

HISTORIES IN RELATION: VIEWING ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPHS  
OF BANFF INDIAN DAYS WITH STONEY NAKODA ELDERS

By

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## **Abstract**

*In the archival record, photographs of Banff Indian Days have been framed primarily through a Settler lens. A more balanced approach to these images and the historical analysis of Settler-Indigenous relations during this event is needed. Using an interdisciplinary approach along with methodologies inspired by Indigenous epistemologies, I presented photographs of Banff Indian Days taken by Catharine and Peter Whyte in 1945-55 to Stoney Nakoda Elders in a series of interviews. By employing the notion of photographs as ‘relational objects’ as outlined by scholars such as Elizabeth Edwards, I seek to understand this concept of relationality and how it aligns with Stoney Nakoda perspectives. In this case study, the voices of Stoney Nakoda Elders, Catharine Whyte (via her written letters), and myself are included as a way to reframe photographs of Banff Indian Days in a multivocal and multiperspectival way.*

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## Introduction

I am in my corner of the archives, sheets of mounted transparencies sit by my side as the light table illuminates my project of choosing which images to request be made into prints. I will bring the collection of prints to Stoney Nakoda <sup>1</sup> Elders, to ask for the names of people unidentified in the photographs, as well as presenting rarely seen views of Banff Indian Days in the 1945-1955 era. I focus in on a portrait of a young girl in regalia, the beadwork dress she is wearing is slightly too big for her, giving her an air of awkwardness as she poses in front of a tipi (Figure 1). A handwritten caption below the image reads “Enos Hunters’ daughter”. This is a small kernel of identification information rarely given in this collection of transparencies, taken by Catharine and Peter Whyte of Banff, Alberta. I consider passing it over, but the image is intriguing, and I find it important to learn the first names of women and girls, as they are so often left out in favor of linking them to their male counterparts, whether it be father or husband. I write down the number on the photo order.

I have embarked on this research project as someone who is known to several families within the local Stoney Nakoda community. I am *Wah si juh wiya*, ‘white woman’ from the Whyte Museum in Banff, Alberta. For the last decade I have worked at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies (WMCR) in various capacities. Considering my interests and undergraduate degree in Native American Studies, <sup>2</sup> I was tasked with organizing

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<sup>1</sup> My research primarily engages the Stoney Nakoda Nation, the English translation **Stoney Nakoda** or **Stoney** will be used for consistency, as there doesn’t appear to be formalized translation in the Stoney language that is preferred by the Nation. The most common translations found were **Iyarhe Nakoda** in local media and online venues while **Iyeth kabi** was used verbally by Elders. For more general discussions, the term **Indigenous** will be used.

<sup>2</sup> The University of Lethbridge offers an undergraduate degree in Native American Studies from which I graduated, along with a second major in Anthropology in 1998. According to U of L’s website, this department will be changing its name to Indigenous Studies, while still using the acronym NAS (<https://www.uleth.ca/artsci/native-american-studies/about>).

Elders' meetings to consult on particular exhibits and educational projects. I participated in a survey of the WMCR's heritage collection of Indigenous artifacts, with the engagement of Stoney Nakoda consultants and traditional medicine practitioners.

During a period of working on digitization projects in the WMCR's Archives & Library department, an impressive collection of photographs portraying local Indigenous people came to my attention. I was struck not only by the large number of photographs held in various fonds<sup>3</sup>, but also by the captioning practices of photographers and subsequently archivists. Names were often missing, and descriptions such as "Indian", "Stony" or the well-worn "Chief" were common. A survey of other institutions within Alberta such as the Glenbow Archives and the Provincial Archives of Alberta demonstrated that the practice of not naming Indigenous subjects and a lack of contextual information is not unusual.

I felt these descriptors were disrespectful to the local Indigenous community, I believed that as an institution, the WMCR had a responsibility to reach out to Indigenous peoples in the neighboring community of Morley to ask for help in naming those portrayed in these photographs. I persistently spoke to whoever would listen about these collections, and the need to seek out local Indigenous Elders to ask for culturally-specific identifications. In the spring of 2014 I received museum funding to go forward with the project I called *Recognizing Relations*. During this ongoing project, 444 photographs have been viewed by over 25 Elders, with an identification rate of about 60-70%<sup>4</sup>. The lessons

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<sup>3</sup> An archival term used to describe a collection of textual or photographic materials that originate from the same source.

<sup>4</sup> The *Recognizing Relations* project occurred in three phases over three years, and each phase had varying degrees of success in terms of rate of identification. One of the main factors in this has been the era in which the photograph was taken (i.e. whether in living memory of Elders) and also geographical location.

learned through this project, and the relationships formed in its process are the foundation for this research.

My goal has always been to make *Recognizing Relations* a collaborative community-naming project that allowed for the local Indigenous community, specifically the Stoney Nakoda Nation, to gain meaningful information about their community history, while the archival collections were becoming enhanced. I saw possibilities for these historical photographs to be a resource for the community; once the people portrayed were named, links could be made between contemporary families and their relations pictured in the past.

Historical photographs of Indigenous peoples have been described as sites of “intersecting histories”, in which various encounters, relationships and cultural knowledge activated by the photograph are shaped by the photographer, the collector, and the archive (Edwards "2003" 83). This means institutions such as archives have been integral to the making of meaning when it comes to historical photographs, their inscription of perceived truth often emerging out of the need to maintain certain ideas about race, nationalism and colonialism (Emerling)(Geismar). Edwards writes, “(a)s a result, photographs have been immeasurably powerful in creating, distorting and perpetuating ideas about culture” (Edwards "2003" 83). What I am seeking is an alternative narrative for these images, an Indigenous interpretation. Perhaps exposing the other side of the intersection.

The case study at the core of this research paper will bring Stoney Nakoda Elders together to view a collection of archival photographs from the annual event Banff Indian Days taken by Catharine and Peter Whyte between 1945 and 1955. While identification work is the foundation of the *Recognizing Relations* project, I believe the images presented

for this study offer a more general view of Banff Indian Days, an invitation for broader commentary. This choice reflects an effort to open up conversation about Settler/Indigenous relationships during this era, to seek out a deeper understanding of the time within a decolonization framework.

By collaborating with the Stoney Nakoda community, can there be a re-inscription of the history reflected in the photographs taken by the Whytes? A new network of relationships and ways of knowing? By honouring relationality, can our understanding of these images shift and transform? Through research of archival resources and oral histories, the voices of Indigenous Elders, historical Settlers, and myself as a contemporary Settler scholar will offer perspectives in the framing of Banff Indian Days and the communities that participated in this exceptional event. This paper will aim to demonstrate that using methodologies that emphasize collaboration with Indigenous communities and privilege Indigenous knowledge bring new and dynamic ways of looking at historical photographs and the communities they portray.

### **THE STONEY NAKODA**

The Stoney Nakoda Nation is a branch of the Dakota Sioux, which separated from the main tribe sometime in the early 1600s and migrated northward. The reason for migration is unclear, but historical records indicate that as they travelled, clans showed preferences for certain areas; some stayed in the woodlands and others continued into the Bow Valley, the foothills and surrounding mountains, these being excellent areas for hunting moose, deer, elk, mountain sheep and goats (Scott-Brown)(Mason)(Dempsey). Signatories of Treaty 7 in 1877, the three main bands of the Stoney are the Chiniki, Wesley

and Bearspaw. While there are two smaller Stoney reserves in Alberta, this research focused interviews on the Morley reserve forty five minutes east of Banff.

### **BANFF INDIAN DAYS**

Banff Indian Days was an annual summer event that ran from about 1895-1970, usually the weekend after the Calgary Stampede. Organized and funded by some of the businesses in Banff, Indigenous people from the surrounding areas were invited to partake in the festivities. The majority of participants were Stoney Nakoda people, however the Cree from Muskwacis (Hobema), the Ktunaxa (Kootenay), Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee), Siksika (Blackfoot), Piikani (Peigan) and Kainai (Blood) Nations were also represented (Mason "2015" 79). In interviews, Stoney Nakoda Elders felt it was important to point out that the other Nations represented were families invited specifically by their Stoney Nakoda relations<sup>5</sup>. In Mason's interviews with Elders, it was also pointed out that this type of gathering in the Banff area was not new, but rather a continuation of a tradition of gathering for trade, exchange and socializing with surrounding Nations during the summer months (Mason "2014" 93).

Developed and promoted specifically for tourists, Banff Indian Days provided rare opportunities for local Indigenous people to participate in dancing, singing, drumming, sporting competitions and gathering with distant relatives, activities that were actively discouraged in everyday life on the reserve (Watson)(Mason). A daily parade from the camping grounds to the Banff Springs Hotel was one of the main events, with prizes awarded to the most elaborate and colorful displays of beadwork, feathers and regalia (Meijer-Drees). In his analysis of local media coverage of the event Mason states, "...it is

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<sup>5</sup> Group meeting at Family Community and Resource Center, September 27, 2017

clear that awards were predominantly given to the men, women and children whose attire most accurately met Western tourists' expectations of "Indigeneity" (Mason "2014" 111).

Banff Indian Days could certainly fit into what M.L. Pratt has coined as a "contact zone", a space where people, usually of disparate power differentials, come together and are required to meet and relate with one another (Pratt 4). Indigenous participants were forced to reside on reserves, literally requiring a pass from the Indian agent in order to leave their designated geographical space (Mason "2014" 44). The tourists to whom the event was marketed came from afar, away from their everyday life, ready to experience new things.

The townspeople of Banff invited both of these groups into a shared space in order to celebrate their perception of Indigenous culture and performance, a rare occurrence in the colonial space of Canada in the years 1900-1970. In her analysis, Meijer-Drees sees Banff Indian Days as a way to mediate contact between Indigenous and Settler culture, "...where relations could be openly expressed, negotiated, and most importantly, manipulated" (Meijer-Drees 8). Mason and Clapperton see Indigenous groups taking the opportunity to produce and assert their own representations within this event, challenging the boundaries of mainstream expectations (Mason)(Clapperton).

The parade created opportunities for commercial and amateur tourist photographers to take portrait-style photographs of Indigenous participants. This possibility held great value as pre-contact and "...romanticized views of Indigenous peoples were very popular and widely collected" (Watson 46). The parade was also of great economic value to Indigenous participants, as there was money available for those dressed in regalia. During times such as the Depression era of the 1930s this was especially

important as there was much economic hardship on the Morley reserve (Meijer-Drees 15). Norman Luxton and other organizers of the Banff Indian Days made sure participants were compensated for their participation with cash as well as food rations.

July 23, 1948 Letter to Mother:

...Thursday was the first day and we were up early and down at the grounds to see the Indians getting ready for the parade. Last year we had gotten the prize money out of the bank all ready for the parade. (each with headdress getting so much those with not many beads less etc. then the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> prizes too)...

Elders Pauline and JR Twoyoungmen commented on a photograph unlike the portrait style images that are popularly seen of Banff Indian Days. This photograph from the Whyte collection gives a glimpse of what the experience of the crowds, both Indigenous and tourist, might have been like (Figure 2).

Pauline Twoyoungmen: *I went on a parade too. And ah- they were all standing like that. They were giving out apples or something to eat at the Springs hotel.*

Dagny Dubois: *Was there lots of people?*

Pauline Twoyoungmen: *Ya, lots of people.*

JR Twoyoungmen: *Lots of tourists!*

(Twoyoungmen, P. and JR, personal interview, Sept. 14, 2017)

July 21, 1946 Letter to Mother:

...The next morning was the first day of Indian Days and such a crowd of people as there was in town, probably the greatest crowd there has ever been. We told them to be sure an be on the bridge at ten sharp as we had to help judge the costumes, However I am afraid they were a bit late and arrived just as the Indians got onto the bridge and with the crowd saw very little, and Kitty couldn't get any pictures at all, in fact no one could and we had a heck of a time trying to judge.

## **Foundations- theoretical and methodological**

Indigenous scholars such as Gerald Vizenor see the historical photography of Indigenous people as a 'simulation' of culture, the representation of tribal people in

decorated clothing symbolizing their experience of colonization (Vizenor 11). Hulleah Tsinnahjinnie sees the over-romanticizing and simplification of Indigenous people as two of the “greatest assaults on Native existence” (Tsinnahjinnie 44). Both scholars find ways to contend with their initial disappointment at the condition they perceive the photographic subjects residing in. Through deeper readings of the photographs, Vizenor finds a new perspective in the gaze of Quanah Parker, well known Comanche leader, “(h)is eyes are the presence of the pictures; the stories of resistance, and traces of tribal survivance”(Vizenor 10). Tsinnahjinnie chooses to share the stories of those photographed, allowing the reader to experience the complexity lost within the archival caption, and given the gift of the photographs ‘talking back’.

While critiquing the photographic archive is important, I have chosen to move away from the type of analysis that seeks out examples of marginalization and disempowerment for Indigenous sitters, and towards the possibility of alternative readings. As Carol Payne points out, by continually critiquing asymmetrical power relations, we “....unwittingly reinforce the very authority they ostensibly critique”(Payne, "2016" 4). What is needed is not another Settler scholar’s opinion of Indigenous representation. Instead, asking Indigenous people for their perspectives on these photographs seems more applicable at this juncture. In the following paragraphs, I would like to share some of the writings that have influenced the theoretical and methodological foundations of this research.

In 2001, Alison Brown and Laura Peers took 33 photographs captured by anthropologist Beatrice Blackwood portraying the Kainai people in the 1920s to Southern Alberta in order to be viewed by the Kainai community. Brown and Peers make an excellent case for the need to consult with Indigenous communities before undertaking any

analysis of their histories, or photographs in which Indigenous people are portrayed. One of their key suggestions is that a focus must be placed on the “...problematic dynamics of reconciling (or not) multiperspectival narratives of the past” (Brown and Peers 149). This means actually asking Indigenous people for their perspectives and giving their voices space in the overall narrative. It means being willing to take the time to make relationships within communities and being accountable to those relationships, thereby becoming part of a longer, more involved research process.

For Elizabeth Edwards, archival institutions need to be decentered from their position as sole interpreters of photographic materials, and photographs need to be taken back to their source communities in order to be re-engaged. This type of engagement creates the “potential to seed a number of narratives”, even between individuals from the same communities, as age, gender, and lineage can effect how images are viewed (Poignant cited in Edwards "2003" 84). Initiatives that collaborate with source communities and recognize Indigenous knowledge create the “...cultural potential for being not only about loss, but instead empowerment, renewal and contestation”(Edwards "2003" 86).

Christopher Wright sees photographs tracing “multiple trajectories... for all their superficial fixity and their inclusion in structures like the archive that seek to contain them, they are processual and constantly in motion” (Wright 166). This idea of movement brings an active quality to the viewing of historical photographs by Indigenous communities, and the potential for meaningful exchange.

Edwards considers the power of oral history in community returns projects, as photographs spark memories and stories, they create a sensory experience for those who are interacting with them. These interactions show that photographs themselves are

“embedded in social relations”, holding dynamic relationships with those who share them in various forums and contexts (Edwards "2006" 34). Photographs can become a tool for communities, a “...crucial technology of Indigenous memory- an important means of producing and processing the past in the present” (Lydon "2010" 174). From the Australian context, Jane Lydon demonstrates how historical photographs have become important mediators in the continuity of genealogies, sense of place, and Indigenous identities for Aboriginal communities (Lydon "2010" 182).

In terms of creating methodologies, it is important for non-Indigenous scholars such as myself to pause in order to reflect on the bias and lack of cultural awareness one holds as a Settler researcher before engaging with Indigenous communities in research and/or collaboration projects. The history of anthropology is burdened with stories of “...cultural protocols broken, values negated, small tests failed and key people ignored” (Smith 3). Indigenous scholars Shawn Wilson and Margaret Kovach base their Indigenous Methodologies within an epistemology that values relationality, “(r)esearch by and for Indigenous peoples is a ceremony that brings relationships together”(Wilson 8). Being in a relationship within this context requires integrity and the willingness to be accountable to those you have formed relationships with in the research process, including yourself and the readers you will eventually share your story with (Wilson)(Kovach).

Paulette Regan challenges Settler researchers to move beyond the analysis of Indigenous culture and be willing to include our own experiences as descendants of colonizers and “the primary beneficiaries of colonialism”(Regan 33). I feel this self-awareness is important to maintain and therefore have chosen to include myself in this text as a tool to reveal the perspectives at work in my analysis of the research experience. In

addition, Margaret Kovach writes, “(u)sing the first person honours the experiential while engaging the abstract and theoretical”, thus showing a willingness to weave one’s own story (Kovach 22). The notion of neutral objectivity is a Western construct, to separate oneself in order to see clearly and subsequently gain knowledge for oneself. This notion does not fit into Indigenous methodologies, as knowledge is seen as relational, part of a larger web of knowledge, therefore inextricable.

These ideas have informed the choice to include excerpts of Catharine Whyte’s letters in the era 1945-1955 as part of the research process. In this way I am able to locate another (historic) Settler voice alive during the time the chosen photographs were created. It should be noted that all photographs selected for this study were taken by Catharine Whyte, or her husband Peter. Accordingly Catharine’s letters are useful to the visual analysis of their work. By layering both the contemporary and historical voice of Settler women in relation to local Stoney Nakoda people, I hope to show a more holistic understanding of the reality of the Indigenous people of the 1945-55 era, how this informed the photography of that time, and how Catharine perceived the relationships held within the larger community by Settler and Indigenous people alike.

### **Practical methodology**

The methodology I created for *Recognizing Relations* as an archival project is essentially the same for this case study in terms of how I contacted Elders and presented photographs in an open meeting format. At the outset of the *Recognizing Relations* project, I could see it had the potential to become a long-term project with the possibility of creating

materials for this final research project<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, I wanted to insure the integrity of my choices, and build in flexibility for other iterations of the project. I applied for ethics approval from Athabasca University, was approved in 2014, and have maintained it until the present time.

Several of the Elders were already familiar and comfortable with the work of identifying people in photographs, and so for consistency I chose to include a binder of 58 photographs taken by the Whytes between 1945 and 1955 for the purpose of identification. This was meant as a third phase of *Recognizing Relations*, however a clear distinction was made between the two projects when speaking to Elders before meetings began. A second binder represented the case study for this research, the purpose of this collection of photographs was to encourage a broader conversation about Banff Indian Days, the interest being in the memories, comments and stories these images might provoke.

Corleigh and Fred Powderface have been my cultural consultants or cultural brokers to engage the Stoney Nakoda community for both this research and the *Recognizing Relations* project. The Powderface family has been active on several projects with the WMCR, Elders Sykes and Florence Powderface are on the museum's Elders Advisory Panel, their son Fred has assisted with school programming as well as *Recognizing Relations*. Corleigh has consulted on heritage items, ceremonial protocols, and has been essential to the *Recognizing Relations* project from the outset. With her and Fred's knowledge of living Elders and the Stoney language, we would discuss and choose who might be a good fit for the project, and they would personally visit or phone each Elder to ask them to participate

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<sup>6</sup> In order to complete the Masters of Arts in Integrated Studies (MAIS) program at Athabasca University, a final research project (MAIS 701) must be completed.

in the project, explaining the purpose of it, as well as going through the consent form for audio recording.

Elders meetings were held on the Morley reserve, cultural protocols such as the offering of tobacco and honoraria were provided, as well as food and drink. Two group meetings were held at the local community resource centre, and smaller meetings were conducted at the homes of Elders. Corleigh and/or Fred were present at every meeting, the intention being for them to be language interpreters for the Elders, and to insure the Elders felt comfortable and informed about the research process. They guided me in appropriate cultural protocols and through their ongoing presence, their relationship with me became a foundation for positive interactions between myself and the Elders. The Elders seemed willing to regard me as trustworthy through my relationship with the Powderface family.

Kovach talks about the importance of locating oneself in the research process, for an Indigenous researcher that would mean situating oneself culturally and geographically, telling Elders who you are and where you are from. Locating oneself "...anchors knowledge within experiences, and these experiences greatly influence interpretations" (Kovach 111). Introducing myself as a first generation Canadian born in Calgary seemed forced; the Elders knew I was a Settler woman living in Banff, to me, they didn't seem too interested in the details. I found myself unsure of how to proceed with this self-location until I recognized that by being introduced by Corleigh and Fred, I was being located through my relationship with them, a known and respected Stoney Nakoda family. When asked directly by Elders, I found myself also self-locating through my affiliation with the Whyte Museum and Archives, as museum founders Peter and Catharine Whyte were known to have many strong relationships with various Stoney Nakoda families during the early to mid- 1900s.

The structure of the interviews were open, once introductions were made and the intentions of the research established, we would simply give the Elders the photographs to look through at their own pace, as loose photographs induce “a freer narrative” (Edwards "2006" 34). We audio recorded the visits when consent was provided and handwrote notes in order to avoid having too many technological devices to distract from the gathering. Corleigh and/or Fred and I would usually meet for a meal soon after the Elders meeting to compare notes, discuss what went well, what didn't, and what impressions we were left with. I would also be filled in on some of the discussions that had occurred in the Stoney language, and other social subtleties I may have missed.

I transcribed all interviews in English and typed transcriptions of those in the Stoney language as Corleigh Powderface translated for me. Before any quotes are published to this paper, I will go back to the Elders to give them gifts of photographic prints from the collection, and to ask them to read over any quotes to make sure their intended communications were clearly understood. In order to be accountable to the relationships that I have formed with Elders and other community members, it is important I maintain open lines of communication during the whole research process.

### **Catharine and Peter Whyte**

Catharine and Peter Whyte were artists, photographers, philanthropists and founders of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies. Peter Whyte was born in Banff in 1905 and as a young man followed his love of painting to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1925. Here he met Catharine Robb who was studying figure painting, “...daughter of a well-to-do family in Concord, Massachusetts with a lineage in both the arts and business” (Skidmore 174). Married in 1930, they built a home and studio in Banff that

became a hub for visiting friends, artists, and local Stoney Nakoda families. Many of the relationships with the Stoney Nakoda originated with Peter's father, Dave Whyte, who opened the first mercantile in Banff in 1905 (Scott 28).

Beginning in the 1950s, the Whytes began the work of collecting papers, photographs, and artifacts in earnest with the intention to start a foundation and museum. In 1958, a foundation was established, first known as Wa-Che-Yo-Cha-Pa<sup>7</sup> and later changed to the Peter Whyte Foundation after his death in 1963. In 1968, the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies opened its doors for the first time (Whyte 138).

Catharine Whyte wrote over 1000 letters to her mother Edith Morse Robb while living in Banff, and they serve to illuminate her day-to-day life and the community she lived in. A number of these letters portray how she felt about the connections her and Peter held with some Stoney Nakoda families, as well as what reciprocity and accountability looked like from her perspective.

Feb.21, 1945 Letter to Mother...

George McLean the Indian came about tea time and Pete took him to the station with a large box of provisions to take back to Morely [sic]. He told us that old Hector Crawler had always called Pete "his son" and so George's wife always speaks of Pete as "her brother" and George thinks of him as his "brother-in-law" and me as "his-sister-in-law", it is pretty touching they way they feel....I gave him the beads that you gave me, for after bringing them back I hadn't seen any Indians that we knew well to give them too, He was very pleased, and I also showed him the bead bags that you made, he thought them very nice, and admired the work...I will try to sit down and write you the stories as he told them for they are very interesting, but it will take a lot of thought to word them as he does.

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<sup>7</sup> The Whytes asked George McLean (Tatanga Mani)(Walking Buffalo) for a suitable Stoney name to describe their foundation and museum. Catharine quotes him defining this as "...anything you see, anything you do, it's perfect. Doesn't matter what you do or what you see. All there. Would draw influence..." (Whyte 138)

Catharine shares with her mother the Stoney's perceptions of relatedness, and if we read carefully, I would posit we see Catharine's own understanding of these connections as well. She and Peter provide provisions to their adopted family as well as small gifts such as beads. It is rare to find a letter where Catharine doesn't discuss the "Indians" without reporting what kind of meal she has provided those who drop by, or a few dollars for the bus or meal en route back to the reserve. During the annual Banff Indian Days there is much description of filling the jeep up with Stoney Nakoda passengers to ferry around town or to the train station. In return there is the telling of stories, invitations to community events such as the Sundance, gifts, selling of handicrafts and occasional oral history recording.

It could also be argued that one of the gifts the Whytes were given by Stoney Nakoda families was access 'behind the scenes' of the Banff Indian Days camp in order to visit those participating, as well as take photographs. Aaron Glass and Brad Evans remark that photographs "...should be treated as complex documents of an encounter to which both photographer and photographic subject brought particular interests, resources, and agendas..."(Evans and Glass 10). Was this invitation to photograph the camp outside official 'visiting hours' a resource to offer within a reciprocal relationship? Was there an agenda to have the camp recorded by people who were considered trustworthy and accessible? It is difficult to know the answers to these questions, however the photographs taken by the Whytes are unique for the time: tipis being raised, food rations dispersed, people in everyday clothing, relaxed and smiling faces. These images oppose the more prevalent portraits of the parade taken by tourists and commercial photographers of individuals in

full regalia on horseback, often somber faced. The scenes captured by the Whytes are outside the realm of the performative sphere of Banff Indian Days (Figure 3).

July 21, 1946 Letter to Mother:

...we took them out to the Indian camp not knowing whether or not we could get inside. However we were able to drive in and told them we would be very quiet and just look and not get out of the car. It worked better than we expected though we didn't stay long enough to hear the boys riding around the camp on horseback singing and beating their drums...It was a beautiful evening and the Indians we know all came up to the car and spoke to us and we introduced them to the family and Rusty gave most of them cigarettes. It was really just the right time to go, the food was being given out too and we saw that too.

### **Photographic encounter**

It seems that social and physical boundaries were maintained in terms of visitation to the camping grounds at Banff Indian Days. Figure 4 depicts two such visitors to the Banff Indian Days camp, Elders JR and Pauline Twoyoungmen looked at the photograph carefully:

Dagny- *Were they allowed anytime, the white people, or only certain times?*

Pauline Twoyoungmen- *They come around noon, not in the evening. Afternoon, when they are finished their lunch and so on. They come around all afternoon til supper again, that's when they come visiting. I guess that man is talking to them. I used to remember that, the ladies come around and take pictures of people.*

Dagny- *Did people like that or...?*

Pauline- *Ya, they don't mind, each time when they take a picture they give some coins, you know, something, or you know something to wear, a scarf or something to eat.*

Dagny- *Ok, it was like an exchange?*

Pauline- *Ya, that's what they do.*

(Twoyoungmen, P., Personal Interview, Sept. 14, 2017)

Carol Williams considers the photographic encounter within the historical record, seeing Indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest using photography as an “opportunity for

economic advancement” (Williams 144). Her analysis shows Indigenous people understanding the value of photographs as commercial tourism was creating a market for images of the ‘authentic Indian’, a potential for exchange.

Aaron Glass also challenges assumptions of Indigenous subjects being passive in the photographic encounter, citing evidence that suggests Indigenous communities “... may have had their own reasons for participating and the means and motivation to directly influence the nature of the resulting pictures” (Glass 131). While it has been established that there were economic benefits to having their picture taken at Banff Indian Days, I wonder if for some participants there was an intention to record their handiwork, a display of beautiful and fine hide, feather and beadwork? This notion of Indigenous sitters choosing to be photographed in order to create a record for their descendants has been considered by several writers (Pratt)(Thomas)(Brown and Peers). Certainly, throughout interviews with Stoney Nakoda Elders, there was an admiration of how well the regalia had been made and how healthy and beautiful the people looked.

### **Photographs as relational**

Edwards sees photographs as “relational objects”, objects whose materiality move the viewer beyond the visual and operate on a more sensory level, mediating and shaping our understanding of history. When photographs are re-engaged by Indigenous communities, they are provided a new space for inscription, as by nature their meaning is mutable, depending on who is looking and what they see. They can be passed around, viewed together, creating a space to talk about past people and events, they “...become entities acting and mediating between people” (Edwards"2006" 31). Indigenous Elders

identifying their relations within photographs to tie them into the overall kinship circle establishes cultural continuity and highlights the importance of relationships.

In viewing photographs with Stoney Nakoda Elders, I was often surprised at what details they would pick out of the photographs, and what meanings they would glean from them. I also came to learn how kinship ties and relatedness organized the gaze of the Elders viewing these images. In viewing historical photographs with Kainai Elders, Brown & Peers note, "...for Kainai people the clan and the local community are the focus of history, and are the social structures through which one experiences and understands history"(Brown and Peers 148). In identifying individuals in the photographs, Elders have been able to link them into the larger web of their families, clans and overall community, thus imbuing the images with a richer, more meaningful history.

Deanna Paniataaq Kingston viewed ethnographic films with King Island Elders and her analysis of over 20 hours of audiotapes showed about 70 percent of the conversations discussed names and kinship relations of the people depicted in the film (Kingston 132). They "...concentrated on reporting the intricate kinship and naming relationships, because it was traditionally important to do so and they want this information to be recorded for future generations"(Kingston 133). Identifying family lines in order to share this with the younger generations was also important to Stoney Elders, Charles Rabbit expressed in one of the group meetings:

*Charles Rabbit: My Elder said, 'Grandson, in the future the younger generation will not know they are related, they won't even acknowledge one another or talk to each other.' My Elder found it worrisome that the future generation would no longer remember who their relatives are and would end up marrying each other. Relatives living together is very disturbing is what my Elder said.*

*Sykes Powderface: We've already reached that stage*

Charles Rabbit: *I often wondered how he was able to foretell the future, but now I realize my Elder was a spiritual person (a seer).*

(Rabbit, C. and Powderface, S., Personal Interview, Sept. 27, 2017)

The younger generation not knowing their kinship connections was a concern voiced by several Elders, the consequences of close relatives having children together was a real issue within this fairly small population<sup>8</sup>. I believe this was one of the motivations for Elders to participate in the *Recognizing Relations* project as well as this case study, as we let them know the photographs along with identified family names and connections would be available as an online resource through the WMCR Archives website.

During the identification process, if an Elder couldn't recall an individual's name, comments on facial features that were reminiscent of particular clans or families would often be made. Beadwork patterns, horses, landmarks and any people surrounding individuals would provide clues to their identity. For the most part, working out how the person was linked to themselves and their family was a way for Elders to make connections to names. In a group setting Elders would lobby their genealogical memories back and forth, slowly circling towards consensus.

In an individual interview, Elder Kathleen Poucette was able to identify forty-one people in the photographs, thirty of those were spoken in context of how she was related to them, or how they were related to other people within their own families or clans (figure 5).

Kathleen Poucette- *My auntie Jean Francis, don't know who the little guy would be, she didn't have any children.*

Dagny- *and she was your auntie?*

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<sup>8</sup> According to rockymountainakoda.com, the Stoney Nakoda population is about 4600 people throughout all three reserves.

Kathleen- *Well distant auntie, you know we are all related.*  
(Poucette, K. Personal Interview, Oct.18, 2017)

For Lydon, photographs have the potential to “...extend socialities across space and time; by bringing those distant in time and space into the present, they establish the owner’s world of social relatedness, identity and cultural legitimacy”(Lydon "2010" 183). This idea of legitimacy demonstrates a keen awareness among Indigenous people internationally that establishing evidence of presence is important in cases of land claims or other legal disputes. I would also argue that there is a more encompassing ideal attached to establishing presence as well; relations between humans is important in the Indigenous epistemology, but so is relatedness to the land and animals.

Shawn Wilson identifies how Indigenous identity is tied to this concept of relationality, grounded in the relationship to the land, the people who lived on it in the past, and those who will be born to it in the future. He states, “Rather than viewing ourselves as being *in* relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationships (Wilson 80). This embeddedness to the surrounding environment and community of living beings has a tangible quality. It is unlike the abstracted way in which land and environment is considered in the contemporary Settler perspective. If we can allow for a subjective moment to feel into this more interconnected reality, it becomes clear why photographs can be considered a technology that fit into Indigenous epistemologies, as they are a fluid and open forum that invite the possibility of relational thinking.

## **Findings**

I had the intention to write about how the Elders spoke about the photographs from ‘behind the scenes’ of Banff Indian Days. I was excited to find these largely unseen images,

from my perspective they were rich and telling of a layered history and complex relationships. These scenes didn't require the identification of people, rather I was hoping for commentary and memories about the event itself, some kind of illumination of the historical record of Banff Indian Days from an Indigenous perspective. However, I quickly learned that Elders weren't very interested in sharing their personal experiences of Banff Indian Days. Their comments were generally kept to short descriptions of the action, or explanations of how the event was organized. Pauline Twoyoungmen did provide a rare glimpse into some of the less harmonious encounters between Indigenous participants of Banff Indian Days and the Settler population:

*I remember we used to be out here. I remember one time we were sitting around the campfire, I was a little girl and my auntie Julia was camping there too, and these white guys were shouting out saying as they drive by 'squaw, squaw who wants to fuck an Indian?' – that's what they yell. And then my auntie knows that she was really annoyed so she gets up and starts running towards them 'right here, right here' and she went like this to them [P acts like she is pulling up a dress] and they took off! [laughter] I remember that. That's what they say from the road.*

(Twoyoungmen, P., Personal Interview, Sept. 14, 2017)

I imagine there are more stories such as this, however Elders chose not to share them. It has been inferred to me that it is considered rude to speak badly of others in the Stoney Nakoda culture, and that negative experiences are often left untold. I also imagine that as an outsider and *wasi-juh*, I am less likely to be seen as someone suitable to hear personal histories, I am not integrated or embedded in the collective history of the Stoney Nakoda like other community members are. In her theorization of silence, Lisa Mazzei locates silence as "...“data”, not as absence, lack, or omission, but as positive, strategic, purposeful, and *meaning full*” (Mazzei 29). The fact that I received silence when asking for deeper

readings of some of these photographs is a message in itself, agency in the encounter of oral history.

### **Three photographs in detail**

Generally, the Stoney Nakoda Elders seemed to prefer making identifications, the 'scenes' I had chosen for memory work often encouraged closer readings of the images in an attempt to identify any people within the action. The decision to include a binder of photographs for identification purposes was fortunate, as the comments that came from that process opened up unexpected narratives and links between many of the people portrayed. It became apparent that truly everyone was 'related' at Banff Indian Days.

*Kathleen Poucette- How come my grandmothers outfit...that looks like me. I think it's either me or my sister Viola. They used to make me go to parade all the time.*

(Poucette, K. Personal Interview, Oct. 18, 2017)

In figure 6, Kathleen Poucette recognized herself through first identifying the beadwork of the dress she was wearing. When I asked if she enjoyed the parade or Banff Indian Days, Kathleen ignored my questions, a familiar rebuff I had experienced from other Elders when I asked how people 'felt' about the event. I had learned from moments like this to not ask too many questions and just listen to what was offered. A few minutes later, another photograph of a young woman in the same regalia appeared (figure 1).

*Kathleen Poucette- [laughter] This is Lavina Brown in my grandmother's outfit. Her maiden name was Hunter. Her adopted mom was common law with my grandpa and I think it's that year that this picture might have been taken.*

(Poucette, K., Personal Interview, Oct. 18, 2017)

The shift in family relationships was echoed by Kathleen's daughter Myrna Powderface and sister Clarice Kootenay, interviewed on another date. They filled in some of the complexities of the genealogy of Lavina Brown.

Clarice Kootenay- *My grandpa adopted her and she wore my grandma's regalia.*

Dagny- *Who's that?*

Clarice Kootenay- *Lavina Brown*

Myrna Powderface - *She came as a [a few Stoney words] step- her mother is a Rider isn't it, but I don't know her name. And she was orphaned so that's when the Hunter [Enos] adopted her...So he passed away, and he went common law with Maggie...*

Clarice Kootenay- *my grandma died in 1949.*

Myrna Powderface- *So my great grandpa took a companion, Maggie...And Maggie came with Lavina.*  
(Kootenay, C. and Powderface, M., Personal Interview, Oct. 10, 2017)

A third photograph depicting Kathleen and Clarice's grandfather George McLean (Tatanga Mani)(Walking Buffalo) and Maggie Hunter, his new 'companion' enriched the story (figure 7)

Kathleen Poucette- *This is Lavina's adopted grandma Maggie Hunter, and this is Eddie Hunter, adopted son. And this is my grandfather Walking Buffalo when they first got together after my grandma died. [laughter]. I could just kick him! [laughter]My grandma died in January, and that following July at the Indian Days was when he took this wife in June and made me go to parade with my grandma's regalia- that's why I said that!*

(Poucette, K., Personal Interview, October 18, 2017)

For Kathleen, this set of photographs were linked as they portrayed a change in the family structure. There was an expectation set by her family to participate in the wearing of her grandmother's regalia, as well as share it with the new young woman who had entered the family, they "made" her be in the parade. The wearing of this particular regalia links the two young women in the photographs, it creates a relationship between them, a belonging to the same family, whether adopted or not.

Stephanie Pratt looks at portraits of Indigenous (specifically Eastern Dakota and Hockonk) people and the intentional choices of material objects they adorn themselves with or hold nearby. She sees this use of material culture as an invitation to pursue new readings of historical portraits, stating “...in paying attention to the kinds of objects each sitter displays on and about their person, we can begin to comprehend how objects can represent relationships outside and beyond the frame of the portrait” (Pratt 21). This implies the beaded regalia holding its own presence, a symbol of relatedness displayed by the participants of Banff Indian Days. Those who recognize the patterns of beads can also begin to discern the patterns of relatedness performed by those who wear them. In reference to figure 1 and 6, Pauline Twoyoungmen relayed her view on why they wore the same regalia:

Dagny : *I have photos of Flora McLean in a similar beadwork from a long time ago, with these crosses*  
 Pauline: *Ya, because they are closely related. Do you know what, they shared their dresses. Maybe that's why, when she finished with her activity she takes it off and passes it on and let the others wear it. They are still doing that today.*

(Twoyoungmen, P., Personal Interview, Sept. 14, 2017)

I had chosen figure 7 as it was one of the few photographs taken by the Whytes in which one of the Banff townspeople or tourists were portrayed interacting casually with Stoney Nakoda people. The relationships that are spoken about in Catharine's letters and in the Banff oral history are very rarely portrayed in the photographic record that I have seen. Interestingly, the Elders who viewed the photograph of Peter Whyte with Walking Buffalo, Maggie Hunter and Eddie Hunter (Figure 7) were not able to recognize him. Their main focus was how to connect the three Stoney Nakoda sitters to each other, and to the other photographs, in particular those of Lavina Brown and Kathleen Poucette.

Aside from the visual cue provided by the beadwork dress, I would have never linked these three photographs together. Archival records such as Catharine's letters wouldn't have provided the complexity of kinship connections either:

July 24, 1950 Letter to Mother

...George MacLean we found has married again. His wife and Enos Hunter died the same year and so George and Mrs. Enos Hunter are now married. We were amused the way he introduced her. We were talking to him when she came towards us and George said, "I want you to meet my new cook!"

The details of the new marriage Catharine provides fit into the Settler model of family and marriage, but the broader implications of the partnership do not. It was only through speaking to those from the Stoney Nakoda community that these images became related. Edwards states, "(p)hotographs allow people to articulate histories in interactive social ways that would have not emerged in those particular figurations if photographs had not existed"(Edwards "2006" 39). The kinship connections that provided young Lavina Brown with two adopted families wouldn't have been told without showing these images to her community; her story is much richer and more complex than Catharine Whyte's original caption, "Enos Hunter's daughter".

While I hold great respect for what Catharine Whyte accomplished in her life, it is hard not to survey some of her practices critically. Never given the chance to meet her, I am only informed by what I can infer from the archival records she left, namely her letters and the photographs that she organized.

Oct. 3, 1946 Banff, Letter to Mother

...I have been mounting kodachrome slides each afternoon. I may seem particular but they do look better when you get the glass really clean and remove the specks and hairs and get the horizons straight. The Eastman matts are made so that it cuts quite a lot of the picture off on each side, nearly a quarter of an inch, so sometimes if it means cutting out an Indian in the distance, or ruining

the composition, I cut the matt wider, and of course that takes time. We got one awfully good roll, the best quality yet in the Indian heads...It takes me all afternoon to mount 36 slides.

I can't help but think that if it took so long to mount the slides, could she not have taken ten extra minutes to write down the names of the "Indian heads" who appear in the images?

From her letters, most of the people pictured were clearly known to her, however in the dissemination of their image, they are reduced to 'heads'. While I would like to assume this type of descriptor comes from Catharine's study of figure drawing, it is hard to escape the sharp disconnect one feels from the relationships she has described so warmly in letters.

### **Conclusion**

I am brought back to the idea of how knowledge is perceived in an Indigenous methodology, it is relational, "...nested, created, and re-created within the context of relationships"(Kovach 47). In her wish to organize her photographic collection, Catharine compartmentalizes her subjects into general headings such as "Indian Heads" and "Banff Indian Days" without taking the care to expand her knowledge of those pictured in a relational way. While we can locate Whyte's upbringing within an empirical system, the expression of this has a dehumanizing effect on the Indigenous photographic subject.

In conclusion, I draw on Ruth Phillips' seminal work *Museum Pieces: Towards the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* for inspiration. She imagines an Indigenous portrait gallery, feeling that true inclusivity within the museum structure means disrupting the traditional idea of what a portrait is meant to be. If Indigenous identity is based in the collective, then a portrait must be displayed with the inclusion of narratives, song and dance as: "A true portrait, from this Aboriginal perspective, is both trans-temporal and collective" (Phillips 240). The viewing of photographs by Elders reflects this notion of

collectivity, while the person is often identified by name initially, it does not take long for stories reflecting the broader web of kinship to unfurl. It would be such a positive endeavor if archival institutions began welcoming Indigenous knowledge as part of their representations of history. To privilege other ways of perceiving the photographic record would bring inclusivity, accessibility and multivocality to communities who do not always feel welcome in institutional environments.

Figures



Figure 1: Whyte, Catharine and Peter. "Enos Hunter's Daughter" 1954. V683/III/B/NS-1885. Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff



Figure 2: Whyte, Catharine and Peter. *Untitled* [Banff Indian Days][ca.1950] V683/III/B/NS-364a. Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff.



Figure 3: Whyte, Peter. *Untitled* [Catharine Whyte at Banff Indian Days grounds][ca.1935] V683/III/C/NS-1603e Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff.



Figure 4: Whyte, Catharine and Peter. *Untitled* [Banff Indian Days grounds][ca.1950]. V683/III/B/NS-2220  
Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff.



Figure 5: Whyte, Catharine and Peter, *Untitled* [Jean Francis and child] 1954. V683/III/B/NS-1912.  
Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff.



Figure 6: Whyte, Catharine and Peter. *Untitled* [Kathleen Poucette in Banff Indian Days parade][ca.1950]. V683/III/B/NS-1666. Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff.



Figure 7: Whyte, Catharine. *Untitled* [Eddie Hunter, Maggie Hunter, Peter Whyte, George McLean (Walking Buffalo)(Tatanga Mani)][ca.1950]. V683/III/B/NS-337a Peter and Catharine Whyte fonds, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff.

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October 18, 2017. Home of Phyllis Ear, Morley, AB.  
Phyllis Ear, Corleigh Powderface, Dagny Dubois.

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Irene Baptiste, Phyllis Ear, Corleigh Powderface, Dagny Dubois.

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