interpretation for the Blackfeet as well as their non-Native Euro-American audience members.

As previously mentioned, discussing how non-Natives interpret NAS programs were mostly observed in terms of their intensive listening to the storytelling aspects of Blackfeet presentations. This is true of both the historical and cultural stories of the
Blackfeet as well as more contemporary telling’s about the way things are today. This is also likely true of those presentations which occur predominantly through song. That is, songs and stories were treated by those in attendance as meaningful and powerful ways for the Blackfeet to share something of themselves with their audience.

Given the complicated history of the park itself, it was more often than not that Glacier National Park as an entity was infrequently discussed by Blackfeet presenters and so other topics were focused upon instead. As mentioned previously, storytelling appears to be a constant throughout most presentations. In this way stories about who the Blackfeet are and how they view their world are shared with audience members. Yet, it is also partially up to the audience to put together the purpose beyond the immediate reality of each story. For example, in the telling of a story about the Chinook winds the immediate reality apparent to most is about a Blackfeet explanation of the weather phenomena itself. However, an important aside that was less explicitly commented upon was the importance of working together between the main character, an orphan boy, and his animal elders who assisted him in freeing the Chinook winds. Thus, there remains some degree of interpretation of the stories that may or may not resonate with visitors depending upon if they too view them that way. In other words, there is not necessarily any guarantee that audience members were interpreting all aspects of Blackfeet stories as Blackfeet would themselves. It was altogether uncommon to hear Blackfeet engage in a meta-discourse about their stories and what they meant or are supposed to mean.

However, Blackfeet presenters would often comment that it is not their desire to be depressing and negative the entire time, as might otherwise occur when talking solely about past and current traumas. Rather, many presenters shared that they too wanted to be
positive and encouraging towards the mutual goal as shared between the Blackfeet as stewards of their traditional lands and generally those who might be called conservationists or environmentalists. That is, Blackfeet presenters did note that they hoped what they shared with those in attendance would reify their own commitments towards protecting GNP lands for future generations, both for non-Natives and the Blackfeet.

Thus, it appears that for Blackfeet presenters there is a desire for attendees to interpret their presentations as opportunities to share in their commitments of conservation and preservation with the Blackfeet, while simultaneously learning more about one another. For Blackfeet presenters, there appears to be a general commitment towards chipping away at the massive lack of understanding that most non-Native people have of actual Native people and in presenting them as more interrelated than some might think.

**H. Genre**

Genre asks us to consider what category or categories could be used to identify the formal characteristics of Native America Speaks programs (Hymes, 1972). As genres often coincide with speech events, it is nevertheless important to bracket assumptions about the interdependence of genre and the kind of speech event being discussed. That is, a great deal of empirical work is necessary to clarify the interrelations between genres, events, acts, and other components. That said, the principal genre of communication in Native America Speaks appears to be that of a cultural presentation. For although we might generally consider a cultural presentation as typically identified with a certain
place; perhaps a classroom, cultural center, or museum, there is enough recursion between the genre of cultural presentations and the components of NAS to suggest that we might understand Native American Speaks programs as a kind of cultural presentation.

However, in the course of this chapter, I discuss “story-telling” as the main generic form of Native America Speaks programs. To that end, we might consider NAS programs as performed by Blackfeet presenters as a specific kind of cultural presentation which occurs through the form of narrative and storytelling,” that takes place predominantly outdoors, in the Earth’s classroom as we might think of it, but which nevertheless concerns education, information, and intercultural exchange.

I. Summary of findings in relation to forthcoming analyses

My attempt here is to detail in as best a way as possible those components which help to provide an initial description of NAS as a communication event. In doing so, I have demonstrated to some extent that the components of setting, participants, ends, act topics, and genre are interrelated and help to make sense of the form and purpose that Blackfeet NAS programs take. That is if we return to our original research question: what do the Blackfeet identify as being important parts of their selves and how do they communicate this identity? we can ask ourselves what this descriptive report about Blackfeet NAS programs suggests as a potential answer and direction for this dissertation to take up. In other words, it should not necessarily come as a surprise to any reader of this dissertation that based on these components Native America Speaks concerns cultures in conversation, one markedly Blackfeet and the other being that of their
audience non-Native Euro-Americans. Indeed, we get a sense of these cultures in conversation throughout our discussion of Hymes’ components.

For example, the setting is at once Glacier National Park but simultaneously also the traditional homelands of the Blackfeet. Participants are actual Blackfeet individuals who engage with their non-Native audience and do so primarily through the use of sharing stories with them. Although the Blackfeet share these things to educate and inform their audience about who they are and what that means, these stories can also be understood as a kind of nighttime entertainment for GNP visitors. Stories that have a specific cultural value for the Blackfeet including functioning as a kind of report on their having been on these lands since time immemorial might just as easily be treated as superficial myths or legends by non-Natives. What struck me as I hope it now strikes readers is that Blackfeet presenters find themselves within a particular communicative scene that necessitates their participation in such a scene as through specific communication practices. In other words, the Blackfeet are not necessarily free to say anything they want about who they are, how they are related, what they are doing together, how they feel about what is going on, and about the nature of things. The social scene of NAS makes the use of certain communication practices expected and altogether normative.

Thus, when Blackfeet give their NAS programs there are understandable tensions between what they might want to say and what they actually do say. To that end, as we transition to Chapters V-VII which concern analyzing and interpreting a Blackfeet discourse of identity, it should become increasingly apparent that this Blackfeet discourse also manages intercultural tensions. That is, although the Blackfeet have plenty of ways
to talk about themselves as Blackfeet people including the use of the Blackfoot language which is otherwise unintelligible to non-Blackfeet, sometimes the scene makes relevant that Blackfeet identity is also discussed in a vacillating form (Carbaugh, 1996). That is, at times, Blackfeet identity is discussed in contrast to the identity of non-Native white Euro-American audience members and what/who the Blackfeet are not. Such requires some communicative maneuvering on the part of Blackfeet to correct some of the untruths and generalized stereotypes that exist about Native American people generally and about the Blackfeet in particular.

What follows first in Chapter V is an analysis and interpretation of Blackfeet discourses about who they are as Blackfeet/Piikuni by focusing on a central hub of identity. I have chosen to refer to this explicit discourse of Blackfeet identity as “I’m Piikuni and Piikuni just means me”. In turn, Chapter VI investigates how the discourse from Chapter V is also expressed along the radiants of relations, dwelling, and action. I refer to this discourse of Blackfeet identity along three radiants as “We think about ourselves in very nuanced ways”. Finally, Chapter VII considers the discourse from Chapters V and VI, encompassing both, in its investigation of the use of the vacillating form as a way of saying things about Blackfeet identity by examining instances in which Blackfeet says things implicitly about their identity as “Blackfeet” in the course of commenting on what/who they are not. I refer to the use of vacillating form generally as “We were never Indians”.

110
CHAPTER V

“T’M PIKUNI AND PIKUNI JUST MEANS ME”: AN EXPLICIT DISCOURSE OF BLACKFEET IDENTITY

This chapter investigates a Blackfeet discourse that depicts being “Blackfeet/Piikuni/Amskapi Piikuni” as something unique to them. Here the Blackfeet discourse is presented distinctly in response to the question: “how do Blackfeet/Piikuni people communicate their identity?” and relatedly, what they (Blackfeet) have to say about themselves. Drawing on Blackfeet NAS programs I describe and interpret this discourse of Blackfeet identity, which is central to understanding these programs as Blackfeet attempt to share stories about who they are and their relationship to GNP lands and their traditional homelands. My aim is to describe and interpret the discourse’s central discursive features, making its cultural logic and underlying values more audible and readily available for consideration.

Although there are certainly other ways that Blackfeet communicate what it means to be “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni,” the discourse examined here is explicitly those employed by the Blackfeet in their doing of NAS programs. I argue that this discourse of “Blackfeet” identity is otherwise commonly understood by visitors to GNP and audiences at NAS programs to say something about what Blackfeet themselves identify as being important parts of their identity within this particular social scene as discussed in Chapter IV. As previously mentioned, this discourse is linked to and shaped by the social scene of NAS programs. Thus, the Blackfeet discourse examined here is produced in part in response to the kind of audience members that attend NAS programs, the setting, their objectives/goals, and the genre of cultural presentations generally speaking. In this
chapter, I focus more specifically on explicit forms of expression employed by Blackfeet presenters as they respond to the question above and interpret the cultural logic and underlying values/beliefs that make this Blackfeet discourse of identity relevant.

Specific matters of particular and interrelated concern in this discourse include the following:

- Ways Blackfeet self-identify in niitsiipâ•”sin (the Blackfoot language) and English;
- Ways in which Blackfeet introductions make relevant radiants of relationships, dwelling, and action for discussing Blackfeet identity;
- The kinship between the Blackfeet and the Blackfoot confederacy;
- Blackfeet and Nitsitapi shared connections to their homelands;
- Blackfeet storytelling and the importance of sharing Napi stories and other cultural stories;
- Ways Blackfeet share and translate niitsiipâ•”sin;
- Blackfeet beliefs and values about who they are;

My goals are to describe the shape of this discourse and interpret the cultural logic of what it means to call oneself “Blackfeet,” and/or “Piikuni/Amskapi Piikuni,” and/or “Nitsitapi” that is presumed and created when this discourse is used. In other words, this chapter provides a description of a Blackfeet discourse about “Blackfeet” identity as well as an interpretation of the meanings which are active in the discourse when it is used.

A. Introductions and self-identification

This chapter begins as do most Blackfeet NAS programs, that is, with Blackfeet introductions of who they are and where they come from. I start here because this is where the Blackfeet usually begin NAS programs, immediately speaking about how they
identify themselves, usually including some use of niitsii•po’•”sin (Blackfoot language).

As we shall hear, by looking at several of these introductions, Blackfeet often make it immediately relevant that a discourse of “Blackfeet” identity is fundamental to their NAS programs.

1. Rising Sun 7/5/18 (RS070518)

I find it somewhat fitting, to begin with Darnell Rides At The Door and the introduction she gave at the second Native America Speaks program I ever attended, and my first NAS program at Rising Sun campground. After turning her microphone on she began speaking as follows:

300 good evening
301 oki
302 oki anikok nitookimi nitoto Amskapi Piikuni ki
303 estekan ninapium estekan
304 what I just said is hello
305 I am
306 nitookimi
307 which means lone camper in our language
308 and my husband is
309 estekan
310 which means uh dependable works for the
311 people
312 what I also said is Amskapi Piikuni
313 which is south peigan
314 and when Steve introduced us he mentioned Piikuni
315 several times
316 the other part of that is
317 we are
318 a part of a great confederacy
319 I didn’t say that in the language
320 but I simply introduced myself

Note that Darnell began with a brief welcome (line 300) before speaking in her Blackfoot language (lines 301-303). As she then translates, Darnell identifies herself by her Blackfoot name Nitookimi (line 306), and also as Amskapi Piikuni (line 312). While
Darnell translates the spoken Blackfoot to English, she adds further translations of specific Blackfoot words (lines 304-313) the last of which prompts Darnell to explain that Amskapi Piikuni is part of a great confederacy (lines 314-318).

This kind of introduction is common amongst Blackfeet presenters who speak niitsii•po’•”sin (Blackfoot language) when addressing their non-Blackfeet audience. That is, stating one’s name and other expressions of identity in niitsii•po’•”sin (lines 301-303), and then translating these expressions into English (lines 304-313). It should also be clear that this kind of introduction makes immediately relevant that Blackfeet think about themselves in terms of their own language (lines 301-303). Such is equally demonstrative of the survival and vitality of Blackfeet culture as well as the continued value of niitsii•po’•”sin as a means of explicitly communicating one’s Blackfeet identity to non-Blackfeet.

Darnell, like others who introduce themselves in this way, not only says things explicitly about her individual, communal, and cultural identity but also implicitly invokes other radiants of meaning. Along the radiants of identity and relationship, she tells the audience that her membership in being Amskapi Piikuni/Piikuni (lines 312-313) and part of the larger Blackfoot confederacy (lines 317-318) is important to who she is and to how she speaks (lines 319-320), and perhaps for whom she speaks. Along those same radiants, by speaking niitsii•po’•”sin (lines 301-303) to those who do not understand the language, Darnell reminds her audience that she and they are members of different cultures with different understandings and perspectives. In Darnell’s case, as in others, this is not done maliciously as she does immediately accommodate her English listeners by translating (lines 304-313). However, this cultural enactment and
demonstration of identities and relationships, and their potential meanings, are noteworthy.

As mentioned previously in Chapter IV.D, as interpretive rangers introduce Blackfeet presenters they acknowledge that NAS programs take place on the traditional lands of the Amskapi Piikuni (but also see lines 314-315 for Darnell’s commenting on the rangers introduction). Blackfeet introductions in niitsii•po’•”sin also implicitly invoke the radiant of dwelling. That is, Darnell, like others, is not speaking in a language, or in terms of a culture, from just anywhere but rather from a place which has deep roots to who she is as Amskapi Piikuni. That is, she is speaking as an Indigenous person who lives near to if not in that place and whose traditional ancestors lived there for thousands of years before Euro-Americans removed the Blackfeet from their land to create GNP. The act of speaking niitsii•po’•”sin then activates a complex web of deeply forceful meanings, relevant not only to Darnell’s identity, and likely her qualifications to speak about Amskapi Piikuni cultural matters, but also to the specific topics she turns to address.

321 one of the major things that we need to
322 cover in this big program tonight is
323 who we are and where we come from
324 and that is definitely part of
325 life for anybody
326 if you know who you are
327 you know where you come from
328 you know where you’re going
329 and you have a path in life
330 and that’s part of our everyday lifestyle

As Darnell transitions from her introduction (lines 321-323), she invokes other radiants as well. Along the radiants of action, identity, and relations, she tells audience members her program tonight more or less concerns what it means to be Amskapi Piikuni—who we are, where we come from (line 323), and where we are going—but also makes
relevant that her criteria for ways of talking about her identity are part of life for all people (lines 324-329). Thus, she somewhat renegotiates that aspects of what is important to her Amskapi Piikuni identity are likely also relevant for her non-Blackfeet audience (lines 324-325).

Thus, Darnell’s introduction, like those that follow, can be heard as both saying certain things and as setting context for other things to be said. As Darnell continues, she again welcomes her audience and resumes talk about who she is.

350 wherever you come from you’re welcome
351 and we’re glad you’re here
352 a lot of times people forget
353 that’s what this beautiful country’s all about
354 and it’s about people
355 and that’s what we call ourselves
356 the Nitsitapi
357 and that means the real people
358 and simply stated the real people are a
359 confederacy
360 we’re one of a major confederacy that runs into Canada
361 our territory ranged from the north Saskatchewan river
362 way up north
363 north of Edmonton
364 all the way down to the Yellowstone
365 and some of you may have traveled through there just recently
366 so there’s a lot of mileage between Yellowstone and the north Saskatchewan river
367 and then we go east into the North and South Dakotas

Note that after Darnell welcomes her audience (line 350) she makes relevant another name the Amskapi Piikuni call themselves, Nitsitapi (lines 355-356), and translates that as meaning the real people (lines 357). Again, Darnell, like others, in speaking this way, says things explicitly about her cultural identity by invoking the radiants of identity and relationships. She tells her audience that her identity as Nitsitapi is important to who she
is (lines 355-357) insofar as it implicitly expresses a relationship that exists across all those who call themselves Nitsitapi, as real people, and as belonging to the greater Blackfoot confederacy (lines 358-359). Darnell too explicitly invokes the radiant of dwelling, suggesting that her Nitsitapi identity is inseparably linked to the traditional land base of the Nitsitapi which Darnell describes in terms of the natural foundations that orient her audience to the traditional boundaries of their territory (lines 361-371) which of course includes Glacier National Park and the places where Blackfeet give NAS programs. It is important to note, as will be shown, that it is along these radiants of identity, dwelling, and relationships that other Blackfeet too make immediately relevant in their own introductions.

2. Two Medicine 6/29/19 (TM062919)

While attending another program at Two Medicine, Robert Hall introduced himself in the following way. We notice here, similar ways that Robert orients his audience immediately to how he identifies himself in niitsii•po’•”sin as Piikuni.

100 Oki
101 Oki ayapiqueeks stino piikuni taka a taka taksitpo
102 anniya nisitapoksin itotamapi wada matatayapisi
103 annibokask matt mattatopastowatowatow a ni a mah
104 a mahkasitpoyitsa anyum
105 itaksinmaksokopistsa
106 awatsa awatsatomikow a napipoksin
107 so I said uh
108 hello English speakers
109 I’m a Piikuni
110 and the reason why I’m Piikuni is
111 datsipoyit
112 I speak the language

Note that like Darnell, Robert began by briefly speaking in niitsii•po’•”sin (lines 100-106). That is, Robert makes immediately relevant that he too thinks about himself in
terms of his Blackfoot language by speaking it. As he translates he self-identifies as being Piikuni (line 107-109). By speaking this way, Robert demonstrates an expression of his identity (lines 110-112). Like Darnell, he says things explicitly about his communal identity while invoking other radiants. Along the radiants of identity and action Robert, tells listeners that his being Piikuni has to do with the fact he speaks the language (lines 110-112).

Along the radiants of identity and relationship, Robert in speaking niitsi•po’•”sin reminds the audience that they are members of a different culture than him. Along the radiants of identity, relationships, and action Robert explicitly recognizes the identity of his audience by describing them as English speakers (line 108). Like Darnell’s introduction above, Robert reminds listeners that these identity terms are the ones they call themselves. It should also be noted, as above, that in speaking this way Blackfeet make explicit claims to their self-identification as Piikuni/Amskapi Piikuni in both English and niitsi•po’•”sin (lines 101, 109).

Continuing, Robert states that language is important (line 113) because that is what brings us together (line 115). Along the radiants of identity and action, Robert tells his audience that his identity as Piikuni can also be understood through the stories he tells
In speaking this way, Robert demonstrates an implicit expression of his identity as Piikuni, through a specific form of communication, “stories”. Robert too invokes other radiants in speaking this way, along the radiants of identity, action, and relationships, he expresses that what brings him here tonight is an opportunity to share with his audience, stories (lines 115-117). In other words, similar to Darnell, Robert’s introduction also makes relevant certain criteria for ways of talking about Blackfeet identity. That is, along the radiants of identity, relations, and action, Robert demonstrates how this discourse of Blackfeet identity is intertwined and nuanced.

3. Two Medicine 7/17/19 (TM071719)

Following Ranger Jordyn Steele’s acknowledgment about tonight’s NAS program occurring on the traditional lands of the Amskapi Piikuni, the Blackfeet, and Glacier National Park, Don Fish spoke the following:

100 Yeah give her a really big hand
101 because she pronounced
102 our name correct
103 really good
104 Amskapi Piikuni
105 sookapii ah
106 sookapii means good in my language
107 Oki niksokoowaaks
108 niistoo kiito kiipootaa
109 ki Amskapi Piikunikoan niisto
110 Niitsiittupiikoan
111 So I said hello
112 my relatives
113 my name is
114 kiitokiipoota
115 that’s my real name
116 kiitokiipoota
117 my English name is Don Fish Donald Fish
118 or Mr. Fish ((laughs))
Like Robert and Darnell, Don begins after congratulating the ranger for a good pronunciation of Amskapi Piikuni (lines 100-103), by briefly speaking his Blackfoot language (lines 107-110). Having already acknowledged his identification as Amskapi Piikuni by commenting on how well she pronounced “our name” (lines 102, 104), Don translates what he says into English (lines 111-118). Like others, he identifies himself by his Blackfoot name which he also translates (lines 108, 113-114). Similar to Robert, Don also identifies his audience using niitsii•po’•”sin (lines 107, 111-112).

Like others who introduce themselves in this way, Don says things explicitly about his individual and communal identity but also invokes other radiants of meaning. That is, while being explicit about his identity, Don also implicitly tells his audience that his identification as Amskapi Piikuni is made evident by his speaking niitsii•po’•”sin (lines 107-110). Along the radiants of identity and relationship, he tells his audience that his being Amskapi Piikuni (line 104, 109) is important insofar as it presents his audience’s identity as “my relatives” (lines 111-112). So, while speaking niitsii•po’•”sin reminds Don’s audience that they are not from the same culture as him, his translation of the word he uses to refer to his audience as “my relatives” (lines 107,11-112) aids in demonstrating that niitsii•po’•”sin provides for Don a cultural enactment of identities and relationships that challenges the otherwise readily demonstrative differences between the Amskapi Piikuni and their non-Native audience.

It should also be noted that Don speaks along the radiants of identity and emotion when he congratulates Jordyn and following the translation of his real name (lines 100-106). As Don says things explicitly about his individual and communal identities he implicitly invokes the radiant of emotion. Along these radiants, Don tells his audience
that his being Amskapi Piikuni and being recognized as such as when Jordyn correctly
pronounced his name is really good (lines 101-104). Along the radiants of identity,
relationships, and emotions Don tells his audience that kiitokiipootaa is his “real name”
(lines 113-116). In telling his audience that Don is his English name (lines 117-118), he
reminds listeners that they are different people from himself, from different cultures, and
with different understandings. In concert, along the radiants of identity, relationships, and
emotion Don tells his listeners that his identity as Amskapi Piikuni has importance to him
insofar as it means having a “real name” (line 115).

as I said hello my relatives
and you’ll understand why I say that when I
get through talking here
and Jordyn, right? Is that your name again? Yeah
131 I got it
132 but she said I do this
133 because of
134 what we always pray for is balance and
135 harmony in this world
136 peace and harmony
137 so worth understanding about our people
138 I really believe that
139 helps out with relationships
140 and that’s what this talk is about is
141 relationships
142 and how we are in this world
143 so when I say
144 oki niksookoowaaks
145 that’s part of that programming
146 I’m saying here

As Don mentions his language (line 126) as an explicit way of enacting his identity as
Amskapi Piikuni he also implicitly invokes other radiants. Along the radiants of identity
and relationship, Don tells his listeners that there is an important reason he referred to
them as relatives (lines 125-129). Along the same radiants, Don tells his listeners that the
values of “balance” and “harmony” (lines 134-135) are important for understanding what it means to be Amskapi Piikuni, and thus his reasoning for calling them his relatives (lines 143-146). Along the radiants of identity, relationships, and action, Don tells his audience that it is worth learning about his people to help with relationships between the two (lines 137-139) and that this is what he is in the course of doing for his NAS program (lines 140-142).

Similar to Robert’s introduction above, it should be noted that Don’s decision to use the word “relatives” in referring to his non-Native audience, like Roberts decision to call them “English speakers”, is deeply symbolic of the complex ways that the Blackfoot language allows Blackfeet to talk about, think about, and relate to their own identity as Amskapi Piikuni as well as the identity of their non-Native audience without having to rely on English to coordinate that meaning. In other words, while speaking niitsii•po’•”sin makes explicit the cultural differences that exist between people who do not speak the same language, niitsii•po’•”sin also provides Blackfeet with the opportunity to renegotiate relationships between different cultures putting those cultures into conversation with one another.

It is worth noting that Darnell’s introduction above expressed that her program is about who you are (identity), where you come from (dwelling and relationships), and where you are going (action), presented as four interrelated ways of talking about her identity as Amskapi Piikuni/Piikuni. Robert’s introduction expressed similar ways of talking about his Piikuni identity, along the radiants of identity, relationships, and action. Here, Don’s introduction demonstrates that his identity as Amskapi Piikuni readily concerns the radiants of identity, relationships, and emotion.
4. Two Medicine 7/10/19 (TM071019)

There are of course other ways that Blackfeet open NAS programs generally. The biggest noticeable difference is an absence of niitsii•po’•’sin. However, as with those introductions above I want to note that these introductions too can be heard as both saying certain things about who the Blackfeet are and as setting context for other things to be said.

200 welcome
to Two Medicine
202 as was mentioned my name is Mariah Gladstone
203 and this evening I’ll be sharing with you guys
204 stories from around the area
205 and hopefully giving you a deeper context into
206 this area
207 and our rich cultural history
208 also wanna mention this is definitely Blackfeet
209 territory
210 Kalispell Salish they’re on the other side of the
211 mountains
212 so Glacier yes we share sides of the continental
213 divide
214 but right here this is Blackfeet land
215 we good ((laughs))

Unlike the previous introductions, we notice that Mariah does not begin by speaking her Blackfoot language. Rather, she begins by welcoming her audience to the setting for tonight’s program, Two Medicine (lines 200-201). Mariah then says things explicitly about her individual identity (line 202) before commenting on what she will be doing tonight for her NAS program, sharing stories (lines 203-204). That is, she speaks along the radians of action, dwelling, and identity. Mariah tells her audience that she will be sharing stories from the area to provide a deeper understanding of the area of Two Medicine and her “rich cultural history” (lines 203-207). Thus, while being explicit about
action and dwelling, Mariah tells her audience that her identity as Blackfeet implies having a connection to this area that can be shared through storytelling.

What we hear Mariah telling her audience next is a correction to information that the ranger provided in her introduction to Mariah (lines 208-215). When the interpretive ranger at Mariah’s program gave their land acknowledgment they did not make explicit a difference between on whose traditional homelands this program was being given but rather commented as to the entirety of Glacier National Park being on the combined homelands of four tribes (i.e., Blackfeet, Salish, Kootenai, and Kalispell). Similar to other Blackfeet who heard similar things from interpretive rangers and corrected them, Mariah speaks explicitly about identity and dwelling, she tells her audience that Two Medicine is definitely “Blackfeet territory” (lines 208-209). Invoking the radiant of emotion and along the radiants of identity and dwelling, Mariah tells her audience seriously but somewhat playfully that this is “Blackfeet land” (lines 214-215).

Again, it should be noted that to the extent that interpretive rangers acknowledge that NAS programs take place on the traditional lands of the Amskapi Piikuni, Blackfeet presenters themselves often restate the importance of their speaking along the radiant of dwelling and identity for their interacting as “Blackfeet” and how such provides context for other things to be said. In this case, Mariah, speaking as a Blackfeet person on her traditional Blackfeet lands also makes relevant her sharing of cultural stories which are tied to these areas and places like Two Medicine where her program is being held.

216 so with our park stories
217 what I’ll be sharing with you are stories of-
218 that Blackfeet people have told
219 for the better part of fourteen thousand
220 years
221 we have archeological evidence that puts us here
222 in this landscape
since that period of time
and also traces our stories to
this landscape
we’re one of the very few tribes that’s lucky
even to be on our traditional homeland
a lot of other tribes were relocated
or consolidated
put on reserves with other tribes
and their stories
are stories of relocation
and removal
and can be traced back to other
locations
for the Blackfeet
our history is here

As Mariah transitions from her introduction, she invokes other radiants. Along the
radiants of action, identity, and dwelling, she tells audience members that the stories she
will be sharing are Blackfeet stories, stories told for thousands of years, stories that place
her Blackfeet people on these lands since that time (lines 217-223). Mariah, like others,
in speaking this way, makes explicit that her sharing of these park stories traces her
Blackfeet identity to these particular places (lines 217-220, 224-225). Thus, she tells her
audience that her identity as Blackfeet is important to who she is insofar as it grounds her
to these places, “our traditional homelands” (lines 226-227), and makes her sharing of
certain stories implicit to an expression of her Blackfeet identity, “our history is here”
(lines 236-237).

5. Lake McDonald Lodge 7/13/18 (LM071318)

Without seeming too long-winded there is good reason to look at one last
introduction in this section of the chapter. Although this program technically took place
on the western side of GNP during the summer of 2018 it is illustrative of certain
discourses of what it means to be “Blackfeet” that should not go undiscussed.
Like other introductions seen above, here Jack Gladstone begins by identifying himself (lines 200-202). However, unlike any of the other introductions we have looked at so far, Jack identifies himself as both Blackfeet Indian (line 201) and as Indigenous (line 202). It is worth noting, as I have mentioned previously, that there are sometimes noticeable contradictions present across Blackfeet NAS presenters when it comes to how they self-identify, specifically the terms they choose or refuse to use. Although this subject is best discussed in Chapter VII where such terms like “Indian” find more frequent use when presented in a vacillating form, as a way of discussing Blackfeet identity and what/who the Blackfeet are not, it is worth mentioning here.

As Jack introduces himself this way, he says things explicitly about his communal and cultural identity but also invokes other radiants. Along the radiants of identity and dwelling, he tells his audience that his being Blackfeet Indian and Indigenous is important to understand in terms of where and for how long his people have been here (lines 200-207). Jack reminds listeners explicitly that various scientific methods reveal that the Blackfeet have been on these lands for at least 25,000 years (lines 203-207). However, as Jack turns to discuss the most credible theory for the Blackfeet arrival (lines 208-210).
208-210), he instead states that traditionalists will say that the Blackfeet have always been here (line 211).

212 which I can accept
213 because as conscious sentient beings on this planet there emerged our relationship with this landscape
214 and that relationship has us springing from
215 and it’s inarguable that
216 every single cell
217 every single visible fiber of our being
218 is from this landscape
219 from the buffalo, plant foods, the elk,
220 from the rich coordination our culture has had
221 for thousands and thousands of years

Along the radiants of emotion, dwelling, and identity, he tells his audience that he accepts what the traditionalists say (line 212) because every cell and fiber of Blackfeet being comes from this landscape (lines 213-220). Jack makes explicit that his identity as Blackfeet is linked, inextricably, to other radiants like dwelling and emotion. That is, his sense of being Blackfeet and Indigenous is fundamental to the places with which his Blackfeet people have long maintained relationships (lines 200-202, 214-220, 222-223).

Before moving on to see what we can make of these introductions interpretively, as with other introductions above I want to remind the reader that generally these Blackfeet introductions can be heard as both saying certain things about who the Blackfeet are and as setting context for other things to be said in the course of communicating a “Blackfeet” identity.

**B. Summary analysis: Identity as a central hub of concern**

With the descriptions of these five introductions, it is worth turning to consider what can be made of them interpretively. It should be noted, that the kind of discourse
presented in this section recurs throughout NAS programs. Further refined inquiry into these and related discourse of Blackfeet identity, particularly through the radiants of dwelling, relations, and action continue in Chapter VI. However, before getting too ahead of ourselves, let us see what kind of interpretations we can make here based on the above Blackfeet introductions and their self-identification as Blackfeet/Piikuni/Amskapi Piikuni.

Most obviously, these introductions speak of being, that is, Blackfeet identity. Yet, these are presented in complex ways which make relevant radiants of relations, dwelling, action, and feeling. For now, making identity an explicit hub of focus we can notice commonly used key terms for self-identification including “Piikuni,” “Amskapi Piikuni,” and “Blackfeet”. We also notice that Blackfeet self-identification is conducted in both English and the Blackfoot language (niitsii•po’•”sin). That is, we notice terms like “Piikuni” and “Amskapi Piikuni” are also active when the Blackfeet speak their introductions in niitsii•po’•”sin. As discussed alongside the introductions above speaking niitsii•po’•”sin says things explicitly about Blackfeet identity but also implicitly about the relationship between those Blackfeet who speak this way and their audiences who do not understand the language.

We notice that Blackfeet sometimes self-identify at individual, communal, and cultural levels. That is, Blackfeet speak of their identity as individuals (e.g., “my name is Mariah Gladstone”), as part of a community (e.g., “Blackfeet,” “Piikuni,” “Amskapi Piikuni”), and at a broader cultural level (e.g., “Nitsitapi,” “the Blackfoot Confederacy,” “Indigenous”). These ways of self-identifying are spoken about by Blackfeet in terms that make clear they think about being “Blackfeet” in self-determined ways (e.g., “in our
language,” “what we call ourselves,” “my real name”). That is, Blackfeet make clear their identification as “Blackfeet,” and/or “Piikuni,” regardless of whatever level of identification they specify, is something they attribute to themselves.

Insofar as we want to remain focused on the hub of identity at this time, we notice how Blackfeet introductions provide context for other things to be said along other radiants of meaning. Although we next turn to discuss these other radiants of meaning somewhat generally, our focus remains firmly oriented to the hub of identity. That is, we notice, at times, and in the course of Blackfeet speaking about “what we call ourselves” that “Blackfeet/Piikuni” identity is also defined in terms of “being a part of a great confederacy,” of “we have always been here,” and “we are our stories”.

For example, concerning relationships, we notice that certain key identity terms are connected to other identity terms including “Nitsitapi,” and “the Blackfoot Confederacy”. As Blackfeet use these terms they connect clusters of terms by using phrases including “we’re one of a major confederacy,” “the real people are a confederacy,” and “the southern Piikuni”. In other words, the relationship is defined in terms of a belonging at various levels of conceptualizations of identity; individual, community, and cultural. Too, we notice other phrases which draw a contrast between the identities of the Blackfeet presenters at their audience including “hello English speakers” and “hello my relatives”. However, since the use of niitsi•po’•sin by Blackfeet and their translating of it into English including what it says both implicitly and explicitly about Blackfeet identity and that of their non-Native audience is a subject best suited for Chapter VII where we consider the vacillating form, let us ignore some of these phrases at present.
Relationship terms in concert with key identity terms also make relevant the radiant of dwelling. That is, in the course of saying things about who they are and how they are related, their relations, Blackfeet also say something about the places where they come from and remain. In other words, the kinship between the Amskapi Piikuni and the other bands of the Nitsitapi is linked to a sense of place: “our territory ranged from the north Saskatchewan river way up north north of Edmonton all the way down to the Yellowstone … and east to the Dakotas,” and “for the Blackfeet our history is here”. We also notice that the Blackfeet say things about where they are when they give NAS programs in relation to the above phrases and terms: “we have always been here,” “this is definitely Blackfeet territory”. Too, these senses of place are tied to particular ways of dwelling: “every single cell every single visible fiber of our being is from this landscape”.

Yet, as Blackfeet speak explicitly along these radiants they too are engaged in a kind of communicative practice. That is, Blackfeet introductions make relevant and set a context for other things to be said in the course of communicating a “Blackfeet” identity. Central to Blackfeet NAS programs are specific interactions as occur between Blackfeet presenters and their audiences: “that’s what brings us together we are our stories?” “what I’ll be sharing with you are stories,” “that’s what this talk is about,” and “one of the major things we need to cover in this big program tonight is who we are and where we come from”.

Integral to such depictions of identity, kinship, dwelling, and action are also terms for emotion, describing how Blackfeet feel about who they are and how “that’s part of our everyday lifestyle”. Such terms and phrases include “that’s what we call ourselves,”
“the real people,” and “she pronounced our name correct, really good Amskapi Piikuni sookapii, sookapii means good in my language”.

Employing these terms and phrases, we can formulate cultural propositions that express taken-for-granted views. Again, it should be noted that the descriptions and interpretations which follow in subsequent sections will aid in further refining such cultural propositions, including these:

- Being “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” is something “we call ourselves”
- When “Blackfeet” are recognized as “Amskapi Piikuni” it feels “really good”
- The “Amskapi Piikuni/Piikuni” are “one” of a “great” “Blackfoot Confederacy”
- The “Nitsitapi” are a “part” of the Blackfoot “confederacy”
- “Nitsitapi” is what Blackfeet “call ourselves” “in our language” and it means “the real people”
- The “territory” of the “Nitsitapi” “ranged from the north Saskatchewan river” up to “north of Edmonton” and back down “all the way down to the Yellowstone”
- The “Blackfeet” have “always been here”
- These are the “homelands” of the “Blackfeet”
- “Blackfeet” “history is here”
- “Blackfeet” “stories” come “from this landscape”
- “Blackfeet” share who they are through “our stories”
- In niitsii•po’•”sin, “our language,” “Blackfeet” share their “real name[s]”

These propositions offer insight into certain dimensions of a deeply felt and expressed identity for the Blackfeet: one which is expressed in their own language and English, ties their identity in integral ways to specific places, has developed through
shared actions and experiences of kinship, and is linked to valued ways of living and (inter)acting in the larger world.

In these ways of speaking, the Blackfeet are “Blackfeet/Piikuni” because of their relationships, their sense of place, their ways of communicating with one another and others, and their feelings. In other words, when Blackfeet are said to be Amskapi Piikuni or Piikuni they are said to recognize their kinship to the other bands of the Nitsitapi and the greater Blackfoot Confederacy. Blackfeet kinship recognizes they are from traditional territories which span international borders and the boundaries of GNP. Blackfeet interact and communicate with non-Blackfeet others through discussing stories, which are tied to their sense of place, and in speaking niitsii•po’•sin. Interacting in these ways contribute to what it means to be “Blackfeet” and is integral for identifying as “Blackfeet”. As we can hear, all five hubs and radiants—identity (who are we), relationship (how they are related to one another and others), action (how they act and interact), emotion (how they feel about who they are), and dwelling (how/where they live and should live in the world)—are active here.

It should be noted that insofar as these propositions feel far-reaching and with little focus, I argue that they nevertheless present integral components of what it means to be “Blackfeet” and the level of nuance with which the Blackfeet think about themselves and who they are. That is, although another analyst might contend that the analysis above is revelatory only insofar as it presents “Blackfeet” identity along multiple radiants I cannot in good faith suggest what it means to be “Blackfeet” solely in terms of cultural propositions that exclusively focus on identity terms. It has always been my intent and hope that I can remain faithful to how discourses of Blackfeet identity are created and
used by actual Blackfeet in NAS. That is, Blackfeet demonstrate in the course of speaking about who they are to non-Natives that “Blackfeet” identity must be discussed along the radiants of identity, dwelling, relationships, and action as integral components of what it means to be “Blackfeet”.

At this point, we can propose several cultural premises that illuminate the foundations of propositions formulated above, making key beliefs and values more readily available.

- Blackfeet identity is irreducible to its constitutive parts (dwelling, relationships, action, emotion, identity)
- Being Blackfeet depends on kinship, sense of place, and ways of interacting with others
- Blackfeet are Piikuni, who are Nitsitapi, who are part of the Blackfoot confederacy
- Blackfeet are also kin to the Nitsitapi and the Blackfoot Confederacy
- Blackfeet are specific places, their traditional homelands
- Blackfeet are their stories and language
- Blackfeet interact and communicate with others through stories and storytelling
- Blackfeet interact and communicate with others through niitsii•po’•”sin
- Blackfeet feel sookapii (good) when others recognize their ways of being

As these premises suggest, cultural views of communication encompass distinctive conceptions of what it means to be “Blackfeet,” that is, who they are, how they relate to one another, where they live, how it feels to be Blackfeet, and how they interact with others. These views are intimately linked to specific beliefs and values of what it means to be Blackfeet when it comes to interacting with non-Natives within the scene of Native America Speaks.
In short, these Blackfeet talk about themselves and who they are in ways that make immediately relevant that they think about identity in nuanced ways. These ways of speaking make relevant additional radiants of relationships, dwelling, and action. That is, these introductions say things about who the Blackfeet are, but they too provide context for other things to be said. In other words, the Blackfeet also demonstrate their being “Piikuni” and/or “Blackfeet” in the course of their interactions with their audience.

As noted in Chapter I, I emphasize the importance of the communicative acts specific to this communicative scene in part because this Blackfeet discourse of identity made them readily audible. That is, like Pratt, Pratt, and Dixon (2014), I suggest that understanding who is Blackfeet necessarily requires also looking at how Blackfeet communicate their being “Blackfeet”.
CHAPTER VI

“WE THINK ABOUT OURSELVES IN VERY NUANCED WAYS”: A DISCOURSE OF BLACKFEET IDENTITY ALONG THREE RADIANTS

As mentioned at the outset of the previous chapter, Blackfeet introductions, which make a central hub of identity immediately relevant, also provide context for other things to be said. To that end, this chapter will pick up where the last one ended by further exploring and interpreting several of these radiants of meaning (i.e. relations, dwelling, and action) which stem from a central hub of identity.

That is, perhaps we have begun to develop a preliminary sense of what it might mean when Blackfeet presenters in Native America Speaks say that they are “Piikuni,” “Amskapi Piikuni,” and/or “Blackfeet”. However, what webs of meaning must be activated for these Blackfeet speakers when communicating and interacting with their non-Native audience in these ways? Recognizing how the cultural scene of these NAS programs make relevant certain ways of speaking about being “Blackfeet” and how to communicate ones being Blackfeet, what actions and ways of speaking might we otherwise expect from the Blackfeet?

In the previous chapter, I noted that these Blackfeet introductions, including their speaking of niitsiip’o’”sin, could be heard as both as saying important things about who the Blackfeet are (as Amskapi Piikuni and Nitsitapi) and as setting an important context for other things to be said. During the course of fieldwork and in conversations with various Blackfeet, this was made explicit time and time again, “It’s important to allow Glacier to tell her story through the voice, through the words of our Indigenous peoples here,” “Different things like that that help you to automatically identify with who you are
and where you’re going,” and “it’s fine it’s okay it just means we think you know we think about ourselves in very nuanced ways”. That is, despite the potential for confusion Blackfeet spoke along multiple radiants as to their being “Blackfeet” and returned consistently to the radiants of dwelling, relations, and action while remaining focused on a hub of identity.

When I first heard statements like these, they did not strike me as especially poignant. I now hear them as a precise and vital reminder of the fact that paying close attention to the context and foundation of any discourse is crucial to cultivating a meaningful understanding of that discourse. In this case, this means paying attention to the ways that communicative means (e.g., use of niitsii•po’•”sin and storytelling) create and express implicit meanings along multiple discursive radiants (e.g., concerning Blackfeet kinship with the Nitsitapi and relationships with Euro-Americans, a Blackfeet sense of cultural identity, being grounded to their homelands, and ways of interacting in those places).

As Darnell spoke in her introduction, “one of the major things that we need to cover in this big program tonight is who we are and where we come from and that is definitely part of life for anybody” (see section V.A.1). If we attend to what we have learned in the course of our investigations here, we can hear Darnell telling her audience that understanding her being “Piikuni” and “Blackfeet” depends on understanding: (1) who she is when she says “I’m Piikuni” (identity), (2) where she comes from both in terms of place and kinship and (dwelling and relations), and (3) how these things will be expressed in practice, that is, how she communicates these in the course of a NAS program (acting). As Darnell’s brief explanation suggests, understanding what it means
to be “Blackfeet” requires crucially attending to the radiants of dwelling, relations, and action all the while as we are primarily concerned with a discourse which otherwise explicitly concerns the hub of identity.

I have written the first portion of this chapter with a similar intention, both to say a few important things and to provide context for other things to be said as follows. In the remainder of this chapter, we will consider each of the mentioned radiants more carefully and will examine their discursive construction and use as it pertains to understanding what it means to say explicitly “I’m Piikuni” and/or “I’m Blackfeet”. That is, the discourses and their radiants which are essential for understanding what it means to be “Blackfeet” including, along the radiant of relations “the Nitsitapi and the Blackfoot Confederacy,” along the radiant of dwelling “Blackfeet connections to a homeland,” and along the radiant of acting “Speaking niitsi•po’•sin (the Blackfoot language) and telling Blackfeet stories”.

As this chapter intends to focus somewhat narrowly on “Blackfeet” cultural views of who/how they identify as expressed along the above-mentioned radiants, it does not necessarily encompass significant discussion of issues that were not readily audible across Blackfeet NAS programs. It should be noted, that such issues as are not discussed here like blood quantum are nonetheless important dimensions of understanding who the Blackfeet are. In particular, blood quantum which functions as a criterial assessment of one’s being Blackfeet or Native American from the position of the federal government and which also causes significant internal strife amongst Blackfeet as to who is and is not Blackfeet, are not discussed in this dissertation. As mentioned previously, there are other
ways of talking about who/how someone identifies as “Blackfeet” that are altogether obscure and otherwise inaccessible for most non-Blackfeet.

However, insofar as Blackfeet sometimes discuss their being “Blackfeet” in contrast to the assumed identity of their audience, and explicitly in terms of who/what is not Blackfeet, we shall investigate the use of the vacillating form in discourses regarding “Blackfeet” identity in Chapter VII.

A. The Nitsitapi and the Blackfoot Confederacy

As Blackfeet discuss their identity they make relevant the radiant of relationships. That is, their being Blackfeet and/or Piikuni is often spoken about in relation to their cultural identity as Nitsitapi and belonging to the Blackfoot confederacy. Above, we revisited how Darnell invoked the radiants of identity, relationships, and dwelling, suggesting that her Nitsitapi identity is inseparably linked to the traditional territory of the Nitsitapi. In this section, I focus more specifically on these kinds of discourses which make relevant that talking about being “Blackfeet” occurs, at times implicitly, in terms of Blackfeet kinship as Nitsitapi and in relation to the greater Blackfoot confederacy. My aim here, is to describe and interpret the central discursive features of these ways of speaking about Blackfeet identity through the radiant of relationships, making the cultural logic and values more audible and readily available for consideration.

1. Two Medicine 7/7/18 (TM070718)

In the course of one of her programs at Two Medicine, Mariah spoke the following about her identity as “Blackfeet” in relation to the Blackfoot confederacy while
invoking her cultural identity as Nitsitapi. That is, she spoke along the radiants of identity and relationships, and as we will see, implicitly along the radiant of dwelling.

Mariah, like others who speak this way, says things explicitly about her communal (line 1303, 1308-1310) and cultural identity (lines 1304-1307), but also invokes other radiants of meaning. Along the radiants of identity and relationships, Mariah tells her audience that her being Blackfeet/Amskapi Piikuni and part of the larger Blackfoot Confederacy is important to who she is (lines 1304-1310). Along these same radiants, she tells her audience that the confederacy is made up of four tribes (lines 1305-1306), her Blackfeet being the most southern of them, Amskapi Piikuni (lines 1308-1310). Mariah also invokes the radiant of dwelling, noting that her identity as Amskapi Piikuni is important to her sense of place in relation to the other tribes of the Blackfoot confederacy and their reserves up north in Canada (lines 1308-1311).
so that is the actual translation of that word
it was the first English speakers that
encountered
anyone from the Blackfoot confederacy
countered them	hey called themselves the Siksika
which is a reference to prairie fires
dying the bottom of their moccasins black
also Blackfo- all tribes within the Blackfoot
confederacy
used fire
as a part of maintaining our ecological
systems
so burning a part of the prairie in the spring
time would blacken that part of the prairie but would
ensure that the sunlight warmed that soil
and new green shoots sprung up first in that area
and animals would come feast on those new green
shoots
and of course fire is an essential part of the
ecosystems around here

Continuing, Mariah makes explicit the relationship that exists between the Blackfeet and
Blackfoot (lines 1312-1313). As she does, she translates the Blackfoot words she uses for
the Amskapi Piikuni into its English form (lines 1314-1316). Along the radiants of
identity and relationships, Mariah communicates the specific relationship that exists
between the four tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy (i.e., Amskapi Piikuni, Kainai,
Northern Piikuni, and Siksika) (lines 1317-1320). Like others, who speak about
themselves in this way, Mariah also implicitly expresses a relationship that exists
between the Blackfeet and the Blackfoot Confederacy, and her audience at NAS. Her use
of the Blackfoot language and subsequent translation reminds her audience that they are
members of different cultures with different perspectives. As Mariah translates that
Siksika literally means Black foot she mentions that led to them being called Blackfoot
by English speakers (lines 1321-1327). Along the radiants of identity, relationships, and
emotion Mariah reminds her audience that Blackfoot is the English word and although it is what the Siksika call themselves, not all Blackfoot are Blackfeet (lines 1312-1327).

As Mariah discusses the origins of the word Siksika, in reference to the prairie fires that all tribes within the Blackfoot confederacy used to maintain their ecological systems (lines 1327-1334), she speaks along the radiants of identity, relationships, and action. Along these radiants, Mariah tells her audience that her identity as Amskapi Piikuni and Blackfeet is also linked to specific practices (i.e., prairie fires) and ways of living in relation to the natural world around here (lines 1330-1342). Mariah implicitly invokes the radiant of dwelling suggesting these practices tie all Blackfoot, including the Blackfeet to their traditional land base.

1343 the Blackfeet call themselves-
1344 uh the Blackfoot generally
1345 all the tribes within the confederacy call
1346 themselves the Nitsitapi
1347 which is the real people

Note that like others, Mariah also makes explicit her identity as Nitsitapi, which she translates (lines 1343-1347). In speaking this way, she says things explicitly about her cultural identity by invoking the radiants of identity and relationships. Mariah tells her audience that the Blackfeet and the other tribes within the confederacy all call themselves the Nitsitapi (lines 1343-1346). Thus, she describes her identity as Blackfeet, Amskapi Piikuni, and Nitsitapi in terms of the relationships that exist between these terms and to the Blackfoot confederacy.

2. Two Medicine 6/29/19 (TM062919)

Like Mariah above, Robert also makes explicit that his identity as “Blackfeet” can be spoken about along the radiants of identity and relationships.
what is the Blackfeet? who are they? well I’ll tell ya historically we were made of six bands two of those bands were peoples who did not speak our language they spoke different languages one of em was the Sarsi that means ally and I think they call themselves the Sutsitna nah a the Sasatie I think they call themselves but in Canada they’re known as the Sarsi because French speaking people heard us say saasii and they heard an r so they wrote it as sarsi...

[4 lines omitted]

the other tribe that were in our Blackfoot confederacy that didn’t speak our language was the Atsina and the Atsina means greasy bellies...

It should be noted, that similar to Mariah’s excerpt immediately above, Robert speaks as if to answer a question he assumes his audience has (lines 200-202). He begins by addressing that historically the Blackfeet were one of six bands (line 203). In speaking this way Robert tells his audience explicitly that he identifies as “Blackfeet,” but also invokes other radiants of meaning including relationships. Along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert tells listeners that his communal identity as Blackfeet is linked to the kinship that exists between the Blackfeet and the other five bands which comprise the Blackfoot confederacy. It should be noted that above Mariah claims that the Blackfeet exist in relation to the greater Blackfoot confederacy and the four tribes which comprise it, but here Robert speaks of six total bands including two bands who do not share the same language as the Blackfeet (lines 204-207). As we hear Robert, at times, using tribe and band interchangeably, we note such but do not further comment upon it.

but then a historically there were four bands
of the Nitsitapi
and again
I know I'm throwing out a bunch of words and
hopefully I can keep up with myself
but going back and explaining what those
words mean
but Nitsitapi just means the original people
but you know before that we were just
matapi
just people
and then we met these other matapiks
who came from across the ocean
so we had to call ourselves Nitsitapi
of our tribe there were four bands
and one of them was the Inaksiks
that means the small robes
they’re the band that is no longer with
us
they kind of been
died out
but they amalgamated back into other tribes
basically...

After discussing the two bands which who did not speak niitsii•po’•”sin Robert turns to
speak about the four bands which comprise the Nitsitapi and speak the same language
(lines 230-232). As he speaks, Robert translates words from the Blackfoot language for
his audience (lines 234-238). Having introduced himself previously in niitsii•po’•”sin and as Piikuni, in speaking this way, Robert, like others, demonstrates an expression of his
identity. That is, he says things explicitly about his communal and cultural identities
while invoking other radiants. It should be noted that as Robert translates Nitsitapi for his
audience he provides historical context as to what the Nitsitapi used to call themselves
(lines 238-244). In the course of his explanation, it is worth noting that he continues
speaking along the radiants of identity and relationships. Along these radiants, Robert
tells his audience that his identity as Nitsitapi developed, in part, through relationships
with people who came from across the ocean (e.g., white Euro-Americans) (lines 242-
Again, it should be noted that this way of speaking says things explicitly about the identity of those who call themselves Nitsitapi, that such implicitly expresses a relationship that not only exists across all those who call themselves Nitsitapi but also invokes contrast between the Nitsitapi and Robert’s audience. That is, Robert implicitly reminds his audience that they belong to a different culture than him.

As Robert continues his discussion of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the Nitsitapi he elaborates upon the four bands who speak niitsii•po’•”sin, having just told his audience that one of these bands, the Inaksiks, were reabsorbed by the other bands.

310 but um
311 the other three bands are still here today
312 and we’re spread across
313 four reserves
314 or reservations
315 but what is a reservation
316 you might ask right?
317 you know we didn’t call some landlord and be like
318 we’d like to y’know
319 reserve you know part of Montana
320 it wasn’t that
321 what it is is
322 and another kind of misunderstanding of what
323 a reservation is is this is not land that was given to
324 us by the United States
325 you know
326 if I go into your home
327 and steal it from you
328 and then you fight back good enough to keep
329 one of your bedrooms
330 and I went around telling people I gave them
331 that bathroom
332 you know you would feel kinda like
333 I fought for that man
334 I kept this
335 I retained it
336 so this is land that we retained
337 as a matter of fact where you are right now used to be
338 part of our reservation
339 it was taken away in the ceded strip
340 in 1898 for a 99 year land lease agreement
As he discusses the three bands that are still here, Robert invokes other radiants. Along the radiants of identity, relations, and dwelling, he tells audience members that his identity as Blackfeet, Piikuni, and Nitsitapi is inseparably linked to the reserves or reservations that they remain on (lines 311-314). Concerned that his audience might not know what a reservation is, Robert explains through an analogy that reservation as a term is a misnomer for those lands that the Blackfeet and Nitsitapi retained as part of their homelands (lines 315-335). Thus, he implicitly expresses a relationship that exists across all Nitsitapi, they remain on the lands that they have always been upon and which previously were much larger than they currently are (lines 336-338). Robert makes this explicit along the radiants of identity, relationships, and dwelling when he states, matter of fact, that the place he is currently speaking from (i.e., Two Medicine) was once part of his reservation but was taken from them over one hundred years ago when George Bird Grinnell, a name synonymous with Glacier National Park, helped found the park (lines 339-346).

Like other Blackfeet who say these things, in these places, Robert explicitly invokes that his identity as Blackfeet, Piikuni, and Nitsitapi is linked to these traditional places and locations that once belonged to them but were later taken from them, including the lands upon which he is engaged in NAS.

so the reservation here I’ll talk about last
because that’s where I’m from
and I’ll save the best for last
but anyways
so up north
up in Canada
the furthest rez is called the Siksika
and Siksika literally means Blackfoot
just verbatim
so I could say
ammo a nitsikin siksinatsi
my shoe is black or
nistomokin siksinatsi
my hat is black
so you here that si-
Siksika
Blackfoot
how they got their name traditionally
we don’t know
it’s lost maybe
a lot of people suggest that it’s because of the slash
and burn techniques
I don’t know
but they were the first tribe to make contact with
for lack of a better term settlers or foreigners
so they heard these people who speak
niitsii•po’•”sin
and that call themselves Blackfoot
and then they heard other people speak this
so they called everybody this right

Robert continues to make relevant his being Piikuni and Nitsitapi by speaking words in
niitsii•po’•”sin and then translating these words into English (lines 356-366). By
continuing to speak in a language that his non-Blackfeet audience do not understand, he
reminds listeners that he and they share different cultures with different understandings.

Robert also makes relevant along the radiants of identity and dwelling that the Nitsitapi
have treaty rights and legal stewardship over four reservations/reserves (lines 350-356).

Along those radiants, Robert tells his audience that the Siksika remain on their traditional
lands in Canada (lines 354-356), something Darnell does when discussing the boundaries
of the traditional territory of the Nitsitapi (see section V.A.1). Insofar as Robert explains
how the Siksika got their name (lines 357, 367-371), he is more explicit in invoking
radiants of identity, relationships, and action. Along these radiants, he tell his audience that his identity in relation to the Siksika also stands in relation to what they call themselves and their way of interacting with the world (lines 367-371). Also along these radiants, he tells his audience that interactions between Siksika and foreigners regarding what they (Siksika) call themselves and those same foreigners later hearing other people speaking the same language (lines 373-379), suggests his identification as part of the Blackfoot confederacy comes in part from his speaking niitsitapi’sin.

385 the other tribe
386 that’s part of our confederacy is the Akainai
387 the Akainai are just cross this border
388 and Akainai is an interesting word
389 for some reason I don’t know why they translated it to
390 blood
391 but it’s wrong
392 so the word for
393 chief is ninna
394 and I could say many chiefs as akaina
395 and that’s what they are
396 cuz they’re all chiefs up there
397 and it’s true
398 they have that attitude even to this
399 day
400 but you know like people
401 ethnographers would go up to them and knock on
402 their scratch their teepee door
403 where’s your chief
404 didn’t matter if they were sixty or six
405 I’m the chief
406 what do you want
407 so that’s how they got their name
408 the Piikuni is what we are
409 and we got severed in two
410 by that border
411 you know
412 we got severed in two
413 so there’s the apatohski piikuni and amskapi piikuni
414 the northern and the southern
415 I’ll let you guess who’s better looking
416 anyways
417 the word Piikuni is hard to translate
cuz it means scabby robe
scabby robe
like a robe
but where that word comes from is a little intense
really what it means is we were the first to hunt
buffalo during the hunting season
and I say that with a tinge of pride
obviously

As Robert continues he discusses the other band of the Blackfoot confederacy, the Akainai (lines 385-407), before finally arriving to his own band, the Piikuni (line 408). Like other Blackfeet who speak this way, Robert notes that the border separated the Piikuni in two (lines 408-412). He calls the northern Piikuni Apatohsi Piikuni and the southern, Amskapi Piikuni (lines 413-414). In this way, Robert makes explicit and demonstrates at least two ways in which he thinks about his identity. Both are along the radiants of identity, dwelling, and relationships; the first, as with others, reminds listeners that Robert’s identity as Nitsitapi and Amskapi Piikuni/Piikuni ties himself to a land base which his ancestors lived upon before Euro-Americans took most of that land. The second reminds his audience that Robert’s membership as Amskapi Piikuni lies in partial relation to the greater Blackfoot confederacy and the three other bands who speak niitsii•po’•”sin and are identified culturally as Nitsitapi and the greater Blackfoot Confederacy still. Again, Robert speaks as an Indigenous person who lives in a place where his ancestors lived but was also separated from other Nitsitapi because of the force of colonial powers. Speaking along the radiants of identity, relationships, and dwelling, Robert makes relevant that his identity as Piikuni and Blackfeet also implicates additional deeply meaningful commentary about the kind of intercultural encounter occurring in NAS. That is, in speaking this way Robert, like other Blackfeet who speak this way,
makes relevant discourses of identity and relationships to demonstrate what it means to be “Blackfeet” and “Piikuni”.

3. “All Blackfeet are Blackfoot but not all Blackfoot are Blackfeet”

Drawing on these two extended descriptions, as well as introductions from Chapter V which have relevancy here, we can consider what can be made of them interpretively. Recognizably, this discourse speaks of “Blackfeet” identity along the radiants of identity and relationships. That is, the kinship of Blackfeet in relation to their identity as Nitsitapi and also as part of the Blackfoot Confederacy is central to this discourse. Yet, in the course of speaking this way, we notice that Blackfeet often make relevant the radiant of dwelling as well. We can formulate the following cultural propositions:

- Being “Blackfeet” and/or “Amskapi Piikuni” also means one is “Nitsitapi”
- The “Blackfeet” are one of “four tribes” that “made” the “Blackfoot Confederacy”
- “Blackfeet” “call themselves” “Nitsitapi” because they speak “niitsitipawpin” “our language”
- “Nitsitapi” are “the real” “original people” since they “met” “other[s]” “settlers or foreigners” “from across the ocean”
- The “territory” of the “Nitsitapi” “ranged from the north Saskatchewan river” up to “north of Edmonton” and back down “all the way down to the Yellowstone”
- The “Blackfoot confederacy” and “Nitsitapi” “live[d]” “up in Canada” on “reserves” and “around here” in “Montana” on “reservations”
- “Piikuni” were “severed in two” by “Canada” and “that border”
- “Reservations” are “land that we retained” but more “was taken away” for GNP
These propositions offer insight and reaffirm certain dimensions of a deeply felt and expressed identity for the Blackfeet: which is expressed in English and niitsii•po’•”sin, ties their identity inseparably to the shared experiences and kinship of being Nitsitapi, is linked to a specific territory, and makes reference to valued ways on living on those homelands.

Again, it should be noted that these propositions represent my attempt to reveal integral components of what it means to be “Blackfeet” within the scene of NAS. As Blackfeet demonstrate in the course of speaking about who they are to non-Natives that “Blackfeet” identity must be understood along the radiants of identity and relationships, I propose several cultural premises that illuminate the foundations of propositions formulated above, making key beliefs and values more readily audible and available.

- Being Blackfeet stands in partial relation to being Nitsitapi
- Being Blackfeet means being a part of a Blackfoot confederacy of four tribes all who speak niitsii•po’•”sin
- The Nitsitapi, original people, speak niitsii•po’•”sin
- The Nitsitapi are tied to a territory that ranged from Canada into the United States
- Piikuni were separated by the border but retained reservation/reserves
- Being Blackfeet stands in partial relation to those who are not Blackfeet or Blackfoot (foreign others)
- Being Blackfeet means having retained some of their traditional land base, which once included what is now known as Glacier National Park
- Being Blackfeet and Nitsitapi means speaking niitsii•po’•”sin on their traditional homelands

As these premises suggest, cultural views of communication encompass distinct conceptions of what it means to be “Blackfeet,” specifically as it concerns who they are
and how they relate to one another. As with the previous section, these views are intimately linked to specific beliefs and values of what it means to be “Blackfeet” when it comes to interactions with non-Natives at Native America Speaks programs.

As this section is meant in some ways to build off of the previous chapter, Blackfeet talk about themselves and who they are in ways that make relevant that they think about identity along several radiants including, here, identity and relationships. Yet, as with the previous chapter, we notice that these ways of speaking also make relevant additional radiants such as dwelling, which we turn to address next.

**B. Blackfeet connections to a homeland**

As Blackfeet discuss their identity they too make relevant the radiant of dwelling. In other words, their being “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” is often spoken about in terms of their traditional homelands and where the Blackfeet are/come from. To the extent it is possible, in this section I focus specifically on these kinds of discourses which make relevant the radiants of identity and dwelling, for a discourse of “Blackfeet” identity. My aim here, is to describe and interpret the central discursive features of these ways of speaking about Blackfeet identity through the radiant of dwelling, making the cultural logic and values more audible and readily available for consideration.

1. **Two Medicine 7/4/18 (TM070418)**

While attending a program from the Āasāisst-ő Language Society, William Big Bull spoke the following about the importance of his connection to the land for his being Piikuni.
you’re here this evening
however long
you’re staying here
is our traditional home
this is our backyard
it also is our front yard
it’s also the place
that feeds us every day of our lives
only today we live in a different world
but our
the natural people
and the natural world
and how we harmonize with the natural world
and our traditions

Like others who speak this way, William says things explicitly about his connection to his traditional homelands including the place from which he is currently speaking within the park (line 603). Like others, having earlier introduced himself in niitsii•po’•”sin, William welcomes his audience while speaking along the radiants of identity, relationships, and dwelling. Along these radiants, William tells his audience that while they are here, for however long, they are in the traditional home of the Piikuni and Blackfeet people (lines 600-603). Along these same radiants, William tells his audience that the area of Two Medicine is part of his traditional home, but also invokes other radiants of meaning. As William continues he speaks along the radiants of action, identity, and dwelling, telling his audience that in addition to this place being his traditional home it also sustains him (lines 606-607). That is, William links action to dwelling, the place that feeds us. As William tells his audience that we live in a different world today (line 608), he invokes the radiant of emotion. Along the radiants of identity, dwelling, emotion, and action, William tells listeners that the natural people live in the natural world, harmonizing with that world and Piikuni traditions (lines 608-613). Like other Blackfeet who speak this way, William expresses that his identity as Piikuni stands
in relation to his being in a place which is his home, which feeds him, and which provides a place to harmonize with the world and Piikuni traditions.

It should be noted that excerpts like this one from William are truly rich sources of cultural communication that present complex understandings both quickly and succinctly. Trying to remain focused on the radiants of identity and dwelling, note that William expresses his identity as Piikuni in specific relation to the place he is speaking from within Glacier National Park, on his homelands and the kind of relationship he has to those places which include the fundamental component these places play in Piikuni traditions.

2. Lake McDonald Lodge 7/13/18 (LM071318)

Like William above, Jack Gladstone also makes explicit that his identity as “Blackfeet” is spoken about along the radiants of identity and dwelling. As was usually the case with Jack’s program where he would perform an assortment of songs from his lengthy musical career where he is known for fusing lyrical poetry with music and spoken word narrative, he spoke the following about the importance of these places to his Blackfeet people.

450 this wasn’t glacier park until just about one hundred
451 years ago
452 it wasn’t the Lewis overthrust
453 it wasn’t calculated
454 in those terms yet
455 it was called the rock mountains
456 or the rocky mountains
457 but to our Blackfeet people
458 it was mistakisks
459 the backbone of the world
460 and just like our spine
461 the connections
462 the neural connections
It should be noted, similar to William, Jack speaks about the place from where he is currently speaking in terms of what it is and means to the Blackfeet (lines 450-459). Along the radiants of identity and dwelling, Jack recognizes that he speaks from a place that is now called Glacier and known by the geological formation called the Lewis overthrust (lines 400-452), yet he invokes other radiants. Along the radiants of identity, dwelling, and relationships Jack tells his audience that the place they now call Glacier wasn’t calculated in those terms until about one hundred years ago (lines 450-451). In speaking this way Jack tells his audience that this place was first known by Blackfeet people and what they used to call these mountains, mistakisks the backbone of the world (lines 457-459) and implicitly suggests that the way his audience knows these places came after these lands were taken from the Blackfeet.

Along the radiants of identity, dwelling, and relationships Jack uses the Blackfoot word for mountains and translates it for his audience (lines 455-458). As he continues speaking along the radiants of identity and dwelling he also invokes the radiant of emotion. Along these radiants, Jack tells his audience that these mountains, the backbone, are like the spine of the Blackfeet and how they came to know the world (lines 459-465). Using the metaphor of people as landscape Jack expresses that his being “Blackfeet” has everything to do with being in and from these places (line 466).

Following his singing of another song, Jack continues to discuss his Blackfeet relationship to this landscape and, as we shall hear, to a central way of “Blackfeet” acting on and in the world.
downstream from here the Saint Mary’s river on the banks of the Saint Mary reservoir that is northeast of Cardston Alberta an hour’s drive from here really there’s a site called Wally’s beach my dad’s name was Wally if I’ve remember this Wally’s beach is what it was called but there is an archeological site the University of Edmonton University of Alberta at Edmonton I met the chief excavator on this almost 13,000 years ago there were findings so for at least 13,000 years ago there’s been a human presence upon this landscape our Blackfeet and our stories indicate there’s a very very long ancient relationship one of the stories we have that indicate this is a trickster story

Jack, like others who speak this way, says things explicitly about his Blackfeet identity as being connected to places at least 13,000 years old (lines 650-666), but also invokes other radiants of meaning. Along the radiants of identity and dwelling, Jack tells his audience that there are Blackfeet archeological sites that date back at least 13,000 and prove there has been a human presence upon these lands (lines 659-666). It should be noted, that Jack is now speaking about the traditional land base of the Blackfeet as extends into Alberta, Canada. Along the radiants of identity, dwelling, and action Jack tells his audience that Blackfeet stories also tie, in an ancient way, them to these places (lines 667-670). It should be noted that along the radiants of identity and relationships, Jack implicitly suggests that both non-Blackfeet and Blackfeet can measure how long they have been a part of this landscape (lines 659-666, 667-670 respectively). As Jack also spoke of in his
introduction above, he presents both non-Blackfeet and Blackfeet means of expressing their having been upon the traditional homelands of the Blackfeet.

All the while, as Jack makes explicit that these stories are another means of expressing Blackfeet relationships with their homelands, he suggests to his audience a particular trickster story that has such a connection (lines 671-672).

400 these are the types of stories
401 that were utilized
402 to connect us with
403 our tradition
404 our culture
405 and ultimately
406 to connect us with identity

Earlier in this NAS program, along the radiants of action, identity, and dwelling, Jack told his audience that stories are an implicit expression of his Blackfeet identity as they connect Blackfeet identity and the Blackfeet people to the landscapes that these stories relate to (lines 400-406). So, while Jack’s non-Native audience might be more willing to accept the archeological evidence that ties his people to these places he orients his own NAS programs towards mainly sharing stories as an expression of his “Blackfeet” identity (line 406). As with other Blackfeet who speak like this, Jack makes relevant discourses of identity and dwelling to demonstrate what it means to be “Blackfeet” but also invokes the radiant of action (i.e., storytelling). As we will see in section C of this chapter, which orients itself toward the radiants of identity and action, storytelling serves as a primary expression of and means of communicating a “Blackfeet” identity (see also section IV.D).

3. “We were always here”
Drawing on these two descriptions, as well as those introductions which have relevancy here, we can consider what can be made of them interpretively. Again, it should be apparent that this discourse speaks of “Blackfeet” identity along the radiants of identity and dwelling. That is, the Blackfeet/Piikuni way of living in the world and on the land is central to discourse about “Blackfeet” identity. Like previous sections of this chapter and Chapter V, we notice that in the course of this way of speaking, Blackfeet often make relevant the radiant of action as well. We can formulate the following cultural propositions:

- These lands are the “homelands” of the “Blackfeet”
- The “Blackfeet” have "always been here"
- “Blackfeet” “history is here”
- “Blackfeet” have been “upon this landscape” for at least “13,000 years”
- Blackfeet “stories” come “from this landscape”
- Blackfeet “stories” “connect” the Blackfeet with “identity”
- To the Blackfeet, these “mountains” were a “backbone” of “connections” to the “universe”
- These “homelands” “feed us”
- Blackfeet “traditions” let them “harmonize with the natural world”

These propositions offer insight into certain dimensions of a deeply felt and expressed identity for the “Blackfeet” which is tied in integral ways to specific places (i.e., territory and traditional homeland) and valued ways of living in the world.

Again, these propositions represent my attempt to reveal integral components of what it means to be “Blackfeet” within the scene of NAS. In these ways of speaking, “Blackfeet” identity is demonstrated through the relationships that they have with the
lands now called Glacier National Park and the larger territory of their traditional homelands. Insofar as Blackfeet demonstrate in the course of speaking about who they are to non-Natives that “Blackfeet” identity must be understood along the radiants of identity and dwelling, I propose several cultural premises that illuminate the foundations of those propositions above, making key beliefs and values more readily audible and available.

• Blackfeet belong to their homelands
• Blackfeet homelands include some GNP lands
• Blackfeet can trace their relationship to their homelands through stories
• Blackfeet stories teach Blackfeet about being “Blackfeet”
• These homelands provided for the Blackfeet to harmonize with the natural world
• Blackfeet being and identity is sustained by these homelands and their connection to these places (i.e., Two Medicine)

As these premises suggest, cultural views of communication encompass distinctive conceptions of what it means to be “Blackfeet,” specifically who they are, where they live, and how they interact with those places and others. These views are intimately linked to specific beliefs and values of what it means to be Blackfeet when it comes to interacting with non-Natives within the scene of Native America Speaks.

In short, Blackfeet talk about who they are in ways that make immediately relevant that they think about “Blackfeet” identity along several radiants including here, identity, and dwelling. Yet as with the other sections of this chapter, we notice that these ways of speaking make relevant additional radiants such as action, which is addressed in the following section.
C. Speaking niitsii•po’•”sin (the Blackfoot language) and telling Blackfeet stories

As mentioned previously in Chapter V, as Blackfeet discuss their identity they too make relevant a means of demonstrating that identity through the radiant of action. That is, Blackfeet often discuss their being “Blackfeet” as is demonstrated in the course of when they share stories with their audiences at NAS. Although it is not within the scope of this dissertation to interpret and analyze each story that was shared at Native America Speaks programs, in this section, I focus on the kinds of explicit discourses which make relevant the radiant of identity and action, the practice of storytelling, for a discourse of “Blackfeet” identity. My aim here is to describe and interpret the central discursive features of these ways of speaking about Blackfeet identity through the radiant of action, making the cultural logic and values more audible and readily available for consideration.

1. Rising Sun 6/27/19 (RS062719)

Following Robert’s self-introduction at Rising Sun campground amphitheater he spoke the following as an elaboration of his reason for sharing stories with his audience.

421 but I’m here to talk about stories right?
422 one of the major things of stories obviously
423 that we all known is
424 Iitpoksin
425 that just means the talk
426 there is no stories without the talk
427 and the way that we tell stories to each other
428 it really does define who we are obviously because
429 whenever you ask anybody a question
430 you’re asking em a story
431 whether you’re asking em a name
432 it has an origin
433 or where they’re from
434 you’re asking of their story
Like other Blackfeet who speak this way, Robert says things explicitly about who he is in terms of the communicative practice he is engaged in with this audience. Having previously introduced himself as Piikuni, explaining that he is Piikuni because he speaks the language, Robert told his audience that what brings them together today are stories (line 421). As he continues, Robert speaks along the radiants of identity and action, telling his audience that the major thing with stories is “the talk” that composes them (lines 422-426). As Robert tells his audience that stories are what define who we are, he implicitly suggests that his being “Piikuni” and “Blackfeet” is also expressed through Blackfeet stories (lines 427-434). As mentioned elsewhere, as Robert produces words in niitsi•po’•”sin and translates them for his audience, he reminds them that they are from different cultures with different understandings and perspectives.

It should also be noted that as Robert speaks along the radiants of identity and action he tells his audience that in his worldview, stories are how you tell someone who you are or where you’re from (lines 429-433). Thus, Robert implicitly suggests to his audience along these radiants that Blackfeet stories can be used to answer both who the Blackfeet are as well as what it means to be “Blackfeet” (line 434). This point is central to understanding this Blackfeet discourse of identity in NAS since it presents stories as both a way of talking about “Blackfeet” identity and as a demonstrative practice of “Blackfeet” identity when interacting with non-Native others.

458 and that’s actually
459 in uh Indian country
460 usually when people
461 explain to someone
462 or someone will say y’know
463 I have native ancestry
464 our first instinct is to say
465 well who’s your people?
466 not in terms of to judgment
467 but in terms of like
468 well what’s your story y’know
469 who’s your people?
470 might I know any of them y’know
471 Indian country is a small place
472 but uh it may be the smallest ethnicity in the
473 United States
474 but it’s one of the most diverse
475 cuz we come from five hundred different languages
476 and that surpasses any other type of definition
477 that we have for human being
478 cuz it’s our language that
479 again, that’s what we express ourselves in
480 we think in our language
481 so what we tell ourselves around on our reservation
482 at least if you’re listening
483 attentively
484 is that we have four eras in our history

As Robert continues, he makes clear that such a means of demonstrating one’s identity through stories is a fairly common practice across Indian country (lines 458-468).

Speaking along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert tells his audience that his identification as “Blackfeet” and “Piikuni” can also be understood in some relation to Indian country which represents at the broadest level the similarities of experiences and practices across some five hundred different languages and Indigenous peoples in what is now called the United States (lines 458-471). That is, Robert presents the practice of sharing stories as a means of how Indigenous people interact with other Indigenous people (lines 471-477). Again, it should be noted that along the radiants of action, dwelling, and identity Robert tells his audience that his Blackfeet identity stands in relation to this larger ethnic group which is sometimes called Indian Country. Robert uses Indian Country both as a means of identifying a relationship that exists across Indigenous peoples but also which grounds them to the physical places that now constitute the United States.
As Robert begins to transition into a set of stories about the four eras in Blackfeet history (lines 481-484) he continues speaking along the radiants of identity, action, and relationships. He implicitly suggests to his audience that the practice of sharing stories tie his Blackfeet identity at a cultural level perhaps to Indian country broadly speaking also provides a means of interacting with non-Natives in attendance at his NAS program. That is, Robert presents the practice of storytelling as a means for assessing who one is and where one comes from (lines 481-484). It makes sense then that if Robert views stories as a communicative practice that can answer such questions, he would then engage in sharing Blackfeet stories as a means of addressing who/what it means to be Blackfeet/Piikuni.

2. Two Medicine 7/7/18 (TM070718)

Similar to Robert, Mariah also makes explicit that her identity as “Blackfeet” can be spoken about along the radiants of action. That is, Mariah also speaks about storytelling as a way to demonstrate her “Blackfeet” identity.

300 we’ll start off
301 with a trickster story
302 so trickster stories are common
303 in many different cultures
304 for the Blackfeet
305 the Nitsitapi
306 in particular
307 we tell stories
308 we tell Napi stories when the snow is on the ground
309 I’m gonna bend the rules a little bit because I see snow up there
310 so though these were traditionally winter stories
311 and stories that helped pass the long hours in the wintertime
312 and keep warm around the campfire
313 we’ll share them with you now
314 in part
to tell you a little bit more about this area
and in part to talk about some of the lessons of morality that these stories helped ingrain within our youth
so this story takes place over in the Many Glacier area

Like other Blackfeet who speak this way, Mariah says things explicitly about how she will be interacting with her audience at NAS (lines 300-301). Along the radiants of action and identity, she tells her audience that her identity as Blackfeet and Nitsitapi is linked to the stories they share (lines 302-308), but also invokes other radiants of meaning. Along the radiants of identity, action, and relationships Mariah tells her audience that these stories will be central to the way she interacts with them (lines 307-315). Along the radiants of action, identity, and dwelling, Mariah tells her audience that these stories will help her to talk about where they are and some Blackfeet lessons of morality (lines 316-323). As she turns to begin telling such a story Mariah tells her audience that this story comes from the Many Glacier area (lines 324-325), a part of Glacier National Park only accessible from the Blackfeet reservation. That is, she grounds her communicative practice not only to her means of interacting with her audience but also to a specific place as a means of both talking about what it means to be “Blackfeet” and as a demonstrative practice of a “Blackfeet” identity.

Following the telling of one such story about the Blackfeet trickster, Napi, Mariah emphasizes the importance of storytelling for her Blackfeet people and why she shares stories like this with her audience at NAS.
of course providing guidelines for you know living in our world as Blackfeet people showing respect for others and of course respect for the rules but also you know helping us understand our surroundings and live within this space Blackfeet are one of the few tribes that is lucky enough to occupy our original homeland so our stories that I am sharing with you you know we have been telling these stories for thousands of years there are teepee rings archeological digs that go back twelve to 14,000 years so we have been here for an incredibly long time and our stories all relate to these spaces you can say oh yeah you know thousands and thousands of years ago this happened right here and that’s really cool and I think as visitors in this space I’m very fortunate to be able to share that with you and help you kind of gain a deeper understanding of the land

Mariah mentions, as above, that these stories provide guidelines for her Blackfeet people to live in the world as Blackfeet (lines 425-433). Like other Blackfeet who speak this way, Mariah makes explicit along the radiants of identity, action, and dwelling that stories provide for the Blackfeet a sense of how to “live within this space” (lines 434-436). That is, these stories are grounded in particular places, places and stories which thus help Blackfeet to understand who they are, where they are from, and how they interact with others. Mariah explicitly mentions this as she tells her audience that her identity as Blackfeet is linked, luckily enough, to the original homelands that the
Blackfeet still live upon (lines 437-439). Along the radiants of identity, action, and dwelling she tells listeners that Blackfeet stories are inextricably linked to place and that Blackfeet stories have been a means of enacting and sharing in interactions for thousands of years (lines 440-443).

As Mariah mentions the archeological sites that support the Blackfeet being here for thousands of years (lines 444-448), along the radiants of identity, action, and dwelling Mariah tells her audience that stories are how the Blackfeet relate to these places, as explanations of how things came to be and why they are the way they are today (lines 449-452). Along those same radiants as well as emotion, Mariah suggests that her being “Blackfeet” means being able to relate to those places through Blackfeet stories, which concern or are grounded in these places (449). Too, Mariah expresses her feeling about being able to trace who she is onto the landscape and through stories like these but also that she feels fortunate to be interacting with her audience to share those stories (lines 454-458). Along the radiants of identity, action, relationships, and dwelling, Mariah tells her audience that she hopes her sharing of stories will provide them a deeper understanding of the land and people who belonged to those lands (lines 449, 454-458), the Blackfeet.

3. “Whether you’re asking em a name it has an origin or where they’re from, you’re asking of their story”

Drawing on these two extended descriptions, as well introductions from Chapter V which have relevance here, we can consider what can be made of them interpretively. Somewhat plainly, the discourse speaks of “Blackfeet” identity along the radiants of
identity and action. That is, as a communicative practice storytelling finds use amongst Blackfeet as a means of both talking about who one is as “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” but also of demonstrating that identity through the interaction of sharing stories with those non-Natives in attendance at NAS programs. As we have somewhat been building up to this section, we note that storytelling as both a form and practice for interacting with others is central to understanding discourses of “Blackfeet” identity. We can formulate the following cultural propositions:

- “Blackfeet” “stories” can tell you “who we are”
- “Stories” are how “Blackfeet” interact with others
- “Stories define” who the “Blackfeet” are
- “Stories” “connect” “Blackfeet” to each other and “Indian Country”
- “Stories” “connect” “Blackfeet” to “this area” like “the Many Glacier area”
- “Stories” explain and “provide guidelines” for proper “Blackfeet” living
- “Blackfeet” “stories” have been told for “thousands of years” and “relate” to “these spaces,” “our original homelands”
- “Blackfeet” “share” “stories” with “visitors in this space” to “help” them understand “who we are”

These propositions offer insight into certain dimensions of a deeply felt and expressed identity for the “Blackfeet” which is tied in vital ways to how they interact with others, is linked to a specific territory, and makes reference to valued ways of living in and interacting with the world.

As with the other sections, these propositions represent my attempt to reveal integral components of what it means to be “Blackfeet” within the scene of Native America Speaks. Insofar as some Blackfeet make explicit what stories mean for understanding “Blackfeet” identity in the course of their programs, other Blackfeet
demonstrate in the course of speaking about who they are to non-Natives that “Blackfeet” identity can also be understood as a result of particular communicative behaviors and practices. I propose several cultural premises that illuminate the foundations of propositions formulated above, making key beliefs and values more readily audible and available.

- Blackfeet are their stories
- Blackfeet stories connect them to their original homelands as they offer explanations and understandings of how things came to be and how to live in the world
- Blackfeet stories demonstrate what it means to be “Blackfeet” implicitly
- Blackfeet stories have been told as long as they have been upon these lands
- Blackfeet stories connect them to parklands like the Many Glacier area and demonstrate their having been on these lands for thousands of years, at least
- Stories provide Blackfeet a means for identity enactment and to help visitors understand who they are

As these premises suggest, cultural views of communication encompass distinct conceptions of what it means to be “Blackfeet,” specifically as it concern who they are and how they interact with others in valued ways as well as with the larger physical world. As with the previous sections, these views are intimately linked to specific beliefs and values of what it means to be “Blackfeet” when it comes to the kinds of interactions they have with non-Natives at Native America Speaks.

**D. Summary analysis: Identity, kinship, place, and stories in hubs and radiants**

Here, as we have heard, who is “Blackfeet” is spoken of in nuanced and complex ways. That is, the discourse which I have here called *We think about ourselves in very*
nuanced ways, in concert with the discourse I called *I’m Piikuni and Piikuni just means me* from Chapter V, is part of a complex web of symbolic terms, their uses, and their explicit and implicit meanings, a web that encompasses, to some degree, what Blackfeet have to say about who they are, as well how they demonstrate their being “Blackfeet” through communicative practice. In this summary section, I revisit analyses from the perspective of discursive hubs and radiants. My aim here is to summarize the discourse, distill key dimensions, and further illuminate interrelations among these dimensions.

As I have come to hear and interpret this discourse, its most explicit and prominent hub is identity, particularly that of Blackfeet presenters who self-identify as “Blackfeet” and/or “Amskapi Piikuni/Piikuni”. According to these Blackfeet their being “Blackfeet” can be expressed in the following ways including, “I’m a Piikuni and the reason why I’m Piikuni is datsipoyit I speak the language,” “all Blackfeet are Blackfoot but not all Blackfoot are Blackfeet,” “we were always here,” and “whether you’re asking em a name it has an origin or where they’re from, you’re asking of their story”. As described and interpreted in this chapter, the central hub of identity which was discussed in Chapter V is explicitly linked to all of the other radiants but most importantly those of relationships, dwelling, and action. In other words, Blackfeet are said to speak about who they are in ways that make apparent they are Blackfeet/Piikuni (identity), that have developed through a shared existence as Nitsitapi (relationships), that are linked to their original homelands which they remain on and have also been disposed of (dwelling), and is principally demonstrated through the sharing of Blackfeet stories (action).

In a somewhat more muted but vitally important way, relationships between (1) Blackfeet and (2) non-Native Euro-Americans are also central to this discourse.
However, this dynamic is best explored in the succeeding chapter which investigates a discourse of “Blackfeet” identity in a vacillating form where a Blackfeet identity is also expressed through what Blackfeet say is not Blackfeet. Yet, this relationship is also articulated throughout this chapter and the preceding one inasmuch as Blackfeet make explicit who they are interacting with (i.e., English speakers, visitors) and the colonial forces which removed them from a majority of their original homelands including Glacier National Park (i.e., foreigners, Canada, United States). In other words, Blackfeet make clear that their identity as “Blackfeet/Piikuni” is at times articulated in terms of the relationship that exists between Blackfeet and their non-Native Euro-American audience at Native America Speaks programs.

Although the dimensions of what constitutes “Blackfeet” identity are diverse and at times tend toward the implicit, the central hub of identity is linked, primarily, to these other radiants of relationships, dwelling, and action (see section V.A). To the extent it is helpful, we can think of these radiants of action, dwelling, and relationships as pillars or foundational support upon which we come to understand how “Blackfeet” identity is discussed and demonstrated. “Blackfeet” identity is thus tied somewhat irreducibly to their relations as Nitsitapi (relationships), their original homelands (dwelling), and the practice of storytelling (action) (see sections VI.A-C).

Along the radiants of identity and relationships, Blackfeet express that their being “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” stands in partial relation to their being Nitsitapi. This includes Blackfeet self-identification at various levels including the individual (i.e., I’m Mariah Gladstone), communal (i.e., Blackfeet), and cultural (i.e., Nitsitapi) (see section VI.A). It does not here include a focus on the relationships that exist between Blackfeet
presenters and their non-Native audience, as that subject is better discussed in the following chapter which deals more readily with how “Blackfeet” identity is expressed in contrast to non-Native Euro-American others.

Along the radiants of identity and dwelling, Blackfeet express that their being “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” has to do with their ways of living in the world and upon their traditional homelands. This includes recognizing that the Blackfeet have always been upon their original homelands, lands which provide for the Blackfeet a way of connecting with their “Blackfeet” identity that nonetheless sustains their connection to these places (see section VI.B).

Along the radiants of identity and action, Blackfeet express and demonstrate that their being “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” is embodied in the communicative practice of sharing stories. This includes recognizing that the Blackfeet view stories both as a means for interacting with others and demonstrating one’s being “Blackfeet” but too, as a communicative practice that connects them to traditional homelands and the places these stories come from (see section VI.C).

In short, Blackfeet speak about their identity as “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” as part of a communal and cultural identity, as part of their traditional places, and as a people who share stories in the course of demonstrating who they are and how they interact with others (i.e., non-Native Euro-Americans). The fact that these Blackfeet presenters speak about and along these radiants (i.e., identity, relationships, dwelling, and action) in the course of Native America Speaks programs speaks to their being central components of understanding just what it means when someone says “I’m Piikuni” or “that’s Blackfeet”. The roots of this historically transmitted expressive system are audible
in Blackfeet/Piikuni (and, perhaps more broadly, Native American/Indigenous) cultural traditions and in a recent/long political history of interaction with Euro-Americans, depending on who you ask. Indeed, as Native America Speaks provides the setting/scene for non-Native Euro-American visitors to come together and learn from Indigenous people like the Blackfeet about who they are and their connections to places like Glacier National Park it is worth noting just how Blackfeet manage these cultures in conversation and how they both speak about and demonstrate their being “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni”.
CHAPTER VII

“WE WERE NEVER INDIANS”: A DISCOURSE OF BLACKFEET IDENTITY IN VACILLATING FORM

This chapter investigates a discourse of “Blackfeet” identity in a vacillating form which presents Blackfeet identity/being in conflict/contrast with the identity of the visiting non-Native and Euro-American tourists/vacationers (Carbaugh, 1996). Rather than Chapter V which investigates an explicit discourse of “Blackfeet” identity, and Chapter VI which investigates a discourse of “Blackfeet” identity along three radiants, the current chapter investigates an explicit discourse about who the Blackfeet are not. As was previously shown, there are occasions when Blackfeet identity is presented in contrast to that of others, at times including those tourists who are in their audience. Rather than statements like “I’m Piikuni and Piikuni just means me” or “being Blackfeet means…” the current chapter considers the consequences of statements such as, “that’s not us” or “that’s not Blackfeet” for further developing our understanding of what it means to be “Blackfeet”. It should be noted that while not all Blackfeet NAS programs engage in the kind of explicit discourse under investigation in this chapter they often make similar claims implicitly in the course of their own programs.

In this chapter, I describe and interpret a discourse of “Blackfeet” identity as a vacillating form of identity talk, which is nonetheless essential to understanding these NAS programs and the Blackfeet voices which are made audible within them. That is, the current chapter investigates a discourse of “Blackfeet” identity through the use of a vacillating form of identity talk which also encompasses those excerpts discussed in Chapters V-VI as it is juxtaposed to them. According to Carbaugh (1996), the vacillating
form involves the interplay of how particular symbols of identity get expressed. The form itself, once understood, provides one way of further understanding how multiple levels of identification can be active within a given cultural scene (Carbaugh, 1996). As particular identities are symbolically played against one another each identity partly motivates talk about the other. That is, as we will see, Blackfeet speak at times about who they are as “Amskapi Piikuni” which makes relevant their speaking about identities which some deny (e.g. being Indian) and including those of visitors in their audience who are markedly not Blackfeet.

My aim is to describe and interpret the discourse’s central discursive features, making the cultural logic and underlying values more audible and readily available for consideration. In contrast to Chapters V and VI, the discourse examined in the forthcoming analyses can be heard as saying something about who the Blackfeet are not, and thus, in the vacillating form to implicitly say something about themselves. As with Chapters V and VI it is important to remember that the Blackfeet discourse examined here is produced, at least in part, in response to the kind of social scene that the Blackfeet find themselves to be in when sharing stories as part of NAS programs. Too, this discourse is responsive to the kind of audience members that attend NAS programs, as it will be shown that Blackfeet often consider the assumed identity of their audience when engaging in talk about who they are. That said, I attempt to focus specifically on the explicit forms of expression employed by Blackfeet presenters as they attempt to demonstrate aspects of who they are as “Blackfeet” in talking about who they are not and interpret the cultural logic and underlying values/beliefs that makes these Blackfeet discourses relevant.
Specific matters of particular and interrelated concern in this discourse include the following:

- Ways in which Blackfeet are different and unlike other tribes;
- Ways in which Blackfeet are different and unlike non-Natives;
- Ways in which Blackfeet beliefs and values differ from others (i.e., white non-Natives);

My goals are to describe the shape of this discourse and interpret the cultural logic of what it means when someone who calls themselves “Blackfeet,” and/or “Piikuni” says something like “that’s not Blackfeet” or “we were never Indians” that is presumed and created when this discourse is used.

A. The Blackfoot language (niitsi•po’•”sin) and cultures in conversation

As previously mentioned it was often the case that Blackfeet would interact with their audience by speaking in their Blackfoot language and/or sharing words in niitsi•po’•”sin in the course of their Native America Speaks programs. As discussed in Chapter V, speaking niitsi•po’•”sin implicitly reminds those that do not understand the language that they are from a different culture than that of their Blackfeet presenter. In terms of the sheer amount of niitsi•po’•”sin spoken and shared with audience members, no other presenter shared more of his language than Robert Hall. Thus, in this section, we look at an extended excerpt from one of Robert’s programs including his introduction. It should be noted that the analyses of the following data show that the pattern active in Robert’s program subsumes those of other Blackfeet. That is, focusing on his way of saying something about Blackfeet identity should be understood as also saying something
about the other presenters. Reproducing Robert’s extended introduction will hopefully make more readily audible how Blackfeet, like Robert, express what it means to be “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” as communicated through a vacillating form of identity talk.

It should also be noted that orienting to this specific program by Robert is done in part because he, perhaps more so than other Blackfeet in NAS, has the background and expertise in the Blackfoot language to make explicit what is going on, usually implicitly, when other Blackfeet speak and share niitsii•po’•’sin with their audiences.

1. Rising Sun 6/27/19 (RS062719)

Again, note that Robert, like other Blackfeet, orients his audience immediately to how he identifies himself in niitsii•po’•’sin as Piikuni.

400 Oki
401 ayapipistoniopikuni sikatsokaiki tsadongotua
402 amskappi piikuni
403 nitsitapi
404 nah kitoyniop
405 I um ((clears throat))
406 hello English speakers
407 I’m Piikuni
408 I’m Piikuni
409 and um maybe
410 I’ll explain what that means in a few minutes

Robert makes it immediately relevant that he think about himself in terms of his own language by speaking it (lines 400-404). Speaking this way, Robert demonstrates an expression of his communal identity while invoking other radiants. Along the radiants of identity and relationships, speaking niitsii•po’•’sin reminds Robert’s audience that they come from a different culture than he does, with different understandings and perspectives. As he begins translating to English Robert identifies his audience as English speakers (line 406). It should be noted that as Robert translates niitsii•po’•’sin for his
audience (lines 405-407), he makes relevant that the use of his Blackfoot language serves as a kind of mark of sorts for recognizing the contrast that exists between Blackfeet presenters and their audiences at Native America Speaks.

411 maybe
412 but um
413 that’s what we call ourselves
414 I grew up here on the Blackfeet reservation
415 we call Amskapi Piikuni
416 the southern Piikuni
417 and my name is Elk shirt
418 I live in Browning
419 I live alongside the train tracks
420 either or

As Robert continues, he mentions that Piikuni is what we (i.e., Blackfeet) call ourselves (line 413). Along the radiants of action, identity, and relationships Robert suggests to his audience that the expression of his communal identity as Piikuni (lines 413-416) makes relevant that this is likely not what his audience calls him or his people (i.e., Blackfeet). Continuing, Robert invokes other radiants. Along the radiants of identity, dwelling, and relationships he tells his audience that his being Piikuni is connected to his growing up on the Blackfeet reservation that they call Amskapi Piikuni, southern Piikuni (lines 414-416). As discussed in Chapter V and VI, in speaking this way, Robert demonstrates that his identity as Piikuni and Amskapi Piikuni can be understood through the connection he has to the place he grew up and lives (i.e., Blackfeet reservation) (line 414), and the relationship of that place (i.e. southern) in relation to the greater Blackfoot confederacy and the Nitsitapi (line 416). We note too that Robert also identifies himself individually as Elk shirt (line 417), as a translation from his introduction which was given in niitsii•po’•”sin.

421 but I’m here to talk about stories right?
422 One of the major things of stories obviously
that we all known is
Iitpoksin
that just means the talk
there is no stories without the talk
and the way that we tell stories to each other
it really does define who we are obviously because
whenever you ask anybody a question
you’re asking em a story
whether you’re asking em a name
it has an origin
or where they’re from
you’re asking of their story
and that’s actually
in uh Indian country
usually when people
explain to someone
or someone will say y’know
I have native ancestry
our first instinct is to say
well who’s your people?
not in terms of to judgment
but in terms of like
well what’s your story y’know
who’s your people?
might I know any of them y’know
Indian country is a small place
but uh it may be the smallest ethnicity in the
United States
but it’s one of the most diverse
cus we come from five hundred different languages
and that surpasses any other type of definition
that we have for human being
cuz it’s our language that
again, that’s what we express ourselves in
we think in our language

Although this excerpt was discussed previously (see section V.D.1) it bears mentioning
that Robert speaks along the radiants of action “I’m here to talk about stories” (line 421),
but also invokes other radiants. Along the radiants of relationships, action, and identity
Robert says that “the way we tell stories to each other it really does define who we are”
(lines 427-428). As Robert turns to discuss Indian country, he mentions that when
meeting other Native people they often ask of each other “what’s your story y’know
who’s your people” (lines 436-446). Along the radiants of relationships, identity, and action Robert suggests that stories function as both a means of identification and a kind of communicative practice to demonstrate who you are and where your people are from (lines 429-434). Although Robert is talking about relationships across Indian Country he suggests that Blackfeet stories are a means for communicating what it means to be “Blackfeet”. Along the radiants of action, identity, and emotion Robert tells his audience too that he expresses and thinks about himself in his language (lines 456-457). This is important to note as it makes explicit for his audience that as he translates from niitsii•po’•”sin to English the distinct cultural backgrounds of Robert and his audience come into conversation. That is the difference in understanding and perspectives that come when people interact interculturally, especially when one group does not understand the language of the other.

458 so what we tell ourselves around on our reservation
459 at least if you’re listening
460 attentively
461 is that we have four eras in our history
462 there’s the okotoke
463 that’s the days of the rock
464 the stone age
465 then there’s immitotasi
466 when the dog was our beast of burden
467 and there’s ponokamitapiyop
468 meaning the horse culture
469 and now we live in nikskim
470 the days of iron
471 if you will
472 I’m gonna see if I can tell you a story
473 about each of those eras

Along the radiants of identity, dwelling, and action Robert tells his audience that his identity as Piikuni on “our reservation” (line 458) can be talked about in terms of the four eras in “our history” (line 461). As Robert mentions the name for each era he speaks first
in niitsii'po’"sin and then translates to English for his audience (lines 462-470). Again, it should be noted that like other Blackfeet who speak this way, Robert speaks first in his own language before accommodating his audience. Having translated each of the four eras, along the radiants of identity, action, and relationships Robert reveals to his audience that he will tell them a story to go with each of the eras (lines 472-473). As is discussed elsewhere (see section V.D) stories are an integral form for interactions between Blackfeet presenters and their non-Native Euro-American audience.

474 For oketoke
475 I’m just going to talk about a specific rock
476 or more specifically
477 an ammonite
478 if there’s any geologists out there
479 is there?
480 ammonite is basically a petrified
481 tentacle of an old sea creature
482 that lived on these plains when it was an ocean
483 millions of years ago
484 and it gets its name from amon ra
485 the spiral
486 and the horn of amon ra
487 but ammonite
488 in our language we call them inniskim
489 and what they are means basically contains the power of
490 iinii
491 and iinii
492 what’s iinnii mean Eean?

As Robert begins his first story for oketoke (the days of the rock), he mentions that the specific rock he is going to talk about is an ammonite. (lines 474-477) Along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert suggests that any geologists might be familiar with that specific name for the rock he is going to talk about. It should be noted that along these radiants, Robert has not yet revealed what he calls the rock but rather how geologists would know this rock by another name (lines 478-479). Continuing, Robert
explains what an ammonite is, a petrified tentacle from millions of years ago, and how it got the name that most of his audience likely know this rock by (lines 480-487). Robert tells his audience that “we call them inniskim” (lines 488-489). Along the radiants of identity and relationships, having just told his audience what an ammonite is and what it means, Robert turns to address what inniskim means to the Blackfeet (line 490). As he mentions that inniskim contains the power of iinii, Robert asked this researcher what inni means (lines 491-494).

It should be noted that as discussed in Chapter IV the practice of calling on audience members, myself included, was not altogether rare. As with other Blackfeet presenters who acted similarly, knowing that I speak some niitsii•po’•”sin, I translated the words into English for the rest of the audience “buffalo”.

495 it means buffalo
496 if you know anything about
497 plains culture
498 is that buffalo was
499 money
500 buffalo was the economy
501 as a matter of fact
502 it’s one of the longest sustaining human
503 economies in history
504 lasted forty thousand years without
505 interruption
506 Rome lasted what?
507 the golden age lasted two hundred
508 so there’s that contrast there

Robert reiterates that iinii means buffalo (line 495) and tells his audience that buffalo was money as far as plains cultures were concerned, it was their economy (lines 496-500).

Along the radiants of identity, dwelling, and action Robert suggests that his Blackfeet people, being a plains culture, depended on the buffalo as one of the longest sustaining human economies (lines 501-503). Along the radiants of identity, relationships, action,
and dwelling Robert draws the comparison between plains cultures that relied on the buffalo for thousands of years to the golden age of Rome (lines 504-508). As his audience is not Blackfeet, Robert suggests in speaking this way noticeable contrasts between the Blackfeet living on the plains for thousands of years and European empires that crumbled after a couple of hundred years (lines 506-508). The point should also be noted that this contrast which highlights the importance of buffalo for the Blackfeet is done to demonstrate the importance of that word iinii, which I translated as simply buffalo in English. That is, in speaking about the buffalo this way, Robert, like other Blackfeet and other plains cultures, demonstrates the importance of the buffalo to his identity as “Piikuni” who have a story about a rock they call “inniskim”.

Continuing, Robert tells his audience that in his language they speak of the inniskim as if it’s alive (lines 509-511). As he says this he mentions that this is one of the ways that his language (niitsii•po’y”sin) differs from English (lines 512-517). Along the radiants of identity, action, and relationships, Robert suggests that his audience, whom he previously welcomed as English speakers, would likely not speak of the inniskim in the way he does in (lines 512-516). That is, Robert is making explicit a dimension along which his identity as someone who speaks niitsii•po’y”sin stands in contrast to the English speakers that he is interacting with. Note that along the radiants of identity and relationships Robert too compares pronouns in English to how the Blackfeet talk about inniskim (lines
514-517). As we will hear shortly, in making this explicit to his audience Robert suggests that an essential component of his being “Piikuni” means also treating this inniskim as alive (lines 509-511). Such establishes an altogether different kind of relationship that exists between Robert and this inniskim than between his audience and the ammonite.

In the following, Robert speaks in a way that I have heard time and again from other Blackfeet, and other Indigenous people generally, as somewhat anticipatory to experiences they have had over the years when non-Natives are told about Indigenous languages that are concerned with animacy.

518 and why is it that we talk about a stone
519 as being alive
520 and animate
521 am I you know
522 bold enough to stand up here today
523 and whip one out of my pocket
524 and say that it’s alive
525 no what it is it’s
526 the importance and the
527 how it affects our culture
528 so what I mean by that is
529 there’s certain plants
530 that are animate
531 and there’s certain plants
532 that are not
533 in our language
534 that doesn’t mean I would sit here and argue
535 that a tree is dead
536 cuz my language treats it as non-animate
537 but again
538 those are just linguistic definitions
539 that were put onto it
540 but also too
541 certain plants were animate
542 because of their healing properties
543 medicinal properties
544 so really what I'm trying to hint at is
545 that you as a speaker of the Blackfoot language
546 that alone would help you be a pharmacist in the
547 wild
548 just knowing what a word is called
549 would let you know
550 that it has a type of medicinal purpose
551 that’s how language helps you navigate the
552 land system
553 that we live in

Here Robert somewhat renegotiates what he means when he said earlier that the
Blackfeet speak of the inniskim “as if it’s alive”. That is, Robert brackets that what it
means to be alive in his language does not mean that only those things have animacy in
the world (lines 518-536). As an example, he mentions that some things, like a tree, are
“non-animate” in his language but that does not mean he would argue that it is dead (lines
525-535). It should be noted that Robert points out that such things are linguistic
definitions and so even saying that this inniskim is alive or that tree is dead were put on
those things by linguistics (lines 537-539). Like his comment above about geologists, it
should be noted that both are widely accepted professions in the western world. Speaking
along the radiants of identity, relationships, and action, Robert suggests that like
geologists who called the inniskim an ammonite linguistics also says which Blackfoot
words have animacy (lines 529-539). Along these same radiants, Robert too suggests that
his audience likely share such perspectives as he readily identifies their different
identities because his audience does not speak niitsii•po’•”sin and are not from his culture
(see also Bastien & Kremer, 2004; Bear, 2000; and LaPier, 2017).

Robert specifies that specific plants had animacy in his language because of their
healing properties (lines 540-543). In turn, Robert makes explicit that he has, in the
course of talking about this inniskim and what that word means, demonstrated how a
speaker of the Blackfoot language would be a “pharmacist in the wild” because he would
know the names of plants and those names would tell him which ones have medicinal
purposes (lines 544-550). It should be noted that in speaking this way Robert too suggests
the importance of his recognizing that this inniskim has animacy in the same way, it allows Blackfeet to navigate the land system that they live in (lines 551-553). That is, speaking along the radiants of identity, dwelling, relationships, and action Robert tells his audience that understanding what has animacy in the Blackfoot language is about recognizing what the language makes evident and how that language provides the Blackfeet a means of relating to and interacting with that land system.

As he continues, Robert mentions that he can navigate the city and read signs because he has the language to do that (i.e., English) (lines 544-558). Along the radiants of identity, action, dwelling, and relationships, Robert suggests that his audience, as English speakers, “all” have the language to navigate the city (line 555). Along those same radiants, Robert tells his audience that the Blackfeet at one time had the language to master the park (i.e., Glacier) but that they probably do not have that ability anymore (lines 560-562). Along these radiants, he suggests that the impacts of colonialism and removing the Blackfeet from the park led to these things “we did at one time” (line 562). Suggesting that such things are part of another story (line 564), Robert turns to share the
Blackfeet story about how they came to have and name this rock, inniskim (lines 565-567).

Rather than share Robert’s entire story about the inniskim I summarize it, pointing out a few things that he mentions in the course of his telling that are important to note. Long ago the Blackfeet were starving and a young woman prayed really hard and had a vision to go walkabout. As she did this she heard chirping and sees this rock, she picks it up and that night has a dream, a big buffalo bull visits her and shares with her a few songs with instructions to stay up for four nights and four days and sing these songs. After that last night, the Blackfeet would be awoken by a bull buffalo but were instructed not to harm that bull.

590 as we were
591 as a people
592 it’s you know
593 can’t say this for us today
594 you know our dreams meant more than what they
595 mean now
596 I you know Freud kinda has his
597 coolness I guess
598 but I think he really did lead us in the wrong
599 direction
600 with interpreting dreams
601 he coulda laid off some stuff
602 but anyways

It is important for Robert to tell his audience that dreams used to mean more to the Blackfeet than they do today (lines 590-595). As he mentions this, he also suggests that people like Freud really led people in the wrong direction for interpreting dreams (lines 596-600). It is important to note that Robert’s use of the word dream suggests that Blackfeet and non-Natives understand that word differently because of their own cultural backgrounds (see also Bastien & Kremer, 2004; and LaPier, 2017 for a discussion of “dreams” and their importance to the Blackfoot/Blackfeet respectively). That is, when
Robert and other Blackfeet mention dreams, they are often speaking in terms of what dreams mean to Blackfeet culture although this is surely not the first way that non-Natives think about this word. Thus, it is important to note here that Robert makes this explicit while speaking along the radiants of identity, action, and relationships (see also Carbaugh, 2001, 2002 for additional comments about the importance of ‘dreaming’ as a communicative form for Blackfeet).

As he continues Robert mentions that the woman who had this dream informed the chiefs and so they sang the songs. Robert tells his audience that it is rumored if you rub enough grease on the belly of an inniskim, it will birth more. Although Robert says that he has never seen it, he informs his audience of the following, “I’ve never seen it but people who I trust told me it happened”. I’ve included this comment because it makes explicit a fundamental belief and value shared by the Blackfeet. That is, like other Blackfeet who speak this way, Robert tells his audience that even though he has not seen an inniskim birth more the people who have told him this are people he trusts (see also Bastien & Kremer, 2004; Bear, 2000 for comments on how Blackfeet teach/learn through experience and LaPier, 2017 for her comments regarding ‘transferring knowledge’). This point is integral insofar as Blackfeet believe that there are knowledges that perhaps are only made audible to certain individuals. Like Robert’s story about the inniskim, the young woman who had the vision and was given songs by the bull buffalo was trusted and respected by other Blackfeet to follow the rules and protocols they had been given so that they too would not starve. Such beliefs are made explicit often enough as concern sacred knowledges and teachings that the Blackfeet receive from other-than-human beings (i.e., the big bull buffalo in the young woman’s dream).
As Robert closes his story about inniskim he tells his audience that after the Blackfeet performed the ceremony for four days and four nights they woke up to a big bull walking through the camp. As this buffalo walked through camp and up onto a nearby hill, the rest of the buffalo were revealed to the Blackfeet:

625 and ever since then
626 we’ve treated this stone
627 the way it deserves to be treated
628 that cultural thing
629 that effigy
630 that time that reminds us
631 that working together and following instructions
632 got us to where we needed to get to

In closing this story, Robert tells his audience that Blackfeet treat this inniskim the way it deserves because of what it provided for the Blackfeet long ago (lines 625-632). Along the radiants of identity, action, relationships, and dwelling Robert suggests that his identity as “Piikuni” and/or “Blackfeet” requires acting in such a way that acknowledges the importance of the inniskim for Blackfeet people (lines 626-627, 630-632). That is, in the course of sharing this story about the inniskim, Robert demonstrates how the inniskim itself, functions both symbolically and culturally for Blackfeet to ground themselves as a people (i.e., Amskapi Piikuni), in a practice (i.e., working together), in a place (i.e., traditional homelands), and in relationships with others (i.e., other-than-human beings).

As Robert ends his story about a rock he begins a story for imitotas, when the dog was our beast of burden.

650 just because people always ask about this
651 when you’re here
652 and its Native America Speaks
653 I think it’s just become
654 normal to have to talk about Napi
Like he often does, as do most if not all Blackfeet presenters, Robert makes time to talk about Napi in the course of getting to his story for imitotas (lines 651-654). It should be noted, Robert, like other Blackfeet who speak this way, tells his audience that because it is Native America Speaks there is an expectation to talk about Napi and share Napi stories (see sections IV.D and VI.C). As will be shown below, Robert uses his discussion of the word Napi to further discuss his identity as “Piikuni” and “Blackfeet” in the vacillating form as he interacts with his audience.

690 Napi’s an interesting word
691 because of how we started using it
692 we started calling
693 you know for lack of a better terminology
694 European Americans
695 Napi
696 cuz they tricked us or somethin
697 but there’s a history to that word
698 and how it came about
699 because our language is very descriptive

As Robert speaks this way he mentions that Napi is an interesting word in part because the Blackfeet started calling European Americans “Napi” (lines 690-695). Note that Robert expresses the “lack of better terminology” to refer to European Americans (line 693). Along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert tells his audience that his identity as “Piikuni” and someone who speaks and understands niitsii•po’•”sin provides him with other means of naming his non-Native Euro-American audience. It should be noted that Robert better explains several of the names the Blackfeet called Euro-Americans in the excerpts below but suggests that Blackfeet called Euro-Americans Napi because they “tricked us” (line 696). As was mentioned previously, Napi is the Blackfeet trickster and so Robert’s mention of calling Euro-Americans Napi because they tricked us speaks along the radiants of identity and action. That is, calling Euro-Americans Napi
because they tricked the Blackfeet suggests that in niitsii•po’•”sin (the Blackfoot language) this identity term for Euro-Americans is also revelatory as to the kind of relationship that exists between them and how they interacted with one another (lines 697-699). Robert makes such explicit when he tells his audience that his “language is very descriptive” (line 699), a point he elaborates next.

As Robert describes how his language is descriptive, he suggests that niitsii•po’•”sin allows him to better understand his Blackfeet world (lines 700-701). He then offers up several words in English and what the Blackfeet call them, translating those words to show how the understanding and meaning of them is different from the perspective and understanding that English speakers have (lines 702-714). Along the radiants of identity, relationships, and action, Robert suggests that his English speaking audience will not only not understand the words he speaks in niitsii•po’•”sin but that they will not necessarily understand precisely what those words mean to actual Blackfeet who speak them, even insofar as Robert willingly translates these words for his audience (lines 702-706, 707-708, 713-714). It should be noted that while other Blackfeet presenters also make use of Blackfoot language rarely do they translate their meanings as explicitly and
precisely as does Robert. That is, although other Blackfeet use niitsii•po’•”sin in the
course of their own programs they infrequently explain what those words mean in the
language.

As Robert continues, he makes explicit how the difference in cultures,
understandings, and perspectives, as exists between himself and his non-Native Euro-
American audience, come to bear on understanding what it means to be “Blackfeet”
and/or “Piikuni”.

715  our word for pillow is kisksatsis
716     and it means
717     an apparatus where you lie your being
718  there’s actually an archeologist
719     who did a lot of work here
720  named Barney Reeves
721     and he named his book these mountains are our
722     pillows
723  but that’s just because
724     you know we didn’t come up here
725     and use these rocky mountains as our pillows
726  this is where we lie our being

As Robert translates the Blackfoot word for a pillow (lines 715-717) he mentions that an
archeologist who did work in this area named his book “these mountains are our pillows”
because of what that word means (lines 718-722). However, Robert challenges that the
archeologist, speaking metaphorically, did not really understand what the Blackfeet mean
when they use that word, kisksatsis (lines 723-725). Speaking this way, Robert suggests
that even when provided with a translation, people who do not speak or understand
niitsii•po’•”sin will misunderstand what those words mean to Blackfeet people, “this is
where we lie our being” (lines 724-726). Note that the mountains mentioned are those
which lay within Glacier National Park and are part of the ceded strip of land that was
taken from the Blackfeet. Such will be made apparent in the following. However, it
should also be noted, that in speaking this way, Robert suggests that what it means to be “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” includes places where they belong and the connections that they maintain with those places.

727 this is where we got medicine
728 primarily benematsis
729 benematsis is like pharmaceuticals
730 like again our language
731 and just the way we thought
732 and our worldview
733 is that we have a lot of words for medicine
734 naatoapi
735 which could mean
736 the sacred
737 that’s also medicine
738 you could even call
739 you could even say
740 pisatapi
741 meaning like wonderful
742 or magic
743 but that could be medicine as well
744 one of our words for headdress is
745 saam
746 which means medicine
747 so maybe that gives you a little bit of insight to
748 you know these conversations about cultural
749 appropriation and people wearing headdresses
750 you know they’re not just called a hat
751 it’s called medicine

As Robert tells his audience that these mountains are where the Blackfeet primarily gathered medicines (line 727), he mentions that in his language and worldview the Blackfeet have a lot of words for medicine (lines 728-733). That is, Blackfeet recognize that medicine is a word in English that has a particular connotation like Robert first suggests as pharmaceuticals (line 729). Yet, as he mentions other words which could also mean medicine he suggests that “medicine” has other pertinent meanings to the Blackfeet (i.e., sacred, wonderful, magic) (lines 733, 735-737, 741-743). The last of these that Robert shares is the word for headdress, saam, which he says also means medicine (lines
744-746). In turn, Robert makes explicit for his audience that such a translation as he provided for headdress as medicine, demonstrates how important headdresses are to the Blackfeet, not just a hat but medicine (lines 747-751). It should be noted that while other Blackfeet use the word medicine, similarly, rarely do they make explicit the point that Robert has just made. That is, along the radiants of identity, action, and relationships Robert tells his non-Native audience that even when he uses English to provide a translation of words in niitsii•po••'sin that there is meaning lost in translation as different cultural backgrounds come into conversation with one another.

Following the telling of his story for imitotas Robert returns to talk about Napi:

760    anyways
761    so this word Napi
762    when we first met
763    European people
764      it was the French
765    and they were coming from the north
766    and again you know
767    if you think of how it was in the human history
768    it was the first time you ever saw people
769    who looked like this
770    and the feature that stood out the most was
771    we talked about how they had upside-down heads
772    why do you think we talked about this
773    French trapper trader having an upside-down head?
774    Beard and bald
775    whereas in our whole human history
776    people didn’t have facial hair
777    I have facial hair just because
778    you know I’m a mutt
779    but people had long hair
780    and clean faces

As Robert communicates to his audience that the first European people the Blackfeet met were the French, he implicitly comments on his identity in a manner that is worth noting (lines 762-764). That is, along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert mentions the Blackfeet talked about the French in terms of how they looked (lines 768-771). He
also suggests that in Blackfeet history they never had facial hair, drawing a contrast between European others like the French and his own identity as “Piikuni” (lines 772-776). What follows is Robert calling himself a mutt because he has facial hair (lines 777-778). It should be noted that in calling himself a mutt Robert suggests that he is mixed. Although it is not commented upon further, here, Robert later mentions that he is part German.

To somewhat streamline my description of Robert’s program so that we can see what can be made of it interpretively, let’s jump forward a bit. Robert shares the story of how the horse came to the Blackfeet as his talking about the horse culture, before coming to the days of iron.

895 so nowadays we live in the days of iron
896 and humanity has taken a shift
897 not just the indigenous peoples
898 the emotional state in which that shift happened
899 and coming to this world
900 was a lot different
901 but we all shifted in this together
902 and I think we’re kinda shocked
903 by how massive us human beings are here

Robert suggests that the days of iron have shifted things, not only for the Blackfeet and other Indigenous peoples but for non-Natives too (lines 895-897). It should be noted that whereas Robert has been speaking about his non-Native audience in contrast to his own being “Piikuni” throughout his program he makes attempts at times to renegotiate that relationship which up until this point has been suggested as mostly being negative (lines 901-903). In what follows we hear Robert attempt to negotiate these cultures in conversation insofar as other Blackfeet who say things in these ways, demonstrate key ethics and beliefs of those “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” who interact with non-Natives at Native America Speaks.
we all
we’re all unique
I have no idea where any of you come from
I assume you come from somewhere farther than I have
and it’s this land that brought us here right
that’s why I believe this land is so important
for thousands upon thousands of years we you
know
I pride myself that we were the caretakers of this
area
our language even got to the point where
it was influenced by this land
and I could come up here
and you know fulfill my own ego
and preach and say this is my land
and I’d be telling the truth
but I could also look at us
and say this is our land
and that’s true too
it’s public lands
and I honor that
and I really think it’s a beautiful thing
so that maybe
the kids here their grandkids can come here
and experience this
and hopefully I'm still telling stories
but the cool thing with the days of iron
is you get T.V.

Speaking along the radiants of identity, dwelling, and relationships, Robert tells his audience that despite how far they have traveled to come here to this place (i.e., Glacier National Park) they have all come from places farther than him (i.e., the Blackfeet reservation) (lines 906-908). As Robert mentions how important this land is to his Blackfeet people he invokes other radiants (lines 910-914). Along the radiants of identity, dwelling, action, and relationships Roberts tells listeners that this land is an important and integral component of what it means to be “Blackfeet,” to be in this place, to be the caretakers of this area, and insofar as this land influenced his own Blackfoot language (lines 913-916). In turn, Robert mentions it would be easy to say that this land belongs to
the Blackfeet, it does, but that these are also public lands, a reason non-Natives visit and recreate in Glacier National Park, and that he honors that (lines 917-925). Along the radiants of identity, dwelling, and relationships Robert suggests that he can claim both truths, these lands belong to the Blackfeet but are also open to travelers (lines 917-923). In another program not investigated here, Robert makes such explicit when he tells his audience that these places in Glacier have always been open to travelers as does Darnell. As he continues, Robert suggests that protecting public lands is a really important thing for future generations and that hopefully, he is still around to share his Blackfeet stories with others (lines 926-930).

It is important to note that as Robert talks about these cultures in conversation he renegotiates aspects that might otherwise contrast his Blackfeet culture with the non-Native Euro-American culture of his audience around a shared goal of continuing to protect these lands for future generations (see section VIII.C for an example of such a saying). That is, although Robert defends his claim that these parklands belong to the Blackfeet, he respects that non-Blackfeet might feel similarly about protecting these places. As Robert mentions later towards the end of his program, he sees NAS as a means of bringing the Blackfeet back into being a part of the park where they can share their perspectives and stories with non-Native others, something Robert hopes will allow his audience to better appreciate and understand what this place also means to the “Blackfeet” and “Piikuni”.

For the days of iron, Robert talks about television and popular representations of Blackfeet and other Native Americans, including how such representations were rarely
accurate. Such prompts Robert to revisit the importance of his identity as being “Piikuni” and how important it is to know who you are in today’s world.

As in his introduction, Robert identifies himself as “Piikuni” reminding his audience that this is what Blackfeet call themselves (lines 990-991). Along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert suggests that the question of what people call themselves seems like the ultimate question on everyone’s mind (lines 992-996). That is, he reifies for his audience the relevance of discourses of identity in today’s world (lines 994-996). In turn, Robert invokes the radiants of identity, relationships, and emotion as he tells his audience that he is lucky to be grounded with a people (lines 1001-1003). Like other Blackfeet who speak this way, Robert suggests that his being “Piikuni” and/or “Blackfeet” is grounded in a place and people who have ancestral ties to the places Robert lives and visits. In other words, along the radiants of identity, relationships, and dwelling Robert tells his audience that place and people are foundational to his identity as “Piikuni”.

like my ancestors are in the dirt
not in boxes
some of em are in boxes
but that’s just because time has changed
and I don’t mean that to like toot my own horn
but I'm kinda doing it that way I guess
Continuing, Robert mentions that while some of his ancestors are in boxes because the times have changed, most are in the dirt (lines 1004-1007). That is, Robert suggests that his ancestors remain tied to the landscape, physically in the dirt, grounding him as Piikuni and Blackfeet person who continues to live in some of those places. Although Robert tries to downplay “toot[ing] my own horn” (line 1008) he cannot help but tell his audience how important this land is to him, his people, and what it means for his identity as “Piikuni” and “Blackfeet” (lines 1009-1012). It is important to note that as Robert speaks along these radiants of identity, dwelling, and emotion he also invokes other radiants. Along those radiants but also the radiant of relationships, Robert tells his audience that if these lands are important to him then he believes he can try to share that with others, like his audience, so they can understand their importance too (lines 1013-1016).

Robert maintains that he cannot separate life, his life as Piikuni and Blackfeet, from this place (lines 1017-1018). As mentioned previously, speaking like this, Robert and other Blackfeet make explicit that their sense of what it means to be “Blackfeet” and/or
“Piikuni” cannot be separated from those places upon which they have always been.

Speaking somewhat matter of fact, Robert tells his audience that they call his people the Blackfeet Indians (lines 1020-1021). Along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert tells listeners that Euro-Americans call his people Blackfeet Indians because that is what it says on their treaty (lines 1021-1023). Along those same radiants, but also the radiants of action and emotion, Robert tells his audience that congress has plenary power over Indians, and thus himself (lines 1024-1025). It is important to note, how Robert explicitly tells his audience that this is what they call him and the real-world implications of being called a Blackfeet Indian. In speaking like this Robert demonstrates how his and the audience’s cultures come into conversation as concern the hub of identity.

1026  it’s kinda weird
1027  anyways
1028  before that we called ourselves
1029    Sokitapi
1030    meaning the plains people
1031  it was easy
1032    there was more plain back then
1033  and then we met these new people
1034    we start calling them Napikwaks
1035  and we start calling ourselves
1036    Nitsitapi
1037    the original people
1038  and then French
1039    revealed themselves as French
1040    we called Nitsitpikwaks
1041    the original white people
1042  you know then the Dutch became
1043    Sisttapipakwaks
1044    meaning the good for nothing white people
1045  Germans became
1046    Siksiktamokin
1047    meaning short hat
1048    because we met them in World War I
1049  and then they all came here Montana and started living
1050  too
1051  a lot of German
1052  I'm German
As Robert suggests it is an odd thing for Congress to have plenary power over himself, he
tells his audience that before they were called Blackfeet Indians they were first Sokitapi
(lines 1028-1029). Speaking along the radiants of identity and relationships Robert says
that the Sokitapi means plains people (lines 1029-1030). That is, again, Robert’s use of
niitsii•po’•”sin demonstrates that his audience is not from the same culture as himself,
insofar as they do not understand what these words mean and need Robert to translate
such words for them. Along those same radiants, Robert tells his audience that then they
(Blackfeet) were Nitsitapi, the original people, after having met a new people they called
Napikwaks (lines 1033-1037). As Robert mentioned earlier in his program Napikwaks
was a name the Blackfeet used to call European Americans.

Continuing Robert tells his audience along these same radiants that after the
Blackfeet met the French they started calling them the original white people (lines 1038-
1041). It should also be noted that as Robert lists the various groups the Blackfeet came
in contact with he mostly explains their names in accordance with how the Blackfeet
came to know each of them. That is, as white people the Blackfeet called them
Napikwaks, as the French they were called Nitsitpikwaks, the original (i.e., first) white
people. Robert says that the Dutch became the good for nothing white people and that
German’s became short hat people (lines 1042-1047). Although he does not elaborate on
the reasoning for calling the Dutch good for nothing, Robert does tell his audience that
they named the German’s according to when they met them in WWI (line 1048). As
mentioned earlier in this chapter when Robert discussed being a mutt, while mentioning
what the Blackfeet called the Germans he mentions that he is part German (line 1052).

1053 anyways
1054 so all these names right
1055 and then pretty soon we started calling ourselves
Indian
cuz that’s what they said we are
and then we started calling ourselves
Native American
and then we started calling ourselves
Blackfeet
and then we started calling ourselves
Piikuni again
cuz we started reclaiming ourselves and our identity
cuz whenever you try to force someone
to be who they’re not
who they are is still there
eye’re just more traumatized now
because you forced them to be something
they’re not

Note how as Robert speaks he describes a relationship over time as to what the Blackfeet used to call themselves up to what they have started calling themselves again, Piikuni (lines 1054-1063). Along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert tells his audience that they started calling themselves the terms that others (i.e., Euro-Americans) had told them they are (lines 1055-1057). As Robert comes full circle back to being “Piikuni” he mentions that doing so has been about reclaiming their identity (lines 1062-1064). Specifically, Robert notes that when you are forced to be something you are not you are traumatizing people (lines 1065-1070). Speaking this way, Robert suggests that his people were traumatized by the experiences that led to Euro-Americans calling them Indians. Note that Robert maintains they never stopped being “Piikuni” but that many are traumatized because of the efforts of forced assimilation (lines 1065-1070). That is, along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert attempts to demonstrate some of the complexity and nuance that Blackfeet consider when trying to communicate who they are to others.

As mentioned previously, there are degrees with which Blackfeet, at times, contradict and dispute identity terms that other Blackfeet more readily accept. For
example, remember that in Jack Gladstone’s introduction he identified as Blackfeet
Indian and Indigenous (see section V.A.5). Above, Robert provides explicit context for
better understanding why we sometimes hear inconsistencies across Blackfeet presenters.
That is, there is good reasoning behind why some Blackfeet identify as Blackfeet Indians
and why others might identify as Blackfeet, or part of Indian Country as Robert does, but
otherwise resist calling themselves Indians. Continuing, Robert spoke the following:

1071 I mean
1072 again you force
1073 we learn this when we’re learning how to move our
1074 bodies
1075 with that little box
1076 these little you know, cone box and triangle
1077 and put it through the things
1078 if you put something where it’s not supposed to be
1079 it leaves trauma
1080 that’s what happened to my community

In an attempt to emphasize the kind of trauma this causes people like the Blackfeet,
especially when it comes to what they call themselves, Robert draws a comparison to the
child’s toy with different shapes (lines 1073-1077). Robert says that what happened in his
community is like forcing one of those shapes through the wrong hole, it leaves trauma
(lines 1078-1080).

1081 I’m really lucky
1082 my parents broke that cycle of trauma for me
1083 and why do I bring this up in a place of stories
1084 because these stories still exist
1085 and that legacy
1086 despite literal billions of dollars poured into
1087 make us lose it
1088 part of it too is that we gave these stories
1089 to the people
1090 to the park
1091 and the park took these stories and is
1092 curating them now
1093 primarily the knowledge of the trails
1094 and all that
Robert stresses that he is lucky that his parents broke that cycle of trauma (lines 1081-1082). Answering a question that he believes his audience has at this point, Robert mentions that he brings this up in a place of stories because these stories still exist for his people (lines 1083-1084). Along the radiants of identity, relationships, dwelling, and action Robert tells his audience that it is equally important to his sense of self as a “Piikuni” and “Blackfeet” to share these stories, that these stories also come from these places. As Robert comments that colonialism spent billions of dollars to remove the Blackfeet from the places that make them who they are (lines 1085-1087), and from their stories, he mentions that the Blackfeet also shared these stories willingly at times with non-Natives (lines 1088-1090). It is worth noting that of the various non-Natives who wrote early ethnographies on the Blackfeet and helped contribute to the establishment of Glacier National Park, some were given names in Blackfoot and married into the tribe or were otherwise adopted by them (see Dempsey, 1988, 1996; McClintock, 1910, 1923; but also particularly Schultz, 1916, 1919, 1962).

As but one example that Robert provides, he says that the knowledge of the trail system that the Blackfeet used historically is what many visitors and tourists recognize as the current trail system within the park (lines 1091-1095). Speaking like this, as other Blackfeet do, Robert demonstrates that even if his audience is unaware of the Blackfeet connections to this place, they have nonetheless benefitted from those connections. It should also be noted that in speaking this way, Robert like other Blackfeet, suggests how his non-Native audience has already, most likely unknowingly, come to know Glacier in part thanks to the Blackfeet and how they took care of this place before they were removed from it. Too, Robert communicates that it is important to understand that his
being “Blackfeet” and “Piikuni” has always been tied to this place and Blackfeet stewardship.

Robert mentions that sharing those stories with non-Natives was good to an extent and that is why Native America Speaks is so important because it is trying to bring the Piikuni back into being a part of this place again, as they have always been (lines 1096-1100). As mentioned in the introduction, the Blackfeet were an integral component of marketing for Glacier National Park in the early days of its existence but it was always more so exploitative than it was ever collaborative or a coming together. Robert expresses that Native America Speaks represents an attempt to make that relationship better (lines 1098-1100). It should be noted that in speaking this way, Robert implies that Native America Speaks provides an opportunity for Blackfeet and their non-Native audiences to mend some of those relationships (lines 1099-1102). Along the radiants of identity, relationships, dwelling, and action Robert tells his audience that sharing stories with them in NAS puts Blackfeet and non-Native cultures into conversation in a way that the Piikuni can share who they are through those stories, as connected to these places, and as are integral for understanding what it means to be “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni”. That is, he again demonstrates, like other Blackfeet, that communicating how/what it means to be “Piikuni” is irreducible from those radiants of meaning that Blackfeet create and use with non-Natives in NAS programs in Glacier National Park.
Jumping forward a bit to the end of his program, before taking questions from his audience, Robert returns to talk about who he is as “Piikuni”.

who are we?

am I a Redskin?

no I'm not

I'm just gonna say it

just because it’s been really

I like the way I phrase it I guess

a lot of people don’t know what to call the Indian

American

I don’t either

because when you call somebody something that they’ve never been called

and you apply it to them

it’s difficult

we were never a whole

the Cherokee were never Indians

ty they were always Cherokee

the Arapaho were never Indians

ty they were always hinanitana

the Piikuni were never Indians

we were just Piikuni

just like

you know if I was callous enough to call all Europeans

one term

Caucasian

it eliminates all their identity

the one thing that we do

is we respect it at a sovereign level

and we don’t really do that with natives

and again it’s not a stab at anyone

it’s just results of

our curriculum

our history

but you know when we go to France

we don’t go I visited the French Caucasian

country

but when you visit Blackfeet Indian reservation

it’s an Indian reservation

there are no like Italian reservations

Robert begins by questioning, once more, who he is and offering a suggestion (i.e., Redskin) which he denies. Along the radiant of identity, Robert refuses to call himself a
Redskin, even though some in his audience might think that such a term is acceptable (lines 1240-1242). Continuing, Robert says that when it comes to what to call the Indian American he admits even he does not know (lines 1246-1248). That is, Robert reiterates that it is difficult and complex when you call someone something that they have never called themselves (lines 1249-1252). Robert tells his audience that the Cherokee were never Indians, neither were the Arapaho, and neither were the Piikuni, they were always what they called themselves (lines 1253-1259).

Next, he compares how others (i.e., non-Natives) think and talk about the Blackfeet by suggesting what “if I[he] was callous enough to call all Europeans one term, Caucasian” (lines 1260-1263). Along the radiants of identity and relationships, Robert tells his audience that doing what he describes would eliminate the identity of these European peoples (line 1264), yet that is exactly what happened to the American Indian and the Blackfeet. Robert suggests that part of his being “Blackfeet” means respecting the identities of others, at a sovereign level, but that has not been the reality when it comes to Natives (lines 1265-1267). Making clear that he is not trying to attack his audience (line 1268), Robert maintains that this is the reality and history of his people (lines 1269-1271). Robert maintains that Blackfeet do not go around calling France the French Caucasian country (lines 1272-1274), but that when non-Natives like those in his audience come to visit the Blackfeet, they come to see the Blackfeet Indian reservation (lines 175-1276), noting that there are no other people who have reservations (line 1277).

As he prepares to answer questions Robert closes by returning to say the following about his identity:

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10 At the time of my fieldwork in 2019 The Washington Football Team still retained its problematic mascot and Native American imagery.
but anyways
it’s a tough question to answer
whenever anybody asks me what do we call you
because everybody has their own different
answer
but one thing I do know is
I’ve never heard anybody say I'm a Redskin you know
wink wink
anyways any questions?

Note that insofar as Blackfeet begin presentations by demonstrating how they think about who they are as “Blackfeet” and “Piikuni,” Robert ends his program by returning to say how complicated and nuanced that answer is but that there are certainly those identities which he is not (lines 1291-1298).

Before moving on to see what we can make of the kind of discourse described here interpretively, I want to remind the reader that although we only looked at one program from one presenter in this chapter, Blackfeet presentations always include these kinds of discourses, often saying such things more implicitly than Robert makes explicit here. That is, paying close attention to the use of the vacillating form for discourses of identity we can come to hear such as both saying certain things about who the Blackfeet are not and, given that that contrast, to say other things about who they are as “Blackfeet” and in the course of communicating a “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” identity.

2. “The Piikuni were never Indians”

Considering what can be made of the above interpretively, it should be noted, that the kind of discourse presented here recur throughout NAS programs, oftentimes implicitly as in the case of other Blackfeet presenters. That is, talking about who and what the Blackfeet are not suggests via contrastive elements, what it means to be
Blackfeet. Focusing on the use of the vacillating form for talking about “Blackfeet” identity puts those cultural differences that exist between Blackfeet presenters and their non-Native Euro-American audience into conversation, sometimes explicitly sometimes implicitly, and on display for non-Native audience members. That is, the vacillating form embraces the discourses described and interpreted in both Chapters V and VI, encompassing them as it is juxtaposed to them.

As mentioned previously, Blackfeet identity is created and demonstrated communicatively in complex and nuanced ways which make relevant multiple radiants of meaning intertwined with the hub of identity (see section V.A.6 and Chapter VI). Insofar as we remain concerned with identity as an explicit hub of focus we recognize that the radiant of relationships is central to understanding the use of the vacillating form. That is, as Blackfeet discuss the identity of their non-Native and Euro-American audience members and who/what is not Blackfeet they too say things about their own identity as “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni”. Again, the vacillating form embraces all of the above as it demonstrates how multiple levels of identification can be active in a single cultural scene like NAS.

We notice that in the course of Blackfeet NAS programs commonly used key terms for Blackfeet self-identification are sometimes played off of other identity terms including “European Americans,” “white,” “Caucasian,” and others from previous chapters, for talking about their audience and who they are not. Considering the interplay between these different identities we suggest additional dimensions for understanding what it means when the Blackfeet say “I’m Piikuni” or “I’m Blackfeet”. This discourse of difference, like many others, amplifies the sound of social divisions and divisiveness. In
other words, as this discourse explicates cultural differences, it implicates differences of opinion, belief, and value about that very difference.

Employing these and related terms and phrases, we can formulate cultural propositions that express some of these taken-for-granted views. As discussed in Chapters V and VI Blackfeet tend to engage in talk about who they are as “Blackfeet/Piikuni” along the radiants of relations, dwelling, and action. To the extent possible I have tried to organize the following list of cultural propositions according to which radiants of meaning are active in them. Along the radiants of action and relations:

- It is “a tough question” to answer “what do we [non-Natives] call you [Blackfeet]” because it is nuanced and complex;
- Blackfeet once called themselves “Sokitapi meaning the plains people” then “Nitsitapi the original people” when they “met these new people” “Napikwaks” white people;
- “Natives” like the Blackfeet “express” their “divers[ity]” in terms of “what we call ourselves,” in their own “languages,” in terms of “what’s your story,” and “who’s your people”;
- “Piikuni” speak “niitsii•po’•”sin” and non-Native others speak “English”;
- the Blackfoot language “is very descriptive” and explains “what we [Blackfeet] see and what happens” in contrast, “English” is “just words”;
- “niitsii•po’•”sin” differs from “English” in ways including how “we speak of it [cultural items] as if it’s alive”;
- “we [Blackfeet] talk about a stone as being alive” because of its “importance and how it affects our culture”;
- Blackfeet “treat” “cultural thing[s]” the way they “deserve” and as “remind us [Blackfeet]” who we are, our relationships, and how to “work[ing] together”
- Translating words from “the Blackfoot language” to “English” does not always translate “the way we [Blackfeet] thought and our worldview”
- Blackfeet call themselves “Piikuni,” “Amskapi Piikuni,” and “Nitsitapi” to “reclaim” who they are while white people call them “Indians” and “Native Americans”
• “Congress has plenary power over Indians”;

• Blackfeet were “force[d]” to be someone “they’re not” leaving them “traumatized”;

• “Piikuni were never Indians”;

• Calling the “Piikuni” and others “Indians” eliminates the diversity of “five hundred different languages”;

Along the radiants of action and dwelling:

• “the Blackfoot language” “help[s]” Blackfeet to “ground” and “navigate” “the land system we live in”;

• “These rocky mountains” are “where we lie our being” and “where we got medicine”;

• Blackfeet “were the caretakers of this area” and their language “was influenced by this land”;

And, along the radiants of action, dwelling and relations

• Blackfeet “at one time” had the “language to master the park” but colonialism and “billions of dollars” were “poured in to make us [Blackfeet] lose it”;  

• “Blackfeet” cannot “separate life from this place”, their “ancestors are in the dirt” here and “this land” is “important” for who the Blackfeet are and in “mak[ing] other people understand that importance”; 

• “This is my [Blackfeet] land” but it is also “public lands” which the Blackfeet “honor” by “telling stories”;

• “This land [Glacier National Park]” brings Blackfeet and “European Americans” together to share “stories” 

• Blackfeet share their cycle’s “of trauma” in a “place of stories” because they “still exist” and are part of the “legacy” of the United States and “the park”; 

• NAS is “trying to come full circle” and bring “Piikuni” back to be part of the park again;

These propositions offer insight into certain dimensions of a deeply felt and expressed identity for the Blackfeet: one which is expressed in their own language and English, ties their identity in integral ways to the identity of their non-Native audience, is
grounded in specific places which their audience comes to visit, occurs through the practice of sharing stories about these places, people, and their stories, and is linked to valued ways of living and interacting in the larger world and with non-Native Euro-Americans generally. These propositions also demonstrate that as evidenced in Chapters V and VI the radiants of relations, dwelling, and action are often invoked in the course of saying something about what it means to “be Blackfeet/Piikuni”

In these ways of speaking, the Blackfeet are “Blackfeet/Piikuni” based in part on the cultural differences that exist between Blackfeet presenters and their Euro-American audiences. That is, the distinction between different cultural groups highlights different ways of being, relationships, interactions, and valued ways of living in the world. Spoken this way, distinct identities are created and symbolically derived from the scene of Native America Speaks. Indeed, as mentioned elsewhere, the socio-cultural scene of NAS makes relevant a particular culture scape, a conversationally based and historically grounded system and way of speaking about “Blackfeet/Piikuni” identities in conversation with and in relation to non-Native Euro-American cultures. Again, as Chapter VI demonstrated how discourses of Blackfeet identity are expressed along the radiants of dwelling, relationships, and action, so too does the use of the vacillating form make evident their continued relevancy here, by being juxtaposed to them.

Also note that insomuch as these propositions are developed by focusing on the above Blackfeet NAS program from Robert Hall, they are reflective of similar ways of speaking about Blackfeet identity that are heard commonly enough across other Blackfeet. Moreover, these propositions reveal integral components of what it means to be “Blackfeet” and the level of nuance with which the Blackfeet think about themselves.
and who they are. That is, we should consider the above propositions as also active when other Blackfeet speak about who they are as expressed through the interplay of identity terms mentioned above. As the use of the vacillating form makes clear, multiple levels of identification can be active in a given cultural scene such as NAS, and it is the symbolic play between terms which partly motivate talk about one another (Carbaugh, 1996).

Although another analyst might contend that such propositions as were made explicit in the above are not present in other programs as they are not presented here in equal length or focus. I argue that they undoubtedly are, albeit sometimes implicitly, to varying degrees especially insofar as other Blackfeet similarly speak like Robert does above, especially when observed using the Blackfoot language (niitsi•po’•”sin).

At this point we can propose several cultural premises that illuminate the foundations of the propositions formulated above, making key beliefs and values more readily available.

- Blackfeet identity can be expressed through the contrasts that exist between themselves and their non-Native audience at NAS

- As Piikuni, Blackfeet express themselves in relation to who they are, where they come from, their relations, and how they interact with others

- As Indians, Blackfeet are told who they are, where they are allowed to be/live (i.e., on reservations), who has control over them (i.e., Congress), how to talk (i.e., in English), and stripped of their diversity

- As Piikuni, speaking niitsi•po’•”sin, grounds them in a place which influences their language (i.e., traditional homelands), with a people (i.e., the Nitsitapi), and helps to express their worldview as the original people of these places

- As Indians, speaking English does not always make clear what the Blackfeet really mean and can lead to misunderstandings, even unintentionally

- Understandably, for some Blackfeet/Piikuni, expressing who they can be traumatic, and is sometimes in conflict with what they call themselves and what others call them
As these premises suggest, cultural views of communication encompass distinctive conceptions of what it means to be “Blackfeet” and as is sometimes expressed as a vacillating form of identity talk whereby what it means to be “Blackfeet” is communicated in part by talking about who they are not. That is, the vacillating form demonstrates, in contrast, how the Blackfeet are unlike their non-Native Euro-American audience by talking about who/what they are not. Moreover, these views are intimately linked to specific beliefs and values of what it means to be Blackfeet when it comes to interacting with non-Natives within the scene of Native America Speaks.

In short, Blackfeet often talk about themselves and who they are in ways that also make relevant who they are not, especially as it concerns assumptions about what non-Native Euro-Americans have come to think they know about Blackfeet Indians. Again, like discussed in Chapter VI the ways of speaking investigated here also make relevant the radiants of relationships, dwelling, and action for developing our understanding of what it means to hear Blackfeet like Robert say, “the Piikuni were never Indians we were just Piikuni”.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In Chapters V, VI, and VII of this dissertation, I described and interpreted a distinct and prominent discourse of “Blackfeet” identity as created and used by Blackfeet presenters in the Native America Speaks program in Glacier National Park: an explicit discourse of “Blackfeet” identity (*I’m Piikuni and Piikuni just means me*), as also expressed through radiants of relations, dwelling, and action (*We think about ourselves in very nuanced ways*) and one implicit discourse of “Blackfeet” identity as expressed the vacillating form (*We were never Indians*) which embraces the others as it is juxtaposed to them.

In this final chapter, I begin by reiterating key points about the nature of this study and its claims. Next, I draw together central findings from the preceding data-based chapters. After which I discuss the study’s potential implications and contributions. Finally, I suggest avenues for future research.

A. Nature, scope, and limitations of the study

This is a study of a discursive practice, of ways Blackfeet people actually speak. This study does not claim that all Blackfeet speak about who they are as “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni” in these ways, nor that other Blackfeet necessarily do. That is, when it comes to the Native America Speaks program, Blackfeet speak in these ways but they may speak of themselves in distinctly different ways in different settings, especially those where non-Natives are not privy to Blackfeet voices.
What this study claims is that certain ways of talking about what it means to be “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni”—a certain cultural discourse—are created and used by these Blackfeet who are involved in the Native America Speaks program in Glacier National Park. The discourse, as described and interpreted in this study, is rooted in a distinct set of cultural premises and is created and employed using a unique set of cultural terms. This study also claims that this discourse is deeply significant to those who speak in this way.

This study also demonstrates one way of using the theory and methodology of the ethnography of communication (EC) and cultural discourse analysis (CuDA). It shows how attending closely to what people say, and describing and interpreting this, can assist us in (1) identifying patterns of discourse and ranges of meaning, (2) formulating understandings of these sometimes-unspoken beliefs and values that underlie how/what people say, and (3) linking these patterns, ranges, beliefs, and values to broader cultural patterns, historically and in the present. It further shows how the vacillating form is productive for understanding discourses of identity and can assist us in identifying and gaining insight into intercultural encounters. As I hope this study demonstrates, the ethnography of communication and CuDA provide valuable frameworks for understanding variations in communicative means and meanings, as they are created and used across different communities and cultures.

This study and its scope have several limitations. One limitation is that I spent limited time (six weeks) doing on-the-ground fieldwork on the Blackfeet reservation and in Glacier National Park. Though I attended and recorded as many Blackfeet programs as
I believed were realistic during that time, this also limited my opportunities for attending community events and conducting informal interviews.

Another limitation is to some extent I favored breadth over depth. That is, although I sought to describe and interpret a Blackfeet discourse of identity in some detail, the scope of the project (encompassing a distinct yet interrelated discourse of Blackfeet identity) made deeper exploration impractical. Too, the complex and interrelated dimensions of the Blackfeet discourse of identity investigated here (along the radiants of relationships, dwelling, and action, as well as including the use of the vacillating form) meant that I spent considerable time trying to separate interrelated components before settling on the kind of interpretation and analysis demonstrated here. As a result, I undoubtedly overlooked relevant dimensions of the discourse. In the case of an explicit discourse of “Blackfeet” identity (I’m Piikuni and Piikuni just means me), for example, I did not significantly explore what it means to identify as a real/original person insofar as none of the Blackfeet presenters made explicit what it meant to them and so I treated Nitsitapi as a kinship term for discussing “Blackfeet/Piikuni” identity rather than investigating such further.

Too, there are generational differences across the Blackfeet involved in NAS and certain legal realities when it comes to being recognized as a Native American person in the United States of America that make such discourse complicated at best to understand. In other words, although some of the discourse around identity terms were investigated insofar as they are oftentimes made explicit in Blackfeet NAS programs, there too are noticeable contradictions that are not the focus of this dissertation. For example, many older Blackfeet will self-identify as Blackfeet Indian or American Indian in part because
those were the common terms used to refer to the Blackfeet when they were growing up. Younger Blackfeet are more likely to resist using the word Indian, yet usually, sometimes explicitly, recognize that the Blackfeet have legal rights because Congress has plenary power over Indians, a complex reality I know.

More generally speaking, discourses about Blackfeet identity are, in other places, more complex than they appear here. Again, this dissertation is not about who is or is not Blackfeet/Piikuni as I believe such a programmatic analysis of key identity terms could reveal. Such could be somewhat problematic even when examined across Blackfeet presenters. Ultimately, such an investigation is perhaps best suited for a future project where more Blackfeet voices could be attended to and the legal realities better explained. To that end, it is also neither my place nor desire to engage in the identity politics of Native Americans and the Blackfeet, especially when blood quantum is concerned, as someone who is neither Native American nor Blackfeet.

Another limitation is that, given my focus on Blackfeet discourse, I did not consider discourse from the other tribes involved in Native America Speaks. Although I chose this focus intentionally, another related project could certainly explore how the identity of “Native America” is communicated across the four tribes which are involved in Native America Speaks. Too, the majority of Blackfeet presentations were given by less than half of the total number of Blackfeet involved in NAS and so those presenters who only gave one program during my time in the field ultimately received less attention than those who gave multiple programs.

B. Central findings
To briefly recap, the overarching question guiding this study has been the following: How do Blackfeet/Piikuni people communicate their identity? Or, more simply, what do the Blackfeet/Piikuni identify as being important parts of their selves within the scene of Native America Speaks, how do they participate in this scene, and what do they mean when they say things like “I’m Piikuni and Piikuni just means me”?

This study discovered distinct, patterned ways of speaking about being “Blackfeet/Piikuni,” as employed by the Blackfeet who give presentations as part of the Native America Speaks program in Glacier National Park. Initial fieldwork and analysis led to the formulation of a prominent and distinctive cultural discourse amongst Blackfeet presenters. This model was somewhat later refined to include: an explicit discourse of “Blackfeet” identity (I’m Pikuni and Piikuni just means me), an expression of “Blackfeet” identity along three radiants (We think about ourselves in very nuanced ways), and an implicit discourse of “Blackfeet” identity as expressed in the vacillating form (We were never Indians) which embraces the others as it is juxtaposed to them. The formulation of this model can be considered the study’s first substantial finding.

I then proceeded with a description and interpretation of the two major symbolic units which comprise the discourse. As I described and interpreted them, the central ideas from each chapter are these:

- *I'm Pikuni and Piikuni just means me*: Blackfeet/Piikuni talk about themselves and who they are in ways that make immediately relevant that they think about identity in nuanced ways. Specifically, Blackfeet introductions and their use of the Blackfoot language demonstrate quite noticeably that they say things about who the Blackfeet are, but they too provide context for other things to be said. These ways of speaking make relevant additional radiants of relationships, dwelling, and action.

- *We think about ourselves in very nuanced ways*: Blackfeet/Piikuni express their identity along three main radiants of meaning (relationships, dwelling,
and action) which communicate who they are (i.e., what they call themselves), how they are related (i.e., as Nitsitapi and part of the Blackfoot Confederacy), where they are from (i.e., traditional homelands which include Glacier National Park), and how they interact with others (i.e., through sharing stories which accordingly grounds them to a people, places, and ways of living).

• We were never Indians: Blackfeet/Piikuni also express their identity in contrast to their non-Native and Euro-American audience at NAS which juxtaposes the above with what they are called (i.e., Indians), who has control over them (i.e., Congress), where they are allowed to live (i.e., on reservations) and how to interact with others (i.e., in English), demonstrating how the Blackfeet/Piikuni were/are stripped of their uniqueness and diversity.

As I interpreted the major symbolic units and considered the relationships among them, I recognized the intertwined discourse as deeply cultural, sharing multiple premises especially insofar as the vacillating form also makes relevant and encompasses the expression of “Blackfeet/Piikuni” along three interrelated radiants while all the while being centrally focused on the hub of identity. The reader will likely note that I have employed the three modes of inquiry required for cultural discourse analysis (CuDA)—theoretical, descriptive, and interpretive—but not the fourth mode (comparative) nor the fifth mode (critical), although the use of the vacillating form can be understood as a kind of natural criticism (see Carbaugh, 1989). I chose this approach not because I think the comparative or critical mode has no place in such research but rather because I believe strongly in seeking to first understand and establish people’s systems of meaning on their own terms and from their perspective. This requires a steadfast commitment to suspending one’s own views and ethical evaluations, at least until description, interpretation, and comparison have been completed in sufficient depth.

Regarding the comparative mode, although I could have likely drawn comparisons between this study and others concerned with discourses of identity, I was concerned first and foremost with establishing an understanding of this case. That is, I
wanted to present Blackfeet voices as undeniably their own and not in comparison to other, most likely, non-Native discourses of identity which I would argue, as heard above, might ignore the nuance and complexity with which the Blackfeet communicate and demonstrate their being “Blackfeet/Piikuni”. Regarding the critical mode, I do think there is something to be said about how the discourse of Blackfeet identity above reflects upon the limits of other discourses to say something about who they are.

To that end, we might consider the two major symbolic units which comprise the discourse of Blackfeet identity under interpretation in this dissertation as symbolic agonistics. That is, as a discursive practice agonistic symbolic resources as expressed when saying “I’m Piikuni” but “that’s not Blackfeet” activate a kind of social distancing that frames interactions as occur between the Blackfeet and their non-Native audience (see also Covarrubias, Kvam & Saito, 2018). In other words, as Blackfeet express who they are by activating a discourse about who they are not, they do so at least in part to counter perceived challenges to their identity as “Blackfeet”. At a more general level, such symbolic agnostics are active and occur frequently across various modes of communication as occur between Indigenous people like the Blackfeet and non-Native others who often challenge or otherwise tell people like the Blackfeet, who they (Blackfeet) are as opposed to letting them tell us.

C. Potential implications and contributions

As indicated earlier, this study is linked to several different literatures. Methodologically and theoretically, it is housed within CuDA and the ethnography of communication more broadly. This framework has provided the study with an overall
orientation to culture and communication, including a crucial commitment to attending to participants’ discursive means and meanings. This framework has also provided the study and author with a set of analytical tools (e.g., cultural terms, cultural propositions, cultural premises, hubs, and radiants) which have proved vital in describing, interpreting, and explicating those means and meanings. Though the study is not focused on theoretical or methodological contributions to or the development of this framework, one aspect of the project is worth mentioning: namely, the focus on Indigenous voices (i.e., Blackfeet/Piikuni, within the context of an intercultural encounter and its specific socio-cultural scene (i.e., Native America Speaks).

Topically speaking, the study is housed within the subfield of Native American communication and culture. Previous research in this subfield has provided the study with somewhat of a broad scholarly context. Such research, for example, set the project within the context of earlier investigations of narrative (e.g., Darnell, 1974; Carbaugh, 2001), ‘membering’ discourses (e.g., Carbaugh, 2002; Pratt, 1996), and cultural perspectives and practices (e.g., Basso, 1970, 1976, 1979, 1992, 1996; Braithwaite, 1997a, 1997b; Carbaugh, 1998, 1999, 1998; Cerulli, 2016a, 2016b; Covarrubias, 2007; Hill and Lujan, 1984; Kennan, Pratt & Lujan, 1991; Modaff 2004, 2019; Philipsen, 1972; Philips, 1992; Pratt, 1985, 1996; Pratt & Buchanan, 2004; Pratt & Pratt, 2017; Pratt, Pratt & Dixon, 2014; Pratt & Wieder, 1993; Shaver, 1997; Shutiva, 1994; Wieder & Pratt, 1990). Some research in this subfield has provided prior examples of identity-focused analysis rooted in the ethnography of communication and CuDA with an eye towards Native American people (e.g., Carbaugh & Grimshaw, 2021a, 2021b; Leighter, Grimshaw & Braithwaite, 2018; Lindsley, Braithwaite & Ahlberg, 2002).
This study contributes to the subfield of Native American communication and culture in two ways. First, it offers descriptions and interpretations of a communicative practice used by the Blackfeet/Piikuni. As noted previously, despite Native Americans like the Blackfeet being a focus of study for a variety of disciplines, little research has been devoted to identifying and/or describing the communicative behavior of those people including forms of public oratory, humor, listening, singing, and uses of hedging (but see Chapter II for a discussion of several that do). That is, culturally communicative practices and perspectives are not often enough carefully considered in the social sciences. Rather, they are often ignored or treated as inferior to other kinds of scholarship.

Second, this study offers an ethnographic investigation of a specific situated, conflicted, contemporary social and cultural scene. Like other research of Native American communication and culture before it (e.g., Carbaugh & Grimshaw, 2021a, 2021b; Leighter, Grimshaw & Braithwaite, 2018; Lindsley, Braithwaite & Ahlberg, 2002; Pratt, Pratt & Dixon, 2014; Wieder & Pratt, 1990), this study provides a detailed analysis grounded in a particular place and situation. In this study, it is shown that symbolic communicative means and meaning (e.g., concerning how/what it means to be “Blackfeet” and/or “Piikuni”) both shape and are shaped by tangible social and material realities (e.g., between Blackfeet and their non-Native Euro-American audience; speaking from a place that simultaneously is and is not recognized as Blackfeet land; in the Blackfoot language and English). The study thus contributes descriptions and interpretations of a new set of grounded, situated, cultural voices.
Topically, this study is also linked to the extant literature on intercultural interactions between Euro-Americans and Native Americans. This literature has provided the study with additional scholarly and conceptual context. That is, this study is especially linked to—and complements and converges with—others’ work on cultures in conversation. This study contributes to these literatures in several ways. First, it offers descriptive and interpretive analyses of a Blackfeet cultural discourse as used in a contemporary and intercultural scene: a scene in which Blackfeet both communicate and demonstrate their being “Blackfeet/Piikuni” for a non-Native Euro-American audience. Second, the study shows how central aspects of this Blackfeet discourse (e.g., kinship as Nitsitapi and within the Blackfoot confederacy, speaking from a place that is recognized as belonging to their traditional territory, and interacting through the sharing of stories) are rooted in historical and ongoing relationships between the Blackfeet and Euro-Americans, including in a Blackfeet discourse of identity about themselves and their audience (e.g., “we call ourselves Nitsitapi, the real people,” “you call us Blackfeet Indians”). Third, as noted above, the study shows that close attention to cultural discourses can yield insight into central premises (e.g., concerning what it means to call yourself “Blackfeet/Piikuni”) which are responsive, to some extent, to the particular scene in which Blackfeet find themselves to be interacting with non-Natives (e.g., the Native America Speaks program in Glacier National Park).

I hope that this study will also make contributions that extend beyond scholarly literatures. That is, in light of the study’s focus on the actual communicative practices and perspectives of the Blackfeet/Piikuni, I hope that it will increase the nuance and sensitivity with which Indigenous peoples and their understandings are approached by
scholars and professionals. It is likewise my hope that it will increase the nuance and sensitivity with which these Indigenous peoples are understood by visitors to and those who live upon Indigenous lands.

Listening and watching Native America Speaks programs for several years and more generally keeping an ear to the goings-on of the Blackfeet, I have been struck by the depth and difficulty of the social, cultural, and political conflicts involving the Blackfeet, Glacier National Park, and Euro-Americans more generally. In light of that difficulty, I do not know that my research will have significant implications for people’s social, cultural, and political lives there, specifically the Blackfeet. Modestly, though, perhaps this study has something to offer.

I am thinking here of the relationships that exist and are expressed across a hub of identity and as expressed along three main radiants, among the people and communities who speak in these ways, and more broadly, across all people and communities involved in and concerned with Native American and Blackfeet issues. I am thinking of the general lack of education and information that non-Natives receive, generally speaking, about people like the Blackfeet in particular and other Indigenous groups more broadly. I am thinking, too, of comments made by Blackfeet who said, “you know we think about ourselves in very nuanced ways,” another who said, “you know that’s what brings human beings together is stories we love stories,” and another still who said, “that’s why this program is important because it’s kinda trying to come full circle put us part of it again you see more Piikuni”.

In the interest of conservation, stewardship, collaboration, and conflict transformation, I hope that my research will, in some small measure, help non-Native
Euro-Americans and others reflect on their own and others’ perspectives and identify common ground in places where it already exists. As one Blackfeet put it towards the end of their NAS program:

I could stand up here and have the attitude and say this is my land and I would be speaking truth cuz my ancestors did take care of this and they were the curators for thousands of years but a more important truth it’s our land legally we gotta protect it so that these two kids can come when they’re old men bring their kids and hopefully they think you know there was one young man who taught there maybe he’s still alive lets go let’s see if he’s still telling stories

That is, I hope that this study might help others to have a bit more empathy and understanding, and perhaps, people will find it a bit easier to imagine and respect the Blackfeet, and other Indigenous people.

I hope, too, that readers who are not familiar with the Blackfeet or other Native American peoples, will recognize and learn from similar discourses, perhaps, created and employed in or nearby the places where they dwell. That is, all of the land that is currently recognized as the United States of America was at one time entirely Native land and so there are countless other places and peoples where similar discourses are likely being created and used if only insofar as the Indigenous people of various places attempt to engage and educate non-Native people who may otherwise be ignorant to those kinds of histories. I have at times heard discourses in unrelated geographic areas where other Native American people speak similarly about who they are as Indigenous people from those places, like the Blackfeet communicatively practice in Glacier National Park.

More broadly, I hope this study helps people recognize that culture and meaning are central to matters of identity, that who we are and our actions (including our
communicative actions) are rooted in values. Acknowledging that there are other criterial ways of determining who one is, especially when it comes to Native Americans in the United States of America, I would argue that acknowledging cultural values (perhaps especially, the invisible ones) plays a significant role in facilitating a greater understanding of who one is—and who one is not.

Finally, I hope that this study will encourage its readers to approach other situations and issues with an ear to the expressive systems and nuances of meaning audible in various discourses of identity. We are all, hopefully, accustomed to hearing, understanding, and speaking of things from our own cultural vantage point. Yet, regardless of our own, there are other ways of hearing, understanding, and speaking, and other cultural logics that can be (and are being) presumed and created. We have much to learn from listening closely and thinking imaginatively, with or without the aid of a specific interpretive approach (e.g., CuDA and the ethnography of communication).

D. Future research

This study, and the interpretations made within, were guided by an overarching research question: how do Blackfeet/Piikuni people communicate their identity? Or, more explicitly, what do the Blackfeet/Piikuni identify as being important parts of their selves within the scene of Native America Speaks, how do they participate in this scene, and what do they mean? This question, and related others, could be fruitfully explored in ways that would further develop and substantially add to this study’s findings.

Within the general confines of this study’s focus—Blackfeet discourses of identity in Native America Speaks—several avenues could be pursued. The data that I
have gathered and similar other data, perhaps from the other tribes that are a part of NAS, could be further described and interpreted. Too, the discourse I have formulated could be further investigated and explicated given a larger corpus of programs. My formulations of this specific discourse of Blackfeet identity could be refined and revised, and comparative analyses of relations and dynamics across tribal nations could be explored and extended in several ways. Development of this study’s findings could, for example, proceed along the lines of questions such as these: In what ways do “Native Americans” present discourses of identity within the scene of NAS? What/how do gender identities and roles manifest themselves in such scenes by communicative means or meanings shared by the Blackfeet? What/how do generational identities and roles manifest themselves in such scenes by communicative means or meanings shared by the Blackfeet?

Too, a historical treatment of NAS might help to better understand some of the conditions which encouraged and embraced the telling of such “minority/Native” views in Glacier as well as to trace how changes to NAS have occurred over time leading to the current analyses. Perhaps if we trace some of these historical developments we might be able to apply them elsewhere, encouraging similar kinds of programming in other locales. It is also probably worthwhile to revisit these data and others to engage more directly in the comparative and critical modes. Although I expressed my reason for being less concerned, at least initially, with these modes there are those excerpts that make clear that such a focus might be equally productive of a more developed and comprehensive understanding of the discourse already presented here. Given what this dissertation was able to accomplish by focusing on the three required modes of inquiry for a cultural
discourse analysis, a fitting next step would be to return to the data and see what else can be made of them by including those modes of inquiry which are sometimes considered as secondary in focus, the comparative and the critical.

Still, within these general confines, future research could also attend to areas neglected by this study. Future investigation and analysis could, for instance, more deeply consider and address discursive dimensions touched on but not treated as focal here (e.g., blood quantum as spoken about in Blackfeet discourse; the question and answer portion of Blackfeet NAS programs; Blackfeet stories themselves). Future research could also investigate other institutional discourses active in Glacier National Park which deal with the Blackfeet (e.g., during the 2019 season there was a ranger-led program titled “Whose Land is This? The Blackfeet and Glacier National Park; physical displays about the Blackfeet and Glacier National Park). Additionally, other Indigenous communities (e.g., Salish, Kalispell, and Kootenai) could be investigated and their discourses compared with one another and with the discourse considered in this study.

Outside the confines of Glacier National Park, yet still with a focus on discursive practices, many additional venues could be pursued. Of the wide range of possibilities, here I suggest only a small fraction. Similar research could, for instance, be conducted in other National Parks and at National Monuments including the Little Bighorn Battle National Monument, exploring how Crow (Apsaalooke) discourses are created and used in the tribal tours they give of battlefield. The findings of such research, and the cultural discourses formulated, could then be compared with discourse from the Blackfeet, identifying both similarities and differences in communicative means and meanings.
Beyond the field of communication, scholars interested in the Blackfeet and Native American people, generally, could extend these investigations in helpful directions, investigating various Blackfeet and other Native American views and voices and the distinct shapes given by each to who they are, how they are related, what they are doing together, how they feel about what is going on, about the nature of things, and how these are—or are not—linked to the shapes given by each to relations with non-Native Euro-Americans in the past and present.

In any or all of these ways, I hope that future research will yield greater insight into the discourse I have identified, will refine my conceptualizations of it, and will identify variants of this discourse as well as distinct others. Even more so, I hope that such research will make a difference for the people, organizations, and institutions most invested in Indian country and Indigenous sovereignty more broadly, helping them as they seek to improve relations, resolve conflicts, provide education, and ensure the best possible future for humans, especially people like the Blackfeet and other Native Americans.


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