Birthright:

Born to Poetry – A Collection of Montana Indian Poetry

Compiled by
Dorothea M. Susag
for the
Secondary Level

With a foreword by Joseph McGeshick

Indian Education
opi.mt.gov Montana Office of Public Instruction

Published by the Montana Office of Public Instruction 2013

Alienation/Acceptance, Between Two Worlds, Change/Growth, Circles of Life, Cycles of Life, Justice/Injustice, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Love/Friendship, Promise/ Disillusionment/Betrayal, Self in Nature, Self in Society, Trickery ∅

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Foreword

What Does Poetry Do For You?

Montana author and poet James Welch was once asked in an interview why he hadn't published anymore poetry after his first and only collection, *Riding The Earthboy* 40 (1971). He told the interviewer that his poetry existed in his novels and other works. At the time I thought that was an elusive answer; however, after thinking about it and reading everything Welch has written, I realized he was right. Poetry can and does exist anywhere a person wants to experience life and its rewards and pains. The word poem itself comes from the Greek word *poiein*, which means "to make." Consequently, since Welch's novels, or prose writings, are made from his own mind, heart and hand, they exist as his poetry. Whatever is made, whatever comes into existence, has the possibility of being considered poetry. Poetry not only exists as a traditional concentrated arrangement of words that may rhythmically or freely express a feeling, an idea, an object, a time or place, it also cleverly finds the universal in the local and the local in the universal in all aspects of life. The power of poems and poets uncovers the connections between the parochial self and the infinite universe that continually celebrates and challenges truth, love, people and place.

Native American poets also uncover a special connection between themselves and their places. Reservation communities, as well as Native American urban centers, continually cultivate their own poets and poetry. They unfailingly look back at the shapes of yesterday, and forward toward the shapes of tomorrow, all the while making their lives and environments a poetry that empowers and allows a deeper consideration for all people and places. These poets, like all artists, at times grapple with some of life's most sensitive topics and often confront the really tough issues that arise in Indian country and beyond. Those complex issues and difficult topics are important and valuable for their truth - poetry creates a unique context for exploring and discussing that truth. Poetry provides the power and insight to address those "silenced" themes.

The poets presented in this teaching collection reflect an intense and deep understanding of the people and places that give them the wisdom and cleverness to find those universal and local associations. That brilliance is found in Heather Cahoon's poem "Missions," her words unfolding the image of how over time Salish "… Chiefs Charlo and Arlee are now just names of nearby towns" and in Vic Charlo's telling of his connection to place in "Frog Creek Circle." The wisdom and love is reflected in Richard Littlebear's lines "… You would call me my Cheyenne name: Howling Bird, come home with us" and in the unmitigated sentiment created in Crow Laureate poet Henry Real Bird's poem "Mom," "…I held her hand when she was in pain." Both poems and poets recount an underpinning so unassuming that readers freely understand their verses. M.L. Smoker continues that wisdom in terms of place in her poem "Crosscurrent." Her words bring to life James Welch's country along Montana's Hi-Line. The stanza containing, "…wheat in the flat lands along the Milk" renders the often unseen finery of people and place into a representation that lovers of poetry and words will find irresistible.

These and the other poets in this collection are products of their places. Knowing their works opens a meaningful path into their lives and the places that shaped their images and tones. Their poetry gives significance to their places, to themselves and to the people around them. They make poetry, and that poetry allows readers to ask and answer the questions: Is the world a better place because of me? What difference am I going to make? And more importantly, what difference am I going to make for future generations? Poetry will help readers answer these and many other important questions as life progresses.

On October 26, 1963, President John F. Kennedy addressed Amherst College students, honoring the memory and life of poet Robert Frost and speaking of the value of the arts: "When power leads man towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses. For art establishes the basic human truth which must serve as the touchstone of our judgment."

Simply put: we are born into poetry, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the places we live and, especially, the people we love.

Spring, 2012, Wolf Point, Montana — Joseph McGeshick

PREFACE

Birthright: Born to Poetry first began with the desire of several in the Office of Public Instruction, Indian Education Division—and with the desire of many teachers as well—to make the poetry of Montana Indian poets more accessible to teachers and students.

In the November 2006 *Phi Delta Kappan* special feature on "Indian Education for All: Montana Takes the Lead," Linwood Tall Bull (Northern Cheyenne) writes:

> *Every tribe in Montana and throughout the United States has a colorful, interesting history, strong stories and legends, knowledge about plants and healing, and survival skills. Knowing more about each other will help non-Indians and Indian children learn to live together well. When we start to learn more about Indian history and culture, all children in our schools will be getting an education about the best of both worlds.* (192)

All those involved in this project know the truth of Tall Bull's words. We also know—and have experienced—the power of poetry to challenge, to stir, to provide insight, to reflect our fears and hopes, and to bear witness to pain and joy, both communal and individual. We know that poetry celebrates life and the ways we can and will survive. More than any other genre, poetry is art that invites our active participation in the humanity we all share. This is our birthright, the birthright of all Montana young people, and this is the critical value of these poets and their poetry for education today. In the words of Pulitzer Prize winning Kiowa novelist and poet, N. Scott Momaday:

> *. . . the oral tradition . . . is surely an idea which informs to one degree or another the poetry of all times and all places. But it seems to me especially relevant to contemporary Native American poetry, where it is perhaps closer than anything else in our time to the surface of human experience and the center of the human spirit. (xx) (from the "Introduction" to Carriers of the Dream Wheel: Contemporary Native American Poetry, edited by Duane Niatum, Harper and Row, 1975)*

In our selection of poets for this collection, I first looked at those from Montana whose poems had already appeared in regional anthologies. Then I considered Montana Indian poets whose poems were referenced in the secondary-level OPI units already available to teachers across the state. I also wanted to create a diversity of tribal and cultural perspectives.

The selection of poems proved difficult because I wanted to add so many more than space allowed. Over several months, I read aloud and shared hundreds of poems with teachers, with the Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts board members, and with staff members from the Office of Public Education, Indian Education Division. I also consulted with some of the poets, knowing that this project couldn't happen without their full support. In collaboration with several, I considered the very specific audience for this collection—secondary-level students from diverse cultures and backgrounds. We asked questions of each poem we read: Will our students identify and find themselves and the worlds that surround them in this poem? How can teachers integrate this poem in units and lessons they already have in place? We looked for a variety of poems that created a balance of subject matter and themes, time and place. And following Tall Bull's words, we looked for poems that would help non-Indians and Indian young people "learn to live together well."

After writing the discussion questions and writing prompts, I sent a copy of all we intended to include with each poem to the poet for feedback. I also asked if they would consider providing information about what inspired them to write the poems. Their positive and supportive responses, their joy at knowing that young people would read their poems, lifted the spirits of all involved in the project and gave us the confidence we needed to proceed.

The poets' investments in the project are the greatest of all. With deepest gratitude to each, this collection represents a much-deserved tribute to the amazing spirit, wisdom and artistic life they bring to the lives of all who listen and read.

Dorothea M. Susag

Teaching Resources

To help all students immerse themselves deeply in this extraordinary collection, it is vital that educators first read for themselves each poem's optional questions and "Tips for Understanding" and "From the Poet," always keeping in mind these essential questions:

> *Where can students find themselves--and those with whom they live, interact and share space -- in these poems?*
>
> *How can our students move toward the recognition of common realities while they develop a greater understanding and acceptance of differences through these poems?*
>
> *How can our students grow in appreciation of their home cultures and landscapes through these poems?*

Then, and most importantly, students should hear and read aloud these poems at least once, twice, even more. Through oral readings and accompanying discussion questions, and suggested resources, students can appreciate the poets' artistic expression of their complex personal, cultural, and historical experiences.

Using *Tips for Understanding*

The blue highlighted box following each poem refers to ideas concerning **Setting, Themes** and **Topics** for the featured poem. The few ideas listed represent potential **primary areas of focus.** The intent is not to exclude others, but to promote discussion and to help teachers integrate these poems into their curriculum. Indeed, most of the poems weave many themes and topics into their lines, with all of the poems addressing others as well.

Consider *Tips for Understanding* as a place to begin.

Themes are drawn from the following list: Alienation/Acceptance, Between Two Worlds, Change/Growth, Circles of Life, Cycles of Life, Justice/Injustice, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Love/Friendship, Promise/ Disillusionment/Betrayal, Self in Nature, Self in Society, Trickery

Topics mentioned: Culture/Tradition, Death/Dying, Education, Federal Indian Policy, Gift Giving, Hard Times, Historical Figures/Ancestors, Horse Culture, Hunting/Wildlife, Identity, Indian Boarding School, Abuse, Nature/Beauty, Place, Relatives/Elders, Reservations, Stereotype/Racism, Contemporary/Traditional Warrior Cultures/Societies.

Using *From the Poet*

For this publication, the poets graciously shared their wisdom and provided comments about the occasions or situations that provided inspiration for their writing. Their comments are included here to help teachers gain insight as they lead students *through* these poems and *into* greater understanding.

Poets and Poems

Alienation/Acceptance, Between Two Worlds, Change/Growth, Circles of Life, Cycles of Life, Justice/(In)justice, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Love/Friendship, Promise/ Disillusionment/Betrayal, Self in Nature, Self in Society, Trickery

Minerva Allen – Photo courtesy of the Montana Office of Public Instruction

Minerva Allen
(Assiniboine)

Minerva Allen is Nakoda. The daughter of an Assiniboine-Gros Ventre mother and a French Chippewa father, she grew up on the Fort Belknap Reservation with her grandparents. She lives at the foothills of the Little Rockies with her family and is retired from working as a full-time Indian educator. Beginning school at age five speaking Assiniboine and Gros Ventre, learning English quickly to serve as tutor for other students in her elementary school, Minerva holds a B.A. in Education from Central Michigan University, an M.A. from Montana State University-Northern, and she has done additional graduate work at Weber State University. She is currently "retired," but continues to be actively involved in varied activities- writing, serving as an Aaniiih Nakoda College board member, and working with senior citizens, generously giving of her time as a language and culture resource person. She is the mother of 14 children and numerous grandchildren. She enjoys life, teaching native language, writing poetry, and doing whatever is needed for the good of the Nakoda people.

Beautiful Existence

Death my friend is not long.
Wrapped in a tanned buffalo robe,
painfully I sank to the floor,
forcing my aching knee joints to bend.
I sat cross-legged.
Fumbling for my ceremonial pipe,
filling it with tobacco from a
Small pouch; lit it.
Smoke wreathed around my head.
I felt for my drum and began a faint
Tapping on the taut rawhide.
The voice that once rang from mountain
tops, echoing along beaver streams.
Softly I sang a chant of death.
All is quiet.

-- Minerva Allen

Reprinted by permission of Minerva Allen, *Spirits Rest*, booklet produced by Graphic Arts Students, and also *Poems Across the Big Sky*, Lowell Jaeger, Ed. (Kalispell, MT: Many Voices Press, Flathead Valley Community College, 2007) 188.

Denotation and Connotation:

Tanned buffalo robe
Ceremonial pipe
Tobacco
Small pouch
Smoke
Taut rawhide
Beaver streams

Tips for Understanding

Setting: Pre-Contact to Early 20th Century Plains
Themes: Cycles of Life, Self in Nature
Topics: Death and Dying, Nature, Culture/Tradition

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are the possible meanings for "my friend" in the poem? How does the meaning change with differing references for "friend"?
2. How may Death be a friend?
3. What is the time and place of this poem?
4. Who is the speaker of the poem? What do you learn about the speaker from images in the poem?
5. What support might cultural traditions provide for the speaker?
6. What might the singing represent to the speaker?
7. What is the "Beautiful Existence" as it relates to this poem?

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. How can the speaker's attitude toward death relate to your attitude toward life or to your understanding of death? Is it positive or negative? What may have caused your positive or negative attitude?
3. How might music help us celebrate or grieve or pray?

Text to Text

4. Compare/contrast "Beautiful Existence" with any of the following works:
   - the description of Death in *"Death Be Not Proud"* by Anglican poet John Donne (Holy Sonnet X – 1615-1617). How might the different cultural contexts affect your understanding of both poems? What do the poems share?
   - Shakespeare's Hamlet and Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy
   - the end of the first chapter of *Two Old Women* by Velma Wallis or the death of Archilde's mother in *The Surrounded* by D'Arcy McNickle
   - Emily Dickinson's *"After great pain, a formal feeling comes – (341)."*
5. "Beautiful Existence" works well with two units based on literary works and published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education: *Two Old Women* by Velma Wallis and *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle. (Allen's poem provides contrast with the protagonists' facing of death in these novels.)

Text to World

6. Research *death with dignity*. How might "Beautiful Existence" address arguments related to this issue?
7. Look at the Elisabeth Kübler-Ross model of the *five stages of grief*. (This model of grief – the process by which people deal with grief and tragedy, especially when diagnosed with a terminal illness – was introduced by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*.)

   Denial: The initial stage: "It can't be happening."
   Anger: "Why ME? It's not fair!"
   Bargaining: "If I do this, maybe it won't be so bad."
   Depression: "I'm so sad."
   Acceptance: "It's going to be all right."

   How might this model explain the speaker's attitude toward dying in "Beautiful Existence"?
8. Using "Beautiful Existence" as your beginning prompt, consider funeral rites and celebrations of life, perhaps particular tribal traditions, as they relate to the process of grieving. You are a friend of a grieving person. Write a letter to a relative who lives in another state about the experience you shared with your friend. Describe what you saw and heard and felt from your perspective as one who sympathizes with your friend in his/her loss.

   Role – friend of a grieving person
   Audience – a relative in another state
   Format – a letter
   Topic – experience at a funeral or celebration of life with a friend
   Strong Verb - Describe and express concern regarding your friend.

Encampment of Power

The snow came unto the village.
They stood hungry and cold.

And our Great white father did not help.
The same old story told.

How many dead of cold and hunger –
shall the others die?

Many horses slain to fill one's kettle.
Many rawhide bags boiled to fill one's belly.
Many cries stopped because of death.

There's not a way to defeat the laws of society.
Like locust on the ground they come,
hunting grounds are bare.

From generation to generation we have inherited
many hardships.
Many we cannot conquer.

Many times it was good to hear
many people sing.
For there were none who wanted anything more.

If the brown land seemed empty,
There was always food to find.
Now we wait and starve.

-- Minerva Allen

Reprinted by permission of Minerva Allen, *Winter Smoke,* (Havre, MT: Florens Hill County Printing, 1996)

Denotation and Connotation:

Encampment
Power
Great white father
Rawhide
Defeat
Laws of society
Locust
Conquer
Sing

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why are the people starving?
2. What are the "laws of society"?
3. How do people stand hunger and cold?
4. Why do the people "wait"?
5. How is the Encampment powerful, as the title suggests?
6. What do you think the line "And our Great white father did not help" means regarding the hardships described in this poem?
7. What might the singing represent to the speaker?
8. What images in the poem represent hope?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: 19th and Early 20th Century Plains, Treaty Period and Reservation Era
Themes: Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Justice/Injustice, Promise/ Disillusionment/Betrayal
Topics: Federal Indian Policy/ Forced Relocation, Hard Times, Reservations

From the Poet:

"'*Encampment of Power*' is about the time when Indians were put on the reservation, and they lost the power to do for themselves. They suffered hardships as they struggled to survive when they could not hunt and had to wait for rations from the war department. Because they needed passes from the superintendent to leave the reservation, they stayed and tried to live on what they had. It was nothing. They eventually endured by eating their horses and boiling their hide sacks so they could just survive. And the emotion went with that."

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. When have you said, "I can't stand it …," how did you survive it? What skills are necessary for survival? What did you fear or hope for?
3. How does that time or event compare or contrast with the people's experience in this poem? How does your response differ or compare with theirs?

Text to Text

4. Read Arlene Hirschfelder's *Native Heritage: Personal Accounts by American Indians 1790 to the Present*. New York: A Simon and Schuster Macmillan Company, 1995. Look for personal accounts that may compare/contrast to the situation for the speaker in "Encampment of Power."
5. Read "Meat for God" by D'Arcy McNickle in his collection of short stories *The Hawk*

is Hungry, Brigit Hans, ed. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1992. This short story deals with reservation-era starving times when it was against the law for Indians to shoot a gun or hunt on the reservation. What are the settings for "Meat for God" and "Encampment of Power"? How does each work deal with the impact of "laws of society" on Indian people? How do the Indians suffer and how do they survive?

6. Read Jodi Rave's: *"Commemorating the Swan Massacre,"* published in the Missoulian, Monday, October 19, 2008. "On a Sunday morning, 100 years ago, a peaceful Pend d'Oreille camp became a death scene for a family hunting deer and elk on treaty lands bordering the Flathead Reservation." What images do the poem and Rave's essay share?
7. "Encampment of Power" easily works with several model teaching units based on literary works and published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education: *Killing Custer* by James Welch, *Fools Crow* by James Welch, *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle, *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Ša, and *The Birchbark House* by Louise Erdrich.
8. Consider how James Welch's "The Man from Washington" (included in this collection) and "Encampment of Power" share similar themes and perspectives.

Text to World

9. Read about the starving and suffering people in America and the world today. What are the statistics – who and where and why? Regarding hunger, what is the situation for American Indians today? What are the possible solutions? Possible sites:
   - *2012 World Hunger and Poverty Facts and Statistics*
   - *Native American Heritage Association*

   From your research, select a situation where people are starving, such as in "Encampment of Power." As a legislator, you will make a formal speech/ presentation to Congress about your concerns and your recommended solutions. Incorporate evidence from research that helps define causes, effects and possible solutions.

   Role – a legislator
   Audience – Congress
   Format – speech
   Topic – hunger in a particular place today
   Strong Verb – Persuade the Congress that they can and should take some kind of action to alleviate the situation.

Heather Cahoon – Photo courtesy of Heather Cahoon

Heather Cahoon
(Pend d'Oreille)

Heather Cahoon is from the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana where she is enrolled Pend d' Oreille. She holds an M.F.A. in Poetry from The University of Montana, Missoula, where she was the recipient of a Richard Hugo Memorial Fellowship. Her collection of poems, entitled, *Elk Thirst*, won the 2005 Merriam-Frontier Award for publication. Cahoon also holds an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in History, Anthropology and Native American Studies. She lives in Missoula with her two small sons and husband, and she teaches at The University of Montana, Missoula.

Blonde

It is November and the sun has gone south almost
as far as it can. Cold air flies wildly through the sky,
the bare and frantic reaches of trees, and through
the dying grasses on Camas Prairie. This wind
knows me by the color of my hair, a light in darkness.

It is November and I can see my soul
slowly leaving my body every time I exhale.

Dad and I take the shortcut across Camas Prairie
to Dog Lake. He is telling me stories
of children with black hair and brown eyes.
My reflection in the side mirror tells me
what I already know. He talks
of these children until I am left standing
in the icy wind watching as he drives away.

It is November and the dying grasses on the prairie
are the same color as my hair. If I wanted I could
lie down in them and disappear, I could escape
the angry wind. But I don't, I know the land and I
would blend together into one and then no one
would ever know I had existed. So I stand.

-- Heather Cahoon

Reprinted by permission of Heather Cahoon, *Elk Thirst,* (University of Montana, Merriam Frontier Foundation, 2005) 24.

Denotation and Connotation:

Blonde
Frantic
Camas Prairie
Color
Dog Lake
Escape
Existed

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does the speaker's reflection in the side mirror tell her or reveal about her?
2. What do the images reveal about the time and place of the poem?
3. How does the speaker feel about herself when she hears her father's stories about "children with black hair and brown eyes"? How do you know?
4. Does the speaker's father actually leave her in icy wind? Could it be a metaphor for something else? What?
5. What do the descriptions of the air and trees and wind reveal about the speaker's attitude towards them or towards herself?
6. What might the speaker's choice to "stand" reveal about her choices in life?
7. Heather Cahoon was one of eight children born to a Pend d'Oreille father and a mother of Dutch, Austrian, and Irish heritage. Of all those children, Heather was the only one with blonde hair and light eyes. How does that information affect your understanding of the poem?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: 20th and 21st Century /the Flathead Reservation
Themes: Between Two Worlds, Change and Growth, Alienation/Acceptance
Topics: Identity, Relatives/Elders, Place

From the Poet:

"I wrote 'Blonde' when I was around twenty-years old, the time when almost all people seek to understand who they are. I grew up Indian, but it had never occurred to me growing up on my reservation that I didn't necessarily look Indian, although my mother is [Euro-] American. The conflict over my identity hit once I left home and was in Missoula going to college--and it provided a whole other component to my understanding who I was. I wrote the poem about how I dealt with feeling like I maybe didn't belong where I felt I did. My father's presence in the poem is metaphorical--he represents a large tribal home/community and my own questions about belonging. The poem moves past this though, to a place where, eventually, I came to know myself as a light-skinned Indian woman."

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. In most families, each child sees him/herself as different from the rest of the children. Write about how your experiences and the choices you make might differ from your siblings'.
3. Write a poem about your experience with a parent that might compare with this one. The speaker in your poem will be "I." Imitate the first line, substituting a month and time of day for whatever might be appropriate for your experience.

4. Cahoon says in her notes "From the Poet" that she didn't question her place in the Indian world until she went to college. What might have happened there to cause her confusion? Think about a time when the opinions of others about you differed from the way you saw yourself. How did that feel, and what did you do to resolve the conflict?
5. Write a poem from the perspective of the father in Cahoon's poem "Blonde." How might he describe this experience with his daughter?
   Role – the father
   Audience – his daughter
   Format – poem
   Topic – an event with his daughter, focusing on images and sounds that might reflect his feelings for her.
   Strong Verb – Describe and retell the experience from the father's point of view.

Text to Text

6. Read the picture book *Less than Half, More than Whole,* by Michael Lacapa, Taylor AZ: Storytellers Publishing House, 2001. Lacapa tells the story of a boy who feels like he doesn't fit in because his skin is lighter than one friend's and darker than another's. How does the grandfather help the boy accept himself as whole? Does the speaker in "Blonde" accept herself as whole when she "stands" at the end?
7. Compare/Contrast this poem with any of the following:
   a. this speaker's situation with the speaker in Sherman Alexie's "13/16" in *Native American Literature: An Anthology*. ed. Lawana Trout. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company, 1999. (20-22)
   b. the way this speaker feels about herself with the speaker in "I Take My Home" by Jennifer Greene (also in this collection)
8. This poem may be used with a model teaching unit based on a literary work and published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education featuring a collection of three autobiographical essays: *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Ša. These essays feature a protagonist who grew up mixed blood but who claimed her Dakota identity for herself.

Text to World

9. Watch the movie *Skin* about a black girl in South Africa who is born to two white parents. What are the identity challenges she experiences? How do her parents or the blacks and whites in South Africa accept or reject her? What causes the acceptance or rejection? How does rejection impact her life? How does she survive and prevail?
10. What situations in history have occurred—and still do occur—where Hispanic, African American, American Indian, Chinese American, Japanese American and Middle Eastern individuals of mixed heritage/race are challenged by discrimination and prejudice? How do they survive?
11. Read online David Murray's Great Falls Tribune article *"Blackfeet divided over blood quantum."* Summarize the differing Blackfeet perspectives.
12. In *Do All Indians Live In Tipis?* (sent by the OPI to school libraries), read "How Do I Prove My Indian Ancestry and Enroll in My Tribe?" by Liz Hill, pp. 8-9.

Missions

From our house in Indian town
we can see the old brick mission,
its outline red against the mountains.
Outside are three small wind-worn cabins
whose walls are held together with bleak
and yellowed photographs of the church
surrounded by hundreds of tipis.
        All those tipis have been turned
        to HUD houses, the trails paved,
        chiefs Charlo and Arlee are now
        just names of nearby towns.
Though I came for information,
wanting to know about the boarding school,
Agnes told me about her day.
She asked about my older sister
and her baby, where they were living now.
She heard they'd moved off the reservation.
        We talked all afternoon and sometimes
        she'd speak so softly I had to close
        my eyes to hear.

Agnes said that many who believed
the fathers' teachings allowed
their minds to become numb and they act
as if someone has stolen their tongues.
        Maybe they believed too much, because
        like Samson, when their hair was cut off
        they lost strength.

Until the fear of living, the fear of dying,
the fear the teachings instilled
has been abandoned, until that fear
has bled from every color in their eyes
they will be lost.
        They will remain like fields of wheat
        that tumble over themselves
        on endless missions to find grace.

        -- Heather Cahoon

Reprinted by permission of Heather Cahoon, *Elk Thirst,* (University of Montana, Merriam Frontier Foundation, 2005) 28.

Denotation and Connotation:

Indian town
Mission
Bleak
Tipis
HUD houses
Chief Charlo
Chief Arlee
Boarding School
Reservation
Fathers' teachings
Stolen their tongues
Samson
Fear
Grace

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why doesn't Agnes give the speaker the information she wants when the speaker first arrives?
2. Why might the owners of the cabins keep the old photographs?
3. Who may have taken the photographs of the church and tipis mentioned in the poem? Why? What story do these photographs tell? Whose story is it?
4. What does the speaker's closing her eyes to listen reveal about what she values?
5. What might Agnes know that the speaker doesn't?
6. What does the speaker know that Agnes doesn't? How are these differences reconciled?
7. How does the tense shift in the stanza about fear affect the meaning of the poem? Who are "they"?
8. According to the poem, what changed for Indian people after the missions came to the reservation?
9. Explain the play on two words in the poem: missions and grace. How might the words contrast with the intent of missionaries who came to Christianize and educate Indian people in Euro-American ways?
10. Why might Cahoon have chosen to end her poem with a prophecy rather than a conclusion to the narrative?

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. What is one question you have wanted to ask a parent or an elder? How did you feel about asking? Why?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Late 19th - 20th Century and 21st Century, Flathead Reservation and Boarding School Era
Themes: Between Two Worlds, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Justice/Injustice
Topics: Indian Boarding School, Hard Times, Relatives/Elders, Place, Ancestors

From the Poet:

"'Missions' stems from a handful of related incidents--growing up in tribal housing where I saw the St. Ignatius Mission out my bedroom window, spending time browsing those old photographs inside those cabins (which I believe were the priests' headquarters/living area and now house relevant memorabilia and are open to the public in the summers as little museums), learning more about the assimilation era of federal Indian policy as a student at UM, and then going home to interview an elder about the boarding school. Ultimately, the advent of Christianity brought significantly more hardships to the tribal people than it did blessings--primary among the negative impacts was the resulting loss of tribal cultural knowledge, hence the final stanza of the poem."

3. If you asked the question, how did the parent or elder respond? What did you learn? How did your asking change your relationship with the elder?

Text to Text

4. "Missions" will work well with six of the model teaching units published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education and based on literary works that reference Indian boarding schools and the lasting impacts on individuals and communities: *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle; *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Ša; *Sweetgrass Basket* by Marlene Carvell; *Counting Coup* by Joe Medicine Crow; *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path* by Joseph Bruchac; and, *As Long as The Rivers Flow* by Larry Loyie.
5. How does the "believed too much" in Cahoon's poem compare/contrast with the meaning of "too much" communicated in William Wordsworth's poem "The World is Too Much With Us"? Or, how does the phrase compare to the "too much" found in Richard Littlebear's poem "Grandma," in this collection?

Text to World

6. In "Missions," the poet mentions two towns. Find out when and why the towns Charlo and Arlee were named and who made that decision. Was it Indian people or the whites who lived there? Why does it matter? Write an article for the newspaper about the history of these towns or another town on or near a Montana reservation.

   Role – a local historian
   Audience – local newspaper readers
   Format – article
   Topic – history of a town and how it was named
   Strong Verb – Explain and inform the readers about the history of the naming of the town.
7. Search *Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes* website and the following book resources sent by the OPI to school libraries:
   - *Challenge to Survive: History of the Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation – From Time Immemorial: Traditional Life, Unit I, Pre-1800*. Pablo, MT: Salish Kootenai College Tribal History Project, Salish Kootenai College Press, 2008.
   - *Challenge to Survive: History of the Salish Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation – Three Eagles and Grizzly Bear Looking Up Period, Unit II, 1800-1840*. Pablo, MT: Salish Kootenai College Tribal History Project, Salish Kootenai College Press, 2008.
   - *Challenge to Survive: History of the Salish Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation – Victor and Alexander Period, Unit III, 1840-1870*. Pablo, MT: Salish Kootenai College Tribal History Project, Salish Kootenai College Press, 2008.
   - *Challenge to Survive: History of the Salish Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation – Charlo and Michel Period. Unit IV, 1870-1910*. Pablo, MT: Salish Kootenai College Tribal History Project, Salish Kootenai College Press, 2011.
8. Using resources listed in #7, examine some aspect(s) of federal Indian policy and its effects on the people of the Flathead Indian Reservation. What were some significant events? How do the people remember them? What are some of the stories the elders tell that they want the young people to know and to remember?
9. Watch excerpts from *We Shall Remain: A Production of American Experience, "Geronimo and Wounded Knee,"* Episode 5 (minutes 39-46 and 74-78 where boarding school survivors share the pain of their experiences). How does this information extend your understanding of the poem "Missions"?

Elk Thirst

Yellow fields thirst. Dryness
lifts the blues and greens
from trees that grow
in uneven rows along
the Flathead's angry pace.

Shallow water follows
the route it has for centuries,
wrapping around cliffs, rocks
that climb into the sky,
sharp edges

softened by water
that forever slides across
these walls as it flows
to urgent falls. Here it plummets
and dives deep.

Rocks and sticks turn
bleak eyes away. Brook trout
swim fast and leave streaks.
The sun reflects in silver scales
by day, at night passion.

Strong colors eat the sky.
One elk steps into blurred water
and drinks. His thoughts,
improbable, he looks and drinks the sky.

-- Heather Cahoon

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Denotation and Connotation:

Yellow fields
Thirst
Flathead River
Angry pace
Urgent
Plummets
Bleak
Brook trout
Silver scales
Passion
Improbable

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Timeless experience along the Flathead River in Montana
Themes: Circles of Life, Self in Nature
Topics: Place, Nature, Hunting/Wildlife

From the Poet:

"'Elk Thirst' is one of my all-time favorite poems that I've written. I love it for the images and memories it brings to me. My family spent a lot of time in the hot summer months at the Flathead River, near Moiese and Dixon, just below the area we call Ferry Basin, which is an elk reserve. I think that the river inspired me to write this poem--all those strong images and the strong rhythm in the poem can also be found in the river."

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why might the trees appear dry along the Flathead River?
2. Find words in the poem that form seemingly harsh or puzzling images. For example, how/why might a river's pace appear "angry"? How do these images add to layers of meaning?
3. What positive/negative impacts do humans have on the river's environment?
4. How does the personification (colors eating and elk drinking the sky) in the last stanza affect a reader's experience with the poem?
5. At what time of day do "colors eat the sky"? What occurs when the elk "drinks the sky"?
6. Why might the speaker have referred to the elk's thoughts as "improbable"?
7. What, other than the elk, thirsts in this poem?
8. What does the poem reveal about rivers?

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. The elk isn't introduced until the last stanza. What is the effect of the elk on your experience with the poem? What do you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch? What memories might you share with the speaker? Might you be present by the river as well?

Text to Text

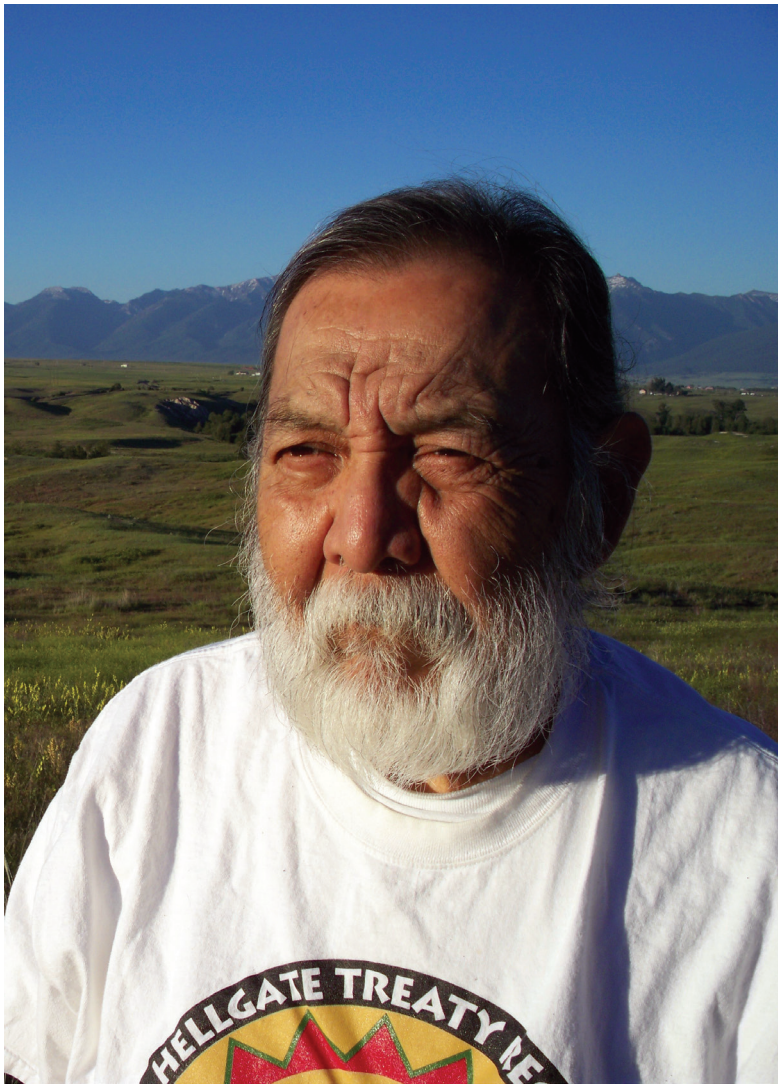
3. Other poems in this collection make references to rivers: "Rivers of Horse" by Henry Real Bird and "Crosscurrent" by M. L. Smoker. What sensory images do the poets use to describe the rivers in each?
4. Read the picture book, *The Little Duck – Sikihpsis* by Ruth Cuthand (Cree) with Cree translation by Stan Cuthand, Illustrated by Mary Longman(Saulteaux). Penticton, British Columbia: Theytus Books, Ltd., 2003. How does the issue with language and communication in *The Little Duck* help you understand the speaker's possible confusion as he/she looks at the elk?

5. "Elk Thirst" will work well with model teaching units based on literary works and published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education. The imagery and sensitivity to nature and her people will resonate with similar images in *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle, *Fools Crow* by James Welch, and *Two Old Women* by Velma Wallis.

Text to World

6. Research newspaper articles about wildlife in Montana. What's the opinion about the animal(s) and their situation(s) discussed in each. How might the opinions compare or differ from the attitude of the speaker in "Elk Thirst"?
7. "Elk Thirst" is set in the western Montana landscape. To someone your age living in Japan, describe an animal and scene from your landscape that you remember and treasure.

   Role – Yourself
   Audience – Japanese student
   Format – a letter
   Topic – Montana animal and landscape
   Strong Verb – Describe the scene and the animal.



Victor Charlo – Photo courtesy of Lowell Jaeger, Many Voices Press

Victor Charlo
(Salish-Kootenai)

Victor Charlo was born in 1938, a child of World War II. As a child, he contracted infantile paralysis, and he was expected to die. But Jerome, a medicine man, doctored him only once, and he got well. In *Put Šeỳ: Good Enough,* Victor says this about his writing: "There are a lot of things I was told I shouldn't write about, and so to compensate, I write around those things. . . . I write about things that are Native because that's what grounds me, things I understand." Charlo attributes his writing style—with "as few words as possible, conjuring up the old sayings, those words I grew up with that come out every now and then," to his early childhood experiences. After attending a seminary, "to make the folks proud," he came back to Montana and graduated from The University of Montana, Missoula. For ten years, Victor served as a counselor with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes at the Kicking Horse Job Corps in Montana. He is at home at Old Agency, Dixon, Montana, just outside the national Bison Range, and his daughter, April, translates his poems into Salish.

Agnes *for Agnes Vanderburg 1979*

We hide-tan here at Agency Creek
and at Valley Creek. Hard work
that lets your mind go as you wait
for the rest of your life. Soft hide,
so soft wind blows like cloth.
Hair white with hide.

She, Agnes, watches and lets us know in old
Salish tongue the word for scraper that I
remember now. So hard. So to the point.

Why did I learn how to write? Why did I want to?
Is it worth the loss of your world going away?

-- Victor Charlo

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Denotation and Connotation:

Hide-tan
Agency Creek
Valley Creek
Scraper

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are Agnes and others doing while they do work with their hands?
2. What does the speaker question about him/herself?
3. What has been gained and lost in the speaker's life?
4. What is the "world" the speaker may refer to?
5. About the word for scraper, the speaker says, "So hard. So to the point." What does the speaker suggest about the differences between the oral Salish and the written English?
6. Identify the contrasting words or opposing ideas in the poem. Does the poem provide resolution for the speaker's dilemma?
7. Like other American Indian writers, the poet has used the written language to retell the truths of what had existed for centuries before. What are the "truths" in the poem "Agnes"?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary/ Flathead- Salish/ Kootenai Reservation
Themes: Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Love/Friendship
Topics: Relatives/Elders, Education, Place

From the Poet:

"Agnes and I were really good friends; so in a poem, I wanted to acknowledge what she could do and what it all meant to me. But the last two lines are the big thing: why did I learn to write? I thought about that question and the tension within me – I didn't have to do this (learn to write), but I really did have to do it. It goes back to the old question of 'what if?'"

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. Other poems in this collection refer to hand work. Identify the poems and the skills. How are the skills similar/different, and who usually performs them? What work do you do that is "hard"?
3. What do the men and women in our lives create that requires time and skill with their hands? Have you learned the skill? Why or why not?
4. In the poem "Agnes," Charlo describes hide-tanning. Describe the process of doing a skill you've learned from a neighbor or an elder.

   Role - Yourself
   Audience – your grandchildren in the future
   Format – technical description of a skill and the steps in learning it
   Topic – skill learned from an elder
   Strong Verb – Explain and describe the process.
5. Read the picture book, *Where Did You Get Your Moccasins?*, by Bernelda Wheeler (Cree/ Saulteaux), Illustrated by Herman Bekkering. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Peguis Publishers, 1992. In this story, a boy brings to school a pair of moccasins his grandmother

(Kookum) made, and he tells his classmates how she tanned the hide and made the moccasins. What do you treasure that an elder or grandparent has made for you?

6. What physical activity or work have you done with an elderly relative or acquaintance? Bake bread, weed a garden, work on a car, play the piano, other? What additional lessons did the elder teach you that went beyond the activity?
7. How is your education different from the kind of education your grandparents experienced? For better or for worse? Explain.
8. Visit a creek near your home, and write your own poem about what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch in that place.

Text to Text

9. View a *photo of Agnes Vanderburg.* How does the photo compare or contrast with the image you saw in your own mind as you read the poem?
10. Read the biography of Agnes included in *Women of Good Heart* by Jennifer Greene. Npustin Press. 2012.
11. Compare/contrast this poem and the speaker's attitude toward Agnes with
    - Archilde's mother in *The Surrounded*, by D'Arcy McNickle
    - Agnes in Heather Cahoon's poem "Missions"

    How does each contribute to a broader definition of Agnes' character?
12. This poem will work with Office of Public Instruction Indian Education model teaching units based upon the following literary works: *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Ša, *Counting Coup* by Joseph Medicine Crow, *Killing Custer* by James Welch, *Fools Crow* by James Welch, and *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle. In each, elders exhibit significant influences on young people.
13. What insight into the women found in *Fools Crow* does "Agnes" give?
14. In *Learning to Write "Indian:" The Boarding-School Experience and American Indian Literature,* University of Oklahoma Press, 2005, Amelia Katanski writes about how the boarding school experience provided the means by which American Indian writers could "wage a linguistic rebellion against the boarding-school ideology. . ." (122). Katanski suggests that through published stories and newspapers, and poetry, American Indians have taken their power in the oral and written tradition to express the "other side of the story." Ironically, they have developed "creative spaces for self-articulation and for complex, syncretic identity formation out of a restrictive, potentially genocidal institution" (130). How does Katanski's idea provide an answer to what Charlo questions in his last two lines?

Text to World

15. Read *"SKC students touch the spirit of Agnes at spring camp*" by B.L. Azure about an activity at the Salish Kootenai College Campus in honor of Agnes Vanderburg.
16. Read Section C "Education" found in *Challenge To Survive, Unit I, From Time Immemorial: Traditional Life, Pre-1800.* Salish Kootenai College Tribal History Project, 2008. (Sent by the OPI to school libraries). Also, perform an Internet search for "Montana Salish Indian Education." How has education changed for Salish people in the last several generations? Identify three causes for the changes.

Frog Creek Circle *for my family, especially Jan*

Mountains so close we are relative.
Creek so cold it brings winter rain.

We return to warm August home,
Frog Creek, where I've lived so long
that smells are stored, opened only
here. This land never changes, always
whole, always the way we want it to be.
We always come back
to check our senses or to remember
dreams. We are remembered today in circles
of family, of red pine, of old time chiefs,
of forgotten horses that thunder dark stars.

These are songs that we come to this day,
soft as Indian mint, strange as this sky.

-- Victor Charlo

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Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary in late summer/ Frog Creek
Themes: Circles of Life, Self in Nature, Self in Society
Topics: Nature, Relatives/Elders, Culture/ Tradition

From the Poet:

"As I was walking back to the old sweat house, this poem just came to me. I thought, here we at Frog Creek, we are at home—all these different images came to me."

Denotation and Connotation:

Relative
August home
Frog Creek
Circles
Red Pine
Indian mint
Songs
Strange

Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the speaker feel about the mountains?
2. How and where are the smells stored? Why?
3. What are the characteristics of this place, Frog Creek?
4. "We are remembered today. . ." is passive voice. Who or what might do the remembering in this line? How would the meaning change if the line read, "We remember today?"
5. How and why might the sky be "strange"?
6. How does the speaker feel about him/herself in this place?
7. How do "circles" make the speaker feel?

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. If possible, visit Frog Creek on the Flathead Reservation or another creek near your home and write your own poem about what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch in that place.
3. What are the constants in your own life? What never changes? Is that constancy in your imagination or is it real and touchable? How?
4. Make a list of the circles that surround you. Write a poem like "Frog Creek Circle" using those names and images.

   Role – third person, looking in a mirror at the writer's reflected self
   Audience – the writer, addressing "you," the person with the experience.
   Format – poem
   Topic – circles of family, friends, animals, celebrations, etc.
   Strong Verb – Describe what you see, do, hear, fear, and rejoice about.

Text to Text

5. Contrast the tone and perspective in this poem with Joe McGeshick's "Wolf Point, Montana," in this collection. How is each poet's attitude expressed towards the subject of the poem?

6. Watch *Victor Charlo reading* his poetry: What do you realize or understand in a new way when you listen to Charlo read his own poetry?
7. This poem will work with the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education model teaching units based upon the following literary works: *Counting Coup* by Joseph Medicine Crow, *Killing Custer* by James Welch, *Fools Crow* by James Welch, and *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle. Each of these units features events and situations where the tribal community brings its people home to live and learn, to suffer and survive within the circle of family, extended family, and tribe.

Text to World

8. Read your local newspapers or community websites. What events—or ways families or communities or students come together—are reported? Why?
9. How do tribal people you know come together to celebrate their connections with each other and with ancestors?

Dixon Direction

Directions are simple here.
Geese know where to go
and eagles fly. Yet sometimes
You get lost on wrong roads.

Then

when you come to school,
you seek from this high window
and find living river, red willow,
white aspen, old juniper and pine.

This is you.

And bright, clay cliffs fix the stars.

-- Victor Charlo

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Denotation and Connotation:

Direction
Wrong road
School
Red willow
White aspen
Old juniper and pine
Clay cliffs
Fix

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who is the speaker? Who is the audience for this poem?
2. What are the "directions" the speaker refers to in the first line?
3. What are some possible "wrong roads"?
4. "Dixon Direction" includes images from both inside and outside the school. What do the images reveal about those who look out the window?
5. What might "This is you" mean?
6. The speaker says "where to go" at the beginning and "cliffs fix the stars" at the end. What might these two verb phrases imply about what the listeners will do in this place?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary/Old Agency, first Two Eagle River School, Kicking Horse Job Corps, Dixon, Montana
Themes: Change and Growth, Self in Society
Topics: Education, Identity, Place

From the Poet:

"The first Native American high school, an alternative high school, was erected at the Old Agency near Dixon, the heart of the reservation. Some submitted names for the school, and the one I submitted was the name they chose--Two Eagle River School. In writing "Dixon Direction," I thought of the eagles and where we were—at the Old Agency right across the river from the eagle tree. For ten years, I served as a professional counselor at the Kicking Horse Job Corps."

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. A note from Charlo under the poem in *Put Šeỳ* says that this poem was "read every week or so to in-coming students at Kicking Horse Job Corps for five or six years." What if you heard this poem at the beginning of your school years, and how would that affect the way you approached being in school?
3. Using "Dixon Direction" as a model, deliver a speech to incoming students at the beginning of the school year.
   Role – a counselor
   Audience – students at the beginning of the year
   Format – speech/poem/song
   Topic – new beginnings, advice to students
   Strong Verb – Persuade students to set goals.
4. What directions for living or about decision-making do you receive? How do you respond and how might it depend on the direction giver?

Text to Text

5. Compare this poem to Dr. Seuss' story *Oh, The Places You'll Go* or to Robert Frost's poem, "*The Road Not Taken.*"
6. This poem will work with model teaching units published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education based upon the following literary works and video: *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Ša, *Counting Coup* by Joseph Medicine Crow, *Killing Custer* by James Welch, *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle, *Sweetgrass Basket* by Marlene Carvell, *As Long as The Rivers Flow* by Larry Loyie, and *Playing for the World,* the DVD about the Fort Shaw Indian Girls Basketball Team. "Dixon Direction" and its topic provide a contrast to the forced off-reservation education the federal government promoted. Two Eagle River School is on the reservation, and Salish-Kootenai people are in charge of teaching their own children.

Text to World

7. Find out about stars and how they have provided direction to travelers worldwide, i.e. navigators on the seas or slaves traveling toward freedom.
8. Learn about the oldest trail on the continent: The Old North Trail
   - *Montana Outdoors*
   - "*Images of the Old North Trail*"
9. Research the site for the *Kicking Horse Job Corps*. What can you learn about this kind of education? How does it help young people?

You, you missed me

Remember old house on hill with family
laughing? Remember mother being happy
and older brothers, sisters and Mom
playing stickgame with me, the youngest, not quite
old enough to play?

Remember playing rock fight with my older
brother, Gene? We would
begin in fun, but if I hit him too hard
or with too big a rock he would get mad,
and I'd be in trouble.

Remember being chased around the house,
being hit on the back with a hail of rocks,
stuttering, "You, you, you mmmm-missed me!"

-- Victor Charlo

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Denotation and Connotation:

Stickgame
Rock fight
Stuttering

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who is the speaker and who is the audience for the poem?
2. What sounds do you hear as you imagine the scene in this poem?
3. What is the relationship between the speaker and his older brother? Can you tell from the poem how the parents might feel about each? Who is the favored one? Why?
4. Do you think the mother is present for the event depicted in this poem?
5. How does the child feel about him/herself stuttering? How might you know?
6. Why might the speaker in this poem choose to remember this particular event and time in his/her life?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary/Universal
Themes: Circle(s) of Life, Self in Society, Trickery
Topics: Relatives/Elders, Identity, Culture/Tradition

From the Poet:

"I always felt normal, even though I stuttered, and the words were hard to get out. They even sent me home from the first grade because of it. But once I'd get to playing, it didn't make any difference what I said and what I did. It didn't matter how big or little you were. I was the youngest, and my family was my shield. I hid behind them. That was my coping skill. I had warm and safe hideout places just in the house, where I might sit for long long times, feeling so safe. I never thought to write 'You, You Missed Me,' but now I realize the importance of writing about the little things. The little poems you think aren't much at all become very important. That's why I'm still writing."

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. Remember a time when you were younger, when you got in trouble for having fun or when fun turned to pain or anger. Write a poem about the incident, including quotes from what either you or someone else might have said.
3. Think of a time when you did something that embarrassed you. As you look back on the incident, and can laugh at yourself, write or retell the event to someone else who was also present.
4. What kinds of outdoor games did you play with your siblings or friends? What were the rules and who made them?
5. Locate a photograph of yourself when you were little. Write a vignette that begins with "Remember when . . . ," modeled after "You, you missed me."

   Role – the student
   Audience – someone else in the photo, or the person who took the photo
   Format – a five-minute writing or vignette
   Topic – an experience from childhood based on a photo
   Strong Verb – Describe the experience; write a narrative that tells the story, and conclude with why you treasure this photograph and time.

6. Think about the place or the people who make you feel safe enough to be different? How do those people help you get beyond any differences that outsiders might pay attention to?
7. How do students in your school treat others who have a disability? How do you respond when you witness discrimination or support?

Text to Text

8. Watch the DVD *Playing for the World: The 1904 Fort Shaw Indian Boarding School Girls Basketball Team,* produced by Montana PBS in 2009 (sent by the OPI to school libraries along with a Guide). *Playing for the World* begins with Shoshone children playing a game, and it goes on to show how the girls transferred the skills and their athleticism to the game of basketball when they went to Fort Shaw Boarding School. Consider how game playing and skill are centuries-old traditions. What has changed and what has stayed the same over time?
9. Heather Cahoon in "Blonde" writes about how her light skin and blonde hair made her different from her siblings and other Indian children, but she never noticed it until she left home. How might her security as a child compare to the security Victor Charlo writes about within his family?

Text to World

10. The speaker mentions "stickgame." Why might the child be too young to play? View the *Traditional Games* link for descriptions of a variety of stick games. What are some of the rules and the equipment?
11. Read about how laws today address the issues of *children with special needs.* If Victor Charlo were in a public school today, how might his experience differ because of these laws? Do laws such as this help or hinder children? Explain.

Jennifer K. Greene – Photo courtesy of Jennifer K. Greene

Jennifer K. Greene
(Salish/Chippewa-Cree)

Jennifer Greene lives on the Flathead Reservation in Montana where she was born and raised. Her book of poetry entitled *What I Keep* was the winner of the 1998 North American Native Authors Poetry Award. She's won first-place awards from the Native American Journalists Association for feature writing. Her writing appeared on a CD entitled *Heart of the Bitterroot: Voices of Salish and Pend d'Orielle Women*. In 2010, Jennifer won a Distinguished Achievement Award from the Association of Educational Publishers for an article that appeared in *Teaching Tolerance* magazine. *What Lasts,* a collection of poetry, was published by Foothills Publishing in 2010. She received the 2010 Menada Literary Prize at the Ditët e Naimit international poetry festival in Macedonia. Her most recent work is a children's book entitled *Huckleberries, Buttercups, and Celebrations* (2011) Npustin Press. Jennifer is Salish and Chippewa-Cree and a member of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes.

My Reservation

Dig up the earth with machines shaped
like an old woman's arthritic hand
clawing and grasping, digging.

People come in droves to Montana,
for the beauty, they always say.

Beauty only they can recognize and define.

Knock down the trees that grow naturally,
build a big house with solar panels,
to be naturalists of course.

Trying to recreate the suburbs among rattlesnakes,
month long blizzards blinding white,
wood ticks and very little rain.

There are giant soft mountain cats
with big warm faces that hear and smell

whose jaws will crush the skull of a child.

Complain about the bear problems because
they eat cattle and get in the way.

But my brown face is a bigger threat than
any cat or bear.

-- Jennifer Greene

Reprinted by permission of Jennifer Greene, *What I Keep,* (Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1999) 1.

Denotation and Connotation:

Old woman's arthritic hand
Clawing, grasping, digging
Solar panels
Beauty
Naturalists
Wood ticks
Mountain cats
Threat

Questions for Discussion:

1. Of the seven reservations in Montana, this poem most directly speaks to the situation on the Flathead. According to the speaker, what is happening on the reservation?
2. What does the comparison of machines with an "old woman's arthritic hand" suggest about the nature of the machines?
3. What is the speaker's attitude toward the "people who come to Montana" and toward the reservation?
4. What does the poem reveal about stereotypes about some of "the people who come to Montana"? Describe them?
5. How might the people who come to the reservation now compare or differ from those who came two generations previous?
6. Where is the irony in the poem?
7. How does the speaker describe mountain cats? Is the speaker afraid? Why or why not?
8. Why or how is a "brown face" a bigger threat than a bear?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary Montana, Reservation era/Flathead Reservation
Themes: Circle(s) of Life, Self in Society, Trickery
Topics: Reservations/ Immigration, Stereotype/ Racism, Place

From the Poet:

"A strong sense of place is really important to me. I have been deeply shaped by all the landscapes I've lived in. I was born and raised on the Flathead Reservation where my father's family is from. My mom is from Rocky Boy. I didn't realize how strongly the mountains around Arlee had shaped who I am as a person and how I think until I lived in the high plains of New Mexico for years. Living in an open, beautiful, treeless landscape taught me how to be more comfortable with my own voice. Each place has its own stories to tell."

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. What places or things do you claim as "yours"? Do they really belong just to you? Who else might claim them as well?
3. In this poem, a "face" represents the whole of the speaker. How do the faces of people you know reveal their personalities or characteristics?

Text to Text

4. Compare or contrast "My Reservation" with:
    - "Sure You Can Ask me a Personal Question" by Diane Burns in *Roots and*

Branches by Dorothea M. Susag, NCTE, 1988. (30-33). Describe the audience and speaker for each. What does each poem suggest about the face of the speaker?

- "Birthright" by M.L. Smoker, in this collection. In each poem, what is the speaker's attitude towards the non-Indians who move to the reservation?

5. Two secondary-level model teaching units published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education are based upon literary works that deal with the influx of non-Indians to the reservations and the consequences for Indian people: *Wind from and Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle and *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Ša. How does the theme and tone of "My Reservation" compare or contrast with those of *Wind from an Enemy Sky* and *American Indian Stories?*

Text to World

6. Learn about federal Indian policies in the following resources:
   - *Montana Mosaic: 20th Century People and Events.* An educational series from the Montana Historical Society. Chapter 6: Federal Indian Policy
   - *Montana Tribal Histories: Educators Resource Guide and Companion DVD* Sent by the OPI to school libraries and available online .
   - Reid, Betty and Ben Winton. *Keeping Promises: What is Sovereignty and Other Questions about Indian Country*. Principal Photography by Gwendolyn Gates. Tucson, AZ: Western National Parks Assoc., 2004.
   - *Tribal Nations: The Story of Federal Indian Law. F*airbanks, Alaska: Tanana Chiefs Conference, in collaboration with Fox Valley Technical College Criminal Justice Center for innovation, Appleton, WI, 2006. (DVD sent by OPI to high school libraries.)
7. Write a response to an editorial about Indian reservations

   Role – a member of the Salish-Kootenai tribe
   Audience -- person who has written a Letter to the Editor regarding his belief that Indian reservations are lands given to Indian people
   Format – letter to the editor of local newspaper
   Topic -- Federal Indian policies that created the reservation system
   Strong Verb – Explain the specific federal policies and include references to Jennifer Greene's poem showing the effects of the policies on the Salish?
8. Consider the issues or conflicts between Indian people and non-Indians who move to or want to use Indian lands for their own purposes, such as the issues mentioned in "My Reservation." What are the arguments on each side?

   Role – Oil company representative or environmentalist or tribal representative
   Audience – agriculturalists and tribal people
   Format – written defense for a hearing about a particular portion of land
   Topic – drilling for oil on reservation land
   Strong Verb – Take a position and persuade the panel and audience that your position is the most just. Use concrete evidence and reputable sources.

I Take My Home

He smelled immovable
like tree sap
and sawdust.

My grandpa smelled like a man.

He was a boxer
fought in a war
had a crew cut
wore suspenders.

Lived on his homeland
his real homeland
where I grew up.

I learned to speak English better
than the people who told him
that Salish was bad.

People ask me why I'm not traditional
then look over my shoulder at my
homeland like cake to cut, divided
hoarded, eaten.

At a Christmas party, I drank from
a teacup with Santa's face
filled with egg nog and rum.
A woman asked me why I drank, since alcohol had
done so much harm to my people. Then
she said that she went to Santa Fe, New Mexico
and bought a tape of Indian flute music, and
could I teach her my dances.

Big hairy men used to take pictures of me
at pow-wows when I danced.
I was a little girl, so I smiled
not clenching my fists around
my green shawl,
posing for men who thought I was
part of a vanishing race.

But here I am like a heartbeat
I beat, I beat
I run and stop and look
between the lines.

My home is in me
like the smell of a green
pine needle broken in two.
Strong, fresh.

My home is in me
like the smell of cold
lake water in my skin,
my lungs
wherever I go.

Wherever I go,
my grandfather's hands,
plum colored and strong,
are touching mine.

-- Jennifer Greene

Reprinted by permission of Jennifer Greene, *What I Keep,* (Greenfield Center, NY: Greenfield Review Press, 1999) 5.

Denotation and Connotation:

Immovable
Crew cut
Real homeland
Salish
Traditional
Vanishing race
Between the lines
Plum colored

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Mid to late 20th Century and 21st Century
Themes: Alienation/Acceptance, Between Two Worlds, Self in Society, Culture/Tradition, Change/Growth
Topics: Elders, Stereotype/Racism, Place, Relatives, Culture/Tradition

Questions for Discussion:

1. How does the speaker define a "man"?
2. What do the images of "tree sap and sawdust," "crew cut" and "boxer" reveal about the speaker's grandpa?
3. What is the effect on meaning of the mixing of senses – smell/touch or action?
4. Who might have told Grandfather that "Salish was bad"? Why?
5. Who are the people who talk to the speaker and ask questions?
6. What does the speaker suggest is the person's attitude towards Indian people and the speaker when she refers to the alcoholism of the speaker's "people"?
7. Where is the irony in this poem?
8. What stereotypes are challenged in this poem?
9. What might explain the difference between the little girl's response to the picture takers and her present attitude toward non-Indians in this poem?
10. What is "home" to the speaker and to her grandfather?
11. Identify the similes in this poem. From what experiences do the similes spring?
12. How does the speaker "Take My Home"?

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. Who are elders you know? What hardships have they overcome to keep a home for you?
3. Fists and hands are significant images in Greene's poems. Using written or drawn or photographed images, describe the hands of someone you admire.
4. The speaker makes reference to other people and their questions about her being "not traditional"? What does "traditional" mean to you and to the people with whom you live?

Text to Text

5. Listen to the stories of veterans in your community and read young-adult historical fiction and picture books that feature American Indian men and women who have gone to war. What are their stories? How have they or their stories influenced their grandchildren and other descendants?

- Bruchac, Joseph (Abenaki). *Code Talker.* New York: Dial Books, 2005.
- Smith, Cynthia Leitich. (Muscogee Creek). *Indian Shoes.* Illustrated by Jim Madsen. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.
- Sneve, Virginia Driving Hawk. (Lakota). *Grandpa Was a Cowboy & an Indian & Other Stories.* Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2000.
- Nelson, S. D. (Dakota/Lakota Sioux). *Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story.* New York: Lee & Low Books, 2006.
- Medicine Crow, Joseph (Crow). *Counting Coup: Becoming a Crow Chief on the Reservation and Beyond*. Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2006.
- *We, The Northern Cheyenne People.* Chief Dull Knife College. Lame Deer, MT. 2008. (Sent by OPI to school libraries.) p. 73 (WWII); p. 79 (Iraq).

6. In "I Take My Home," the poet mentions her grandfather's service in the military. Interview a veteran about the places he or she was stationed during a war. Research those places and what happened there. Relying on the story the veteran tells, in the voice of the veteran, write a letter home, describing his or her situation. Conclude with words or phrases that show how "home is in me" for the soldier.

   Role – a veteran
   Audience – relatives at home
   Format – letter
   Topic – situation and place where veteran is serving and what he/she treasures or misses about home
   Strong Verb – Tell a story and describe the veteran and the situation.

Text to World

7. The Office of Public Instruction Indian Education Division has published a model teaching unit based upon Joe Medicine Crow's memoir: *Counting Coup: Becoming a Crow Chief on the Reservation and Beyond.* Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2006. Joe Medicine Crow is a Crow elder, a war veteran, who was awarded the Congressional Medal of Freedom on August 12, 2009.
   - *Obama Honors Sixteen*
   - *Joe Medicine Crow To Receive Presidential Medal of Freedom*
   - *Joe Medicine Crow*

   How might the speaker's grandfather compare with what you learn about Medicine Crow in his memoir, in articles in newspapers or on websites, and from stories told about him?

What I Keep

You brought me a turtle,
small, old and green,
because he was beautiful
and alive.

We put him in the kitchen
sink and watched him crawl
before we set him free
where you found him
in a field of tall dry
yellow weeds.

You gave me a rock,
strong, gray and smooth
because it caught your eye,
and it was shaped
like a heart.

For my 20th birthday,
you gave me an old nickel
with a perfect picture of
a buffalo on it.
I keep them both in my wooden
jewelry box.

You gave me the smell
of your forehead on a
sunny day. I keep
the shape of your face
in the bend of my palm.

-- Jennifer Greene

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Tips for Understanding:
Setting: Contemporary or Late 20th Century
Themes: Change and Growth, Circles of Life, Love/Friendship
Topics: Relatives/Elders, Nature, Identity, Gift Giving

Denotation and Connotation:

Turtle
Beautiful
Perfect picture

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the relationship between the speaker and "you"?
2. Why may the speaker have included "old" in the description of the turtle in the first stanza?
3. What might have caused the weeds to be yellow or dry? What does the image suggest about the season or landscape of the poem? Where might turtles live in "yellow weeds"?
4. What do each of the gifts have in common for the speaker or for the giver?
5. Did the speaker ask for these gifts?
6. What does the speaker value?
7. What is the source of these gifts?
8. What do the last three lines suggest about memories and relationships?
9. Is the bent "palm" giving or taking?

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. What is the most important gift you have ever received? Why do you regard it as valuable?
3. How do you make decisions about what to give others?
4. What are your treasures? Why do you consider each a treasure?
5. Write a poem about three or four gifts you have received from a special person. Follow the format of Greene's poem, beginning with "You gave me . . ."

Text to Text

6. Consider gifts and what they might mean to those who give and who receive them, and what they might mean for the relationship between the two. Compare and contrast "What I Keep" with the following:
    - The short story, "*The Gift of the Magi*" by O. Henry
    - The picture book, *The Gift Horse: A Lakota Story* by S.D. Nelson (Dakota/Lakota Sioux). New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 1999.

Text to World

7. Suggestions for gifts, where to buy them and who might need or want them, dominate the media around holidays or special days (Valentine's Day, Mother's Day). Research some current practices of gift giving in America's *popular culture.*
8. Prepare a visual presentation about the commercialization of gift giving. Examine what

motivates people to give, what has changed over time, what are the most popular gifts and why. In what ways do advertisements stress the importance of gifts? Consider ways gift recipients have changed or stayed the same. What do they expect? Then reflect on the ideas in "What I Keep" and draw your own conclusions about gift giving and receiving.

Role -- a new parent in a support group that examines influences on families and children and ways to respond to them

Audience – other parents in the support group

Format – visual presentation

Topic – the commercialization of gift giving and its influence on children and families, and the meaning of gifts as portrayed in Greene's poem.

Strong Verb -- Describe (through words and images), explain, and persuade your audience to adopt your conclusions about gift giving and receiving.

For Those Who Hate

Keep your fists strong and
the toes of your boots sharp
as razor blades.
Someone who has more
than you might turn his back.

Keep your kids mean and
fighting like taunted dogs
so they don't grow up
to be humane and make
you feel guilty.

Keep on talking so your
mouth doesn't fall
open and let you cry,
because then you might
have to think
about the things that
make you sad.

-- Jennifer Greene

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Denotation and Connotation:

Fists
Taunted
Humane
Guilt

Questions for Discussion:

1. The poem is entitled "For Those Who Hate." Who is the poem for? Who might hate and why?
2. In the first stanza, what might the "you" do and why?
3. What is the relationship of "you" or the audience for the poem and those he/she encounters?
4. What might this poem suggest about bullying?
5. Today people say, "Don't be a hater." How might that statement relate to the title or content of the poem?
6. Why would "someone who has more than you turn his back"?
7. What may frighten the subject of the poem the most? How and Why?
8. What might make the person in the poem "sad"?
9. Can the "boots" be understood as metaphor? If so, what might they represent?
10. What are the lessons for us all?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary and Universal
Themes: Self in Society, Circles of Life, Alienation/Acceptance, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Justice/Injustice
Topics: Identity, Hard Times, Relatives/Elders

Note: The teacher may want to discuss with the class sensitive issues such as stereotypes/racism, as presented in the poem

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. Where have you seen situations similar to the one in the poem happening in your life? Write about a time when you felt you were wronged by another person and you responded in a way that made things worse. What could you have done instead?
3. If you were the subject in "For Those Who Hate," how would you respond to the speaker?

   Role – a person to whom the poem is addressed
   Audience – the speaker in the poem
   Format – e-mail
   Topic – the accusation of one who hates and the sadness that he/she might not want to think about
   Strong Verb – Explain why you felt so angry and then share the reason for your sadness. Ask the speaker for understanding.

Text to Text

4. What situations in Zitkala Ša's essays in *American Indian Stories* exhibit a character who might compare with the audience in "For Those Who Hate"? (pages 60 and 79-80) What is the underlying sadness?

5. Read "For Those Who Hate" together with Lois Red Elk's "A Force They Could Not Control," in this collection. What do you learn about the causes of hate and violence? What solutions might be implicit in the poems?

Text to World

6. What does the poem suggest about the causes of people being mean to each other? How might the Five Stages of Grief—Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance-- contribute to your understanding of the poem?
7. Read about *bullying* (from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services). What are the causes and suggested solutions? How do they apply to situations in your school?
8. Refer to the *Bully Free Montana* pages on the OPI website for information and resources regarding the serious issues of school climate and bullying.
9. Although "For Those Who Hate" does not address a particular race, how might it address the issues inherent in racism? Search the following for causes, consequences, and solutions:
    - *Racism* from The Anti-Defamation League
    - *The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights*
    - *For Native Americans, Old Stereotypes Die Hard* by Brian Bull for NPR, *All Things Considered*

Just Wrinkles

Her face remembers things she can't. The skin
around her mouth and on her cheeks hangs down
weighed down with smiles and laughs forever stored
inside a pouch so full it had to stretch
and curve. She never paced herself when she
was young. She let her face and skin express
her joy and sadness flowing, flowing fast
through sharp new rocks becoming worn with life
so smoothed and grooved into comfort, routine
that now routine is all she has and grooves.

-- Jennifer Greene

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Denotation and Connotation:

Just
Paced
Express
Routine
Grooves
Pouch

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary and Universal
Themes: Circles of Life, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Cycles of Life
Topics: Relatives/Elders, Identity, Place

Questions for Discussion:

1. What might the wrinkles represent?
2. How does the speaker feel about the subject of this poem?
3. How does this poem use personification to draw a positive or negative picture of old age?
4. From what you know about elders' lives, what sadness and joy may the elder in this poem have experienced?
5. How does life *wear* people?
6. What does the word "just" in the title reveal about the speaker's opinion of the elderly woman or about the woman herself? Are they all she has left? Consider understatement and how the poet may have used it.

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. Modeling Greene's poem, "Just Wrinkles," focus on physical features, unique behaviors, and a few sayings, to describe an elderly person you know and love.

   Role – yourself
   Audience – *AARP The Magazine* or your local newspaper or TV station
   Format – article
   Topic – an elderly person
   Strong Verb - Describe the person and recommend him or her for a "My Favorite Elder" award. Turn the recommendation into a visual presentation for a community event or celebration.

Text to Text

3. Using the images in this poem, sketch a main character in a short story, such as
   - the subject of Minerva Allen's poem "Beautiful Existence," in this collection
   - the woman in Eudora Welty's "*A Worn Path*"
   - a character in a memoir or novel—such as Velma Wallis' *Two Old Women*—or in a play, such as *King Lear* by William Shakespeare.
4. Imagine a typical conflict within a family. Put the subject of this poem in that situation. How would she act or respond?
5. Consider the relationship between elders and young people. Compare "Just Wrinkles" with the following poems, also in this collection: "Blonde" by Heather Cahoon, "Agnes"

by Victor Charlo, "What I Keep" by Jennifer Greene, "A Conversation with Grandma" by Dick Littlebear, "Mom" by Henry Real Bird, and "Our Blood Remembers" by Lois Red Elk. What do the speakers value the most? What characteristics do the elders share?

Text to World

6. Read obituaries in the newspapers, particularly those of elderly people. What do the writers say about them? How did they live their lives? What did they value? What impact did they leave on their children and on their grandchildren?
7. Look at the covers and stories that appear in the magazines you find at the checkout counters of local grocery and drug stores. Compare/contrast those photos and stories with "Just Wrinkles." What do you learn about popular culture today? What do you learn about what's important to you?

Richard Littlebear – Photo courtesy of the Montana Office of Public Instruction

Richard Littlebear
(Northern Cheyenne)

Richard (Dick) E. Littlebear was born on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and grew up in Busby, Montana. He graduated from Bethel College in Kansas, received a Master's Degree from Montana State University in Bozeman, and, in 1994, he received his Ed.D. in education from Boston University. He is President and Interim Dean of Cultural Affairs at Chief Dull Knife College on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. Dr. Littlebear is an advocate for bilingualism and bilingual education on a local, state, national and international level. He actively encourages the continued usage of oral and written Cheyenne language and, more generally, all indigenous languages.

NAMȧHTA'SOOMȧHEVEME
We Are the Spirits of These Bones

He'tohe he'konȯtse nataosee'ešėhae'eševe'ȯhtsemo'tanonėstse.
We have been with these bones for a long time.
Naa ovahe nataešeasėhetotaetanome hetsėstseha
And we are beginning to feel a whole lot better
he'tohe he'konȯtse tse'ešeevȧho'ėhoo'ȯhtseto hetseohe
now that these bones are now back here
Tsetsėhestȧhese tsestaomepo'anomevȯhtsevȯse he'tohe ho'e.
among the Northern Cheyenne people on their Reservation.
Naa ovahe mato nahotoanavetanome.
But we are troubled for another reason.
Nao'omeaseohtsetanome
We want to travel on
he'tohe he'konȯtse etaešeevaovana'xaeno'oma'enenėstse.
now that these bones are safely buried.
Ooxesta etaeševȧhešeovėšemanenėstse.
They have now been properly put to rest.
Hene netao'o etaešenėšepėheva'e.
All that has happened is all very good.
Naa ovahe naso'hotoanavetanome:
But we are still troubled:
He'tohe he'konȯtse etaešekanomeevapėhevo'tanėstse.
These bones are now in a good place.
Naa taamahe tsemȧhta'soomȧhevetse,
But we, as the spirits,
tsexho'eohtsėhanetse hetseohe nasaahene'enahenone.
do not know this place.
Hetseohe na'ȯhkeva'neamėsohpeohtseme heva
We just used to travel through this place
ho've'otsetse naa mato heva ho'eemȯhonetse.
when we were hunting the enemy or hunting for food.
Hetseohe nasaahestȧheheme, nėhešėhene'enome.
We are not from here, we want you to know that.
Hetsėstseha naeveamemano'eeme.
We have been meeting and singing.
Emȧhemoheevameo'o tse'tohe mȧhta'soomaho.
All the spirits who have been with these bones for a long time were called to a meeting to sing songs.

Nanȯhtsenanonėstse ho'nehenoonȯtse tsetao'seevane'evaotsêhaaetse
ma'tao'omeaseohtsetse.
We are looking for the right wolf songs that will guide us.
Hetsėstseha naohkenemeneme.
So now we are singing.
Naohkeonesėhahtsenonėstse nemeotȯtse.
We are trying different songs.
Ma'tame'enomatse, nėstseo'omeaseohtseme,
Whenever we find the right wolf songs,
hapo'e tosa'e nėtseovėšename, tosa'e tsehpêhevėhene'enomatse.
we will travel on to a place we know, to a familiar place where we can sleep peacefully.
Tsestao'sėsaa'evave'šėhavėsevetanohetse.
Where we will no longer feel bad.
Tsestao'sėsaa'evave'šėhoonȯsetanohetse.
Where we will no longer feel homesick.
"Taaxa'e netaoneseme'enanonėstse ho'nehenoonȯtse," naheme.
"Let us find some wolf songs," we said.
Naevemaemamȯhevananonėstse onehavo'ėstse.
We put together some drums.
Hene koomaa'ėse naevepo'ponȯhanonėstse.
Once we were finished we sadly pounded on the drums.
Naa hetsėstseha naeveno'nȯhtse'anonėstse nemenestotȯtse
And now we are looking for songs that will
tsetao'seve'šeo'omėhoxovestavatse
help us as we travel on
or maybe we can now be here and sleep restfully.
naa mato heva hetseohe nȧhtanėšeeveovana'xaenaootseme.
He'tohe naonėsaanėšekanomepėhevėhene'enahenone.
Even though we do not know this place so well.

-- Richard Littlebear Ve'kesȯhnestoohe

Printed by permission of Richard Littlebear, Chapter One of *Revitalizing Indigenous Languages - Some Rare and Radical Ideas for Keeping Indigenous Languages Alive* by Richard Littlebear. *July 12, 2011*. (Adapted from a speech delivered at the Fourth Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium at Flagstaff, Arizona, on May 2, 1997. Teaching Indigenous Languages, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona).

Note: From across the continent, thousands of American Indian burial sites have been disturbed and their remains taken without permission from the tribes or descendants—with many ending up in "scientific studies" or in museums such as the Smithsonian. The 1990 *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* established the process whereby federally-recognized American Indian tribes can request that museums and institutions receiving federal funds return culturally affiliated human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. It also allows for the return of American Indian human remains found on federal lands.

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Late 19th, 20th and 21st Centuries/Northern Cheyenne Reservation
Themes: Justice/Injustice, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Circles of Life
Topics: Hard Times, Place, Ancestors

From the Poet:

"The inspiration for 'We Are the Spirits of These Bones' came from my nephew, Regis Littlebear. He lived about a quarter mile east of Busby. In between Busby and his home was the cemetery that contained the bones of people who had died at the Fort Robinson Breakout in the winter of 1878-79 and which had been repatriated in 1993. He said that once in a while he heard singing, and he asked me if someone was singing in the village. It turned out that nobody had been singing. I then thought maybe the spirits were singing since their bones had been returned."

Denotation and Connotation:

Repatriation
Lost
Confused
Peace
Language
Singing
Rest

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who are the speakers in the poem?
2. Why are they lost and confused?
3. From when they "left" to the present time, how has life in this place changed?
4. What role does "singing" play in the lives of these people and those who welcome them?
5. What might "journey on" or "be at rest" imply?

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. How does your community/family honor those who have passed on?

Text to Text

3. Read the following articles:
    - Jodi Rave's column in the *Helena Independent:* "*Feds not complying with act passed 18 years ago*"
    - Jomay Steen's article "*Indian remains finally at rest*," in the *Rapid City* Journal, March 31, 2005.
    - Dr. Littlebear's essay: "*Some Rare and Radical Ideas for Keeping Indigenous Languages Alive*."
    - *The Fort Robinson Outbreak Spiritual Run*

After completing the reading of various articles and Littlebear's poem, "We Are the Spirits of These Bones," and reviewing the story by Jomay Steen and where these bones originated, write about how you would feel if one of those remains identified were your relative.

Role – a member of a community near an abandoned Indian boarding school
Audience – community members and newspaper readers
Format – Opinion Editorial
Topic – thirty-six 100-year-old unmarked graves of Indian children near a former Indian boarding school
Strong Verb – Explain, site relevant resources, and persuade your readers to follow the rules of the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act as they proceed to identify and help Indian people reclaim their ancestors' remains.

Text to World

4. What do the actions of individuals and governments to *take* the remains of American Indians reveal about what they may have believed or known at the time of their actions?
5. The taking of the remains, and the impact on their descendants, falls under the category of *historical trauma*. Some descendants respond with anger while others find reconciliation. How may have this repatriation affected the Northern Cheyenne people? Where does this poem fit as a response to this historical trauma?

A Conversation with Grandma

Šaahe, Nešk̇e'e, etaosee'ešėhae'xove tsexho'oxeveestsėstovatse; naahe etaosee'ešėhehpėhae'xove tsexho'oxeahahtovatse.

Oh, Grandma, it's been a long, long time since last I talked to you; even longer than when I last listened to you.

Hanȧhaohe hoxoveto netaosee'ešėhaa'eševesevee'e.

You've been gone to the next camp for a long, long time already.

Tse'ȯhkeevėhešeeestsėstoveto, hetsėstseha naso've'ȯhtsemaa'e.

What you said to me in those long ago talks has stayed with me all of my life.

Ne'ȯhkėsaa'eevesee 'kotsenovahe naa ovahe tse'ȯhkeevėheto, naohkėso'eamemȧxa'oo'e tsetȧha'ešėstanoveto.

You were not the hugging kind, but you've touched me all of my life.

Na'ėstse neestsestȯtse tsehešemȧxa'oeto, naso'hene'ena:

One way you touched me I remember:

Ho'eešema 'seo'enemenatse, neokeevȧhohpo'anenemane

When we took down our camps from berry-picking time every fall

neohkeevȧhoohto'eohtsemane,

and as we rode home on the horse-drawn wagon,

nestaohkeevȧhootoo'o, hoehase nestaohkeevȧhotoove'hoohtanȯtse hene tsehae'eho'omenaa'ėstse hoehase.

you would look back to the mountains.

Nestaohkeveše:"Ve'kesȯhnestoohe!

You would call me by my Cheyenne name: Howling Bird,

Nexhooseve'hahtsėstse.

Come home with us.

Nehnoohtȯtse hene tsexhaa'eho'omene naa tse'esto'ovoma'e.

Leave those mountains and valleys

Neta'heomepėhevatsesta henėheohe tse 'evo'soeto. "

where you had such a good time playing. "

Nexhetȧxevonehnėstse amo'eneone, eso'po'ota.

You'd say come get in the wagon, there's still room for you.

Ne'ȯhketaveononestatamȧtse, ohotama kahkėse henėheohe tse'ȯhkeamonoeto.

I often thought that your calling me was peculiar since I was usually sitting right beside you.

No’ka, ne’ešėho’kenėhetątse: "Neške’e, hestseohe nato’eamonoo’e. ”

And one time I finally said, “Grandma, I’m right here.”

“Nahene’ena,” nexheve. “Nemąhta’sooma nataevaonoomo. Neoseeheomeovana’xaeevo’soo’e. Nemąhta’sooma nėstaonąhaxeevąhevėsto’soemo. Nėstanėheševona’o’ąhtse. Nasaanėheto’hehe. Hena’hanehe tsetaevąhoseonoomo nemąhta’sooma.”

And you said, “I know. It’s your spirit I’m calling. You had too much fun back there and I’m afraid you’ll want to join your spirit and I will lose you. I don’t want that to happen. So, I’m calling.”

Tsehnėheto, naxhene’ena tsehešemehotaneto.

When you said that, I felt so needed.

Na’ȯseemąheexovomohtąheotse.

I felt so warm all over.

Na’ȯseevao’ȯseo’otomomohtąheotse

I felt so complete.

Naa, Neške’e, nehene’enovątse. Nahene’ena neohkėhoonȯse’oxe.

But, Grandma, I know you. I know you miss me. I know you don’t feel complete.

Naa, nano’hene’ena tsehešėhaaenoveto.

And I know your sense of humor.

Nėstsene’eševe’eonoome.

So, don’t call me home to the next camp anytime too soon.

Hetseohe naso’ooxestaamėhešėhe’heetovanove.

I’m still having fun at this one.

-- Richard Littlebear Ve’kesȯhnestoohe

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Denotation and Connotation:

Next camp
Touch
Berry picking
Calling

Questions for Discussion:

1. What complexities can you find in the poem that might be in contrast to the simplicity of the title?
2. What may the reader conclude about Grandma from the second line: "even longer than when I last listened to you"?
3. The speaker remembers a time when he/she was with Grandma. When did the event happen?
4. What were Grandma and the speaker doing together? What was the speaker doing alone?
5. How does the speaker feel about the experience?
6. What does Grandma fear as they leave the mountains? Why?
7. What does the speaker miss the most about Grandma?
8. How might a person leave a spirit behind, or "join a spirit" and lose a part of him/her self?
9. Where does the poem change from longing and sadness to happiness? What does that reveal about the speaker?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: 20th Century/Northern Cheyenne Reservation
Themes: Change and Growth, Circles of Life, Self in Nature
Topics: Place, Identity, Ancestors/Elders

From the Poet:

"Whenever I write expressively, I first write in the Cheyenne language. That's how I wrote 'A Conversation with Grandma.' Then I translate what I have written into the English language. I do this because I want to see the central idea or image or images and express them first in Cheyenne. In the translation process, I try to write words in the English language that are just as expressive and evocative as those in the Cheyenne language. The idea is to give the English language reader as provocative a journey in the English language as, I hope, I have provided in the Cheyenne language for Cheyenne language readers. "

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. How do those who love you "touch" you?
3. What kinds of talks have you had with an elder? What are the lessons you learn?
4. Ask an elder you know this question: What has changed or what has been lost in this world or with young people like me? What has stayed the same? How do you feel about the changes?

Text to Text

5. Other poems in this collection deal with the relationship between elders and young people. Compare "A Conversation with Grandma" with these poems, also in this

collection: "Blonde" by Heather Cahoon, "Agnes" by Victor Charlo, "What I Keep" and "Just Wrinkles" by Jennifer Greene, "Mom" by Henry Real Bird, and "Our Blood Remembers" by Lois Red Elk. What do the speakers value the most? What characteristics do the elders share?

6. This site, *Grandparents in Children's Books*, provides an annotated list of books for children about grandparents. Consult with your librarian about which books might be available in your library or which books the librarian might purchase or obtain on inter-library loan. Plan a read aloud in the class, with students sharing the books or stories that best resonate with them.
7. "A Conversation with Grandma" can work well with the memoir *Counting Coup* by Joe Medicine Crow. The model teaching unit based upon *Counting Coup* was sent by the OPI to school libraries. In his memoir, Medicine Crow shares stories and words of his grandparents, always giving them credit for the significant role they played in his life.

   Role – Yourself
   Audience – Grandparent/respected elder
   Format – dialogue or conversation, following the pattern of Littlebear's poem "A Conversation with Grandmother"
   Topic – a response to the grandparent/respected elder thanking him/her for positive influence
   Strong Verb – Create a conversational response to the grandparent/elder.

Text to World

8. Read about the roles of grandparents with grandchildren:
   - *"The Role of grandparents in children upbringing"*
   - *". . . Children and Grandparents Were the Perfect Combination"*
   - "*Since the Start of the Great Recession, More Children Raised by Grandparents*"
   - Western Heritage Center - *"Tsistsistas and Suhtaio: Expressions of Northern Cheyenne People"* What do these Northern Cheyenne elders say about their roles as grandparents? Consider what has changed with child rearing since the beginnings of the recession. What do you think is the most important contribution grandparents can make to their grandchildren's lives?

AMONEO'SANENOTAXE
Modern Day Warrior

Eohkėxaetšėhe'keevoo'o, tseohkėhešeevoo'ovėse ma'xeve'kėseho ho'nese'nevavȯse. Hova'ehe eohkėsaa'o'ha'oohtahe

He looks around with awesome raptor eyes that miss no movement.

Eohkėxaetšėhe'keahasėstsee'e. Hova'ehe eohkemȧhenesta.

He listens with patient predator ears that miss no sound.

Hetaneo'o naa he'eo'o emȧheahasėstseeo'o. Tsemȧsoka'a'xeo'o mėhnestomevȯtse hene na'ėstse tsetonoohtomevȯse hoo'xevahtȯtse.

Warriors and women alike are all waiting to jump up when they hear the right call.

Ho'ėhosėhoo'xevaohestovetse, eohkėxamaehešėšene'še. Eoseeho'tȧhevatano. Etaohketšėpeveno'me'etanootse'ta tsehešenotȧxevevo'ėstanehevėse.

Each unnerving call tightens his face with anticipation, awaiting the prize, remembering his warrior ancestry.

Tsehe'ešeamėhoo'xevahtovetse, exaehe'keaseevomohtahe, exaehe'keasėhohpeohtse.

And he does what he must; he moves his hands with talon-like grace and suddenness in response to each call. He greets each call with edgy, sweaty anticipation.

Eohkeešėto'ėsto'eevoameotse tsehe'ešeamėhoo'xevahtovetse.

He suppresses moans that arise within his throat with each call.

Eohkėxaetšėva'neevoa'xe.

His eyes dart about anxiously.

Henėheohe tsevesėhoese vo'ėstaneo'o, exaehe'kemȧheaseootsetanoo'o. Eohkemȧheevoameotseo'o tsehe'ešeamėhoo'xevahtovetse.

Other warriors and women groan with disappointment and their groans rise in fearsome crescendo.

Ta'mȧhove'še enėxho'oxėhoo'xevahtovetse. Oohtseheta enėxaetaevehetse tsetonoohtȯtse.

Then comes the climactic call. It is the right one for him.

Ta'mȧhove'še ema'xeto'eka'a'xe. Ema'xetȧhpe'e'hahe: Naho'tȧheva!

He springs upwards and yells the modern day war-cry: BINGO!

-- Richard Littlebear Ve'kesȯhnestoohe

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Denotation and Connotation:

Warrior
Raptor
Warrior ancestry
Talon
Grace
Crescendo
Call
Bingo

Questions for Discussion:

1. What are some of the images or scenes that you see as you listen to and read this poem?
2. What might a raptor see and listen for?
3. What words communicate the warrior's emotion?
4. Who might be playing Bingo in this poem?
5. How might the poet feel about the warriors depicted in this poem?
6. Which images or lines, words or phrases, may be true or ironic (what kind)? How?
7. How is humor used in this poem?
8. Trickery is one of the listed themes. Who is tricked?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary/Bingo parlor
Themes: Trickery, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Between Two Worlds
Topics: Contemporary/Traditional Warrior Cultures/Societies, Culture/Tradition, Hunting/Wildlife

From the Poet:

"As with 'Modern Day Warrior,' I generally try to use simple words to express what I think are profound thoughts. Also, as I write this now, I'm consciously writing about a process that I do not think about when I'm writing: that is writing. For me, getting the reader to comprehend the central idea or image and to learn from it are primary considerations. When I first started writing in the Cheyenne language, I was doing it for my own learning. I wanted to learn to write Cheyenne as easily as I wrote the English language, and I never thought that my writing would get published. I resisted getting published for a long time, but now, for the sake of Cheyenne language perpetuation, I'm contributing my Cheyenne language writing to various publications."

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. Describe a game you have played where you felt the same level of intense expectation and pressure as the subject in this poem. How did you feel when you won? When you lost?

Text to Text

3. Read about warriors in the following articles and books:
    - Bently Spang's *The War Shirt,* Barrington, IL: Rigby, division of Reed Elsevier Inc., 1999, and a supporting lesson found in *Model Teaching Units, Language Arts, Elementary Level, Volume Two*, sent by the OPI to elementary schools.
    - *A History of the Cheyenne People* by Tom Weist, Montana Council for Indian Education, 1977 (sent by the OPI to school libraries)
    - *We the Northern Cheyenne People,* Chief Dull Knife College, 2008 (sent by the OPI to school libraries)

- Find Littlebear's use of the word "prize" in "Modern Day Warrior." Compare to the following passage from *Fools Crow* by James Welch, p. 85.
  "Men, even experienced warriors, do not always listen to reason when they are close to the prize. The closer to the prize, the more the fever obscures the judgment."

4. Reflect upon the traditional role of warriors and the irony/humor found in "Modern Day Warrior." Also access the following articles/resources found online discussing American Indian humor:
   - *Indian Humor Exhibit*
   - *"Bently Spang examines culture with humor in Emerson installation"*
   - Sent by OPI to school libraries:
   - *Do All Indians Live In Tipis? Questions and Answers from the National Museum of the American Indian* (sent by the OPI to school libraries), "Why do some people think Indians do not laugh or smile?" pp. 62-63.
   - *We, the Northern Cheyenne People* (sent by the OPI to school libraries), pp. 35-45, a chapter on the Northern Cheyenne language. Pp. 42-43 offers a good explanation of stereotypes.
   - In 1969, Lakota author Vine Deloria, Jr. offered up his perspective regarding humor and American Indians: "Humor, all Indians will agree, is the cement by which the coming Indian movement is held together. When a people can laugh at themselves and laugh at others and hold all aspects of life together without letting anybody drive them to extremes, then it seems to me that that people can survive." (Deloria, Jr. Vine, *Custer Died For Your Sins*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press) 167.
     Reflect upon the importance of humor/irony in your relationships with family and friends.
     Role – high school student
     Audience – self
     Format – journal or diary entry
     Topic – how humor in your communication with people positively benefits your life
     Strong Verb – Describe and provide examples of use of humor and irony in your communications

Text to World

5. For information about American Indian gaming, see:
   - Chapter 23 pp. 269-278 and "Ancient Tales" p. 276 from *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Native American History* by Walter C. Fleming, sent by the OPI to school libraries.
   - Chapters "Why Do American Indians Run Casinos?"; "What Happens to the Revenue from Indian Casinos?"; and, "Do the Rich Casino Tribes Help Out the Poor Tribes?" pp. 128-134, from *Do All Indians Live In Tipis? Questions and Answers from the National Museum of the American Indian,* sent by OPI to school libraries.

Joseph R. McGeshick – Photo courtesy of Joseph R. McGeshick

(Chippewa/Assiniboine/Sioux)

Joseph R. McGeshick was born in northeastern Montana on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. He grew up in the small Hi-Line town of Wolf Point along the Missouri River. He is an enrolled Sokaogon Chippewa (Mole Lake, Wisconsin) on his father's side and is also Assiniboine/Sioux (Ft. Peck, Montana) from his mother's side. He has worked in the area of Indian education for the past thirty years as a teacher, administrator and writer. McGeshick has taught at the high school, community college and university levels. His first book, a collection of poetry titled *The Indian in the Liquor Cabinet and Other Poems,* was published in 2006 and his second, *Never Get Mad At Your Sweetgrass*, is a collection of short stories published in 2007. In 2008 he also co-authored the first edition of *The History of the Assiniboine and Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana: 1600-2000.* A second edition of that history will be published March of 2012. His next work is a novel titled *Sister Girl*, due out in the summer of 2012. McGeshick lives and writes in eastern Montana.

If I Lived in That House

If I lived in that house
A father would read to his daughter
A man would throw a ball to a boy
A woman would softly kiss a child
A family would sit and eat a meal
A knock would go unanswered
A girl would cry in her small room
A boy would stand alone, staring down a hallway
A shiny faucet would drip into a white sink
A bare light would cast a yellow beam onto a porch
A dark silence would fill the black winter night
A rainstorm would blur an open field

And a man would not think too hard

-- Joseph McGeshick

Reprinted by permission of Joseph R. McGeshick, *The Indian in the Liquor Cabinet,* (Baltimore, Maryland: Publishamerica, LLLP, 2006) 30.

Denotation and Connotation:

Softly kiss
Unanswered knock
Shiny faucet
White sink
Bare light
Blur

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary/a House
Themes: Between Two Worlds, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Promise/Betrayal/ Disillusionment
Topics: Hard Times, Place, Identity

From the Poet:

"I was in Bozeman walking along a street with these huge old opulent houses and I was thinking about growing up in a tribal house."

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who is the speaker? Is it "the man" at the end of the poem? If not, who might it be?
2. What house is the speaker looking at? One on TV? One in a neighborhood not his own?
3. How is this poem about possible misperceptions?
4. Consider the shift after the fifth line with the sixth line: "A knock would go unanswered."
5. What do you learn about the boy, and the man, from the sensory images in the poem?
6. Who may be knocking and why?
7. Why may the girl cry in her small room?
8. What do the images of "small room" and "bare light" possibly reveal about the economic status of the family at the end of the poem? Are there words that contrast with these?
9. Why wouldn't a man "think too hard"? What might happen if he did?

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, Enlightens you.
2. What do you look at and wish you had: clothes, a house, a car, a motorbike, a life like the rich and famous? Where do you see the things you wish for? How do your possession(s) contrast with what you see? How does that make you feel?
3. The poem also speaks of affection, attention, and play. How important are these to you?

Text to Text

4. Read Montana Public Radio's "*The Write Question*" piece about Joe McGeshick. It includes a poem from a recent publication as well as a biography. Similar to "If I lived in that house," how does the poem "Chasing the Sun Across the Hi-Line" include an element of yearning for what the speaker can't have? Why is the speaker's hope "false"?

Text to World

5. Reflect upon:
    - *materialism* and how it might be evident in the high school world. In many high schools, some students can afford to spend hundreds of dollars on new outfits every fall, while others wear hand-me-downs or clothes they bought at the local

thrift store. Consider how the latter students, perhaps similar to the speaker in McGeshick's "If I Lived in That House," may feel about themselves as they face this contrast day after day.

- Words about and from Sitting Bull - "Sitting Bull made money, most of which, as Annie Oakley bears witness, went into the pockets of small, ragged boys. Nor could he understand how so much wealth could go brushing by, unmindful of the poor. He formed the opinion that the white man would not do much for the Indians when they let their own flesh and blood go hungry. Said he, 'The white man knows how to make everything, but he does not know how to distribute it.'" *Buffalo Bill and Sitting Bull: Inventing the Wild West*. (Bobby Bridger, University of Texas Press: 2002)
- the concept of *Give Away Ceremony* – "The Give Away Ceremony, or similar ceremony, is said to be universal among Native American people. Unlike other societies where one is likely to say, 'Look what I did' and expect to receive gifts, in the Native American society the person being honored has a Give Away Ceremony and gives gifts. It has been said that the chief of a tribe was always the poorest in the village for he looked out for the good of all his people. Charged with their welfare, and honored by them, the chief gave away blankets, horses, food and whatever else his people needed." (Murton McCluskey*, Your Guide to Understanding Enjoying Pow Wows*, sent by the OPI to school libraries, p. 19).

  Role – a student journalist
  Audience – students in your school
  Format – a feature article in the school newspaper
  Topic – materialistic culture and attitudes
  Strong Verb – Explain three major impacts of materialistic culture in today's world on teens and on school climate in general; pose the question of whether or not Give Away Ceremonies might provide positive influences.

6. Describe this house from the perspective of the boy or the girl? What does he or she see that the speaker misses?
7. A portion of an essay by Deborah E. Barker – *"Visual markers: Art and mass media in Alice Walker's Meridian"* - references an essay - "The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It?" by Alice Walker, the author of *The Color Purple*. In Walker's essay, she writes about her mother who worked as a housemaid for wealthy whites. While she worked in their homes, she watched soap operas, "placing herself in every scene she saw." However, the contrast between those scenes and her presence in them directly contrasted with what she experienced in her own home. Read the page available online and discuss the way Walker's mother's experience may compare/contrast with the speaker in McGeshick's poem "If I Lived in That House." Consider the "man" in both stories. What do they have in common?

Wolf Point, Montana

Proud of a legacy built on rotten carcasses
Hundreds of wolves stacked on the Missouri's north bank

Accreted land and lives washed away and deposited
Now new with saplings that grow out of pure sand

Poaching works both ways
What happens when geography no longer defines character?

-- Joseph McGeshick

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Denotation and Connotation:

Legacy
Carcasses
Accreted
Poaching
Geography

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who is "proud" of "a legacy built on rotten carcasses"?
2. What is poached and how does it work "both ways"?
3. What's the difference between "poaching a culture" and "assimilation" or "acculturation"? [See "From the Poet."]

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Wolf Point, Montana, 20th Century, Contemporary
Themes: Justice/Injustice, Promise/Disillusionment/Betrayal, Between Two Worlds
Topics: Nature, Place, Hunting/Wildlife

From the Poet:

"The Wolf Point poem is historical. The poaching metaphor refers to poaching deer off the reservation and poaching culture; Indians poach white culture, and sometimes whites poach Indian culture."

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. How has a place near your home changed over time? Is the change positive or negative? What caused it to happen?
3. What kind of poaching goes on near your home? Who does it and why? Are the perpetrators prosecuted? Why or why not?
4. How does or doesn't geography define your character? Think of where you live, how you spend most of your time and how that might compare or contrast with your elders' young lives.

Text to Text

5. Compare/contrast "Wolf Point, Montana" with "Frog Creek Circle" by Victor Charlo and "I Take My Home" by Jennifer Greene (both in this collection). How do the speakers' attitudes towards landscape differ and why? Consider that this poem is set on the Fort Peck Reservation and Charlo's and Greene's on the Flathead Reservation.

6. What is the relationship between place and culture or the character of the individuals who live on the Missouri's north bank? For example, a person might say that a farming culture fosters a strong work ethic in individuals. Compare "Wolf Point, Montana" with "Birthright for Carl Lithander" by M.L. Smoker (in this collection) for additional thoughts regarding the influence of place on lives.

Text to World

7. The speaker asks "what happens when geography no long defines character?" Consider how people define themselves, especially when they live and work away from

nature – an office in New York may look the same as an office in Wolf Point, Montana. How does geography define character?

8. In "From the Poet," Joe McGeshick writes about whites poaching Indian culture. What does that look like, and why would anyone want to steal another's culture?
    - Read *"Hey, You in the Headdress! Do You Know What It Means?"* by Chelsea Vowel from *Huffington Post Canada*
    - How might this situation relate to [Indian] *"The Mascot Issue"*?
9. Research Montana laws about poaching. Why were they created? What are the penalties?
    - *Poaching: Enough Is Enough* from Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks
10. Reflect upon the topic of poaching across time.

    Role – voice of the Missouri River
    Audience – all who live near Wolf Point, Montana
    Format – speech or song lyrics
    Topic – wolf kill as spoken of in the poem; and/or poaching, both historically and in current times
    Strong Verb – Tell/sing what the river has seen over the years - a description of the causes and effects of early poaching on wildlife, the Assiniboine/Sioux people, on the landscape, as well as contemporary poaching situations.

Henry Real Bird – Photo courtesy of Ken Stolz, Humanities Montana

Henry Real Bird
(Crow)

Henry Real Bird, Bauchee wachaytchish (Timber Leader) was born and raised on the Crow Indian Reservation of southeast Montana. He was taught the tradition of the Crow primarily by his grandparents, Florence Medicine Tail Real Bird and Mark Real Bird. The Crow language was the only language he spoke until six years old. Then he was exposed to the English language at Crow Agency Public School. At the age of ten years, Henry decided he wanted to be a teacher because of having some wonderful teachers at Crow Agency Public School. After Hardin High School, he enrolled at Western Montana College where he earned athletic letters in cross-country and rodeo. Two years later, he transferred to Montana State University, Bozeman, where he received an elementary teaching degree. The cowboy life from the hills to the rodeos and classroom teaching is where he has spent his life: from the Navajo Reservation, to the Crow Reservation and the Northern Cheyenne Reservation. He rode saddle broncs professionally from 1978-1980. While rodeoing, teaching, and drifting around, he wrote twelve children's books, four chap books of poetry and one book of poetry. Now days, he and his wife Alma raise bucking horses and care for their grandchildren from two sons and one

daughter.

Recognition Exceptional Achievement – MSU Billings – 2010
Montana Poet Laureate – 2009-2011
High Plains Book Award – Best of Poetry for *Horse Tracks* – 2011
Academy Western Artist, Will Rodger's Award – Cowboy Poet of the Year -- 2011

Thought

"Thought is like a cloud
You can see through shadow to see nothing
But you can see shadow
When it touches something you know,
Like that cloud's shadow
Touching the Wolf Teeth Mountains.
When the clouds touch the mountain's top
Or where it is high
The wind is good
When you're among the clouds
Blurred ground among fog,
You are close to He Who First Did Everything,"
Said my Grandfather Owns Painted Horse.
We are but nomads asking for nothing
But the blessing upon our Mother Earth.
We are born as someone new
So then
We have to be taught
The good from the bad.
What is good, we want you to know.
What is good, we want you to use,
In the way that you are a person.

-- Henry Real Bird

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Denotation and Connotation:

Thought
Wolf Teeth Mountains
He Who First Did Everything
Nomads

Questions for Discussion:

1. How is thought like a cloud?
2. What is the experience the speaker's grandfather describes?
3. Who is "He Who First Did Everything"?
4. Who is "we" at the end of the poem? Who is "you"?
5. How might we "use what is good"?
6. What are the characteristics of a "person" to the speaker and his grandfather?
7. What lesson does the speaker learn from his grandfather?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Crow Country
Themes: Change and Growth, Self in Nature, Circles of Life
Topics: Education, Elders, Identity, Nature/ Beauty

From the Poet:

"As a cloud casts its shadow across the sky, generally it is invisible until it touches something on earth within your sight. Also this shadow is in reference to understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. I used to write a poem a month for a bulletin board at Little Big Horn College, and this poem is one of them. The beauty is We are born as someone new, a new start."

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. The speaker repeats what his grandfather told him because it made such a powerful impression on the speaker. What has an elder told you that you treasure that much?
3. The speaker's grandfather creates a visual image of being "among the clouds." Describe/reflect upon an experience when you were alone but enveloped by a spiritual presence.
4. Investigate shadows and see if you can concretely experience what the poem says by trying to "see through … to see nothing," and also to "… see shadow when it touches something you know"
5. How do you define good and bad? Provide examples of good and bad and how you decide.
6. Do you agree with the poet's grandfather that "we have to be <u>taught</u> the good from the bad?" Who teaches/influences you?
7. How might "thought" connect to clouds, shadows, good and bad?

Text to Text

8. Look up the lyrics or listen to *"You've Got to be Carefully Taught"* by Rodgers and Hammerstein in the 1949 production of South Pacific. *Youtube video.* The composers experienced serious criticism for this "political" song. They were challenged for their "Communist agenda" and their supposed promotion of interracial marriage. They responded to the criticism by keeping the song in the play despite the possibility of the

play failing. What are the assumptions found in this song?

9. Consider the TV series, *Lost.* How does the light/dark good/bad imagery compare with the imagery in this poem? What aspects of human nature does each represent?
10. Read *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. Would the elder in "Thought" agree with Golding's premise that humans need to be taught to be good, that it doesn't come naturally? Also pertaining to *Lord of the Flies,* classroom discussion can result from a consideration of the negative American Indian stereotypes found in this book.

Text to World

11. Henry Real Bird was named Montana's Poet Laureate for 2009-2011. According to the Montana Arts Council Website, "The *Montana Poet Laureate* Program recognizes and honors a citizen poet of exceptional talent and accomplishment. The Poet Laureate also encourages appreciation of poetry and literary life in Montana. This position was created by the state legislature in 2005." The founding director of the Western Folklife Center, Hal Canon, says "*Real Bird's work* is in the 'greatest tradition of the beat poets. His work is an interesting melding of cowboy, horsemanship and Crow culture. There is no difference between his poetry and everyday life.'" After reading Real Bird' s "Thought," research "beat poets." What are some of the characteristics of "beat poetry" that you find in Henry Real Bird's poems?

    Role – a fan of beat poetry
    Audience – *Studies in American Indian Literature,* a Journal
    Format – article
    Topic – Henry Real Bird's poetry
    Strong Verb – Compare Real Bird's poetry with definitions of "beat poetry" and with at least three poets who represent this genre and era.

12. Access *The Apsáalooke (Crow Indians) of Montana: A Tribal Histories Teacher's Guide* by Phenocia Bauerle, Cindy Bell, Luella Brien, Carrie McCleary, Timothy McCleary, and Hubert B. Two Leggins (sent by the OPI to all school libraries). What can you learn about the Crow and their landscape--including the Wolf Teeth Mountains—from these sources?
13. Watch Henry Real Bird Read his poetry in a youtube video: *Henry Real Bird 2009 Montana Poet Laureate* How does your hearing and watching him read affect your experience with the poems?

Mom

My mother, I held her hand
When she was in pain,
Then among the stars I stand
On such a young winter night,
The moon of the first snow
Brought the cry from low
Where death is trying to bite.
Last breath was a strain
To release her free into happiness,
But our night fires put the sadness
Upon our faces lit in darkness.
All of us, we know each other,
Moons have passed, but still bother
With the missing of who gave me life.

-- Henry Real Bird

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Denotation and Connotation:

Mother
Young winter night
Moon of first snow
Bite
Bother
Missing

Questions for Discussion:

1. What images in "Mom" reveal the time of year?
2. What is the effect of this happening on a "young winter night"?
3. What is "the cry"?
4. How does death "bite"?
5. What is the age of the speaker? Child? Adult?
6. What is the speaker's attitude toward death?
7. What might the fires reveal about the physical context of this poem?
8. How do "fires put sadness/Upon faces"? What do they reveal?
9. Where does the poem shift from past to present? How does that shift influence meaning?
10. Look at the subject of the last two lines – "bothers" is the verb. Who or what "bothers"? What is the implication of this reference?
11. At the end, there is a shift from "we" to "me." What does that shift imply about the speaker and his situation?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Universal
Themes: Circles of Life, Cycles of Life, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival
Topics: Death and Dying, Relatives/Elders

From the Poet:

"After life ends, and the world goes to the other side camp, a night fire glows the sadness of our loss. One can never forget their mother no matter how long that departure has been, true love."

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. Have you lost a pet or a friend or a family member? How does memory help or hinder you as you deal with the loss?

Text to Text

3. Read
   - "*Remembrance*" by Emily Brönte
   - "*Remember*" by Joy Harjo, also found in *Roots and Branches*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1998 (13)
     How do these poems depict the way we grieve?
4. Read "Beautiful Existence" by Minerva Allen (in this collection). How does the experience of the person who is dying differ from the mother in Real Bird's poem?

5. Write your own poem to someone you care about deeply, to a person you have lost or to a person who is still in your life. Begin with "This is a poem to" or begin with something like Real Bird's first line in "Mom": "My ------ I held her hand . . ."

   Role – yourself
   Audience – the person you wish to address
   Format – free verse poem or rap
   Topic – what you see or saw in that person that you want to share
   Strong Verb – Describe the person through physical images you see, what you might hear him/her say, and conclude with how this person makes you feel.

Text to World

6. From NPR, watch and listen to "*Across Montana on Horseback: Poet Hands out Poetry*"

Rivers of Horse

All you real human beings, listen.
This is the story of the coming of the horse.
The Spanish barb the Comanche rode,
The mystic pony the Shoshone stole,
Drifting up from the Rio Grande
To the Columbia River Basin,
Mighty herds the Cayuse drove,
Mighty herds of horses.
Out of a dream they came to the Crow,
Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho,
Through the Northern Plains and mountains grazed,
Around the wolf and buffalo strayed,
Flowing herds of horses,
Rivers of horse,
Rich rivers of horse,
Up and down these coulees and draws,
From the Rio Grande, the Platte
And the Powder River, flow herds,
Of this mystic pony,
Of this mystic pony.
Tapping willow stick, I can still hear,
I can still hear my grandfather
Tapping Painted Black with a willow stick,
At one time, a long time ago,
My Grandfather Owns Painted Horse
Behind him I sat
On his horse Painted Black,
I hugged him lightly
As I leaned the right side of my face
Gently against his back,
These horses have a soul,
Do them good and respect them.
Talk good to them and they know.
They talk to each other, they say.
"When you talk good to the horse's spirit,
They will come to you, and you will be
Lucky with them in a heart that is good,"
Said my Grandfather Owns Painted Horse.
At the edge of my eye something went by,
It returned into my feeling,
You're so far away from me
As I stare into the twinkle and glitter
Of blowing snow flakes in the wind,
Before, the warrior was respected
The hides on his lodge reflected
The quality of horses he rode,
Great horses made great warriors,
Atop a fast running buffalo horse
He could catch a fast running buffalo,
To stick an arrow behind the last rib
And deep into the heart.
The warrior's people ate the best of meat
Packed on his many horses.
The war horse was the most prized of steeds
Tied to his thigh as it grazed outside
The lodge by night. This was the war horse,
He used to strike the grand coup
As he ran up on the enemy to touch him
While he was still alive,
Many feathers of grand coup,
And return with many horses
Make for a long-tailed war bonnet.
Great horses made great warriors.
The second best coup
Was to enter the enemy camp by night,
To cut the rawhide rope attached
To the sleeping enemy warrior's top mount.
From a dream he was given this
White sorrel medicine horse paint
In the shadow of Shining Mountains,
In the moon of the first thunder,
Atop his medicine horse paint, he could
Swoop up a beautiful woman to steal
From lodges that are different from his.
His song they would sing
As he danced the scalp dance and the victory dance,
To give away the best of horses,
Fast running horses, to spread
Good fortune among his people,
He was close to the horse's spirit.

On the great war horse
He could kill the enemy,
Lead a successful war party,
To become the chief, the man that is good.
The Maker blessed him with great horses,
So he had someone to lean his back against.
The great horse made the warrior great.
Remembered pulling strands of sinew thread
To run through my mouth, to pinch one end,
Then to roll-twist the rest down the outside
Of my right thigh, on late snowy winter night.
I got up to poke the fire,
When Grandmother Everything She Joins
Recalled this story:
"A horse that is good,
Their brother-in-law they would give
To show love and respect for their sister.
A girl's parents would give
Ten good horses to a great warrior
To marry their daughter.
But a man who is not a man
Would give horses to a girl's parents
For the girl's hand in marriage,
So the great warrior would have
Many horses and many wives.
Back when the woman lived with the man,
Before, that's how it was.
The children of a respectable family
Would ride Appaloosa horses
With no tails as a prestige symbol,
The rest of the old folk's horses,
And children's horses were squared-off tails,
These great horses made people great
Out in the Northern Mountains and plains,
Where horses and women were stolen
In intertribal plains warfare.
Bird Horse, Horse On the Other Side,
Medicine Tail, Pretty Paint, Rides the Horse,
Takes the Horse, Horse Herder, Spotted Horse,
Brings Home Many Geldings, Has a Lot of Colts,
Lucky with His Horse, Always Rides Horses,
Gray Horse Rider, Sorrel Horse, Buckskin Horse,
Black Horse Rider, Lead Horse Rider:
These are our names from a horse culture.
Then, there was a day when all of my father's horses
Were killed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs,
And Sell Out Indians for twenty-five cents an ear.
So too with the coyote and magpie,
But they survived in time,
Before that, the buffalo and wolf were gone.
After this, the sheep and spotted buffalo
Were brought in to eat the buffalo grass,
"Don't shed a tear for the horses
For they replace a human being's life,"
Said my Grandmother Everything She Joins,
Florence Medicine Tail Real Bird,
"But that day, I made my tears drop
When they killed all the horses.
That day was bad, my heart was bad.
If these were days like those when lodges used to move,
My heart would be extremely good."
Painted Black Horse Rider, Spirit Horse Rider,
Protector and Defender of the Crow
Who still rides the prairies and mountains,
I have always been told about you.
So now I offer you Painted Black Horse Rider,
My sacred pipe for many good tomorrows.

-- Henry Real Bird

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Denotation and Connotation:

Real human being
Spanish barb
Mystic
Rio Grande
Columbia River Basin
Cayuse
Arapaho
Coulees and draws
The Platte
Lodge
Sorrel medicine horse (paint)
Paint
Shining Mountains
Sinew thread
Willow stick
Appaloosa
Prestige
Buffalo grass
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Coup
War Bonnet
Coyote
Magpie
Spotted buffalo (longhorn cattle)
Buffalo grass
Sacred Pipe

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Spanish invasion, 1519, Southwest - to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' killing of the speaker's father's horses in Crow Country
Themes: Justice/Injustice, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Promise/Disillusionment/ Betrayal
Topics: Horse Culture, Historical Figures/ Ancestors, Contemporary/Traditional Warrior Cultures/Societies, Place, Culture

From the Poet:

"In 'Rivers of Horse', I trace the trail of the horse from Cortes to the tragic end just across the river. But filled with hope, I follow the dream to this day. I continue riding the mysticism of horses through ice and snow to reach the heat and dust. I love this life!"

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the historical connection—time and place--between the Spanish, Comanche, Shoshone, and the Rio Grande to the Columbia River Basin that the poem alludes to? What happened when and how?
2. What is the significance of horses coming "out of a dream" and the recurrence of "mystic"?
3. What characteristics of rivers are also characteristics in herds of horses? Consider what they do and what they mean to human beings?
4. What does the speaker's grandfather teach him about horses and how we should treat them?
5. Where did the warriors aim their arrows to kill the buffalo? Why?
6. How would the warrior keep his horse from wandering?
7. What do you learn about the life ways of the speaker's people through their relationship with horses?
8. What are the differences between the purposes of intertribal warfare and the stealing of horses, and the purposes of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the killing of horses?

9. What does it mean to "count coup"? What are the two "coup" that the speaker refers to? What is the reward for "counting coup"?
10. How would the speaker define a "good horse"?
11. What is the effect on meaning of the speaker repeating "Great horses make great warriors"? Consider the ways Indian people depended on the horse.
12. Who is "Painted Black Horse Rider, Spirit Horse Rider, Protector and Defender of the Crow"?
13. Who were the "Sell Out Indians" and what did they do?
14. Where is the hope in this poem?

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. What wisdom or insight have you learned from an elder?
3. What are the words or names you might string together from the motorized transportation culture you live in (similar to "Rivers of Horse")?
4. Write a free-verse narrative poem after the pattern of Henry Real Bird's "River of Horses." The poem may be set in the distant past or the present. Write out of your own experience—write from what you know.
    - Select a person, an animal, a family, wind or storm, or a group of people.
    - Begin with phrasing similar to Real Bird's, such as "This is the story of . . ."
    - Consider the images you see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Make a list and use those images as you tell the story. Repeat the name throughout the poem.
    - Within the poem, the reader should understand why you tell this story.

Text to Text

1. Several of Henry Real Bird's poems make connections between what his grandfather and grandmother have said, and situations or events in his life or in the lives of his people. A suggested activity is to identify intergenerational connections found in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *Fools Crow* by James Welch and *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle. Compare to those found in Real Bird poems.
2. This poem is included in the model teaching unit based upon *Fools Crow* by James Welch; however, it will also work well with other published OPI units based upon literary works and sent to school libraries that deal with Crow culture or the Horse culture: *Killing Custer* by James Welch and *Counting Coup* by Joseph Medicine Crow where Medicine Crow discusses and provides examples from his own life of what it means to "count coup" in the Crow culture.

Text to World

3. List the tribes named in this poem. Find a map that will identify the historical location and the present location of each. One helpful site: *montanatribes.org*
4. List the rivers named, and locate and identify them on a map.
5. Access "*Historical Timeline*" on, the website for the library of the Little Big Horn

College. Read the historical time line to better understand the Crow people and culture.

6. Select one of the images, stories, Crow traditions, names of tribes and horses, geographical areas or historical events mentioned in "Rivers of Horse." Research the background using authentic Crow resources if possible. Each student will prepare a presentation based on his/her research for a public event where the class will first read aloud the poem, and then read it aloud again at the end.

   Role -- yourself as a student researcher
   Audience – members of your community
   Format – powerpoint presentation
   Topic – any of the topics names within the poem
   Strong – Describe and explain the history or background of the particular topic.

Lois Red Elk - Photo courtesy of Lowell Jaeger, Many Voices Press

Lois Red Elk
(Dakota/Lakota)

Lois Red Elk is descended from the Isanti, Hunkpapa, and Ihanktowan bands of the Dakota/Lakota Sioux nation. Her father, James Red Elk is a descendant of the Sitting Bull family, and her mother spoke five different languages, French, Latin, Sioux, Assiniboine, and English. She enjoys writing poetry and prose and practices the art of porcupine quill embroidery. She has a Human Services Degree from Fort Peck Community College and an Education Degree from Rocky Mountain College. Married to her dear friend and husband, Dennis, for 41 years, they have two children and eight grandchildren.

A Force They Could Not Control

The buildings are gone now,
Not a planned demolition, but
a matter of structures slowly
wasting away. Now, only the
brown and gray pictures remain,
left in boxes in the attics of
abandoned buildings and
in the minds of young children
now in bodies fully grown.

Set up by the war department,
a school for the children
of the beguiled and helpless,
taught to sew, to mend shoes,
to be carpenters or farmers,
and to touch secretly,
so that no one would know.
It was after all a school; and
they learned their lessons well.

The witnesses: places
quiet and cold; the kitchen, the pantry,
the dark, dank basement.
Tear stained faces, one by one.
One who closed his eyes real tight;
One whose face would turn blue;
One who lost his speech;
One fearful of running water.

The descendants sort through
old photographs; each face a memory.
This one became a rancher,
--rode the hell out of his horses.
This one killed himself,
--before his eighteenth birthday.
This one drank until he passed out.

And that one, that one,
passed on the legacy of touch.

They were told not to tell, but
they have, and look for their
lives in pictures and see
the cunning that taught them
touch and how to win the
trust of children. And they did not
know that the touch would
lead them to the time when they too
would look upon the children with

a force they could not control.

-- Lois Red Elk

Denotation and Connotation:

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Force
Demolition
Beguiled
Touch
Trust
Children
Control
Fearful
School
Memory

Questions for Discussion

1. Why were Indian children forced to attend boarding schools?
2. What is the tone of this poem, and why is tone important to our understanding?
3. What is the connection between boarding schools and the war department?
4. How does that connection influence readers' understanding of boarding schools?
5. What did the students study? Why?
6. What other lessons did they learn?
7. Where do the memories remain?
8. What were the consequences of the children keeping secrets and not telling about what happened in the boarding schools?
9. What is the effect of the speaker not mentioning persons as witnesses, only the personification of places?
10. Who could "not control" the force? Why?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Indian Boarding School, beginning in 1879 to the mid-20th century, Contemporary
Themes: Between Two Worlds, Justice/Injustice, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Promise/Disillusionment/Betrayal
Topics: Place, Hard Times, Indian Boarding School, Abuse, Federal Indian Policy, Identity

From the Poet:

"During my formative years, I was raised in a healthy cultural tiospaye (family and extended family), and then years later as an older adult, I chose to live in a major urban city where my societal learning experience was rich and varied. When I returned to the reservation, I was shocked by the many abuse cases that existed on my home lands. I wondered why and how this happened because abuse was never a part of our cultural traditions. I began asking of and listening to a lot of people – professional counselors and witnesses. I heard firsthand how abuse came to a conquered, hopeless people. I heard how abuse was forced into our society by abusers disguised as teachers, priests, agents of all professions, religions and through boarding schools. I learned that often the abused becomes an abuser, and this harm carries with it an enormous amount of stigma, fear and secrecy, which allows abuse to continue generation after generation. As a poet, I choose to write about abuse the only way I know."

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. What do you study in school that is missing from this list of boarding school studies in the poem? Consider the purpose of your schooling today and the purpose of boarding school lessons or studies as indicated in this poem?
3. How would you have felt being forced to dress like someone very different from what

you were used to wearing, to have your hair cut off, or to speak a language not your own? Imagine you are in this situation. Describe how you feel, what you fear, what you wish for.

4. Red Elk's poem "A Force They Could Not Control" mentions old photographs. What do family photographs tell you about your ancestors? Locate an old photograph of a relative. In a first person narrative directed to "you," tell or imagine a story you've been told about this person.

   Role – the person(s) in the photo
   Audience – "you" or the person looking at the photo
   Format – narrative or short story
   Topic – an event in this person's life
   Strong Verb – Tell the story using dialogue and sensory images that reveal place and time.

Text to Text

5. Watch *Chapter 4: Dislocation/Relocation in Montana Mosaic: 20th Century People and Events,* An educational series from the Montana Historical Society. Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society and West of Kin Productions, 2006. In this DVD, speakers make specific references to abuses that occurred in boarding schools. What consequences of the boarding school experience and/or abuse do the speakers mention? How do they compare or contrast with the images in "A Force They Could Not Control"?
6. Read Chapter Five and view photographs – "Tribal Histories Narrative, Boarding Schools: The Abduction of Children" from *Montana Tribal Histories: Educators Resource Guide and Companion DVD.* (Also sent by the OPI to school libraries.) On the Companion DVD or online, view the *slide show* of archival photos of children in both traditional and Montana Indian Boarding school settings.
7. Read *A History and Foundation of American Indian Education Policy* by Stan Juneau, Blackfeet Tribe. What do you learn that might help you understand this poem?
8. "A Force They Could Not Control" would work with the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education model teaching units (sent to school libraries) based upon the following literary works: *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle, *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala-Ša, *Counting Coup* by Joe Medicine Crow, *Sweetgrass Basket* by Marlene Carvell, and *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path* by Joseph Bruchac. Consider how the main characters in these works may have responded to experiences in boarding school and forces "they could not control."
9. Access the following Social Studies Lesson from the OPI Curriculum Resources page - *The Boarding School Period – American Indian Perspectives*

Text to World

10. When and why were boarding schools closed or abandoned? What boarding schools in Montana are still operating and why? How have they changed from their original mission of assimilation?

11. Read an account of children and/or primary source descriptions at boarding schools, such as any of the following:
    - Medicine Crow, Joseph (Crow). *Counting Coup: Becoming a Crow Chief on the Reservation and Beyond*. Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2006. 128 pp. ISBN: 0-7922-5391-4 Boarding School (95-100). Memoir
    - View speakers discussing boarding schools from the MontanaTribes.org web page, *Federal Policy, Essential Understanding 5.*
    - See #6 above.
12. There is a saying: "Silence Hides Violence." This poem suggests abuse of children at boarding schools. "This one" or "that one" mentioned in the poem behaved violently towards others or themselves. Do you think they had told anyone about possible abuse? Why or why not?
13. Might the subject of Greene's poem "For Those Who Hate" and the speaker in McGeshick's poem "If I Lived in that House" (both in this collection) have inherited the consequences of historical trauma related to boarding schools as described in Red Elk's poem? How?

Porcupine on the Highway

Amos: They said sister is stranded on the highway.
Her car is about 10 miles east of town.
Sister: I might as well pick up this porcupine or
It'll be smashed by tonight.
Porcupine: I give my body to a quill worker,
and laugh at Magpie on the fence.

Amos: Mom, I'm taking Myrna to help sister.
Her car quit and I might have to tow her in.
Sister: Oh, it's a big one and the quills
aren't damaged. It's got long hair, too.
Porcupine: Clouds are fading. Earth is cooling.
Grass is calling me home.

Amos: There she is. She put something in her trunk.
It looks like a big old porcupine.
Sister: This sure is a mess. I should skin it here.
All the cats will be coming into the yard.
Porcupine: They used to read my bones, study my
entrails for health and weather.

Amos: What happened? Did you break down?
Don't tell me, you're scavenging road kill?
Sister: Yeh, both! All of a sudden this thing
stalled, then I saw this huge porcupine.
Porcupine: They say our voice sounds like a
whimpering child. People gather.

Amos: Pull your hood latch. Your cable was loose.
Take it home and skin it. We'll follow you.
Sister: I'll make Myrna a quilled bracelet and
brother some armbands. Surprise them.
Porcupine: She'll remember later that last week she
dreamed about a big porcupine on the highway

- Lois Red Elk

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Denotations and Connotations
Quill worker
Scavenging
Health
Gift
Weather
Magpie
Smashed
Whimper
Road kill

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does "They said" suggest about the relationships between members of the community?
2. The porcupine says, "I will give my body to a quill worker." What does this say about the human-animal relationship?
3. Identify a unique characteristic of each of the three speakers?
4. What motivates each of the three speakers?
5. The porcupine says, "They used to read my bones, study my/entrails for health and weather." Who are "they" and what would they learn from reading the bones?
6. Why might Amos and Myrna have names but "sister" doesn't?
7. What does the poem suggest about dreams? About history? About truth/reality?

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. The point of view shifts throughout the poem, so one event is described from three different perspectives. Think of an event you've experienced. Imagine you are two other participants, and describe the event from their perspective, as well as your own.

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary/Dakota-Sioux Country
Themes: Circles of Life, Cycles of Life, Love/Friendship
Topics: Culture/Tradition, Death and Dying, Relatives, Hunting/Wildlife, Gift Giving

From the Poet:

"'Porcupine on the Highway' is a portion of a real dream I had. In the dream I was driving down a highway, saw a porcupine alongside the highway, picked it up and took it home. About a week later the scenes in the poem between me and my brother actually happened. I was on my way home when my car stalled; so I pulled over. That's when I saw the porcupine. I had no worry about getting home, as many people waved and said they would send me help. As traditional Sioux quill workers, my sisters and I belong to a quill worker society that is six generations old. My brother knows we are always in need of quills, yet he decided to tease me and accuse me of harvesting road kill. As I viewed the porcupine, I noticed a magpie on the fence waiting for me to leave. I thought to myself, "Not this time! I am taking the porcupine!"

I teach quill work at the community college where I work, and I know that the entire animal is utilized, nothing wasted. The quills are used for artwork, the porcupine is food, the entrails and skin are examined for fat (so we know what kind of winter it will be) and the bones, teeth and claws become jewelry. I also know what they sound like when they are talking to each other. That's when I got the idea to add the porcupine's voice to the event and wrote a script for three, Amos (brother), Sister (me), and Porcupine. In the Sioux culture we believe we are related to all animals, and this animal was speaking as I stood by the road. It wasn't until 6 or 7 days later that I remembered I had dreamed about the whole event. Again, we believe dreaming about future events is part of our culture."

Text to Text

3. Read *I Will Be Meat for My Salish* by Bon I. Whealdon and others, Salish Kootenai College Press and the Montana Historical Society Press, 2001. How might the buffalo compare/contrast with the porcupine in Red Elk's poem?

Text to World

1. Following the pattern of "Porcupine on the Highway," write your own dialogue-in-narrative-type poem. Imagine an animal voice and two human ones and write each of their experiences and perceptions of an event.
   Roles – Animal, two humans
   Audience – Anyone
   Format – Dialogue in a narrative
   Topic – the event around which your poem's voices are centered
   Strong Verb – Tell the story from each character's perspective.

2. OPI Indian Education has published and sent to school libraries a model teaching unit based upon Joseph Medicine Crow's memoir, *Counting Coup*. Read the chapter called "Stealing Beef." After reading both the poem and Medicine Crow's chapter, write about your own experience with killing or finding a dead animal by the road.

Our Blood Remembers

The day the earth wept, a quiet wind covered the
lands weeping softly like an elderly woman, shawl
over bowed head. We all heard, remember? We were
all there. Our ancestral blood remembers the day
Sitting Bull, the chief of chiefs, was murdered. His
white horse quivered as grief shot up through the
crust of hard packed snow. Guardian relatives mourned
on our behalf. They knew our loss, took the pain from
our dreams, left us with our blood. We were asked to
remember the sweeter days, when leaves and animals
reached to touch him as he passed by. You know those
times, to reach for a truth only the pure of heart
reflect. Remember the holy man—peace loving. He
was a sun dancer—prayed for the people, water, land and
animals. Blessed among the blessed, chosen to lead the
people, he showed us the good red road, the one that
passes to our veins from earth through pipestone. Our
blood remembers. In vision he foresaw the demise of
that man, the one with yellow hair. "Soldiers falling
upside down into camp," he saw. Champion of the people,
a visionary, he taught us how to dream, this ancestor
of our blood. He instructed, "Let us put our minds
together to see what life we will make for our children"—
those pure from God. Remember? Pure from God, the
absolute gift, from our blood and blessed by heaven's
stars. And, we too, pure from God, our spirit, our blood,
our minds and our tongues. The sun dancer knew this,
showed us how to speak the words and walk the paths
our children would follow. Remember?

-- Lois Red Elk

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Denotation and Connotation:

Shawl over bowed head
Ancestral blood
Holy man
Blessed
Good red road
Grief
Pipestone
Demise
Visionary
Sun Dance

Questions for Discussion:

1. How does "blood remember"?
2. Why is Sitting Bull called "sun dancer"?
3. From images in the poem, what time of year was Sitting Bull murdered?
4. How deep is the grief over Sitting Bull? According to the poem, what was Sitting Bull's role with his people?
5. Who is the speaker? Who is the audience for the poem?
6. What was Sitting Bull's wisdom for his people?
7. The poem alludes to "the man with yellow hair." Who was he and why isn't he named?
8. What are the "paths our children would follow"?
9. The speaker in this narrative poem is a collective "we." What does that mean? Why does it matter that it's more than an "I"?
10. What characteristics does this poem share with oral history?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Summer, 1876 – Greasy Grass River; December 15, 1890/Standing Rock Agency, Dakota
Themes: Circles of Life, Promise/Disillusionment/Betrayal, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival
Topics: Culture/Tradition, Death and Dying, Federal Indian Policy, Historical Figures/Ancestors, Relatives/Elders, Contemporary/Traditional Warrior Cultures/Societies

From the Poet:

"I believe our spirit, our genes, and our blood carry memory. In Dakota/Lakota Cosmology we are all related because we believe the Great Spirit created everything with the same materials, the same forces, the same energy, and the same spirit that exists in the universe.

We believe we can stretch our spirit far into time and see or feel other energy. Sometimes this "spirit stretching into time" can happen in a dream, during prayer, or in a vision. Others may call this day dreaming, deja vu, a premonition, or extrasensory perception, but there is something there, and we, from time to time, connect with it. I believe we can feel the extreme energy radiating from a death or a birth. Sitting Bull, himself, saw in his vision before the Battle at Greasy Grass, "Soldiers falling upside down into camp…" This spirit stretching, in a vision, was a message that Custer and his army would be defeated, and they were.

I believe that we can feel or remember the goodness and messages Sitting Bull radiates. We just have to pray and make the connection."

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. What are the stories your people remember? Why do you regard them as important?

Text to Text

3. According to the poet, Lois Red Elk, Sitting Bull held his Sundance and experienced his vision of "Soldiers falling upside down into camp...." at a place called Deer Medicine Rocks, north of Lame Deer, Montana. To deepen your experience with this poem, search the following sites for photos and comments about the petroglyphs:
    - "*Deer Medicine Rock"*
    - "*Deer Medicine Rocks*"
4. Research Sitting Bull, in history books, online resources, elementary-level text books "about Indians" or videos. Ask these questions:
    - What does each resource say about Sitting Bull as a leader?
    - Who are the authors and what is their perspective? e.g., Lakota historian or perhaps a textbook author from another part of the country, etc.
    - How do the "facts/perspectives" differ or compare with those in Red Elk's poem?
    - What might explain the difference or comparison?
5. Watch the TBS Video *Native Americans: The Plains Part II* on Sand Creek, Wounded Knee, and Sitting Bull.
6. Read Alfred Lord Tennyson's "*Ulysses*." Compare the leadership characteristics of Tennyson's first-person speaker with Sitting Bull as portrayed in this poem.
7. View *Last Stand at Little Big Horn: Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse Battle Custer.* American Experience Series. DVD. WGBH Boston Video. 2005 (DVD sent by OPI to high school libraries). This documentary was written and produced by James Welch and Paul Stekler. What are the stories about Custer and Sitting Bull that you hear and see in this film?
8. Read excerpts from James Welch's *Killing Custer: The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians Sitting Bull* - last paragraph p. 50 to the top of p. 53, and last paragraph p. 65 to the second paragraph p. 67. How do Welch and Stekler add to your knowledge about the figures in Red Elk's poem?
9. View Chapter 10 *"The Seven Rituals"* in *Oceti Sakowin: The People of the Seven Council Fires* for a presentation of a Lakota view of Sun Dance. (DVD sent to school libraries by the Office of Public Instruction.) Reflect on the meaning of sacred.
10. Compare this lesson attributed to Sitting Bull in "Our Blood Remembers:*"Let us put our minds together to see what life we will make for our children,* with Owns Painted Horse's lesson in Real Bird's "Thought" poem (in this collection).

    Role – a student in a class about leadership
    Audience – peers in the class
    Format – essay
    Topic – most important qualities of a leader
    Strong Verb – In an informative essay, compare and contrast ideas of leadership, using quotes from Sitting Bull, Owns Painted Horse, Tennyson's "Ulysses," and one of your relatives. Include examples of behaviors that would support each of these ideas. Conclude with your opinion of what you think would make an outstanding leader.

Text to World

11. Do you believe that other cultures or nations have memories stored in the "blood"? Consider contemporary cultures or nations as well as those of the past. What images or names of leaders would descendants remember in a poem like Red Elk's?

At Winter Solstice

We
have all
risen at this moment,
sometimes in a dream or in a
distant thought to meet the hour when
light and dark retrieve time from the icy north.
We have found ourselves beholding the absence of
that disc of fire, of life and we have yearned for a common
warmth, a light to assure our quiet direction. It is
when time turns into a whisper, when we exhale
descending crystals of night and breathe
into our lives the early rays of the
new day that we know we
have walked the earth in
the sacred span of
solstice.

-- Lois Red Elk

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Denotation and Connotation:

Solstice
Retrieve
Behold
Yearned
Sacred

Questions for Discussion:

1. When does the winter solstice occur? How long is it?
2. What happens to the earth, to humans, during this time?
3. How might time "turn into a whisper"?
4. What is the relationship between the winter solstice and the "we" in the poem?
5. To what is the sun or moon compared, and how does that affect our understanding of its role in our lives?
6. How does the poem help readers understand awareness and its value?
7. The speaker makes an assumption at the very beginning of the poem. Is that assumption true for "all"?
8. What may the speaker be rising from? ("we have all risen")

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Winter Solstice, Dakota-Sioux Country, Night
Themes: Cycles of life, Change and Growth, Self in Nature
Topics: Nature/Beauty, Place

From the Poet:

"When does Winter Solstice happen? Is it a day, an hour, or a moment in time? This is what I asked myself. I concluded that it is a moment in time, but it is the time before and after that moment where energy, time and thought bring us to the beauty of the moment. Winter Solstice is the anticipation, the waiting, knowing that a force is moving between the sun, earth, and between us humans. It is the knowledge that an event is occurring, something is changing, and finally, that another level of energy has come our way. My father would ask me, *'Did you feel it?'*"

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. Listen to or read the poem aloud several times. Imagine you are together with the speaker in the poem. Where are you standing? What do you see and feel? Who else is with you? Describe what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch.
3. Study the rotation of the earth and how it tilts and turns during different seasons. How does this rotation affect humans physically and emotionally? How does it affect you? Consider the effect of shorter or longer days, more light or more dark, and cold and heat.
4. What insight into winter solstice does the poet share that you hadn't noticed?

Text to Text

5. "Winter Solstice" expresses powerful appreciation for life, for time, for a momentous event.
   Look for other poems and also visual arts that feature time or seasons, sun or moon or stars.

   Role – speaker to an Environmental Science Class
   Audience – students in the class

Format – visual and oral presentation
Topic – the way art, in poetry and photography or painting, describes/presents/reveals/explains scientific phenomena
Strong Verb – Display art and poetry to inform the audience about how art and poetry can extend the students' experiences and understandings.

Text to World

6. View images of the *winter solstice from around the world*. Create your own image in whatever medium you might choose.
7. What seasons or aspects of the skies do people celebrate or pay particular attention to today? For example, in January 2012, MSNBC reported "The northern lights were producing a vibrant and spectacular show in the skies over northern Europe due to the biggest *solar flare* in six years."

M.L. Smoker – Photo courtesy of M.L. Smoker

M. L. Smoker
(Assiniboine)

M.L. Smoker belongs to the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation in Montana. She was the recipient of the Richard Hugo Memorial Scholarship at The University of Montana, Missoula, where she earned her M.F.A. Her collection of poems, *Another Attempt at Rescue,* was published by Hanging Loose Press in 2005. In 2010 she co-edited a collection of human rights poetry, *I Go to The Ruined Place,* with Melissa Kwasny. Smoker has served as the Director of Indian Education and is currently the School Transformation Director for the state of Montana. She has taught various courses at Fort Peck Community College, the University of Colorado and The University of Montana, Missoula.

Birthright *for Carl Lithander*

We talked once of driving all the remote gravel roads, writing from here and there, a little like Hugo, though neither of us had read his poems yet. Today I am wondering about those unwritten drafts. Could they have predicted the severity of this drought, would they have spoken to our own landscape, one of anger, sympathy and remorse: You, the eventual heir to your family's homestead; and me, an Indian woman who leases her land to white men made up of the same storm and grit and hunger as your grandfather. What if we had found a message in verse written from some small town? -- *abandon this place*. Would we have listened and turned the car east or south and left behind the land our families have lived on for generations? But where could we travel and not long for the ache of wind blowing over open land? And how long could we have held ourselves back, away from our need to feel claimed by a place we can only, with our limited tongue, call home.

--M. L. Smoker

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Denotation and Connotation:

Hugo
Birthright
Drought
Sympathy
Remorse
Storm and grit
Limited tongue
Homestead
Lease
Grit and Hunger
Norwegian immigration

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary/Fort Peck Reservation
Themes: Between Two Worlds, Circles of Life, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival, Love/Friendship
Topics: Federal Indian Policy/Homesteading/Dawes Act, Identity, Place, Reservations

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the relationship between the Native speaker and Carl Lithander?
2. What is the season and place of the poem? How do you know?
3. What is the "birthright"?
4. How do the speaker's and Carl Lithander's historical experiences in this landscape differ?
5. How does the colon after remorse help readers understand the meaning of the phrases "You, the eventual heir to your family's homestead; and me, an Indian woman who leases her land to white men made up of the same storm and grit and hunger as your grandfather."?
6. What is their mutual need?
7. How did homesteading affect or change the Indian woman's home?
8. Why did some Indian people not live on allotted lands? Why might the speaker lease land and not live on it herself?
9. How can a place "claim" a person?
10. Why would they want to "abandon this place"?
11. Is this a poem? How?

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. What defines "home" for you?
3. What are your birthrights? How did you receive or obtain them?
4. How have you let anger go? What do you gain? What do you lose?

Text to Text

5. Compare/contrast the speaker and comments about the reservation in this poem with "My Reservation" by Jennifer Greene (poem in this collection).
6. Compare and contrast the tone and the themes in Smoker's "Birthright" with McGeshick's "Wolf Point, Montana," regarding the impact of immigration on landscape, wildlife, and people.

7. "Birthright" works well with model teaching units, published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education and sent to school libraries, based upon these literary works: *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle and *Killing Custer* by James Welch.
8. The speaker in "Birthright" recognizes that now in this contemporary time, both she and Carl Lithander will call this place "home." This is a peace poem; there is no anger but instead the recognition of a need common to all. The end of Zitkala Ša's essays, *American Indian Stories,* featured in another model teaching unit published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education and sent to school libraries, shows that Zitkala Ša would fight for freedom and rights another way. She did it through words and the legal system. How can words in poetry and words in legal documents accomplish similar goals?
9. Consider cultural, ethnic, economic, national, geographical, political, community and family contexts within "Birthright."

   Role – yourself
   Audience – your future children and grandchildren
   Format – prose poem modeled after Smoker's "Birthright"
   Topic – the "birthright" concept as it relates to you and what you will pass on to your audience
   Strong Verb – Research the concept, select three areas you consider appropriate for you and what you want to pass on, incorporate them in a prose poem, concluding with what you value the most about your birthright.
10. Write a letter from Carl in response to the speaker in "Birthright." What might Carl remember, question, value?

Text to World

11. Read about *Richard Hugo,* the poet mentioned in Smoker's poem, and read some of his poems. Why might Smoker have said "a little like Hugo"? What might Lithander, the speaker in "Birthright," and Hugo have in common?
12. Read about *Allotment and History of the Fort Peck Reservation*. How does the information on this website help you understand references to land and homesteading in this poem?
13. The 1887 Dawes or "Allotment" Act, its causes and consequences, led to dramatic changes in the lives of Indian people. What other stories deal with people losing control of their environment, their way of living, their culture? What characteristics of individuals or communities made it possible for them to survive?
14. Research the complex history of Jews and Palestinians and both of their claims to Jerusalem. How might this situation compare or contrast with that of the Indians and the homesteaders? Access *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 101* from the organization Jewish Voice for Peace.

Crosscurrent *for James Welch*

The first harvest of wheat in flatlands
along the Milk startled me into thoughts of you
and this place we both remember and also forget as home.
Maybe it was the familiarity or maybe it was my own
need to ask if you have ever regretted leaving.
What bends, what gives?
And have you ever missed this wind?—it has now
grown warm with late summer, but soon
it will be as dangerous as the bobcat stalking calves
and pets just south of the river.
Men take out their dogs, a case of beer and wait
in their pickups for dawn, for a chance with their rifles.
They don't understand that she isn't going to make
any mistakes. With winter, my need for an answer
grows more desperate and there are only four roads out.
One is the same the cat hunters drive with mannish glory
and return along, gun still oil-shined and unshot.
Another goes deeper into Assiniboine territory:
This is the one I should talk myself into taking next.
I haven't much traveled the third except to visit
a hospital where, after the first time,
my mother had refused chemotherapy.
And the last road you know as well as I do--
past the coral-painted Catholic church, its doors
long ago sealed shut to the mouth of Mission Canyon,
then south just a ways, to where the Rockies cut open
and forgive. There you and I are on the ascent.
After that, the arrival is what matters most.

--M. L. Smoker

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Denotation and Connotation:

Flatlands
Milk River
Regret
Bobcat
Assiniboine
Mission Canyon
Ascent and Arrival
James Welch

Questions for Discussion: (add exploring who Jim Welch is at the beginning so that there is context for the students)

1. How might the speaker "remember and forget" home?
2. She has left and returned, and now she leaves again. Why does she wonder if Jim Welch regretted leaving?
3. What might each of the roads symbolize for the speaker and/or the poet as an American Indian and for the universal human experience?
    - where a bobcat eludes the men who fail to catch or kill her
    - the one she should take next, the one "deeper into Assiniboine territory"
    - another to the hospital, the one perhaps leading to the greatest grief
    - the one she decides to take, the one where the Little Rockies open into Mission Canyon, south of Harlem, Montana
4. What does the Mission Canyon as "place" represent to both the speaker and Welch?
5. Explain the irony in the canyon's name? Who may have named the canyon?
6. Why does "the arrival matter most?" What do the speaker and Welch find there?
7. Where is there hope, and pain, both on and away from the reservation? What kind?
8. What can be kept (how) and what must be let go (how)?
9. What are the speaker's tools for survival?
10. How does this poem challenge popular beliefs and stereotypes about Indians and reservations?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary/Montana Hi-Line, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Fort Belknap Reservation, Assiniboine Country
Themes: Between Two Worlds, Change and Growth, Circles of Life, Self in Society
Topics: Reservations, Nature/Beauty, Hunting/Wildlife, Relatives/Elders, Identity, Place

From the Poet:

"I had to write 'Crosscurrent,' an open letter really, to Jim Welch because there were so many things I needed answers to. I couldn't think of anyone who would understand better all that I worried over, hoped for, believed in and feared. It was more than just being bi-cultural, living among two worlds. It was about place, landscape, belonging, family and friends, spirituality, loss, continuity … I needed to connect with someone who had felt the love of home and all that that meant, as well as the need for something else to sustain one's self. Jim continues to remain my touchstone."

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.

2. Have you ever left a place you had lived for several years, maybe from birth? If you could, what would you go back to in that place? Why?
3. If you have a friend who has moved away, what does that friend say he/she misses the most? What does your friend appreciate about the new home? Why?
4. What place or landscape—a room or a river or a mountain or a street or a playground—means the most to you as you consider leaving your home community, such as the speaker in "Crosscurrent," to go to school or to find a job?

   Role – yourself
   Audience – the place
   Format – farewell letter to the place, addressed as "you"
   Topic – the place and what it means to you
   Strong Verb – Describe the place and include a narrative of a single significant event that you remember in that place.

Text to Text

5. Read "*The Road Not Taken*" by Robert Frost. *Listen to Frost* reading his poem. Compare and contrast the way each poet – Frost and Smoker - deals with choices individuals make and the consequences of those choices. Did the speaker in "Crosscurrent" take the "Road less traveled by"? Explain.
6. What coming-of-age stories or novels deal with the issue of leaving home as part of the growing-up experience?

Text to World

7. What can you learn about the Fort Belknap community and the history of its people from the *Fort Belknap Indian Reservation* website and the *Aaniiih Nakoda College* website?

Casualties

". . . linguistic diversity also forms a system necessary to our survival as human beings."
--Michael Krauss

The sun has broken through.
Breaking through,
this sun—but still
today my words are dying out.

Still as I tell of stillness
of a very word
as ( ) as it leaves this world.

My grandmother was told that the only way to survive was
to forget.

Where were you?
Where were
you? Speaking of myself,
for my own neglect: too often
I was nowhere to be found.
I will not lie.
I heard the ruin in each Assiniboine voice.
I ignored them
all. On

the vanishing, I have been
mute. I have risked
a great deal.
Hold me accountable
because I have not done my part
to stay alive.

As a child I did not hear the words often enough to recognize
what I was losing.
There are a great many parts of my own
body that are gone:

where hands
belong there is one lost syllable.
And how a tooth might sound---
its absence
a falling.

Sound is so frail a thing.

( ) hold me responsible,
in light of failure
I have let go of one too many.

I have never known where or how
to begin. **-- M. L. Smoker**

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Denotation and Connotation:

Casualties
Linguistic diversity
Breaking through
Ruin
Accountable
Silence
Stillness

Questions for Discussion:

1. How might the quote at the beginning help readers understand the poem?
2. What is lost?
3. What is the speaker's conflict?
4. Who owns the problem? Why?
5. How do the parentheses and spaces and italics influence meaning?
6. What is the relationship between "hands" and "tooth" and the sense of loss?
7. What is the implication in the passive-voice phrase, "my grandmother was *told*"? Who told the grandmother? Why would some people want Indians to give up their languages?
8. What are the consequences for individuals and communities when a language dies?

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. What experiences have elders told you about where they encountered conflicts or challenges as children? How did they handle them?
3. What do your grandparents or parents tell you about your culture or your heritage that you are failing to keep alive? How can you begin to recover what might be lost if you don't carry it on?

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: 20th – 21st Century/Fort Peck Reservation or Fort Belknap Reservation
Themes: Alienation/Acceptance, Change and Growth, Cultural and Personal Loss and Survival
Topics: Education, Culture/Tradition, Identity, Relatives/Elders, Hard Times/Language Loss

From the Poet:

"I, like too many other American Indians, grew up not ever having the opportunity to hear or to speak my own native language. The reality is, native languages are dying all around us – they are becoming extinct, no longer used or spoken. The numbers of fluent speakers are dwindling.

I have made attempts to learn Assiniboine over the years, however it is extremely difficult. I could make lots of other excuses for myself though, and I often feel guilt over not working harder at it. There are probably less than 25 fluent Assiniboine speakers left in Montana.

I believe something tremendous happens when a language is lost. An entire world view that has been shaped for hundreds and thousands of years also vanishes. The ways we build and establish our communication are so important to who we are and how we connect to one another and our world. It is a difficult and painful topic for me to reflect on, and I tried to convey that through this poem."

Text to Text

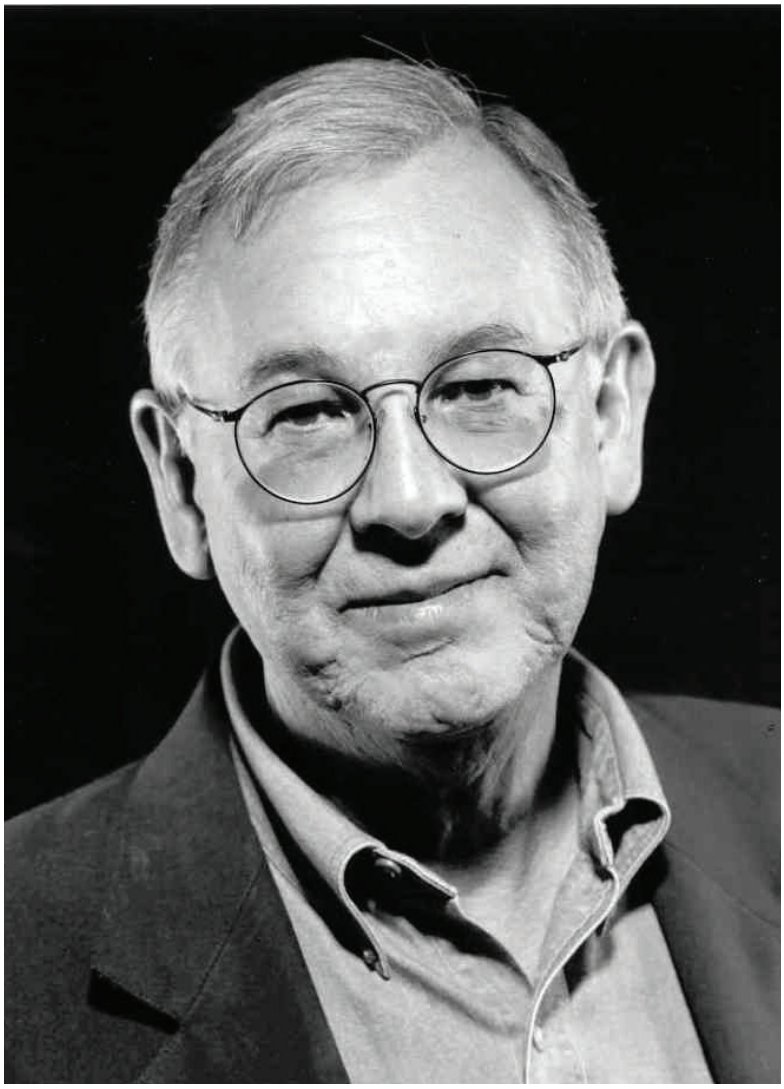
4. Read two poems by e.e. cummings that make use of unusual punctuation and spacing to convey meaning: "*anyone lived in a pretty how town*" and "*[In Just-]*"
   How does your reading of these two poems expand your reading or understanding of Smoker's "Casualties"?

Text to World

5. Inquire about individuals in your community who have lost or given up knowing their native language or tribal languages in particular. Also consider languages of immigrants, such as German, where during WWI/WWII it was the language of the enemy, so people quit using it – in some cases, were forced to quit using it. How has that loss impacted those individuals?
6. Listen online to *Mandy Smoker* reading and talking about her poems on *From the Fishouse: an audio archive of emerging poets.*
   How does her reading affect your experience with her poems?
7. Read about the resurgence of native languages. Why and how do native languages still survive?
   - "*Teachers Hope to Stir Life Into Crow Language* "by Laura Tode
   - "*Native Language Preservation Efforts*" by Jodi Rave, national reporter and columnist in *www.Indianz.com*
   - "*Fading Fluency*" by Luella N. Brien, also found in The Apsáalooke (Crow Indians) of Montana, sent by the OPI to school libraries
8. Access this OPI Social Studies lesson - *Results of Forced Assimilation – Loss of Native Languages*
9. Read one of the following major works—or another of your choosing--and consider the methods used to wipe out American Indian languages. Also consider the consequences for children over time.
   - Carvell, Marlene. *Sweetgrass Basket.* New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2005.
   - Littlefield, Holly. *Children of the Indian Boarding Schools.* Picture the American Past Series. First Avenue Editions/Lerner Publishing Group. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, Inc., 2001.
   - Loyie, Larry (Cree) with Constance Brissenden. *As Long as the Rivers Flow.* Illustrated by Heather D. Holmlund. Toronto: A Groundwood Book, 2002.
   - McNickle, D'Arcy(Métis/Salish). *The Surrounded*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1936.
   - Medicine Crow, Joseph (Crow). *Counting Coup: Becoming a Crow Chief on the Reservation and Beyond.* Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2006.
   - Olsen, Sylvia with Rita Morris and Ann Sam. *No Time to Say Goodbye: Children's Stories of Kuper Island Residential School.* Winlaw, BC: Sono Nis Press, 2001.
   - Peavy, Linda and Ursula Smith. *Full-Court Quest: The Girls from Fort Shaw Indian School Basketball Champions of the World.* Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008.
   - Pilkington, Doris/Nugi Garimara. *Rabbit-Proof Fence.* New York: Hyperion Miramax books.

- Sterling, Shirley (Interior Salish). *My Name is Seepeetza.* Vancouver BC: Groundwood Press, 1992.
- Zitkala-Ša (Yankton/Dakota). *American Indian Stories.* Introduction by Susan Rose Dominguez. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.

  Role – a boarding school graduate
  Audience – non-Indian readers of the Atlantic Monthly Magazine (select a date that's relative to the book you read)
  Format – essay
  Topic – Indian boarding school and native languages
  Strong Voice – Persuade your readers, through clear evidence sited from your sources, to change education practices with American Indian children.



James Welch – Photo courtesy of Lois Welch

James Welch
(Blackfeet/Gros Ventre)

James Welch was born in Browning, Montana in 1940 and was raised on the Blackfeet and Fort Belknap Reservations. His father was Blackfeet , his mother Gros Ventre, each having Irish ancestors. After World War II, the family lived in: Portland, Oregon; Sitka, Alaska; Spokane, Washington; Pickstown, South Dakota; and Minneapolis, settling in the mid-1960s back in Harlem Montana, just off the reservation. From an early age, Welch dreamed of becoming a writer. He received his bachelor's degree from The University of Montana, Missoula, and continued his study of creative writing in the university's M.F.A. program. Welch married Lois Monk, a professor of English and comparative literature in 1968. His first book of poetry, *Riding the Earthboy 40*, appeared in 1971 and was followed by a series of acclaimed novels. In addition to *Winter in the Blood* and *The Death of Jim Loney,* Welch also published *Fools Crow,* a historical novel about a band of Blackfeet during the years of white encroachment following the Civil War; *The Indian Lawyer*, a novel inspired by Welch's ten-year service on the Montana State Board of Pardons; and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, about an Oglala Sioux who went

to France with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Welch also co-authored with Paul Stekler the nonfiction work *Killing Custer: The Battle of Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians*. This book includes his experience working with Stekler on the script for their 1990 documentary, *Last Stand at Little Bighorn*. Popular in France, Welch was awarded a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government in 1995. In addition to numerous workshops and conferences, Welch taught at both the University of Washington and Cornell University. He died of lung cancer in 2003 at his home in Missoula.

The Man from Washington

by James Welch

See *RIDING THE EARTHBOY 40* by James Welch or find poem in original printing of this document distributed to all public Montana high schools.

Denotation and Connotation:

Crude
Buffalo Robes
Slouching dwarf
Rainwater eyes
Inoculated

Questions for Discussion:

1. Who is "The Man from Washington"?
2. What were the "crude beginnings"? According to whom?
3. What was the "end" the speaker references, and how did it come easy?
4. What might "flat world" refer to? Where did the term originate?
5. What is the time and place of this poem?
6. Who does the speaker of the poem represent?
7. Which images or lines, words or phrases, may be true or false or ironic (what kind)? How?
8. How does the speaker feel about "The Man from Washington"?
9. What were the promises?
10. What are the effects of the poet's use of consonants such as m's and p's on the characterization of the "Man from Washington"?
11. Who is/was tricked in this poem? Explain.

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Mid to Late 19th Century Treaty and Pre-Reservation era/Montana Territory
Themes: Between Two Worlds, Promise/Disillusionment/Betrayal, Trickery, Justice/Injustice
Topics: Death and Dying, Federal Indian Policy, Hard Times/Forced Relocation, Place, Reservations

From the Poet:

According to Lois Welch, Jim's widow, "The Man from Washington" was written in November of 1968, shortly after he finished his graduate work. In his early years, Jim had lived on several reservations: Blackfeet, Chemawa (in Oregon), Sitka (Alaska) and the Fort Belknap. The poem has been widely anthologized and recognized for its clarity and irony.

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. When have you felt smooth-talked, promised falsely, betrayed, or sold a bill of goods? Write about how that felt, how you survived the time.

Text to Text

3. The subject of Welch's poem "The Man from Washington" appears in several works by Montana and Plains regional authors. In addition, look at model teaching units published by the Office of Public Instruction Indian Education based upon the following literary works: *Wind from an Enemy Sky* by D'Arcy McNickle, *Killing Custer* by James Welch, *Fools Crow* by James Welch, and *American Indian Stories* by Zitkala Ša.
    - Choose one of the above works for study.
    - Describe the figures in the work who may be called "The Man from Washington"?
    - How do they compare/contrast with the *man from Washington,* the subject of Welch's poem?

- What is the conflict(s), and what are the consequences for those who are relocated or restricted to "reserved" lands?

4. Read Minerva Allen's poem, "Encampment of Power," in this collection. How does her poem contrast or compare with Welch's? Consider the point of view of the speaker in each poem.
5. Lois Red Elk's poem "A Force They Could Not Control," in this collection, includes a similar oppressive force that may have involved trickery as well. How can both of these poems help you understand a situation you have witnessed or experienced?

Text to World

6. Where might a similar kind of trickery (promise/betrayal) exist in the world today?Read a current news magazine or newspaper or watch political ads that might reveal similar situations. Consider what political leaders might say or do and what the "fact checkers" might say that would contradict the political talk. Who has the power? Who are the winners and who the losers?
7. Were the promises in treaties/agreements kept to Indian people? If they could be kept, who was in charge of keeping them?
8. For background information and model lessons, read the Chapter Three Tribal Histories Narrative "Treaty Period: Sovereignty and A Promise" found in *Montana Tribal Histories: Educators Resource Guide and Companion DVD*, pp. 54-68 (sent by the OPI to school libraries and also available online)
9. After reading "The Man from Washington," research the history of the *Fort Laramie Treaty, 1868* and *The History and Culture of the Standing Rock Oyate.*
   Also read "1868 Fort Laramie Treaty – Trying Again" in *Montana Stories of the Land by Krys Holmes*, pp. 130-131 or access online at *Chapter 7*.
   Write an OP Ed for a major newspaper that persuades readers to think critically about the treaty, its causes and consequences for both Indian and non-Indian people.
   Role – a person living in Montana in 1868
   Audience – Americans living back east
   Format – an opinion article
   Topic – the Fort Laramie Treaty, its causes and consequences for Montana's population, Indian and non-Indian alike.
   Strong Verb – Persuade your readers to practice compassion, to think critically about the treaty.
10. Although the poem, in general, addresses the situation for pre-reservation tribal people, review the *History Timeline* and determine the events and times that "The Man from Washington" addresses.
11. Using this poem as a model or guide, what do poets contribute to the historical narrative that your history textbooks might miss?
12. Seek out background information regarding disease in *Montana Tribal Histories: Educators Resource Guide and Companion DVD,* Chapter Two Tribal Histories Narrative "Colonization: Epidemics, Traders, Horses & Guns," pp. 30-33 (sent by the OPI to school libraries) and also available online. What caused the diseases to spread?

13. Read other works dealing with forced and misguided relocation:
    - Chapter 3 of *Killing Custer* by James Welch and Paul Stekler. Consider who might have said this: "they aren't using the land. We might as well develop/settle/farm/mine it."
    - *"Evangeline*" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, where the English removed and dispersed the inhabitants of Arcadia.

Thanksgiving at Snake Butte

See *RIDING THE EARTHBOY 40* by James Welch or find poem in original printing of this document distributed to all public Montana high schools.

Denotation and Connotation:

Butte
Antelope
Clattered
Balked
Stunted pine
Jolted
Etched
Ancestors
Crude
Season of their loss
Thanksgiving

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary/Snake Butte on Fort Belknap Reservation
Themes: Between Two Worlds, Self in Nature, Trickery
Topics: Hunting/Wildlife, Place, Ancestors

About the Poet:

When he was young, Jim Welch would go hunting with his father and his brothers.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What time and place does the title evoke?
2. What are the different meanings and uses for "time" throughout the poem?
3. If this situation occurs on Thanksgiving weekend, consider the meaning for Indian people of the traditional celebration/commemoration of an event in 1621, the "season of their loss."
4. Who might the speaker of the poem represent?
5. What might threaten the horses and antelope? How do they react? What threatened the "ancestors"? How did they react?
6. What is the effect of not naming the "thing" that frightens? The "something unseen"?
7. What is "the answer to our time"?
8. What are some "names for time"? Which names appear in the poem?
9. Of what importance is "time" for the speaker?
10. What is the effect of stanza breaks on the meaning of lines in the poem?
11. What specific sensory images indicate feelings in animals – fear or joy?
12. What does the speaker see in the rocks?
13. How might the title help the reader understand the last line? What is lost? How was it lost?
14. Where is irony in the poem, particularly with the title and the speaker's perception of "Thanksgiving" for Indian people?
15. Trickery is a theme listed for this poem. Who or what is tricked?

Making Connections:
Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. What threats in nature do you experience or witness today? Explain.
3. What activity would you choose to do on Thanksgiving?
4. Welch's "Thanksgiving" is a hunting poem with vivid description of the horses and what they fear. Relate a memorable experience you've had with an animal. Tell the story using action verbs and sensory description.

Role – yourself
Audience – a younger sibling
Format – short story
Topic – a memorable experience with an animal
Strong Verb – Write a short story, a narrative, about your experience.

Text to Text

5. What stories do children learn in school about Thanksgiving? Research books and articles about Thanksgiving:
   - textbooks in your school libraries, especially the elementary school library
   - access the OPI Social Studies lesson *"1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving"* based on the book of the same name by Catherine O'Neill and Margaret M. Bruchac.
   - *"Thanksgiving: A Native American View"* by Jacqueline Keeler
     Thanksgiving" from history.com
   - *"Deconstructing the Myths of 'The First Thanksgiving"* by Judy Dow (Abenaki) and Beverly Slapin

   What are some of the contradictions of "fact" that appear in these sources and in stories you learned in school?
6. James Welch frequently uses the word "crude." Look up the various definitions and think about the definition most appropriate for Welch's use.

Text to World

7. Look at pictures of *petroglyphs or cave paintings or carvings.*
   Where in Montana might you find them? Who may have left them? What was their purpose?
8. Snake Butte rises south of the Fort Belknap Agency and just west of Highway 66. View photographs of Snake Butte:
   - *Snake Butte by David Hartt*
   - Snake Butte by Jake Wallis, *Montana Tribal Histories: Educators Resource Guide,* pp. 70-71

   How do these images affect your understanding of and experience with the poem?

There is a Right Way

See *RIDING THE EARTHBOY 40* by James Welch or find poem in original printing of this document distributed to all public Montana high schools.

Tips for Understanding:

Setting: Contemporary and Universal/ Montana Plains

Themes: Justice/Injustice, Self in Nature, Cycles of Life

Topics: Hunting/Wildlife, Nature/Beauty, Place

Denotation and Connotation:

Prairie hawk
Right
Right Way

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is "justice"? What is injustice?
2. What or who might the mouse symbolize?
3. Where is irony in the poem? Consider all the possible meanings for just and right?
4. What is the implication of the phrase, "the mouse was any mouse," within this poem?
5. How is the mouse "a part of a wind that stirs the plains."
6. What "winds" stirred "the plains"?
7. How does the speaker respond to the sight?
8. How does the world "try" to be right?
9. What does the poem celebrate?

Making Connections:

Text to Self

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, respond in writing (D.I.C.E.) to any or each of the following about what: **D**isturbs; **I**nterests; **C**onfuses; or, **E**nlightens you.
2. Watch and describe an animal. Is it predator or prey? What does it do? How does it react to you or others? What might you learn from watching that animal?
3. What birds of prey live in your region or neighborhood? Name them and describe them.
4. Does the poem separate the world into predator and prey? Is it a fair description of the world as you know it?

Text to Text

5. Select one literary element or device or strategy these poems share with Welch's "There is a Right Way."
    - Gerard Manley Hopkins' *"The Windover"*
    - Robert Frost's *"Design"*
    - Elizabeth Bishop's *"The Fish"*

Role – a recent high school graduate
Audience – the curriculum committee of your high school
Format – a persuasive essay
Topic – a comparison/contrast of major elements found in "There Is A Right Way" and the three poems listed above, concluding with your opinion of an idea or literary device they share (other than animals).
Strong Verb – Compare these four poems. Using evidence and your knowledge of literary devices, persuade the college curriculum committee to include them in the newly adopted Senior Seminar course.

Text to World

1. How might our understanding of the term "balance of nature" apply to this poem?
2. Who are the predators and who the prey in human or Indian history? Who says?
3. View photos:
    - *Hawks, kites, eagles* from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Montana Field Guide
    - *Falcons* from the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Montana Field Guide
    - *Prairie hawks* from Google Images

Discussion Points and Writing Prompts for All Poems

A. Questions relating to the Seven Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

1. How might the poem represent the cultural or historical or linguistic diversity of tribal peoples?

2. How might the poem represent the diversity of individual Indians? How does the poem answer the question, "Who am I as a unique individual"?

3. How might poem represent the traditional communal nature of Indian communities?

4. How might the poem reflect the oral history of diverse Indian peoples in Montana?

5. How might the poem help build our understanding of reservations and their legal and historical ramifications? How might the poem express ironies or contradictions of popular beliefs regarding reservations? Readers should keep the following in mind: The principle that *land should be acquired from the Indians only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions:*

   I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.
   II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.
   III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists.

6. How might the poet or speaker be reflecting upon the impact of any of the following federal policy periods on Indian people.
   - Colonization Period 1492 –
   - Treaty Period 1789 – 1871
   - Allotment Period 1887 – 1934
   - Boarding School Period 1879 –
   - Tribal Reorganization Period 1934 – 1953
   - Termination Period 1953 – 1988
   - Self-Determination 1975 – current [includes the Tribal Self-Governance Act of 1994. "The Chippewa and Cree Tribes of Rocky Boy's Reservation and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation are currently the tribes in Montana that are participating in self-governance." *(Montana Tribal Histories: Educators Resource Guide and Companion DVD, p. 153)]*

7. How might the content of the poem conflict or compare with the stories mainstream historians might tell?

8. How might this poem's content or speaker help develop understanding of tribal sovereignty as it might differ from tribe to tribe?

B. Topics for active reading, writing, reflection, discussion, and analysis:

1. After hearing the poem read aloud, practice the following Critical Reading Strategy used by Laurie Smith-Small Waisted Bear:
    - What does the text *say?* What are the *Denotations* of words or phrases?
    - What does the text *mean?* What are the *Connotations* of words or phrases?
    - Why does it *matter?*

2. Look for **Irony** in the poems:
    - ***Verbal Irony:*** the contrast between what is said and what is meant.
    - ***Dramatic Irony:*** the contrast between what a character thinks to be true and what we (the readers) know to be true.
    - ***Situational Irony:*** the contrast between what happens and what was expected (or what would seem appropriate).

3. Consider how these poems might connect in theme and content with other works of literature? Why is irony of such central importance in these works?

4. Consider the images that reflect the five senses of sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste, as they create vivid pictures for the reader? What is the effect of these images on meaning?

5. Look for evidences of simile, metaphor, personification, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, allusion, overstatement and understatement, irony, and tone. How might the reliance on strong sensory imagery contribute to the effect of the poem?

6. Consider how the poet employs musical devices—patterned speech?

7. To help meet the goals of the Montana Common Core Standards, a R.A.F.T.S. writing or speaking assignment has been included for each of the poems in this collection. As students respond to R.A.F.T.S. prompts, they can demonstrate their knowledge using a defined point of view for an audience other than the teacher. Using the format below, teachers can create their own R.A.F.T.S. prompts.

    Role – point of view or role of the writer, other than the student
    Audience – the person/group, other than the teacher, for whom the writing is intended
    Format – form of writing—i.e. poem, children's book, letter, eulogy, editorial, e-mail, historical account, recommendation, review, short story, thumbnail sketch, persuasion to an official, monologue, letter of explanation, case study
    Topic – the idea or subject for the writing
    Strong Verb – the purpose for the writing: to persuade, analyze, create, predict,

compare, defend, evaluate, describe, or inform, etc.
For R.A.F.T.S. information see the readwritethink Strategy Guide (IRA and NCTE)

8. Identify the ***mood***—the feeling in the poem, i.e. melancholy, sarcastic, happy, sad. Identify the ***tone***—the poet's attitude toward the subject of the poem.

9. How does the poem use or contradict popular stereotypes of American Indians or Euro- Americans?

C. Ways to Experience Poetry:

1. Ask students to think about where they might connect with the poem – with the speaker or audience, with the place or the landscape, with the situation. How might they find themselves in the poem?

2. Invite students in small groups to interpret and say a poem together as a group activity. They may read it all together or they may read it as a reader's theater interpretation with individuals taking parts.

3. While listening to a poem read aloud, one student may draw on butcher paper or on the white board with colored markers while others watch, or all students may draw at their desks and then share with the group what they drew.

4. This activity – Interpreting Poetry with Music - is included with permission from Michael Wolfe, music teacher. Students as individuals or in groups of two may:
   a. Select a poem from this collection
   b. Read it several times and answer these questions:
      - Is the poem happy or sad? A mix? Other?
      - Does it take place in the past, present, or future?
      - What images do you see as you read the poem?
   c. Then students will find two instrumental pieces of music – one in a major key and the other in a minor key.
   d. Students practice reading the poem to each piece of music – rehearsing carefully as they match up the poem with the music and being creative with inflection, rhythm, important words and tone of voice.
   e. Finally, students will perform their readings with both musical backgrounds.
   f. Their peers will respond to and discuss the ways the poems were presented and interpreted.
   g. All students can discuss how the performance in major differed from the one in minor and what changed between the performances.
   h. How do you think the poet might feel about the musical choices for his/her poem?

5. Ask students to select concrete objects from their own landscape and write a poem, telling their story and the personal connections with that object.

6. Use one of these poems as a model. Invite students to imitate the form, or any other aspect of the poem that they may choose, using their own imagery and language.

7. Ask students to identify their favorite word sounds in a poem and discuss how those sounds make them feel about the subject.

8. Invite students to identify a poem's "golden line," the one that strikes an individual in a way that touches the heart or that brings some kind of aesthetic pleasure creating special meaning.

9. Discuss how the poems may reflect traditional American Indian perspectives on the environment – views where humans relate to and work with the environment versus views where humans conquer and control their environment. How might this compare or contrast with the way students view the world?

10. Ask students to find photos or videos (perhaps on YouTube) featuring any of the poets.

11. Beginning with some of the poems in this collection, have students create a collection of their favorite portrait poems—poems that draw word pictures of people, either autobiographical or biographical—including ones they might write themselves using one of these poems as a model. These sites provide writing patterns:
    - *Portrait Poems*
    - *Write An Instant Biography Poem*
    - *How to Write a Biography Poem*

Montana Common Core Standards
Applied to
Birthright: Born To Poetry - A Collection of Montana Indian Poetry

A. Reading Standards for Literature (Grades 9-12)

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly (within cultural contexts, including those of American Indians) and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the poem.
2. Determine central themes and central ideas of a poem, including those of American Indians, and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a poem.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. Include those written by American Indian poets.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences or stanzas relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a poem, including those of American Indians.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in multiple representations of a topic in different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.
9. Analyze how a poet draws on and transforms source material in a specific work, in cluding how American Indian stories and oral histories appear in contemporary poems or how historical events and experiences influence meaning in poems.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently.

B. Writing Standards (Grades 9-12)

Text Types and Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts, including American Indian texts, to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians

Essential Understanding 1
There is great diversity among the twelve sovereign tribes of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each tribe has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

Essential Understanding 2
Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is a great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.

Essential Understanding 3
The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs.

Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the "discovery" of North America.

Essential Understanding 4
Though there have been tribal peoples living successfully on the North American lands for millennia, reservations are lands that have been reserved by or for the tribes for their excusive use as permanent homelands. Some were created through treaties, while others were created by statutes and executive orders. The principle that land should be acquired from the Indians only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions:

I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.
II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.
III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists or states.

Essential Understanding 5
There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have affected Indian people and continue to shape who they are today. Many of these policies conflicted with one another. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods:

Colonization/Colonial Period 1492 - 1800s
Treaty-Making and Removal Period 1778 - 1871
Reservation Period - Allotment and Assimilation 1887 - 1934
Tribal Reorganization Period 1934 - 1953
Termination and Relocation Period 1953 - 1968
Self-determination 1975 - Present

Essential Understanding 6
History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

Essential Understanding 7
American Indian tribal nations are inherent sovereign nations and they possess sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, under the American legal system, the extent and breadth of self-governing powers are not the same for each tribe.

Resources

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