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“What’s on the earth is in the stars; and what’s in the stars is on the earth”: Lakota Relationships with the Stars and American Relationships with the Apocalypse

Suzanne Kite

What’s on the earth is in the stars; and what’s in the stars is on the earth.

—Stanley Looking Horse

Understanding extraterrestrials as a product of American mythology requires seeing the multiplicity of fears in the American consciousness. Contemporary American mythologies spring from founding mythologies. In the settler retellings of the history of Columbus’s arrival, the American Revolution, and the signing of the Constitution, “America,” and later, the US nation-state, washed away *terra nullius*. The enduring desire to avoid facts or truths is evident in the United States today via the fervor for conspiracy theories.¹ Nearly 50 percent of Americans believe in at least one.² Historically, these range among aliens, the Illuminati, National Security Agency surveillance, the John F. Kennedy assassination, hauntings, the Pentagon Papers, 9/11 terrorism as an inside job, and up to the present, when the COVID-19 virus is being labeled a hoax. Yet theories only remain theories for as long as it takes to prove them. Just like the hydra of conspiracies that shapes the United States as a nation, the

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intersections between extraterrestrials and the US nation-state fracture into even more intricate pieces of an unsolvable puzzle.

For American Indians and other peoples targeted by the United States, government conspiracy theories prove true. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was embedded in the American Indian Movement, just as the FBI has targeted Black identity extremist groups. Manifest destiny is the term used to justify the continent-wide genocide by settlers and their continued legacy of colonialism. While often it is interpreted primarily as symbolizing ownership of space, settler futurity enacts the doctrine of manifest destiny, taking ownership over time, and reconfigures it into a linear, one-way street: progression through apocalypse. As discussed in the following pages, the soul of the settler, non-Indigenous, white American can never fully settle or rest until it fully owns the land; it cannot rest until achieving indigeneity. Colonial desire and quest for indigeneity is a quest for a new religion and a new mythology, stories that are formed and re-formed through traumatic, apocalyptic events that defy human comprehension—such as the genocide of millions of humans and nonhumans.³ The fear of the “unknown,” be it the expanse of extraterrestrial space or the wilderness, grows closer and closer in America, a fear which shapeshifts, haunts, and terrorizes like a being in the dark, or the savage in a darkly forested periphery. In contemporary Lakota cosmologies, the lines between Lakota relationships with the extraterrestrial are blurred with New Age American ufology, as is seen in the writings of Ehanamani and interviews of Chief Golden Eagle.⁴

It is also clear that the history of American ufology is deeply intertwined with the history of nuclear warfare.⁵ While the face of American fear undergoes changes, settler science has produced technologies such as the atomic bomb, which remains a constant and powerful threat to humanity, with unearthed radioactivity that will continue to kill for millennia. The factual basis for nuclear fear can connect many of these points of conspiracy, but not all of them. The terror of grappling with the unknown unites all of these conspiratorial trains of thought. As a Lakota woman, I understand the unknown as sacred, *wakhan*, and when faced with the unknown, I have a toolkit: ceremonies and relations that prepare us to face death, sorrow, and confusion. However, to the non-Indigenous, white settler, the tools are few and do not reflect the ancient relationships to the land and the stars in this place called America. Perhaps the unknown must be fictionalized and transformed into a caricature to be grappled with.

This paper interrogates the US Euro-American and Lakota relationships with knowability and unknowability, examining American fear of the “unknown” through colonial conspiracies, American paranormal mythology, and culture of conspiracy, and finally looks towards Lakota ethics as already established ways for greeting the unknown.

COLONIAL CONSPIRACY

Conspiracies are born out of fear of the unknown. In the United States of America, this fear is brought sharply into the forefront of the national consciousness, a result of ongoing colonialism. Embedded in American colonialism is the desire to become

Indigenous through gendered and violent methods. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang highlight “settler nativism” as the first “move to innocence,” “an attempt to deflect a settler identity, while continuing to enjoy settler privilege and occupying stolen land.”⁶ Tracing what Tuck and Yang call “attempts to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity,” these moves to innocence are the root of a series of conspiracies tied to extraterrestrial futures. UFO and New Age conspiracies often include borrowed and colonized Indigenous identities and ideas.⁷ This technique is prominently seen in New Age communities in urban and rural areas across America, where Indigenous ceremonies are sold to settlers as a commodified spiritual experience and cross-pollinating with UFO communities.⁸

The same logic that allows for the consumption of Indigenous spiritual practices allows for the possession and destruction of the land and nonhumans. That same logic sees nonhuman extraterrestrials as simultaneously futuristic and evolved or reptilian and nefarious. In this many-headed imagining of the alien colonization of Earth, the Euro-American becomes “indigenous” through the act of being attacked, a distorted metaphor and a move to innocence for the invasions that are promised during American wars: the attack of the Japanese and Nazis, the attack of Communists, and the ongoing promised attacks on “freedom” by immigrants, Asian Americans, Latinx laborers, BLM activists, antifascists, Muslims, and whoever else is designated an enemy by the United States. Only through violence and war are settler futures imagined.

PARANORMAL MYTHOLOGY

Who believes in Indians? Imagined conspiracies are mobilized to perpetuate white supremacist settler futures, while real conspiracies continue constantly as a form of internal colonialism.⁹ In order to fulfill settler futurities, non-white claims to indigeneity must be continually destroyed, disappeared, or ignored. “Indigenous peoples must be erased, must be made into ghosts.”¹⁰ The ghost-like, near-fictional status of the Indian perpetuates internal colonization: “The settler positions himself as both superior and normal; the settler is natural, whereas the Indigenous inhabitant and the chattel slave are unnatural, even supernatural.”¹¹ Philip J. Deloria writes, “Americans wanted to feel a natural affinity with the continent, and it was Indians who could teach them such aboriginal closeness. Yet to control the landscape, they had to destroy the original inhabitants.”¹² Even through genocide, land theft, and removal, the need to fulfill settler futurity continues through the sciences.

Archaeologists and pseudo-scientists alike have long attempted to revise the length of time and origin of Indigenous people on the North American continent. Perhaps they imagine that, if Indians arrived from Asia a certain number of years ago, it could justify genocide, that we would not be “from here” in the first place. This displacement of Indigenous people in American archaeological histories is replicated in American schools. “When education professor Sara Shear looked at academic standards for elementary and secondary schools in all 50 states, she found that a staggering 87 percent of references to Native Americans portrayed them as a population only existing before 1900.”¹³ Settler futurities require science to search for proof of

our lack of indigeneity, the same science that measured Indigenous skulls and dubbed Indigenous adults child-like and unfit to self-govern.

In examining the geography of a haunted space, one can imagine the American map like Borges's *Unconscionable Map* laid over the land itself.¹⁴ The new map that has been laid over the continent is haunted by the land just beneath the surface. An American mythological past is created through the blending of the paranormal with the landscape, an attempt to embed a settler past to create a settler future. Revealing the bias of settler sciences requires examining settler desires and beliefs, which ultimately form new myths and new gods. Over the relatively short history of the American identity, American mythologies have been developed through song, costume, literature, policy, and media.¹⁵ The phenomenon of Tumblr witches¹⁶ or the post-1970 desire to invent American Indian ancestors¹⁷ speaks to the desperation of the American to create their indigeneity.

This desire links to what Tuck and Yang refer to as a “move to innocence,”¹⁸ that is, actions that aim to alleviate settler guilt without any meaningful action to aid Indigenous communities. Ironically, in comparison to American academic standards about real Indigenous peoples, 37 percent of Americans believe in ghosts, if not other forms of paranormal events or experiences.¹⁹ In the 2001 Gallup topline report, “About three in four Americans profess at least one paranormal belief, according to a recent Gallup survey. The most popular is extrasensory perception (ESP), mentioned by 41 percent, followed closely by belief in haunted houses (37%).”²⁰ Upon examination of the full list, we find spiritual ideas around death, extraterrestrials, and hauntings—all phenomena made popular by the Spiritualist movement of the late-nineteenth-century Victorian era.

In the Euro-American context, ghosts are defined by both Christian teachings and Spiritualist understandings, even thought of as possible results of time travelers, “humanoids,” and other paranormal theories about hauntings.²¹ Looking toward cultural phenomena such as the stories of Washington Irving, the adoption of Hallowe'en, the explosion of spiritualism in 1848, and the satanic panic in the 1990s, it is clear that much of the American paranormal landscape is a direct manifestation of European conceptualizations of the afterlife and borrowed mythologies that have been laid over on top of the Americas, resulting in a pantheon of phenomena which persist today.²² In contemporary paranormal media, hauntings often start in the late 1800s, coinciding with the era of American Spiritualists. During the Spiritualist movement in particular, Euro-Americans living on “American” land were holding séances, while Indians living on Indian land were being starving to death and actively murdered as a part of the genocidal project. The idea of a haunting on Turtle Island, or any location, implies layers of beliefs, layers of living and the dead cohabitating: Americans, Canadians, white settlers implanting their own ghosts, layering their own stories over the top of the map, an attempt to retroactively own that location.

In a recent conversation, artist Scott Benesiinaabandan spoke about the popularity of paranormal media: “Most non-indigenous people’s interaction with the mystery is they want to provoke it. This is like talking ghost stories around a campfire, right? They want proof or they want the thrill. They want to put their finger in the dark well

of the mystery, but they're not really wanting to be in that whole lake of mystery."²³ *Ghost Hunters*, a popular Travel Channel television series in which spirits are provoked to display agency, now employs body-tracking technology to obtain quantifiable data on the unknown, specifically searching for anomalous body-like shapes. Airing on the same channel, *Finding Bigfoot* does the same, searching for scientific data and proof of paranormal and cryptozoological beings. However, they often are pointing their equipment into the darkness, where motion-tracking software tracks shadows in error, searching for a bodily shape.

What Is Haunting America?

Americans are possessed by the desire for a settler past and the claim to indigeneity beyond Spiritualist seances or local legends—for a supernatural connection to place. Even though settler-ghosts now populate the American dimension of the land, the vast landscape that Indian-ghosts occupy still haunts the terrified American unconscious. The Indian graveyard surfaces often in the American media from movies to video games to books. The desire to possess human remains by European and American institutions is evidenced by the vast holdings of Indigenous human remains languishing in colonial museums. Vine Deloria Jr. suggests that the fervor to hold our bones is an extension of the desire for our deaths to make room for their indigeneity: "If the propensity of whites during the summer of 1971 to grasp some bit of authenticity by locating, excavating, and embracing Indian skeletal remains can be interpreted as an attempt to discard their own physical, cultural, and spiritual heritage, then the collective psyche of white America was indeed in deep trouble."²⁴ The fear of Indian hauntings through graveyards or burial mounds or otherwise is pervasive in the American media, perhaps as a figment of the facts about the genocide that occurred and occurs on the outskirts of the American subconscious. Perhaps those facts begin to filter through deeply settled fears about the unknown.

In the nearby dimension of actual Indigenous people, a related haunting occurs. In his dissertation "Mythologies of an [Un]dead Indian," Jackson 2bears writes, "Living as a Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) person means I have had to learn to live with ghosts—the hauntological experience of ancestry is a spectral landscape populated by a multiplicity of spirits, phantoms and apparitions."²⁵ 2bears proposes using Jacques Derrida's theory of hauntology to analyze the haunting of our ancestral geography: "In considering ancestry through a spatial logic as being a landscape populated by animate spirits with whom we share an 'internalizing bond,' this project seeks to speculate about those specific spirits that would seemingly seek to do us harm . . . those undead apparitions that continue to come back to haunt the living."²⁶ To understand the various levels of hauntings, we can understand 2bears' "hauntological experience of ancestry" as an alternate dimension to the haunting of America, the Indigenous map of ancestry emanating from the earth.

On another dimension of the American map, Karen Barad examines the hauntology of quantum entanglements through Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle and the two-slit experiment. "The world 'holds' the memory of all traces; or rather, the world is

its memory (enfolded materialisation).”²⁷ Here the hauntological maps of America collide, for America is haunted by the enfolding relationship between atomic warfare and Indigenous genocide. Barad’s use of hauntology includes the expansive nature of location, in which the area known as Copenhagen holds a locational relationality that emanates outward through time and space, affecting human and nonhuman. Barad writes, “Copenhagen is densely populated with ghosts. Every being made killable on a mass-scale by twentieth-century technologies, whether victims of Auschwitz, or hibakusha of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki . . . other entangled high-tech massacres of populations made killable, or at least dispensable, whether at Bhopal, Chernobyl, Bikini Atoll, or elsewhere.”²⁸ Barad suggests that this multiplicity of “timespacematterings” are haunting and haunted by the atomic bomb’s history and all that it affects and effects, Indigenous people and land included. This concept is drawn together elegantly by Lou Cornum in his essay, “Irradiated International”:

In 1998, a group of Dene elders from Northwest Canada traveled to Hiroshima to meet with survivors and descendants of survivors of the atomic bomb dropped some fifty years earlier. Some of the uranium used to kill more than 200,000 people in Japan had been mined and transported by Dene men, many of whom died years later from radiation-related disease. The six Dene elders came from where the earth had been torn up to the place where earth and sky were ripped apart like never before. They came to Hiroshima to apologize and to recognize the shared radioactive reality between people touched by the detonation of the bomb and those who unwittingly touched the materials that would make such a weapon. Nobody from the Canadian government was present, none among those who had exploited the miner’s bodies and their homelands and willingly aided the construction of the atomic bomb ever made the journey.²⁹

The atomic bomb, Indigenous ethics concerning the nonhuman, and the responsibilities to other communities implicit in sovereignty reveal Indigenous dimensions to the hauntological landscape. This haunting atomic past connects to space travel and to settler futures. Cornum draws a connection between the Trinity Test and American “star-bound destiny.”³⁰ Stones, taken from Indigenous lands using Indigenous bodies, and transformed into radioactive materials, is the material result of the American fear of the unknown enfolded with fear of nuclear radiation and executed as warfare and violence. This will be the materials of further colonization into space. These enfolding timelines and materialities bury settler pasts, presents, and futures in the earth and water as nuclear radiation, a terrifying and factual conspiracy that will poison the world for millennia to come.

Culture of Conspiracy

What is a conspiracy to a country that hides a genocide? American conspiracy culture attempts to digest the unknown by iteratively producing overarching theories to encompass all possible points of data, theories that require an enemy with an unseen plot. Caroline Woidat writes, “Examining so-called ‘paranoid’ narratives of American

history—both fictive and ‘real’—illuminates the shadowy presence of Native people in America’s conspiracy culture.”³¹ Since the beginning of European settlement, fear of the unknown wilderness and those who lurk in it have gripped the American psyche, manifesting as early as the Puritans.³² Fear of the unknown is the dominant theme of conspiracy theories, and in America, the original fear was of nature and the savage Indians nature could obscure, understood by settlers to be just as nonhuman as the rest of the American landscape.

From the origins of American fears of nature, through the creation of American mythologies, has emerged a culture of conspiracy. Michael Barkun writes, “The essence of conspiracy beliefs lies in attempts to delineate and explain evil.”³³ The Indian has been signified as Other and as a threat by the settler since the beginning of the colonial nation-building project. Conspiracies help make sense and order out of the unknown, organizing and mythologizing that fear into a settler future.³⁴ An essential conspiracy among many is that of flying saucers, sometimes understood as being connected to extraterrestrials and sometimes not.³⁵ In analyzing the Gallup polls on UFO beliefs, Barkun notes “What might have been an early Cold War fad clearly came to occupy a semipermanent niche in the American psyche . . . the level of belief was not only relatively stable; it was extraordinarily high . . . tens of millions of Americans accept the reality of UFOs.”³⁶ The UFO conspiracy is particularly gripping to Americans because of its historical enmeshment in massive technological advancements: World War II, the atomic bomb, and the enigmas of the nuclear Cold War. UFOs become intertwined with many other conspiracies, such as “men in black” and New World Order.³⁷

Understanding the status of the UFO as a construction of settler futurity requires seeing belief in UFOs and related relationships with extraterrestrials as both political and epistemological. Settler fear of the unknown manifests in UFOs as a fissure in the limits of knowability. Discussing belief and knowability in relation to political sovereignty, authors Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall write, “Modern sovereignty is anthropocentric, constituted and organized by reference to human beings alone.”³⁸ Relationships with knowability and unknowability are a key difference in settler and Indigenous epistemologies. “As unidentified object the UFO poses a threat of unknowability to science, upon which modern sovereignty depends. Of course, there are many things science does not know . . . its authority rests on the assumption that nothing in Nature is in principle unknowable.”³⁹ Knowability, capture-ability, map-ability are qualities of settler futures, asserting ownership over land and sky.

This mythology is born at the dawn of the Cold War, with Americans reeling from the new reality of global nuclear warfare, a new and unimaginable horror, an almost unknowable fear. American obsession with UFOs can be read as metaphors of metaphors of very real events and facts, where a kernel of true information lives at the center of a mythologized caricature of fear, especially fear of atomic annihilation. The mythology of Area 51, tied to UFO and extraterrestrial conspiracies, is the product of decades of American covert military operations, entangled in military black budgets and created alongside nuclear weapons, requiring secrecy and conspiracy to be embedded in the foundations of the secret base. After the “War of the Worlds” broadcast, the American military and governments around the world understood the

general public's panic to be primed for manipulation. Hiding true opinions from the Associated Press, Annie Jacobsen writes, "these military men were not saying ... that there was serious concern among strategists and policy makers that entire segments of the population could be so easily manipulated into thinking that something false was something true. Americans had taken very real, physical actions based on something entirely made up."⁴⁰ The priority for the US government was to safeguard the technology and existence of the U-2 and Oxcart aircraft programs at all costs, including the cost of creating an endless string of conspiracies and UFO sightings. Jacobsen traces the UFO sighting craze in American to the launch of U-2 tests from Area 51, when "reports of UFO sightings by commercial airline pilots and air traffic controllers began to inundate CIA headquarters. Later painted black to blend in with the sky, the U-2s at that time were silver, which meant their long, shiny wings reflected light down from the upper atmosphere in a way that led citizens all over California, Nevada, and Utah to think the planes were UFOs."⁴¹

Nuclear hauntology returns in Jacobsen's analysis of with what American conspiracy theories should be concerned. Jacobsen writes, "For conspiracy theorists, in the captured-aliens-and-UFOs narrative, the federal agency orchestrating the plot is the CIA. . . . And yet the one agency that plays an actual role in the underlying facts regarding all three of these conspiracy theories is the Atomic Energy Commission."⁴² It is the Atomic Energy Commission, Jacobsen suggests, that should be of greatest concern to the general public; "these conspiracies all stand to aid and assist the Atomic Energy Commission in keeping the public away from secret truths."⁴³ American conspiracy theories can be read as metaphors of metaphors of very real events and facts where a kernel of true information lives at the center of a mythologized caricature of fear, UFOs and aliens, even when fear of nuclear annihilation and everlasting war are legitimate terrors.

Perpetuating Settler Futurity

Area 51 itself is funded through "black budgets."⁴⁴ The term refers to the intentional obfuscation of a budget from the American taxpayer and public, preventing scrutiny over both secret operations and the spending of the government. If the US military and intelligence communities are paid to protect interests, it is clear whose interests those are: the beneficiaries of the massive black budgets. The current requested black budget for the 2020 fiscal year is "\$62.8 billion for the National Intelligence Program, and \$22.95 billion for the Military Intelligence Program."⁴⁵ As of 2013, when Edward Snowden leaked the usages of the then \$52.6 billion "black budget" to the *Washington Post*, there were revealed to be "16 spy agencies that make up the U.S. intelligence community, which has 107,035 employees."⁴⁶ If the conspiracy is the hidden agenda of an institution in power that willfully misleads and manipulates the truth, this is a \$62-billion-dollar conspiracy.

While the American black budget could be compared to budgets for health care, education, and public services per capita, it is worth noting that in 2020 the entire Bureau of Indian Affairs budget authority "would decrease by more than \$1 billion,

going down to \$1.99 billion.”⁴⁷ Passing legislation to protect Indigenous women (not to mention girls, two-spirit, and queer Indigenous people) has been made nearly impossible by the US government, a fact that in itself could be understood as one of the myriad of conspiracies being inflicted currently on Indigenous peoples in North America. It is feasible to call the following connected events a “conspiracy” of willfully ignoring, mishandling, and not investigating: the disappearances of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit individuals; the decades of abuse of Indigenous children; the removal of American children to boarding schools where they were abused, neglected, and murdered; as well as the modern-day violations of the Indian Child Welfare Act, overincarceration, separation of migrant children from their families, caging those children, and not providing adequate health care to those incarcerated during a global pandemic. These conspiracies are terrestrial and very probable or proven. It is not a coincidence that “alien” defines a political class in the United States, the many descendants of people indigenous to the Americas, while at the same time referencing beings indigenous to outer space. While 47 percent of Americans believe in aliens (the extra-terrestrial life forms), many Americans see so-called “illegal aliens” as invaders. What separates proven and provable conspiracies carried out against Indigenous children from the unprovable conspiracies popular in American culture is how these conspiracies benefit white supremacist settler futurity.

Looking at the motivations of settler futurity, there are conspiracies of time and conspiracies of space. In a settler conspiracy of time, the term *destiny* suggests a natural (or perhaps divine) unfolding of events. The term *conspiracy* works similarly, implying a figure working in secret, aiding an enemy or an unseen goal. The epistemology that makes manifest destiny and the “pilgrim’s progress” presumes multiple layers of linear thought: a vision from East to West coast, a beginning in divine intervention to an ending in the fulfilment of American destiny. In a settler future based on progress and evolution, civilization is advanced through contact with aliens, just as Indians “progressed” after contact and assimilation with Europeans. Indians are seen as the uncivilized past, contemporary Americans as the normal present, and aliens as the ultimate ascension of the future human. John Rieder writes, “Here is the anthropologist’s fantasy: Although we know that these people exist here and now, we also consider them to exist in the past—in fact, to be our own past.”⁴⁸ Rieder proposes that “the way colonialism made space into time gave the globe a geography not just of climates and cultures, but of stages of human development that could confront and evaluate on another.”⁴⁹ The colonial sense of progress is indelibly fixed to an unrelenting linear timeline towards a settler future, where Indigenous peoples are the uncivilized past, American white-superiority the present, and Mars colonization and extraterrestrials the future.

Mastery and force are the actions of enslavement, and as Dylan Rainforth points out, “object mastery and territorial possession are demonstrably part and parcel of the processes of genocide.”⁵⁰ Land and location, when reduced to the status of inanimate objects incapable of intelligence or agency, become resources to use and discard. When the logic of mastery and possession is exploded over entire continents, every entity is possessed along with it. A conspiracy of space is required to reshape the land itself

into *terra nullius*, ready for the taking by American settlers, or even reshape the land as having always been possessed by Europeans through revisionist histories claiming settler nativism.

In the case of the Kennewick Man, ancient Native American bones were reported to have “caucasoid traits [and a] lack of definitive Native-American characteristics.” Furthermore, “the anthropological term ‘Caucasian’ was confused by some members of the media and public, who interpret it as meaning ‘white’ or European.”⁵¹ Even stranger, it was said that Kennewick Man resembled Patrick Stewart.⁵² The “science” of archaeology invented by Thomas Jefferson and Vine Deloria’s observation on 1971 Indian grave robbing are one and the same, whereby the settler sees the land as his and everything in it, including Indigenous human bodies.⁵³ The ancient American Indian-built mounds desecrated by Europeans and then proclaimed to be proof of European history were built five centuries before the Egyptian pyramids. The Indigenous builders were mythologically replaced by a “lost white race,” the same form of revisionist history as the Kennewick Man.⁵⁴

Settler futurity employs revisionist history to claim that Indigenous peoples, even ancient Egyptians, were and are unable to invent technologies, build monuments, or produce evidence of intellectual achievements. Fifteen seasons of History Channel’s television show *Ancient Aliens* reproduce the conspiratorial and revisionist techniques of writers such as David Hatcher Childress. One of the theories, rooted in the misinterpretation of science, is also featured on *Ancient Aliens*. This theory purports that “Rh negative is very rare. . . . It was only in Europe. So, it spread out from there. Out of Africa, that theory has it that all human beings originated in Africa, Southern Africa, sub-Sahara, they’re all Rh positive. They don’t have any Rh negative. Where did Rh negative evolve then?”⁵⁵ These statements, which feature the classic format of presenting scientific facts out of context, are followed by increasingly conspiratorial questions that introduce outside answers. These interviews read as a denial of European ancestry from sub-Saharan Africa: intervention must have occurred somewhere along the way because Europeans could be a different species than the rest of the world. These historical revisionist techniques are racist and used to replace history with settler pasts and settler futures.

LAKOTA ETHICS IN COSMIC REFLECTION

The status of the Indian may fluctuate between human and nonhuman according to the goals of settler futurity, but the status of “nature,” of nonhuman kin that populate Indigenous cosmologiescapes and co-generate Indigenous ethics, remain Other in the settler dimension. Through this status of nonhuman or inanimate we see a clear difference in how extraterrestrials emerge in Western ontologies versus Indigenous ontologies. These mythological beings inhabit a settler futurity that remains fearful and suspicious of the unknowability of Terran (human native or resident of the planet Earth) nature and nonhuman beings. If mythologies and stories form the context from which ethics are generated, American conspiracies and paranormal stories warn us about the price of nation-building through genocide. Ethical relations with extraterrestrials are possible,

but humanity would have to choose to understand nonhumans through ontologies that lead to ethical relationships, a dimension of reality on Turtle Island wholly separate from the United States of America.⁵⁶ Lakota ontologies, mythologies, and cosmologies already include the nonhuman and extraterrestrial, but these understandings are not based in fear of the unknown, but respect for the unknown.

The English language fails to convey how intricately entwined the Lakota people are to the land, how that complex relationship includes human and nonhuman entities, inhabiting the sky, stars, and earth. Drawing from ideas of Indigenous normativity, and considering how the Lakota cosmology also includes many nonhuman entities, what is paranormal to the settler is normal to the Lakota.⁵⁷ In *Lakota Star Knowledge*, Ronald Goodman explains that the Lakota “felt a vivid relationship between the macrocosm, the star world, and their microcosmic world on the plains.”⁵⁸ This relationship was understood in a metaphysical but also physical sense: “There was a constant mirroring of what is above by what is below. Indeed, the very shape of the earth was perceived as resembling the constellations. For example, the red clay valley which encircles the Black Hills looks like (and through Oral Tradition is correlated with) a Lakota constellation which consists of a large circle of stars.”⁵⁹

Since at least 100 BCE, the Lakota people calculated their decisions by the stars.⁶⁰ This relationship is documented on “a pair of tanned hides: one hide is an earth map with buttes, rivers and ridges, etc., marked on it. The other hide is a star map.”⁶¹ In investigating the maps, Goodman writes, “These two maps are the same,” we were told, “because what’s on the earth is in the stars, and what’s in the stars is on the earth.”⁶² Living in sync with the constellations was the spatial-temporal ceremony enacted on the scale of the entire area surrounding the Black Hills: “For example, Harney Peak [Heñáka Sápa] was associated with the Pleiades group which was called “The seven little girls,” wincincala sakowin. Each spring when the sun moved to that constellation, the People understood this as sacred speech directing them to go to Harney Peak. Oral Tradition told them what ceremonies to do there.”⁶³ The story central to Lakota understanding of the stars is the story of Star Boy.⁶⁴

Star Boy Story as Told by Jhon Goes in Center

The story about the Timpusla (edible and medicinal root), actually has a lot of connections and affiliation with our star knowledge. Today’s environment has been this resurgence of Marvel comic heroes. We also have our heroes, and the hero we have is Star Boy. He’s like Superman, you know.

But as the story goes, in the beginning there were, I think three young women, probably of a late teenage, marrying age. They were friends and they were out on the Prairie in the evening, and as I guess, anybody would do, they would visit with one another and express their wishes and hopes with one another. But there’s two of them, they said, “Oh ...” One of them in particular said, “I really wish I could marry a star.” The other one said, “Oh, I want to marry a star, too.”

They came out another evening and were making that same wish again, and all of a sudden here come a star down to see them. And then he said, “Well, I’ll grant

you your wish. You can marry me." And this other star was an older star, too, so he took the young lady as a wife, and there they went up into the star nation and became man and woman.

In a mirror image of this world as we know it, there's another world that is like this up there. The two women, of course, they would talk with one another, talk about home and missing their family, but they realized they're obligated to their husbands.

"But he told me, he said, "When you go out and gather the turnips, the Timpsula," he told her, "When you're out digging for the Timpsula, do not dig the big ones, just bring up the small ones." You know? "Those are tasty. But when you see the big ones, just leave them." Of course, that causes a lot of curiosity.

They were all out in the prairies up there in the star world, digging Timpsula, pulling the bark off of them and braiding them. And if you can imagine, people, they made long ropes of these things, and they dried them and saved them for wintertime; very valuable Timpsula braids.

They were there braiding all these Timpsula they were digging up, and of course, oh yeah, they would not look so much for the big ones, but they come across some. But their curiosity got the best of them. And the young lady, she was with child. She was, since she had married a star man, she became pregnant, but she was doing her duty digging turnips. Well, she was curious enough to pull up a big one. When she did, it was a hole in the sky. She looked through, and oh, she got homesick because she seen her people down below, and she wanted to go visit them. Oh, yeah. "I just wish I could see my relatives."

She started feeding her Timpsula braid down there, thinking that she could climb up on her rope and go visit her people, but the rope was not long enough, the Timpsula braid. Anyway, she ended up falling to Earth. And when she fell to earth, of course she died. And when she died, she popped open and gave birth to this young baby. And this young baby was henceforth raised by meadowlarks. The meadowlarks found the baby and they fed it and raised it.


Like I said, in those days, the animals could talk to humans and humans to them. These meadowlarks, they took care of this baby and raised it to a certain age, but they couldn't do any more for it. They took this baby to a Lakota village and . . . a couple adopted this little baby, and it was a boy, and they named him Star Boy because the meadowlarks indicated that he came from the stars. Well, this boy, for some reason, and every reason because he was supernatural, grew really fast. This is why the meadowlarks couldn't keep up with him.

As any Lakota man was, he was a good Hunter. He was a good protector. He was raised by a family where he understood the essence of being a Lakota man, was to always work hard for the people. And the people loved him, and he loved the people. There was some harmony in all that. Any time something ever happened, and he was the first to go out and right a wrong. He was kind of like Superman, as I said, he was a superhero.⁶⁵

Mirroring the Stars through the Kapemni: Twisting Vortexes

The story shared by Goes in Center describes Lakota extraterrestrials as those living in the spirit world, which is not Mars, but a place that is *wakhan*.⁶⁶ Star Boy is the child of extraterrestrials, who live in the spirit world, doing normal activities, having normal emotions. Goodman writes, “Traditional Lakota believed that ceremonies done by them on earth were also being performed simultaneously in the spirit world. When what is happening in the stellar world is also being done on earth in the same way at the corresponding place at the same time, a hierophany can occur; sacred power can be drawn down; attunement to the will of Wakan Tanka can be achieved.”⁶⁷ This is described as the Kapemni, the twisting vortex.

Lakota geometry is a way of transmitting knowledge and creating new knowledge through a semiotics that emerges from lived experiences, dreams, and vision, translating Lakota cosmology through to this world. The Kapemni symbols are described by Goodman:

There is a Lakota family who own a document that combines on one hide, what is usually found on separate star and earth maps. The symbol for the earth sites is Δ and the symbol for the stars is ∇ . These shapes are not to be understood as flat triangles, but as cones, as vortexes of light. Thus, the inner shape of a star is an inverted tipi. When earth sites and stars are combined (as they are on this hide), the image looks like this:  This symbol is called in Lakota, Kapemni, which means, “twisting.” Thus, what is above is like what is below. What is below is like what is above.⁶⁸

This reflection of earth world and spirit world can be understood through the microcosm of the tipi. Goodman writes, “Building a tipi as Mr. Running transmitted it is nothing less than re-creating or replicating a world. . . . The true inner shape of this world is a crystal of light, a vortex of powerful light.”⁶⁹ The deep significance of all the poles that make up the tipi are their own iterative symbolic materiality, connected to Lakota cosmology and generating ethics. Lakota ontologies that see nonhumans as more than material, but as sacred and animate beings, are understood through the enacting of Lakota knowledge, the transformation of bison kin into homes. Goodman describes, “Even in everyday life, living inside a tipi symbolizes living inside the sun. . . . The buffalo is the embodiment of solar power in the animal world. Physically and metaphysically when the Lakotas lived in tipis they were living inside the skin of the sun, of a star.”⁷⁰ Discussing the Sun Dance as another example of a Kapemni microcosm, Goodman writes, “Dancing around the holy tree, that is, sacrificing and praying, the Sun Dancers create a vortex of power with its apex pointed up . . . re-incorporating the cosmic laws as well as re-affirming the stellar world which expresses the divine will implicit in all motion and thus, finally, the dancers draw spirit into the life they have helped to renew.”⁷¹ Understanding this vortex shape as a macrocosm, Goodman suggests expanding that shape of the vortex to the entire Black Hills; we see the race-track around the Black Hills reflected in the Milky Way. “This circle of stars referred to as Cansasa Ipsuyue” is also called “The Sacred Hoop—can gleska wakan in Lakota

theology—all of life occurs within an unending circle of time, space, matter and spirit. So the Black Hills is viewed as the microcosmic hoop out of which annually new life is born.”⁷² The circle of stars reflecting the circle of land around the Black Hills is more than a metaphor, but rather a psychical and spiritual landscape upon which the *Kepemni* is enacted by Lakota. As different Lakota constellations align with sacred land formations throughout the year, they signify the right time to conduct ceremony in that place, to connect with the spirit world via the *Kepemni*.

The well-traveled space between the Earth and the Stars is in the center of the Big Dipper, or as the Lakota understand it: the *Cansasa Ipusye*, the Pipe. *Cansasa Ipusye* is passed through by the Road of Spirits, the Milky Way. Reflecting on two of the most sacred journeys, the journey of a soul from the spirit world to birth and the journey of a spirit back to the spirit world at death, the constellations, and perhaps these *Kepemni* (twisting vortexes) provide the path:

When a Lakota dies, his or her material body returns to the grandmother sacred below. The spirit rises up into the spirit world, returning to grandfather sacred above. Formerly, there was a star in the center of the Big Dipper. Now, however, there is an opening or hole where the star was located. . . . The *Wanagi* (spirit) comes up into the spirit world through this hole which was made when Fallen Star’s mother dug out the first wild turnip [timpsula].⁷³

This is the *timpsula* of Jhon Goes in Center’s story.⁷⁴ The earth and stars reflect each other in Lakota astronomy making clear the connections, relationships, contexts, ethics, and spirits of the stars and spirit world.

Indians and Aliens

Intersections of Western ontologies and paranormal beliefs with the lived experiences of Indigenous people defy delineations of culture and place, blurring where the known and unknown intersect. Ardy Sixkiller Clarke, Ehanamani, Chief Golden Eagle, and my own family tell stories that contemplate and reinterpret settler conspiracies through Indigenous lived experiences. Clarke’s book, *Space Age Indians*, catalogues various stories of Blue Men, extraterrestrials reported to Clarke by American Indian Vietnam veterans describing battles and experiences with Agent Orange, prompting the question, why did these extraterrestrials choose to save Indians? One elder veteran reports:

We had the same question: why us? . . . When we talked about it, the general consensus was that the event was a part of our legacy as Indians. The Star People had always interacted with our people. Our ancestors knew them, our grandfathers knew them. They were just looking out for us because we were Indians. They were our ancient kin; a part of our DNA. . . . Hell, we had heard star ancestor stories that all the ancestors watched over us and protected us. It was easy to transfer that belief to the Blue Men.⁷⁵

Reports of extraterrestrial connections to American Indians during an American war reveals a collision between futurities. The settler use of human beings as

expendable tools for external colonialism collides with the spiritual understanding of anomalous experiences.

In a related vein, a Lakota man called Chief Golden Light Eagle has a YouTube channel and hosts conferences on UFOs, aligning himself with New Age ufology rhetoric, but through a Lakota lens. In a short interview for his YouTube channel, shot during an *Ancient Aliens* television shoot, Chief Golden Eagle says,

Now I was having a little bit of a problem with the term alien and especially with EBEs, ETs, extraterrestrials, extraterrestrial biological entities, because they're a form of negativity sound. And our brothers and sisters of the stars there, they work with light. They work with a very high vibration. So these terms alien and all that sets up [a] negative vibration within you that's not very good because under the laws of attraction, the star people will not hang around you very long. They're very sacred people, very enlightened people. They're beings and people of light. We use the term English star nations, star people, star brothers and sisters. In our ceremonial ways, we call them wicahpe oyate, which is a very sacred terminology and very sacred way of addressing our relatives from the stars.⁷⁶

Chief Golden Light Eagle is complex, thoroughly blending terminology from settler communities with Lakota concepts of the spirit world. Similarly, the Lakota writer Dr. A. C. Ross, also called Ehanamani, is known for his bestselling book *Mitakoye Oyasín*, which interestingly situates Lakota knowledge near New Age concepts by comparing Lakota myths with a variety of historical events, including Western-rooted aliens and paranormal beings, although in a factually loose way. In any case, this comparison is rooted in Lakota ethics. Dr. Ross has said in an interview, "Other people are talking about a long time ago. . . . We still got the contact today, we are still making contact today. These aliens are here helping us."⁷⁷

OUR RELATIONSHIPS ARE NOT METAPHORS, OR HOW TO GREET NONHUMAN KIN FROM THE STARS

As the American public panics over what has been dubbed "post-truth," it is worth recalling that, for Native people, settler mythologies have always relied on post-truth, that is, lies. Manipulation of fact comes as no surprise to those whose genocide is so easily glossed over. In their essay "Truth and Native American Epistemology," Jim Cheney writes that the difference between Indian "ceremonial worlds" and Western "ceremonial worlds" is the intention of these worlds to be "responsibly true," and that Indigenous worlds are "built on the basis of an ethical-epistemological orientation of attentiveness (or, as Native Americans tend to put it, respect) rather than an epistemology of control."⁷⁸

One divergence of post-truth and responsible truth occurs at the rejection of ethics in favor of ownership. The difference between interpretations of science in *Ancient Aliens* and the interpretation of Lakota sacred site symbols as connections to the spirit world is the promotion of irresponsible ideas that perpetuate harm against communities.⁷⁹ Ethics is the line that separates irresponsible words from responsible truth.⁸⁰ Writers such as David Hatcher Childress and media such as *Ancient Aliens* are examples of the ways in

which America mistakes the real conspiracy for a paranormal phenomenon, choosing to ignore the project of political control for stranger and stranger conspiracy theories, similar to mistaking the map for the territory. America proves, time and time again, that the conspiracy is real—just more mundane, evil, and deeply engrained than imagined.

Lakota ontologies generate ethical protocols for creating relationships with nonhuman entities and it is from these ethical protocols, since time immemorial, that we could theoretically develop relationships with previously unknown entities, even extraterrestrials. Lakota relationships with some stones, seemingly inanimate objects, are understood as being capable of communication and holding memories of deep geologic time. In an interview, my grandfather, Lakota elder Mahpiya Nazin, says of stones

Yeah, they're like teachers. Everyone that I have, every stone I have taught me something or is in the process of teaching me something and now it comes down from the elders from the North, the old people. They're teaching me about that spirit inside of people. . . . See, when we communicate with the other world, it's not done through our minds. It's done through the spirit, not the mind. . . . Their minds get in the way, all the time.⁸¹

Mahpiya Nazin's message is very similar to Ehanamani's, communicating the intention of spiritual beings, emerging through the unknown or unknowable, to help humans. There is a right way and a wrong way to do things, and relationships with star beings, aliens, extraterrestrials, or any unknown entity are no different. The Lakota have already mapped the stars and established an ethical way of connecting to the stars, from birth to death and the mysterious in-between, accepting the unknown as the Great Mystery.

On this physical plane, in the settler dimension, the death of the Indian and the haunting replacement of the Indian with settler ghosts are the conspiratorial setup for a settler future of evolution towards extraterrestrial colonization of other planets. The ghost status of the Indian obfuscates the connections between disparate events and ideas, from the mining of uranium to the raising of a tipi, but they are all connected because it is all Indigenous land. Lakota beliefs, passed from generation to generation, give the next generation of Lakota people the tools to actively process experiences with death, trauma, genocide, the unknown, and all that cannot be understood. Lakota philosophy and culture give us the tools to engage and have a relationship with concepts and beings that are infinitely unknowable. These tools allow the confrontation and processing of fear to be normalized. This is, of course, not unique to the Lakota, but found across many Indigenous cultures.

Lakota epistemologies enact the manipulation of time, space, and especially personhood into active cosmic vortexes, beyond the settler map.⁸² David C. Posthumus writes, "The distinction between natural and supernatural, so basic to European thought, was meaningless in Lakota culture. . . . Humans are not superior" in Lakota ontology; they are "pitiful and helpless" younger siblings of the animal world.⁸³ The Lakota sense of being and personhood is so immensely different from the settler ontology, that when combined with the Lakota ceremonial cosmologyscape of terra-astro movement and ceremony, we can find an epistemological exit and the way to connect with the cosmos

in a good way. Concepts of an enfolding past and present, knowledge of the complex spiritual personhood of beings other than humans—even aliens indigenous to other worlds—and the connection to place inherent to Lakota epistemologies mark them apart from American mythologies, even as our dimensions and timelines collide. Lakota knowledge is just the beginning of the many dimensions of truths—responsible truths—that the diverse multitude of Indigenous philosophies contain. Though many may not believe, the truth is already here.

NOTES

† Stanley Looking Horse (epigraph) is quoted in Ronald Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, ed. Alan Seeger (Mission, SD: Sinte Gleska University Press, 1992), 31.

1. Susan Lepselter explains how conspiracy theories are connected with fear of the unknown differently than I do here and for broader purposes. Susan Lepselter, *The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

2. Shankar Vedantam, “More Americans Than You Might Think Believe in Conspiracy Theories,” *NPR.org*, <https://www.npr.org/2014/06/04/318733298/more-americans-than-you-might-think-believe-in-conspiracy-theories>.

3. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

4. A. C. Ross, *Mitakuye Oyasin: We Are All Related*, 1st ed. (Denver: Wicóni Wasté, 1989); *Earth-Star TV*, “Chief Tells Ancient Aliens Crew Not to Say ‘Aliens,’” May 15, 2013, *Ancient Aliens*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=17&v=wg4Dz87aYug&feature=emb_title.

5. Annie Jacobsen, *Area 51: An Uncensored History of America’s Top Secret Military Base* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011).

6. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 40–43.

7. *Ibid.*, 43.

8. An example of settler nativism borrowing and colonizing Indigenous identities and commodifying them is the Sweat Lodge ceremony organized by Rea Beaubien in the Yucatán peninsula. See Rea Beaubien, “Sweat Lodge,” <https://reabeaubien.com/sweat-lodge>.

9. Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization,” 44.

10. *Ibid.*, 45.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 5.

13. Soli Salgado, “American Students Think Native Americans Are All Dead,” *Utne Reader*, December 9, 2014, <https://www.utne.com/community/american-students-think-native-americans-are-all-dead>.

14. Jorge Luis Borges, “On Exactitude in Science,” *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 704.

15. An American mythology that dates back from the late 1700s is the Tammany Society, which has adapted “indian costumes” into their practices. See Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 13.

16. Mikaella Clements, “A Brief History of the Tumblr Witch,” *The Establishment*, *Medium*, July 10, 2016, <https://medium.com/the-establishment/a-brief-history-of-the-tumblr-witch-8f30657849f>.

17. Daniel R. Wildcat, “Indigenizing the Future: Why We Must Think Spatially in the Twenty-first Century,” *American Studies* 46, no. 3 (2005): 417–40, <https://journals.ku.edu/amsj/article/view/2969>.

18. Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization," 44.
19. David W. Moore, "Three in Four Americans Believe in Paranormal," Gallup Poll, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/16915/three-four-americans-believe-paranormal.aspx>.
20. A similar poll has not been conducted since 2001. This Gallup poll lists paranormal activity as the following: "Extrasensory perception, or ESP, that houses can be haunted, ghosts/that spirits of dead people can come back in certain places/situations, telepathy/communication between minds without using traditional senses, clairvoyance/the power of the mind to know the past and predict the future, astrology, or that the position of the stars and planets can affect people's lives, that people can communicate mentally with someone who has died, witches, reincarnation, that is, the rebirth of the soul in a new body after death, channeling/allowing a 'spirit-being' to temporarily assume control of body."
21. Jim Harold, host, "American Psychic-Dominican Voodoo," *The Paranormal Podcast*, October 13, 2020, <https://jimharold.com/category/the-paranormal-podcast/>.
22. M. E. Fitch, *Paranormal Nation: Why America Needs Ghosts, UFOs, and Bigfoot* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2013).
23. Suzanne Kite, personal online interview with Scott Benesiinaabandan, September 1, 2020.
24. Vine Deloria Jr., Leslie Silko, and George E. Tinker, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 30th Anniversary ed. (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 15.
25. Jackson 2bears, "Mythologies of an [Un]dead Indian" (PhD diss., University of Lethbridge, 2012), 1.
26. *Ibid.*, 6.
27. Karen Barad, "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come," *Derrida Today* 3, no. 2 (November 2010): 261, <https://doi.org/10.3366/drt.2010.0206>.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Lou Cornum, "The Irradiated International," paper presented at Future Perfect conference, Data & Society Research Institute, New York, June 7–8, 2018, <https://datasociety.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ii-web.pdf>.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Caroline M. Woidat, "The Truth Is on the Reservation: American Indians and Conspiracy Culture," *The Journal of American Culture* 29, no. 4 (December 2006): 454–67, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1542-734X.2006.00422.x>.
32. Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Culture: From Kennedy to the X-Files* (London, UK: Routledge, 2001).
33. Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, 1st ed., Comparative Studies in Religion and Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 16.
34. *Ibid.*, 19. Barkun defines both systemic conspiracies and super conspiracies; the former is "believed to have broad goals, usually conceived as securing control over a country, a region, or even the entire world" and the latter "refers to conspiratorial constructs in which multiple conspiracies are believed to be linked together hierarchically."
35. "Within a few months of the first modern claim of a flying saucer sighting in June 1947, polls showed that 90 percent of the population had heard of them. . . . The number fell to 47 percent in 1990 but was still at 48 percent in a 1996 Gallup poll, nearly half a century after the first sighting." *Ibid.*, 93.
36. *Ibid.*, 94.
37. *Ibid.*, 139.
38. Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall, "Sovereignty and the UFO," *Political Theory* 36, no. 4 (August 2008): 607–33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591708317902>.
39. *Ibid.*, 623.

40. Jacobsen, *Area 51*, 17.
41. *Ibid.*, 45.
42. *Ibid.*, 206.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, 300.
45. Steven Aftergood, "U.S. Intelligence Budget Data," US Intelligence Budget Data (FAS: Intelligence Resource Program), <https://fas.org/irp/budget/>.
46. Barton Gellman and Greg Miller, "'Black Budget' Summary Details U.S. Spy Network's Successes, Failures and Objectives," *Washington Post*, August 29, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/black-budget-summary-details-us-spy-networks-successes-failures-and-objectives/2013/08/29/7e57bb78-10ab-11e3-8cdd-bcdc09410972_story.html.
47. Acee Agoyo, "President Trump Releases New Budget with Cuts for Indian Country Programs," *Indiansz*, March 11, 2019, <https://www.indiansz.com/News/2019/03/11/president-trump-releases-new-budget-with.asp>; Bureau of Indian Affairs, "Bureau of Indian Affairs Funding," Washington DC; Bureau of Indian Affairs, Detailed BIA Funding Report, 2020, https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/fy2020_bib_bh085.pdf
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49. *Ibid.*
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51. Adam Khalil and Zack Khalil, *The Violence of a Civilization without Secrets*, (2017), documentary, *Vimeo*, <https://vimeo.com/217342747>.
52. "Kennewick Man," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kennewick_Man&oldid=823442997.
53. Gene Zechmeister, "Jefferson's Excavation of an Indian Burial Mound," in Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia, *Monticello.org*, November 2010), <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-excavation-indian-burial-mound>.
54. Jason Colavito, *The Mound Builder Myth: Fake History and the Hunt for a "Lost White Race"*, 1st ed. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2020).
55. *Ancient Aliens*, season 11, episode 10, "The Prototypes," written by Kristina Djokic and Max Thompson, aired July 22, 2016, History Channel, 2016. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5872080/>.
56. Jason Edward Lewis, Noelani Arista, Archer Pechawis, and Suzanne Kite, "Making Kin with the Machines," *Journal of Design and Science* 3, no. 5, Resisting Reduction Competition Winners (July 16, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.21428/bfafd97b>.
57. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 43.
58. Ronald Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge: Studies in Lakota Stellar Theology*, ed. Alan Seeger (Mission, SD: Sinte Gleska University Press, 1992), 18.
59. *Ibid.*, 21.
60. The Lakota people have been living in relation to star beings since at least 100 BCE, if not much earlier, according to ethno-astronomer calculations. "It was at that early that the celestial Pipe ceremony brought the sun into the *Cansasa lpusye* constellation at dawn on spring equinox." Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge*, 31.
61. *Ibid.*, 32.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*, 33.

64. Thank you to Ed Stover for recommending this telling of the story.
65. Jhon Goes in Center and Melissa Sievers, "Savor Dakota: The Legend of Star Boy," South Dakota Public Broadcast, October 5, 2016, <https://www.sdpb.org/blogs/savor-dakota/savor-dakota-the-legend-of-star-boy/>.
66. *Wakhan* can be defined in many ways, all difficult to describe in English or in words: sacred, unknowable, beyond comprehension, mysterious, the underlying unknowable force in the universe.
67. Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge*, 35.
68. Ibid., 31. See also Charles R. Bailey, "The X-Form: Applying Teton Lakota Sioux Cosmology to the Rock Art of the Upper Midwest," *Utah RockArt2.org*, September 2000, 3–12, http://www.utahrockart2.org/pubs/proceedings/papers/20-01_Bailey_-_The_X-Form_Applying_Teton_Lakota_Sioux_Cosmology_to_the_Rock_Art_of_the_Upper_Midwest.pdf. John Colhoff, a Dakota man employed at the Rapid City Indian Museum said that "an hourglass figure (two triangles joined at their apexes, ka-pe-mini) represents a prayer. The lower part (triangle has to do with the earth and the upper part is the heavens. This design represents a prayer from earth going to heaven and being met halfway by the heavenly bodies." See Bailey, "The X-Form," 3-12. Perhaps it is just coincidence that this shape also looks like the Western scientific representation of a "light cone," a view of special relativity proposed by physicist Hermann Minkowski to model the distance a flash of light can travel.
69. Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge*, 19.
70. Ibid., 19.
71. Ibid., 32.
72. Ibid. Also, as Neidhart interpreted in *Black Elk Speaks*, "I saw the sacred hoop of my people, and it was one of many hoops which made one circle, wide as daylight, and as starlight . . . and I saw that it was holy." John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 43.
73. Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge*, 27.
74. "Prayed to by Lakota midwives, To Win 'Blue Woman' is a spirit who inhabits the around the hole in the Big Dipper. To Win (or Ton Win, 'birth woman') is called on to aid women in labor, easing the pain of childbirth. 'Blue Woman' also assists the spirits of newly deceased humans in being born back through the hole into the spirit world." Goodman, *Lakota Star Knowledge*, 27.
75. Ardy Sixkiller Clarke, *Space Age Indians: Their Encounters with the Blue Men, Reptilians, and Other Star People* (San Antonio and Charlottesville: Anomalist Books, 2019), 110.
76. EarthStarTV, "Chief Tells Ancient Aliens Crew Not to Say 'Aliens,'" May 15, 2013, *Youtube* video, 2:04, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wg4Dz87aYug&t=17s>.
77. pushthelimit, "UFO Dr Ross Dakota Spiritual Leader & Sun Dancer," January 29, 2012, *Youtube* video, 5:36, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaeFzLq-z-E>.
78. Lee Hester and Jim Cheney, "Truth and Native American Epistemology," *Social Epistemology* 15, no. 4 (October 2001): 319–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02691720110093333>.
79. Kim TallBear, "Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming," *Kalfou: A Journal of Comparative Relational Ethnic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.15367/kf.v6i1.228>.
80. Hester and Cheney, "Truth and Native American Epistemology," 319–34.
81. Suzanne Kite and Mahpiya Nážin, "It's Not Done through Our Spirit, It's Done through Our Mind," *South as a State of Mind* 11 (Fall/Winter 2019): 12–21, <https://southasastateofmind.com/current-issue/>.
82. David Delgado Shorter and Felipe S. Molina, "Geographies: Yoeme," in *The World of Indigenous North America*, ed. Robert Allen Warrior (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 105.
83. David C. Posthumus, *All My Relatives: Exploring Lakota Ontology, Belief, and Ritual*, New Visions in Native American and Indigenous Studies (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press: The American Philosophical Society, 2018).