

# **THE OLDMAN RIVER AND THE SACRED: A MEDITATION UPON APUTOSI PII'KANI TRADITION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

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## **Abstract / Résumé**

Impacted by a water storage dam during the late eighties, the Old Man River, in present-day Alberta, has from time immemorial been the sacred center of the Aputosi Pii'kani people's homelands. Using an organic approach to oral tradition, the essay explores the religious significance of a Pii'kani sacred geography centered on the Old Man River. Considering environmental ethics, special attention is given to the Pii'kani worldview and tradition.

Ayant subi les incidences d'un barrage réservoir vers la fin des années 1980, la rivière Old Man, située en Alberta, est depuis un temps immémorial le centre sacré des terres ancestrales du peuple Aputosi Piikani (Nation des Péigans). En utilisant une approche organique de la tradition orale, l'article explore la signification religieuse de la géographie sacrée de la nation Piikani qui est centrée sur la rivière Old Man. En tenant compte de l'éthique environnementale, l'article porte une attention particulière à la vision du monde et à la tradition des Piikani.

In the late eighties a water storage dam was completed on Alberta's Oldman River. The dam-project generated considerable controversy when conflicting reports were manifest in the Canadian federal government's predictions of negative environmental consequences and the Alberta provincial government's forecast for a beneficial environmental impact. These assessments haunted the project with an unresolved ambiguity. The project was further complicated by a high degree of political intrigue and despite considerable opposition to the dam, construction continued throughout the protests thereby biasing the project's outcome with a capital commitment. This strategy of increasing a project's incentive via continued investment threatens rational environmental policy, planning, and impact analysis while compromising faith in government and the rule of law.<sup>1</sup> In his recent assessment of the project, historian Jack Glenn has called it a shameful process that has disgraced the governments involved.<sup>2</sup>

In the haste to proceed with project construction, cultural and moral values were largely overlooked and undervalued. Particularly omitted were those values held by the Aputosi Pii'kani or North Peigan peoples. Located twelve kilometers below the dam, the Peigan Indian Reserve hosts a community with significant cultural and moral values that were at stake in the matter. This Native community, nonetheless, was itself significantly divided between conflicts of immediate physical and economic survival in needs driven by extreme poverty and the moral requirements stemming from their traditional religious ethos and cultural identity. As a result, the Pii'kani physical existence as a community was pitted against their traditional religion creating a moral conundrum.

Given that this conundrum of community survival versus the continuation of the traditional cultural and religious ethos is a factor of post-Conquest events, it is necessary to consider worldview transformations imposed upon the Pii'kani. In seeking to address Native cultures, contemporary scholars are divided in following an orthodoxy of structural modernism versus post-structural postmodernism. In this paper, it is my position that one cannot rely solely upon either of these intellectual paradigms and that we must seek to re-think our discourse analysis along the lines of the experiential and embracing an organicism. So considered, it has been my experience to note that post-Conquest Native communities tend, in general, to be divided between an element embracing Modernism as defined by the advent of literacy and progressive abstraction amid universal absolute truth claims versus an element of traditionals who retain a commitment to ancestral values and organic participation and reciprocity with the natural world. In this context, the Modernist Natives are often Christian and economically progressive es-

posing to a large extent Western values. Conversely, the Traditionalists are largely non-Christian adhering to oral traditions and cultural patterns passed down from time immemorial. While in most cases, both elements are impoverished, the Modernists tend to be less so than the Traditionals and they are generally far more willing to sacrifice ancestral and nature based moral values. It should, however, be noted that to some extent individual members of the community may find themselves spread between these two value paradigms. For the purpose of this analysis, it is the Traditional religious ethos, cultural practices and moral values that are the subject of this study.

In summarizing the traditional religion, cultural and moral values, Glenn offers that the Pii'kani valued the river as a birthright and center of their homeland, as well as, an ancestral burial ground, a source of spiritualism and "the thread that binds the Native people with the natural environment."<sup>3</sup> While these views and values were central to Pii'kani tradition, others in the tribe saw the potential for economic development on the Peigan Reserve that might relieve the residents impoverishment and contribute to their well-being.<sup>4</sup> As a result, the Pii'kani community was divided in its response to the dam, which created a position easily exploited by the outside interests. Since Native Modernists, motivated by poverty, tend to willingly accept change provided it brings the promise of monetary benefit, they were largely unopposed to the environmental degradation. It was, however, the Pii'kani Traditionalists who had the most to lose. In the traditionalists's identification with place, specifically the Oldman River, these Natives were impacted with a major disruption of their religious ethos and cultural identity.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the tone and focus of this study will be directed to the essential features of a Traditional based paradigm and the specific Pii'kani values as they comprise and environmental ethos respecting the Oldman River.

Bearing the Creator's name, the Oldman River had flowed freely through time immemorial and the Pii'kani had made their Aboriginal home along its banks. With the promised inundation of these sacred grounds, the Peigan Nation joined with environmental interest groups represented by Friends of the Oldman River to oppose and defend the sacred river valley.<sup>6</sup> Further evidencing their traditional concerns, Pii'kani religious leaders sponsored a spiritual ceremony honoring the Oldman River — the Creator's River. Led by Joe Crowshoe, Sr. they sought reciprocity with the river spirits and prayed for their protection.<sup>7</sup>

Tribal protest peaked in 1990 when a group of Pii'kani Indians made efforts to re-direct the river in an attempt to halt the dam construction.<sup>8</sup> As a result of the dam-threat, an off-shoot of the traditional Pii'kani warrior society known as "Lonefighters" was organized by Milton Born-With-

A-Tooth under the authority of Floyd Heavy Runner, traditional Chief of the Brave Dogs Society among the Amaskapi Pii'kani.<sup>9</sup> Other traditional religious practitioners including Evelyn Crowshoe Kelman, daughter of the principal Aputosi Pii'kani religious leaders Joe and Josephine Crowshoe, joined the Lonefighters camp in an effort to strengthen the spiritual power of the protest and sustain its peaceful non-violent resistance.<sup>10</sup> While the Lonefighters protest resulted in a serious confrontation with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, peace prevailed as Kelman lead a ceremony by the sacred river.<sup>11</sup> The dam construction, nevertheless, proceeded and together with the authoritarian governmental police action, a profoundly negative impact resulted for traditional Native religious freedom. As a consequence, the dam-project was reminiscent of earlier acts of British-Canadian and American imperialism in halting Native religious ceremonials.<sup>12</sup>

In order to understand this project's impact upon Pii'kani tradition, we must consider the history and religious values associated with the traditional Native sense of place and environmental ethic. In this context, a Federal Review panel concluded that since the Oldman River is "the Blackfoot Nation's holy river...[and] central to the development and maintenance of Blackfoot religion and culture...a summary of the knowledge of the spiritual and cultural significance of the river is required."<sup>13</sup> Although no government review considering Pii'kani religion ensued, Glenn, in retrospect, makes an attempt to supply a brief summary review of Peigan religious traditions associated with the river.<sup>14</sup> It is in response to this need for a critical religious evaluation that I offer the following assessment, beginning first with an overview of Native religious traditions and their ritual relationship to the natural environment, the study presents a theory of Sacred Geography, reflecting a traditional religious ethos. In the second context, the paper engages an ethnohistorical analysis including selected mythological narratives associated with the Oldman River. In the third section there is a mythographical analysis of the foregoing Pii'kani narratives and ethnohistory. In the final section, the paper engages an ethical meditation seeking to reflect upon the moral wisdom obtained and environmental philosophy demanded from the study.

In Native religion, there is an overriding value of nature and ecological integrity. Categorized under the inspirited or animism and the ensouled or animatism rubrics, nature, among traditional Natives, is acknowledged to have power while humans are thought powerless without the beneficence of these Nature Persons or Spirits.<sup>15</sup> Christopher Vecsey calls the practices based on this ethos "Indian environmental religions," he has explained that its goal is harmony with nature, ethical

reciprocity in the human species' relationship with the "non-human persons" of nature, and in consequent, contributive to a spiritual affinity between Indians and wild nature.<sup>16</sup> Stating this essential point, Joseph Campbell declared "Nature religions are not attempts to control nature but to help you put yourself in accord with it."<sup>17</sup> Åke Hultkrantz affirmed this position emphasizing the ecological integration of religious thinking and practice among Natives and he declares that there is a "cosmotheistic interpretation of nature," which is operative among these traditions. As a consequence, the Great Mystery, the sacred, is manifest throughout the natural world. For traditional Natives, there is, accordingly, a sacred unity of nature, humanity, and "supernatural powers" that require the moral acknowledgement of wild nature. The result of these beliefs is that the spirits of nature are fully integrated into all aspects of social, cultural, and environmental activity and therefore, manifest nature is of definitive significance in traditional religious practice.<sup>18</sup>

The pioneering scholar of Native religio-ethnology, Joseph Epes Brown confirmed this thesis explaining the Indians' attitude of reverence for nature and for life to be the central tenet of their religion. His work is particularly important in explicating a Native metaphysic of nature wherein the natural forms or forces are expressive of the Ultimate Power, or essence, of the Great Spirit. Neither monotheistic nor pantheistic, this metaphysic of nature "refers both to a Supreme Being and to the totality of all gods or spirits or powers of creation."<sup>19</sup> Monotheism, moreover, narrowly construes God as a fact, thereby failing to realize the mythic view of God as unknowable mystery<sup>20</sup> that is implicit in these traditions. Likewise pantheism suggests a personal god inhabiting the world. But as Campbell explains: "The idea is trans-theological. It is of an undefinable, inconceivable mystery, thought of as a power, that is the source and end and supporting ground of all life and being."<sup>21</sup> Consequently, Native religion is grounded in respect for both the Ultimate Power and the manifest Creation; wild nature is therefore central to traditional Native religious practice. Once at a Pii'kani Thunder Pipe ceremony, Joe Crowshoe, Sr. explained this very succinctly stating, "This bundle contains the Nature, we are hear [in ceremony] to honor the Nature."<sup>22</sup>

Traditionally when reflecting upon values, Natives including the Pii'kanis refer one to a creation myth or narrative story.<sup>23</sup> These myths, moreover, form the heart of these traditions. Indeed, among traditional Natives, mythological message has the power of immediacy: "Cosmologies, world views, and religious and ritual expressions," all "have their origin and reinforcement in myth."<sup>24</sup> In a generic context "myths," "legends," "stories," and "tales" can be referred to as narratives, and this tradition of oral narration is non-literate, but it is not illiter-

ate in the sense of lacking a logical methodology. Acknowledging this deeper reading of myth, Campbell remarked: "Mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, it is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth — penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words."<sup>25</sup> Hultkrantz, accordingly, contends that myth is essentially a religious concept and he puts forth a threefold classification of such narratives in Native America.<sup>26</sup> These are, first, sacred narratives which are traditional myths or formalized stories that have been ritualized via seasonal restriction, and second, legends, which take place in historical or recent times and account for human interaction with the spiritual powers residing in the natural world. Third, there are narrative tales or stories imparting "news or tidings."<sup>27</sup>

According to Campbell, mythology concerns the mystical dimension, for without this you have ideology. Myth also concerns "the pedagogy of the individual, giving him a guiding track to guide him along." Sacred narrative, furthermore, "coordinates the living person with the cycle of his own life, with the environment in which he's living, and with the society which itself has already been integrated in the environment."<sup>28</sup> As a mode of transformation, myths alter consciousness and change our thinking, and this process is accomplished through trials and revelations.<sup>29</sup> Myth, as mystical knowledge, is, moreover, the literature of the spirit and it occupies the same zone as dream, a zone which Campbell called "the Wisdom Body." This insight stands in stark contrast to the Cartesian mode to think of consciousness as being particular to the head. Campbell's notion of the Wisdom Body embraces consciousness in the body as born of nature. He explains, moreover, "When you go to sleep, it's the body that's talking. What the body is moved by are energies that it does not control. These are the energies that control the body. They come in from the great biological ground."<sup>30</sup> Born of dream and vision, myths are thus metaphorical of the spiritual potentiality in the human body, a potentiality that originates in nature. As such, we observe that the same powers that animate human life also animate the life of the world.<sup>31</sup> Upon recognizing this wisdom, it is conceivable that we might understand Thoreau's maxim, "in wildness is the preservation of the world," moreover, given that myth is the penultimate truth which is born of the body as acted upon by nature, then surely it is a perennial philosophy of wildness beyond human desire and intentionality. This finding, likewise, stands in stark contrast with Western attitudes toward nature, which emphasize a "perfection of the wild" and manipulation of nature for human instrumental desires and intentions.<sup>32</sup>

Mythic themes express cosmological and ritual values and events in the now. They are "time outside of time," wherein time as a mundane

event is suspended in favor of the eternal verities of creation happening with narrative recital. Mythic time, therefore, reveals creation as an ongoing, continuing reality where the forces of nature are a continuing cyclical process. "The recitation of a myth defining creation, for example, is not experienced in terms of an event of linear past, but rather of a happening of eternal reality, true and real now and forever, a time on the 'knife edge between the past and the future.'"<sup>33</sup> Myths inform and explain reality, however, not in the linear context of fact as in history or science, but in the events of ever-active creation, occurring and recurring in the cycles of days or seasons and in death and rebirth. Myths respond to creation in the immediacy of process, informing life as it is "ever happening and observable through all the forms and forces of creation."<sup>34</sup>

According to Campbell, "the sanctification of the local landscape is a fundamental function of mythology."<sup>35</sup> Identifying the sacred, creation myths present that which is pre-eminently real. "People claim the land by creating sacred sites, by mythologizing the animals and plants — they," moreover, "invest the land with spiritual powers. It becomes like a temple, a place for meditation."<sup>36</sup> This claiming of the land transforms the place into a space of spiritual relevance. Through the revelation of myth, which itself is grounded in wildness, sacred space ensues and the natural spirits or manifest forms associated with particular places reveal numinous character. The moral significance of sacred space is that its character is uniquely its own and not an arbitrarily human invention.<sup>37</sup> In this context, sacred space is untrammelled — free of external dominion, particularly that of human control and order. It is, therefore, space which manifests its inherent will and reveals the great mysteries of creation or the Ultimate Power. Respect for the effectiveness of sacred space, and the relationship with it, empower obligations for its protection from profaning influences. Consequently, creation myths provide the foundation for ethical behavior in regard to sacred space<sup>38</sup> and they give definition to what I will refer to as sacred geography. Given this understanding of myth and sacred space, we are prepared to explore the Pii'kani Tradition and its valuation of the Oldman River.

Affirming the metaphysic of nature outlined in the preceding discussion, the Pii'kanis acknowledge a direct correspondence between the immanent and the transcendent. The "land"—elemental processes, minerals, plants, and animals—are, moreover, recognized to have a spirit.<sup>39</sup> These beings are personified in a category of moral personhood persons. In this context, the human form is not the defining characteristic of being nor is it the apex of being, rather the category of "personhood" is extended to all manifestations of the Ultimate Power. Consequently,

the notion of "society" is cosmic, broadly ecological, and non-hierarchical. In this world view, the natural forms are intrinsically valuable and therefore morally significant.

Illustrating this ecological reciprocity in a specific Pii'kani context, McClintock declared: "The Great Spirit, or Great Mystery, or Good Power, is everywhere and in everything—mountains, plains, winds, waters, trees, birds, and animals."<sup>40</sup> This "Good Power" is an endowment from the Sun, Natos, who is acknowledged as the creative source of all power and animation. Natos, Sun, gives his blessing unto the people in return "for their reverence for all of nature."<sup>41</sup>

When asked who created them, Red Eagle of the Amaskapi Pii'kanis declared: "Old Man made us. I don't know who made him. I guess he always was. And he was, and is, a God. He was not called Old Man because of great age. The gods can not grow old, they live forever. Our first fathers gave him that name because of his appearance: blue eyed he is, and white skinned, and his hair is the color of the morning sky just before the rising sun comes in sight."<sup>42</sup> "Old Man or N'api, the Piikani Creator, is associated with the sun, Natos." N'api is a compound expression of "the word Ni'nah, man, and the particle api which expresses a color, and which is never used by itself, but always in combination with some other word." George Bird Grinnell further explains that api really conveys the tint of early morning light—the dawn—which is an off-color white with a faint yellow cast: thus, N'api seems to mean dawn-light-color-man, or man-yellowish-white. The shade is precisely the color of an old man's hair.<sup>43</sup> A central point here is that light is the most important thing in life. In this context, the beginning of the day is analogous to the beginning of the world, furthermore, creation begins with the lifegiving process that is photosynthesis, and since light comes before the sun—creates it or brings it forth, so to speak—then it is the antecedent of the sun as the Creator. This Creator, N'api is an "non-human person" exemplifying the metaphysic of nature outlined earlier and he occupies the liminal zone between night and day that is dawn. Metaphorically then the "Dawn of Creation" is implied in this mythological figure.

The Pii'kani peoples speak an Algonquian dialect that aligns them with a host of Algonquian-speaking tribes living primarily in the eastern woodlands and subarctic areas of North America. Commonly referring to themselves as Nitsitapi or real people, there are three closely related tribes who speak the same language—the Pii'kani or Peigan comprising the Aputosi Pii'kani or North Peigan in Alberta and the Amaskapi Pii'kani or Blackfeet in Montana, the Kainah or Bloods, and the Siksikau or Blackfoot, with the later both located in Alberta. A traditional Blackfoot Confederacy included the (Algonquian) Atsina or Gros Ventres in Mon-



tana and the (Athabaskan) Sarsis in Alberta.<sup>44</sup> It is acknowledged that the members of this confederacy were probably the earliest Algonquian-speaking residents of the plains, and that they occupied this area long before the "discovery" of America.<sup>45</sup>

Given this brief introduction to a traditional Pii'kani religious ethos and identification of them among North American Aboriginals, we can now turn to an examination of the sacred narratives or myths<sup>46</sup> associated with the Oldman River.

## I. Creation Myth

*In the Pii'kani creation myth, N'api—Old Man—is the creator of the world and everything living therein. In the long ago, all was covered with water, so N'api sent the animals to dive below the surface seeking the land in the murk depths. Among the animals, there was first the duck, next the otter, then the badger, and finally the muskrat. All dived in vain except the muskrat who remained under water so long that Old Man began to fear for him. Nearly drowned, muskrat at last floated slowly to the surface clutching a little ball of mud between his paws. Old Man took this mud and blew upon it; the mud began to swell and it continued to grow larger and larger until it became the whole earth.*

*Roaming over the earth, Old Man piled rocks to make mountains, he gouged out beds for rivers and lakes, and filled them with water. He caused the plains to be covered with grass; he made roots and berries grow; he created the birds and the animals; and at last, with a lump of clay, he made himself a wife. Together the two—Old Man and Old Woman—designed the people and decided how they should live. Old Man insisted on first say in everything and Old Woman agreed provided she might have the final say. Old Man declared, "Let the people have eyes and mouths in their faces, and let them be straight up and down." Old Woman responded, "Yes, let them have eyes and mouths; but they shall be set crosswise in their faces." Old Man continued, "Let the people have ten fingers on each hand." "No," cried Old Woman, "ten fingers are too many. They will be in the way. Let them have four fingers and a thumb on each hand." And so the people were made.*

*Old Man and Old Woman could not agree on mortality or immortality for the people. Finally Old Man declared, "I will throw a buffalo chip into the water. If it floats, the people will die for four days and live again; but, if it sinks, they will die forever." He flung the buffalo chip into the water, and it floated. "No," exclaimed Old Woman, "I will throw this rock. If it floats people will die for four days. If it sinks, they will die forever." The rock sank to the bottom when she threw it into the water; thus, they agreed that death was final because if people lived forever they would*

not feel remorse and compassion for one another.

*In the beginning the people were hungry and cold, so Old Man taught them to collect edible roots and berries, to make wooden bows and stone-headed arrows, to use weapons, traps, and deadfalls in killing buffalo and the smaller animals for food, and to dress the skins for warm clothing. When his work was completed, Old Man climbed a high mountain and disappeared. "Some say that N'api's home was in the mountains at the head of the stream that still bears his name, Old Man River, in the province of Alberta;" and the people "still point out Old Man's gambling place west of Fort MacLeod, where N'api played the hoop-and-pole game long, long, ago."*<sup>47</sup>

Also during the creation, Old Man set forth the Piikani homeland, declaring: "Here I will mark you off a piece of ground." The boundaries he gave for this land begin at a point along the summit of the Rocky Mountains west of Edmonton, Alberta; and "taking in the country to the east and south, including the Porcupine Hills, Cypress Mountains, and Little Rocky Mountains down to the mouth of the Yellowstone on the Missouri, then west to the head of the Yellowstone, and across the Rocky Mountains to the Beaverhead; thence to the summit of the Rocky Mountains and north along them to the starting-point."<sup>48</sup> It is instructive to note that the Oldman River is located in the center of this homeland which *N'api* made for the Pii'kanis, indeed, the river itself bears the name of the Creator. Known as *Naw-pew-ooch-a-tay-ctos* or the river the Old Man played upon,<sup>49</sup> it is at the heart of an area which the Natives refer to as "*Real Oldman Country*."<sup>50</sup>

Pii'kani occupation of the *Real Oldman Country* extends back over 5,000 years and the earliest Native occupation of the reservoir area is evidenced at 8,000 or more years ago.<sup>51</sup> Discovered at the headwaters of *Na'api's* River, a great pile of stones rested until the 1930s and these stories represented the prayers of uncounted generations of Natives.<sup>52</sup> Reflecting upon this heritage, Pii'kani Elder Joe Crowshoe, Sr. has related a legend that implies the people were wandering until they came upon the Oldman River Valley which gave them a home and an identity, and further, if ever this sacred geography is lost then the Pii'kanis will cease to exist.<sup>53</sup> Manifesting this concern when choosing the Peigan Reserve, Chief Eagle Tail showed a preference for the area of the Oldman's River near the Porcupine Hills.<sup>54</sup>

Grinnell noted that the Blood camp was along Oldman's River where Fort MacLeod stands today and Schultz (Apikuni) declared Oldman's River to be the home of the Kainah.<sup>55</sup> In 1869, Ft. Whoop-Up was founded at the confluence of Oldman River and St. Mary's River, which was the heart of the Blood hunting grounds. Stocked with repeating rifles and

whiskey, the Whoop-Up grossed \$50,000 by September of 1870 and contributed significantly to the demise of the buffalo. Four years later, upon their arrival, the Mounted Police established Fort MacLeod along the Oldman River.<sup>56</sup>

## II. Making of Old Man River

*A Pii'kani geopiety is further revealed in the mythic "Making of the Old Man River" story. In the long ago, high in the Rocky Mountains near the Frank Slide (Alberta, Canada), Old Man created the river which bears his name. Moving into the mountains, long before the Oldman River came to be, N'api camped there with his sister and six or seven lodges. Food was plentiful in the foothills of the Rockies and the people lived well there; they were happy for many months. N'api was the only young man among this small band, but there were five young women including his sister. These young people were at the age of sexual discovery.*

*With no other young men around, the young women began to plan how each one might get N'api. N'api's sister overheard their plans and she decided to make her own plans. That very night she waited until everyone was sound asleep and then she went sneaking to her brother's bed, without speaking a word she crawled under the robes with N'api. Thinking that it was one of the other girls, N'api unknowingly made his sister his secret lover. Each day N'api thought of his secret lover and flirted with each of the young women except his sister, this affair went on for several months.*

*One day when walking in the forest, N'api decided to find out who his secret lover was, so he devised a plan to discover the young woman's identity. Secretly he dug a pit beneath his bed. It was so deep that one must have assistance from the surface in order to escape it. Covering the pit with his bed and devising a special trip for the trap, N'api prepared to catch his secret lover that very night. Shortly after everyone went to sleep, the woman crawled into N'api's bed and they made love until morning when she prepared to leave, N'api triggered his trap and they both fell into the pit.*

*Slowly as daylight illuminated the pit, N'api discovered his sister and he felt very shameful. In their shame as they looked upon one another, they began urinating. They urinated and they urinated filling the pit and still they urinated, the urine became "a brook, then a creek, and finally a river, which channelled down through southern Alberta and became known as the Oldman River, or as the Natives know it, N'api's River."<sup>57</sup>*

The Oldman River is, in this narrative, a marker to the importance of sexual mores and right behavior in the Pii'kani social order.

### III. Story of the Crow Lodge

In 1905, Walter McClintock journeyed with his Amaskapi Pii'kani friends to the home of the prominent medicine man, Brings-down-the-Sun who lived near the Porcupine Mountains on Oldman's River. There he learned that Oldman's River was also known as Crow Lodge River because of a vision for the Crow Lodge which was received near its source.<sup>58</sup> In regard to this vision, Brings-down-the-Sun informed McClintock:

There is a high peak in the Rockies, where this river rises, which we call Crow Lodge Mountain, because it is home for enormous flocks of crows. They gather every evening, and roost in the trees on the mountain side during the night, but they always leave in the morning. An Indian secured there the dream for the Crow Lodge, and we have given the river the same name, because he made the lodge in a ravine, not far from this camp. A short distance up the river, is a high cliff, called the Women's Piskun. It is the place where a large band of women once camped. They supported themselves by running buffalo and antelope over their piskun. We have a tradition, that men and women have not always lived separated into families, but ran in bands like the animals. Napi (Old Man) is said to have started our living together in families.<sup>59</sup>

The "high peak in the Rockies" appears to comport with the contemporary Crowsnest area and Andy Russell presents a legend of the Crow's Nest in support of this conclusion.<sup>60</sup> While Russell's story is plausible, there is a rich mythic tradition associated with the Crow Lodge and its place of origin.

A grandson of Brings-down-the-Sun, contemporary Elder Joe Crowshoe, Sr., explains that the Crow Lodge is in fact a coulee or glacial morain occurring between Brocket and Ft. Macleod and which runs from the Oldman River to the Waterton River. Furthermore, according to Crowshoe, it was at this place where the Old Man visioned the Crow Lodge.<sup>61</sup> Yellow Kidney, an Amaskapi Pii'kani Elder who owned the *Maistoikokaup*—"crow bird lodge"—three times, told its origin story to Claude Schaeffer, explaining that the Crow Painted Lodge originated among the Buffalo Chip band while they were camped along the Oldman River.<sup>62</sup>

*During the pre-horse days, the Pii'kanis roamed the Oldman River Valley south of the Porcupine Hills. In a time when the people were hungry and short of food, "the band chiefs assembled in council and agreed to hold a bison drive." Following a successful drive, the hunters began*

butchering the dead buffalo. Taking home only a few pieces of meat, one hunter left the remainder of his share in the corral intending to return the next day. As the people of the camp retired, the crows began to flock around the corral in great numbers. Awakened the hunter before daylight, his wife told him to bring in the balance of the meat. In the early dawn light while he neared the corral, he noticed a lodge pitched nearby. The lodge was painted with figures of seven crows on the south and seven on the north side. Curious about this mysterious tipi, he approached closer and saw many crows sitting there. At the end of the row, a female crow was singing: "My man! You'd better get up. There's a man coming towards us. We shall have a smoke."

Jealous, the male crow angrily replied: "The people on the outside of us are enemies. I hear their weapons."

His mate responded: "We'll have a smoke. We'll pray for good luck for the people."

Reassuring her husband about the hunter, she continued: "I want to give this human our lodge. He will feed us." Responding to his wife's intention, the male crow regained his good humor and presenting the lodge to the hunter, he declared: "These are all our children here. You have fed them. We give you this lodge, with all the power that's in it." With this declaration, the hunter returned home, leaving his kill for the crows to eat.

Having no meat when he arrived home, his wife asked: "Where is the meat?" The hunter replied, "I have given it to the crows to eat," without mentioning their gift of the lodge. During his dreams that night the hunter visioned the crow people who told him: "You saw the lodge. You must make one like it. Paint it like the one on the hill."

Addressing the old people the next morning, the hunter related his dream: "Now I want to talk to you. We have been given wonderful aid. I saw a painted lodge yesterday up at the corral. There were two rows of crows painted upon the cover, each row standing upon a red line representing the blood of the bison. In the rear where the lines join, a buffalo skull is drawn. That represents the fat on the side of a buffalo's head, which is the favorite food of the crow."

The old people remarked: "This is a very wonderful gift from the crows. We'll use it as a protection for our people and also to insure good fortune in securing bison. The lodge will be used to draw the bison to us. Today you must take down your lodge and paint it like the dream lodge. You must do this at once."

Placing several travois against his lodge, the hunter began outlining the crows's, red line and skull, soon the designs were complete. To represent bison meat, he cut a red robe into small triangular pieces and

attached one to each of the bird's beaks, and the horns of the skull pointed downward rather than up. A bison tail was attached to the corner of each smoke flap and in the rear between the top and the skull, seven more bison tails were attached. Representing the dream bringer, Nitsokan—butterfly, a blue cross was painted on the top rear.

Following the painting of the lodge, the hunter told the people: "Tonight we will go through the ceremony taught me by the crow people. We will borrow some rattles from the Beaver Bundle men, and then we'll use the drum. We'll make a blood soup with berries to eat afterwards. That is what the Crow woman did. She sang first, accompanied by the rattles. The women will sing first, and then the men will drum and sing. Then everyone will rise and dance. Everyone will make all the noise possible, so much as to nearly tear the lodge down." At the conclusion of the ritual, the buffalo drive woman said: "I will give these two buffalo stones to the lodge for use in the ceremony. I will give my rattles at the same time."

With this wonderful tipi, the owner of the lodge was told that all the crows were his children and that some of them were his horses. Later stray horses were secured by the Piikanis from a people who had been stricken by the smallpox. Fox Head, a Buffalo-chip Band Chief, said that horses were so fond of the crow lodge that the bottom was made ragged by their chewing; and the owners of this lodge were destined to acquire many horses. While according to Yellow Kidney, the lodge was originally owned by the Buffalo-chip band, it was later shared with the Grease-melters and it then passed back and forth between these bands.<sup>63</sup>

McClintock provides a description of "the Crow Tipi explaining that it exhibits a ring of crows around the upper part of the lodge with a bison skull at the back (West) door."<sup>64</sup> Associated with the ecology of place, the lodge reveals sacred power; in this case, the spirit power is manifest in the relation between the bison who enter the spirit door of the West and the crow who circle in the sky above. Reflecting upon the power of the crow or raven, Brings-down-the-Sun explained:

The Raven is very wise. He knows more than any of the birds. We have found that he always tells the truth, so we watch his actions very closely, that we may be able to look into the future. If we see a raven circling high in the air over camp, we know that a messenger will soon come from a distance bearing news. *In former days, when we were on a buffalo hunt and found no game, if we saw ravens playing together on a ridge, we took our course in that direction, knowing we should soon secure meat. If we were on a war*

expedition, and saw ravens light in the trail ahead of us and two of them had their heads close together, as if whispering, we hurried to get into ambush, because the ravens knew an enemy was approaching and were giving us warning [emphasis added].<sup>65</sup>

Acknowledging the bird's relationship with the buffalo hunt, crow scavenging of bison carcasses is an expectable phenomenon associated with buffalo jumps. The lodge captures this power and is a manifestation of the bounty produced from the hunt; in the context of place, the crow lodge is "the meat lodge" or place where meat is obtained and thus it is a manifestation of the buffalo jump along the Oldman River — Head-Smashed-In.<sup>66</sup>

#### IV. *N'api's Romance*

According to Brings-down-the-Sun, "on Crow Lodge River, just across from our present camp, a lone pine tree once stood. It was a land-mark for people travelling north and south along the Old North Trail, because it stood upon the plain and could be seen from a long distance."<sup>67</sup> Acknowledging this lone pine as the marker of the Old North Trail, McClintock also recognized it as the metamorphosed Old Man who according to Brings-down-the-Sun "is said to have started our living together in families"<sup>68</sup> which is the account of *N'api's* romance.

*In the long-ago, when N'api created the world, he separated the men and the women into two camps; the women were living along Crow Lodge or Oldman River and the men lived in the mountains above them.*<sup>69</sup> *Realizing the error of this separation, N'api spoke to the men: "You shall no longer live by yourselves. Come! We will go up to the camp of the women, and each of us get one of them."*

*All the men were most willing to meet the women, so they dressed in their best garments, particularly N'api who was the finest looking of all the men. At the camp of the women, the men all stood in a row because the women had the right of choice. Although she was poorly dressed and blood stained from butchering buffalo, the Chief of the women had first choice. She walked up and down the line of men and finally she returned to N'api taking his hand. N'api noticed many fine looking, well dressed women waiting their opportunity to select a mate, so intrigued by the attractive women, he rejected her. Angered by his rejection, the Chief Woman returned to her camp and cautioned all the women against selecting N'api and she then cleaned herself and dressed in her finery. Returning to the hill where the men stood, the Chief Woman appeared transformed and was very fine looking. Indeed, N'api thought her the best looking of all women and kept stepping in front of her so that he*

might be chosen. Ignoring N'api, the Chief Women chose another man for her mate and all the other women followed her advice and left him, unselected at the conclusion of the mating.

N'api became very angry that he was not chosen by a woman; and because of his behavior, the Chief Woman turned N'api into a pine tree which stands alone at the edge of the mountains where the plains begin. It is said that Piikani romance endures today because of the beauty where this event took place.

Brings-down-the-Sun noted that N'api's romance occurred "a short distance up the river" in a "place where a large band of women once camped." He further identified this place as the "Women's Piskun" where "they supported themselves by running buffalo and antelope over their piskun."<sup>70</sup> Attempting to locate this lone pine, Brian Reeves places it downstream from the Peigan Reserve before Ft. Macleod.<sup>71</sup>

While the lone pine may not be within the impoundment area, it will likely be affected by a reduced level of sub-irrigation and a concomitant lower water table. Consequently, the metamorphosed form of the Pii'kani Creator, and thus his works of bringing men and women together, are threatened by the water storage project. In a context of similar concern, Brings-down-the-Sun commented:

I am continually advising my people not to cut down the trees along the river, but to haul their wood from the forests on the mountains. They have followed my advice and we still have our big leaf trees (cottonwoods). The long leaved trees are the spear-leaf (Balsam-Poplar). We also have round-leaf trees (Quaking-Aps) and brush-sticks (Willows). We always speak of large trees as "The Old Time Trees" and the small ones as "Young People's Trees."<sup>72</sup>

This concern for the existing vegetation continues to be a central argument among the Pii'kanis when opposing the water storage project.<sup>73</sup>

## V. The Buffalo Marriage

The Head-Smashed-In buffalo jump may also be the site where the Peigan *I-kun-Uh'-Kah-Tsi* or all comrades society emerged; a narrative closely associated with a *pis'kun* or buffalo jump has been recorded by George Bird Grinnell.

*In the long ago, the people were camped along the river below a great pis'kun. The buffalo congregated above the jump but would not run over the edge. Wanting for food, the people were hungry and beginning to starve.*

*Early one morning, a young woman going for water noticed a herd*



of buffalo feeding on the prairie along the cliff above the pis'kun. "Oh!" she cried out, "if you will only jump off the pis'kun, I will marry one of you." While her plea was little more than a jest, she marvelled in great wonder and awe while the buffalo came jumping, tumbling, and falling over the cliff.

Frightening the young woman, a big bull leaped clear of the pis'kun walls and approached her. "Come," he said, taking hold of her arm. "No, no!" she replied pulling back. "But you said if the buffalo would jump over, you would marry one; see, the pis'kun is filled." With these words, he led her up over the bluff onto the prairie.

Following the killing and butchering of the fallen buffalo, the people missed the young woman. Fearing for her because she was nowhere to be found, her relations were very sad. Taking bow and quiver, her father declared, "I will go and find her."

Travelling over the prairie, he came upon a wallow where he could see a buffalo herd in the distance. Tired, he was sitting at the wallow thinking what he should do when a magpie came near him. "Ha! Ma-me-at-si-kim-i," the man spoke out, "you are a beautiful bird; help me. Look everywhere as you travel about, and if you see my daughter, tell her, 'Your father waits by the wallow.'" Flying over the buffalo herd, the magpie discovered the young woman and lit on the ground near her. Turning his head this way and that way, the bird approached the young woman telling her, "Your father waits by the wallow." "Sh-h-h! sh-h-h!" replied the girl, whispering with fear for her bull husband who was sleeping nearby. "Don't speak so loud. Go back and tell him to wait."

"Your daughter is over there with the buffalo. She says 'wait!'" said the magpie, when he had returned to the man.

By and by the bull awoke, and taking a horn from his head, he gave it to his wife saying, "Go and get me some water." With gladness, the woman approached the wallow and speaking to her father she declared, "Oh, why did you come? You will surely be killed."

"I came to take my daughter home; come, let us hurry."

"No, no!" she replied; "not now. They would chase us and kill us. Wait till he sleeps again, and I will try to get away," then filling the horn she returned to her bull husband.

Swallowing the water, the bull declared. "Ha! a person is close by here." With her heart fluttering, the woman replied, "No one."

After drinking more water, the bull stood up and bellowed a fearful sound, "Bu-u-u! m-m-ah-oo!" Together the other bulls rose, shaking their short tails and rolling their great heads, they bellowed back. With this declaration, they pawed the earth and rushed to the wallow where they trampled the man to death. So effective were their great hoofs that not

even a small piece of his body could be seen.

With the death of her father, the woman cried, "Oh! ah! Ni-nah-ah! Oh! ah! Ni-nah-ah!" (My father! My father!) "Ah!" said her bull husband, "you mourn for your father. You see now how it is with us. We have seen our mothers, fathers, many of our relations, hurled over the rocky walls, and killed for food by your people. But I will pity you. I will give you one chance. If you can bring your father to life, you and he can go back to your people."

With this chance, the woman turned to the magpie: "Pity me. Help me now; go and seek in the trampled mud; try and find a little piece of my father's body, and bring it to me."

Flying to the place, the magpie searched every hole and tore up the mud with his sharp beak. At last, finding something white, he pulled a joint of the man's backbone from the mud and returned it to the woman.

Covering the bone with a bison robe, the woman sang. After the first song, her father's body lay dead beneath the robe. Once more she sang and this time when she removed the robe, her father stood up living once again. The buffalo were astonished, but the magpie was glad flying around and making a great noise.

"We have seen strange things this day," said her bull husband. "He whom we trampled to death, even into small pieces, is alive again. The people's medicine is very strong. Now, before you go, we will teach you our dance and our song. You must not forget them." At the conclusion of the dance, the bull said: "Go now to your home, and do not forget what you have seen. Teach it to the people. The medicine shall be a bull's head and a robe. All the persons who are to be 'Bulls' shall wear them when they dance."

With great joy, the people welcomed the return of the man and his daughter. A council of chiefs was called and informed of all that happened; they then selected young men to learn the dance and song of the bulls. Thus marks the origin of the I-kun-uh'-kah-tsi.<sup>74</sup>

In the "dog days" before the coming the horse, the Pii'kani secured bison meat by driving small herds of buffalo over cliffs, primarily during the fall and occasionally during the spring.<sup>75</sup> Reflected in their mythologies and religious ceremonials, the bison was the central animal in sustaining the Pii'kani way of life. Indeed, as seen in this narrative, the bison contributed to their individual and social structures. Associated with the piskun or buffalo jump, the foregoing narrative affirms Pii'kani ritual respect accorded the nature, specifically the bison, and it illustrates their ceremonial reciprocity in affirming revivification of the species.

## VI. The Origin of the Beaver Medicine

Among the oldest ritual traditions of the Pii'kani, there is the beaver medicine bundle.<sup>76</sup> The Beaver Medicine bundle tradition is richly associated with the Oldman River.

*"In those days there were two orphan brothers. The younger, named Akaiyan (Old Robe), lived with his brother Nopatsis, who was married to a woman with an evil heart. This woman disliked Akaiyan and continually urged her husband to cast him off. One day when Nopatsis came home, he found his wife with her clothes torn and her body lacerated. She explained that, during his absence, Akaiyan had treated her brutally. Nopatsis said nothing to his younger brother, but planned how he might be rid of him forever. It was midsummer, the time when the ducks and geese dropped their feathers. He proposed to Akaiyan that they should go together to an island in a large lake and said, 'At this time there will be many ducks and geese there, and we can gather the feathers they have dropped to be used for arrows.' When the brothers came to the lake they built a 'skatstan' (raft), binding together logs with buffalo raw-hide and then floated on it to an island, far out in the lake. As they walked along the shores of this island looking for feathers, Akaiyan wandered off alone. He was returning with his arms full, when he beheld his brother out on the lake, going towards the shore of the mainland. He implored Nopatsis not to abandon him to perish on the lonely island. But his brother only called back, that he deserved no pity because of his brutal treatment of his sister-in-law. Akaiyan besought him to return, solemnly declaring before the Sun that he had not injured her. But Nopatsis replied heartlessly, 'You can live alone on the island all winter. In the spring, when the ice melts in the lake, I will return to gather your bones.' Akaiyan sat down and wept. He thought his time had come to die. Then he called upon the animals and the under-water spirits for assistance. He also prayed to the Sun, Moon and Stars, saying,*

*'Haiyu! Mistapixit Mekape Natosichpi!'*

*'Behold, O Sun! I cast away whatever of bad I have done!'*

*'Kokumekis! Kotatosix Kummokt Spummokit!'*

*'O Moon! O Stars! Pity me! Give me strength!'*

*"After this prayer Akaiyan felt relieved and strengthened. He walked around the island and found a few branches, with which he made a shelter. He also gathered many loose feathers, piling them up and making a bed that fitted his body so well that he slept warmly on the coldest nights. He killed many ducks and geese before their time for leaving the island to fly south, shooting the wild ones with his arrows and striking the tame ones upon the head with long sticks. He kept some for his winter food, but he skinned others and made a warm robe for himself by*

*binding the skins together with alder bark.*

*“One day, when he discovered a beaver lodge, he lay for a long time watching it and weeping to himself, because he had been abandoned. Finally, a little beaver came from the lodge, and said to him, ‘My father wants you to come into his lodge.’ Akaiyan followed the little beaver into the lodge, where he saw a big beaver with his wife and family seated around him. This beaver was white from the snows of many winters, and so large that Akaiyan knew he must be the chief of all the beavers. The Beaver Chief bade him be seated, and asked him why he was living alone on the island. Akaiyan told him how cruelly and unjustly he had been treated and left alone to die. The Beaver Chief pitied Akaiyan and counselled with him, saying, ‘My son, the time will soon come when we will close up our lodge for the winter. The lake will freeze over and we cannot come out again for seven moons, until the warm winds of spring will break up the ice. Remain in our lodge while the snows are deep. We will teach you many wonderful things and, when you return again, you can take knowledge with you, that will be of great value to your people.’ The beavers were so hospitable, Akaiyan decided to remain with them. He took with him into the beaver lodge many ducks and geese for food and his bird-skin robe to keep him warm. They closed their lodge before it became cold, leaving a hole for air at the top. During the coldest days the beavers kept Akaiyan warm by lying close to him and placing their tails across his body. He made friends with all of them, but he liked the youngest and smallest beaver best of all. He was the cleverest as well as the favourite child of the Beaver Chief. Akaiyan learned their habits and manner of living. They taught him the names of the herbs and roots, which we still use for the curing of the people. They showed him also the different paints, and explained their use, saying, ‘If you should use these, they will bring to your people good luck and will ward off sickness and death.’ They gave him the seeds of the tobacco (origin of tobacco), and taught him how they should be planted with songs and prayers. They made scratches with their claws on the smooth walls of the lodge to mark the days, and when the days completed a moon they marked the moons with sticks. He witnesses many dances belonging to their medicines, and listened carefully to the songs and prayers. The Beaver Chief and his wife (Wise Old Woman) taught him the prayers and songs of their medicine and the dances that belonged to them, and said, ‘Whenever any of your people are sick, or dying, if you will give this ceremonial, they will be restored to health.’ He noticed that the beavers never ate during ceremonial, and that they beat time for the dances with their tails, always stopping when they heard any suspicious noise, just as they do when they are at work. They told him that they counted seven*

moons from the time when the leaves fall before they prepared to open their lodge in the spring. When they heard the booming of the ice breaking in the lake, they knew it would soon be time to leave their winter home.

"Little Beaver told Akaiyan that, before he parted with them, his father, the Beaver Chief, would offer him a present and would allow him to choose anything within the lodge. Little Beaver also advised him, saying, 'When my father asks you for your choice, say that you will take your little brother. He will not be willing to part with me, for he prizes me above everything he owns. He will ask you four times to choose something else, but take me with you, for I will have more power to help you than any of the others.'

"The ducks and geese were flying north, when the beavers finally opened their lodge for the summer, and the Beaver Chief said to Akaiyan, 'You will soon leave us now, because it is time for your older brother to return. But, before you start, I will allow you to choose anything in my lodge to take away with you.' The Akaiyan, remembering the advice of Little Beaver, asked for his youngest child. The Beaver Chief made many excuses and endeavoured to persuade him to gift. After the fourth trial, the Beaver Chief said, 'My son, you show your wisdom in selecting your little brother to go with you. I am sorry to part with him, because he is the best worker and the wisest of my children, but, because of my promise, I now give him to you.'

"The Beaver Chief also told Akaiyan that, when he returned to his people, he should make a sacred Bundle similar to the one he saw them using in their ceremonial. He also taught him the songs and prayers and dances that belonged to the Bundle and informed him that, if any of the people were sick, or dying and a relative would make a vow to the Beaver Medicine, the sick would be restored to health.

"One evening, when the Beaver Chief returned from his cutting, he said to Akaiyan, 'My son, remain in hiding and do not show yourself. Today, when I was among the trees on the main shore, I saw your brother's camp.' The next day Akaiyan, watching from the beaver lodge, saw Nopatsis coming to the island on the raft. He saw him land and walk along the shore hunting for his bones. Then Akaiyan ran, with Little Beaver under his arm and took possession of the raft. He was far out in the big lake before Nopatsis saw him. He at once realised that his younger brother had secured power superior to his own and had become a great medicine man.

"Akaiyan now returned with Little Beaver to the tribal camp. He went at once to the Head Chief's lodge and told his story. All the people received him with the greatest honour, when they heard of the wisdom

and power that had been given him by the Beavers. Akaiyan gathered together a Beaver Bundle as the Beaver Chief had directed. He and Little Beaver had remained all winter in the camp, teaching the people the songs, prayers and dances given him by the Beavers. Akaiyan gathered together a Beaver Bundle as the Beaver Chief had directed. He and Little Beaver had remained all winter in the camp, teaching the people the songs, prayers and dances given him by the beavers. When Spring came, Akaiyan invited all the animals to add their power to the Beaver Medicine. Many birds and animals of the prairies and mountains came, offering their skins and taught him their songs, prayers and dances to accompany their skins, just as the beavers had done. The Elk and his wife each contributed a song and dance, also the Moose and his wife. The Woodpecker gave three songs with his dance. The Frog alone of all the animals could neither dance nor sing, and it is for this reason he is not represented in the Beaver Bundle. The Turtle could not dance and had no song, but is represented in the Bundle, because he was wise and borrowed one from the Lizard, who owned two songs.

*"In the following spring Akaiyan returned to the island with Little Beaver to visit the beaver lodge. He saw his brother's bones on the shore and knew the beavers had not helped him. The Beaver Chief welcomed Akaiyan warmly and when he gave back Little Beaver to his father, the old Chief was so grateful that he presented him with a sacred pipe, teaching him also the songs, prayers and dances that belonged to it. When Akaiyan returned again to the Indian camp he added this pipe to the Beaver Bundle. Every spring Akaiyan went to visit his friends, the beavers, and each time the Beaver Chief gave him something to add to the Beaver Bundle, until it reached the size it has to-day. Akaiyan continued to lead the Beaver ceremonial as long as he lived and was known as a great medicine man. When he died, the ceremonial was continued by his son, and has been handed down ever since."*<sup>77</sup>

The power of the beaver medicine continued to sustain the Pii'kani in their *real Old Man Country* as they defended it from other tribes, Josephine Crowshoe related an account of a contest between the Pii'kani and the Snake or Shoshone. Somewhere in the long-ago, below the present-day Peigan Reserve and the Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump at another piskun, it is said that the Pii'kani encountered the Snakes. In a stand-off across the river, it was decided that two champions, one from each tribe, should meet in the river. As the warriors struggled in the water, the Pii'kani leader, clutching a beaver-knawed stick, called upon the beaver medicine and with its power slew the Snake leader. Afterwards the Shoshone people withdrew and the Pii'kani remained fast in their *Real Old Man Country*.<sup>78</sup>

These narratives confirm a rich and complex metaphysic of nature, which is grounded in respect for both the Ultimate Power and the manifest Creation; moreover, the "natural forms or forces express most directly reflect the Ultimate Power, or essence, of the Great Spirit" which is knowable through integration with "the gods or spirits or powers of creation."<sup>79</sup> Elements of this integration include: first, purification of body, soul, and spirit, second, spiritual expansion, in realizing a relationship to all that is, and third, identity or realization of unity in a state of oneness with the totality.<sup>80</sup> Affirming this metaphysic of nature and spiritual praxis, the myths reflect a "total field imagery,"<sup>81</sup> this perspective stands in stark contrast with the isolation and reductionism of the Western ethos. It, furthermore, reflects the conflict between ecology and the scientific method. Known as the "subversive science," ecology is the study of interrelationships, conversely science seeks to isolate and reduce the variables to determine a sole causal effect. By simile, Native traditional values are born of association and interrelationship seeking reciprocity with the nature, while the Western ethos values the artificial perfection of nature in serving human instrumental desires. The Pii'kani myths examined here are "keepers" of cultural and religious values as they represent a world view distinctly different from the technologically instrumental valuation of nature characteristic of Western culture.

This Native metaphysic of nature is an ontology of "power" and in the sense of "potency", it is manifest in the process of metamorphosis, reciprocity, and respect. *N'api*, for example, is a being of power, and as mythic Creator, he appears as an anthropomorphised person, but he is also capable of metamorphosis and reciprocity. His identification with the Oldman River in each of the narratives establishes a sense of reciprocity between the Pii'kanis and Creator's River. This sense of reciprocity commits one to an extended sense of community and sets forth the basis for respect in "right action." In these narratives, respect is therefore a central theme of the good life.

This commitment to right action via reciprocal respect contributes to a concept of the "Good" which provides the foundation for a traditional moral theory. As the manifest site for the origin of the good, the Oldman River is established as a sacred landscape. It is, moreover, identified as the place from which the good is derived. Furthermore, in the traditional naming of a thing, the name imparts the essence or power of its meaning upon that which is named; consequently, Oldman River is literally the Creator's River or River of Creation. Since the essential meaning given to the river is of the most holy character, and it is believed the myths are living with the name, we can, therefore, be assured that the Oldman River is sacred. In their respect for the mythic Creator's River,

which is *N'api's* River, the Pii'kanis manifest, accordingly, an environmental ethic in their traditional religious praxis.

Considering the traditional Pii'kani valuation of the Oldman River, we must first see it in a total field or wholistic imagery consistent with an ecological mandate. In the second case, we must consider the Pii'kani wisdom of place affirmed in these narratives and associated with the Oldman River. In doing so, we should reach a reasoned sense of valuation that is intrinsic among Pii'kani tradition. To begin with, there are four broad categorical value themes that the narratives impart. These include, first, sacred place association in revealing the power of place that originates these concomitant values. In revealing transformative interrelationships of power, place values are, furthermore, metaphysical. Knowledge as an epistemological truth born of place is a second categorical value imparted in these stories. Composing the third value rubric, there are mores and morals generated in these narratives. As a measure of respect, the fourth categorical value is ritual reciprocity and revivification together with a conservation ethic.

In the first instance, the Oldman River region is the ancestral home of the Pii'kani and known to them as the *Real Old Man Country*. *N'api*, the Creator, is associated with the river throughout its basin. His home is in the mountains at the head of the Oldman River. His gambling place where he played the hoop-and-pole game, and his bowling green lies near Maycroft Crossing directly within the affected area of the reservoir. It is, further, the home of several piskuns or buffalo jumps that traditionally sustained the ancestral Pii'kani way of life. And we have seen that it is the place where countless Pii'kani prayers were referent in stone pile offerings. In these contexts, the Oldman River is a sacred ancestral home and the Pii'kani regard for it manifests a culturally grounded Aboriginal right that was encoded in treaty. The Pii'kani, moreover, agreed to treaty with the Canadians as sovereign to sovereign in seeking to preserve their way of life. Their traditional culture and its preservation is central to the Aboriginal rights secured in treaty and, as a result, there remains a cultural property burden upon the successive occupants of the *Real Old Man Country*. This cultural property burden must include legal respect for the traditional Pii'kani sense of place. An Aboriginal right respecting the power of place was never surrendered by the Pii'kani and their sovereignty by treaty accords a level of respect for place consistent with the traditional culture. When he declared that they would cease to exist as a people should they fail to retain their sacred geography, Joe Crowshoe, Jr. was effectively asserting this Aboriginal right and its cultural burden retained via treaty in regulation of occupation and use of the land. Any usurpation of these Aboriginal rights demands ethical con-



sideration and right action to protect this sacred geography.

Additional to the power of place valuation, we must acknowledge metaphysical considerations. N'api, the Creator, appears as a transformative being capable of metamorphosis. In this sense, he inhabits all aspects of place—mineral, flora, and fauna. In doing so, he reminds us that the energies of nature are fluid and dynamic existing in all things and subject to an all encompassing respect. A foundation for the animistic and animatistic understanding, this transformative sense of being is an ontological imperative demanding ritual reciprocity and moral consideration.

Places that generate epistemological truth via dream and vision are particularly potent when manifesting a sacred geography. In for example, the vision of the Crow Lodge, commemorated in a sacred tipi and ritual, there is a direct moral relationship manifest with the natural place. Metaphorically in the Crow Lodge, the Pii'kani were given the insight of plenty, supplying their needs through buffalo piskuns. While the sacred tipi is moveable and subject to relocation as the tribe wandered the *Real Old Man Country*, it is a symbolic referent to the place of its visionary origin. As such, it references the sacred power of that place in its ecological integrity. Several such sacred sites are manifest within these narratives including the Crow Lodge, lone pine, bowling green, piskuns, and others all interrelated amid the Oldman basin forming a composite sacred geography that is the *Real Old Man Country*.

The epistemological truths of the narratives further manifest knowledge born of place and nature. This knowledge includes respect, etiquette, medicine, calendar and industry. Reciprocal respect is apparent when the Crows accept the hunter's gift of meat and teach him the means to honor the bounty produced in the hunt. It is, likewise, apparent in the teachings of the Beavers to Akaiyan. In turn the Beavers teach him ceremonial etiquette and paint, herbal knowledge, calenderical observations, and give him the example of industry. As a mark of this gift from the Beavers, the Pii'kani will never burn a stick of wood that has been chewed on by a beaver. When, furthermore, a Beaver Medicine song is concluded, it is said, "the beaver tries hard."<sup>82</sup> implying that we too should do our best.

As noted, mores and morals constitute the third values rubric derived from these narratives. In fact, these stories convey essential concerns for sexual mores, which teach right behavior to young people. The affair of N'api and his sister is clearly a shameful matter that is not socially acceptable among the Pii'kani society. Disrespect for women, such as that given by N'api to the Chief Woman is, furthermore, a socially inappropriate behavior. From the story of N'api's romance, we also

learn that in Pii'kani social order, women have the right of choice and they cannot be compelled to marry against their wishes. To disregard these mores, such as N'api does, may result in a similar fate where a man ends up old and alone. Hence, respect for women is a paramount moral teaching in these narratives.

A second theme of Pii'kani social morality is evident in the Beaver Medicine narrative conveying a brother care ethic. The narrative teaches that we must not lose sight of our kinship obligations through human frailty in jealousy or other socially inappropriate behavior. Social order and responsibilities are taught through the Buffalo as the Pii'kani form traditional societies, such as the all comrades society. When, furthermore, Akaiyan accepts the Little Beaver as his brother, he assumes a moral bond with the Beaver people manifesting a kinship brother care extending to these nature persons.

In the context of these moral obligations, the Oldman River serves to remind and secure in its presence right behavior and the good life. In a study of the western Apache, Keith Basso has identified this practice of extending moral values to place as a means of conveying the good. In this context, places with their moral associations "stalk" the people and insure right behavior. Reflecting upon this ethical system, Basso concludes that "Wisdom sits in place,"<sup>83</sup> thereby affirming a moral geography, such as evidenced among the Pii'kani.

In the fourth and final value context, ritual associations with place affirm sacred geography. The narratives reviewed here have contributed several rituals to the Pii'kani tradition. These rituals, including the Crow Lodge, Bison rites, Beaver Medicine and tobacco planting, have a direct correspondence with an ecology of place. This correspondence with nature includes the reciprocal obligations associated with sustaining life including revivification. Indeed, it is in the revivification rituals directed to restoring the life of the bison and other nature persons that we most explicitly observe a Pii'kani environmental ethic. As life preys upon life, we are obligated to show respect and take reciprocal action to revivify those lives taken. Derived from a sense of place and an ecological interrelationship, this ritual respect is accorded the *Real Old Man Country* and all the persons—mineral, flora, and fauna—living therein, and it is this valuation that is central to the traditional Pii'kani religion associated with the Oldman River.

In consequence, our contemporary moral obligations to these concerns must be carefully derived and, in this regard, we are well served to recall the advice of that most prominent Western sage, Plato.<sup>84</sup> Cautioning the planners of cities, Plato declared that particular locations possess ecological and spiritual qualities which markedly affect human char-

acter development.<sup>85</sup> This advice echoes through time with an essential wisdom for contemporary land use planning and it further affirms a Western basis for environmental ethics which might be applied to such controversies involving Natives and non-Natives.

The wisdom of Plato's remarks reflect an aesthetic viewing of nature. In his reckoning with the ecological and spiritual powers of place, he is, moreover, affirming an aesthetic participation. Originally aesthetics meant perceiving the external world through the senses, thus when conjoined with respect for the powers of place, it obtains a sensuous perception characterized by moral attentiveness to the powers of place. Plato therefore acknowledges an inherent worth in the natural object, which may translate into intrinsic value, as for example in the philosophy of G. E. Moore where aesthetic contemplation of a natural object is defined to be a good in itself because of the participatory relationship to the whole.<sup>86</sup> Since the Oldman River is acknowledged to be the catalyst for creation—the Creator's River—it is confirmed as a place of intrinsic value contributing to the good of the whole, particularly in its place within the Pii'kani religious tradition. As such, it commands our respect. Respect for this sacred river has been manifest from time immemorial during the Pii'kanis's occupation of this region. The river is, therefore, an aesthetic indicator of ecological quality and its demise is manifest in the alteration and development of the natural landscape, forces and properties.

Recalling Plato's charge, non-Natives have much to learn from Natives in confirming the ecological and spiritual powers of place. The Oldman River project has dismissed this essential wisdom and imposed environmental degradation upon the Aboriginal occupants of this land as a fate. We cannot, however, escape our obligations to nature, to the Creator's River, to Native religious liberty and Aboriginal right. Any such attempt to evade these obligations, compromises our moral being as a people and it denies our claim to an ethical society. And as Plato advised, "A sagacious legislator will give these facts all consideration a man can, and do his best to adapt his legislation to them."<sup>87</sup>

While I have not addressed the ecological impact of the dam as constructed, this essay has established the moral regard that the Pii'kani Natives have for their Creator's river. There remains, however, the damage done to the sacred river and to Pii'kani tradition as a result of the dam-project. Glenn has asked, "Does it Matter?" and concluded that the affair has been a shameful abuse of nature and the Pii'kani people. While such acts of environmental degradation are largely irreversible, the Pii'kani are left with a flawed landscape inadequate to sustain their traditional religion. Given that there is no replacement of such a loss, care should be given to the remainder of the Oldman River basin with

significant set-asides of large geographical areas along the tributary rivers devoted to Pii'kani tradition. Granting the Pii'kani these religious reserves that can be shared with the public in a respectful manner would seem to be a reasonable mitigation and one that should be mandated by the governments involved.

As considered, herein, we have become aware of a non-anthropocentric valuation of nature and a moral regard for sacred geography and the natural environment. That the Pii'kani Lonefighters fought the "battle" for their sacred river and lost is deeply moving, yet in their moral resolution there resides a sincere respect for that which is sacred. In this case it is a profound regard for Nature such as my old Pii'kani Godfather, Joe Crowshoe, Sr. once told a group of my students "Out there, the Nature, the landscape will teach you who you are."<sup>88</sup> The power of this wisdom rests in the ecological integrity of the land and ironically the old Pii'kani Elder's wisdom mirrors the Greek Sage Plato's cautionary remarks. Although the Pii'kanis lost this "battle" their resolute adherence to their traditions is a lesson that ought not be forgotten.

#### Notes

1. See Andrew Nikiforuk and Ed Struzik, "Death of a Valley: Next Year, Alberta's Oldman River will just stop rolling along," *Harrowsmith*, March/April 1989, v. 13(6): 35-45. Disclosing the political intrigue haunting the project, the authors pointed out violations of regulatory procedures, political inconsistency and government propaganda designed to sponsor "water socialism" and a grandiose water-diversion scheme. In addition, the authors acknowledged the unsatisfactory manner with which the provincial government had addressed the dam's safety, as well as historical, cultural, and environmental concerns. Tom Philp, "Mega-projects offer to redirect water to nation's arid parts," *The Morning News Tribune*, Tacoma, WA, March 16, 1991: A-6 reported that plans to divert water from the north to California could create "a 51-dam, Yukon-to-Mexico hydroelectric extravaganza that essentially would turn the Canadian Rockies into a 500-mile spigot." Also helpful in affirming the failed consideration of historical, cultural, and environmental concerns, see Brian O. K. Reeves, "The Oldman River Dam and Alberta's Heritage: Conservation or Desecration?" in Stewart B. Rood and Frank J. Jankunis, editors, *Economic, Environmental and Social Aspects of the Oldman River Dam Project*, University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, 1988 who pointed out that the political decisions were reached prior to the appropriate assessments, and that the specific resource and

cumulative impact studies were totally neglected.

2. Jack Glenn, *Once Upon An Oldman: Special Interest Politics and the Oldman River Dam*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999: 271-272. Glenn's assessment of the project and process by which the dam was constructed is thorough and complete revealing the special interests and governmental frauds involved.
3. Glenn, *Oldman*, 4.
4. Glenn, *Oldman*, 4.
5. Reeves, "The Oldman River Dam," 82-87 has acknowledged the cultural-archaeological resources at stake pending the project's completion. These are of provincial, national, and international significance; indeed, Professor Reeves declares: "*The Oldman River Dam will have the greatest negative impact on Alberta's historical resources and related riverine ecosystems of any project this scale proposed, planned or constructed in the history of this province [Alberta]*" {his emphasis}. Writers NikiForuk and Struzik, "Death of a Valley," 43-44 acknowledge the profound consequences which the dam imposes upon contemporary Peigans; moreover, Peigan traditionalists feel that the project desecrates their place of origin, their ancestral burial and traditional ceremonial grounds and their natural pharmacopoeia. These concerns coalesce in a serious and eminent threat upon their way of life and concomitant religious freedom. Glenn, *Oldman*, 151-154 has further considered Reeves assessment together with conclusions of Jack Ives, director of the Archaeological Survey of Alberta who rejected Reeves recommendations. Reeves, a professor of archaeology at the University of Calgary, had advanced two critical points. First, he suggested that archaeological evidence must be considered "in association" with other finds in a regional context examining the Plains bison-hunting cultural complex. According to Reeves, two sites, the Three Rivers area and the Head-Smashed-Buffalo Jump, were related. Ives rejected this position arguing that there was no tangible evidence between the two sites, yet he, nonetheless, appeared to use the notion of association between sites when he concluded "that there may be numerous other sites in the area with a connection to Head-Smashed-In that would render Three Rivers of lesser importance than assessed by Reeves." The rules of Ives logic are thus inconsistent and tortured. Addressing the conservation versus excavation controversy, Reeves second point called for site protection. In a final assessment of these arguments, Glenn states, "There was no indication that Alberta Culture or Alberta Environment paid the least attention to the Peigan's claim to an interest in archaeological resources." In this manner, he

- declares that Alberta Culture viewed Native interests in the lowest and narrowest manner possible.
6. Glenn, *Oldman*, 8.
  7. Personal Experience, Peigan Indian Reserve, Alberta, 1988. Glenn, *Oldman*, 190 affirm that Joe and Josephine Crowshoe are acknowledged as the traditional religious leaders of the Aputosi Piikani people since the 1930s. See also Reg Crowshoe and Sybille Manneschmidt, *Akak'stiman: A Blackfoot Framework for Decision Making and Meditation Processes*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2002: 2.
  8. Glenn, *Oldman*, 7.
  9. Personal Knowledge, Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Montana, 1989. While living on the reservation, I was told that Milton-Born-With-A-Tooth consulted with Floyd Heavy Runner, Brave Dogs Society leader, at Heart Butte, Montana concerning this matter in seeking advice and authority to use traditional Pii'kani means to oppose the dam-project. The "Lonefighters" were accordingly sanctioned under the traditional Pii'kani law.
  10. Evelyn Crowshoe Kelman, Personal Communications, Brocket, Alberta, 1990.
  11. Evelyn Crowshoe Kelman, Personal Communications, Brocket, Alberta, 1990. Accounts of the "Lonefighters" direct action campaign may be found in the following sources: "Injunction halts bid to divert river," *The Globe and Mail*, Aug. 31, 1990; "Lonefighters might defy Oldman Injunction," *The Edmonton Journal*, Aug. 31, 1990; "Militant Peigans alter flow of Oldman," *The Edmonton Journal*, Aug. 31, 1990; and Jim Morris, "Police, fear of bloodshed won't stop Peigans: Lonefighters wait for police action," *The Edmonton Journal*, Sept. 1, 1990: A-5 - A-6. See also Glenn, *Oldman*, 76-86 who supplies a detailed description of these events.
  12. Acknowledging past governmental (British-Canadian and American) attempts to terminate Native religious practices, the charge of imperialism is not overstated. See, for example, Walter McClintock, *The Old North Trail: Life, Legends and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, (o.p. 1910) 1968: 384-385 wherein Peigan spiritual leader, Brings-down-the-Sun, earnestly addressed McClintock concerning this matter: "The white race have always cheated and deceived us. They have deprived us of our country. Now they are trying to take away our religion, by putting a stop to the ceremonial sacred to the Sun. Our religion was given to us by the Sun and Moon, and we will never give it up, while the Sun and Moon last. The white people have given us no good reason why

they wish to take away our religion. We do not fight, nor drink whisky at our ceremonials, and there is nothing harmful that can come from them. We have been struggling to keep up our religion, in order that our people may be happy, and that they may lead better lives. When I began preparations for a Sun ceremonial this spring, in accordance with the vow, made by one of our women for the healing of her sick son, the agent shut off our rations. He would not allow my family to receive the food, upon which we are dependent. Because of these things my heart has become bitter, and I have made a vow, that I will have nothing more to do with the white race." Affirming the claim of imperialism, this tragic legacy of religious persecution is also acknowledged by the writer, Andy Russell, *The Life of a River*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1987: 97 who properly recognizes the essential requirement of an untrammelled landscape for Pii'kani religious ceremonies.

13. Canada, Oldman River Dam Environmental Assessment Panel. *Additional Information Requirements*. Vancouver: Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office, 1991: 20, quoted in Glenn, *Oldman*, 107.
14. Glenn, *Oldman*, 190-191.
15. Joseph Epes Brown with Emily Cousins, *Teaching Spirits: Understanding Native American Religious Traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001: 84.
16. Christopher Vecsey, "Environmental Religions," in *American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in Native American History*, edited by Christopher Vecsey and Robert W. Venables. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, 1980:1-37.
17. Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, Betty Sue Flowers, editor, Doubleday, New York, 1988: 23-24.
18. Åke Hultkrantz, *Belief and Worship in Native North America*, edited by Christopher Vecsey, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY, 1981:117-135, in "Feelings for Nature among North American Indians," Hultkrantz explains a cosmotheistic interpretation of nature as the perspective where "nature is sacred because it reveals, or symbolizes, the Great Mystery," *ibid*, 128; and \_\_\_\_\_, *The Religions of American Indians*, translated by Monica Setterwell, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1967, in translation 1970.
19. Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian*, Crossroad Press, New York, 1982: 37, 60, 70.
20. Joseph Campbell, *Transformations of Myth Through Time*, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, 1990: 96 the problem of symbols is the tendency of people to get lost in the symbol; this process of concretization is "one of the major deceptions in the Western han-

- dling of symbols." Accordingly when the God idea is recognized as a symbol, we observe the message of the spirit.
21. Campbell, *Power of Myth*, 31.
  22. Joe Crowshoe, Sr., personal communication, Brocket, Alberta, 1988.
  23. Clark Wissler and D. C. Duvall, "Mythology of the Blackfeet," American Museum of Natural History, *Anthropological Papers*, New York 1908, v. 2 (pt. 1):13 who point out that "the myths are, in a sense, prelude to the rituals; yet, when one asks for the reason or significance of a specific part of a ritual, he is referred at once to the myth. Campbell, *Power of Myth*, 82 states the universality of this point declaring: "A ritual is the enactment of a myth. By participating in a ritual, you are participating in a myth."
  24. Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy*, 84.
  25. Campbell, *Power of Myth*, 163.
  26. Hultkrantz, *Belief and Worship*, 3-19.
  27. Hultkrantz, *Belief and Worship*, 3-19; see also A. Irving Hallowell, "Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior, and World View," in *Contributions to Anthropology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, (o.p. 1960)1976: 364-365.
  28. Campbell, *Transformations of Myth*, 47 and \_\_\_\_\_, *Power of Myth*, 31.
  29. Campbell, *Power of Myth*, 126.
  30. Campbell, *Transformations of Myth*, 94.
  31. Campbell, *Power of Myth*, 22.
  32. See John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974.
  33. Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy*, 84-85; see also, Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1959: 68-113.
  34. Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy*, 86; also helpful in making this point, see Paula Gunn Allen, "The Mythopoeic Vision in Native American Literature: The Problem of Myth," *American Indian Cultural and Research Journal*, 1974, v. 1(1):3-13.
  35. Campbell, *Power of Myth*, 91.
  36. Campbell, *Power of Myth*, 92-92.
  37. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 95; "Sacred Space," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, editor, Macmillan-Free Press, New York, 1987, v. 12: 526.
  38. Campbell, *Transformations of Myth*, 101 concurs explaining that "myth has to do with relating the human being to his environment." Furthermore, he reaffirms that Native rituals "are not meant to control nature. They are meant to put you in accord with nature, nature will



yield its bounty. This is something that is coming up in our own consciousness now, in the ecology movement's recognizing that by violating the environment in which we are living we are really cutting off the energy and the source of our own living. It's through this sense of accord, living properly in relation to what has to be done in this world, that one fosters the vitality of the environment."

39. John MacLean, "Blackfoot Medical Priesthood," *Alberta Historical Review*, Spring 1961, v. 9(2): 3-4 who writes: "Animism holds a strong place in the Native belief, every tree and stone, the rapid of the river, and the lone mountain being the residence of a spirit."
40. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 167; Schultz (*Apikuni*), *Blackfeet and Buffalo*, 31-32 records a similar prayer which goes "Oh Sun! Oh, Above People! Pity us; help us.... Oh, Earth Mother! Pity us; help us"; this sacred ecology is even more profound in James Willard Schultz (*Apikuni*), *Blackfeet Tales of Glacier National Park*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1916: 52 wherein Mountain Chief when searching for two Buffalo horses, leads the people in the "song of all living things" which honors "the birds, the animals, the trees, the rocks — yes, even they have life." Further confirming this general point Ella E. Clark, *Indian Legends from the Northern Rockies*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1966: 270-271 explains the spiritual significance of "the Nature" remarking "By 'the Nature,' Mr. Creighton (a Blood Indian) referred to the supernatural, the spirit power." The context of Creighton's remarks involve a Dream vision in which he is told by the Dream Person: "You will make a Sun Lodge. Then the Nature will show you where you will find buffalo."
41. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 169-170 explains "The Sun, as the great centre of power and the upholder of all things, was the Blackfeet's supreme object of worship." Presenting the same point today, Percy Bulchild, *The Sun Came Down: The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1985: 325 explains "Our people of the Piegans call this Creator *Nah-doo-si*, Holy One, or as others call him, Sun." James Willard Schultz (*Apikuni*), *Bear Chief's War Shirt*, edited by Wilbur Ward Betts, Mountain Publishing Co., Missoula, 1983: 133-134 explains that when the Blackfeet offer Prayers and songs to the Sun they pray: "If the Sun were God, this was the time He would have blessed his children for their reverence for all of Nature," see also Wissler and Duvall, "Mythology of the Blackfeet," 10.
42. James Willard Schultz (*Apikuni*), *Why Gone Those Times?: Blackfoot Tales*, edited by Eugene Lee Silliman, The University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1974: 146.

43. George Bird Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales: The Story of a Prairie People*, The University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, (o.p. 1892) 1962: 256-257 where he contends that the idea of light as the Creator would be absurd to the Blackfeet of today: "The statement that Old Man was merely light personified would be beyond his comprehension, and if he did understand what was meant, he would laugh at it, and aver that N'api was a real man, a flesh and blood person like himself." The personification of light and N'api is not as incongruent as Grinnell implies here; moreover, N'api is an anthropomorphosed "non-human person," therefore sharing the attributes of light and the attributes of personhood. In consequence, this example is an ontological acknowledgement of the metaphysic of nature outlined earlier. Schultz (*Apikuni*), *Blackfeet Tales of Glacier*, 97 concurs with Grinnell declaring that the meaning of N'api is "dawn, or the first faint, white light that gives birth to the day." Thus, "the original religion of the Blackfeet was the worship of light personified." Further demonstrating the personhood of N'api, Ewers, *The Blackfeet*, 145 points to his role as trickster explaining "It is significant that they looked upon Old Man not only as the Creator but as a humorous little fellow who went around trying to play tricks on people and animals and whose tricks sometimes backfired. Many N'api stories are not only funny, but obscene." Wissler and Duvall, "Mythology of the Blackfoot," 10-11 record N'api's role as "the blunder, the immoral mischief maker;" see also *Ibid*, 53 for N'api's role as Creator.
44. Crowshoe and Manneschmidt, *Akak'stiman*, 2; John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders of the Northwestern Plains*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1958: 28; George Bird Grinnell, "Early Blackfoot History," *American Anthropologist*, 1892, v. 5: 153; and James Willard Schultz (*Apikuni*), *Blackfeet and Buffalo: Memories of Life Among the Indians*, edited by Keith C. Seele, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1962: 271-281 which explains the misunderstanding that led to the break between the Blackfeet and the *Atsina* or Gros Ventres.
45. Ewers, *The Blackfeet*, 6-7; Grinnell, "Early Blackfoot History," 157 who claims that the Blackfeet took possession of the northwest plains from the Missouri River to the Saskatchewan River in very ancient times.
46. The following traditional Pii'kani narratives are presented here for analysis based upon the rules of citation and copyright authority granted in their original publication.
47. Ewers, *The Blackfeet*, 3-4; Brian O. K. Reeves, *Personal Communications*, Department of Archaeology, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, 1989, who has identified *Na'pi's* bowling green west of

Maycroft Crossing.

48. Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, 143-144; Schultz, (*Apikuni*), *Blackfeet and Buffalo*, 311-312; Schultz (*Apikuni*), *Why Gone Those Times?*, 147.
49. Georgia Green Fooks, *Ft. Whoop-Up: Alberta's First and Most Notorious Whiskey Fort*, occasional paper no. 11, Whoop-Up Country Chapter, Historical Society of Alberta, Lethbridge, Alberta, May 1983: 59 citing Peter Fidler [1802].
50. Reeves, "Oldman River Dam," 86, 96; and Russell, *The Life of a River*, 47.
51. Reeves, "Oldman River Dam," 83, 90.
52. MacLean, "Blackfoot Priesthood, 3-4 indicates that such offering sites were in use in southern Alberta during early historic times; Russell, *The Life of a River*, 117, 120-121 reveals that during the depression these prayer stones were removed to form a roadbed, he writes: "It was an omen of what was to come in our treatment of the holy river of the Blackfoot people."
53. Joe Crowshoe, Sr. speaking at the University of Montana, Missoula, MT (October 1988).
54. Hugh A. Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1972: 104; and Clark, *Indian Legends*, 256 wherein Blackfeet narratives imply that the human creation occurred south of the Porcupine Mountains along the Oldman River.
55. Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, 70; and Schultz (*Apikuni*), *Why Gone Those Times?*, 148.
56. Dempsey, *Crowfoot*, 73-74, 79; and Ewers, *The Blackfeet*, 256.
57. Bullchild, *The Sun Came Down*, 171-173.
58. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 377 whose informants acknowledge "Brings-down-the-Sun noted authority upon our ancient customs and religion — lives near the Porcupine Mountains, on the Crow Lodge River." Brings-down-the-Sun's home was thusly located on the Peigan Reserve along the Oldman River. Incidentally, Brings-Down-The-Sun was a grandfather of Joe Crowshoe, Sr., Personal Communications, Brocket, Alberta, 1988.
59. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 440.
60. Russell, *The Life of a River*, 60 this "Legend of the Crow's Nest" implicates a war party of Crow Indians who were stealing Peigan horses. Trapped in the mountains, the Crows abandoned the high ground during the night. "The astonished Peigans believed that their enemies had changed themselves into crows to fly away. They called the mountain Crow's Nest, and so a Rocky Mountain pass, a lake, and a river running out of it acquired a name."

61. Joe Crowshoe, Sr., Personal Communication, Brocket, Alberta, 1988; Paul M. Raczka, *Winter Count: A History of the Blackfoot People*, Friesen Printers, Calgary, 1979: 31 confirms this point declaring "The Crow lodge is very famous among the North Peigan since the dream was given at the confluence of the Old Man River and Crow Lodge Creek on the North Peigan Reserve."
62. Schaeffer, Claude E., "Blackfoot Painted Lodges," *Fieldnotes/Manuscript Collection*, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta, 1934-69, File #125.
63. Bullchild, *The Sun Came Down*, 171-173.
64. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 208.
65. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 440.
66. "Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump" is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located across the Oldman River from Brocket, Alberta — home of the Peigan people: see Reeves, "Oldman River Dam," 95.
67. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 435.
68. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 328, 440.
69. Bullchild, *The Sun Came Down*, 222-228 locates this sacred event on High River, just southwest of Calgary; Schultz (*Apikuni*), *Blackfeet Tales of Glacier*, 98-105 places this myth in the Glacier-Two Medicine country of Montana; and Schulz (*Apikuni*), *Historic Montana*, 1959, v.9: 1 reports its happening in the area just south of the Two Medicine River. These multiple locations are explained via the several clans and bands or tribes of the Confederacy conferring sacred meaning upon their specific geography of origin; that is, each clan and band or tribe utilizes the myth as a centering device in identifying themselves with a sacred geography.
70. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 440.
71. Brian O. K. Reeves, Personal Communications, Waterton, Alberta, 1989.
72. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 386.
73. Joe Crowshoe, Sr., Personal Communications, Brocket, Alberta, 1988 who reported having a dream that the forests along the Oldman River were dying due to the proposed dam.
74. Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, 104-107.
75. Crowshoe and Manneschmidt, *Akak'stiman*, 6.
76. Crowshoe and Manneschmidt, *Akak'stiman*, 7.
77. McClintock, *The Old North Trail*, 104-112.
78. Josephine Crowshoe, Personal Communications, Brocket, Alberta, 1989.
79. Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy*, 113.
80. Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy*, 113.

81. A position cognizant with the "Deep Ecology Movement," Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movement: A Summary," *Inquiry*, 1973, v. 16: 95-100.
82. Mike Swims-Under, Personal Communications, Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Montana, 1989. This point, however, has been made to me many times by many traditional Pii'kani Elders both in Montana and Alberta, Swims-Under, however, was the principal Beaver Medicine ceremonialist.
83. Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Place: Landscape and Language among the western Apache*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.
84. Frequently relying upon narrative when conveying his dialogues, Plato, while at the origin of the Western tradition, occupies something of a liminal zone between the oral and literate paradigms. As such, his writings often give evidence of a pre-Modern ethos and value paradigm.
85. Plato, *Laws*, V: 747d-e; herein the Western Sage would seem to implicate animism and animatism, as well as, sacred geography as important value axioms.
86. G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1903: 195-202.
87. Plato, *Laws*, V: 747d-e.
88. Joe Crowshoe, Sr., Personal Communications, Browning, Montana, 1989.