Chapter 1

Introduction

"You can wipe out a generation of people, you can burn their homes to the ground, and somehow they will still come back. But if you destroy their achievements, and their history, then it is like they never existed... just ash floating."

(Excerpt from the movie, *The Monuments Men*. Minute 29:11-29:31)

This research project seeks to deconstruct the history of the horse in the Americas and its relationship with the Indigenous Peoples of these same lands. To date, this “history” has been written to reflect a Eurocentric and colonial paradigm, and the traditional knowledge (TK) - “knowledge and values, which have been acquired through experience, observation, storytelling, from the land or from spiritual teachings, and handed down from one generation to another” - of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and any information that is contrary to the accepted Western academic view has been disregarded, purposefully excluded, or reconfigured to fit the accepted paradigm. This chapter serves to provide an overview of the research processes that will be utilized to conduct this investigation. This overview will include the following: an explanation of the rationale behind the import of this research, an introduction of the researcher and project participants, a presentation of the methodology and methods that will be used, a timeline and geographical context for the project, as well as the expected benefits for academia, Indigenous Peoples, and the world.

1.1 A Eurocentric Myth

In his article titled “Essays About America’s National Myths in the Past, Present, and Future,” Ira Chernus addresses the fact that the word “myth” means “so many things to so many people”; however, “[I]n our everyday English language myth means a fiction or a lie. Some myths are total fictions. Though they can have powerful influence on a society, they can also be debunked by fact, which places some limit (in theory) on their influence.” For this particular

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research study, the Eurocentric myths regarding the existence, extinction, and migration patterns of the American horse will be further explored.

Every child who goes through the American school system is taught that the Spanish and subsequent European explorers are responsible for “reintroducing” the horse to the Americas and, therefore, to the Native Peoples. Jay F. Kirkpatrick and Patricia M. Fazio offer the following account of this claim in their article titled “Wild Horses as Native North American Wildlife”:

The precise date of origin for the genus Equus is unknown, but evidence documents the dispersal of Equus from North America to Eurasia approximately 2-3 million years ago and a possible origin at about 3.4-3.9 million years ago. Following this original emigration, several extinctions occurred in North America, with additional migrations to Asia (presumably across the Bering Land Bridge), and return migrations back to North America, over time. The last North American extinction probably occurred between 13,000 and 11,000 years ago … In 1493, on Columbus’ second voyage to the Americas, Spanish horses, representing E. caballus, were brought back to North America, first in the Virgin Islands, and, in 1519, they were reintroduced on the continent, in modern-day Mexico, from where they radiated throughout the American Great Plains, after escape from their owners or by pilfering. 6

This version of history can be found in textbooks, documentaries, magazines, television programs, and on countless websites. As the horse was inextricably linked with the idea of what constituted a “civilized” person and/or community for European cultures at the time of first-contact with the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, this claim fits neatly – and comfortably - into Western academia’s predominantly Eurocentric paradigm. According to a research article I published, titled, “The Relationship between the Indigenous People of the Americas and the Horse: How the Dominant Culture’s View of Oral History Denied Truth,” I explain the following:

When the European explorers arrived in the Americas, they brought with them their belief that all that was “civilized” originated from their homeland and their culture. At the time of the 1500s, 1600s, and 1700s, one of the marks of “civilization” included one’s possession of the horse and one’s mastery of horsemanship skills. 7

Indeed, ownership of Spanish horses was tied to the concept of nobility in Spain and Europe. The Andalusianworld.com website proclaims:

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Throughout its history [the Andalusian horse] has been known for its prowess as a warhorse, and prized by nobility. The breed was used as a tool of diplomacy by the Spanish government, and kings across Europe rode and owned Spanish horses. 8

In addition to this, the horse is credited with being the key element that allowed Queen Isabella of Spain to end a war with the Moors that had gone on for many, many centuries. This is explained further in William A. Berg’s book titled Mysterious Horses of Western North America:

A plentiful supply of fine Arabian horses had enabled the Moors to force the Spanish armies away from the Mediterranean shore. For almost 700 years they had crowded the Spaniards ever northward until they had come to the land of Castile. There at long last King John had withstood them. But King John had died and then his daughter Isabella had become queen and had sworn at her father’s deathbed to drive the infidels across the sea. The task had seemed hopeless at first, but then she engaged Manuel Cortés, a childhood friend, to supply her with horses for her armies. Cortés did so well that the queen prevailed over the Moors and now one more strong campaign should prove their end, but more horses would be needed. Horses would decide the issue. 9

As Berg goes on to describe, the Queen would give Cortés “carte-blanche to collect and secure all horses from anyone in Spanish lands for exclusive army use. He continues as follows:

Immediately thereafter letters of credit to Cortés were issued, enabling him to establish agents in neighboring countries that had horses, and his instructions were to secure all the horses possible, and as quickly as he could arrange for their training and deliver them to the queen’s commanders in the battle against her enemy. It took only a few years and by then Cortéz had that horse procuring project in high gear, and horses were delivered in great numbers to the queen’s forces. When letters of credit had expired or were insufficient, the cause of Christian Spain against the infidel Moslems produced thousands of horses on credit. These horses, all together, gave Queen Isabella the strength that had before been lacking and she thrust the Moslems completely out of Spain. 10

Indeed, Benjamin Breen’s article, titled “‘The Elks Are Our Horses’: Animals and Domestication in the New France Borderlands,” states the idea that the horse was a symbol for what constituted a “civilized” person and/or culture “in the context of the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi region between 1670 and 1730” 11 for those of the colonizing culture is supported:

De Toni noted that four of his men deserted upon noticing horses in the lands to the south of the Illinois because “as soon as they had possession of a horse, they no longer believed themselves to be among the Savages.” The increased mobility allowed by horses (and the

10 Ibid., 289.
presence of nearby Europeans they implied) undoubtedly played a role in this desertion. But de Toni’s phrasing would suggest that the symbolic associations between the horse and civility played a role as well. 12

Although this belief system regarding the history of the horse in the Americas supports the worldview held by the dominant Western culture, it is contrary to the oral history and TK of many of the Peoples who are Indigenous to the Americas. Claire Henderson offers a concise summary of this Indigenous perspective in her article titled The Aboriginal North American Horse:

Dakota/Lakota Elders as well as many other Indian nations ... contend that according to their oral history, the North American horse survived the Ice Age, and that they had developed a horse culture long before the arrival of Europeans, and, furthermore, that these same distinct ponys (sic) continued to thrive on the prairies until the latter part of the XIXth (19th) century, when the U.S. government ordered them rounded up and destroyed to prevent Indians from leaving the newly-created reservations. 13

Indeed, in their article titled “Eyininiw mistatimwak: The Role of the Lac La Croix Indigenous Pony for First Nations Youth Mental Wellness” authors Angela Snowshoe and Noel V. Starblanket provide the following example to illustrate how one of the Indigenous Native horse breeds in Canada nearly became extinct:

According to Donald Chosa Jr., Cultural Coordinator at Bois Forte Indian Reservation, the [Lac La Croix pony] became endangered when the missionaries came to the reservation in the 1940s and saw no use for the ponies. Furthermore, they felt that it was inappropriate for First Nations children to witness the ponies breeding. As a result, the majority of the breed was destroyed, 14 regardless of the discernible social and historical importance of the ponies to their original caretakers. 15

Although mainstream academia and Western science have not given this Native knowledge credence to date, the website titled The Survival of Horses in Pre-Columbian America by Terry McNamee, states that there is no reason — scientific or otherwise — that this traditional Native claim should not be considered plausible and possible:

12 Ibid.
13 Claire Henderson, The Aboriginal North American Horse (Quebec City, Canada: Laval University, 1991), 1.
The idea that horses could have survived into more recent times in areas south of Alaska and the Yukon was suggested 40 years ago by archaeologist Paul S. Martin. He said that there was no reason why horses could not have survived in isolated areas of North America as late as 2000 BC. But more recent discoveries are revealing that horses may have been present in North America much longer, even right up until the time when Europeans "reintroduced" horses to the Americas.  

Indeed, this dilemma has been noted by many in Western academia, including John Canfield Ewers in his book *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture*. He states as follows:

Anthropologists and historians have been intrigued by the problem of the diffusion of the European horse among the Plains Indians. It is well known that many tribes began to acquire horses before their first recorded contacts with white men. Paucity of documentation has given rise to much speculation as to the sources of the horses diffused to these tribes, the date when the first Plains Indians acquired horses, the rate of diffusion from tribe to tribe, and the conditions under which the spread took place.

This confusion between what could be seen firsthand (deep horse cultures and superior horsemanship skills) and the conclusion that was often recorded by early conquistadors and colonialists can be clearly seen in Francis Haines's article titled "Horses for Western Indians" as published in the magazine titled *The American West*. He states the following regarding the supposed erroneous perception that "groups of Anglo-Americans" had while watching the "proud buffalo hunters in Plains regalia, riding spirited horses" in the early 19th century:

Thus, there was no question but that the Plains Indians had been horsemen from time immemorial. The entire culture seemed to depend on the horse, and the horse-culture complex was at a high stage of development, about on a level with that of the Asiatic steppes, where horses had been used for thousands of years. All this seemed to imply that horses had been in use on the western plains for a long period. Yet once historians and anthropologists began delving into the records of early western explorers and travelers, it soon became apparent that horses had come to the western United States in comparatively recent times, and had come from the Spanish colonies to the south. Indian tradition and folklore supported this idea of recent acquisition.

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
Despite displays of horsemanship skills that rivaled those of the "Cossacks, Mongols, Arabs, Bedouins, and Moors" and statements from people like George Catlin who documented that, "I am ready without hesitation to pronounce the Comanches the most extraordinary horsemen that I have ever seen and I doubt very much whether any people in the world can surpass them," Western academics and historians still circled back to support the claim that Native horses and horse cultures were somehow derivative of Europe.

Although historians and archeologists do not always agree upon dates, "it is now generally accepted that the first American Indians populated North America between 30 and 40 thousand years ago." Such a lengthy occupation would have ensured that the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas had an extensive understanding and knowledge of the geography, flora, and fauna of their territory. Their mastery of such knowledge would naturally have surpassed that of a newly arriving colonizer.

Despite this fact, Western academia still supports the initial reports of a few Spanish conquistadors who claimed that there were no horses in the Americas upon their arrival to specific geographical areas in the late 1400s. Their exploration of the Americas at the time of these reports extended solely to certain Caribbean Islands and a small portion of modern-day Mexico. In holding onto such claims, Western academia has chosen to override contrary accounts shared by Indigenous Peoples, ignore numerous sightings of vast herds of horses by early colonizers, discount the sightings of Native Peoples with horses that were recorded by subsequent explorers long before European horses were said to have escaped from the Spanish, disregard recorded accounts from settlers who arrived in the Americas in the 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, and not allow modern scientific evidence indicating the presence of Equus remains during the proposed extinction period (500 years ago to 12,000 years ago) to effectuate a paradigm shift.

Western science claims objectivity. Ernest Bailey and Samantha Brooks state that "[s]cience does not allow assumptions, but rather rests on experimental proof." Despite this purported foundation, Western science has not proven the veracity of its claim that the

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
Indigenous horse of the Americas did not survive the last “Ice Age” (Wisconsin Glaciation) even though scientists have the technology within the field of equine genetics to do so.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, prominent equine geneticists routinely pepper their academic papers with such quotes as the following, which serves as the opening of a scientific paper titled “Genetic Analysis of the Venezuelan Criollo Horse”:

After the extinction of the North and South American \textit{Equus} species about 10,000 years ago, from causes still not completely understood,\textsuperscript{27} (see Clutton-Brock, 1996), horses only returned to the American continent (the New World) with the second voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1493.\textsuperscript{28}

This “claiming without proof,” which in this case has been labeled as “science” and “history,” continues to denigrate and distort the history of many of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. Likewise, it continues to provide a distorted foundation upon which other misconceptions and assumptions are made within other academic disciplines.

As their relationship with the horse was – and in many cases still is – a critically important life element historically, culturally, and spiritually for many Native Nations and people of Native descent throughout the Americas,\textsuperscript{29} this dominant Western cultural claim has served as a fundamental attempt to diminish such cultures by asserting a Eurocentric position of dominance. In making this claim, the dominant Western culture is saying, “Without us, you would not have these sacred and critical elements of your culture,” and therefore, “Your culture is derivative of our own.”

Although Western science has focused surprisingly little effort on proving the validity of its claim, archeologists have unintentionally located evidence of \textit{Equus} remains during the purported extinction period while testing samples at archeological sites across North America. An example of this can be found in \textit{FAUNMAP: A Database Documenting Late Quaternary Distributions of Mammal Species in the United States}. Scientific evidence of \textit{Equus} remains and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Collin, Yvette J., “Deconstructing Western Science with regard to the History of the Indigenous Horse of the Americas,” paper presented at the Canadian Indigenous/Native Studies Association (CINSA), Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, June 2016.
\end{itemize}
fossils were found at various archeological sites throughout North America outside of the time periods accepted by Western science for the horse and up until recent Pre-Columbian historical times. These sites were located in the following states: Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Kentucky, Montana, North Dakota, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, South Dakota, Washington, and Wyoming.\(^{30}\) Interestingly, researchers later categorized many of these findings of *Equus* as “OUT”, which they define to mean “unit of finding questionable.”\(^{31}\)

In addition, Western scientists and archeologists have also located *Equus* bones and other remains that have been scientifically confirmed within the supposed extinction period. Horse artifacts have also been discovered in pre-Columbian ruins. For example, in her book titled *In Plain Sight: Old World Records in Ancient America*, Gloria Farley describes and cites numerous instances of artifact evidence of pre-Columbian horses in America, each of which were discovered in the southeastern region of the United States.\(^{32}\) Findings such as these serve to give credence to the Indigenous viewpoint.

From the late 1400s until the mid-1800s, the dominant Western culture’s academic establishment claimed that the horse originated in Europe. As there is no record of Columbus having seen horses when he landed in the Caribbean in 1492, it is possible that it was their belief at the time — and, therefore, their truth — that horses did not exist anywhere in “The New World” prior to their “discovery” of it.

However, if we are to believe that all of the wild horses across the Americas today are descendants of those horses brought over by the Spanish and other early explorers, it is important to look at the reality of the conditions at the time. For example, the Spanish ships were small in size and the traveling conditions were detrimental to the health of the horses being transported.\(^{33}\) Therefore, a great number of the horses that were actually loaded onto these Spanish ships did not survive the voyage to the Americas.\(^{34}\)

The image on the next page (Figure 1) was taken from Pablo Pérez-Mallaina’s book titled *Spain’s Men of the Sea: Daily Life on the Indies Fleets in the Sixteenth Century*. It is common

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\(^{30}\) Russell W. Graham and Ernest L. Lundelius, Jr., *FAUNMAP: A Database Documenting Late Quaternary Distributions of Mammal Species in the United States* (Springfield: Illinois State Museum, 1994).

\(^{31}\) Ibid, 25.


\(^{33}\) Dr. Marco Oviedo, interview by Yvette Running Horse Collin, in Chimayo, New Mexico, August 20, 2016.

knowledge that horses can develop colic easily (severe stomach problems that can lead to death) if they are not provided the correct environmental and feeding conditions. Pérez-Mallaina states the following regarding the abysmal living conditions that both people and animals were subjected to on these roughly two to three-month voyages:

... some readers will recall that peasants customarily shared their houses with their farm animals. But the sailors and passengers were also obliged to share their scarce living space with all sorts of animals, some of them carried voluntarily but most of them involuntarily. In effect, the ships' crews faced serious competitors in the struggle to find a free space. Some competitors were inanimate objects, since boxes and chests with clothing and personal effects were customarily placed on the decks, plus the passengers' food, which could not be kept in the storerooms below deck. In addition were the nautical apparatuses stowed on the bridge, plus the capstan, the cook stove, and even the masts; all of these occupied space. Then there were the animals carried on board. A caravel of sixty-five tonales that departed in 1507 toward Hispaniola carried, besides its crew and eighty-three passengers, eighteen mares and twelve yearling calves. On this voyage, the animals traveled as cargo ... Passengers customarily carried live animals to slaughter during the voyage, in order to have fresh meat ... We have testimonies that these animals shared places on the deck with owners who did not want to lose sight of them, lest they fall into the hands of someone determined to have a feast at their expense. An English sailor commented that, despite the danger unleashed by a tremendous storm, no one could resist smiling at the sight of seasick pigs staggering around the decks vomiting. 35

![Figure 1 - System for Transporting Horse on Ships](image)

36 Perez-Mallania, Spain's Men of the Sea, 133.
There are a number of theories regarding the origin of the term “Horse latitudes,” which are located about 30 degrees north and south of the equator. “According to legend, the term comes from ships sailing to the New World that would often become stalled for days or even weeks when they encountered areas of high pressure and calm winds … to conserve scarce water, sailors would sometimes throw the horses they were transporting overboard.”\textsuperscript{37} However, one theory that is considered very reliable is taken from \textit{Historia General y Natural de las Indias}, which was written by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés in 1535. This theory explains that, “mariners gave it this name because many brood mares being shipped from Spain to the Canaries died on board.”\textsuperscript{38}

Despite facts such as these, it was not until Joseph Leidy and Robert W. Gibbes’s work, “Meeting for Business, Sept. 28, 1847; On the Fossil Horse of America; Description of New Species of Squalidæ from the Tertiary Beds of South Carolina,”\textsuperscript{39} was published in 1847 that Western academia began to accept the idea that the horse had existed on the North American continent before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. However, upon this acceptance, they became adamant that the extinction of \textit{Equus} in the Americas must have occurred many thousands of years prior to first European contact. Therefore, despite physical archeological evidence proving the ancient presence of the horse in the Americas, the fact that the horse knowledge and husbandry practices of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas did not mirror those of the European cultures, and the fact that many Native Peoples were seen with horses when explorers first encountered them, Europeans were still credited with introducing the horse and horse culture to the Indigenous Peoples.

Despite a number of subsequent technological advances, and a vast expansion regarding the number of relevant archeological, paleontological, and zoological discoveries, Western academia’s version of the history of the horse in the Americas has evolved very little since


Leidy, the “founder of paleontology in the United States,” 40 made his findings public more than 150 years ago.

1.2 Researcher Background

As Indigenous Peoples have historically experienced exploitation at the hands of non-Indigenous researchers, many are wary of cultural outsiders who wish to conduct academic research about their cultures and within their communities. 41 42 In light of this, it is my intent to approach this topic and the Indigenous research participants from the perspective of a cultural “insider.” As a woman of primarily Native heritage (Nakota, Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche and Mayan on my mother’s side and Nakota, Cherokee, Choctaw, Jewish, Scottish and Nordic on my father’s side), I am uniquely positioned to interact as an “insider” with Peoples from many different cultures and Native Nations.

As I grew up “urban Indian” and my mother was trying desperately to pass as “white” in the hopes of avoiding ethnic persecution, my upbringing was not tied to a particular reservation or Native Nation. My mother experienced a great deal of prejudice as an Indigenous woman in America. Accordingly, she attempted to shield me from this by marrying a man who was a Dutch citizen when she was already pregnant with me. She also described both herself and the man who was listed as my biological father on my birth certificate as “white,” and gave me a completely European name. 43 44 Later in life she would tell me that these things were the best gifts she could ever have given me, as with a name of French and Dutch origin and an adjusted birth certificate “people would never know” that I was a Native woman. Therefore, I would not have to “clean toilets” for a living like she did. As her marriage did not last long, my siblings and I were raised by a single mother whose educational abilities and job opportunities were limited. Therefore, we did not have enough money to be able to afford to have horses or for me to have exposure to them.

43 As an adult, I made the decision to correct this by replacing the European middle name she had chosen for me with my maternal grandfather’s surname, “Running Horse.”
As a result of these things, I did not grow up around my Peoples’ traditional knowledge surrounding the horse or receive any dominant culture training regarding the horse. The only formal education I received regarding the history of the horse in the Americas during my early years was a few paragraphs from the history and/or social studies textbooks that were assigned to us in my middle school and high school. These books credited Columbus with introducing horses to the Americas in the late 1400s. As is the case with most Americans, I had no reason to question whether or not what I was being taught in school was factually correct.

Due to the training I received from my mother about the importance of meeting the dominant Western culture’s benchmarks for success, as well as my determination to help my family and community, I did pursue higher education. My undergraduate work was completed at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland (a BS in Writing Seminars), and I received a Joint Master’s Degree in Journalism and Latin American/Caribbean Studies from New York University in New York City. I did not study the history of the horse at either of these institutions or during my subsequent years as an investigative reporter. However, my level of exposure to “horse medicine” and Indigenous TK surrounding the horse dramatically increased beginning in 2006. For the purposes of this research project, the term “horse medicine” or “spirit horse medicine” will be used to refer to any healing and/or spiritual work that occurs through or around the horse.

The incidents that stimulated this shift are described in an article I published (2014) titled “The Medicine Horse Way: The Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and their Traditional Horses”:

In 2006, my world would be forever changed. I was kidnapped, drugged (overdosed in an attempt to kill me), gang raped, and left for dead. Although my physical body would survive this tragedy, there was no promise of a “normal life” available to me after this occurred. I suffered from ... Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), my nervous system was destroyed, the damage to my organs was severe, and I was unable to eat or sleep in any sustainable fashion.  

The level of post-traumatic stress, physical, and psychological injury that I suffered as a result was so severe that medical professionals explained that modern medicine had no cure for

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45 This was reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). As the perpetrators belong to organized crime, the FBI is handling it and there is no further commentary.
me. However, during this time I received a gift from a family who lived on a New Mexico Pueblo. The man in this family is considered to be a "medicine man." The role and description of the term "medicine man" when referring to Indigenous Peoples may differ between Native Nations. However, for the purposes of this research project, the term "medicine man" or "medicine woman" will be used to describe a person who is understood by his or her community to be able to aid in spiritual, emotional, mental and physical healing with their knowledge of traditional ceremony, prayers, songs, and/or medicinal animals, plants, and herbs.

This man had grown up with access to his People’s TK regarding the healing properties of the horse. As the Native women of his Nation and surrounding Nations have been the victims of rape and other life-threatening abuses since the colonizing cultures first infiltrated their communities hundreds of years ago, his Peoples have developed ways to help heal the "incurable" with the help of their relative, the horse. Sadly, as the colonial mindset still permeates the Americas, this "medicine" is as needed today, as it was hundreds of years ago. Andrea Smith explains more in her book titled *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*:

When a native woman suffers abuse, this abuse is an attack on her identity as a woman and an attack on her identity as Native. These issues of colonial, race and gender oppression cannot be separated. This fact explains why in my experience as a rape counselor, every Native survivor I ever counseled said to me at one point, "I wish I was no longer Indian." 46

The following statistics are provided in the article by Lyndsey Gilpin titled "Why Native American Women Still Have the Highest Rates of Rape and Assault":

A new Department of Justice study shows that over 2,000 women surveyed, 84 percent of Native American and Alaskan Native women have experienced violence, 56 percent have experienced sexual violence, and over 90 percent have experienced violence at the hands of a non-tribal member ... Experts say these record numbers still underestimate the number of women affected by violence. 47

During a time when I was in desperate need of healing, he gifted me with two horses - a red roan mare that had been trained (according to his People’s traditions) to protect him during ceremony and spiritual battle - and her four-day-old paint filly, which he had seen prior to her

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birth in a vision in conjunction with my healing. The healing I received is partially described as the following:

Within a few months-time my family was able to secure some land, erect fencing, and move “Nakota Wind” and “Cheyenne Faith” to their new home on our land in a mountain canyon meadow. Although I could feel little more than terror on most days, during my time with these animals I experienced moments where I was able to believe that I was loved and safe. During such times, I could access my memories more readily, my PTSD symptoms lessened, and my feelings of hopelessness were greatly reduced. My physical injuries also began to heal more rapidly. At times, the bursts of energy that I felt coming through these animals and into my mind and body threatened to knock me to my knees. 48

Years later, in an attempt to better explain to other people about the powerful waves of energy that came from these horses into me, I began researching modern-day science around equines and/or the brain. Scientists have discovered that horses emit “alpha waves” – the same waves emitted by humans during prayer - and they are beginning to recognize that the emission of such waves can be beneficial in treating brain injuries. They call this type of therapy/treatment “Neurofeedback,” which is defined as follows:

... biofeedback for the brain and the body. It is a painless and drug-free way of helping an injured brain return to a healthy state ... Faster brainwaves focus attention, enable planning, organization, and quick wits.... After trauma, fever, bad diet, or exposure to drugs/toxins, brainwaves may slow to whatever energy level can be supported based on available nutrients ... Neurofeedback can reawaken and help the brain, and the body it controls, along the road to recovery. 49

My education and exposure to the Indigenous TK surrounding the horse increased as I received spiritual visions from my Ancestors regarding this topic, and as I conducted pre-research with Native Elders and spiritual people regarding the history of the horse in the Americas. My journey gained momentum as my family began to gather representatives of what is left of the Indigenous horse of the Americas. I now oversee a preservation effort (125 + horses.) This enables me to observe these animals in as close to natural conditions as possible. This place is called Sacred Way Sanctuary and it is located in Florence, Alabama.

As I have witnessed and experienced firsthand what these horses can do spiritually, I do not sell horses. In keeping with the traditions of my Plains Indian ancestors, I am of the belief

48 Ibid., 4.
that “medicine” - or “that which helps one to connect to the Creator” - cannot be bought or sold. Therefore, these horses are gifted to those who will agree to see them from this perspective and allow them the opportunity to continue to procreate. Sacred Way Sanctuary has had visitors from all over the world. These horses live in family bands of their choosing, and our stallions stay with their mares year-round. The foals remain within the family dynamic until they are weaned, which is anywhere from between six months to one year of age. There are two ways in which the environment the sanctuary provides for these horses differs from the time they spent living freely with my Indigenous ancestors. First, due to modern day conditions, we must utilize fencing, and secondly, my herds have limited space due to the fact that they cannot roam freely and set their own territorial boundaries.

1.3 Project Participants, Timeline, and Context

It has been my experience that my family’s commitment to the preservation of these horses and the traditional practices surrounding them has served to strengthen the level of trust between myself and project participants. I have conducted years of pre-research with the following people: Native Elders and ceremonial leaders from a number of Native Nations within North America, Indigenous medicine people and/or Holy People (referring to those individuals who regularly connect to the Ancestors and bring messages from Heaven back to their people), the children and/or grandchildren of tribal and spiritual leaders; both Indigenous and non-Indigenous caretakers of what is left of these populations of horses, equine scientists and practitioners, archeologists, people who possess family collections of Native artifacts (amateur archeologists), and academics.

Due to protocol issues, once the formal interview process began I re-approached many of the individuals with whom I had conducted pre-research to request formal interviews for this project. Some did not feel comfortable having their TK recorded for Western academic purposes. Some of these participants referred me to another person within their community or Nation who they felt had the authority to speak about these issues “on record.” Likewise, as some of the knowledge I gained about the horse and horse stories was gifted to me within Indigenous ceremonial contexts, not all of it is considered appropriate to share in an academic format.

Although my pre-research with regard to this topic began as early as 2006, my formal interviews and the further dissection of a limited edition and out-of-print publications
that include little known firsthand accounts of “Native horses” and/or Natives with horses in the Americas in the 1500s, 1600s, and 1700s, was conducted from January 2015 through August 2016. I have collected oral history, creation stories, and other forms of TK from at least seven Indigenous Peoples/Nations throughout the Americas. Among these tribes are the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Peoples (the Oceti Sakowin), the Cheyenne, the Choctaw, the Blackfoot, the Diné (Navajo), the Ojibwe, and some of the Pueblos in the New Mexico area.

1.4 Methodology and Methods

In order to ensure that this research is performed in a manner that is reflective of the types of projects that have import to Indigenous Peoples and their communities, it is critical that the research methodology is aligned with an Indigenous ontology, epistemology, and axiology. In the article titled “Preserving a Space for Cross-cultural Collaborations: An Account of Insider/Outsider Issues,” Webster and John highlight a common difficulty within cross-cultural research:

... [C]onversations are underscored by epistemological differences and methodological dilemmas stemming from the often incongruous fit between methods of collecting and analyzing and presenting data that characterize the Western academic tradition and Indigenous ways of knowing, communicating and sharing knowledge.

Therefore, an indigenous research paradigm that includes Critical Indigenous Research Methodologies (CIRM) and relies heavily upon collaboration with participating communities and/or individuals, and is “grounded in the Indigenous values of responsibility, respect, relevance, reciprocity, relationships, and resiliency” has been chosen. As a number of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Elders encouraged me to pursue this topic during my initial pre-

research phase, it is my intent that this community-based, collaborative spirit be continued throughout the research process.

In order to better understand the social issues surrounding this topic, I utilized Grounded Theory (GT) to enable me to develop a plausible and well-founded theory regarding the reasons behind the behavior and reactions of both non-Indigenous and Indigenous Peoples and societies with regards to this topic. According to The Grounded Theory Institute, the following statement explains what grounded theory entails:

Although many call Grounded Theory a qualitative method, it is not. It is a general method. It is the systematic generation of theory from systematic research. It is a set of rigorous research procedures leading to the emergence of conceptual categories. 54

If it is indeed a myth that the Indigenous horse of the Americas did not survive the last “Ice Age,” and Native Peoples did have a horse culture that preceded the arrival of the Spanish in the late 1400s, how is it that the current Western academic belief system has continued for centuries? How is it that newly arriving explorers – such as Sir Francis Drake - and settlers could see herds of wild horses with their own eyes, and witness Indigenous Peoples with advanced horse husbandry techniques that were completely different than their own, and still accept the statements to the contrary that were offered to them initially by the Spanish?

Qualitative methods, such as participant observation, interviews with Indigenous Elders, medicine people, scientists, horse experts, and reproductive geneticists, as well as analysis of written historical, academic, and scientific records, are utilized to conduct this research. This qualitative data that I gather will be coded in order to “pinpoint ... what [I] see in each bit of data, make ... comparisons with other data, ... provide ... short-hand labels for segments of data” 55 and allow for a grounded theory to emerge regarding the behavior of societies around this topic.

It is important to note that Western science now has the technology to complete the genome sequencing for the Ancient North and/or South American horse. Initially, the design of this project included comparing the DNA of the horses at my Sanctuary with the genome sequencing of ancient North and South American horses. However, at the time such sequencing

had not been completed. However, in 2013 results were published that indicated that genome sequencing had been completed on a Middle Pleistocene era horse (dated from approximately 560,000 - 780,000 years before present (kyr BP) from the Yukon area. In addition, these scientists sequenced the genome of a late Pleistocene horse (43 kyr BP) for comparison purposes. 56 Continued work in this area, especially in conducting genome sequencing for ancient North and South American horses from the Holocene period (approximately 11, 700 years before present), would allow for surviving horses to be tested to see if matching markers can be found. If so, we can scientifically deduce that the ancient North and/or South American horse, indeed, survived the Ice Age.

I have been told by a number of Native Elders from various Native Nations that there were “many types of horses” that survived the last Ice Age, not just a single type or breed of horse. This factor will need to be taken into consideration when performing the subsequent genetic testing. For example, since the genome sequencing of a Yukon horse from the Middle Pleistocene era has now been performed, then I would select my leopard spot curly appaloosa stallion whose parents and grandparents are from the Aishihik Lake area in Canada to test against this sample, rather than my Southern Native-line horses. In order to address this issue, I have started the process of locating an equine genetics team that would be interested in performing such work, as well as securing the funding to support such work.

1.5 Summary

The dominant Western academic culture has historically categorized the oral history and TK of Indigenous Peoples around the world as “myth,” while holding up their own preferred renditions of history as “truth.” However, a preliminary examination of mainstream Western science and academia’s treatment of the history of the horse in the Americas shows that the “myth” likely lies within their own version of history. Contrary to what the dominant Western culture and academia have presented to the world for centuries, they do not have scientific or historical proof that the ancient North and South American horse died out during the last Ice

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Age, nor that the Native Peoples did not already have an established horse culture upon the arrival of the first Spanish horses to mainland America in 1519.

With an abundance of evidence suggesting the plausibility of the explanation offered by many Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, it would be irresponsible for us not to “take another look.” Reconstructing the history of the horse in the Americas to include any updated and/or missing information will accomplish the following: provide a more complete and accurate view of history, help to elevate Native Peoples and their TK to a more unbiased and appropriate place within academia, aid in preserving this knowledge for future generations, help academic scholars to be able to stand by their findings rather than continuing to defer to previous academic authority, and likely help to save what is left of these endangered animals.