

THESIS

MOBILITY IN THE BAKKEN: RHETORICAL PLACE-MAKING IN CONTESTED NATIVE
AND WHITE RURAL SPACE

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Henry D. Miller

Department of Communication Studies

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Master's Committee:

Advisor: Greg Dickinson

Karrin Vasby Anderson
Lindsey Schneider

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ABSTRACT

MOBILITY IN THE BAKKEN: RHETORICAL PLACE-MAKING IN CONTESTED NATIVE AND WHITE RURAL SPACE

This thesis engages the intricacies of oil extraction in and around the Bakken region through confronting rhetorical modes by which settler colonialism is practiced and resisted in a modern context. Today, oil boomtowns rhetorically transform a modern-day frontier and reestablish a colonial order that justifies resource extraction and alters spatial relations on the North Dakota landscape. Using *in-situ* rhetorical criticism, I methodologically weave myself into the texts as both a critic and participant in how space is produced. This thesis consists of an introduction, two main analytical chapters, and a conclusion. In the first analytical chapter, I argue Watford City produces spaces and narratives of whiteness that normalize settler colonialism and situate white bodies as natural occupants of oil boom space. Serving as a metaphor for whiteness, oil fracturing or “fracking” functions as a rhetorical design of both city and museum. In the next analytical chapter, I explore the complexity of overlapping white and Native spaces on the tribal municipalities of New Town and Four Bears Village. To rhetorically comprehend the oil boom spatially on the Fort Berthold Reservation, it is necessary to understand how place is constructed through the production of archived memories and survivance. By situating both Native and white space next one another, this thesis argues that oil boom spaces in North Dakota are being (re)occupied by predominantly white male bodies that hinder the livability of Native bodies in Native spaces. All the while, the Fort Berthold Reservation resists settler colonial practices through everyday acts that decolonize space and place through archived memory and survivance.

DEDICATION

To my father and family friend, Jim Hallum. Thank you for always making me think about space, life, and labor on those long, hot summer days when we used to bale hay covered in grease. You both taught me how to sweat. Without you two, I imagine I'd be a bit farther from this project.

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Chapter 1: Introduction - Occupational Rhetoric in the Bakken: Publicly Producing Archival Frictions and Everyday Settler Colonialism

“Who moves, where, and under what conditions, and who does not move and stays in place, under what conditions, have to do with how individuals are differently situated in relation to structures that enable movement or the lack of movement.”¹ -Raka Shome

The state of North Dakota is currently experiencing the largest population boom in the state’s history since the Homestead Act of 1862. The culprit of this exponential population expansion lies in the emergence of oil drilling across the state in the oil-rich area known as the Bakken Oil Reserve. This oil boom has resulted in North Dakota’s oil and gas dominance, making it the nation’s second-leading producer of crude oil only behind Texas.² With this population surge has come an unprecedented migration of predominantly white male workers into the Bakken region. This flow of bodies has resulted in the development of numerous “boomtowns” across the North Dakota landscape. Watford City, in particular, serves as a boomtown of significant importance as the county’s population has more than doubled since 2010.³ Meanwhile, the nearby Fort Berthold Reservation has experienced drastic increases in crime ranging from nonviolent offenses to sexual assault since the oil boom’s expansion into North Dakota communities. Both places are facing a (re)emerging spatial transformation as a result of the Bakken Oil boom. This confrontation is drastically altering how white space and Native space is produced both off and on the Fort Berthold Reservation.

In this study, I investigate the production of space as a rhetorical process in the Bakken region of North Dakota. Through this development, I explore how the production of space invites

certain individuals' mobility and livability, while restricting others in an oil boom time. This case study offers insight into a modern-day U.S. imperial system, as capital extraction takes precedence over Indigenous lives, and settler colonialism disguises itself behind good-will public relations and justified resettlement during and after the great recession. In an everyday manner, both oil industry workers and public bystanders rationalize a (re)occupation of place, space, and memory through employment that colonizes space. By placing Watford City's fractured archive of whiteness beside New Town and Four Bears Village's spaces of archived memory and survivance, this thesis explores the complication of space in Native and white spaces during oil boom times of settler colonialization. Indeed, settler futures may be disrupted through archived memory and survivance in Native spaces, and Native spaces may be controlled and produced by the bodies that inhabit them. Today boomtowns rhetorically transform a modern-day frontier and reestablish a colonial order that justifies resource extraction and alters spatial relations of this North Dakota landscape in economically desperate times on a financially starved landscape.

The Great Plains have become resettled and transformed with both modern and nostalgic regional values. Such ideas spatially alter boomtowns and the neighboring Indigenous communities. Boomtown Watford City produces politics of space, place, and memory through narratives that justify economic and spatial occupation. These products spill onto the Fort Berthold Reservation, as narratives become contested, rewritten, and/or forgotten. Ultimately, discourse impacts the lives of residents in both communities, as the genealogy of place is relationally driven. Individuals both constitute place and interact with the effects in their everyday experiences through a net of social relations. By implementing both textual and spatial analysis, I located rhetorical modes relating to settler colonialism, white space, and Native space as they are publicly produced and consumed.

To explore the rhetorical justifications of, responses to, and consequences of these rhetorical actions, I investigated 1) Watford City, ND and 2) New Town and Four Bears Village on the Fort Berthold Reservation. Through this process, I constructed rhetorical texts of these sites out of several specific artifacts. In my rhetorical examination of Watford City, I engaged the city's downtown main street and the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County. Then, to understand Indigenous engagement with spatial change, I explored the main streets of New Town and Four Bears Village, the Earth Lodge Village, and the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum located in Four Bears Village, ND.

My rhetorical analysis is guided by three major research questions. RQ1: In what ways are racial, ethnic, and/or gendered identities engaged or suppressed in the towns, their museums, and their representations? RQ2: What are the terms publicly used in Watford City's Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County, as well as in New Town and Four Bears Village's Three Affiliated Tribes Museum to explain the spatial change in North Dakota? RQ3: What are the invited material consequences of these rhetorical efforts? As I worked through each research question, I recognized the critic's role in rhetorical scholarship. My thesis offers a potentially unique insight into how *in situ* criticism allowed me a humbling opportunity to dialogue with my own past, present, and future. Having grown up in rural northeast Nebraska, I returned with my privileged identity as a white, straight, cisgender male who inhabits positions of both settler and critic. Also, I acknowledge my travel through a space that I have subsidized through my tax dollars and presence. Indeed, such criticism (re)imagines a geographical division of both ideology and physical space in a climate of political polarization, as I dialogued with my unique relationship to the land and a rural west/midwestern colonial past.

This thesis engages in an ongoing scholarly discourse regarding the political nature of space, place, and memory.⁴ By conversing with scholarly discussion on rural space, place, memory, postcolonialism, and gender/masculinity, this study suggests a close examination of the polysemous term “occupation” can be understood as both a term of employment and a spatial practice in a particular place. Therefore, I analyzed a contemporary example of settler colonialism in the U.S. that mirrors what Raka Shome suggests is an example of “third-worlds” emerging in “first-worlds and vice-versa.”⁵ In the subsequent sections of this introduction, I begin by writing into relevant scholarly literature on space and place, rhetorical studies of Native American discourse, and extractive midwestern economies. Next, I describe my critical method. Finally, I offer a preview for the rest of my thesis.

Review of Relevant Literature

Space and Place

In a globalizing world, people are rarely disconnected from other individuals and places. Postcolonial scholarship refuses to ignore the interwoven relations of economy, society, and culture, as spaces of exploitation are vital to exploring an inequity of power.⁶ Space is argued to be as important as time to understand the politics of occupation and resource extraction on the Great Plains in the 21st century.⁷ This section of relevant literature begins by exploring the relationship between post-colonial theory and the localness of space, place, and memory. Following, this section ends by using critical regionalism as a disciplinary tool to evaluate regions’ localness, while simultaneously challenging regional memories. These reflections enable nostalgic narratives of dominant ideology through the manufacturing of memory to (re)create space and place.

Postcolonial scholarship plays a vital role in exposing the injustices that are taking place in a contemporary environment that too often normalizes inequalities through a rhetoric of “progress.”⁸ Shome assesses how the infiltration of multinational capital affects local markets and communities by reorienting imaginaries through the Global North and the Global South.⁹ Her insights lay the foundation for a spatial critique of power relations in an interconnected world where transnational capital is only a wire transfer away and physically occupying a space or place can be done with a single plane ride. Similarly, Doreen Massey connects the local and the global by suggesting that space-time has geographically expanded and altered places as, “localities are not simply spatial areas you can easily draw a line around. They will be defined in terms of the sets of social relations or processes in question. Crucially, too, they are about interaction. Such interaction, moreover, is likely to include conflict.”¹⁰ This distinction is vital to combat the argued “localness” of a place. Today, economies rarely exist on their own, in a local or regional sense, and the oil boom around the Bakken Oil Reserve is far from local with its relationship to transnational capital.¹¹ Yet, how spaces, places, and memories are communicated back to those who move through these spaces tells a riveting story of power and politics, as not all bodies are granted the access to move equally.¹²

In a landmark essay, Raka Shome and Radha S. Hegde argue that postcolonial studies have made a clear commitment to disrupting histories and confronting the myth of American exceptionalism.¹³ Through this process, Shome and Hegde suggest that today’s globalization of capital and an ambiguity of territories has led to displacements and diaspora inside the same nation.¹⁴ Karma R. Chavez argues that this movement contributes to a pressing need to create spaces of subversive performativity.¹⁵ The core of gender performativity is then the possibility of envisioning alternative possibilities for existence. Shome and Hegde explore images of popular

culture, identity, hybridity, and agency, as agency in particular is “deeply bound to the politics of identity couched within the structures of gender, nation, class, race and diaspora.”¹⁶ By engaging postcolonial literature as it connects to the communication field, this study illuminates the rhetoric that follows neocolonial practices of oil enterprises, as companies, capital, and predominately white bodies migrate to North Dakota.

Drawing on theorists like Shome, Massey, and Lawrence Grossberg, Chavez neatly lays out the significance of spatiality that transcends space as material and embraces a relationality of space.¹⁷ This changes buildings, migrations of people, and ecological transitions that all lead to a closure of space.¹⁸ How we explore relationships within spaces leads us to consider how particular bodies get assembled in specific contexts and across particular borders.¹⁹ By foundationalizing the formation and assemblages of how space is produced through bodies’ movement or lack of movement, this study applies Chavez’s insights to the barriers that divide the U.S. nation-state and sovereign tribal lands to recreate a system of normalized oppression.

In an essay on Chicana feminism, Lisa A. Flores proposes a liberatory framework for woman on the margins of society to construct a homeland through a rhetoric of difference.²⁰ As marginalized groups create their own space and “reverse existing and external definitions and...create their own definitions,”²¹ individuals can use the material available to construct their identity and share their voice.²² How Native American woman and non-normative bodies react to an uncertain disruption of space, culture, and safety further demonstrates the power of carving out space. Further, recognizing the interconnection between Indigenous livability and the landscape, this process may recreate both a livable reality and an opportunity to define one’s own life in their terms through place.²³

Indeed, bodies' relationships to particular places and their connection to the local are important markers in Indigenous livability. Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci, Jr. argue that memory places have the power to, "import localisms and accommodations to the physical and peopled environments."²⁴ Indeed, public places have the capability to offer a respite from the outside modernizing world, while simultaneously proposing connection and possibility for those who seek it.²⁵ In a similar vein, Greg Dickinson suggests that nostalgia opens the possibility of reimagining pasts through selective memories and convenient memory loss. This allows individuals to re-identify with a communities' past through a consummatory function to remember.²⁶ By dialoging with the past, oil boomtowns across North Dakota are reconfiguring memories within their communities to emphasize selective notions of nostalgic pasts that favor their (re)settlement of the American West.²⁷ Consequently, this retells a story that abstains from critically analyzing historical narratives.²⁸

To dialogue with regional construction of place, Douglas Reichert Powell suggests, "When we talk about a region, we are not talking about a stable, boundaried, autonomous place but about a cultural history, the cumulative, generative effect of the interplay among the various competing definitions of that region."²⁹ Often rural communities and museums are prone to hegemonic constructions of the past that favor the colonizer's relationship with the landscape over Indigenous perspectives.³⁰ Such conventions invite oversimplified constructions of place, and rural communities often favor regional notions of place that promote nostalgic conventions.

The origins of the critical regionalist movement dates back to the 1980s, as figures such as Kenneth Frampton theorized how "flat data" was corporatized to regionally simplify landscapes. Following Frampton, architectural theorists began to study the political nature of localized space.³¹ Building upon such scholarship, Jenny Rice argues that critical regionalism

meets rhetoric at the point of dislocating nostalgic narratives. In doing so, regional rhetoric “disrupts given narratives of belonging that are framed on a national level and between individuals.”³² Indeed, rhetorical theorist Dave Tell urges critics to avoid venerating strict binaries of the local and the global, as both monolithic readings reduce our ability to see regions.³³ The result of such oversimplification is illustrated by Carly S. Woods, Joshua P. Ewalt, and Sara J. Baker’s examination of the regionality of the Nebraska History Museum, which they describe as “a site where rhetorics of space, place, and memory intermingle within a historically anchored nostalgic and utopian regional rhetoric.”³⁴ The danger then lies in how places serve as displays of public memory where we intermingle with one another inside; still, the critical hope is situated in how we confront regional conventions and embrace spaces of conflict.³⁵ Calling to question the complexities of constructing place creation through regional memories, this project plans to reconsider and rupture the connection between a neoliberal understanding of multinational capital and an incomplete understanding of local production.

Confronting neoliberal geographies and constructions of place, Ewalt challenges how neoliberalized spaces restrict resistive movements.³⁶ By recognizing how spaces are normatively occupied by certain bodies, scholarship on place-making becomes more nuanced. A strong historical example of a (re)occupation is that of the American Indian bodies protesting on Alcatraz, as Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook suggest this occupation was “fundamentally linked to place.”³⁷ This work expands on notions of occupation, as bodies additionally affect how places become remade and reorganized to resist a hegemonic narrative of regional embracement. Massey warns that a neoliberal construction of the past and its connection to the present combine to become normalized space and beyond critique.³⁸ Such neoliberal conventions miss the capacity to think of places as “temporal and not just spatial: as set in time

as well as space.”³⁹ Thereby, places’ pasts are created by the interweaving of historical stories we tell about a particular place, and dominant meanings often emerge from leading narratives of a particular place.⁴⁰ A few questions then arise. What kind of bodies are occupying a particular space? Further, because occupation drastically affects how places are (re)made, what are the stories being told and who is telling them? Bodies then serve as markers of how place is made through an ongoing process of social relations,⁴¹ and understanding how particular bodies move through space plays a vital role in this research.

Native American Rhetoric

Recognizing the importance of bodies in place-making and settler colonialism, the production of Native space is often rhetorical in both its intention and impact. This section of relevant literature traces the origins and praxis of Native American rhetorics relevant for my thesis. By highlighting the relationship of discourse to make and remake Indigenous space through land, gender, and globalization, memories and spaces of survivance are prioritized to resist settler colonialism and erasure. This section proceeds by initially examining the relevant assemblages of Native American rhetorics to our contemporary moment that bolster rhetorics of survivance. Next, I consider the dangers of tokenizing and commodifying Indigenous images. Finally, I explore the intersections of Indigenous space, globalization, and land use to comprehend how society inches closer to understanding how power is (re)inscribed in places of contemporary settler colonialization. Indeed, fusing time and space prioritizes stories from oral traditions that prioritize survival. This complicates how we see rhetorical agency throughout a history of written records and hegemonic conflicts over territory.

By exploring post-colonial theory through constructions of space, place and time, Native American rhetoric complicates these areas of scholarship and offers an a more comprehensive

understanding of how time and space's relationship has led to occupations of land in our present day. This everyday occupational move appears normal enough yet follows traditional colonial practices of hindering survival and influencing a (re)constitution of space as transnational capital and improved transportation channels increase in accessibility predominantly for those in power.

Randall A. Lake proposed that Native American rhetoric serves a consummatory function not for a white audience, but for those who are still dialoging with their Indigenous heritage following a time of religious repression, assimilative boarding schools, the withdraw of funds for education, and economic strangulation.⁴² This consummatory function has allowed for tribes across the United States to unite together against a common oppressor.⁴³ This capability for unification that Lake articulated has been exemplified following the Dakota Access Pipeline protests (DAPL) at Standing Rock in 2016.⁴⁴ As the privatized paramilitary security and law enforcement met the peaceful protestors in Cannonball, North Dakota, tribes represented across the U.S. were bussing, driving, and finding any means necessary to travel and document their survival. This rhetorical occupation combats the colonial act of building an oil pipeline over sacred burial grounds as physical and metaphysical occupation of land increased drastically.⁴⁵ Additionally, Lake and the DAPL protest have been theoretically challenged in recent years to critique heteronormativity, indigeneity, place-making, and settler futuricity,⁴⁶ These grounds are significant as they mark both a material and non-material place where spatial relations act out in a conflict that confronts space-time. Still, Lake builds upon this relationship by adding a component of memory and writes: "Through occupation, the past is made present."⁴⁷ Thus, this thesis will examine how a (re)occupation of North Dakota oil boomtowns is spatially complicating survival and transforming a Native space and place.

Through removal and reconstruction of territory, Native Americans' land mirrors many modern (re)settlement spaces.⁴⁸ This historical plan was, and largely still is, a settler colonial practice that encourages assimilation with the aspirations of appropriating land from reservations for settlement.⁴⁹ Indeed, more militant Native American protest movements have clearly understood the significance of occupation through survival, as occupation has been a prominent protest strategy at Alcatraz, Mount Rushmore, numerous Bureau of Indian Affairs offices, and Wounded Knee.⁵⁰ In fact, the practice of occupation has been used by occupy movements across the globe, illustrating its significance as a rhetorical practice of survival that negotiates space. Lisa King, Rose Gubele, and Joyce Rain Anderson, as well as Natchee Blu Barnd draw contemporary examples of survivance through occupying Native space and unsettling settler colonialism through a remapping of space.⁵¹ By employing rhetorics of survivance, places may rupture neoliberalism and the normativity of settler colonialism in a modern context. Additionally, through increasingly recognizing survivance, authorship and sovereignty become more enmeshed in texts resisting and residing in Native space. Indeed, occupation may be thought of as bringing attention to the spatial relations of settler colonialism, rather than suggesting all occupations are the same. However, these spaces/places play an increasingly important role in confronting spatial colonization in an increasing neoliberalized world.

Hegemonic discourses surrounding oil boomtowns in the U.S. are becoming more normalized through abatements that have expanded drilling.⁵² Such rhetoric has material consequences for Native space and survival. Practices of settler colonialism are rationalized by narratives that suggest increased occupation is a justified response to economic recession. Mary E. Stucky and John M. Murphy contend that U.S. Americans have normalized the rhetorical transformation of the frontier into domestic territory, claiming that "These ways of 'thinking,

saying, and doing' are embedded in the culture of the contemporary United States."⁵³ For example, in his examination of the U.S. mint's gold dollar bearing the image of Sacagawea, Jason E. Black argues that the coin serves as a commodity, currency, and cipher that symbolizes Native American Women as a being to be used, exchanged, and replicated in order to justify and inaccurately insert a rationalized consenting collaborator with their colonizers.⁵⁴ All too often we forget that in the Declaration of Independence, Native Americans are referred to as, "merciless Indian Savages, whose known mode of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions."⁵⁵ Survivance does not guarantee resistance, as dominant discourses continually commodify and tokenize indigeneity to justify the mapping of settler colonial projects.

Today, many of the disputes over land center around commodity prices and/or resource value.⁵⁶ Patrick Wolfe suggests, settler colonial practices hide historical attitudes and results of Manifest Destiny.⁵⁷ Here narrative ownership take a more neoliberal path that grounds land use in public relations and community harmony. Such inability and unwillingness to challenge the (re)occupation of land leaves tribe's survival partially at the mercy of capital outside of the local community. Further, Lisa King argues that Native bodies are often reductively situated into hegemonic place-based timelines.⁵⁸ Stuckey and Murphy argue, "Even if the sites remain in Indigenous hands, they are often renamed, robbed of their sanctity, and put to other uses, the value of which is determined by the colonizer, not the colonized."⁵⁹ Thus, survivance functions as situationally resistive and heavily dependent on the authorship of this narrative. The greatest threat to Indigenous life in the U.S. lies in how symbols are changed to rhetorically colonize and occupy Native space through the Euro-American's emergence "as the natural, evolutionary product of the savage and the civilized."⁶⁰ This normalized rationalization equally justifies an

internal migration of predominantly white U.S. males looking for work on and near the Fort Berthold reservation. Occupation as both employment and settlement are normalized through the remnants of Manifest Destiny and masculine entitlement. Indeed, how survivance is situated and used to produce place may indicate if there is resistance or tokenization taking place.

In order to challenge a normalized occupation of white bodies, this section of literature on Native American rhetoric addresses space-time's unique capacity to explain socio-spatial relationships with time through building on post-colonial scholarship in the previous section.⁶¹ By commodifying Native bodies, stories, land, and resources for centuries, settler colonialism becomes increasingly legible to a larger public, as spatial relations and normalized occupation of land again becomes contested. What is more, through recognizing Native American resistance through rhetorics of survival, narrative authorship becomes clearer and sovereignty becomes republicized to resist settler colonial practices. Using space-time as a framework, narratives of land occupation become more relevant, as space becomes melded with time to complicate how power is conceptualized today.

Extractive Economies in the Midwest

The emergence of the Bakken oil boom near the time of the great recession played a significant role in the justification for resource extraction and occupational settlement.⁶² As many Americans were left without work, homes, or direction after the great recession, the boomtowns across the Bakken Oil Reserve offered high-paying employment and job security.⁶³ Aaron T. Philips argues this overlap alters space-time geographies as, "Space, place, and time, then, are woven into the same material ecologies."⁶⁴ Consequently, the stories boomtowns tell and media's portrayal of what is happening across the rural landscape of North Dakota is largely taken as truth. Indeed, the narrative of the Bakken oil boom as a savior in times economic

distress tells a favorable story to the public. This scene places space-time within a story that distorts how the public is being educated, as well as what stories are being told and what perspectives are conveniently forgotten.⁶⁵ These accounts predominantly serve the interests of whiteness and traditional masculinity, as narratives of rugged individualism and economic victimization come to the foreground in popular media.⁶⁶ David H. Kahl Jr. advocates using critical communication pedagogy to encourage students to break away from neoliberal normalization of resource extraction by challenging the true intent of companies and the benefactors.⁶⁷ The language of normalization is complicated. Unless society ruptures harmonious assumptions about neoliberal resource extraction, the next generation is unlikely to challenge normalized profit at the expense of the environment and its inhabitants.

Philips warns that hegemonic control of knowledge production is enacted through “The reconfiguration of an extractive space (a pit) into an educational space...”⁶⁸ Indeed, “The hierarchy is clear upon critical investigation: education depends upon extraction; extraction in turn trades the capital it supplies to education for the ability to elide its invasion reorganization of landscape.”⁶⁹ Resource extraction on the Great Plains is not always as straightforward as traditional Marxist economic determinism might suggest; instead, oil extraction has become normalized and is taking place on Colorado’s Front Range. This area refers to the area on the east side of the Rocky Mountains of Colorado where the center of the state’s population and wealth is concentrated.⁷⁰ As neoliberalism has proven to be a hushed voice of exploitation, rural areas and wealthy development spaces alike are facing overlapping industries of extraction; thus, ideology is transported across landscapes and naturalized in the everyday.

A major critique of resource extraction lies in its traditional, and largely still prevalent, origins in the “developing world” as a means to offer exports to already “developed” nations or

what might be termed “core economies.”⁷¹ Adrienne Kroespch argues that resource extraction in rural areas is more mythic than a present reality.⁷² Conveniently, Kroespch focuses predominantly on the number of individuals impacted by extraction practices. This dismissal overlooks communities and individuals that inhabit subaltern identities on the plains, such as many on reservations. This perspective employs a “majority benefit” approach by reorienting public focus towards population centers rather than many rural depopulated areas across the midwestern United States. Further, this perspective leaves their critique historically convenient, as the author dismisses much of the analysis of boomtown literature in the 1970s.⁷³ There is, however, an undoubtable binary between the “New West” and the “Old West” in regard to rhetoric surrounding resource extraction.⁷⁴ As less populated land is emptied of its resources, more populated areas (including even the suburbs on Colorado’s Front Range) are experiencing the encroachment of resource extraction. This, however, does not diminish the global and national reality of unpopulated places/spaces/land being robbed of commodity crops and natural resources for more metropolitan benefit.

The relative dearth of population in areas subject to extraction does not make the activity any less important. It is on these “frontiers” or contested spaces that the ugliness of capital begins to materially impact individuals’ lives. By exploring natural resource extraction economies and the spatial narratives of tribal land loss, this thesis explores these spatial conflicts. These sites create and display a disproportional amount of power that reflect and embody discourses of settler colonialism and neoliberal practices of resource extraction at the expense of many rural communities, with an emphasis on reservations.

Located less than thirty miles from boomtown, Watford, City, lies the Fort Berthold Reservation, which is home to the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara

Nation. The relatively recent oil boom has brought an influx of capital and men into the reservation and surrounding territory. The result has been a state population increase of 13 percent between 2010 and 2018.⁷⁵ These areas of historically contested space date back hundreds of years, and historic examples of this practice are the placement of dams along the Missouri River. When the sites of dam construction are charted on a map, it becomes clear that reservation lands of the Santee Sioux and the Three Affiliated Tribes have lost millions of acres of valuable fertile farmland to dam construction.⁷⁶

This spatial story is not a historical narrative relegated to a textbook or an outdated distant example; instead, these spatial narratives are vital to understanding space-time in the here and now. Shome contends that space is a central form of communication needed to address inequity.⁷⁷ Shome also argues, “who moves, where, and under what conditions, and who does not move and stays in place, under what conditions, have to do with how individuals are differently situated in relation to structures that enable movement or the lack of moment.”⁷⁸ Therefore, occupation of land both on the Fort Berthold Reservation and within boomtown Watford City spatially communicates a (re)constitution of place that materially impacts how bodies, particularly non-normative bodies, move across the landscape the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara still call home. One quantifiable result has been an influx of men and capital into the area leading to one article reporting a seventy-five percent increase in sexual assaults against Indigenous women on the Fort Berthold reservation.⁷⁹ Such statistics should not be taken lightly. Residents across the Fort Berthold Reservation (re)make their home that has again been appropriated for resource extraction and capital acquisition. This moment provides an excellent opportunity to examine space, place, memory, power, gender, and settler colonialism.

Through resource extraction, economies are created to benefit from areas being both depopulated and disproportionately controlled by relatively few landowners. Thereby, this dilemma places the future of rural areas, as well as marginal communities, such as reservations, at a greater risk of exploitation.⁸⁰ These extractive economies also open up investment opportunity that is global and largely exploitive of the local. By exploring how places are (re)constituted through spatial discourses that invite, promote, and disperse narratives of (re)settlement that justify resource extraction, this thesis considers how places are (re)made and stories are (re)told by those in power. These constructions disproportionately benefit the few through a rhetoric of occupation that emerges as extractive economies exploit the local and the tribal. All the while, extractive economies transform landscapes and impact how individuals connect and move through their homeland. This alteration of home promotes an immediate problem for non-normative and/or Indigenous bodies, as industry brings an unprecedented amount of capital, men, and lawlessness that disproportionately impacts Native bodies.

Methods

In this study, I examined the spatial discourse emerging in and around oil boomtown Watford City and the Fort Berthold Reservation's two key municipalities of New Town and Four Bears Village. As the fundamental interest of this paper centers around settler colonialism in the 21st century in the name of occupation that is justified as both a necessary occupying of physical space and rationalized employment, I examined how a rhetoric of occupation is publicly created, consumed, and replicated. This research was done using a mixed-method approach of textual analyses of downtowns, museums, and *in situ* criticism of the boomtown Watford City and the

tribal municipalities of New Town and Four Bears Village to better understand the multiplicity of stories that emerged around the North Dakota oil boom.

In Situ and Textual Analysis

Because this thesis employed *in situ* criticism, it was important for me to reflect on my own positionality as I interacted with spaces across the North Dakota landscape.⁸¹ Traveling from Fort Collins, Colorado first to Watford City, North Dakota is just under a 600-mile trip, and I followed that with a 59-mile drive to New Town, North Dakota. Acknowledging my privilege of mobility was crucial to foregrounding my approach as I moved through others' space as an outsider. Yet, by visiting each site, town, and museum, I grasped a more complete story of how a rhetoric of occupation is manufactured and survived by this area's inhabitants. By calling attention to how genealogies from the past, present, and future meld together with space, this project generated a deeper insight into space-time, as it relates to expansive occupation and limited mobility in the seemingly limitless landscape of the Great Plains.

The geographic depth of rural spaces calls for a reimagining of space. In order to contribute to this conversation, I employed *in situ* rhetorical criticism. Michel de Certeau writes,

*A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus, space is composed of intersections of mobilized elements...Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs of contractual priorities.*⁸²

In a similar vein, Carole Blair's reflection on criticism and bodies posits what is lost by not actually physically "being there." She argues that "how we, as critics, make the object 'real'" matters to our readers, and she suggests that the term "matter" plays a vital role in our physical presence in how we translate our sensual experiences to our scholarship.⁸³ Thus, as *in situ* rhetorical criticism becomes more popular, critics must continue to reflect on how our bodies interact with the places and spaces to which we travel.

Notable individuals practicing space and place rhetorical criticism, Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki explore space, time, and colonialism while moving through both the Buffalo Bill Museum and Plains Indian Museum, as masculine spaces of whiteness and cultural hegemony.⁸⁴ Dickinson et. al, challenge history, national identity, and the carnivalization of conflicts between Anglo Americans and Native Americans.⁸⁵ Further, as these scholars moved through the Buffalo Bill Museum, they were asked to dialogue with their pasts to comprehend how these experiences impacted their movement. In order to critically self-reflect, practitioners may consider the origins and processes of space and place research. Again, de Certeau writes, “The childhood experience that determines spatial practices later develops its effects, proliferates, floods private and public spaces, undoes their readable surfaces.”⁸⁶ By recognizing our situatedness in a particular place as researchers, we are forced to face a complicated interconnectedness of social relations. These anchors are impacted by our identity and remade by our personal individuality.⁸⁷

Through the interactions of space-time, spaces and places are remade and experienced as we are in a constant flux of “being” and “becoming.”⁸⁸ Therefore, a dialogue with space-time and power *in situ* offers this project crucial grounding. By documenting bodies’ relationship to (re)constituting places, this project begins to consider the researcher’s role in critical methodology. This (re)occupation of the North Dakota landscape plays an integral role in how white spaces are recreated through collective occupation, as Native spaces and bodies confront an interruption of their everyday movement understood through postcolonial scholarship on agency, adaptation, and a recreation of home.⁸⁹

In this thesis, I joined a decades old spatial conversation that has yet to reach its theoretical potential, as I built upon the scholarship that de Certeau, Blair, and Dickinson have

carefully done. I welded myself to a space-time that is both physical and metaphysical, as I drove, walked, and navigated through space where only a fraction of its original Native inhabitants still reside. To walk through colonized space is to re-engage a vital conversation that has been taking place about the importance of studying space, place, time, memory, and rhetoric. Moreover, to walk through a place is to accept the inevitability of changing a place and to acknowledge how it changes you.

Taking a vital step in my *in situ* rhetorical criticism, I drove to Watford City, New Town, and Four Bears Village over Winter break for these particular places to act on me as I acted on them to gather a fuller picture of how a rhetoric of occupation functions to produce settler colonization in the 21st century. Indeed, engaging this spatial discourse allowed for a contribution to rhetorical scholarship by diagnosing politically spatial moves in the name of resource extraction. This method marked an opportunity to investigate agency in the lives of the inhabitants on Fort Berthold Reservation, as spatial relations have dramatically (re)altered the lives surrounding the Bakken oil boom.

By implementing traditional textual analysis, this thesis diversified an *in situ* method that offered a great opportunity for rural spaces to be represented through increased rhetorical agency in boomtown Watford City, as well as the Fort Berthold Reservation municipalities of New Town and Four Bears Village. This technique captured mediated rhetoric to materially analyze narratives of space and time. Finally, both museums and main streets asked me as the researcher to synthesize and extract ideas, arguments, and criticisms through a textual analysis. This project then moved from one site to the other by interweaving methodologies throughout to compile an in-depth archive of this spatio-temporal confrontation on the Great Plains.

Thesis Outline

My thesis is predominantly focused on a space-time configuration detailing how a rhetoric of occupation is created, maintained, and continued in boomtown Watford City, as well as how a rhetoric of occupation is ruptured, unsettled, and decolonized in and around Four Bears Village and New Town. In this introduction of my thesis, I have drawn on relevant literature, asked research questions, and explored the scope of my project. Further, this section serves as an overview of my thesis context, theory, method, and relevancy.

Next, chapter one begins by critically positioning my own experience of moving through Watford City, as I walk down main street starting from the south end of town and work my way north. While moving through this boomtown landscape, I reflect on my own experience and identity. Further, I interact with a space that is not so distant from my upbringing and dialogue with a place that has emerged as a “boomtown” after newly accessible oil wells were tapped. This spatial methodology intends to engage with rhetorical tools used to promote, sustain, and prolong occupation in Watford City. In this chapter, I propose that to understand Watford City as an archive of whiteness and settler colonialism, it is necessary to consider how Watford City is spatially arranged through a metaphor of hydraulic oil fracturing or “fracking” as a rhetorical design of city.

In the section that follows, I build upon this fracking metaphor to describe how memories and pasts are injected to frack historical timelines in the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County on main street to tell preferred histories of nostalgic whiteness that (re)creates regional narratives of settler colonialism. The venue appears to have been recently built and designed to solidify Watford City as place with a past, present, and future. By documenting my experience through pictures, notes, and conversations, I formulate a clearer understanding of the stories that are told

of occupation in Watford City and near the Fort Berthold Reservation. Intertwining the rhetorical nature of the main street and museum of Watford City offers vital insight into how each rhetorical artifact builds on one another to produce a spatial narrative of settler colonialism, justification, and perpetuation.

Chapter two examines historical narratives and spaces of archived memory and survivance from the perspective of the Fort Berthold Reservation. To do this, I begin by visiting the Earth Lodge Village and exploring how this place (re)produces Native Spaces of survival through archived memory as a space of transitional inhabitation. Next, I walk through the downtowns of Four Bears Village and New Town to compare and contrast one another with Watford City to consider how Native and white space are publicly produced. Further, I investigate how settler colonialism might be ruptured, unsettled, and decolonized through survivance. To finish this chapter, I visit the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum in Four Bears Village to consider how Native space is produced, communicated, and archived to disseminate and construct a collective public memory that tells the sovereign stories of the Three Affiliated Tribes.

Finally, my conclusion pivots back to my central research questions, as I examine my findings, reflect on future directions for research, explore some of the limitations of this study, and consider potential contributions to literature and the larger scholarly conversation. This final section revisits the direction, scope, and main takeaways to build a coherent understanding of my argument and project. By approaching my thesis in this manner, it is my hope to create a piece of rhetorical criticism that honestly dialogues with a contemporary example of settler colonialism following one of the largest oil booms in our country's history, especially as much of the Bakken oil reserve is located on tribally owned lands. Indeed, I investigate how hegemonic discourses of

space and place are (re)constituted to rupture the relationship of occupation in the role of dominant discourse. In addition, I explore the rationalization of neo-colonial expansion in the name of predominantly male employment and traditionally masculine economic opportunity at the material consequentiality of Native American communities through acts of exotified “othering.”

By exploring modern spaces through spatial discourses and evaluating how publics talk about mass migrations of people through narratives and community framing, problematic accounts of colonialization in a modern context emerge. Whether or not publics engage in an authentic conversation about the (re)occupation of a space and place as a tool of settler colonialism, tells a riveting story of a contemporary reality that revisits the possibility for destructive historic events to be again written off in the name of capital acquisition at the expense of Indigenous populations.

Chapter 2: (Re)occupying Watford City: Spatially Fracturing Archives and Publicly Producing Whiteness in the Bakken

“I have always said I would not have been President had it not been for my experience in North Dakota.”

-President Theodore Roosevelt⁹⁰

After reaching my third or fourth 70-mile-plus stretch without a gas station, I began to viscerally feel the spatial desolation and isolation that often characterizes the Bakken Oil Reserve and North Dakota landscape. This dislocation from the general public population centers disorients the visitor. One gas station in a small Wyoming town had a human trafficking phone number in the men’s bathroom. Another note, in a different location, instructed to not leave vehicles unlocked and to make sure you were not followed to your car. Seeing each of these warnings led me to consider how oil boomtowns might differently situate the safety of individuals’ movement compared to other isolated communities scattered across the Great Plains.⁹¹

Eventually, the isolation broke, and the early afternoon began to approach. I started to see my first consistent signs of oil production with flair towers, pump jacks, and semi-trucks carrying petroleum products painted with red clay. The traffic increased. Brand-new, jacked-up, and four-door pickups began to appear. All the while, sports cars came out of nowhere, passing my Camry with authority. Only 45 minutes out from Watford city, I approached a gas station named “Sweet Crude” and knew I was getting closer my destination. I had seen, spent time, and

grown up around hundreds of small towns across the Midwest and was familiar with rural locations. Yet, how would this boomtown, my first, be different from these other communities?

In order to engage with the oil boomtown of Watford City, I drove north from Fort Collins, Colorado to visit and explore how rural space is produced, commodified, and disseminated to public audiences of Watford City. Through these collective publics, I generate a diverse archive to explore how place is remade. This chapter proceeds in two stages. To begin, I walk through Watford City's downtown main street to understand how oil boomtowns are framing occupational rhetoric of space, time, and gender. Next, I move through the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County to explore how Watford City spatially constructs its past, present, and future to visitors and its residents. By placing these two sections in conversation with one another, I argue a more complete story will be generated explaining how oil boomtowns in North Dakota are producing space and narratives of whiteness that normalizes settler colonialism. This chapter argues that oil fracturing or "fracking" functions as a rhetorical design of both city and museum. In order to clarify the wide scope of this rather long chapter, I will provide an overview of each of the two primary sections.

In the first section, I argue that Watford City utilizes hegemonic narratives of space and place to produce white space and situate white bodies as natural occupants in an oil boom place. I immerse myself in the experience of "being there" through *in situ* rhetorical criticism. For section one, I begin by reflecting on the experience of traveling to Watford City from Fort Collins. Second, I argue that Watford City's downtown has been appropriated by the oil boom and functions as a fractured memorial to settler colonialism and a proudly (re)occupied settlement. Finally, I suggest the downtown signage of Watford City maps a rhetoric of Rough Rider Topoi through rugged individualism and adventure seeking as an avenue for consumption.

In section number two, I argue that the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County functions as an archive of whiteness to orient oil boom residents towards a preferred public memory. I start my visit by exploring how I am asked to move through and orient myself to the museum upon entry. Next, I argue that the museum appropriates the oil boom and the practice of fracking rhetorically to function as a spatial metaphor for a mobility of occupation that makes settler colonialism both inevitable and justified. Finally, at the end of section two, I explore how the museum essentializes women to situate “Courage.... Endurance.... Faith.... of the Prairie Roses” to facilitate frontier rhetoric of space, place, power, and safety.

Placing each of these pieces together, I gather a nuanced understanding of how settler colonialism is rhetorically functioning in the 21st century. Watford City offers a unique opportunity to explore productions of space and time in a changing place. The city’s proximity to the Fort Berthold Reservation further complicates how productions of white space emit byproducts of whiteness and the petroleum industry that transforms places and threatens Native space. Recognizing this dilemma, I begin with Watford City, as a primary producer of white space in oil boom towns.

McKenzie County stands as the fastest growing non-metropolitan county in the country.⁹² According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2010 McKenzie County had a population of 6,360, and if you fast forward seven years that population more than doubled to 12,724.⁹³ This mass influx of population growth has brought in thousands of people to find work in the oil industry. Watford City is the largest municipality in McKenzie County, as its own population has grown 264.4 percent between April 2010 and July 2017.⁹⁴ This growth has led to a (re)framing of community space, movement of capital, and individuals seeking economic opportunity, as each has materially altered the landscape and city. How place is (re)constructed and contested

space is communicated in Watford City tells a story of cultural hegemony and public settlement practices through the city's downtown and the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County.

The Everyday Participation of Whiteness: Fracking Archives and Rough Rider Topoi

By capturing how Watford City is rhetorically functioning to remake place and normalize settler colonialism, this extensive section ties together how the downtown produces everyday space that archives nostalgic forms of whiteness and what I term a Rough Rider Topoi to be consumed by publics through the spatial metaphor of fracking. My initial experience of “getting there” then serves an opportunity to critically engage the texts/textures of Watford City. In early fall of 2019, I began to carefully schedule my site visit to North Dakota. I packed my car with all the winter and backpacking gear a young outdoors person, socialized through midwestern paranoia, can fit into a trunk of a 2003 Toyota Camry (it is a lot). Watching the weather for a potential storm, I figured it passed. The night before, I received word that Fort Collins, Colorado and Cheyenne, Wyoming were expected to receive up to 14 inches of snow. Considering the desolation of eastern Wyoming, I opted to postpone the trip until Christmas break. The Great Plains winters are not particularly forgiving and significantly impact how one moves to, in, and from these spaces, similar to the challenges faced by Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki when visiting the Buffalo Bill Museum.⁹⁵ I set out for my trip at four o'clock in the morning on December 22nd, as the weather forecast granted me a generous three-day window.

I arrived on the outskirts of Watford city from the south. New roads and roundabouts give the characteristically old rural community life. The pro-life billboards, “Catholics believe what?” radio station billboard, and numerous bank billboards brought the previously desolate landscape to spatial modernity. Massive petroleum complexes made themselves visible and semi-trucks

pierced the visual the landscape. Predictably common around extraction sites, there was little spatial negotiation of road space, it was clear who these new road developments were made for.⁹⁶ Brand-new neutrally colored apartments grew out of the prairie with gusto that I can only compare, at a smaller scale, to what I have seen in Shanghai, China or more to scale on the Front Range in Colorado. I mention this as they did not “belong” to the regional stories of prairie towns or similar municipalities of 7,000 or below. The housing was new. Complex after complex and newly built company housing after the next, began to cover the hills with a recency of development I had not ever seen in similar rural spaces. Each RV park, new hotel, and apartment housing advertised “Cabins For Rent,” “Look,” and “Apartments for Rent.”



Figure 1. North Dakota Landscape. Photo by Henry D. Miller.



Figure 2. Housing on the Outskirts of Watford City. Photo by Henry D. Miller

Pulling closer to main street, I drove on main street less than block away from downtown. I see a billboard titled, “Your Oasis for Fun!” advertising the 4-Bears Casino and Lodge. Here, the overlapping of Native spaces and white spaces makes itself visually present in boomtown Watford City. Next to the billboard, one of the bright yellow stoplight poles sits overhanging main street at the intersection of 6th Ave. SE. Many of these newly built poles are also equipped with security cameras. Just before this intersection, I saw a billboard next to the family dollar with an aggressively enthusiastic Theodore Roosevelt, in a suit, pointing out to what may or may not be me, as the sign reads “the ROOSEVELT” “Hotel. Suites. Personality.” I wince at the blatant intrusion into my personal automobile space, then laugh to myself, as I realize this is where I reserved a room for tonight. I then take a left a few blocks ahead at Junction 85/200. The town rhetorically invites, almost begs, individuals into this settlement space through the consumption of housing, entertainment, and religion. This observation draws back to de Certeau, as he writes, “from the functioning of the urban network to that of the rural landscape, there is no

spatiality that is not organized by the determination of frontiers.”⁹⁷ Drawing on nostalgic memories of new settlements and (un)settled space, the town and billboards invite me to turn off my long-running GPS and enter the city comfortably.

Although, this community is unfamiliar to me and unique amongst all the local, national, and international travel I have done, it still mirrors rural sentiments I grew up around. It incites a cringe-worthy comfort that pairs with blatantly offensive language that can best be understood during political conversations during family holidays, as I am not above the regional comforts of what Jenny Rice referred to as “cultural poaching and encroachment.”⁹⁸ This comfort is quickly interrupted as I pull up to the Roosevelt. This newly built, modest, yet far from cheap, hotel sits on the west side of town. I park my car next to a white sculpture of Theodore Roosevelt. From the chest up, Teddy is wearing a red scarf that has been tied around his semi-truck sized neck, as he dwarfs the Chrysler minivan beside him. He looks west, towards expansion, towards settlement, as I remember a quote plagued with romanticism, “the West was won by words as well as bullets.”⁹⁹ This is where I will be staying tonight.



Figure 3. Theodore Roosevelt Statue. Photo by Henry D. Miller

I walk in. The front desk and lobby are equipped with recreational memorabilia that President Roosevelt would be proud of. With no less than four pictures of Teddy, I am surrounded. To the right of the front desk, a framed picture of President Ronald Regan hangs with a letter to James Brady giving thanks for his courage, as he would be permanently disabled from a gunshot wound during the Reagan assassination attempt. Politics aside, this hotel and community have oriented me towards conventions of rugged individualism, courage, western expansion, grit, and exploration.¹⁰⁰ This spatial exploration is interrupted, as I grab my key and drive to my cabin. Inside, I read a typed note that warns me to not answer the door if someone is knocking, to make sure I have not been followed, and to call the emergency contact if something seems out of the ordinary. Watford City's welcome has its caveats. After check-in, I head downtown.

Downtown's Memorialization of Settler Colonialism

With a privileged public body, I approach Watford City's downtown as a white, cis-gender male, tall, and able-bodied person. Recognizing these affordances, as well as other bodies occupying the downtown area on main street, are key to understanding the movement of bodies around the Bakken oil boom. Not surprisingly, many of the other people I observe inhabit similar identities. From what I can ascertain, the majority of the men I see are driving down main street in small town fashion and occupy many similar positionalities. The downtown, as a space, is uniquely placed away from the busy intersections and oil tankers.

Each stoplight directs the movement of vehicles in a very direct and deliberate way. Small towns offer unique models of larger cultural cities, behaviors, and spaces. In this place traffic of vehicles and bodies make space. The downtown then is (re)made as highways have recently been strategically rerouted to move traffic away from downtown. This production of

space directs vehicles to go around downtown and eventually continue North. These bypasses are equipped with roundabouts that keep capital in constant motion and prevents the slowing and stopping of products. Massey reminds us that geographical restructuring is important to capital and labor.¹⁰¹ Thus, the downtown as a road and space has changed purpose, as it is no longer a key node of capital transportation of either bodies or products.

What purpose does a downtown then serve the community of Watford City and/or the oil boom more broadly? In this section, I argue that the downtown of Watford City functions as a spatial archive of settler colonialism where settlement is proudly reflected upon, built, and planned. Being in Watford City as a rhetorical critic may be understood first through my method and then through two rhetorical modes. I start by narrating how I get to Watford City as it orients me as an outsider of both space and place. Next, I argue that fracking is a rhetorical design of Watford City, as it regionally fractures memories of settler colonialism to describe a proud reoccupation of oil boom settlement. Finally, I contend that the downtown main street rhetorically functions to promote settlement as a consumptive adventure through what I refer to as a Rough Rider Topoi. As this thesis repeatedly calls for a reorientation in how we think of space, temporality, gender, and settler colonialism, my aim for this chapter is to reorient how we think about the production of space in places of negotiated settler colonialism through being there.¹⁰²

This spatial archive functions as a place where settler colonialism is mobilized to produce white spaces and hegemonic narratives. Further, Watford City provides a neoliberal service to the oil boom as community is welded to oil extraction and the memorialization of Manifest Destiny.¹⁰³ In this section, I argue the location of downtown Watford City serves as a spatial metaphor for fracking. The out of the way location represents a vein that serves as a place and

site for a lateral injection of memories and bodies. Here, former pasts, present growth, and future community masks and/or justifies a (re)occupation of oil drilling space.

Watford City's transportation systems move bodies and traffic through and around the city pointedly. Today, the original highway no longer travels through downtown, as bypasses have been rerouted to go around. This process offers insight into how seeing the downtown area as a metaphor for hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" is reconstructing both the landscape of Watford City and the downtown. The process of fracking has been marked as one of the primary methods for oil extraction in North Dakota.¹⁰⁴ Simply put, this type of oil mining is done through traditional drilling or well bores, and then cuts laterally at a 90-degree angle.¹⁰⁵ The downtown is fracked in and around laterally to move capital more quickly and effectively around the downtown of Watford City. However, to complete the hydraulic fracking process, water is flooded into the drilled cavities to fracture the rock to release petroleum products.¹⁰⁶ Similar to this fracking process, the former downtown and municipality of Watford City has been rhetorically fractured, and the oil boom has injected new bodies and memories into place and (re)flooded the landscape and downtown resulting in the fracturing of spaces, memories, and safety.

This injection is permanent and lacks stability, as short-term profit is prioritized over a sustainable future for former, current, and future residents. Filling the downtown with regional pasts that are incomplete and predominantly white, bodies restructure the genealogy of place, as nostalgia is tapped into to rearrange and rationalize a (re)occupation of place through occupational settlement. An example of this process is demonstrated through First International Bank & Trust's indoor community timeline. This display is located just inside a door advertising the Outlaws' Bar and Grill on the downtown main street. Indoors, a wide-open space serves

almost as a miniature all-hours community walking space or lobby that is characteristic of large-scale shopping malls. Once indoors, a movie theater is selling tickets, the bar and grill begins to die down for the evening, and the First International Bank and Trust is closed with only a lit display outside their locked doors. Across three twenty-foot sections the bank showcases a display that is lit with exhibit titles, pictures, and descriptions. The three titles are as follows: “Commitment to Community,” “Proud of the Past,” and “Poised for the Future.” Under each digital display a series of pictures rotate through.

The “Commitment to Community” section is displayed in front of a large North Dakota landscape backdrop and describes the following three architectural developments tied to the bank’s financing: Rough Rider Center, downtown revitalization project, and hospital. The “Downtown Revitalization” credits the bank as responsible for listening to “Watford City’s residents’ calls for a movie theater and steak house.” Additionally, the display describes the bank’s family-ran leadership as visionaries who are credited with creating this complex and boasted “a city with a good banker for years to come.” Next, the “McKenzie County Hospital” description highlights community medical professionals providing care to the region, while also connecting the bank’s role as “instrumental in getting Watford City’s first hospital built in 1952.” Each of these community structures recreates space and architecture through finance and ties wealthy families to community development. Indeed, showing commitment to community is linked to the production of architecture that solidifies a connection to settlement and fracks regional place-making.

In the next display section to the right titled, “Proud of the Past,” Odin Stenehjelm is depicted in a seven-plus foot picture laying out a genealogical timeline of the bank and family ownership. One of the descriptions is a quote by a family member stating, “...I have always tried

to work hard for the improvement of our community. We have had good years and the bad, wet ones, and dry ones, but we have made steady progress in building strong and service minded banks...[for] the state of North Dakota as well as the nation.” Compressing time, region, and place, this quote flattens pasts by injecting narrative accounts of community leaders through finance that positions credibility through local and national place-making based on property expansion. By constituting a community through narratives of past developments and dismissing other place-based realities of settler colonialism, Watford City’s genealogy and ethos becomes remade through narrow productions of history and community development.

The final rhetorical move of this three-part display stitches family reproduction to oil production through place-making. Titled “Poised for the Future,” this display positions a picture of an oil pumpjack at either daybreak or nightfall, a father holding his son wearing a cowboy hat in front of a lodge-pole, grassed stockyard, and another white, heterosexual family sitting on hardwood floors with their two adolescent children. The oil pumpjack description boasts First International Bank & Trusts role in “managing minerals under more than half of the states 15,000 active [oil] wells.” In the next two-family picture descriptions, they are promoting subtitles of “Wealth Management” and “Mortgage.” The goal is for the bank to help “secure your family’s well-being for generations to come...giving your family peace of mind when planning for the future.” This quote further bolsters financial institutional ties to future development due to oil expansion that produces a singular regional future for Watford City that is inevitably and intrinsically tied to the Bakken oil boom. A last notable quote under “Mortgage” promotes an illusion of authenticity and localness by offering, “your first home, vacation home, or dream home...[through] in-house mortgages, allowing qualified customers to keep their loans local.” By finally tying the future of Watford City to long-term home ownership, First International

promotes a future for bodies young or old, as well as modest or wealthy through local financing that is framed as only possible through global capital that (re)occupies and builds up structures, families, and places around oil boom areas.

Scholarship on place-making through nostalgia and/or different constructs of regionalism echo this point.¹⁰⁷ These pasts rhetorically function to exclude certain bodies, ideologies, beliefs, and behaviors through archival ambivalence.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the downtown serves primarily as a site to drill into pasts, rupture knowledge systems, and reflood main street with preferred bodies. This space fractures histories that do not cater to oil extraction, whiteness, and narratives of settler colonialism.¹⁰⁹ Further neglecting Native spaces, bodies, and memoirs of both the past and present. Indeed, understanding how Watford City is regionalizing the current oil boom offers constructive insight into understanding how places are fractured and reconstituted.¹¹⁰

Down the street, the Watford City Children's Park rhetorically fracks pioneering genealogies that reconfigures systems of knowledge around time and memory, as capitalism and heteronormativity produce a foundation for occupational justification. Further, the Watford City Children's Park reinforces normalizes familial claims to boomtown space. Oddly enough, as I approach the park a smell of cedar mixes with diesel and gasoline fumes, as bits of my childhood surface. I remember putting up hay and alfalfa with my father on hot summer days driving a cab-less 1952 Super-H-International to rake the hay ahead of my dad's International-1066. This smell invokes the role of family in settler colonialism.¹¹¹ For this section, I am particularly interested in the family's role in fracking space, dismissing guilt, and displacing Indigenous bodies for productions of white space. Further, the playground then functions as a rhetorical space of heterosexual reproduction that perpetuates pioneering spirit.¹¹² Children explore the unfamiliar playground by orienting themselves to explore and practice games like tag, with home bases, or

cowboys and Indians, with particular territories and teams. My own speculation aside, this playground is of considerable size and is formed with dark wooden poles. The structure makes activities available such as swinging, playing tic-tac-toe, riding a stationary train with a steering wheel, and even a miniature house and village inside the playground with a specific label reading, “Watford City N.D.” On this city centered playground, local pride, as well as regional settlement and spatial occupation is socialized to help children claim their own community and space. While children acquire and practice place, community claims to white space are flooded into place and solidified with place being remade in the process of heterosexual reproduction.



Figure 4. Watford City Children's Playground. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

Heteronormativity may be understood as centering a normalcy of heterosexuality and reproduction as natural process of human life.¹¹³ For Watford City, heteronormativity is assumed and certainly normalized, as reproduction is integral to downtown Watford City's ethos. With a fenced perimeter, "Watford City Children's Park" resembles a miniature medieval kingdom with slides, small swings, and signage indicating no tobacco, alcohol, or glass containers. Above the playground entrance is written, "THIS AREA IS DESIGNED FOR CHILDREN AGES 5-12 ADULT SUPERVISION REQUIRED[-]THE TOT LOT AREA IS FOR AGES 2-5." By situating this playground at the entrance of downtown for everyday adolescence, Watford City fracks and publicizes spaces that socialize heteronormativity and a resettlement of space for individualized age-appropriate spaces. Indeed, heteronormativity also normalizes a gender binary that is fueled by capitalism through work schedule, reproduction, family structure, and productivity in public and private gender spheres.¹¹⁴ Similarly, we see this, separate from the textures of main street, around the Watford City High School. Newly built on a hill, the high school is surrounded by apartment complexes. This convenient spatial location places reproduction as an integral element of oil boomtowns. Here, advertised spaces for family and pioneering occupational spirit make and remake community through fracturing as an architectural design of Watford City.

Opportunities to cultivate community in everyday spaces are increasingly marketed to boomtown move-ins. In order to create a (re)imagined community, Watford City's downtown meets a desire to reconstitute community through local news at the "McKenzie Country Farmer." Established in 1908, this newspaper plays a vital role in how information is disseminated, localized, and regionalized to form communities.¹¹⁵ Newspapers function as fracturing devices and genealogical generators of past, present, and future. De Certeau writes, "Words become the

outlet or product of silent histories,” as reading is active in recreating places.¹¹⁶ In an oil boomtown, how communities create a collective memory of timelines, as well as place in contested spaces, contributes to negotiations of place.¹¹⁷ If this community continues to grow, the town’s newspaper, as well as its central location downtown, may serve a rhetorical role in how places are created, talked about, and built by its new residents. Each of these spaces orient new bodies to recreate space and interact with newly occupied space through everyday engagement as simple as climbing the monkey bars, reading a flier, or buying a newspaper to see what’s going on in the county or country.¹¹⁸ Moving from localized and regionalized memories towards more nationalized and internationalized themes, downtown Watford City ties community development to nation. Indeed, Watford City (re)imagines their own community through local, regional, national, and international fracturing to produce community pride. By engaging these connections, this further locates places of friction and spaces of cultural production that perpetuate and normalize settler colonialism.

Community in Watford City is produced and fractured in a number of spaces that complicate nation-building. Near the playground, American flags and stones emerge in a newly built space that appears to be a veterans’ memorial. Walking towards the memorial, I get sidetracked and stumble upon a sign indicating I am at “mile-0.” The sign reads, “Watford City Centennial 1914-2014 Building our Future by Honoring Our Past,” and the sign claims that Watford City grows where there was an absent prairie with “no trees, no houses, no fences or power poles, no oil derricks or oil pumpers and no roads. Cattle grazed where we now find a very prosperous community.” This sentiment sets itself into place, as Watford City places a binary on the past that limits our scope of understanding to then and nothing, to now and everything. Walking paths, like this one, function as sites that expand of everyday space that

fracks, builds, and produces community space to cover and (re)cover pioneering space.

Descriptions of these projects cover the original inhabitants and veer far from even a simple land acknowledgement for our nation's first people. Native Americans are non-existent and therefore dismissed. Settlement starts from nothing to everything, as there can only be past and future and no consciousness to evaluate or critique "progress" in the present.

Switching towards productions of pioneering space, printed on the sign is the following caption:

Our citizens have witnessed 100 years of history through the evolution of our society and community in Watford City, North Dakota. We have appreciated the sustained cultivation and vision through the determination and grit of many pioneers in the mapping of our direction...splendidly survived and prospered.

The last sentence starts, "Your footsteps (on this walking trail) will begin with the enthusiasm of the first pioneers in the area and you will walk full circle to realize how the passage of time and events has shaped our community." Here a participatory journey centers walking as an everyday means to map, frack, flood, and cultivate a past in order for individuals to reorient themselves towards a future.¹¹⁹ This orientation places the individual as a voyeur and participant in the future whose gaze strictly intensifies towards progress, as individuals walk forward by any means necessary. Conveniently, this centers the oil boom as a future that embodies progress, modernity, and self in community development. Indeed, as rhetorical critics, our bodies continually move towards texts and/or textures in an inherently rhetorical fashion.¹²⁰

Directing our attention back to the flags and veterans' memorial, walking is composed of detours, distractions, and displacements of self. Pulling myself forward and walking (as the marker suggested I do), I approach a massive untitled memorial that reconstitutes community and bolsters nation-building. The monument is circular and surrounded with eleven stone pillars, in a common enough style, resembling Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England. Each pillar has a

famous quote related to war from a president on each side and a list of service members who have given their lives in combat below the quote. Then in the middle of the pillars, each branch of the military is commemorated with a traditional seal in the center of a flat, dwarfed cylinder. This monument provides no explanation of how the monument is designed to function, yet we gather enough details from the spatial textures presented to us to make our own predictions. However, the monument seems far from serving a polysemous purpose, as the memorial has been newly constructed aside a playground in the city's park.¹²¹ It is my understanding that Watford City's veterans' memorial rhetorically functions to center memories of sacrificial citizenship and service to country through engraved names of local soldiers who lost their lives in combat. Located at a community park, like so many other memorials, this instalment makes efficient use of a proximity to a playground and downtown location to centralize a constituted community.¹²²

By tying patriotism to place, Watford City links the oil boomtown to nation-building in a spatial placement that creates a connection to community and country. In a similar vein to "support our troops," this memorial functions to frack the flag by tying and/or constituting the oil boom with national identity.¹²³ Thus, to challenge the country, fracking, and oil development in general is to refute or display disdain for troops, community, and country. This further ties the Bakken oil boom to national identity, as local spaces construct and reconstruct place and identity. After a quick walkthrough, I take several pictures, and walk my way back onto main street roughly 350 feet away.

Once back downtown, diesel fumes again register with increasing strength as pickup after pickup authoritatively drives past me, and I take notice of the setting sun. A few blocks into walking from south to north, on the right side of the road, a Chevy half-ton pickup swerves at me

from behind and a fully loaded vehicle filled with men my age look at me and drive off. My memory traces back to when I used to live in rural Nebraska and would run in the darkened late evenings on gravel roads and pickups would swerve at me as a part of a regional Friday or Saturday night “booze cruising” ritual. In Watford City I find a similar experience, yet here the expressions of masculinity are amplified and cover from the chaos is a little ambiguous. Inhabiting a male body, a swerve is all I get. My mobility is not radically compromised, only noticed.

Consuming a Rough Rider Topoi

While moving through Watford City, I find the downtown functions as a site and/or playground of masculinity. The main street publicizes what I call a Rough Rider Topoi that fracks and relies on new frontier space as a texture for consumptive adventures. Influenced by Teddy Roosevelt’s self-proclaimed life changing experiences in North Dakota and out west, Roosevelt would eventually become a member of a group of men called the Rough Riders who fought as a special military unit during the Spanish-American War in Cuba.¹²⁴ President Roosevelt would later employ Rough Rider ethos through the Frontier Myth as a catalyst for change, as Roosevelt was able to recreate a genealogy of the frontier through romanticizing early European settlers.¹²⁵ Capitalizing on this myth, Roosevelt created credibility through a Rough Rider mentality that connected his experiences in North Dakota of toughening up and “becoming a man” to national identity by embracing rhetorical modes of western expansion after the frontier was considered closed. It is important to note that Roosevelt occasionally advocated for the equality of different cultures and genders; yet, his rationalization for equality routinely fell short as embracement’s of biological determinism, masculine displays of bravado, and political inconsistencies contradicted his rhetoric. Indeed, these sentiments continue to be debated to this

day.¹²⁶ Through the commodification of the Frontier Myth, Roosevelt justified a (re)expansion of whiteness that could be relatively applied to Manifest Destiny, property expansion through capitalist enterprises, and settler colonial behaviors. A glorification of this narrative visually emerges and covers main street, as nostalgic pasts are fractured and tapped.

This section will be looking into three primary texts that construct masculinity and enable occupation of and around Watford City. First, I will be exploring how hegemonically produced spaces rhetorically function by drawing on rugged individuals that provide instructions for how to become a pioneering man. Next, I contend that bodies flood space as both weapons and wielders of weapons, producing space and territory through aggression. Lastly, I suggest that by acquiring land and real estate, white space is created literally through property ownership and figuratively through everyday occupation and movement of white bodies that fractures space to create an archive of whiteness.

Signaling an ethos of adventure and exploration, I see “6 Shooters’ Showhall and Café” and “Outlaws’ Bar & Grill.” Both recently built stores are ironically located inside the same building as the First International Bank and Trust. The “6” on “6 Shooters” is in the shape of a pistol magazine similar to the popularized U.S. military issued Colt 44. In a similar vein, the Outlaw’s sign depicts the half-covered face of a mystery man underneath his cowboy hat brim. Signifying a consumption of lawlessness and rugged individualism, both businesses visually situate downtown to mirror and fracture an old west storefront that popularizes violence and anarchy. This further creates a sense of adventure and unsettled space that have yet to be impacted by the demands of modernity.¹²⁷ Not far away, a liquor store front appropriates the visual esthetics of the stereotypical Old West saloon, as the 21st century mobile saloon fronts as a liquor store equipped with a drive-thru option. Mobility through four-wheel-drive hybridizes

mobility and blurs the lines of masculine mobility, as horses have long been out of style on this rugged landscape.

Further bolstering occupational claims to space, “City Bar” becomes visible with a sign hanging perpendicular to the building about 20 feet high. On the sign, three translucent beer bottles sit in ice and below the title rests an oil pumpjack in between “City” and “Bar.” This self-claimed dive bar functions as a token of ownership and working-class space. This bar signage capitalizes on the oil boom and hitches the city to oil production by almost making the “City” possessive of the oil pump beside it. To be an oil worker is to be a part of these institutions and frack city space. Thus, drinking in a bar is depicted as a part of belonging.¹²⁸ Next door, belonging is available through visual loyalty to place, as “The Ink Well Tattoo Co.” modestly sits next door at half the height of the City Bar. Each piece of signage further ties community to place with every oil rigging and well reference. Consuming a Rough Rider Topoi is easily accessible. Individuals are repeatedly flooded and (re)oriented into fractured space to consume nostalgic constructions of masculinity that connects settler colonialism, rugged individualism, and community, as work remains central to masculine identities.¹²⁹

The production of space is negotiated by bodies that create distance between themselves and the “other.”¹³⁰ This segment explores how main street functions as a consumptive space of protection from “the other.” Further drawing on the “6 Shooter” theme from the café, “Big Boy’s Toys Guns and Ammo” places two revolvers intersecting one another to form a lethal “X” with the barrels for their business sign. The sign actively fractures main street archives. Memory is tapped into through a rhetoric of freedom, as well as independence, through attention to a “Boy’s” fantasy and grown-up or “Big” sensibilities. Growth may also be modified to accommodate individual tastes as well. Beside the armory, a black steel box reads, “Rent Drop

Box.” In a library like fashion, this capsule offers individuals an everyday opportunity to develop at taste for firearms as a means of protection and negotiating space.¹³¹ A poster on the front window advertises a pair of pistols made by Glock that suggest they are “A Perfect Fit,” as modernity proposes strapping on dual pistols similar to the Old West but with high-tech modern fashion. Still, temporality is increasingly drawn upon to nostalgically frack settler colonial logics of space that play up revolvers as negotiators of space in Old West movies by means of main street duals and shootouts.



Figure 5. Big Boy's Toys Guns & Ammo Downtown. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

The rural main street is often thought of as a space of economic competition over property where wilderness and civilization are moderated. Historically, rural western towns served as a space to buy food, building supplies, clothing, and other staples. Because of this common space, people who either lived outside of town or were passing through were forced to

interact in community spaces to gather supplies that only a population center could offer. For example, in western films, women and gender are frequently seen as markers of civilization and order.¹³² Thus, once order and community were disturbed or contested, conflict broke out. To disrupt harmony is to challenge settlement and western expansion.

By considering nostalgic narratives of community defense and/or family protection, weapons become centralized and woven into a binary between wilderness and civilization. One symbolic display of this behavior is communicated in old west films through main street duels or shootouts. Firearms then may serve as memory objects and devices to “civilize” and produce white space.¹³³ Through this process, the body at the other end of the barrel is fractured, othered, and dehumanized to justify space and place development. Although games like, “Cowboys and Indians” might be moving out of style vernacularly, they remain central to an ethos of rugged individualism, frontiersmanship, and westward expansion. Guns then further negotiate space with “the other” by disrupting Native space and promoting white space. Indeed, pistols negotiate a range of space extended from self, yet, behind the weapon, the individual body becomes a defender of space in Watford City. By recognizing narrativized accounts of weapons as objects that defend both community and nation, this section proposes that firearms function both as nostalgic memory objects as well as tools that have historically fractured, negotiated, produced, and rationalized a defense of community space and property.

Turning towards more individualized means to manually produce space, “Watford City Karate & MMA” occupies a storefront in downtown to advertise mixed martial arts and what appears to be traditional karate. Drawing from the body, self-defense has become increasingly popularized as the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) has solidified a cult-like following.¹³⁴ In addition, it is important to recognize the body as capable of being both a resistive agent and

oppressor. Disciplinarily grounded in self-control, many mixed martial arts are used as an outlet, as opposed to a weapon for the general public. However, by publicizing self-defense, an “other” may be produced through binary logics. This production of the other complicates how communities negotiate what an appropriate citizen or body may look like in Watford City.

With migrating bodies moving to oil boom areas for employment, uncertainty may be constructed and capitalize and/or frack into a place’s self-defense market. Yet, this promotion echoes the cult classic film, “Fight Club” adapted from Chuck Palahniuk’s book by the same name. Karen Lee Ashcraft and Lisa A. Flores critique such victimized sentiments as men struggle to cope with modernity and shifting popular notions of masculinity.¹³⁵ However, the publicity of advertisement and merchandise, such as “Tap Out” shirts complicate publicity of martial arts and masculinity. On the front of the building a sign depicting an octagon enmeshed in rubberized fencing, commonly used in UFC rings, has a fist centered as the octagon measures over two feet in diameter. I again find this decal on two full-sized vans behind the building, as the vehicles have a human sized advertisement titled: “After School Karate Program Watford City Karate & MMA.” On these vans a cartoon young woman and man wear black robes and black belts. Mixed martial arts have long served as a popularized means for self-defense and discipline. Yet, masculine violence used to negotiate space continues to be a commodity in rural America and Watford City, as contested space is not strictly reduced to land ownership.¹³⁶ As new bodies circulate into oil boom areas, community spaces may publicize narratives of unsafety. Whether adults or children, individuals are taught how to produce and create space through everyday social relations that fracture narratives of safety to produce the “other.” Indeed, space is negotiated as a weapon that acts both as an extension of self (pistols) and the individual self in society.

Located just under two miles from downtown, the “Rough Rider Center” emerges as a structure to visually and regionally reclaim white space. This building’s location is outside the scope of my thesis project, yet it is important to note as signage dips into nostalgic fracturing of the past and promotes a masculine attitude of adventurous pioneering spirit. Situated next to the Watford City High School, the Rough Rider Center occupies approximately 268,000 sq. ft. This multipurpose facility’s vision statement hopes to “continue to grow the capabilities and role of the Rough Rider Center as the community and region continue to grow through a process of continuous improvement and development of our people and resources.” Regionalism often prioritizes specific pasts that favor a monolithic present narrative and preferred pasts that feed future progress through short-sighted incomplete narratives.¹³⁷ The Rough Rider center plays into this narrative, as the mere scale of space being occupied demonstrates spatial negotiations that speak to the pioneering spirit of the “process of continuous improvement and development of our people and resources.” This public proclamation of masculinity and adventure is often centered around public space. How then might private space be publicly communicated in downtown Watford City and navigated in hypermasculine oil boomtowns?

Along with these projections of rugged individualism and Rough Rider Topoi, it might be beneficial to consider individuals’ mental health conflicts with a hypermasculine downtown message. Just south of Big Boys Toy’s, the “Summit Counseling services” blue and white sign reflects the waning North Dakota sunlight. This segment of services may serve a vital counter-role in private negotiation of space in places of dwelling. In contrast to strong projections of public masculinity and fearless adventurous spirit, counseling services may speak back and rupture productions of hegemonic masculinity. Summit provides addiction services like “DUI/Drug & Alcohol evaluations, DUI Seminars, [and] Outpatient Treatment.” The counseling

services range from assistance for children and adults to private issues like depression, anxiety, emotional and sexual abuse, anger management, and couples' therapy. Considering counseling services' role in private space negotiations of masculinity may be vital to better understand illnesses related to anger, anxiety, depression, and family troubles in private spaces in oil boom areas. Private spaces are often difficult to study in space and place scholarship and limited observation makes much of this work challenging. By considering the publicity of Rough Rider Topoi alongside public constructions of privacy through counseling services, gendered rhetorical codes may become more complete in understanding Watford City's main street.

A final nuance of Rough Rider Topoi, real estate advertising in public places, complicates and fractures embodied claims to private space. The Bakken oil reserve has radically transformed real estate in both oil boomtowns and land prices nearby more broadly.¹³⁸ Businesses like "Bakken Realty" further express this transformation. One building to the south of Summit Counseling Services, this real estate businesses' "A" in "Bakken" is illustrated as an oil tower for drilling. This "A" has black spouting oil from a bore hole straight down to represent normal oil well drilling. In addition, there are three lines below running perpendicular and lateral, embodying practices of hydraulic fracturing. This visual connection almost acts as the rhizome of oil drilling, as fracturing wells create infinite postmodern cracks in shale.¹³⁹ These metaphorically fractured rhizomes extend to the public in the form of property.

The Bakken Reality sign digitally ruptures traditional claims to space by constructing a digital place to experience and practice place-making. This storefront has around eleven electronic screen monitors that display different properties around the Bakken. The screen I took a picture of advertises suites with an interactive video equipped with touch screen capabilities. To indicate the amount of space a dweller will be occupying, the monitor displays the monthly

price, map listings, extra info, and mortgage payment calculations. Interactive real estate technologies on main street offers an everyday experience for adults similar to children at the Watford City Park playing “town” inside the playground. Here adults slide their fingers over a new frontier of properties and settlements, as naming, mapping, and signage facilitate bodies relationships to dwelling and the fracturing of space that normalize settler colonialism.

Occupying property is presented in Watford City as a necessary step in settling a wild landscape and creating community. During my time on the northern outskirts of downtown, I found another real-estate company called “Homestead at Watford City.” I found this sign right in front of a large newly constructed church. Fracturing nostalgic memories of a predominantly white public audience, homesteading occupies a memory space of adventure, ownership, and rugged individualism based upon the narrative of becoming “self-made.” Despite the fact that Homestead land was almost free, pioneering solidified displacement of Native bodies and erased Native space to created and produce white space for settlement.¹⁴⁰

In order to bridge public spheres of landownership and development, business like “Badlands Hardware” sponsored by “Do it Best” are necessary to build and expand both private and public white space. Real estate for individuals in boomtowns is as important as it is for the petroleum industry, and bodies are needed to fracture and alter land for human use. Many of the references in Watford City portray a possible future through taking land and developing, progressing, gathering, and extracting the resource necessary for public life to flourish. This mentality centers a rhetorically adventurous type of consumption that spatially fractures Watford City to create space for a Rough Rider Topoi.

The first section of this chapter has been designed to thoroughly engage how space is used to publicly promote practices of settler colonialism. After rhetorical engagement with

Watford City's downtown, I move to the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County. By placing the two spaces beside one another, the remaining section of this chapter remaps and reconceptualizes how productions of space, gender, and settler colonialism in oil boom towns are fracked to produce, promote, and enact public displays of community building.

Fracking Space and Gender: Regionalizing Place-Making at the Pioneer Museum

In this second section, I place my experience of visiting downtown Watford City alongside moving through the pioneer museum to compare and contrast how places around the oil boom are produced, constructed, and/or fracked through mobility and gender. Admittedly, I entered the Long X Bottle Shop store at 9:55am on January 23rd, 2019. I argue entering a liquor store before noon was necessary in order to fully engage the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County, as the two-share space in the same building. The bottle shop is located on the north side of the museum and both are owned by the city. I was informed by the cashier that the two non-profit businesses benefit one another and the community. Each enterprise watches the other and introduces bodies to Watford City at all times of the day and night. I asked about the accordion gate locking the liquor store and pioneer museum apart. The woman at the liquor store says they use the gate because they like to keep the floors open to ensure being able to keep an eye on one another. I was then reminded that the museum would be opening in the next five-to-ten minutes, so I paid the woman \$8.94 for my North Dakota-grown hopped IPA and left. Promptly and in comical and cyclical fashion, I exited the liquor store, placed my paper sack in the trunk of my Camry, and re-entered the building through the museum side to better reorient and professionalize myself.

I walked into the museum at roughly 10:03am. Upon entering, I enthusiastically struck up a conversation with a woman behind the counter named Dawn. She was eager to share, and quickly explained the age, origin, and function of the museum through a mixture of her own experiences as a multi-generational occupant and curator. I clarified my purpose for coming and my interest in the city and museum. I asked if it would be ok if I took pictures. The woman notified me that this would be fine and genuinely listened to my thoughts, concerns, and curiosities about the oil boom area. As two fellow rural Americans, we talked invitationally and deliberately about some of the financial challenges of space in rural communities and about Watford City more directly. With agreements and disagreements, the conversation went from five minutes to over twenty.

In this next section, I transition from my experience of being in downtown Watford City to participating in the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County. Centering fracking as a spatial metaphor for the layout of the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County, the museum functions as space that archives whiteness to remap place. This part of my thesis will convey how the museum is functioning through three primary rhetorical moves. First, I plan to argue that how I entered the museum and spoke with the curator impacted how I was introduced to the space and how I moved through the space. Next, I suggest the museum makes use of space in their basement by stitching memories of the oil boom to settlement development that (re)constructs and fractures the genealogy of the surrounding area to favor the development of oil infrastructure. Similar to the previous section, I further use my fracking metaphor from the downtown location and expand upon what this fracking metaphor could mean for how we remember and create discourse around the memory of the Watford City area. Understanding fracking as a spatial metaphor for mobility of occupation further paints the frontier as inevitable

for settlement. Finally, I propose that the upstairs of the museum essentializes women and female bodies as agents of “Courage...Endurance...Faith...” who serve as transitional figures who fracture and settle (un)settled space. Each of these pieces aims to further generate an understanding of how spaces and memories are produced for the general public that often function to colonize space and place through reconstructions of the past, present, and future.

For this first section, I will focus on how the museum curator, Dawn, envisioned the museum to function and asked me to move through it. Quickly in our conversation, she was adamant that the museum holds the potential for people who are coming in and out of the community to take a moment and consider what it might be like to really be a part of Watford City in the traditional small-town sense. Dawn vocalized the difficulties of having only “partial families” staying in the town. Most people have apartments but do not bring their families. Thus, many do not stay in the area long-term or join in on community happenings. However, she did eagerly vocalize how some individuals came to Watford City and found another home through engaging and becoming involved in community events and activities. Spatially, Dawn saw the museum and downtown of Watford City as locations that people can visit to understand the past of the town and know what they are a part of or could be a part of. Through participation, Dawn suggested that the museum and downtown serves as places to engage the rich past of Watford City and to join the future. In a more critical sense, our discourse appeared increasingly assimilative, as Dawn aimed to localize and regionalize Watford City.

Through critical regionalism, Powell suggests that scholars should take regions seriously as the “generative effect of the interplay among the various competing definitions of that region.”¹⁴¹ Thus, pasts are often essentialized and nostalgically harnessed to recreate a present and future in a dominant fashion that stifles counter convention of regions and encourages us to

be critical of constructions of both the local and the regional.¹⁴² Stepping onto the main floor of the pioneer museum there are postcards and books with Teddy Roosevelt, memorials symbolized with a golden-barreled lever action rifle, and maps of McKenzie County. Each of these displays lay out and frack regional narratives that favor hegemonic mappings of space and time.¹⁴³

Other postcards had firefighter outfits on the fronts, children riding horses, pet cats, and paintings of the landscape. Many accounts of North Dakota's landscape function as a creator of settlement through institutions like fire safety and family. In this context, children also served as markers of nuclear heterosexuality and biopolitics. Further, pets point to an extension of dwelling and serve as regional attachments to home, public, and regional spaces. Each of these displays rhetorically functions to make the visitor feel at home in North Dakota and a part of a longer historical timeline of whiteness. What is absent, however, are narratives of Indigenous life, adequate representations of the region's initial inhabitants, and a critical presence of counter-narratives.

As the conversation between Dawn and I reaches a place of transition, she consciously opens up about the environmentally harsh reality of fracking. She vocalizes the unfortunate nature of the type of drilling and refuses to apologize for a practice that she argues has benefited her formerly shrinking community. She explains the three different oil booms that Watford City and North Dakota have experienced. The first boom Dawn mentions began in the 1950s, the second started in the 80s, and the third, and most recent, is still happening. In this conversation, Dawn vocalizes that the museum and visitor center is just over 12 years old and was recreated and moved to its current, revamped location on the corner of 2nd Ave. and Main St. Our conversation concludes, for the time being, and she instructs me to begin my visit in the

basement. By starting in the basement, Dawn hopes I may better understand the transparency of the fracking process and Watford City through the exhibits.

Spatially Fracking Frontier Mobility and Settlement

The first artifact I see walking into the basement is a picture of a red-colored drill bit with a quote regionally linking oil production to place. Black text displays, “The history of the oil development is one of the big romances of the industrial age and we should not forget that it is the wildcatter who always develops it. The wildcatter may be a dreamer of dreams, but when his dreams come true, we call him a practical man with vision.” Wildcatters are considered to be pioneers of oil extraction in unfamiliar territory and are viewed as risk-taking individuals of worthy of praise in this particular capitalistic situation. Thereby, like a wildcatter, this section of my museum analysis investigates fracking as a spatial metaphor for mobilizing occupation of the frontier through hegemonically masculine enterprises.

Orienting the reader to productions of narrative space that centralizes wealth, family, and oil production to region, a picture of “The Day the First McKenzie County Well Came In” sits beside a red drill bit illustration. A description beside the picture from the newspaper, *McKenzie County Farmer*, writes in 1952 about the excitement the oil brought to the community through politically powerful people and traditional courtship. Below this account a cut-out touristic license plate is hanging stating “North Dakota *The **NEW** Oil State.*” Categorizing North Dakota as “the new” oil state, orients the museumgoer to view oil production as a part of the state’s genealogy and regionalizes narratives of occupation and settler colonialism. By connecting the oil boom to state development it becomes harder to criticize or critique resource extraction on the

North Dakota landscape.¹⁴⁴ The newspaper's connection to oil, money, and women, situates the oil boom to community, wealth, and reproduction.

Functioning to reeducate all bodies and ages of the public, two chairs sit beside three different oil drilling bits and a television screen to display "Modern drill bits donated by: Baker Hughes." Besides this miniature display, a large model of an oil drilling site is available for observation. Roughly the size of children's toys, the setup shows heavy equipment, office spaces, and trailers for doing business. On another wall, Mitchell Precision donates an oil drilling bit replica to explain horizontal drilling used for fracking. This exhibit begins their first sentence by writing, "To protect North Dakota's Fresh Water aquifers from drilling and fracking contamination, surface casing is set into a clay formation 50' beneath the deepest fresh water producing zone at 2,500' then cemented in the well bore. In addition, intermediate casing running the depth of the well is cemented inside the surface casing and well bore providing extra protection." Through (re)education, the museum serves as a space that promotes public relations around the oil boom for all ages and for Baker Hughes and Mitchell Precision. By doing this labor, the pioneer museum rewrites a neoliberal narrative riddled with a fractured corporate authorship and agenda.¹⁴⁵



Figure 6. Oil Drilling Education Space. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

The final paragraph attempts to rebrand the fracking narrative and erase doubt by suggesting that “There is 7,500’ between the deepest ground water aquifer and the frack zone at 10,000.’ This distance makes it virtually impossible to contaminate our fresh water from hydraulic fracking.” By centralizing and prioritizing safety and transparency, this fracking exhibit fails to address some of the most significant concerns and research-based problems of this extraction process.¹⁴⁶ However, in a public museum, this material serves a propagandized purpose that reduces skepticism and criticism of hydraulic fracturing and commandeers the public memory towards hegemonic interest in space and resource extraction to rationalize settler colonialism. By placing regional conventions around the history of Watford City, regional narratives of oil development serve similar rhetorical conventions that situate the oil boom to be considered beyond criticism. Indeed, oil development and settler pasts are singular and framed as positive monolithic truths.

Recognizing fracking as a metaphor that rhetorically remakes place, temporal penetration drills laterally into narratives of North Dakota that (re)centralizes oil extraction and development as central to understanding space and history. Roughly a third of the basement exhibits spread across the floor and walls function as spaces for literal and figurative fracking, as oil booms serve as places for reeducation. In a contrasting tone, Aaron T. Phillips suggests the Natural History Museum of Utah at Rio Tinto Center conceals the practice of mining to highlight the museum's connection to land and geography.¹⁴⁷ Playing on frontier narratives of openness, unoccupied land, and undeveloped space, the drilling display in the basement of the pioneer museum reiterates grand narratives of masculine openness.¹⁴⁸ What is more, this message symbolizes the frontier as untapped, unmapped, and unsettled. The oil boom hydraulically injects itself into North Dakota's timeline and fractures counter-narratives and regions, memories, and ways of sustaining and living by orienting the oil industry as central to understanding the landscape and place of Watford City.

Two more exhibits expand upon our understanding of space, as ranching and farming center exploration as an orientation and/or mobility that spatially fixes "man" into occupying space based on capital. These two displays are located in this corner of the museum. Facing the two, on the left, we have one dedicated to ranching with a title, "Over 100 Years of Ranching." Then towards the right, the exhibit focuses on pioneering and reads, "Pioneers of the Prairie." Although both ranching and pioneering are inextricably linked to settler colonialism, they are also distinct in how they occupy space.

Ranching rhetorically functions to frack open space initially through selective mobility, as it incrementally closes the landscape for pioneering. Ranching requires adequate open space to move cattle to market and across land with limited fencing. There are varying scales of ranching,

yet, the type that has established land around Watford City serves a unique relationship with space and settler colonialism. Yet, the mobility of ranching contrasts with the fixedness of settler narratives through pioneering, farming, and community/nation building. Each of these narratives contribute to the fracturing of space and normalization of settler colonialism, as their relationship to space and temporality are significant to how oil boom space is produced and remembered.

The ranching exhibit centralizes a lifestyle of mobility as a necessary orientation towards profit. This installation then uses exploration as fuel for cowboy mobility and marks white bodies, men in particular, as privileged and rootless.¹⁴⁹ For example, a plaque titled, “The Texas Longhorns” describes the longhorn trail as an 1894 path where the Reynold brothers drove thousands of longhorn cattle from Big Bend Texas to northwest North Dakota. This path and plaque function rhetorically to centrally frack and slice through the middle of the entire United States from south to north and vice-versa. Such a trip warrants an adventurous spirit that inserts narratives of achievement and innovation related to crossing space. Indeed, this movement and path champions a taming of the west, as the tablet suggests that “The longhorns are the foundation upon which the cattle industry in western America was built.” Foundationally, cowboys and ranching play a rhetorical role in the genealogical restructuring of space, mobility, and settlement across the rural plains.¹⁵⁰ This further encourages settlement and solidifies the ethos of the already “in place” settlements. Such movement also dismisses Native spaces and excludes land rights and Native American bodies more broadly.¹⁵¹ Thus, white mobility adventurously seeks and moves across “the other” and fixes Native bodies and communities to space in order to open up western space and that makes settler colonialism feasible.¹⁵²

Further reorienting modern conventions of space, the museum again ties Theodore Roosevelt to the historical timeline of Watford City. A sign displays, “President Theodore

Roosevelt who ranched in McKenzie County once stated, ‘I never would have been president if it hadn’t been for my experiences in North Dakota.’” This caveat functions to fracture a historical timeline and solidifies a link and justification to historical land use in McKenzie county and occupation more broadly. Further, it also offers a historical example of tying the economic practice of ranching to modernity, as becoming a “modern man,” as the adventurous man is a necessary first step in pioneering and farming. Above, an introductory paragraph to ranching suggests that between 1866 and 1884, there were over five million cattle driven from north Texas by the Reynolds brothers. Indeed, cattle fracture space as they spread across the landscape and make place settling possible through mobility. Each of these accounts allow for the pioneer museum to fracture historical timelines and examples that highlight innovative economic development. Further, these practices situate an opening for oil infrastructure development to position another wave of economic growth, regardless of the displacement and restructuring of Indigenous space.¹⁵³

Later in the ranching exhibit, “The Big Lease” is described as an opportunity for McKenzie county farmers to lease land on the Fort Berthold Indian reservation “from the government for ranching purposes.” The last sentence refers to ranching as a major industry for McKenzie county and boasts to have one of the highest volume counties for producing cattle. By hitching narratives of ranching on tribal land as justified through government management, the public’s memory is fractured and oriented to rationalize and even promote productions of white space and profit on the nearby Fort Berthold Reservation’s land.¹⁵⁴ If ranching land on the Fort Berthold Reservation was “successful” and “profitable” viewers might draw similar parallels about the development of petroleum production on tribal land. What is more, this sentiment also interlaces the homesteader to place, as the following is written: “The span of the range country’s

blossoming in all its splendor covered the period between the coming of the railroads and the closing of the range by the homesteader.” This spatial transition additionally transforms economies and how space is both used and occupied. Through these fractured transformational narratives, the production of white space is justified, while Native space is threatened and framed as again open, government willing.¹⁵⁵

An exhibit titled “Pioneers of the Prairie” centers the domestication of land, animals, and people to communicate a temporal intertwining of family, frontier, and future. A large picture of a team of six draft horses pulling a multi-row plow is displayed below the title symbolizing the penetration of the land and fertility of an agrarian life. Close by, behind a salon chair, a mirror appears to visually connect the ranching exhibit to the pioneer layout through its reflection. On the left half of the mirror we see a certificate from the board of barbers’ examiners and a picture of the first barber in Watford City. The barber exhibit may function as a fracturing symbol of the spatial closing of the frontier. Haircuts then serve as a step toward civilization or a situatedness in modernity that moves away from the unkempt cowboy and stereotypical long-haired Native American.

In a similar fashion, another micro-exhibit displays seven strands of barbed wire in front of numerous family “brands” serving as rhetorical signage that closes spaces and privatizes places and memories. Yet, spaces of ownership continued to be fractured, produced, and negotiated. Indeed, barbers, barbed wires, and brands, serve as symbols that visually function to transition memories that reconstitute space that disproportionally promotes productions of white space.¹⁵⁶

Beyond symbols and materials that help and/or hinder mobility for settlement, heavier, more stationary, iron and steel products are used to highlight the increasing fixedness of bodies

to spaces long term. These artifacts differ from the saddles, horse blankets, chaps, and stirrups displayed on the ranching exhibit. Each of these objects symbolizes an transition from a nomadic existence to a sedentary or industrial lifestyles of pioneering occupation, as a pitchfork, Pearson's Nailer, pulley weight, and steam engine whistle each mark a material transition towards settlement and industry. The only textual explanation for this exhibit centralizes the Homestead Act of 1862. It refers to the homestead act as one of the most important legislative pieces where "270 million acres, or 10% of the area of the United States was claimed and settled." This information piece goes on to talk about the equality of opportunity for all settlers including "immigrants, farmers without land of their own from the East, single women and former slaves," yet the civil war was not over until 1865. Indeed, this narrative of equality is both historically naïve and inaccurate to the likely reality. Also, there has been significant discrimination against women and certain ethnic identities against would-be homesteaders.¹⁵⁷ Central to this exhibit were visual objects, symbols, and textual narratives that harnessed a transition towards domestic settlement that temporally fracked and reoriented and retied pioneering genealogy to the family, frontier, and future. This future-oriented sense of heteronormativity priorities a sense of time that exists and functions through constructions of reproduction specifically and capitalism more broadly.

Building on this reproduction narrative, a modern-day farming exhibit emerges close by. In a similar vein to the petroleum exhibit, this section designates agricultural production as interlinked with growth and life. This display engages elements of reproduction and constructions of productivity as oil and agricultural products are interlinked with symbols and proofs of output necessary for life to exist and thrive. By tying oil production and fracking to agricultural commodities, growth and life are deceptively linked to the oil industry.

In a similar move, a map display begins to question how space is represented through the production and connection of North Dakota's natural resources to world markets. A poster standing around seven feet high and four feet wide reads, "From the Land...The Eternal Agrarian Our Dependence on Agriculture." This photograph displays "industry facts that displays an interactive map of the world" and claims, "North Dakota Feeds the World!" This It also lists the commodities North Dakota leads the nation in producing such as canola, flaxseed, honey, and spring wheat. The three paragraphs describing these connections prioritize and credit homesteads in this production. This exhibit internationalizes, nationalizes, regionalizes, and localizes production. Thus, fertility of the land is positioned spatially to interact with each of these spatial conventions.

Each of these exhibits function to memorialize and commodify pasts to reinscribe nostalgic narratives that fracture and adjust history and memory to favor contemporary petroleum development and productions of inherently white space. The second paragraph states,

Horses and plows have been replaced with drones, apps and other technology, improving product quality and enabling our producers to protect our resources with the efficient use of fuel, pesticides, and fertilizers. Old West is taking on a new modern look and feel, but one thing remains: our commitment to be good stewards of the land we love.

This further solidifies a staunch connection to the past yet leaves enough ambiguity for the future that is "frontier" in nature and casts modernity as uncertain for the public. Visitors are then left to speculate. When placed along with the other nearby exhibits relating to oil, ranching, and pioneering, this "ambiguous future" is far less unclear than this poster suggests. These rhetorical constructions are far from postmodern and serve singular purposes that link spatial intersections celebrating nostalgic productions of space, region, and nation.¹⁵⁸ The ambiguity of modernity opens and produces space to exploit rural futures and communities through pseudo-uncertainty.

Intermixing space and time, generational relationships are appropriated and commodified to organizationally and nostalgically remake place. Above a doorway, the Future Farmers of America's (FFA) creed states, "I believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words, but of deeds—achievements won by the present and past generations of agriculturists." Reflexively considering my own experience with memorizing this doctrine, I see to the left of these words what appears to be a grandfather walking with his adolescent grandson. This familial expression rhetorically ties reproduction to productivity and generational occupation to land.¹⁵⁹ Centering intergenerational relationships and a futurity through child-rearing, public memory may be fractured and reoriented towards an interlinking of community, reproduction, and industry development.

Throughout this section I have pointed to how the pioneer museum basement fractures narratives of economic development around the reoccupation of bodies in and around Watford City. The basement installments reorient public memories and spaces towards oil drilling, ranching, and farming to function rhetorically to remake pasts, reframe the present, and situate the future to justify and expanded settlement space. How might each of these narratives be propagandized for the oil industry development? How could reproduction be used to justify and promote settlement and heterosexuality more broadly? Finally, how are women's bodies oriented and/or included in this pioneering story? Theorizing from the basement, women are nonexistent and may serve primarily as vessels for reproduction whose bodies are transitionally marked as producers of children and community. Further, this narrative appears to centralize children as necessary bodies in settler colonialism and the expansion of white spaces in areas of occupational extension. By interrogating gender and generational constructions around the oil

boom in Watford City, we may better understand how bodies are used to create and fracture spaces that are produced, promoted, and propagandized.

Colonizing Transitional Space Through the Prairie Roses

In the final section of this chapter, I pivot from the museum basement towards the upstairs. The basement functions to frack into historical narratives of memory and space through exhibits that exist in lateral veins from a primary walking path. In contrast to the basement exhibits omitting women's bodies, this section of the museum served as a predominantly masculine space that appropriates women's bodies and their reproductive capacity to rationalize and promote childbearing as apart of settler colonialism that fracks memories and reoccupations of space. Similarly, the upstairs display embraces a binary of masculine and feminine. Through this exhibit, I argue that "Courage...Endurance...Faith...of the Prairie Roses" provides a demonstration that highlights the production of space, place, power, and safety on the former and "new" frontier. Here women's histories are fracked to serve as commodified figures that transition spaces from unsettled to settled and co-create an occupation of space and settler.

I begin this section by documenting my movement from the basement to the upstairs. Next, I argue that the upstairs exhibit functions to champion women's movement to pioneering areas as fracturing agents in nation-building, only to fix them to a domestic space resulting in a reoccupation of white space.¹⁶⁰ In the next section, I argue that women's bodies are commodified to serve as symbols of modernity, civilization, and assimilation through the production of electrical transmission as a gendered metaphor for fracking, expanding, and connecting rural pioneering families. Finally, this exhibit mechanizes the presence of women's bodies and reproduction to promote community safety that violently protects white femininity through lynching.

As I walk up the steps, running parallel, near chest level, pictures sized 8x11 line the wall. These images depict constructions of white spaces, such as cowboys and log cabins. Native Americans are displayed through posed pictures of traditionally dressed tribal leaders. There are two primary headings. The top heading is a timeline, for example, “1800-1870” then below there is another heading consistently titled “Native American Timeline.” Beneath the headings there are facts describing conflicting timelines. The top of each poster assumes a white time and the below marks a Native time. Not surprisingly, “white” is not labeled, as it is assumed. Thereby, the Native timeline is portrayed as strictly belonging to Indigenous people, as opposed to it being a part of the genealogical timeline of the area and North Dakota space and landscape more importantly.

With multiple sheets laying out historical timelines beside one another, the museumgoer may gather a more complete picture of intersecting timelines; however, they also receive an incomplete history that regionalizes spatial narratives and rationalizes occupation of Native space by white bodies.¹⁶¹ Further, a binary is created between Native and white space that hinder a process of mutual influence in the production of space. It also dismisses systems of power and often fails to recognize the nuances of settler colonialism. This display is found on the way up the stairs to what functions as a domestic or feminine space. Thus, confronting settler colonialism, displacement, and genocide may be rhetorically categorized in the pioneer museum as feminine subject matter and separate from ranching, farming, pioneering, and oil drilling.

At the top of the railing a banister is decorated with red, blue, and white checker print skirts. Straight ahead of me, I see pictures of women bordered in pink. Below them is a cabinet filled with waving-fans painted in stereotypically Chinese artwork, hats with fabric flowers, and

various dolls. The title of this first exhibit is “Courage.....Endurance.....Faith.....of these Prairie Roses.”

This installment has an explanation of this micro-exhibit and arguably the entire upstairs more-broadly with four paragraphs. The first sentence states, “Although the men of European ethnic background were the first to come as explorers, trappers, cowboys, and as settlers to western North Dakota, it was the women who followed who civilized it and made a place for home and family...who came with them to bear children and build the families that inhabit McKenzie County today.” Indeed, the gendered spheres are intertwined through work and intimate relationships, yet power differentials between genders is exhibited in a carnivalesque fashion that places wildness (masculine) in opposition to order and civilization (feminine).¹⁶² This first section rhetorically functions as a space that describes how predominantly white women on the frontier were used to fracture space by actively settling and civilizing pioneer space by being put into movement after the explorers, cowboys, trappers, and settlers crafted space.

Similarly, civilized masculinity functions on the predicate that land is inherently female and virgin, which increases the desire and rationality to colonize land and bodies.¹⁶³ Historically, bodies such as Sakakawea’s were rhetorically used to set an example to Anglo-American women about their duty to service and settler expansion.¹⁶⁴ We see a similar trend in the promotion of Watford City as a family sphere that is attempting to become a space of modernity.¹⁶⁵ With a disproportionately male population, especially between ages 20-30, Watford City continually suggests that this oil boomtown is a family space.¹⁶⁶ However, this is far from true, as Watford City consistently brings women into community space and promotes reproduction as necessary

to rationalize and humanize the oil boom, the practice of hydraulic fracking, and acts of settler colonialism.

What follows is a testimony solidifying the role of fracturing mobility in settler colonialization on the western frontier. The description goes on to state,

Without electricity, modern medicine, efficient transportation, or any of the advances that have transformed the life of modern North Dakota women, pioneer women lived lives of unrelenting work...The women who came to stay were in every way like the state flower, the Prairie Rose, enduring the lonely and harsh winters and bringing beauty and hope to those who stayed in McKenzie County. Without the women who followed, the men would never have remained.

Without women's eventual presence, spaces and places would simply be passed through and/or temporarily used, while the space would continue to be considered a part of the wilderness or not worthy of settling. It may be because predominantly white women were put on the move through patriarchal normativity that the settling of Watford City was possible.

By white men fixing white women to space, Indigenous women's movement was restricted by both white men and women for settler colonialism to function.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, Native women were fixed to place and their mobility was restricted through settler colonial practices that were blatant in restricting their bodies to Native spaces, such as reservations and boarding schools.¹⁶⁸ In regard to agency, I do not suggest white women were merely acted upon; instead, I hope to communicate how their movement was in the interests of nation-building, capitalism, and resource extraction. Today, as disproportionate numbers of white males come to occupy spaces around the oil boom on what the bulletin board outside the pioneer museum described as the "new frontier," Indigenous women may again have their mobility restricted as rates of sexual assault and violence towards Indigenous women has increased during the oil boom.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, mobility of female and non-normative bodies may often times be fractured and negotiated through the presence of male bodies.

On the other side of this display, three fine-featured mannequins comfortably stand beside one another. The two females are wearing traditional wedding dresses and a man stands in a dark black suit with a bowtie and top hat. The tile just behind them inside their glass case reads, “Weddings On The Prairie.” In order to knit child-rearing and reproduction to the genealogy of settling, pioneering, and imperialism, it is necessary to tie marriage as a Christian institution that marks reproduction ethical, respectable, and acceptable.¹⁷⁰ This display orients the viewer to recognize settlements of the past and connect them with the present if this oil boomtown is to be “settled.” Thus, women become further stitched and used to frack and civilize space in a modern oil booming time. In addition to wedding showcases, quilts, sewing looms, dining room tables, baby strollers, doilies, family portraits, and instruments decorate the display cases and walls of the upstairs. The totality of these exhibits situates heteronormativity as a prerequisite to settling space through marking a preferred reading of sexuality for public memory.¹⁷¹

Close by, education and reproduction highlight family systems’ connection to the rural. One example is a classroom with the A-B-C’s lining the top of two walls coming to a corner like wallpaper. There are two desks. Both education and reproduction are situated as institutional spaces used to socialize and orient museum visitors towards traditionally feminine spheres. In rural areas, social life and community life is often located in nodes of reproduction and heteronormativity.¹⁷² Children may dictate social life, social class, respect in community, and continuation of the family name in pastoral communities. Again, centralizing reproduction, spatial occupation is about more than moving to a space and inhibiting others movement; It is about the repetition of occupation through each generation fracturing space through child birth

and nation-building, as well as the rationalizing of settlements in the name of institutions centered around reproduction like the church, marriage, school, and sports.

Drawing on hydraulic fracturing as a spatial metaphor, electrical transmission functions similarly as a gendered symbol. Transmission serves as a key area of infrastructure development needed to infiltrate and expand private space across the North Dakota landscape for settlement. An exhibit is titled, “Rural Electrification Brings Light To The Prairie.” This exhibit functions as a symbol of modernity, mobility, and occupation. Transmission lines connect the rural to urban and allow for remote occupation of places. Genealogy of energy transmission is centered around a domestic sphere further meshing a justification of (re)occupation of space in the name of civilizing and/or providing comfort for the family. This then questions how the oil boom is using community and family to rationalize environmentally damaging practices and the resettlement of the North Dakota landscape through manufactured marketing towards community, family, and goodwill. Further, electrical transmission allows for a visual and metaphorical space for fracturing timeline and connecting local, regional, national, and international spaces. Framing transmission as necessary for traditionally feminine spheres to operate and assist in the settling of frontier space, positions oil infrastructural development as also necessary for building families, schools, and communities.

Another exhibit marks many of our memories nostalgically, as we visualize and/or rationalize our upbringings and current occupations of space. One exhibit hides in a walled off section equipped with a doorway that has been specifically framed under a wood-tiled roof section indicating a private doorway into a pioneering homelife with a miniature kitchen and bedroom uncharacteristically sharing a space. As viewers, each person visiting the exhibit may be able to visualize themselves in this private space. This gendered space highlights deeper

questions into how narratives of settlement and identification become normalized even in the 21st century through everyday spaces such as kitchens and bedrooms. Indeed, this space dismisses and fails to challenge unjust occupation of space, place, and memory.¹⁷³ Without discounting individual agency, we may also ask how female bodies are encouraged to move or become commodified in order to modernize and/or assimilate rural spaces in oil boomtowns. The publication of private spaces in individual homes continually challenges our memories of dwelling, as comfort and normativity rupture critical sensibilities towards settler colonialism.



Figure 7. Dwelling in Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

Finally, in a jarring fashion, a display referred to as “End of the Rope” “The True Story of North Dakota’s Last Lynching” appears. In this relatively large display, I am educated about the last lynching of a white man named, Charles Bannon. The story goes that out of anger Bannon killed a family of six. In a mystery-novel-like fashion, one of the first paragraphs claims he “confessed to murdering a local family of six [and] would not go unpunished.” As I read through the roughly twelve pages of documents discussing the charge, denial, eventual

confession, and punishment, I began to consider how Bannon served as a symbol of a settled landscape.

As Bannon's murders were undeniably horrendous, it also functions rhetorically as a transitional symbol of space and a memory note of transition from lawlessness to lawfulness. In morbid fashion, below the final pages of paper describing the citizen-orchestrated lynching, the actual ropes and noose that were used to lynch Bannon are on display. Beside the rope is the mask/black bag that covered Bannon's head from the public when he was hung. In addition, there is a "mask from the lynch mob member." Each of these eerie artifacts may function to rhetorically deter future violence, but more importantly mark a closing of frontier and an inviting of settlement and community.

This symbolic display of citizenship may cover the more racially motivated histories of lynching across the U.S.'s lineage. By showcasing a specific lynching of a white body, other acts of marked racialized violence and terrorism may be ignored and hidden under heinous acts of simpler violence that does not challenge nation-building based upon racism. In a similar vein, Ersula J. Ore argues that lynching serves as a symbol of nationhood citizenship through eliminating the other and as a form of rhetorical and material protection of white femininity.¹⁷⁴ Although distinct, Watford City chooses to publicly display the last lynching that was in fact a community led lynching for the public. This choice centralizes violent and lawless citizenship in the formation of Watford City through specific and narrow rhetorical constructions of lynching that dismisses the colonial genocide that marks America.

Even with this symbol of protection, I question why the lynching display exists on the same floor with a clear traditionally feminine/domestic theme. It appears that although not framed as racially motivated and/or racially targeted, as all party members appear to be white,

the exhibit does rhetorically function to publicize an end of threat from lawlessness and “the other.” Interestingly, a mob-related murder that was community not legally ordered went without a conviction, leading those carrying out the murder to go free. In a space closely bordering the Fort Berthold Reservation, we may ask how lynching as an enactment of community creation and nation-building might function to endanger “other” bodies that are deemed as threatening, different, and/or phenotypically dissimilar than the community.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, the lynching exhibit, when paired in the spatial location that it occupies, may offer a further detailed marker of brutality that is encouraged through nation-building and protecting white femininity.¹⁷⁶ In a pioneering space, community and civilization are undistinguishably bound to domesticity and femininity historically.¹⁷⁷ By positioning the lynching display in the upstairs exhibit, domestic spaces are further defended by the memory of community violence.

In order to capture the rhetorical modes moving through the upstairs exhibit of the Prairie Roses, I gathered data relating to constructions of space, mobility, memory, and heteronormativity. Settler colonialism is framed as possible only through the fracturing of frontier space through the mobilization of and presence of female bodies in domestic spaces. The upstairs of the pioneer museum serves as an archive of situational mobility that connects preferred performances of gender, sexuality, and community through occupying private spaces that are violently defended through lynching. Through celebrating private spaced settlement, the museum situates female bodies as movable commodities for fracturing space to make room for reproduction, continuation, and justification of (re)occupied communities.

Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to better orient the reader to productions of white space and occupation in the municipality of Watford City. By moving through the downtown of Watford City and the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County through *in situ* rhetorical criticism, I have argued that the Bakken oil boomtown produces space and neoliberal narratives that normalize settler colonialism. Placing each of these sections beside one another has rhetorically opened space to be occasionally critical of my own method, as well as my orientation to the texts/textures. Moreover, the comparing of the two sites contributes to rhetorical theory and criticism by considering how (re)occupation around resource extraction sites changes the genealogy, geography, past, present, and future of places. The rhetorical force of controlling the production of space and memory, threatens polysemous readings of place and closes space, rather than opening it to counter-narratives and regions.

Further, if local productions of space that are rhetorically local, regional, national, and international are dismissed, archives of whiteness may become metaphorically fracked to make a space more governable than livable, clearly normalizing each of our roles in settler colonialism and fossil fuel consumption. Raka Shome's challenge to scholarship to retheorize and rethink rhetorical criticism from/of the Global South, asks this discipline to reconsider where spaces and practices traditionally thought to only exist in the "third world" are located.¹⁷⁸ Recognizing the proximity of Watford City and McKenzie County to the Fort Berthold Reservation challenges audiences to engage with the practices of settler colonialism that the government of the United States and its citizens have normalized for economic benefit. Indeed, neoliberal spaces are produced through constructions of whiteness and white supremacy. By studying the spaces, places, and memories around the Bakken oil boom, this chapter exposes a fractured and

corrupted archive that publicly invites whiteness and white mobility, while suppressing the history, movement, and existence of Indigenous bodies.

This chapter has set out to link the production of spaces around the Bakken oil boom with the closing of livable space for non-white and non-normative bodies in rural regions. Although the control of whiteness through museums, downtowns, and other archives have been heavily researched, this thesis proposes the work is far from done.¹⁷⁹ Strategies of whiteness are implemented in everyday fashion that remake spaces and places in rhetorical systematic modes.¹⁸⁰ If rhetoric is to deliver on its promise of centralizing praxis, then we may further reflect on the gaps of research, people being materially impacted as I write this essay, and the places continuing to be produced that restrict mobility and livability. When scholarship dismisses resource extraction in rural places, it attempts to unlink bodies, identity, indigeneity, and environment from the consumption of population centers. By recognizing how rhetorical designs of fracking in Watford City are strategically erasing the other and bolstering rhetorics of whiteness, space and place begins to be fractured and flooded with narratives that predominantly benefit white bodies and hegemonic claims to rural space.

My first text, the downtown of Watford City, invites publics into a space that has been rhetorically fractured by the oil boom, as it appropriates heteronormativity to legitimize occupation, links region to nation, and stitches hegemonically masculine behaviors to nation-building and pioneering. The final section, the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County, functions as an archive that ties the oil boom to spatial constructions of locality, regionality, nationality, and globality, as this space was built with oil boom capital. Further, the pioneer museum highlights gendered spaces, professions, and publics to legitimize the former settlement and the recent (re)occupation of space in and around Watford City.

Today, scholarship on whiteness has been increasingly engaged, yet it does not mean that productions of whiteness have slowed or stopped. Investigating oil boom towns and spaces that border the Fort Berthold Reservation matter. It matters in terms of mobility, livability, and safety of our nation's first people, as each of these archives have become fractured and filled with regional narratives that speak to the incredulous process of settler colonialism in the 21st century. In the following chapter, I explore how Four Bears Village and New Town produce space that decolonizes, ruptures, and unsettles settler colonialism. By challenging the relationship between nation-building and settler colonialism, the Fort Berthold Reservation renegotiates Native space through inhabiting at the Earth Lodge Village, creating community in the downtown of New Town, and taking narrative ownership at the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum. Each of these texts specifically engage practices and tactics that subvert settler colonialism and reorients labor and authorship to the spaces and places the TAT reside.

Chapter 3: (Re)flooded Native Space: Archived Memory and Everyday Survivance on the Fort Berthold Reservation

“Everyone laughed at the impossibility of it,
but also the truth. Because who would believe
the fantastic and terrible story of all of our survival
those who were never meant
to survive?”

-Joy Harjo, “Anchorage for Audre Lorde”¹⁸¹

The drive from Watford City to Four Bears Village takes approximately 58 minutes to travel a distance of 49 miles. My GPS agreeably leads me east on Highway 23. There are three total turns to take once you are out of Watford City, and two of the three are roundabouts. As I mentioned earlier in the last chapter, roundabouts are new constructions in oil boom spaces. Replacing many traditional perpendicular intersections with stoplights and four-way stop signs, roundabouts keep traffic moving and oil tankers from stopping. I approach each with careful anticipation as I consider the hot-wheel-like size of my Camry in comparison to the approaching trucks and semis. Keeping capital moving, myself included, roundabouts twice mark the drive from boomtown Watford City to Four Bears Village. These intersections may be spatially characterized as participatory embodiments of the rules of white spaces that prioritize a pairing of timeliness with entrepreneurship and capitalism.

Similar to the drive to Watford City, my journey towards Four Bears Village is visually marked by flare towers, pumps, and processing facilities on either side of the highway. I

approach a green sign with white letters presenting, “ENTERING FORT BERTHOLD INDIAN RESERVATION.” Below this sign, another sign yellow orange in color with black letters states “ATTENTION CONTRACTORS & TRUCKS \$1,000 FINE/LOAD,” as it requires that scoria and gravel be taken from and used on tribal land. On the other side of this sign, a similar green sign reads, “LEAVING FORT BERTHOLD INDIAN RESERVATION” and just below that another green sign states, “BUILDING PERMITS REQUIRED.” Pivoting back to the east, just past this sign, around 100 feet away, a white and blue sign with black lettering reads, “WELCOME TO THE FOUR BEARS SEGMENT.” Each of these signs mark claims to Native space that are distinct from white space on and around the Watford City area. As marking and mapping space may often be thought of as colonialistic in nature, it is also a necessary process for Indigenous bodies and places to account for control of space and resources in oil boom locations¹⁸².

I began my journey after visiting Watford City’s downtown main street and the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County. During my visit to Watford City, I gathered data through rhetorical field methods that employ pictures, field notes, conversations, and walking observation.¹⁸³ My plan is to take a similar approach in this chapter towards exploring Four Bears Village and New Town. By physically “being through there” as developed in the introduction and implemented in the previous chapter, I argue that New Town, Four Bears Village, The Earth Lodge Village, and the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum resist productions of settler colonialism and cultural hegemony during the Bakken oil boom through archived memories and a rhetoric of survivance that opens up possibilities for residents and visitors to begin to decolonize space. In order to gather a clearer understanding of how Four Bears Village and New Town construct, create, and negotiate the production of space, I first visit the two

communities and the Earth Lodge Village in section one. In section two, I examine how the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum rhetorically functions.

As I start to write this paragraph, I reflect on my current location. Today, it is 6:43 am, and I am writing from a tribal college basement office in Macy, Nebraska on the Omaha Reservation. Last week, I was a few miles away from the Santee Sioux Reservation where my family lives. Growing up my parents both taught on one or both of these reservations. My mother has long taught Headstart and my father is an educator of ecology at the community college serving both tribal communities. I grew up in and around these spaces and grew in these places. The memory of my childhood is spotted with road trips through natural areas across the Great Plains of the Midwest/West. Dad would often take me on work trips traveling across the area and country, as he met at other tribal colleges for meetings, grants, or to pick up equipment to bring back to his home college. Each of these experiences oriented me to both the rural landscape and Native spaces. Yet, my family and I grew up with privileged positions, as we occupy white racial and ethnic identities. Owning sixteen acres, our family inherently occupied space that was originally inhabited by Indigenous bodies. We come from long lines of ranchers, farmers, and homesteaders. Yet, both my parents have managed to fall out of and/or break that cycle for various reasons.

I approach this project with a privileged identity and a limited scope in understanding the spaces, places, memories, and people of the Fort Berthold Reservation. Yet by doing this challenging work that speaks to power and spatial injustices, I hope to carve out of white spaces for Native voices, bodies, spaces, places, and memories to speak for themselves.¹⁸⁴ By traveling to and from locations like Watford City, New Town, and Four Bears Village, I aim to consider the complexity of the overlapping of white spaces next to Native spaces to formulate rhetorical

constructions and productions of space around these neighboring oil boom areas. In the last chapter I drove from Fort Collins, Colorado to Watford City, North Dakota. This chapter begins by starting in Watford City, North Dakota and driving to Four Bears Village and New Town, North Dakota.



Figure 8. Leaving Watford City and Driving onto the Fort Berthold Reservation. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

Rupturing the Bakken: Archived Memory and Survivance in Native Space

In the first section of this chapter, I argue that to rhetorically comprehend the oil boom spatially on the Fort Berthold Reservation it is necessary to understand how this place is constructed through the production of archived memories and survivance. To begin my argument, I first critically reflect on how I get from Watford City to Four Bears Village as a participant in rhetorical field methods.¹⁸⁵ Next, I explore how earth lodges spatially function as an archive that (re)produces Native space. Finally, I investigate how the downtowns of Four Bears Village and New Town compare and contrast with one another, as well as with Watford City more broadly in the production of Native and white space. Each of these considerations aim

to open up space to allow for voices and places to speak for themselves, as I move through each with humility and an open mind and heart.

Once a few miles onto the Fort Berthold Reservation heading east, a billboard emerges with the phrase, “Your Oasis for Fun!” to highlight the 4-Bears Casino and Lodge. This signage is a replica of the one mentioned in the earlier chapter on the main street of Watford City just south of downtown. Functioning almost as a treasure map might, each of these signs signals bodies from predominantly white spaces to become mobile and move their bodies and capital to the Fort Berthold Reservation. Signs like this orient individuals towards Native spaces through advertisements of white spaces. All bodies may be welcome in casino spaces, yet communities prioritize advertising to those outside of town to lure bodies into places that benefit Native spaces and communities. The oil boom functions similarly, as the Fort Berthold Reservation aims to financially benefit from the Bakken oil boom, while simultaneously avoiding the destruction of their established community.

The municipality of Four Bears Village nears, and I see the Eagle’s Landing C-Store and the 4-Bears Casino and Lodge. The casino asks that I “Stay with us tonight” and suggests I “Inquire inside” on an electric changing screen. These imperative sentences function as orders and invite my body and capital into this space. Instead, I take a right before the casino and then a left to park in a lot outside the Casino and Three Affiliated Tribes Museum. According to my GPS, I am in the middle of town. I grew up in the country just outside of a small town of less than 800, yet, this is a bit smaller. Four Bears Village functions as a spatial center that connects the large-scale and rurally located Fort Berthold Reservation to a central node. Centrality remains key to the Fort Berthold Reservation’s unity. The reservation consists of three tribes: Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara. Both Four Bears Village and New Town serve as two of the

primary sites of centralized government and leadership on the expansive Fort Berthold reservation. By exploring the productions of public space and archived memory on and near these municipalities, I aim to further complicate narratives of occupation around the Bakken oil boom.

(Re)producing Native Space at the Earth Lodge Village

Before I visit the downtowns of Four Bears Village and New Town, I decided to stopover at the Earth Lodge Village to consider how productions of historical occupation on Native space is produced for publics. By building upon these constructions, I argue the Earth Lodge Village presents an Indigenously produced space that urges audiences away from traditional forms of colonial dwelling and invites visitors towards an alternative and/or hybridized form of modern *inhabitation* that mixes the traditional constructions of home with contemporary materials and demands. During this section of analysis, I will first be exploring how I get there and the orientation the space invites. Next, I examine how earth lodges function to close space between the Three Affiliated Tribes (TAT) and encourage survival and inhabitation through an archived memory.¹⁸⁶ Finally, I propose that this village functions as an archival place while simultaneously existing as a transitional node for memory and space.

Moving towards the Earth Lodge Village, I drive on snow packed gravel roads for less than a mile. I encounter hills, curves, and irregular ruts that may be marked and caused by heavy equipment traveling in to build what appears to be an industrially scaled earth lodge with thousands of square feet. The structure is named the Interpretive Center and has been constructed to serve as a cultural space and visitor center. The purpose statement writes, “This unique attraction offers the traveler from the state, region, national and global with an experience that is embedded in the culture, oral tradition and history of the MHA Nation.”¹⁸⁷ In addition, the

building has been designated as an education space for MHA Nation Culture and “Tribal members who are interested in researching our culture and utilization of archive and computer room.[And] Recording room for Tribal members.”¹⁸⁸ Looking out the window this building emerges with all the construction materials of a modern structure. By recreating an earth lodge to serve as an educational space at an industrial scale, this structure is built as an archived memory that visibly symbolizes the survivance of the TAT through inhabitation. Just past this enormous synthetic earth lodge, a village of traditional earth lodges are nestled into the ground on the southern rim of Lake Sakakawea.

On my left, just in front of the village, I see lodgepole pines stripped of their bark into posts and planted behind a sky-blue, black, and white painted concrete wall stating the following: “Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish “We Are Still Here.”” This rhetorical sentiment may be leveraged as an everyday marking of embodied survival and inhabiting that has decolonized and resisted settler colonization memories and acts of genocide.¹⁸⁹ In the Earth Lodge Village, being “still here” echoes a presence of resistance in both the past and future memories of the TAT. This sentiment reiterates a rhetoric of survivance that has resisted erasure.¹⁹⁰ To exist through settler colonial practices is to rupture expectations of displacement and assimilation. I continue driving past this wall and through the middle of each of the multiple earth lodges that face the center.

The earth lodges arguably represent not only survival through the great plains winters and a place for family, but also a space for the TAT to commune together in the face of devastating small pox epidemics during the 18th and 19th centuries to survive socially and resourcefully.¹⁹¹ This site further creates Native space through manufacturing structures that protected and offered refuge for each tribe individually and collectively. Today, these buildings are understood as markers of archived memories that embody independence from the western world and spaces for

community negotiation. As mentioned earlier, each of these earth lodges face inward, utilizing windbreaks and creating a centralized community. On some reservations, dwellings and/or housing serve as spaces where multiple generations and extended families exist and make do.¹⁹²



Figure 9. Earth Lodge Village near Four Bears Village. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

In a similar vein to dwelling, inhabiting has been used in Native American scholarship to note the inherent connection between Indigenous people's identity and the landscape.¹⁹³ The TAT communicates this spatially through homes created with earth, trees, sod, and fire. Building into the landscape solidifies a spatial connection to land that may be based on survival rather than exploitation and surplus profit, in contrast to oil and resource extraction.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, earth lodges may rupture conventions of occupation in spaces such as Watford City, as inhabiting suggests a connection with settling and living amongst the lands through learned generations and survival with the land, as opposed to a relationship of submission and domination with the landscape.

Although sharing similarities to constructions of old Homesteads in Watford City, the Earth lodge Village produces a unique archival space that is inherently tied to the land and shares the earth to construct each dwelling for survival. Walking into the entrance of a first earth lodge, I see a wall covered in tree bark blocking a straight entry into the structure, a similar wall exists on the left, and I am invited to enter the ledge in a counterclockwise direction. With a fire in the middle of each earth lodge, every structure asks the bodies entering it to move in an untangling direction around the fire. This route may be thought of as an unwinding clock that counteracts and ruptures western constructions of time and space. Often, linear time and space consists of a circular clock, hence clockwise, and a left-to-right reading orientation, leading most to read in the popularized “Z” style. Through segmenting time into equal and measurable units the clock, representative of how the global north approaches time, suggests that constructions of time are modern. Inside these structures, I am unwound while simultaneously wound, as if in a snail shell with an ending point. This unwinding process asks my body to rethink the linearity of time and the face of a clock. While certainly unhinged spatially, I am also recentered around a fire pit, as I imagine others entering in front and behind me fitting me in between a community that is centrally spaced around a fire for warmth. The quarters are spatially generous, yet my orientation towards individualism is collectively ruptured, as I imagine these structures functioning as multi-family and/or multi-generational spaces of inhabitation.

In contrast to the traditional earth lodges noted above, one of the larger earth lodges resembles the others on the outside yet has a modernized interior. This earth lodge, as well as the industrially scaled one, is built almost exclusively out of synthetic materials that function as spaces of transitional dwellings. By transitional dwellings, I focus on Henri Lefebvre’s notion of a transitional object, as symbolic and functional to bring a space to a close or transition.¹⁹⁵ I

suggest that each of these structures mediates an archived memory of survivance that facilitates a transition from former or traditional dwellings/homes to more modern and/or westernized structures resided in today that maintain and connect cultural practices. Each of these structures serve as sites of negotiation between Native space and white space that operate as representations of hybridized “modern” or “western” structures. By challenging knowledges of space and power, these structures of archived memory ask visitors to renegotiate their own sense of space that recreate pasts as primary producers and laborers of production.¹⁹⁶

Individually, as well as collectively, the traditional earth lodge, hybrid earth lodge, and industrial earth lodge all serve as markers of spatial production that archive memories of survivance and resistance to settler colonialism. Contributing to how spaces transition and mark bodies to space and time, this thesis provides an understanding of how white spaces appropriate and exploit occupational practices during oil boom times and other moments of resource extraction and/or settler colonialism more broadly. The Earth Lodge Village offers a helpful place to locate productions of space that rupture and splinter white space, imaginations, and other destructive claims or lack of claims to whiteness.¹⁹⁷ By moving through the Earth Lodge Village, I aimed to reorient myself to better engage the constructions of Native and white spaces in the Four Bears Village and New Town.

Disrupting Settler Colonial Logics in Four Bears Village

Not long after I get into my vehicle, I head back to Four Bears Village and park in a similar location between the casino and the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum. In an approximate figure-eight fashion, I begin to wonder through Four Bears Village’s downtown. Ideally, I planned to walk down main street, however, main street appears to be relatively non-linear. The

business district is small enough scale, so I walk. This sub-section of my thesis will be highlighting how Four Bears Village functions as a spatial node of commerce for the Fort Berthold Reservation, even though few residents live in this community. I argue that Four Bears Village occupies a space of archived memory that publicly disrupts and unsettles settler colonial logics of ownership and regionalism, as administrative architecture remaps ownership and everyday spaces make claims to ownership and survival of Native space, identity, and labor. I discuss how Four Bears Village relates to Watford City's downtown and expand upon significant productions of space.

An early difference in how the nation-state is constructed from Watford City, Four Bears Village's "Ft. Berthold Veterans'" memorial appears less than five percent of the size than Watford City's. The monument is clean, inviting, and well-marked. In contrast to Watford City's memorial, Four Bears Village modestly speaks to how productions of nationhood and patriotism are produced to symbolize survivance and function as a hybrid site of archived memory that resists monumental constructions of nation-state building. Four Bears Village memorializes military service to country as an extension of tribe and sovereignty. In contrast, Watford City regionally connects nation building with a settler colonial ethos to justify occupation.¹⁹⁸ In Four Bears Village, the picnic area styled roof sits above the veterans' marker, and it is placed between the Casino and the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum. This location makes it scarcely visible to casino and museum workers, consumers, and community. The location is archived in a space disconnected from participatory everyday community and experiential landscapes, as the size and location emblemize the periphery of the nation-state in sovereign Native spaces.

In a space of more everyday community activity, the C-Store confronts conflicts of Native and white space, as this site invites bodies for fuel, employment, food, and rest. Inside the

front door, an old-style newspaper serves as a testament to community survival, while simultaneously considering the production of a hegemonic regional identity, as mentioned in the previous chapter.¹⁹⁹ The *New Town News* serves as an everyday archived memory that is rupturing regional constructions of space by taking narrative ownership of community news. Additionally, connected to labor, hiring materials blanket the walls, windows, and spaces around the newspaper dispenser not particularly different from Watford City. Indeed, employment on the Fort Berthold Reservation is constructed synonymously with survival in a geographically isolated place. Defending the survival of the TAT, a sign on the front door posts “The wearing of hoods is prohibited within this property.” Similar to weapons in Watford City, the uncertainties of hoodies, as infamous and anti-Black as they may be in certain contexts, have the visual capacity to increase uncertainty and infringe upon Indigenous survival due to the flooding of outside bodies into and out of the Fort Berthold Reservation. Recognizing the C-Store as a space that communicates everyday survival as a spatial node of body and labor negotiation, the Four Bears Village negotiates archived memories of regional hybridity, while simultaneously protecting its residents through employment and safety measures.

A more formal institution that manages the production of Native space, the Tribal Administration building of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation serves as a space of archived memory that symbolizes the capacity to self-govern in oil boom times. The building sits over a large space spread out with a single story. It is a functional building but far from extravagant. From the outside, this building symbolizes an everyday space where tribal members from across the Fort Berthold Reservation visit and maintain sovereignty through services and everyday resistance to privatized and nation-state systems. More notable, the “MHA & Tero Energy Complex,” close by, stands at over four stories high and boasts new red and beige brick.

This energy complex functions as Fort Berthold's energy headquarters, as the TAT has embraced fracking for oil production and created this facility as an administrative space. By ensuring self-management of resource extraction through sovereign resource removal infrastructure, Four Bears Village ruptures common narratives of white hegemonic production models through settler colonialism.²⁰⁰ Indeed, the MHA & Tero Energy Complex, as well as the Tribal Administration Building, both function to decolonize exploitation through self-management and celebrate organized tribal leadership through everyday construction of Native space.



Figure 10. Tribally Owned MHA & Tero Energy Complex in Four Bears Village. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

A less formal space of archived memory, Four Bears Village RV campsite, remains unoccupied. This space appears radically different than other camping sites in Watford City, as RV's silhouette the skyline and are borderline inescapable. Space is occupied differently in Four Bears Village, as oil booms do not appear to be rupturing the Four Bears Village landscape. Thus, even the RV park remaining unoccupied demonstrates a resistance to oil boom logics of flooding open space. The Four Bears Village ruptures settler colonial logics by reorienting,

reoccupying, and resituating cultural claims to space in unsettling times through producing archived memories of unoccupied space. Simply existing and not commodifying space is an anti-settler colonial act. To be absent is to symbolize survival and resistance to the (re)occupation of space. Even outside this park, there are few RV sites. I was told at one point by a woman that their oil workers' camps or "mancamps" as she called them were well outside the community, and they had their own services. This was to ensure they would be minimally interacting with the communities of Four Bears Village and New Town. As I knew coming into Four Bears Village and New Town, the oil boom was present, but these two towns were far from exploding in population and serve more as primary administrative centers for the Three Affiliated Tribes. Thus, the community has already existed in a recognizably familiar state and continues to produce space that retains authorship.

Walking through Four Bears Village has helped me better understand productions of space on the Fort Berthold Reservation. Further, Four Bears Village rhetorically functions as a public space that ruptures normalized narratives of settler colonialism and produces sites of survival through archived memory. Fort Berthold resists outside control of tribal resources and space by seizing the production and labor of oil extraction. Recognizing this distinction, the Fort Berthold Reservation (re)places indigeneity into capitalistic systems to financially benefit and avoid exploitation of their land's resources. In the next sub-section of this chapter, I plan to travel five miles east over the Four Bears Bridge and across Lake Sakakawea to explore how occupation, space, and time is being produced on the largest municipality on the Fort Berthold Reservation.

Spatial Hybridity in New Town

Driving towards New Town, I pass two sets of pillars marking where the former bridge used to be. The space appears to be saved as a memorial to a former time and structure recently demolished. In the place of this former bridge there appears to be a memorial right between the two sets of pillars spaced roughly 100 to 150 feet apart. This marker is compiled of multiple stones jutting out from the ground with writing and pictures on each. Struggling to recognize this memorial's significance, I remember that often monuments are used as a means of place-making. Indeed, it is paramount to recognize how narratives are either shelved or displayed, as public sites of archived memory drastically differ in consumption. Joining the past and the present, the remnants of a former bridge marks space as significant and the previous bridge as necessary to understand the present bridge to reconstruct place. The new bridge then opens space to be ruptured by a global sense of place and capital linking oil fields on both sides of the Missouri River.

By moving through New Town, this portion of the chapter suggests that community space becomes hybridized through spatial productions of archived memory and survivance that rupture settler colonialism. To begin, I suggest that the architectural design of main street opens space to negotiate the downtown of New Town as a community site of archived memory. Next, I compare and contrast the relationship of regional survivance through archived memory in the downtowns and community developments of New Town and Watford City. Finally, I attend to sites of archived memory that New Town uses to produce spaces and images on main street that breach and challenge settler colonialism through constructions of hybridized indigeneity.

Lake Sakakawea is named after the famous Shoshone woman who is popularly credited with keeping Lewis and Clark alive during their expedition. Importantly, the sign and lake may serve as a symbol of whiteness named after an Indigenous woman. In a similar vein, as Jason Edward Black notes, Sakakawea serves as commodified signage on U.S. currency, and similarly, she is used to mask constructions of white space responsible for disrupting survival and displacing of 325 Native families in the area and flooding hundreds of thousands of acres of land.²⁰¹

Driving over this lake I notice a semi in front of me loaded with what appears to be pipe fittings, as I begin to see symbols of the Bakken oil boom's presence in New Town. Once over the bridge, I notice more yellow stoplight poles. Additionally, on the outskirts of town, I see the green and white "New Town" sign sitting just in front of a semi and trailer caring gasoline or diesel. Within the same frame, I read a holiday sign, "Thank you Bakken for a great 2019! Happy Holidays From Oilfield Factoring." Another sign displays "United Quality Cooperative" the "Q" is made into a wheat ear and a fueling nozzle. Each of these constructions locate and place New Town side-by-side in Bakken oil economic reliability. Watford City and New Town co-share this similarity. However, entering town it becomes apparent that Watford City and New Town move differently and are spatially unique from one another both through architectural design and community activity.



Figure 11. Bakken Oil Presence at the Entrance of New Town. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

Upon driving from Watford City to New Town, I strictly follow highway 23, which leads me directly into the heart of downtown New Town. In contrast to Watford City, this route does not sidestep the downtown or go around it. Instead, it slowly brings bodies and passengers of vehicles through the heart of New Town. This architectural design opens space to negotiate the downtown of New Town as an active archival memory. Yet, a clear distinction is traffic load. New Town is considerably smaller than Watford City with 5,000 fewer residents. My visit is on December 23, 2019. This time of year warrants unique traffic that may be irregular and difficult to generalize due to the holidays and short duration of my visit. Even so, the activity is considerably different in my experience.

Upon starting on the west end and working east, there is a main stretch of road with intermediate stop signs and side streets one lane wide on each side of the primary stretch of main street. These side streets are separated from main by a curb that allows for slower one-way traffic to park at businesses. This hybrid architectural design allows New Town to function as a space

for moving capital and products through downtown, while simultaneously partially rupturing the speed of neoliberal capital transportation by keeping space for community activity at a comfortably safe speed. Indeed, Massey writes, “places, in fact, are always constructed out of articulations of social relations (trading connections, the unequal links of colonialism, thoughts of home) which are not only internal to that locale, but which link them to elsewhere.”²⁰² Along with this design, there are a considerable demonstrations of surviving settler colonial practices, as people are parking, talking, moving around main street through the paralleled side streets. Similar to many rural communities I am more familiar with, this community is not “new” or has not “boomed.” This is apparent through population demographics, as well as community spaces of social relations that visibly present themselves as I walk. ²⁰³



Figure 12. Side Street Next to Main Street. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

Bringing in this traffic from the south, the Four Bears Bridge interestingly funnels bodies, vehicles, and capital through the main street of New Town. Such movement demonstrates capital mobility that could potentially stymie New Town residents’ movements through their home. While this is likely true, the spatial archived memory of New Town’s downtown allows for segmented spaces for community off the busy main street. Again, stop signs do significantly

slow traffic. Yet, it is the sides streets that make New Town uniquely equipped to resist and continue community and social relationships over space and amongst the speed of the oil boom.²⁰⁴ The main drag of highway 23 symbolically restricts Native bodies' livability and mobility by representing dominant productions of space designed for white mobility. These constructions map bodies into places as capital and petroleum products flow and move around Native bodies through the center of downtown.²⁰⁵ However, side streets and community activity beg questions around survivance, agency and livability amongst this booming chaos.

Much of the movement I observed may be spatially understood as productions of representational space that serve as places where community is resistive to hegemonic structures.²⁰⁶ Individuals make do, get by, and move through everyday activities by crafting their own stories.²⁰⁷ New Town serves as a functioning space of community that is used, lived in, and a place of resistive archived memory and survivance. On the other hand, Watford City's spatial location, as well as activity may be better understood as a functioning archive of whiteness.²⁰⁸ As downtowns serve as symbols of community and social relations, especially in sparsely populated rural communities, New Town appears to provide this space better than does Watford City. Observing these initial distinctions, it may first be helpful to spend this next section comparing and contrasting productions of space in New Town with Watford City's downtown. In the following argument, I attend to how New Town rhetorically functions to produce archived memories of survival through spaces and images on their main street that rupture and challenge settler colonialism. Indeed, these productions confront white space and rupture of settler colonialism, as well as oil and gas activity through constructions of indigeneity and survivance.

Noticing the walkability of downtowns, we may also consider where schools are located. In New Town, the schools are all within a block or two from main street. Watford City's

elementary schools are located close to main street, yet the high school is a 3.2-mile drive away. Understanding the architectural differences of building new infrastructure and assuming everyone can or has the means to drive, I question the dislocation from community and the relocation of young bodies into spaces that are more accessible to employees of the oil boom. Often Watford City's downtown functions as a manufactured space inviting community rather than a location where it is happening. Moving the high school outside of town (considerably), dislocates bodies from community, and places young people into locations convenient to capitalism and vehicle mobility that materially impacts individuals movement.²⁰⁹ This distinction also displaces young bodies from centralized community and fixes them to a space where access is only available through vehicles. New Towns school systems may relocate to spaces outside of community some day with increased earnings from the oil boom, but as we speak, the schools are centrally tied to main street and the community more broadly.

From the main street of New Town, I see a small pull-able trailer used for advertising. On the board roughly six by eight feet, it reads "NTHS BOYS X COUNTRY STATE CHAMPS" in neon pink and chartreuse colors. This sign functions as an everyday site of archived memory. In rural communities, sports teams are often seen as a reflection of community values and culture that reflect survival and social capital in small towns.²¹⁰ When a sports team behaves or performs poorly, other towns may question values like work ethic, community cohesion, and discipline. Vice-a-versa, New Towns positive performance is communicated and publicly displayed for New Town residents.

Additionally, athletic success is communicated to the wider state, and ruptures stereotypes frequently ascribed to Native spaces and communities as places are stereotypically reduced to poverty, teen pregnancy, gambling, alcoholism, and laziness.²¹¹ The signage and

success rhetorically dismantles many of these stereotypes and communicates to other predominantly white rural communities of their town's survival, cohesion, and pride. It may be noted that the men's cross-country team has won twelve small-school titles in the last fourteen years.²¹² Athletic success in New Town is worth mentioning as pride for distance running in many Indigenous community goes back generations. For example, figures like Native American Billy Mills brought Indigenous bodies onto the athletic world stage when in 1964 he set a world record and won an Olympic gold medal in the 10K. He would be the only American to ever win gold in this event. Today, Mills visits many reservations frequently.²¹³ This sense of community pride might be improperly reduced to localism or regionalism that reinforce imagined communities, but in rural spaces everyday productions of archived memory sites reflect how community values portray rhetorics of survivance and material constructions of space, place, and memories of pride.

Community is also cultivated in how local information is produced and spread across space. On main street I see a business building named "Viking Screen Prints." This business appears to be responsible for printing the *New Town News* and the *Mountrail County Record*. Vikings Screen Prints communicates it is the location and "Home of the NEW TOWN EAGLES and PARSHALL BRAVES." As the signage suggest, place is produced and functions as a representational space of community creation that serves several rural communities and the entire county. This space on main street also manufactures local and regional symbols of community survival as it advertises, "Come check out our school logo clothing!" By further stitching community to schools and pride, we begin to see how community is both established and symbolically archived through the production of textile signage. This construction, in particular, functions similar to Watford City's newspaper site, yet serves a uniquely distinct

rhetorical role. Where Watford City aims to (re)create white space and community in oil boom areas, New Town has already created social space and is further producing Native space through community signage that is both centrally located in downtown and near the school.

Unsettling settler colonialism and recreating Native space amongst an encroachment of white bodies onto Native space is complicated as they interweave one another, yet, nation-state building takes place through colonial claims to place and territory.²¹⁴ As I pass the Tastee Freez Restaurant, on my left I do a double take as I see a miniature model of an oil pumpjack roughly seven-foot-high and eight-foot-wide. It rests in front of a building on main street titled “Missouri River Resources.” On the sign in front of the building, we see an outline of the Fort Berthold Reservation just below the Missouri River Resources title. On the right and left side of these borders there are two eagle feathers hanging. Then just inside the border a map of Lake Sakakawea is centered, as a topographical layout. To the left of the blue lake, an oil pump in black is depicted, and to the right a black oil drilling rig is printed. This map and sign are a complex set of symbols. Beginning to unpack this the best I can, I see symbols of white and Native space confront one another both spatially and temporally. Lake Sakakawea, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, represents productions of white space that serve as representations of space, and the oil rigs may communicate similar messages when observed individually. Yet, when placed together on a map between two eagle feathers, such simplifications or mappings are more nuanced.



Figure 13. Business Signage Negotiating Oil Development. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

By placing each of these symbols upon and within one another, spaces and memories may begin to function as sites of archived memory that decolonize space. However, rhetorics of decolonization should be recognized as subjective, as metaphors of decolonization can be fraught with attempts to “reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futuricity.”²¹⁵ This sign may begin to problematically represent what is commonly referred to as “walking between both worlds” or between a white and Native experience that some refer to as a “foot in each society.” Conversations around two worlds are common in expression but may reduce possibilities if seen as a strict binary.²¹⁶ Taking control of the production of resources extracted on tribal land, this sign recreates ownership and (re)dialogues with land and resource rights and loyalties. Thus, these productions and signages function similarly to how Blu Barnd constructs signage in Native and white communities related to Indigenous street naming.²¹⁷ In Blu Barnd’s assessment of street signage, Henri Lefebvre’s understanding of abstract space is implemented, as Indigenously

named street signs in Native spaces produce abstract space;²¹⁸ whereas, in white spaces, they mark a white claim to Native space and language as a commodity.²¹⁹

With this building, business, and signage, the Bakken oil boom is complicated and functions as a potential decolonization of Native space from white representations of space. Indeed, producing representations of space like this mapping, may allow for financial freedom and control over Native space through inevitable capitalist manufacturing like the petroleum industry. As many assign blame and suggest what tribes' obligation to the environment ought to be, we may also ask if Native space may be reclaimed by a securing their own space and ensuring their own survivance through compliance or participation in an industry that if neglected will (re)control their space, place, and bodies. By reconstructing and archiving institutions of resistance, tribal communities may compete and face exploitive industries through their own institutions and community needs.²²⁰

Furthering this negotiation, New Town takes on many of the regional constructions of main street similar to Watford City through pickups, cafés, dinners, and drive-thru liquor stores. It also confronts conventional notions of tourism. Down the street, a large square sign faces me titled, "Gift Shop Gallery." On this sign a woman and child, appearing to be Sakakawea and her baby, are observable as silhouettes in the foreground of a red, orange, and yellow sunset. The evening transitions the viewer to another time. The time presented to me asks me to face this building as it advertises itself as a place of tribal tourism for the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara nations. This building serves a public display of archived memory that suggests an alternative narrative, or at the very least a space of memory production that places the TATs' experiences with space as rightful residents of the area today, in the past, and in the future.²²¹ In front of the building, a bright colored bench with Sakakawea and her child on back are surrounded by

painted horses, eagle feathers, and the four sacred directions. This storefront, as well as bench, reorient the viewer towards an alternative sense of time and space that invites a friendly reexamination of settler colonialism and survival.²²²

In a similarly gentle style, a fence painted with colorful trees, branches, and hundreds of children's handprints overlay one another like rhizomes across the pine. Branching off one another, each handprint demonstrates a recognition of adolescence and community future. Similar to Watford City's constructions of heteronormativity, yet distinct, New Town's connection of youth, survivance, future, and resistive erasure actively combats settler colonialism. This publicity of the front masks whatever is behind the fence and invites a discourse of rural haunting that questions what might have been in that downtown storefront space or continues to be present.²²³ I proceed to the next building on my left. This structure is titled, "MANDAN'S BEAD SUPPLY STORE." Below the open sign, there are nine distinct types of homes connected and arranged side by side in gradually increasing size like the ideal Verizon bars from the commercials in the early 2000s. I make out an earth lodge, igloo, two story home, teepee, two buildings I cannot name, and the last is an adobe home. Each of these pictures represent sites of archival memory that connect traditional dwellings to Indigenous bodies and survival.

Emphasizing the term inhabiting, as related to dwelling, each structure connects the inhabitant to the earth through its materially constructed earth supplies. This white window front painting is subtle, and I only notice it now that I scroll through pictures on my laptop. Zooming out, the bead store suggests a symbolization of cultural connections to traditional practices. This literally weaves and binds beads to leather pieces that secure themselves to clothing, pouches, drums, drum mallets, and headdresses. Only when assembled and woven to products from the

earth can beads begin to create tribal signage that is indecipherable to outside observers like myself.²²⁴ This storefront represents a situatedness into time and home space. This functioning publicity decolonizes the typical whiteness of downtown spaces characterized by “froyo” storefronts, colonial spice outlets, and/or olive oil businesses. Each of these examples have come to represent white spaces I have grown to recognize in Fort Collins, Colorado. Whereas, Watford City’s storefronts draw nostalgically from past constructions of the wild west and pioneering. New Town dismisses both constructions and creates space that ruptures the conventional and produces representational spaces that signify resistance and survivance in the midst of normalized settler colonialism around the Bakken Oil Reserve.²²⁵



Figure 14. Dwellings Painted Outside the Mandan’s Bead Supply Store and Security Camera. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

Further exploring the hybridization of space in New Town, “Great Plains Indian Trading” may be best understood as a catch-all gift and supply shop. Out front, the metal support beams

for the storefront overhang are wrapped in candy canes, silver bulb ornaments, and pine fixings. This business claims Fort Berthold is the “POW WOW CAPITAL OF THE WORLD” and offers gifts that include quilts, blankets, silver, turquoise, jewelry, and southwest gifts. A large five by five picture is centered with two young Native American presenting girls holding eagle feathers and smiling in celebratory dress with braids, as “Wilsons Great Plains Indian Trading” is written in turquoise text.

This building functions as a public space of archived memory that serves as a hybrid gift shop for both tourists and locals. Much of the imagery makes a claim to authenticity and appears to commodify customs and products, yet through agency attributed to being a part of an ingroup, consumptive claims of appropriation are nuanced. The southwest gifts may offer gifts that are beyond one strict tribal affiliation; however, this space offers room for consumption for both Native and white bodies alike, in addition to others. By interweaving white and Native culture through bolo ties and jewelry, this building serves as an “Indian Trading” space that transforms survivance into an everyday practice. Indeed, this production hybridizes place through a publicly archived memory.²²⁶ The storefront communicates a rhetorical melding of products from many groups that intersect and culturally confront one another.

A similar confrontation, the next-door business titled, “MEXICAN FOOD ‘Dakota’ (written sideways like fine print adding edits to a sign) MEXICAN FOOD CHECKS CASHED” produces a space of cultural hybridity appropriating and/or mixing families, cultures, and cuisines to create a distinct cuisine of survival. With a lot going on here, this store appears to be a Mexican restaurant with a “Dakota” tribal cultural influence. My mind wonders to Indian tacos and frybread adaptations. The store also advertises services that suggest they “FIX i-Phone SCREENS HERE.” Side-by-side, the Great Plains Indian Trading Post and the “Dakota”

Mexican Food Checks Cashed function as sites of archived memory that create spaces to rupture reservation imaginaries and confronts white institutions. By cashing checks at a “Dakota” Mexican food restaurant, productions of traditionally white space, such as banks, are ruptured as the public challenges what it means to be tied to money, finance, tracking, and mapping. Banks still exist, as do insurance companies, but it is the presence of alternative options and/or decolonizing institutions and spaces that rupture conventions of western society.



Figure 15. “Dakota” Mexican Food and Check Cashing Business Next Door to Great Plains Indian Trading.

Photo by Henry D. Miller.

A large number of businesses across New Town construct a storefront appeal that connects a diverse group of individuals to their consumptive space. This commodification is often built upon and around place-making. Two bits of signage display this claim. The first two models of my description of survivance and regional cultural melting are the “CINCH JEANS & SHIRTS” and the “Gray Horse Energy Services.” The Cinch retailer is a luxury brand of western

outerwear that is famous for being a high-class brand of cowboys, cowgirls, and cowpeople in predominantly rural areas. Prices are often high in cost, but a normal shirt may run you over \$75 and pants over \$100. This brand is associated with white wealth and rodeo culture, yet on a reservation and tribal community, rodeo and horse-life are very much culturally significant and present. These brands represent consumption and luxury consumerism, and it also portrays a blending of regional cultures.²²⁷

In the same building, Gray Horse Energy Services offers skills like roustabout, hotshot, semi trucking, and water hauling that ruptures and complicates white assumptions about trucking companies around the oil boom and rural trucking businesses in the predominantly white state of North Dakota. This company has visuals of a battling warrior with a spear on the front of the sign along with another spear and dream catcher symbolizing survivance. To support my claim of white normalcy, above the website on the sign, the following is written: “100% Native American Owned Tier One Services.” Here assumptions about ownership of businesses and normality of stereotypically white industries are ruptured. Alongside clothing and trucking companies, hybridity exists and breaches cultural generalizations and combines regional styles to create a unique construction of dress and employment. In contrast to regional hybridity, I begin to move away from downtown and toward a museum dedicated to the inhabitants on the Fort Berthold Reservation.

Survivance and Ownership: Decolonized Space at the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum

After I walked through Four Bears Village and before I explored New Town, I came across an important text. Near the 4 Bears Casino, the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum sits a few hundred feet away encased inside a large A-frame structure. I park and look out at the closed

museum with one car outside of it. This final portion of my analysis will be investigating how the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum is rhetorically functioning both spatially and temporally. In order to consider how Native space is produced, communicated, and disseminated to construct a collective public memory through archived memory, I consider how the museum functions rhetorically to tell stories of survivance of the TAT. This section will be broken down into three parts. First, I explore the process of entering and orienting through my own movement and the conversations I had with the museum staff. Next, I consider how Native occupation and settlement of space is situated transitionally through survivance, as a historic result of manifest destiny. Finally, I investigate how the museum functions as a site of archived memory to produce spaces of mobility, safety, and security.



Figure 16. Three Affiliated Tribes Museum. Photo by Henry D. Miller.

Entering and Orienting

I approach a black gate, open it, and walk up to the front door that has plowed a radius of snow offering my entry. A kind woman unlocks the door and greets me. With access granted, we begin a conversation that intersects space and time. Another woman welcomes me and the three of us begin talking about the museum, the Bakken oil boom, and the overlapping of boomtown and tribal space. Still seeing their warm, yet skeptical faces, I reiterate and clarify, “Also, I am not a journalist, by the way.” We all laugh, and I explain my project and what I am interested in. They both exhale with relief and open, beginning to filter fewer words. I am quickly and clearly told that the Fort Berthold Reservation is pro-oil drilling. It is framed as an economic necessity and difficult to pass up, as former oil booms did not benefit the tribes notably.²²⁸ Nodding, I listen to their concerns and visions.

The other woman then clarifies, as she tells me that if I am interested in the oil boom in this museum that I will not find anything. Verbally, I laugh, “Great!” We all laugh. They mention the benefit of the oil money on community infrastructure and individuals. I will discuss this in greater detail in my final section on survivance, safety, and security. In the meantime, they leave me with a final rule of respect: no pictures. I read this before I arrived, so I brought a notebook and voice recorder. The museum secures their visual archive, as well as their genealogical authorship.²²⁹ This may ensure/reduce the commodification of their stories, pasts, and culture for a predominantly white public. Functioning almost as a decolonizing of commodification and capitalism, this request is granted. Because of this security and nature of the museum, this section emphasizes my experience with this space. It should be understood that through voice memos and notes, I gather textual data, describe images, and explain how certain exhibits spatially and temporally function through my positional understanding. This also

ensures a shorter section than my visit to the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County. With this in mind, I begin my ambulatory visit.

Once you walk in the front doors of the museum, the first thing you see is large picture of tribal leaders and elders on a wall in front of you. This small room, functioning similarly to a porch to keep the cold North Dakota air out of the main part of the museum, orients the visitor to archived memories of survivance. Turning to my right, on the wall three to four picture frames hang. In the framed micro-displays, narratives of female elders fill each. Not a single man is displayed in any of the frames. Mentioning historically significant figures such as Helen Gow and Sakakawea on the right, women are memorialized to the public as the first visual displays visitors see when walking in the museum. This presentation is radically different than the pioneer museum, as the women's display is almost a caveat to settlement, rather than an initial orientation. The woman at the pioneer museum instructed me to engage with the women's exhibit last, instead of first.

Arrangements at the entrance of the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum explore pasts through the eyes and perspectives of elders. Aging is a sign of great honor on many reservations, and you see this time and time again, as they are always/often the first to eat, speak, and reflect on decision making processes. This priority contrasts and threatens capitalism, as growth and reproduction inevitably fuel this economic system temporally.²³⁰ Thus, memorializing the survivance of elders across time ruptures and unsettles settler colonialism during oil booms. Attention to elders queers a normalization of nuclear-centric time and challenges white occupation more broadly, as being necessary bodies for security, settlement, and community.

The above sentiment contrasts with Watford City's assessment of growth, community, and family. Children function as the vitality of community growth and oil boomtown

development. This perspective enslaves itself to neoliberal extractive industries and dismisses intergenerational knowledge and experience. Indeed, if machine-like efficiency is a priority, elders threaten production of space and time, leaving women in boomtown areas to become dehumanized vessels of production for community growth and development. This heteronormative framework threatens the survival of women and places female bodies as commodities and slaves to occupation, settlement, capitalism, and male bodies. Children are then prioritized as prime assets to (re)inscribing and (re)occupying white space. The museum ruptures this convention, as women and elders are positioned as valuable bodies for communities through knowledge, leadership, labor, and growth. Women then serve as part of producing, occupying, and surviving through Native space, as opposed to necessary to keep men out of trouble and repopulate pioneer space. Orienting publics towards the importance of women and elders as archived memories, the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum, spatially and temporally ruptures traditional conventions of biopower through age, gender, survival, and value of bodies.²³¹

Surviving Transitional (Re)occupation of Native Space and Settlement

By reorienting public visitors, the museum also situates occupation as a historical result of surviving manifest destiny.²³² This transition is spatially negotiated through archived memories on the main museum level. From the front doors, the museum invites a clockwise engagement. Starting left to right, I approach an installment explaining both textually and visually what traditional living was like before white bodies entered Native space. Features of these installments included: living settlements, villages, earth lodges, farming, and hunting buffalo. Each feature prioritized and emblemized making do and survival through generational knowledge and community cooperation.²³³ Such a display encourages the visitor to dialogue with

themselves by reinserting traditional ways of life in conflict with demands of modernity, as well as the continuing presence of many of these traditions today that have survived. Indeed, Native space is commutatively self-produced through legible sovereignties that builds upon rhetorical legibility and draws on a symbolic context that emphasizes a multiplicity of meanings.²³⁴

Further, this may help us understand inhabiting and making do with what the environment offers in museum spaces. This documentation and presence push against settler colonialism to situate Indigenous bodies back into Native space and lay claim to a rightful occupation of space.

Genealogically, space is revisualized not through strict critical engagement with white descriptions of space, but instead, produces space and plants Native bodies inside an archived memory that rests on a historic timeline to resist settler colonialism.²³⁵ Again, the sentiment from the Earth Lodge Village, “We Are Still Here” is echoed and reinforced to the public through survival.

As I move past the traditional living display/archives, the timelines and narrative accounts become more critical of settler colonialism and the movement of white bodies onto Native space. An example of this presence is an account of the “Journey of Fish-Hook-Village.” This community place was a historic location and functioned as a site of archived memory where members of the TAT would reside during certain times of year that would eventually be ironically flooded by Lake Sakakawea after the building of the Garrison Dam. Here community is remembered and (re)moved from its sacred space to another location that would eventually become a part of New Town and/or Four Bears Village. Nearby, another display spoke of the mysticism of the Buffalo and its importance for survival and life. Presenting each of these pieces offers insight to the importance of place-making and delicate ecosystem to sustain life for centuries and generations.

After situating the institutions that sustained life, the display engages with settler colonialism and the destruction of a traditional way of life. The notorious boarding schools reenter the picture, as biopower transitions spaces through assimilative strategies.²³⁶ There are accounts of children being taken away from their homes, as one explanation from a mother described the crippling helplessness of losing a child taken to the boarding schools. Here we see how Native children are commodified for assimilative purposes, which builds upon the narrative of community and nation-building as in Watford City. The difference lies in the livability of white children and the encouragement of their growth for nation-building. In contrast, Native futures are and have been erased by sending children to boarding schools. In addition, labor that had generational roots and roles was dismantled and restructured, as the goal of settler colonialism is removal, assimilation, erasure, and (re)placing labor.²³⁷ Men were called to transfer their time towards monetary labors such as blacksmithing and carpentry. Similarly, after generations of varying tribal contributions, the labor of women transitioned to sewing, doing laundry, and cooking. Each of these challenges caused a restructuring of Native space and time to survive. As white space was produced through the destruction of Indigenous ways of life, white bodies displayed a mobility towards a settlement of their choosing; whereas, Indigenous bodies were placed and situated into immobility, settlement, and a spatially restricting lifestyle. Thus, movement of Indigenous bodies became hegemonically embedded in settler-colonial archives of whiteness such as boarding schools or occupations such as labor role changes for men and women. Yet, the TAT adapted, survived, and maintained agency in their lives. Movement was restricted but not destroyed. Assimilation was present but not finalizing.

Through spatial relocations, forced mobility, and placed immobility, each tribe began to recreate community and resistance from culturally reductive assimilation. The invasion of Native

space resulted in the Arikara eventually joining the Mandan and Hidatsa, as smallpox and battles left the allied tribe with few members and struggled to survive. These circumstances are also what brought the TAT together to their current space and location. The Three Affiliated Tribes Museum serves as a functional memorialization and site of archived memory of this coalition. Many installments display both individualized and collective pasts, presents and futures of the tribes. One space commemorated the TAT notable chiefs and tribal leaders, as each was individually honored in collective unison with each other. These portions of the museum serve as testimonies of community creation in the midst of settler colonialism.²³⁸ Survival through sustenance is also documented before and during white occupation of Native space with traditional foods such as: dried meats (jerky), corn, “white-man’s corn,” chokecherry paddies, mushrooms, and dried wild turnips. Survival and making do temporally characterize the resistance, presence, and future of Native space.²³⁹ The Three Affiliated Tribes Museum confronts space, time, agency, and survivance to serve as potential avenues to unsettle western time, space, history, and rhetorical traditions bound in whiteness.

Archive of Mobility, Safety, and Security

Settler colonialism as an act and process has largely put individual people in movement only to restrict their mobility.²⁴⁰ Moving from situating occupation as a transitional historic act, this next section aims to explore how the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum functions as a site of archived memory to produce spaces of mobility, safety, and security. It is important to note that museums and the bodies inside are alive.²⁴¹ The displays ignite movement in visitors’ legs as they move through them. Participants’ minds move as they think of alternative timelines, histories, and ways to live. The understanding of history that visitors develop is growing and in a

process of constant negotiation in how participants comprehend colonization and decolonization. Museums are fluid places that incite and demand movement through a living archival memory.²⁴² The curators breathe, talk, and walk, as I asked them questions about their experiences with the community, museum, and oil boom. Indeed, museum workers are inherently apart of the consummatory function of museums, and images, bodies, and narratives of survival are consumed.

In this particular museum, my own mobility is called upon as one of the women I talked with at the beginning of my visit asked that I visit the tribal building/headquarters. To take this visit highlights the importance of “being there” and interacting with a space of archived memory found nowhere else. She said it was important that I heard about the pros and cons of the oil boom and infrastructure development. The duration of my visit as well as the tangible scope of my project did not incite this meeting, yet I imagine that I may get other opinions similar to these two women at the museum. Supporting oil extraction is a difficult decision, and the invitation of drilling onto the Fort Berthold Reservation invites bodies, capital, and material onto and off of the reservation. For example, my body was called into movement in order to learn about the people of the TAT during an oil booming time. It seems people are often asked to move into action, whether in a museum or at the dinner table over political discussion during the holidays.

Upstairs an installment highlights the “HISTORY IN THE GARRISON AREA,” as this display is largely tied to space, inhabiting, and movement. The initial images one sees are of an area mapped around the Fort Berthold Reservation, the Missouri River, and the Garrison Dam. Lake Sakakawea is predominantly situated on the Fort Berthold Reservation, and each of these maps communicate the movement and relocation of the people of the TAT as a result of constructing the dam, trading posts, and battles. The once fertile river bottom, now flooded by

the construction the Garrison Dam on tribal land, was referred to as a space of “unnumbered generations of Indian Farmers” before European settlers arrived in the area. The map appears to display fourteen original locations where tribal villages once existed in the now flooded land on the dam(n)ed Missouri River. As the ground was flooded, pasts were erased and left to stories. By constructing the lake, the river was colonized leaving the land unrecognizable by its original inhabitants. Damming the river functions as not only an archive and memorialization of whiteness, but also a testament to visual assimilation that ruptures landscape imaginaries, destroys native ecology, and challenges Indigenous survivance.

After the civil war and the discovery of gold in Montana, the display writes, “immigrants poured into the country and Indians were desperate because of encroachment on their lands. The military sought to restrict travel across the plains to a few major routes; one being a river route.” The word “poured” serves as spatial metaphor that pairs to the flooding of Native space and land. As the traveling of white bodies became restricted and funneled by what the display described as the “hostile Sioux,” the river became a route, road, node, and transport line of white bodies and marketable products making settler colonialism possible.²⁴³ Thereby, the river functions similarly to the spatial metaphor of fracking as a design of Watford City. This area of Native space was then largely colonized by the river, further serving as a symbol for neoliberalism and a route connecting the production of white space to settler colonialism.

Today, river travel in the area is long gone. Highways, bridges, and roundabouts replace river transportation and “pour” oil boom infrastructure, products, and bodies onto Native space. Thus, the products of the oil boom secrete excesses of violence, drugs, sex trafficking, and harassment. Bodies begin to move through their home space differently and the routes of settler colonization rupture into intimate spaces effecting survivability. Further, downtowns and main

streets are colonized and serve as symbols and sites of white mobility, as roads replace the river. The Three Affiliated Tribes Museum functions as a space of archived memory marking transitions of the movement of Indigenous bodies in relation to productions of white space. This display notes acts, strategies, and productions that create white space through a settler colonial process. Yet, the installment also cultivates an imaginary that asks the viewer to visualize what life was like in spaces that were flooded and destroyed by representations of white space. Imagining alternative possibilities, precolonial life ruptures and unsettles settler colonialism through archived memories decolonizing space, language, and water.

The emergence of reservations marked a spatial moment where Native mobility was tangibly fixed. In 1870 the Fort Berthold Reservation was established and mapped.²⁴⁴ This move was designed to secure bodies to racially fixed spaces. For example, in nearby Watford City there is an extremely small percentage of Native American ancestry. In Four Bears Village and New Town, there is larger population. Some have roots in cultural whiteness, but it is still a minority. Reservations in this particular area then fix bodies to spaces and create separate spaces of cultural production. During the oil boom, bodies have been put back into motion making their survivance intertwined with their mobility. However, predominantly white bodies are doing the majority of the pushing and moving towards capital and opportunity. This movement has created a reoccupation of space in and around the Fort Berthold Reservation. Today, vehicles make mobility more of an everyday act of movement that may increase survivance and break down racialized mobility. Yet, it should be understood that even with physical mobility, safety, security, and freedom are not ensured.

When arriving at the museum, one of the two women I talked to shared her experience as a young mother of three. When I asked her about the oil boomtowns around the area, she told me

that she needs to drive to places like Watford City and Williston to get certain products and supplies that New Town does not carry, as the town has less than 2,000 people. She was quick to share that she does not feel at all safe in Watford City and that she often drives farther to Williston just to avoid Watford City all together. Both Williston and Watford City have populations that have almost doubled, and Williston is roughly twice the size of Watford City. These boomtowns have demographically changed so quickly that a lack of law enforcement was cited as a concern for travel that threatens survival. I was told that Williston is probably more dangerous, but at least they have law enforcement and more people around. Watford City, on the other hand, was considered a place without community and minimal safety.

I asked the two women if they felt safe in New Town and Four Bears Village. They both said they never worry about it because the mancamps are around, but they are way out of town with their own services and entertainment. Thus, they often avoid coming to town. Further, I was told New Town is different than Watford City and Williston, because New Town was actually a community with people watching out for one another. Curious about this, I asked them to explain. The two looked at each other and laughed, as they talked about how everybody knew everybody and there were eyes watching out for you. I expect they laughed in the same way people from my rural communities laugh at the double-bind of knowing everyone's business. Often, you would not mind if they knew a little less, as gossip is often sport in rural areas. Regardless, both the museum and my conversations with the two women suggest that mobility and survival is often contingent on settler expansion. As predominantly white bodies are reoccupying spaces, they often render other bodies immobile due to concerns of safety threatening bodies livability. Further, the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum functions as a space of archived memory that fosters decolonial narratives relating to mobility, safety, and security. By

recognizing the connection between mobility and settler colonialism, we may better understand how predominantly female and/or nonnormative bodies experience hindered mobility and livability through their ethnic, racial, and gender identity.

Conclusion

To end this chapter, I would like to explore my conversations with the two women at the museum as it relates to the future of TAT. I was asked to understand a clear distinction between how many people the Fort Berthold Reservation served across an extremely large set of space compared to Watford City. Because of this responsibility, the TAT relied heavily on having strong tribal leadership. Without a strong tribal council, the revenue from the development of petroleum infrastructure around the Bakken oil reserve could be threatened by going to individual families and people rather than the community. I was told that at the current moment, tribal leadership was strong. The women were excited to tell me that one of the first areas of community investment was in housing. They were adamant that housing was a dominant priority, and especially important was the housing for the community elders. Also, new construction for schools had begun.

With these improvements, they also told me that since the oil boom drug use by young people had gone up higher than they anticipated. Therefore, I was informed that they heavily invested in anti-drug campaigns, cracked down on drug dealers and middlemen, and placed a considerable amount of money into drug prevention and rehabilitation programs for young people. Since the early stages, I was told things had gotten under control in those areas. They were open about domestic problems around the community but suggested that the oil boom had greatly benefited the community. With a clear understanding of the environmental damage of

fracking, the people I spoke with did not see much of an alternative to development for survival. In the past they benefitted little from the oil booms and were especially exploited. This time, the people I met were proud and confident of the lawyers they had on staff and their tribal leadership.

With a few more checks and balances put into place and a united community, the Fort Berthold Reservation seems to be negotiating a rich past, a flourishing present, and a promising future. This community cohesion, located in the middle of Bakken oil boom chaos, continues to produce Native space by placing the oil boom as separate from their cultural heritage, yet apart of community growth. By developing and expanding community infrastructure like schools, housing, museums, and visitor centers, the Three Affiliated Tribes builds their community and reminds the world that “We Are Still Here.”

Chapter 4: Conclusion

“People want convenience and that comes with a cultural amnesia, self-imposed.”

-Tommy Orange²⁴⁵

When beginning this project over a year ago, it became increasingly clear that the North Dakota oil boom was a complex situation unfolding in diverse places. Quickly, I realized there was more content than I could ever pack into a thesis. The oil boom in the North Dakota Bakken Region began as a sort of enigma in rural space that appeared far-fetched and displaced from much of the nation and myself. Yet, as I began to do more research, I started to notice the situation up North was not only about isolated oil extraction in extreme climates with a disproportionate amount of men, but more about the reproducing of space and place to make expanded oil drilling possible and a part of community identities. This realization asked me to question other spaces, places, and bodies potentially being impacted by this phenomenon. My thesis contributions aim to generate a more in-depth look at rural spaces and places through knowledge of settler colonialism, gender violence, masculinity, mobility, and memory as they intersect with rurality.

Internal to each of these contributions, the Fort Berthold Reservation emerged as provocative place that both absorbed the brunt of oil boom expansion and benefited financially from the new oil wells. New Town and Four Bears Village emerged as central municipalities on the Fort Berthold Reservation making them choices for my texts/textures. Placing New Town and Four Bears Village next to boomtown Watford City, this project developed into an exploration of what it meant for a town to “boom” and what the stakes were for surrounding

communities that originally inhabited and continue to occupy these spaces. I see each of these texts as intertwining to understanding the Bakken oil boom in North Dakota. This interconnection is the primary reason for the large scope and size of this project.

Methodologically, my aim for this thesis was to tap into rural spaces and places that I was familiar with. While I did not grow up in North Dakota, I saw a plethora of similarities between my experience growing up in rural Nebraska between Native and white spaces. Further, the disconnect of North Dakota from population centers and the U.S.'s visualizable vernacular, situates my methodological considerations as pertinent to semi-narratively describe my method through in *situ criticism*. I moved through each of these spaces to document, theorize, and observe how settler colonialism is publicly communicated and reinscribed through place-making. Additionally, I investigated how my method offers decolonial possibilities and flexibly to build upon previous research and closely interact with the productions of spaces, places, and bodies in the region. In the remaining pages of this project, I will give a brief summary of each chapter with a few key takeaways. To close this thesis, I would like to address a few limitations, as well as potential contributions and implications to the field of communication generally and rhetorical studies more specifically.

Fracking and Flooding Spatial Archives of Watford City

In the first analytical chapter, I primarily focus on how hegemonic productions of space are publicly communicated and connected to regional memories of North Dakota. These rhetorical constructions bolster narratives of (re)occupation that make and remake Watford City as a community that is “open for business.” Each of the examples in this chapter demonstrated how place-making is key to how settler colonialism functions in rural communities. The

beginning of chapter two documents my experience of visiting Watford City. I record the emergence of numerous oil pumps, flair towers, pick-ups, and large-scale apartment complexes that are not characteristic of many rural communities. Upon my arrival, billboards begin to formulate how Watford City makes place-based claims to occupation and place.

The downtown of Watford City expands these claims and constructs an environment where everyday participations of community reinscribe whiteness and territorial claims that connect nation building to the Bakken oil boom.²⁴⁶ One of these everyday productions of space are the roundabouts located on the edges of town that allow oil boom capital and products to be transported without having to slow down. Thus, Massey suggests, “social relations (trading connections, the unequal links of colonialism[])...are not only internal to that locale, but which link them to elsewhere” emphasizes the everyday connections and productions of space that interlink small communities to global nodes of power.²⁴⁷ The original highways went through Watford City’s downtown, but the new construction of roundabouts allows capital and bodies to circumvent centralized spaces of community production. Thus, Watford City’s downtown serves as an archival space of whiteness where community is manufactured and practiced. By highways and roads being rerouted around main street, I argued that the downtown of Watford City began to increasingly serve as a space that is rhetorically fracked as a means to fracture the genealogy of a community and metaphorically flood each narrative with constructions of whiteness that emphasized regionalism, heteronormativity, and settler colonialism. This spatial metaphor emphasizes the rhetorical potential to visualize how boomtowns in oil boom spaces combine with community development to regionalize narrative of whiteness.²⁴⁸ The result has been a complete reconstruction of the downtown of Watford City in order to remake a space that

rationalizes a reoccupation of space through nation-building and experiential landscapes of everyday whiteness.²⁴⁹

Productions of everyday whiteness are paramount as they are participatory across genders and ages. For example, the downtown lays a claim to heteronormativity and nation-building through reproduction.²⁵⁰ The Watford City Children's Playground solidifies this sentiment, as the inside of the playground has a miniature version of Watford City embedded within. As de Certeau writes, "To practice space is thus to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood; it is, in a place, to be other and to move towards the other" we consider how place is remade through young people in a community.²⁵¹ In this space, children normalize the practicing and (re)practicing of making community at a young age. This standardized behavior solidifies the incestuous nature of settler colonialism that demonstrates how difficult it is for individuals to self-recognize and commutatively combat neoliberalism. Indeed, by connecting child reproduction to community-building through practiced place-making, the downtown of Watford City solidifies a self-rationalized claim to place based on family expansion and economic precarity.

Building upon constructions of pioneerism and Manifest Destiny, this thesis further suggests that Watford City's downtown space also functions to promote a Rough Rider Topoi. A masculine ethos is constructed to appeal to the disproportionate number of predominantly white men whom have moved onto the North Dakota landscape and oil boom towns..²⁵² This appeal is demonstrated through repeated examples of President Theodore Roosevelt's self-promoted masculinity.²⁵³ It is here where a sense of manhood is harnessed to endorse the resettlement of space and a building of a nation with a monolithically white identity.²⁵⁴ Through billboards, statues, bars, gun stores, and mixed-martial arts studios, Watford City's downtown functions as a

consumptive space that appeals to adolescent males' senses of exploration and entitlement. With much of the petroleum development happening during and after the great recession of 2008, the oil boom landscape of North Dakota represents a space where nostalgic visions embody seemingly limitless open space, restored sense of traditional masculinity, and a lawlessness that is comparative to rugged individualism. Here tropes of cowboys and Indians excite John Wayne fans and recast an entitlement to space resulting in normalized productions of white space and place. Each are fracked and flooded with white epistemologies and ontologies that dismiss both alternative narratives and settler colonial practices.²⁵⁵ Solidifying these claims, the Pioneer Museum of McKenzie County channels the downtown ethos and produces another space of archived whiteness.

The second half of chapter two transitions from exploring the downtown space of Watford City and pivots towards a territorial museum on main street. This space rhetorically functions in my thesis to explain the movement onto and around Watford City through means of place-making and essentializing gender. Similar to the downtown, the pioneer museum is flooded by oil boom propaganda that focuses its effort into altering and regionalizing McKenzie County and Watford City as inherently tied to oil production and nation-building. The museum's spatial layout functions similar to the downtown of Watford City. They both function as spaces that are metaphorically fracked by the oil boom. Each links claims to space and community building to oil production that situates the community as being beyond critique and challenging, as criticizing the methods of oil production would be to challenge regional constructions of community and nation.

The museum's two primary displays each function to regionalize place-making by fracking space and gender to tell singular narratives. Essentially, they justify settler colonialism

through developmental narratives of progress that situate mobility and gender as key categories for community development.²⁵⁶ Again, I center fracking as a spatial metaphor. The museum then serves as a space that archives whiteness to remap place. In the basement, a display centralizes the oil boom and its contribution to the region by claiming to be historically present early in the community's development. The display goes on to educate the public about the safety of hydraulic fracturing. Indeed, the display functions to regionalize oil production and frame oil extraction as common, safe, positive, and beneficent.²⁵⁷ Following, the cowboy and ranching display showcases the relationship between occupation and situational mobility, as each were strategically located to build Watford City. Incorporated into this display, Teddy Roosevelt champions the settling of Watford City, as he is credited for being a part of this narrative with his famous ranch in McKenzie County. Beside the ranching display, a more agrarian exhibit historically places the area into space, as families and farming begin to centralize property rights that claim to outcompete and develop the landscape from ranching to farming.²⁵⁸ In a similar move, the oil boom aims to modernize the community and oil extraction by linking it to agricultural deployment through family reproduction, heteronormativity, and nation-building. The basement section of the pioneer museum begins and ends with an oil drilling exhibit that normalizes oil extraction and fracks understandings of histories by tying resource extraction to the genealogical timeline of community development and pioneering practices of the region.

The first analytical chapter closes with the exploration of the upstairs exhibit. In this space, publics begin to see how women's histories are similarly fracked to serve as commodified bodies used to transition pioneering spaces from wild to settled. Further, places of community co-create a historic occupation of space that closes the frontier. This exhibit is framed as a liberatory space that showcases women's agency on the prairie.²⁵⁹ While I note this significance,

I also argue that white women's bodies became commodified and mobilized to civilize frontier space through both a frontier myth and Manifest Destiny for the nation-building. Thus, the fixing resulted in the expansion of settler colonialism that inherently fixed Native bodies to spaces and reservations that disproportionately placed Native women to space that is again amplified today through the (re)occupying of white men into oil boom areas. Indeed, women are commodified during times of settler colonialism, as their bodies are put into movement and consumed to build community, nation, and rationalize the production of white space. The upstairs of the pioneer museum functions as an archive that fractures gender to document mobility that connects preferred performances of gender, sexuality, and community. Each of these displays boasts of the occupation of private spaces that are also violently defended and celebrate the settlement of private spaces. Noticeably, the museum situates female bodies as moveable commodities for reproduction and justification of futures for (re)occupied communities.

Unsettling Space and Place-Based Narratives in New Town and Four Bears Village

To bolster the relevance of this thesis as it relates to mobility, chapter three explores how productions of white space interact with the constructions of Native space. Recognizing each of these confrontations, scholarship may benefit from diving deeper into the inherent relationship between settler colonialism and white claims to Native space during times of resource extraction. The Fort Berthold Reservation, located only miles away, bolsters a decolonizing ethos through archived memory and productions of survivance in Four Bears Village, New Town, the Three Tribes Affiliated Museum, and the Earth Lodge Village. Each of these spaces unsettles practices of settler colonialism through everyday productions of space to construct representational spaces resistant to exploitive capitalist enterprises.

In this analytical chapter, I began my visit at the Earth Lodge Village. I consider how Native spaces of inhabiting may function as transitional spaces that solidify a claim to occupying space, while simultaneously serving as an archival space where modern settler colonial logics are unhinged.²⁶⁰ The Earth Lodge Village highlights numerous spaces that archive survival and the presence of inhabitation and connection to the land through structures like the earth lodges, gardens, educational spaces, sweat lodges, and various other structures.²⁶¹ Built near the lake, similar to the traditional villages near the river before the construction of the Garrison Dam, the TAT reminds visitors that “We Are Still Here” regardless of settler colonial claims to Indigenous space in both the past and present. As settler colonialism is inherently tied to space, it is also inevitably about Native space and their relationship with the land.²⁶² Recognizing this confrontation, the Earth Lodge Village may serve as a helpful site to locate Native claims and production of space that dismantle white imaginations, modern destructive claims, and normalized orientations to the American West. Through the Earth Lodge Village, my hope has been to (re)orient myself as an *in situ* rhetorical critic towards alternative forms of dwelling, survival, and space production that engage settler colonialism where it matters. This choice complicates and nuances engagement with Four Bears Village and New Town for the rest of chapter three.

Both the downtowns of Four Bears Village and New Town cannot be completely explored rhetorically in the limited pages of this thesis, yet, this insight offers scholarship a more wholistic look at how two spatially significant towns on the Fort Berthold Reservation negotiate the oil industries presence. The relatively small size of Four Bears Village does not detract from its influence and/or contribution on the Fort Berthold reservation, as this space appears to be a centralized node for bridging space and people across the reservation and area. Administrative

buildings and businesses like the MHA & TERO Energy Complex, Tribal Administration, 4-Bears Casino & Lodge, and the Three Affiliated Tribes Museum individually and collectively signify the spatial significance of Four Bears Village as a site that negotiates the oil boom. Further, Four Bears Village functions as a rhetorical space that splinters normalized narratives of settler colonialism by generating control of capitalistic systems, such as oil extraction, to financially benefit and avoid exploitive practices of the past.²⁶³ Interestingly, New Town functions similarly, yet appears to foster productions of community space.

The downtown's spatial layout transparently invites both resource extraction vehicles and products through its downtown main street, while simultaneously incorporating stop signs and paralleled side streets only feet off of main street. These details suggest an alternative means of producing space that contrasts with Watford City's. Because of these differences, the section on New Town focuses on the comparing and contrasting of New Town and Watford City's productions of space in their downtowns. Indeed, by doing so, this thesis was able to hone in on these similarities and clear distinctions that not only suggest that settler colonialism functions differently on Native and white spaces, but is inherently ruptured in Native spaces. The aim of this chapter was not to "white-splain" how spaces function in totality, but rather suggest that how communities are being formed, spatially produced, and publicly communicated drastically impact how settler colonialism becomes normalized in the 21st century. Recognizing my outsider limitations, visiting the Three Tribes Affiliated Museum helped me, as well as other visitors, navigate how the TAT wished their stories to be told to the public.

The Three Tribes Affiliated Museum quickly and directly took narrative ownership of their tribal space and temporality through the exploration of past, present, and future. In this chapter, I visited the museum and similarly talked with staff to orient myself to this space as an

outsider. The staff wanted me to know right away that there is not oil boom material in this museum. There was, however, a considerable number of artifacts functioning as objects of archived memory that explained the history of the TAT through its relationship with land, mobility, and settler colonialism. Through recognizing these relationships, I was increasingly interested in how Native occupation and settlement of space was transitionally situated as having a historic relationship with Manifest Destiny and survivance.²⁶⁴ The museum emphasizes the effects of forcing bodies into subalternity and their survivability. Historical enterprises like trapping, exploring, farming, and pioneering have all impacted the mobility of Native bodies through the perpetual (re)placing of individuals and communities.

Today, resource extraction floods similar spaces and disproportional amounts of predominantly white men materially impact how spaces are produced and bodies feel safe or unsafe in moving through their homeland. This reality suggest that it is all the more important that the Three Tribes Affiliated Museum produced spaces and memories that position the museum as a place that speaks of mobility, safety, and security. The two curators I spoke with expressed to me their own fears of visiting oil boom towns in predominantly white spaces, due to little law enforcement and concern over their own safety in public spaces like main street and Walmart. My site visits have been attentive to locate where white and Native spaces both publicly produce and rupture place-making during settler colonialism.

Moving from the analytical chapters, I would like to attend to a few implications and methodological payoffs. For this thesis, the direct implications rest on individual and cultural ways of being in Native space and homeland. The primary concerns and motivations of this project have been centered around exploring the immediacy and right to breath, move, and grow in spaces that Native bodies have called home for generations. Larger and broader cultural and

political implications lie in the ignoring and ignorance of rural space and places by metronormative institutions and bodies. This covers up regions and spaces that are inherently rural. The result is a rhetorical burying of bodies on the margins of society and underserved, underrepresented, and under-supported populations.

Ignorance of Rural Spaces and Bodies

The theoretical aims of this project were designed to reorient publics' normalized dismissal of rural areas with further hopes to avoid the sheltering of neoliberalized acts of settler colonialism. This erasure of rurality inherently ignores most non-normative bodies in these spaces. Much of the scholarship that has been done on space and place often builds upon academics focusing and/or theorizing out of metronormative frameworks and existing bodies of literature. For example, Doreen Massey has referenced rural places for explanation, but has not, in my understanding, ascribed a great deal of agency to these places and/or people.²⁶⁵ Henri Lefebvre, on the other hand, writes of the rural productive potential of open space to be exploited and appropriated, yet theoretical constructions and contributions through rural space wane with deindustrialization and the depopulating of rural spaces.²⁶⁶ Lastly, Edward Soja does engage with rurality, but appealingly only as it relates to the construction of the urban, as the relation of rural is important to the postmodernity of the urban; yet, theory does not appear to emerge out of rural or seem concerned with geographic rural capitalism.²⁶⁷ As I greatly look up to these individuals, their work, and those who have extended, critiqued, and recreated theory based upon their influences, I find myself inclined to draw more heavily from places of rurality whose scholarship engages with queer theory, critical regionalism, feminist and gender studies, masculinity, and settler colonialism through post-colonial studies.

In communication studies many of these connections have been bridged by connecting post-colonial scholarship to communication studies that focus on mobility and gender, crafting a space for increased livability that focuses on a rhetoric of difference, building a greater understanding of metronormativity, developing criticism on the politics in place-making, and answering land-grant questions and promises through the borderlands.²⁶⁸ Yet, I see an underdeveloped body of research on space and place literature on rural areas. Sociology has generated entire subfields dedicated to rural sociology and the intertwinings of these local, regional, national, and international connections. It is my conviction that if communication studies is to continue to honor its rhetorical commitment to attend to the #RhetoricSoWhite claim, they may need to consider expanding their theoretical lens to include rural studies and its inherent relationship to settler colonialism, space and power, diasporas, resettlement, food systems, militant whiteness, gender violence, and queer life repression and livability. This recognizably and statistically white population in rural areas is a reality, but it is not totalizingly white or privileged. Indeed, it is where whiteness has considerable power and influence that identities, bodies, and alternative systems of resistance are being produced, challenged, ruptured, and generated to create alternative possibilities for livability. The goal is not to reinscribe whiteness through its explanation, but to rhetorically understand rural places and the bodies they conceal through the production of space in politically divided times.

Rural to urban migration is a global phenomenon and an inherently economic and capitalistic issue. Whether or not that is the resettlement of former rural bodies disproportionately occupying “slums” and “shanty towns,” rural spaces are not areas to dismiss or ignore simply to avoid recognizing and marking hegemonic constructions of whiteness. Instead, by paying attention to these spaces, places, memories, and bodies, it is my hope that communication studies

and rhetorical studies more specifically can better theorize and generate alternative forms of resistance, as well as subversive livability's in the presence of hegemonic productions of space, ontology, and epistemology. As mobility is largely considered unequal and privileged, who remain and continue to be dismissed in these rural spaces? Who are flooding that space? How are they combatting neoliberalized claims to whiteness, space, land, resources, electoral power, marginal bodies, and labor?

Settler-Critic In Situ

Through my own thesis work, I see my contribution building upon the work of *in situ* rhetorical criticism and the rhetorical field methods of Michael Middleton, Samantha Senda-Cook, and Danielle Endres, while simultaneously recognizing the gaps in my method without in-depth interviewing and ethnographic time dedication.²⁶⁹ Situated somewhere in between Carole Blair and Endres, I place my methodological contribution as mildly autobiographical. This project is based upon my privileged identity and experience of both growing up in rural space as both a settler and critic.²⁷⁰ Additionally, my dedication to contributing to the labor of settler colonial issues, Indigenous communities, individuals, families, and spaces provides a methodological and personal stake of attention towards close friends, institutions, families, and communities I grew up around and believe in doing work with.

By exploring the overlapping of white and Native spaces through *in situ* rhetorical criticism, I believe I have attended to the expansion of critical regional studies by complicating regions and showcasing the contestation of bodies based on social relations as well as the production of space and place-making. The boomtowns and Indigenous communities impacted by the Bakken oil boom have different ways of producing, displaying, and generating genealogies of place to recreate space. It is my assertion that paying attention to these

constructions and decolonial practices offers scholarship an opportunity to locate rhetorical spaces where our discipline may self-examine and recognize how settler colonialism and neoliberalism functions within the U.S. in normatively dismissed rural spaces due to their generalized whiteness.

In an attempt to use my experience conducting *in situ* rhetorical criticism as a metaphor, I highlight and compare my settler-critic method to disciplinary aims interrogating rhetorical studies through the #RhetoricSoWhite movement. There are undoubtedly barriers to doing *in situ* work on reservations and in Native spaces. My white identity offers me privileges in these communities, as well as outs me, and I cannot help but reflect on my own cultural mistakes when communicating with different tribes across Nebraska. When I was much younger, I remember being surprised that borderline acceptance into one tribal community did not guarantee access to the next. The obviousness of this situation may seem ridiculously apparent to an academic with or without experience in Native communities, but as a well-intentioned, non-religious, and outgoing young person with Native friends, this was not easy to comprehend and communication in these spaces could be difficult without critical self-awareness. Admittedly, this project incited a similar experience of recognizing my own whiteness, navigating spaces, handling interactions, and constructing claims and arguments about a cultural group I was not a part of. Similarly, rhetoric does not get a pass into the decolonization of rhetorical studies because they “have” done the work, are “trying” to do the work, or “some” people do the work. The #RhetoricSoWhite movement is about crushing the cannon, altering barriers, and institutionally doing *in situ* rhetorical criticism. Further, the goal is to get the critic to turn on itself to recognize how the scholar/institutional-critic, functions similarly to my settler-critic position to interrogate itself and to un-map and unsettle different spaces.

Writing about Indigenous communities has often been uncomfortable academic work for me and rightfully so. I take this work seriously. Additionally, I recognize the irony of my own self-victimization through acknowledging my white uncomfortability in writing about Native space and culture. It can be nerve wracking to get it right, and I believe in sharing the workload. Doing research on the Fort Berthold Reservation plays off my own fears of essentializing an entire group of people. This place is distinct from other reservations I grew up on and around, yet there are some cultural similarities. In contrast, I do not carry near the anxiety in doing *in situ* rhetorical criticism in spaces like Watford City, primarily because I have navigated so many similar communities and can pass as a part of the in-group. Where Watford City is unique, it is also steeped in whiteness that is characteristic of a homogenous rural culture produced out of nation-building and hegemonic progress. These observations held true in oil boomtown Watford City, yet the degree and speed of place-making was less generational and chronic than I was used to, as it was much more immediate than I have seen in other communities. The blunt reason for that, to me, is that rural communities are not really growing in most instances. Thus, when an oil town is booming, you see a goal of place-making that is immediate and singular like a proper thesis statement, which I have struggled to write. The future is not commutatively or generatively produced democratically, but rather bolstered by an agenda that has clear benefactors of how place gets remade.

My prime motivation for this project lies less in a white-savior complex and more in a disciplinary call/question as to why rural areas are dismissed and buried in the hierarchy as if there are not marginal/underserved enough for the bodies, occupants, and communities to matter. The quantity argument is an incessant claim of hegemony that is often capitalistic and based in efficiency, body count, and serveability. It is almost as though the draining process of rural areas

makes them less appealing or exotic to think about. Maybe also, too displaced and difficult to access both physically and intellectually.

Politically and culturally, I am not sure where rural America is going. Electorally, their representation is overwhelming. Yet, no one often asks who is left behind or covered in these rural communities and/or by these state and local ran politics. The people who are dismissed in rural America by its whiteness, often do not count, are not served, or might be considered a necessary casualty. As I write this, reservations across the U.S. are battling the COVID-19 pandemic, but they are not singularly concerned over their at-risk family and/or friends. They fear cultural erasure, as the globalization of disease has resulted in the genocide of their people before. This distress of erasure will never be understood by dominant groups in places like Watford City or academia. Space matters in rhetorical scholarship and Indigenous livability in isolated rural communities matters for survival. In the future, I imagine the next projects I start will continue to focus on the livability and agency of bodies veiled behind the whiteness of rural areas. Focusing on these spaces, places, and bodies, I aim to continually explore how rural spaces are dismissed and underserved, as ignorance continues.

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