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APPROPRIATION OF A NATIVE AMERICAN SYMBOL:

FROM SACRED TO PROFANE

by

Laura Kaye Seneshen

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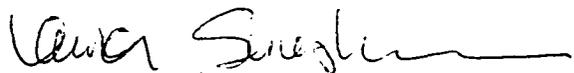
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This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:


Dr. Jay Stauss
Professor of American Indian Studies

4/9/96
Date

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ABSTRACT

This thesis asks the question of whether or not the appropriation of a Native American symbol by the dominant culture constitutes a profanity. The history of so-called "Medicine Wheels" is examined, while looking at their possible uses in prehistoric times and how they are used today by both cultures. Duplicative ceremonies conducted by those professing to be "Medicine Men\Women" are examined in a context of ethics, backed by the voices of the Native American community.

INTRODUCTION

Certainly there has always been a time when one culture appropriated or borrowed from another to a greater or lesser extent. This can be observed even more closely in those regions of geographical proximity. However many questions arise when borrowing occurs between two cultures that are widely divergent, in place, ethnicity and time.

As we know from history, cycles or patterns frequently repeat themselves. There is at present (1996) a resurgence of many old ideals and a quest for meaning in lives which are part of what we call the "New Age Movement." There are certain similarities with a time in the sixties commonly referred to as the "Hippie Movement" in that it was also a time of searching and questioning, compounded with the sexual revolution, civil rights movement and the womens' movement. The New Age Movement however, has incorporated many diverse beliefs concerning spirituality, ritual, ceremony, healing, channeling, diet and so forth in its quest for a higher consciousness. These beliefs, to name only a few, include Chinese, Japanese, Ayurvedic, Buddhist, Mayan and Native

American concepts, as well as the use of symbols and objects of ritual.

Likewise, American society at large is also seeking to find definition, meaning, and a sense of belonging in spite of broken family ties, materialism and impermanent connections to the land. All around we see symbols from other ethnic groups incorporated into daily existence - Yaqui Deer dancers on hot sauce bottles, Tohono O'Odham man-in-the maze symbols on Tee shirts and jewelry, reproductions of Navajo sand paintings hung on walls, Plains Indian medicine bags worn around necks, beaded Apache key chain holders, "Dream Catchers" dangling from rear-view mirrors and many many more.

A "liminality" exists at present which occurs during transitional periods of history "When the past has lost its grip and the future has not yet taken definite shape." (Turner, 1980:1) The concept of liminality was originally introduced by the anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep in 1907 in reference to rituals that mark the passage of the individual through various stages of the life cycle. Victor Turner followed, publishing works (1969, 1974) that built on Van Gennep's concepts in that he expanded the notion of a liminal phase such as a social movement as being autonomous in itself. As a part of a liminal phase which this thesis proposes we are

now in spiritually speaking, symbols stand out as signs of the ritual of transition.

"The edges of our categories are charged with power and mystery. The people, objects or events that touch those margins may be taboo or polluted because they are out of place. They are sources of danger, a threat to our orderly conceptualizations and desire for form and predictability but also as Turner shows, they are sources of renewal, possibility, innovation and creativity." (Myerhoff, 1978:117)

The focus of this thesis is an examination of a Plains Indian symbol which was found in the regions of upper North America and lower Canada. Originally referred to as "Boulder Configurations" in the early Anthropological Journals, these later came to be called "Medicine Wheels." In recent years, as the New Age movement has gained momentum, this symbol has been adopted and used in various ceremonial contexts throughout North America by non - Native Americans. The ritualization of a symbol which is not part of Anglo culture raises many ethical concerns. The purpose of this thesis is to bring data to bear on the hypothesis that the use by the "other" than the Native American group which originated sacred symbols such as the "Medicine Wheel" is profane. This thesis will describe and analyze the various uses of the "Medicine

Wheels" by Native Americans and non- Native Americans. Of particular interest will be an analysis of the sacredness of Native American symbols and whether meanings are retained only within specific places and or purposes.

CHAPTER 1. HISTORICAL RESEARCH REGARDING "BOWLDER
CONFIGURATIONS"

Among the artifacts of the New World are curious configurations that have defied attempts to determine their exact dates of origin as well as their specific uses. Unlike the famous "mounds" of the Ohio Valley area, or petroglyph rock art, "Boulder Configurations" as they were originally called, have not reached the same notoriety or even academic agreement as to ritual function. Lacking a Native American written history or concensus of opinion regarding oral history, we can only look at the empirical data and present possible answers. Why this symbol has been appropriated and moved into the "New Age" will be examined in the following pages.

In order to have a sense of what we are talking about regarding boulder configurations, the following definition is given; "These phenomena primarily consist of a circle of stones or cairn from which rows of stones extend outward as in the spokes of a wheel. Most of these are extremely simple in

nature, but some have extra features such as an outer circle of stones which connect the ends of the spokes, or cairn within the hub of the wheel." (Brown, 1963:225)

The American Anthropologist first published a paper in 1891 entitled "Boulder Outline Figures in the Dakotas, Surveyed in the Summer of 1890" by T.H.Lewis. This was the beginning of recorded data concerning the large mysterious circles most often found in the northern plains of North America and extending into southeast Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada.

The Anthropological Society of Washington, D.C. had published two prior papers, (1889, 1890) also by Lewis on stone monuments in the areas of northwestern Iowa, southwestern Minnesota and South Dakota which documented all sorts of round and square configurations, ranging from snakes to turtles to shapes of people. Lewis' surveys and drawings originated in 1883 but in his paper "Stone Monuments" (Lewis, 1890) he unearthed an even earlier reference from an explorer, a J.N. Nicollet who had visited southern Minnesota in 1838 and published a subsequent report in 1845 mentioning the boulder works. Little research has been done on these boulder "Effigies" and hopefully more information will come to light on them in the years to come.

It was Lewis who thought there were parallels in the Eastern hemisphere as regards the stone circles and squares. He referred to the 1870 published work of an Englishman entitled "Stone monuments, tumuli, and ornaments of remote ages" in his attempts to theorize that what he was seeing were in fact "ancient cemeteries" (like those) situated in Sweden, North Germany, the Italian Alps, Algeria, and India." (Lewis, 1889:164)

A subsequent paper in the American Anthropologist in 1903, "A Wheel-Shaped Stone Monument In Wyoming" by S.C. Simms introduced the useage of the term "Medicine Wheel." In this very interesting documentary, Mr. Simms, while on a visit to the Crow Indians on behalf of the Ethnological Division of the Field Colombian Museum, had the opportunity to speak to Crow informants as well as draw a diagram of the "wheel" which had a circumference of approximately 245 feet. (Simms, 1903:109) Simms reported finding a bleached buffalo skull resting on the eastern side of the center hub, facing the rising sun. There were also some buffalo bones lying next to the cairn. No excavation or scientific work ensued at that time. It was the Crow informant who had called the shape a "Medicine Wheel" which was positioned on the easterly side of a mountain called "Medicine Mountain" in the Big Horn Range of

mountains in Wyoming.

Although the Crow informant and others knew of the "wheel" and where it was located, none knew of any ritual useage by the 1890s. "They said it was made by people who had no iron." (Grey, 1963:28) Chapter 2 of this thesis will examine what the dominant theories were then as well as current scientific thought concerning the different uses. Were they in fact considered "sacred?"

In 1922, George Bird Grinnell wrote "The Medicine Wheel" describing the same Wyoming site that Simms had written about, however this latter publication gave much more detailed information regarding measurements and more speculation regarding its use, particularly linking it to the Cheyenne.

Thomas F. Kehoe (1954) and Alice B. Kehoe (1957) published further information regarding the wheels, questioning and positing the use as grave markers. 1956 also saw the publication of "Stone Medicine Wheels, Memorials to Blackfoot War Chiefs" by Hugh A. Dempsey in the Journal, Washington Academy of Science.

The Plains Anthropologist, Journal of the Plains Conference published various papers in 1963 focusing on one region of North America and its Native inhabitants. The topic

of "Wheels" emerged again in Don Grey's paper, "Big Horn Medicine Wheel Site, 48BH302." Mr. Grey referred to earlier research done in 1915 by a local amateur historian and a later survey done by the U.S. Forest Service in 1917. (Grey, 1963:28) By 1958, the Wyoming Archeological Society had completed a scientific investigation, establishing the earliest age of the Big Horn Site to be 1760 A.D. based on dendochronological methods.

Also in the same Journal was a paper on a different site located within the Crow Reservation, entitled, "The Fort Smith Medicine Wheel, Montana" by Lionel A. Brown. A description of the wheel is as follows: "The pattern consists of a central circle of stones measuring 3.2 feet in diameter with six straight spokes in pairs, radiating from the outer limits of the hub. Two of the spokes have been disturbed by the construction of a dirt road, whereas the remaining four appear to be complete. The latter range from 42 to 63 feet in length and the disturbed ones are approximately 40 feet long." (Brown, 1963:226) Excavation revealed the presence of twelve pot sherds and seven beads, five of which appeared to be trade beads. A tentative date for construction of the wheel was set at 1800.

In 1979, Alice and Thomas Kehoe explored the theory as to

whether or not boulder configurations were solstice alignments in a Canadian publication "Solstice - Aligned Boulder Configurations In Saskatchewan." The above paper was a direct result of extensive fieldwork done in 1975 on eleven sites, with the principle focus on the following three: Moose Mountain, Halbrite and Glen Ewen, all sites in Saskatchewan, Canada.

"Photographs were taken at sunrise and sunset at as many of the configurations as could be visited during the week centering on summer solstice (June 22)..... At each of the listed sites, the transit was set up at the center of the configuration, usually approximately the middle of a central cairn, and the angles to each peripheral cairn or the ends of radiating lines read off. The angles to landmarks recorded on the local topographic map were read off from the same station to aid in establishing the angle between true and magnetic north at the site." (Kehoe, 1979:3)

Kehoe's fieldwork was twofold in that it relied on scientific analysis of data and interviews with Native informants in Saskatchewan and Alberta, Canada. Also included were interviews with Natives in the Peigan (included within the Blackfeet confederacy) community of Browning, Montana on the Blackfeet Reservation. The three dominant theories

regarding the use of the "wheels" or more appropriately "circles" since indigenous peoples did not know "wheels" until the nineteenth century, will follow in Chapter 2.

Certainly the most comprehensive of all published material on "Wheels" was the 1988 publication that came from the Archaeological Survey of Alberta, entitled Medicine Wheels On The Northern Plains: A Summary And Appraisal by John H. Brumley. Mr. Brumley documented 67 sites, divided them into 8 subgroups and offered specific criteria as to what a wheel should consist of in order to be called such. The following is what Brumley arrived at in order to offer a standardized set of criteria for a Medicine Wheel:

" a) a prominent, centrally located stone cairn of varying size made up of unmodified stone.

b) having one or more concentric stone rings of generally circular shape; and/or

c) having two or more stone lines radiating outward from a central origin point, central cairn or the margins of a stone ring." (Brumley, 1988:3)

Brumley also included, within the categorization, other ancillary features such as stone structures which were frequently incorporated within or at least spacially

associated with the wheels. His theory was that the stones in the wheels were accretional or that over a long period of time stone components were added to the original substructure or wheel. The same applied to the sites of the original cairns, with the addition of the spokes later. Brumley's fieldwork presented site descriptions of the eight subgroups with additional descriptions of any archeological evidence. Many of the cairns and subsequent surroundings had not been excavated by 1988 or by the time of his writing. A summary of his data is as follows:

SITE DESCRIPTIONS

The actual topographic settings of the wheels were extremely diverse, ranging from the summit of hills to the placement in valleys or on the flat prairie, or sometimes on an escarpment overlooking a lake basin or next to a river. There was no established consistency as to the topographic placement of the site or directional alignment.

MEASUREMENTS

The measured diameter of the stone rings (the outside wheel itself) in all the 67 sites ranged from 40 meters to 4 meters, with the number of spokes ranging from 28 to 3. The range of

sizes for spoke lengths ranged from 135 meters to 2 meters. The diameter of all the central cairns ranged from 12 meters to 2 meters across. (Brumley, 1988:109-126)

ESTIMATES REGARDING AGE

The earliest dates put forth on the construction of cairn sites has been through the work of James M. Calder, who theorized as follows: "From analysis, it appears that a new cultural practice was introduced into the Plains during the Oxbow Complex (3200-2500 B.C.)...The tradition appears to have been maintained through subsequent cairn construction and the accumulation of artifacts, until ca. 1000 B.C., the beginning of the Pelican Lake Phase. During the interval 3200-1000 B.C., use and construction of the cairn seems to be fairly uniform.....From ca. 1000 B.C. to A.D. 200 there seems to be a considerable decline in cairn use." (Calder, 1977:202) He then went on to theorize that there was a revival at approximately A.D. 200 which explains the Late Prehistoric artifacts found. (Majorville Site, Alberta Canada)

Dempsey's work included extensive questioning of the Blackfeet of northern Montana and Peigan of southern Alberta regarding the age and ritual use of the structures. He received the following information from a Blood informant

named Jack Low Horn that the stone markers did not originate when his "Chief" Bull Back Fat died in 1842 but "was started in the days when our people used dogs instead of horses." (meaning prior to the time when horses were introduced, back when dogs were used to transport material goods) (Dempsey, 1956:177)

Test excavations and subsequent results on the Ellis Medicine Wheel Site in Alberta found the presence of scattered human skeletal remains and the decomposed remains of a painted wooden stake near the ring center. Using the wood from the stake, a date was obtained of 450 plus or minus 160 years before the present. (Approximately A.D.1375 to A.D.1695) The additional finding of projectile points among and between tipi rings at the site led Brumley to derive a late prehistoric age. (Brumley, 1985:204)

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Grey (1963), in his examination of the Wyoming Bighorn Medicine Wheel stated that he placed the construction of the cairn at about 1760 or later due to dendochronological testing of wood found in the cairn. The above data leads one to conclude that the Canadian sites are much older, with Native American ritual use spreading in a more southerly direction into Montana and Wyoming.

The above summary excludes any measurements of the extra

stone structures or cairns other than the central cairn. Brumley referred to other cairns located either within the large circle or outside of it as ancillary features, while labeling the small circles of stones "tipi rings." These tipi rings were thought to be the stone remains from those who had camped on these sites, ranging from prehistoric to more recent times.

The intent of this thesis is to examine the meaning of the Wheel from both perspectives, Native American and Anglo. Why has it been appropriated and moved into the "New Age?" Does the Medicine Wheel's use by the "other" profane it or is the "sacredness" retained in spite of a different space, culture and time?

CHAPTER 2. THEORIES REGARDING USE AND NATIVE TESTIMONY

In Chapter I, archaeological information was presented that boulder configurations span an extremely wide time frame, from pre-Christ to the late 1700s. This chapter will present material regarding the use of boulder configurations, supported by information from Native American informants.

The accretional nature of the cairn and spokes could account for the finding of several generations of cultural artifacts, such as human skeletal remains, projectile points and other possible offerings such as trade beads. Anthropologists and archaeologists (Grey, Dempsey, A. & T. Kehoe and Brumley) generally agreed that the sites of the cairns or accretional domes were older than the spokes. Some of the cairns showed evidence of partial sinking or caving in, particularly in sites where pits were found underneath. These were attributed to possible burials, vandalism and/or rodent activity. (Kehoe, 1979:37)

The four dominant theories argued by those who were associated with the wheels are as follows:

1. The wheels were used as astrological guides or as indicators of solstice. (Kehoe,1979 and Eddy,1974)
2. The boulder outlines were the representations of a Sun Dance lodge\location or Cheyenne Medicine Lodge. (Grey,1963 and Grinnell,1923)
3. The central cairn or hub of the wheel was the site where a chief had died, thus becoming a sacred burial marker. (Dempsey,1956 and Kehoe,1954)
4. The configurations represented a ceremonial site of importance, whether a past battle, vision quest site, or ceremonial offering site, possibly connected with hunting buffalo. (Brumley, 1988)

WHEELS AS SOLSTICE MARKERS

John Eddy was the first scholar to argue the possibility of astrological significance in his 1974 article in Science Magazine, using the Bighorn Medicine Wheel as an example. "It now seems likely that the structure was built for calendar purposes--specifically to mark the summer solstice Sun and certain stars of midsummer down, and that it was last used for this purpose 200 to 700 years ago. A line through the center of the distinctive outlying cairn and the central cairn points

to within 1/3" of the place of sunrise at summer solstice, and a similar line from another of the outlying cairns points to sunset on the same day. The place of sunrise is easier to mark than sunset (for reasons of eye fatigue) but the fact that both are marked is interesting and probably significant." Eddy went on to conclude "It says that were midsummer dawn be clouded, the users had another chance to mark the solstice Sun the same day when it set. ..The alignments could have been the result of accidental placement, although the odds against chance alignment on sunrise and sunset to the measured accuracy are greater than 4000:1." (Eddy, 1977:147-169)

Kehoe's work in 1979 further paved the way for speculation and subsequent fieldwork to determine if there was a basis for astrological use regarding the boulder works. When writing about the "Roy Rivers Wheel" in Saskatchewan, Kehoe stated "The possibility that the Roy Rivers figure is a "sunburst" is raised particularly by the fact that, as calculated and also observed on June 24, 1975, the sun at summer solstice sets directly over this figure for an observer stationed on the central cairn. No other solar or stellar alignments are apparent at this time." (Kehoe and Kehoe, 1979:15)

Eddy's work in 1974 had presented convincing evidence

that Medicine Wheels were astronomically aligned. "Stone alignments such as the wheel could have used as horizon markers, to identify the directions of rise or set of selected celestial bodies. A pole stepped vertically in the central cairn could serve as a gnomon or foresight, which in conjunction with a backsight point at a peripheral cairn, would define the azimuth of rising or setting of some important object.....The spoked pattern resembles a common sun symbol. A Crow name for the Bighorn Wheel was "the Sun's Tipi," and in one Crow legend "The Sun built it to show us how to build a teepee." (Eddy, 1974:1036)

Earlier in Chapter I, Eddy reported that Crow informants denied any knowledge of the Wheel, contrasting sharply with Lowie's 1918 account from a Crow informant who called the Wheel the "Sun's Lodge." (Lowie, 1918)

Eddy found the Moose Mountain Wheel (Saskatchewan) so similar to the BigHorn Wheel (Wyoming) that "It could have been built from the same set of plans. If we presume that the Moose Mountain Wheel had been built about 1,700 years ago, then alignments were nearly perfect. And at about that time, about A.D. 300, Aldebaran would have served as a perfect harbinger of the summer solstice at the site. This meant that for more than 1,000 years the early Indians of the plains were

using the same star risings, and the sun's to mark the summer solstice." (Eddy, 1977b:144)

Considerable argument exists both in support and in opposition for this astrological theory, while lacking a definitive way to either prove or disprove it. Many of the wheels lacked the correct placement to be considered solstice-aligned, although Eddy and Kehoe certainly presented a strong argument for at least some of the wheels.

When a Blackfeet informant was questioned regarding the observance of solstice he responded "There was something on the longest day of the year, but not in my time. No one remembered the right path, the right story on it in my time." (Kehoe, 1979:35) In Blackfeet origin stories, the sun, moon and stars figured prominently as transformed personages. (for cosmology see Wissler, 1936, Harrod, 1987) As Harrod puts it, "Solar symbolism is most fundamental to Blackfeet religious life," so indeed the wheel as a representation of the sun or as a solstice marker is quite possible.

WHEELS AS MEDICINE LODGES OR SITES OF THE SUN DANCE

Grinnell's work in 1922 utilized Cheyenne informants, not the least of which was Elk River, born around 1810-12.

(Grinnell, 1922:307-309) After showing Elk River a drawing of a Medicine Wheel, Grinnell writes "He said at once that it was the plan of an old time Cheyenne Medicine Lodge. The outer circle of stones he said represented the wall of the Medicine Lodge; the lines leading toward the center, the rafters - or as he called them the lodge poles of the Medicine Lodge; and the small circle in the center of the large one, from which the so-called spokes radiate, represented the center pole of the Medicine Lodge. He added that the building to the northwest to the entrance, and within the circle and touching it, was the place from which the thunder came; and by this I understood him to mean what I call the altar - the place in the Cheyenne Medicine Lodge which is especially sacred, and in which is the buffalo skull." (ibid)

Whether or not the drawing of the wheel represented, to the Cheyenne, an actual Medicine Lodge or the symbolic outline only, is unclear but the following comment from Brumley in his later work builds on this idea: "Further consideration should be given to the possibility that the circle element in Medicine wheels are symbolic representations or the actual structural remains of lodges. The general type of lodge associated historically with the Sun Dance of the Cheyenne and other Plains groups may well have functioned in a number of

other groups social and religious functions." (Brumley, 1988:96)

Although Grinnell makes a strong case for the wheels as Sun Dance sites, this simply does not hold true for wheels in general based on divergent Blackfeet, Peigan and Blood information.

WHEELS AS BURIAL MARKERS

Archaeological findings from the limited number of cairns that have been partially excavated lend support to the hypothesis that these are burial sites in at least the areas that the Blackfeet historically occupied. These sites include Rumsey, Twin Peaks, Manyberries, Halbrite, Grassy Lake, Majorville, and Ellis, all of which are in Alberta, Canada. Certainly the bulk of Blackfeet information points in this direction, based on documentation thus far.

In 1880, John McLean (stationed at Fort McLeod in southern Alberta) wrote the following: "Several great battles were fought, and these cairns were placed there to commemorate these events, and probably to mark the spot where some of their greatest warriors died. When a great chief or warrior died a lodge was placed over him, and when this was thrown

down by the wind, the body of the deceased was laid upon the ground, and a cairn of stones erected over it. There is a cairn called by the Indians the "Gambler's Cairn," near the store of I.G.Baker, in the town of Macleod. Several years ago a Peigan camp of Indians located on this spot was attacked by smallpox, and the disease proved so fatal that fifty dead lodges were standing. Among those who died was "Aikutee"; i.e. "The Gambler," head chief of the Peigan tribe. His people placed a lodge over him and when that had been blown down by the western winds, he was reverently laid upon the ground, and the cairn of stones erected. The original cairn was three or four feet in diameter, with rows of stones between forty or fifty feet in length leading to the cairn. Only one row of stones remains, and the cairn is worn nearly level with the street. This simple monument is of little interest to the passing stranger, but the Indian riding past will turn to his comrade and say, "Aikutee." (McLean, 1896:579)

Based on Blackfeet tradition, a differing mortuary method would prevail in times of sickness which was to be left in a sewn-up lodge. The customary Blackfeet burial was to be placed either in a high fork of a tree, left in scaffolding on a hill, or to be placed underground.

Kehoe interviewed an older Peigan by the name of Adam

White Man who supported the above mortuary custom by saying: "I heard that when they buried a real chief, one that the people loved, they would pile rocks around the edge of his lodge and then place rows of rocks out from his burial tipi. The rock lines show that everybody went there to get something to eat. He is inviting someone everyday. People went there to live off him. Not every chief is treated like that - just the one loved by everyone. I have never seen this type of stonework but I heard of a chief in Canada who was buried like that." (Kehoe, 1954:133)

Jim Weasel Tail (Blackfeet) offered "The lines of rock show the different directions in which they go on the warpath - they were the dead chief's war deeds. If they kill someone, they pile rocks at the end of the rock line. If there is no rock pile present, then they just go to the enemy. Short lines are short trips." (Kehoe, 1972:184)

Brumley's work further substantiated the theory of the central ring as that of a tipi ring and subsequent use as a burial lodge in his examination of one subgroup of Medicine Wheels. According to him, the four or five lines placed outward were to show respect for the deceased warrior. He went on to document evidence of skeletal remains found in a southwesterly direction of the center of the tipi or in the

traditional Plains Indian place of honor, opposite the doorway. (Brumley, 1988:63)

The possibility of the smaller, central tipi rings as burial markers could only be used in the regions where the Blackfeet were located either historically or pre-historically. Any of the wheels that had large central circles would automatically not fit into that category and could not be explained as tipi rings or burial markers.

To research current Blackfeet beliefs regarding the wheels, I contacted Blackfeet Community College in Browning, Montana and found that a class entitled "Sacred Circles" is offered and is being taught by a Native American, Professor Don Pepion, M.Ed.. During a phone interview, Prof. Pepion stated that he thought that the wheels were memorials to chiefs "Who had been buried in lodges in the Plains, with the stones placed out to show the person traveling on different war parties." He added that these were\are "Sacred Sites" to the Blackfeet while acknowledging the conflicting and contradictory information offered by the historians and anthropologists of the dominant culture. The lines to the cairns "Invite the spirits in to speak." (Pepion, personal communication 12-4-95) He went on to say that the Blackfeet were in the Wyoming\Montana\Alberta\ Saskatchewan areas,

according to oral tradition, longer than was originally put forth by historians in the current textbooks. Prof. Pepion cited Dr. Barney Reeves' work of the University of Calgary regarding an updated view that the Blackfeet migrated from the West and later moved back and forth due to climatic changes rather than migrating from the East as was originally thought. (Reeves, unpublished work in process)

Based on this new information then, the Blackfeet ranged in an area much larger than historians document and would explain the wide range of Medicine Wheels, which is not to say that they were all created by the Blackfeet but certainly at least the early Native Peoples of the Plains area. As Prof. Pepion said in his later correspondence, "There are probably not any generic Medicine Wheels and each tribe may have their own interpretations. Even within a tribe there may be varying explanations due to ceremonial different useage and society (or clan) customs. Some may be individualistic, as in our tribe many things are given to a person through the Creator." (Pepion, correspondence 12-11-95) He went on to conclude that in order to honor the sacredness of the nature of the wheels, he needed to withhold some information which he felt would not be appropriate for him to share.

WHEELS AS CEREMONIAL OFFERING SITES

"Since spirituality is the essence of all things that we do, then sacredness is an inherent element." (ibid)

The presence of what appears to be ceremonial offerings at the Majorville, Alberta site lends support to the notion that Native Americans inherently viewed these sites as sacred. This particular wheel is cited due to extensive excavation of the entire south side of the cairn and the abundance of material artifacts found. Calder's publication in 1977 on Majorville provided new information regarding a ceremonial context. The cairn provided a high number of tools (both used and unused) for hide and food preparation and projectile points. Calder theorized that the type of artifacts excavated such as "iniskim" (fetishes used by the Blackfeet in conjunction with calling bison), pipes, and red-ochre pigment on bird bones proved that Medicine bundles and/or offerings were made there. (Calder, 1977:204-205)

Since this site was quite ancient, thought by Calder to have existed for about five millenia, it fills in a picture of how these cairns may have been used before changing custom prevailed. Generally the Canadian wheels exhibit material artifacts of great antiquity.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have looked at four theories developed by the dominant culture regarding the possible uses of Medicine Wheels in the New World from prehistoric to historic times - namely as early solstice markers, Sun Dance/Medicine Lodge sites, burial markers and as ceremonial offering sites, possibly used for supplication in the hunting of bison. It would be naive to think that the wheels were constructed by and used by their descendents for the same function over time. More than likely, the following holds true based on what we have reviewed so far:

1. There is a long term history and accretional nature of construction particularly for the cairns and to a lesser degree for the spokes.
2. There was probably a multiplicity and shifting of functions through time, allowing for all of the uses that have been put forth.
3. The wheels were constructed by early Native Americans who occupied the Plains area and into Canada, with the Canadian wheels showing more evidence of age.
4. It is probable that the builders of the wheels were the ancestors of the contemporary Shoshoni, Cheyenne, Crow and

members of the Blackfeet confederacy.

5. The notion of "sacredness" based on the use of the wheels has been established by the dominant culture through the archaeological excavations that have taken place and their findings (human remains, ceremonial offerings, and red-ochre-stained objects associated with ritual).

6. Since the notion of "sacredness" is inherent in Native American world view, then it would follow that the wheels are consistent with that.

CHAPTER 3. THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT IN ITS RELATIONSHIP TO
 THE MEDICINE WHEEL

"You want to experience Native American philosophy and ceremonies?" The ad in The Western Horseman continued, "Calm your soul." (Behr, 1996:73) A noteworthy transition has occurred. The marketing of Native American ceremonies is now being used by guest or "Dude" ranches as an enticement. Instead of finding these words in one of the New Age journals, magazines, papers or on flyers stuck on bulletin boards, we are now seeing the marketing of Native American spiritual enlightenment in this ad for Hidden Creek Ranch, in Harrison, Idaho. (ibid)

The promotion of tourism through Native American images is not new, however the additional enticement of being part of an authentic or "real Indian" ceremony is more recent. The appropriation of Native American symbols by the dominant culture has gone several steps further with the trend to appropriate Native American ceremonies as well. Romanticized beliefs about indigenous "natural ecologists" are now coupled

with the notion that their spiritual way is the "True Way" ; hence a desire by the "New Agers" of the dominant culture to adopt various and assorted combinations of Native American ritual taught by so-called Medicine Men, Women, or Shamans. Some individuals are claiming to be empowered by either their long term associations with Native Americans or their knowledge of having directly received the true spirituality of "The Red Road," and most claim Indian descent.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE "NEW AGE"

Before we look at the various ways that the Medicine Wheel is being used in an Anglo context, a brief overview of New Age philosophy is provided. The following comes from the definitive work on "New Agers" entitled The New Age Encyclopedia:

"The New Age Movement can be defined by its primal experience of transformation. New Agers have either experienced or are diligently seeking a profound personal transformation from an old, unacceptable life to a new, exciting future. One prominent model for that transformation is healing, which has given rise to what is possibly the largest identifiable segment of the movement, the holistic

health movement. Having experienced a personal transformation, New Agers project the possibility of the transformation not just on a number of additional individuals, but of the culture and of humanity itself. More than a possibility, it is, they claim, a present reality; The New Age is emerging in this generation. This affirmation, this hope, that the New Age is imminent gives the movement its name. Healing projected into the larger social context has become a movement to heal the earth, the ideological foundation for the movement's support of peace and ecological activism." (Melton, 1990:xiii)

And where can you find a better healer than in a "Medicine Man/Woman or Medicine Wheel? Whether the intent is to lead a more spiritual lifestyle or simply a desire to seek transformative experiences, individuals coming from the New Age modality tend to try all sorts of approaches to healing the body/mind/soul. Within this context comes the syncretism of different types of ceremony\ritual for transformational purposes or healing associated with the use of any of the following: The Great Spirit, commonly called "Spirit", Universal energy, nature, animals, minerals in crystal form, sage, sweetgrass, Earth as Mother or "Gaia", the moon, the "Wild Man" or "Wild Woman" theme, one's personal Indian Guide, Channeling, Meditation, (both Zen and Tibetan) Buddhism, the

Chinese system of geomancy or Feng-Shui, Mayan Calendrics, Harmonic Convergences, Native American spirituality and the use of Medicine Wheels.

THE WESTERN PRIMITIVIST PREMISE AND BACK TO THE EARTH MOVEMENTS

The overall mission of the New Age movement links up well with revived and romanticized notions concerning indigenous peoples as "Children of Nature," therefore possessing primal spiritual knowledge. Kehoe refers to this stereotypical thinking as the "Western primitivist premise." (Kehoe, 1990:195) As Kehoe observes, there have been cycles, historically, where "back to nature" movements have occurred; driven by civilization's dismay with civilization, and as a result those disgruntled ones look to the "other," particularly those "primitives" living a simple, close to the earth existence, as being more "pure."

Due to reactions to industrialization, a conservation movement emerged in the early 1900s in North America which has manifested itself at least three more times since then. This movement, which may be called "romantic conservationism," concomitant to a rise in interest in Native American

spirituality, has appeared during the following times:

1. During the time of Roosevelt. (a time where seances were popular, in attempts to connect with Indian spirits)
2. Again in the 1930s with the C.C.C.. (an era connected with the Indian Reorganization Act, in an attempt to involve native peoples more with agriculture)
3. The late 60s with the back to the earth\hippie movement. (an era which focused on challenging the status quo. Communes were popular in a co-operative farming\living arrangement, combined with observances of spiritual beliefs, as in ashrams)
4. In the mid 1990s with the New Age movement. (typified by the syncretism of borrowed ritual, in attempts to connect with the earth)

In the foreword of George Wharton James' 1908 publication, What The White Man May Learn From The Indian, is the following: "I call upon the white race to incorporate into its civilization the good things of the Indian civilization; to forsake the injurious things of its pseudo-civilized, artificial, and over-refined life, and to return to the simple, healthful, and natural life by which the Indians largely lived before and after they came under the domination of the Spanish padres." (James, 1907:12)

While approaching Native Americans as "noble savages/children of the earth" in a paternalistic manner, James conversely expounded on their high "moral, poetical, and spiritual qualities" (James, 1908:25) and what the dominant culture could learn from them as regards the positive effects of sleeping out of doors, the maintenance of healthy and vigorous bodies, and the benefits of nasal breathing to name only a few. In spite of his stereotypical thinking, and sweeping generalizations, evidenced in his comments regarding Native Americans' behavior as "simple, almost colorless way of expressing themselves" (James, 1908:26), he firmly established in the minds of the reader that there existed a close and intimate relationship between human life (Indian) and nature, hence "primal spirituality."

In his conclusion, he wrote "I thank you Dusky Brother of the Plains, ... in recalling to me some primitive principles which civilization ignores at its peril." (James, 1908:280)

George Wharton James and other popular writers just after the turn of the century, helped to create not only a tourist interest but a popular philosophy, compounded with the later influence of Fred Harvey establishments in the 1920s, and accesiblity to "Real Indians" through the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific Railroads. "Exotica" in our own back yard!

And so returning to the New Age movement, the current revival of romanticized notions around Native American spirituality fits neatly into a void that is left by the lack of effectiveness of organized religion to meet the "New Ager's" contemporary desires for ritual and ceremony. Unfortunately, the potential is there for the New Age to represent a storehouse of magical thinking, in addition to the presence of a dark side which involves the occult in all of its manifestations of black magic such as ritual animal sacrifice, etc..

Those ceremonies, lifted from Native American culture and spirituality, and their associated symbols are numerous; for example, the organization by and participation of Anglos in sweat lodge ceremonies without gender constraints; Anglo participation of both men and women in Sun Dances; and Anglo constructed Blessing Way ceremonies, to name only a few. A major problem with the appropriation of Native American ceremonies/rituals and their associated symbols is that they have simply been reduced to an extension of Anglo interpretative views, while lacking Native American enculturation, as represented in the Los Angeles advertisement for "Psycho Shamanism, a blending of traditional psychotherapy with Shamanic ritual and body work offering a sacred synergy

for healing and transformation to take place." (The Light Pages, 1992:23)

The above ad represents a shift, as Kehoe pointed out, of the altered emphasis (from a Native American context), of ritual healing, formerly being applied to the body as having moved into the appropriated context of healing as applied to the mind or as the ad puts it, "Psycho-Shamanism."

The Awareness Journal, a Tucson based newspaper, calling itself "A monthly newspaper for human potential in service to the planet" carried an ad in November 1995 for Shamanic Ceremonies which would include Drum making, Spirit Horse (journey of manifestation), Doctoring Circle, and Drumming Circle. The leader, calling himself an "American Shaman," stated he was of Mongolian heritage and Native American lineage. No prices were given although the ad also included the words "Authentic, Powerful, Experiential," in case the reader needed convincing. This type of "Native American" or "Intergalactic Shamanism" experience abounds in most New Age literature in the rush to capitalize on "pop-Indian spirituality."

STEREOTYPICAL SYMBOLOGY

As we know from posed, turn-of-the-century photographs, an Indian could be identified as such if he had a feather "war bonnet" on, even if he was from another tribe, the "archetypal Indian." Years ago in Santa Fe when differing indigenous groups from the pueblos came together to sell their handwares in the Indian market, they were told to wear feather headdresses so that the Anglos could tell they were "Indian." This kind of stereotypical thinking carries over to today in that Plains Indian symbols are regarded by Anglos as being most Indian. The same holds true in the selection of the symbol of the Medicine Wheel.

I would have to agree with Alice Kehoe that it was Hyemeyohsts Storm that introduced the symbology of the wheel in his creation of "pop Indian spirituality" (as Kehoe phrases it) as put forth in his book entitled Seven Arrows. In this modification of a Cheyenne Medicine shield (although Kehoe attributes the circle motif as having come from wooden hoops used in a Cheyenne game), Storm leapfrogged into a whole dimension of concocted Native American spirituality. Interestingly enough, an article in the 1973 Journal, The American Anthropologist, had this to say about Mr. Storm: "Reviewing Mr. Storm's book requires attention to two kinds of problems- some moral and some scholarly. Of these, the

scholarly problems are more easily disposed of. According to the dust jacket, "Seven Arrows is the first book about the ancient Ways of the Plains People to be written entirely by an Indian." " This is patently untrue." The reviewer, John Moore, goes on to document other books written by recognized Cheyenne and then continues, "The book also claims to explain the meanings of the religious symbols used by the Cheyenne in their cosmology, in the Sun Dance, in shield - making, and in traditional stories... In Storm's version, two rather minor elements of Cheyenne religion have been elevated to major significance - medicine wheels and shields. I have never heard of a medicine wheel in current religious practice, although Grinnel wrote about them. Shields, however, are still made, although it has always been strictly a male privilege. No Cheyenne of my acquaintance has heard of the "Women's.. Shields" and "Childrens' Shields" mentioned by Storm." (Storm, 1972:8) In conclusion the reviewer commented, "Several books would be required to correct the compounded inaccuracies of Storm's version of Cheyenne tradition. The frustration of even attempting to do this has prompted a widespread outrage among religious Cheyennes. The calmest comment that I have received from a Cheyenne is from a member of the Tribal Council who described the book as "complete B.S. from cover to cover."

(Moore, 1973:1040)

And so coming from an extremely convoluted Cheyenne origin, the Medicine Wheel symbol emerged, gained its place as a prominent Plains symbol (within Anglo pop culture), was then appropriated and redefined to be manipulated and used for just about anything. The late, but nevertheless controversial Sun Bear, claiming to be a Chippewa Medicine Man\seer and his helper Wabun reinterpreted the wheel in their 1980 writings called, The Medicine Wheel, Earth Astrology. The wheel or circle exists, as Sun Bear represents it, as a teaching tool in order to become better acquainted with movement and change (or life cycles) as reflected in the meanings of the different moons, totems, plants, minerals and animals. A simplistic reduction of the symbology would be that the wheel represents a continuum of life in a back-to-the-earth approach within the transformative context and power of the "magic circle." (Sun Bear, 1980:5) The term "Medicine Wheel" has since had astrological implications in New Age references but more frequently the wheel is used more in the construction of space for ceremony or in reference to the four cardinal directions.

CONTEMPORARY NEW AGE RITUAL WITHIN THE WHEEL

New Age literature is rich with mention of "Wheels" particularly in relationship to sites for ceremony. One prominent name which has appeared (1992) in the Arizona Light, a New Age newspaper, is that of Meria Heller. Her name caught my attention since she was advertising a Medicine Wheel Ceremony in the Phoenix, Arizona area which was held bi-weekly for \$5. I contacted her and set up a phone interview to get a sense of what the wheel meant to her and how she interpreted its use. Initially, she said that she was no longer holding the public wheel ceremonies but would still do private ceremonies only if she knew who the participating people were. Public wheels would be invitational only. Her reasons for this, as she explained it were she wanted to know that those who were in the circle were coming from a "good" place and truly in "white light" because not everyone was, even though they might claim to be. In Meria's words "I now think of the wheel in terms of the Universal Medicine Wheel due to the circle symbol and its frequency in other cultures. I see it as the new peace symbol of the nineties, whether it is used to create a space for meetings, or as a space for celebration or for anything." (Heller, personal communication: 2-1-96)

Any wheel that she constructs is usually a thirteen-stone wheel, without spokes. However my impression was that when she

did a wheel ceremony, the invited group of people assembled together to form the wheel. Meria stated that she used the number thirteen based on the belief that it is accurate with Cheyenne tradition.

At this point I think it is important to mention again that there were no references found while doing this research regarding the Cheyenne using Medicine Wheels. Possibly in prehistoric times or before anyone could remember there was use by the ancestors of the Cheyenne or Plains people.

Meria, however claims that an old Cheyenne contacted her and stated that her number of stones was appropriate. When asked about the type of ceremony that she conducted, I received the following information: "In a public wheel, the ceremony usually consists of the following parts and is more like a class, with each person paying a small fee to participate:

1. The group forms itself into a circle.
2. Each participant "smudges" each other.
3. Meria (calling herself a Consultant\Facilitator and Reiki Master) speaks to them about the wheel.
4. A "talking stick" is passed around to each person so that each may speak whatever is on his\her mind.
5. Based on intuitive knowledge received from listening, the focus is then placed on healing in the group or on

teaching something. During this time Meria may sing songs, as in "The Circle of Life" or facilitate the releasing of "old stuff." In these ceremonies, she claims that there has been a spontaneous healing of disease which she attributes to the energy of the wheel and to the person requesting it. (i.e. their ability to heal themselves)

When asked about the borrowing of the wheel symbol she stated that its use was not considered sacred by Native Americans and that she left well enough alone of something that she did consider as belonging to Native Americans such as the sweat lodge ceremony. Again, since the circle is a universal symbol, she said that it does not represent a form of inappropriate borrowing in her interpretation.

In concluding the interview with Meria Heller, she stated "I don't want to be clumped in with New Age people; I don't consider myself a New Ager because I don't agree with 80% of it. I consider myself a "New Thinker." She continued with, "Much of the New Age movement is suspect, such as the occult, drug-induced hallucinations and the B.S.. The New Age movement, otherwise known as the new religion, is the new opium for the masses; same old stuff with a new name." (ibid) She warned of plastic Medicine Men and stressed that INTENT is

the keyword. Ms. Heller has a published booklet entitled The Medicine Wheel based on Sun Bear's medicine wheel, a video entitled "The Thirteen Stones of the Universal Wheel" with a companion workbook, and a soon to be published book called, Reinventing the Wheel Universally. In her words, "Nature is my Church." (ibid)

Richard Dannelley's popular book entitled Sedona, Power Spot Vortex and Medicine Wheel Guide placed Sedona on the map for all those seekers of wheel-inspired encounters. As he put it, "The legends of the Human Race tell of many powerful mountains and spirit wells: places where the children of the Earth have found healing, and the keys of inner knowledge. It should surprise no one that modern Americans have discovered a place of magic in the new land. The energy of the vortices affects our minds and bodies on the deepest levels: within our beings, in the place of silent knowledge, we know that Sedona is a place of magical transformation. All things are part of an "energy matrix". Native American Mystics refer to this matrix as the "Web of Life." The web is multidimensional: it is a form of Spirit-Intelligent energy. The Sedona vortices are but a few of the many Power Spots which are tied together in this Web of Life." (Dannelly, 1989:dust jacket) Notice the "children of the earth" reference and the correlation with

modern day Americans.

The Center for the New Age in Sedona (which represents the hub for New Age information) advertises everything from aura cleansing to angelic healing clinics, as well as free vortex maps, and medicine wheels. (The Awareness Journal, 1995:17) However Sedona's very own compendium of information is found in Sedona, Journal of Emergence, which lists many of the "transformational services" that can be found there such as "life path readings done by earth Medicine Woman, using power\animal symbology." (Sedona, 1992:99)

Reverend Bill Samsel, Minister of "The Church of the Law of One in Sedona" at the Center for the New Age, leads or facilitates Medicine Wheel ceremonies every Wednesday evening, at no charge. He is of Kiowa descent and interprets the wheel "As a symbol representing unity and the earth itself; I use it as a tool to further the beliefs of Black Elk in that all races need to work together as stewards of the earth rather than consumers in order to make it into the next century." (Samsel, personal communication: 3-7-96) Samsel's ceremonies are usually within a twenty-eight stone circle, (consistent with Lakota beliefs) with a fire pit in the middle. Here "People re-connect with Mother Earth or nature but even more so with the fire in the pit. It represents something primal

that draws us back. This sense of primalness transcends time and touches us. Prayers are said out loud then we put offerings like sage or sweetgrass in a prayer bundle with tobacco into the fire. The fire transmutes the energy, taking it all to the spirit world." (ibid) Some of the purposes of the ceremony, he explained are to receive empowerment, to get back in touch with Nature, to respect one another, to recognize the unity and interconnectedness of all life and to think twice about leaving the ceremony and throwing trash out of the car window. When asked about other uses of the wheel in Sedona he answered "There are two types of wheels being used: one is a circle with two lines drawn through from North to South and from East to West to represent the four cardinal directions; and the other is simply the circle with a fire pit. The uses vary; they may be sites for meditation, or prayer wheels, or sites for full moon ceremonies or even Celtic rituals." (ibid)

The ommittance of the other directions of zenith and nadir or above and below are omitted, as further examples of how the wheel is altered into the thinking modality, (adoption and adaption) of the dominant culture.

Nicolas Mann's book Sedona - Sacred Earth, had this to say about wheels "Now, in some places the proliferation of

medicine wheels in the Sedona area has almost reached epidemic proportions and has detracted from the natural beauty of the place. While there is certainly a case to be made for spontaneity, it should be remembered that medicine circles were originally built by those who possessed knowledge of the subtle currents of the land, of proportion, of measure and astronomy and the ability to maintain the ceremonial purpose which kept the site alive. If these qualities are lacking it may be preferable to keep the original nature of the land intact." (Mann, 1989:88)

The proliferation of wheels in Sedona has caused great concern regarding the removal of rocks and rearrangement of the natural landscape, echoing Mann's warning. Much has been written on this to describe the problems presented for the local residents of Sedona, compounded with the concerns of the varying factions of organized religion and the Forest Service. Chapter Four will look at the problems created by what I refer to as that of mixed-use.

SUMMARY

In summary, we have noted the cycles of revival of romanticized Native American or "Western Primitivist"

theory, coupled with the multiplicity of current use regarding wheels. The symbol had been reinterpreted by those who use it as a generic vehicle for ritual ceremony and placed within an Anglo context, without a standardized meaning. The uses could very well be invented by the holder of the ceremony, as those interviewed pointed out in their comments that the wheel could be used for just about anything. The concensus of opinion, in all those interviewed, is that there is a great deal of power manifested within the wheel or circle, no matter how it is used. However, there is no general agreement as to whether the use constitutes appropriation of a sacred symbol, as those using it claim that the wheel is either a universal symbol or simply a circle.

The symbol of the wheel has indeed become the counterpart of the 60s "Peace Symbol," but more than that, the wheel has, in a sense, become the very symbol of the New Age. The syncretism of ritual is a blatant rejection of the dogma of the Christian Church's claim that there is only one way. The New Age offers many paths for the seeker of transformation and spiritual experience.

CHAPTER 4. PROBLEMS OF MIXED-USE

The presence of ancient "Boulder Configurations" on the earth carries with it an inherent responsibility, which is to protect them from vandalism and destruction, whether or not their origins and uses are fully understood by either the dominant culture or the indigenous culture; conversely, when one group significantly alters the landscape in the construction of wheels on protected land, an equal number of problems arise. In this chapter we will look at some of the difficulties created in the ceremonial use of the wheels in particular relationship to the land they are on, as well as examine the problems of mixed use.

No where are these problems more in evidence than in two Medicine Wheel sites previously mentioned, namely Sedona, Arizona and The Bighorn National Forest in Wyoming.

First, we will look at Sedona in the years following the Mayan Calendric observance called the Harmonic Convergence which brought approximately 10,000 New Agers and Metaphysical believers to the red rock country.

SEDONA, ARIZONA

In 1991, The Los Angeles Times published an article entitled "U.S. Forest Service in Arizona Is Stuck Between a Rock and Religious Freedom." Bob Gillies, the Sedona District Ranger for the Forest Service had this to say:

"In some areas these medicine wheels are all over the place. The wheels destroy what people are there to enjoy. One of the biggest, measuring at least 200 feet across, is on Schnebly Hill near town. To build it, New Agers disturbed rows of malpais rock that had settled through centuries of rain into a rippling pattern on the hill. Now it's a sequence of circles, crosses and things like that." Gillies and his seven rangers patrol 225,000 acres. "It was a unique and beautiful feature in the red rock country and they destroyed it." (Banks, 1991:A24) The added construction of Native American - type sweat lodges on the same Federal land has compounded the problem, with the Forest Service tearing down any structure found as well as any wheel located, only to have them reappear again. The New Agers, according to The Los Angeles Times article, claim that Schnebly Hill "has been designated a sacred site by the Native American Church, meaning that under Federal law it can be used by American Indians for a sacred purpose. Whether a prayer wheel, or sweat lodge is legal or

not depends on who builds it." (ibid) Gillies' response was that no tribe had asked the Forest Service to designate Schnebly Hill a sacred site, saying "We respect laws governing Native American religious sites, but we've checked with local tribes on all these things and haven't found one that it is their doing." (ibid)

The obvious argument here is that if Schnebly Hill was designated a sacred site for ceremonial use by Native Americans, it would not necessarily follow that any one else could use the site, much less construct duplicative wheels.

Questions and claims of "Sacredness" are deeply interwoven within the problems of mixed-use, construction and destruction of the wheels. In the Sedona terrain, wheels are being constructed by the dominant culture, claiming that this was\is sacred space to Native Americans of the past and present. (see Mann 1989) The landscape is being altered in the name of sacredness, while disregarding sacredness, with New Agers claiming that they have the right to practice religious freedom, in spite of the fact that they are violating Federal law with the constructions. Their acknowledgement of sacredness, attributed to Native American use, seems reason enough to respectfully leave the environment alone, rather than profaning the space.

A subsequent article "Bad Vibes Rock New Age Mecca" in The Los Angeles Times (Chandler, 1991:A1), brought attention to varying factions of the towns' population with a quote from Joe Berna, a Southern Baptist minister; "The New Age Mecca... it's a spiritual battleground! Believers should not mix such things as psychic visions, crystal wearing and goddess worship with New Testament Christianity. New Agers are looking in the wrong place and finding the wrong god." (Chandler, 1991:A27) According to Reuben Snake, Director of the Native American Religious Freedom Project, "New Agers are pseudo-Indians exploiting our culture and trying to imitate Indian religion. We want the land and our customs undisturbed." (ibid) Theodore J. Smith Sr., Tribal Chairman of the Northern Tonto Apaches and Yavapai Tribe of Camp Verde added "Do not deface or pollute the air or the ground. Go in and do the spiritual things, pray to God and then move on." (ibid) Enter another faction - The Environmentalists, as represented in the local Sierra Club. They were quoted as having initiated a lawsuit against the Forest Rangers in order to block the building of a campground project which the Rangers said was necessary to accommodate rising tourism due to vortex and wheel interest. District Ranger Gillies was interviewed for a second time,

stating further concerns regarding the New Agers and the smudging that had occurred, obliterating prehistoric symbols and paintings on cave walls. He acknowledged the finding of coyotes ritually sacrificed in Boynton Canyon and questioned the "freedom of religion" issue saying, "I'm not here to debate their beliefs. No one is denying them the right to meditate. But a Medicine Wheel is just as unacceptable as if someone were to erect a Star of David or a cross or spray "Jesus Saves" out there...This is everybody's land - not just yours or mine. My concern is for resource protection." (ibid) The fact that in 1991, one third of every dollar derived was from tourist money adds complexity to the Sedona landscape. One local resident summed it up by saying, "Sedona may not be sacred ground, but it sure is fertile." (ibid)

THE BIGHORN MOUNTAINS, WYOMING

The Bighorn National Forest Medicine Wheel site in Wyoming, represents more variations of mixed-use problems which were addressed in 1989 in "Sacred Site Or Tourist Attraction", an article which appeared in The Washington Post. Divergent interests, as in Sedona, were represented in the article. They were as follows:

1. The concerns of the Forest Service in its position to protect the wilderness and site, known as The Medicine Wheel National Historic Landmark.
2. Increased tourism creating the need for some type of tourist information building and road widening.
3. The desire of New Agers to have access to the wheel.
4. Native American outrage at the invasion of privacy during ceremonial ritual.
5. Rancher interests, primarily regarding grazing rights in the vicinity of the wheel.
6. Business concerns as represented by the timber industry.

Out of necessity, the Forest Service had to build a fence around the 80 foot wheel. After conducting an environmental assesment of the location in 1988, the Service proposed building a visitor information center, widening the road on the ridge leading to the wheel and building a viewing ramp. The purpose of the fence was to protect the wheel from ongoing vandalism as well as to keep out "oddballs, like the woman whom rangers found one morning sleeping nude in a foil-like blanket within the fence. She said she had been born there 300 years ago." (O'Gara, 1989:A6)

District Ranger Peter Chidsey was quoted as saying, "When

Native Americans conduct ceremonies here, the general public gawks and takes pictures." (ibid) The response from the Northern Cheyenne, Crow and Northern Arapaho was that there should be absolutely no improvements made to accommodate tourists and that furthermore, there should be guarantees for ceremonial privacy. As the Chairman of the Northern Cheyenne Cultural Protection Board, Bill Tallbull stated, "Here you have a spiritual environment including plant life and animal life, so it concerns us the Forest Service is planning a timber sale on the mountain. In addition, the proposed viewing platform is like building a platform in one of your churches that looked down on you during your church time." (ibid)

By 1990, the problems created by scores of New Agers who insisted on constructing wheels, complete with spokes and cairns, on nearby land and trespassing on the Bighorn Wheel were so persistent that a general outcry ensued, according to Mary Randolph acting as Public Affairs Officer for the Wheel between 1988-1995. (Randolph, personal communication: 3-15-96) "At that time there was no law enforcement and we had a big problem with people constructing wheels and tying offerings like undergarments or just about anything to the fence. We had to put a stop to all of this. It became apparent that there might be a major confrontation if nothing was done."

(ibid)

The position of the business community (known as The Bighorn Mountains Medicine Wheel Association) was that the wheel should "Be open at all times, for all people" without any special privileges for contemporary Native Americans since the wheels were constructed by "the ancient ones." (ibid) Increasing pressure from this group, allied with business interests in the nearby town of Lovell, Wyoming, added to the need for a second Environmental Assessment.

The second Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Medicine Wheel National Historic Landmark for the Protection Project was performed in 1991, offering a variety of six alternatives to propitiate the differing interests. The mission statement was as follows:

"The goals of this project focus on correcting specific problems at the Wheel. These include:

1. Develop appropriate access to various areas of the Landmark.
2. Protect archaeological resources.
3. Recognize and protect American Indian spiritual and cultural values." (Todd, 1991:titlepage)

Due to the Forest Service having received over 400 comments, with the majority urging sensitivity to Native American

issues, it was decided by the Forest Service to disregard the Environmental Impact Statement, explaining that it was "Dropped because it was done by a bureaucratic process without consultation and involvement with Native Americans."

(Randolph, phone interview: 3-15-96)

What followed next was that the Forest Service stepped back and created a "Memorandum of Agreement for Short-Term Management of the Site," and proceeded to arrange for consultations among six differing organizations, including Native American interests until a consensus of agreement was reached as regards the following, hereafter referred to as "Programmic Agreements."

1. The Bighorn Wheel was recognized to have spiritual significance, hence "sacredness."
2. The hiring of a staff of "Interpreters" or docent-type educators would meet each group of tourists and walk with them to the site, showing due respect, while explaining the significance of the wheel based on each interpreter's respective tribal view. There is approximately a 50% ratio of Anglos versus Native American "Interpreters."
3. No car could drive up to the wheel and stop or park there. Due to the fact that the same road accesses 10,000

acres of forest land, the road had to remain open to the public but would be closed during any ceremonial time.

4. Requests by Native Americans for private ceremonial time was given as follows:

- a) three days before each equinox and solstice;
- b) an additional twelve days would be given during the year based on requests of recognized tribes only.

Native Americans would be the only ones to have access to the wheel with all others having to stay outside of the fence and locked gate.

5. There would be no timber sales for the next five years.

6. No cattle would be permitted within the area of the wheel for grazing.

When interviewing Ms. Randolph, District Ranger, I asked her when the Forest Service was first approached by Native Americans to have access for ceremony. She responded that "The first request was around the Fourth of July, 1993, by a Cheyenne for a Vision Quest. The other uses that I know of were for other Vision Quests as well as a piercing ceremony or Sun Dance. Usually the requests come from the Arapaho or Shoshoni but other tribes visiting from the East or South sometimes ask for 15 minutes of prayer time. We did have a

group of Shoshoni school children in the wheel to learn about a ceremony, more in a teaching context. And now, I would say that 99% of all the offerings tied to the fence are legitimate. There are no more problems of inappropriate offerings left by Anglos, or vandalism of Native American offerings due the close scrutiny of the Forest Service."
(ibid)

And what of Native American use of the Bighorn Wheel prior to six years ago? Prior to the time of fence construction and the creation of The Medicine Wheel National Historic Landmark, it is presumed that there was use by Native American groups or individuals; The creation of the status of Landmark was certainly of no benefit to those Native Americans wanting to have unlimited ceremonial access.

An "Interpreter" is available from 7 A.M. to 7 P.M. seven days a week, starting July 1 until October, to greet each visitor and instruct, while making sure each person stays on the path. A small structure and area for parking were established at "Five Springs Saddle," about a mile and a half from the wheel. This is the location where the "Interpreter" starts to walk with the visitor. The road is generally closed during the other times of the year due to snow.

A plan is still in process to develop programming for the development of historic properties. Whether the Bighorn site will additionally be designated as a Traditional Cultural Property or as an Historic District has yet to be decided.

The Forest Service has made a case study of the wheel based on the problems of the past six years, calling it "Mobilizing People To Act." It includes a video of the Forest Service Supervisor and the current District Ranger discussing how the problems were resolved in an effort to accommodate all the varying interests, not the least of which were Native American ceremonial demands. An Ethnographic Report will be released next year concerning the uses of the wheel by the differing tribes. It is currently underway by Campbell & Boggs, ethnographers from Missoula, Montana.

SUMMARY

In summary, we have looked at some of the concerns of mixed-use and the mediating position that has been placed on the shoulders of the U.S. Forest Service which historically has not always been friendly to Native American concerns, particularly in the areas of forest and land management. The problems of sacred Native American sites and the demands for

ceremonial use have been no small problem, within the context of land management. Since this thesis concerns itself with matters pertaining to Medicine Wheels, no claim is made here to be an exhaustive study of the Forest Service management policies, in so far as the fact is that we have looked at only two locations and how they have been handled.

Each wheel that exists in the northern United States as well as Canada, exhibits significant functional, temporal and ethnic differences; and "As such each must be perceived and managed as the unique, non-duplicated cultural feature of high public, cultural, and scientific interest and significance that it is." (Brumley, 1988:98)

However, the question remains, what will happen to other ancient wheel and boulder effigy sites, whether documented or not, as regards protection? The dangers of vandalism cannot be overemphasized since the efforts of only one or two people can all but obliterate a wheel or stone effigy. It is hoped that these "configurations" will be treated with all due respect.

CHAPTER 5. ETHICAL CONCERNS

This chapter will focus on ethical concerns, in the larger picture of one culture borrowing a spiritually significant symbol from another culture. As an extension of ethical concerns, the following questions need to be addressed:

1. Why does one culture borrow symbols and or rituals to enhance its own spirituality?
2. When is the taking of a symbol deemed inappropriate?
3. Is the status of sacredness transferable to the "other" or lost?
4. Does the archaic nature of a symbol diminish its relevancy in a modern-day context?

BORROWING AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

The ethical concerns around "appropriating" historically significant, Native American material objects have increased during the twentieth century as opposed to the times of the

1700s and 1800s, eras which focused on the subjugation and domination of indigenous peoples, with large inventories of "artifacts" being transported to the museums of France, Germany or to the curio cabinets of private collectors and later the Smithsonian. It is impossible to separate Native American objects of spiritual significance from those called objects d'arte. Even though some would still claim that the era of subjugation and domination are still in process, which may well be, we will nevertheless pursue the following discourse on the thesis topic of sacredness moving in the direction of profanity.

Certainly all cultures have borrowed from one another but when culture specific ritual symbols, ceremonies, and religion are actively replicated, the question of ethic needs to prevail. This is moving one step further from the taking of objects for the curio cabinet.

The use of another's ritual is a highly complex problem, with all the inherent possibilities of any judgement sounding moralistic, but yet here is an issue involving cultural integrity and conversely the lack of cultural integrity. Ask any Native American person (or tribe) if he\she feels encroached upon spiritually, whether through imitative ceremonies, ritual or intrusion. Is this the latest domain

that is "up for grabs" by the dominant culture?

In "Psst! Wanna Buy a Ceremony?" (Americans Before Columbus, 1992:8), the question of ethics was addressed by a group of prominent Native Americans in a publication of the National Indian Youth Council, calling some of the contemporary non-Indian groups, "Worse than Indian Wannabes--those masquerading as Indian healers and spiritual guides who sell sacred objects and traditional herbs and charge fees for conducting sacred or phony Indian ceremonies." (ibid)

The Lakota Times was quoted in the above article, saying "Sacred rites of the Lakota are performed sacrelegiously for a naive and eager public seeking enlightenment but in reality merely getting their wallets lightened." According to Avis Little Eagle, "Pipe ceremonies, sweatlodge ceremonies and vision quests, along with the Lakota Hunka, or adoption ceremony, are in demand by a New Age generation." (ibid) Based on The Lakota Times information, the leaders of the ceremonies are the Deer Tribe's Metis Medicine Society, The Pan American Indian Association, Medicine Wheel Circle or Gathering, American Indian Church, and Split Feather Council, although they change names and locations often.

"The Deer Tribe claims to have Cherokee ancestral roots, but Cherokee elders have denounced the group. Its practices

combine a mix of Indian spiritual beliefs with crystals and even Buddhist, Sufi and martial arts teachings. Its leader, Harley "Swiftdeer" Reagan claims to be a Cherokee medicine man, but principal Chief, Wilma Mankiller added "This man does not even remotely represent the Cherokee Nation. I'm just tired of people going around representing themselves as healers and medicine men. We hear of it all the time, and no one is bothering to check their credibility or credentials." (ibid)

Some so-called healers may in fact have been taught by medicine people. "This does not give them the go-ahead to be a teacher themselves or the right to claim to be medicine men," according to Oren Lyons, a faithkeeper of the Onandaga Nation and founder of the Elders Circle." (ibid)

Rudy Martin (Tewa-Navajo-Apache), in the same article, brought up the issue that it isn't only non-Indians that are out there peddling spiritual teachings. "Why are some American Indians doing this? They say they "had a vision" and they are sharing the knowledge. Sharing? Maybe, but in most cases all they are doing is selling. These people suddenly become "spiritual leaders" or "medicine persons" overnight. Real medicine people don't refer to themselves as such because they know it takes years, a lifetime in fact, to gain the knowledge. I think non-

Indians who are seeking guidance often mistakenly believe that every American Indian they meet has a special connection to the Creator and is all knowing. Unfortunately, this attention in many cases strokes the egos of some of our people....if they were qualified to teach (usually they are not) that would be one thing but you can't gain this wisdom on a weekend excursion to the mountains or out of a book." (ibid)

Marilyn Youngbird, (Crow, Cheyenne and Hidatsa) explained the motives of taking another's ritual with great clarity in her observation that, "There are many people in America who are seeking. We're all searching for our roots. Those who don't know who they are, are hungry. Instead of learning who they are, they take, and it's not right. Taking someone else's ritual is like taking a friend's dress thinking it will make you beautiful." (ibid)

This response from Marilyn Youngbird, I believe, answers the question as to why rituals and their symbols are being borrowed; the seekers are spiritually hungry and as Anglos within the dominant culture possess diverse Euro-cultural origins. There exists a sense of disconnectedness from ancestral belief systems, frequently including a lack of kinship ties extending even into the immediate family, compounded with a lack of connectedness to specific location

or "home," meaning not just the earth but the specific land of origin. All this adds up to a lack of identity. While looking for external solutions to a spiritual and identity deficit (internal problems), New Agers and seekers are dangerously open to plastic Indian and non-Indian medicine men\women. Access to bogus medicine people is easy due to marketing done through New Age literature and\or New Age bookstores. Looking at the best sellers list is a good indicator of just how strong this spiritual hunger is, with identity concerns following a close second.

WHAT IS INAPPROPRIATE BORROWING?

"If we are to preserve our ceremonies and keep them pure, then we must speak up. Without the purity of our rituals and spiritual practices, then I am afraid that there is no point in doing them," warned Marlyn Youngbird in "Psst! Wanna Buy a Ceremony?" Herein lies the crux of the problem of inappropriateness. The use of a spiritually loaded symbol by someone outside of that culture, particularly in a ritualistic context, constitutes a desecration of a spiritual tradition. Within the context of cultural property, meaning built-in world view, values and belief systems, at its very core exists

the same ownership of spiritual property. The taking of a symbol, layered with spiritual meanings, cannot ever be appropriately used by the "other" in a different cultural setting.

The argument that so-called "medicine people" and New Agers use is that Native American spirituality and knowledge needs to be shared in order for all to work together, as stewards of the earth, while denying the necessity for spiritual property to be private.

The fact that such a blatant lack of respect regarding ceremony could exist, has caused a more militant posturing by some Native Americans. In a prior article entitled "Spiritual Hucksterism," Ward Churchill interviewed several tribal spokespeople, asking them what they thought about those selling ceremonies. Russell Means, by far and away the most militant, challenged Sun Bear with, "Since when is the sweat not an Indian ceremony? It's not "based on" any Indian Ceremony, it is an Indian Ceremony. So is his (referring to Sun Bear, still living at that time) so-called "vision quest," the pipe, his use of the pipe, sage and all the rest of it. Sun Bear is a liar, and so are all the rest of them who are doing what he's doing. All of them know good and well that the only reason anybody is buying their product is because of

this image of "Indianness" they project." (Churchill, 1990:96)

Janet McCloud, a longtime fishing rights activist and elder of the Nisqually Nation, summed up her views with the following: "First, they came to take our land and water, then our fish and game. Then they wanted our mineral resources and, to get them, they tried to take our governments. Now they want our religions as well. All of a sudden, we have alot of unscrupulous idiots running around saying they're medicine people. And they'll sell you a sweat lodge ceremony for 50 bucks. It's not only wrong, it's obscene. Indians don't sell their spirituality to anybody for any price. This is just another in a very long series of thefts from Indian people and in some ways, this is the worst one yet." (ibid)

This theft of ceremony however, is very insidious in that it is glossed over by a genuine desire of many of the New Agers to find enlightenment, without considering the ethical ramifications. Romanticized notions within the dominant culture that Native Americans possess primal spiritual knowledge outwardly resemble respect, but in reality when rituals and symbols are up for "grabs," the use becomes both overtly and covertly disrespectful; that is, overtly disrespectful to the original owners of the "spiritual

property" and covertly disrespectful to the users, in their taking and in their use.

WHEN AN OBJECT IS APPROPRIATED, SUCH AS THE SYMBOL OF THE MEDICINE WHEEL, IS THE STATUS OF SACRED TRANSFERABLE OR LOST?

The answers to the above question will be examined in the following paragraphs, while looking at the shared meanings within each social world, that is, within Native American culture as contrasted with that of the dominant society.

The vision experience, whether dream vision or waking vision, mediated a sense of transcendent power to the Plains Indian peoples. "Migrations in experience between the everyday world and realms of transcendent meaning are made possible through symbols. In its briefest definition, a symbol may be understood as anything that evokes in experience one or more levels of transcendence. Symbols form the passageways between the world of ordinary experience and worlds of transcendent meaning. But what is symbolic for a person or culture is known only through investigating the particularities and history of the specific group or individual. Such investigations usually reveal the presence of paradigms of symbolic form which evoke in the experience of many people a common sense of

transcendence." (Harrod, 1987:25)

Aside from having a shared world view, with all the inherent expectancy of receiving power, either through vision experiences or tranference from another, is the fact that Native Peoples went through a great deal of hardship, deprivation, and frequently self torture in order to prepare for such an experience. These forms of preparation could include a life-long apprenticeship for those called to be "medicine people," as healers or seers of the future. For other indigenous peoples, however, rigorous or extended fasting occured with ritual purification or even more extreme forms of deprivation and pain such as participation in the Sun Dance in order to induce a vision or spiritual encounter. Physical and spiritual preparation and individual transcendence through ritual dominated the Plains belief system. (ibid)

Factions within Anglo culture, however, looking for the "quick fix," and possessing an entirely different world view, seem to think that the use of a Native American symbol, such as the medicine wheel, can carry with it the right to adopt, syncretize and conduct ritual in a completely alien environment, and yet carry the same power. The status of sacredness, derived from its Native American origin, is lost

in the duplication although those appropriating the symbol may profess to create their own sacred space in the recombination of its use. If the space was referred to as a "sacred circle or prayer circle" rather than as a "wheel," there would be no reference to Native American sacred property, hence no disrespect would be shown.

The symbol of the Medicine Wheel, (with spokes) within an Anglo context could mean differing things to different people, as well as have no meaning at all since it is not anchored in place, historically. There is no shared sense of meaning because the wheel is not a spiritually significant symbol within the dominant culture, lacking a tradition of use, as Harrod observed, other than perhaps offering a vague resemblance to the old peace symbol of the sixties or maybe a Mercedes-Benz emblem. What, for instance, would the Star of David mean to a non-Judaic person? Probably very little if that person was from a differing culture, possessing a different spiritual paradigm.

Ritual purification and/or deprivation are not part of the preparation that the New Age followers carry out in their quests for enlightenment, except for those random participants (Anglo) in the Sun Dance, which could be another topic unto itself regarding appropriateness.

A general sense of expectancy does not exist within Anglo culture to have a continuum of either waking or dream visions, nor is it common experience to move between the worlds of daily living and spiritual encounter, frequently through a talking object such as a rock or animal. A wholistic approach to spirituality, meaning everything is permeated with spirituality and deserving of respect, is generally lacking within the dominant society. It is more common to find that spiritual beliefs are relegated to a niche referred to as "religion, sometimes observable on Saturdays or Sundays." This contrasts sharply with Native American world view.

Indigenous ceremony, ritual and spiritual beliefs can be compared to indigenous art, in that it has been objectified by the dominant culture as a commodity to be bought or taken. Kubler's observations on art and subjugation parallel what is occurring today, only viewed in a slightly different way; all that is needed is to substitute the word "religion" wherever the word "art" appears.

"Enemy works of art are destroyed during cultural conflicts. The triumph of one culture over another is usually marked by the virtual cessation of the art of the vanquished and its replacement by the art of the conqueror. When the offending

objects and monuments finally cease to correspond to any living behavior, they become symbolically inert. They then are "safe" to play with in recombinations, emptied of previous vital meanings, as in tourist souvenirs, antiquarian reconstructions, or archaizing revivals." (Kubler, 1962:9)

If we, as Anglos, undermine Native American ritual, what will the "other" be left with? Is there nothing that the dominant culture will designate "sacred" or "inviolable?"

DOES THE ARCHAIC NATURE OF A SYMBOL DIMINISH THE MODERN-DAY CONTEXT?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to focus on two separate issues; first the actual physical sites and secondly, on the representational symbol of the wheel.

The fact that the wheel has an ancient history does not diminish its importance or relevancy, in spite of past arguments, made particularly by big business interests in the vicinity of the Bighorn Wheel in Wyoming. A similar statement demonstrating the ridiculousness of this argument might be to say that Stonehenge in Great Britain is of little contemporary importance due to its antiquity. The Medicine Wheel sites, whether in Wyoming, Montana, Alberta or Saskatchewan, are of

the same importance as petroglyphs, boulder effigies, rock art, the famous Mississippian mounds or any other mark left on the earth by the ancestors of Native American peoples and as such need to be observed with respect and regarded as "treasures," not to be plundered! They are visible links to the past, connecting Native Americans to the land of their ancestors, and a part of all that is sacred. The proof of sacredness is in the evidence of offerings at these sites.

A symbol, usually represented on a support or material object, is generally archaic, in order to carry an historical, culture-specific meaning. A cross, for instance, is rich with meaning to those of the Christian faith, whereas for a Native American during the time of the Jesuits, the symbol might represent oppression, linked with memory of the Spaniards arrival in North America. The point here is that a symbol such as the wheel carries with it different meanings to each observer, based on their interpretative systems or enculturation. For two people within the same culture, symbols and types of spiritual experience would be interpreted in similar ways due to similar world views. To use Harrod's words, " Given the deeply shared meanings which constitute the social world of a tribe, continuities exist in the level of social experience. These basic symbols of a culture are

routinized because they are deeply shared and thus have power to shape the experience of individuals in a similar manner." (Harrod, 1987:36)

The focus of this chapter has been to look at ethical concerns and to provide answers as to why Native American ceremonies and symbols are being appropriated by the dominant culture in the larger picture. The taking is indicative of a deficit within Anglo spirituality and exhibits a covert attempt to undermine Native American spiritual beliefs; the word covert is used because Indian "Wannabees" profess admiration for all things Indian although their imitative ceremonies show the utmost disrespect. The inherent nature of the symbol, coming from a Native American origin and context of sacredness is lost in the duplication because the symbol has not been routinized nor does it have common meaning within Anglo culture.

The antiquity of the symbol of the wheel does not diminish its power, sacredness or importance in a modern-day setting but instead heightens its spiritual value, becoming a landmark connecting the past with the present.

CHAPTER 6. DEFINITIONS OF EACH CULTURE'S USE OF THE
 WHEEL

This chapter will summarize the definitions of each culture's Medicine Wheel to further determine how the use has moved from that of sacredness to profanity. The stance of the Native American community and subsequent action that they have taken will also be covered in support of the thesis argument.

Research in the first two chapters of this thesis, made clear that the exact origins and uses of the wheel are not known but can be accepted as sacred and used within the modern-day context of Native American spirituality. The varying antiquity of the wheels, compounded with their diverse locations, indicates that the forerunners of the Plains Indian peoples created the wheels as possible sites for any of the following:

- a) As astronomically aligned locations to mark the solstice or equinox.
- b) As indicative of the outline of a Sun Dance lodge or Medicine Lodge.

c) As a marker of the site where a chief had died, thus becoming a sacred burial marker or memorial.

d) As a ceremonial site, whether a past battle, vision quest site, or ceremonial offering site, perhaps to the Sun or for bison.

(see chapter 2 for references cited as regards each anthropologist and who is credited with each theory)

While acknowledging that there may have been a multiplicity of uses, depending on which indigenous group used the wheel and allowing for cultural adaptation, there is the additional component of changed use over time.

Prof. Pepion's unpublished paper entitled "Significance of the Circle and Rock Formations in the Pikuni Tribe" which he kindly sent me, has an important reference from another member of the Blackfeet Tribe, Percy Bullchild, who wrote about the circles of the past as manifestations of the faith of Native Peoples. According to Pepion, Bullchild, in his book The Sun Came Down, "Talked about Native people in North and South America honoring the Creator Sun and the beginning of Native American religion." (Pepion, 1994:1)

"The circles from the past that are found in many places in these two continents are influenced by our father, Creator

Sun, many things are made in their pattern, in circles. The circle of the Sun, the circle of Mother Earth.....The straight lines and designs on the mountain tops, on high places, that point to a certain star or a special place in the universe... were all made by our ancestors, the Natives. These were special places of worship to the sun and stars, the moon too. Many of these places were sacrificial areas, a place of self-torture, a place to strain one's body for the sake of a certain religious and sacred object, a star, the moon, the sun, or a particular place here on earth. Nature as a whole was all-sacred to the Natives. Our way was all- reverence for the universe." (Bullchild, 1985:268)

A SUMMARY OF CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS USE

The Bighorn Wheel, Wyoming

The Forest Service has very limited information on contemporary ceremonies in the Bighorn Wheel since they can only indicate the number of days that are given to Native Americans for access to the fenced-in, gated wheel. No bystanders are allowed to observe any of the ceremonies. The fact that the use of the wheel is requested three days before

the times of solstice and equinox by Native peoples seems to confirm that there is a link to Kehoe and Eddy's theories regarding astronomical significance. The District Ranger, Mary Randolph, however, mentioned in her interview that this was a topic (meaning astronomical theory) that most of the Native "Interpreters" or docent-type guides are not comfortable in discussing, which causes further speculation. Here again is the question of ethic and knowing when to stop asking why, when the questions pertain to someone else's spirituality. A sense of ethic had to prevail in the writing of this thesis in order to respect the right to spiritual privacy.

Based on Ms. Randolph's information, those requesting the use of the Bighorn Wheel are the Cheyenne, Arapahoe and Shoshoni for vision quests, piercing ceremonies\Sun Dance, or for prayer-time which take place during the remaining twelve days that are available. As mentioned earlier, traditional Native American ceremonial offerings (pouches and strips of cloth) are tied to the fence that surrounds the wheel, indicators of a sacred place of power.

The type of requests made by the Cheyenne and others, as reported by the District Ranger, are consistent with Clark Wissler's early work, "Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfeet Indians," (1912). It is quite probable that strong

similarities still exist as to the types of ritual conducted by the Blackfeet today within the context of the Medicine Wheels in Montana. Important locations for fasting or dreaming were on the top of a hill or a burial site. One of the usual methods to obtain power was through sleeping outside and fasting for four days, preceded by the help of an elder in the use of the pipe, accompanied with prayer and smudging. The inspiration for and use of a private song was also an instrument of power, used in conjunction with an object. It is significant to note here that the object could be transferred but the power would stop without the transfer of the song. (Wissler, 1912:103)

Based on the information given by Bullchild, Pepion and Wissler, it is assumed that varying forms of the same types of ceremony discussed above continue today, within the ring of the circle or wheel, away from the watchful eyes of the dominant culture.

MODERN-DAY ADAPTATIONS OF THE WHEEL AND ITS USE

While currently teaching a class entitled "Sacred Circles" at Blackfeet Community College in Browning, Montana,

Prof. Pepion uses symbols such as the Medicine Wheel to represent Indian world view, placed within the larger context of historical information and Blackfeet oral tradition concerning the wheels. Much of the text for his class uses the same sources presented in this thesis, with additional information on sacred places, gained from Prof. Pepion's own work with Dr. Barney Reeves, at the University of Calgary. Dr. Reeves also has work in process on the ancient constructions.

As past Tribal Health Director, Prof. Pepion uses the circle as a wellness teaching tool, to talk about what constitutes respect and what constitutes abuse. The wheel or circle (interpreted as a circle with four directions) represents wholeness and how we are related to all things in a relationship of connectedness. For him, "The circle has a practical application in a healing setting such as the Blackfeet Chemical Dependency Treatment Center which was started in 1989. "Blackfeet elders (Kicking Woman et al.) say that the circle is important in our culture since it is used in many ways including the following: teepee, camp circle, medicine lodge, sweat lodge, ceremonial circle, sun symbol, drum, and dance. A shared vision and philosophy have emerged out of this Native tradition concerning wellness, using the

wheel to teach that we have four aspects to our nature: the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. Each of these aspects must be equally developed in a healthy, well-balanced individual through the development and use of volition (i.e. will). Several tribes believe that illness is caused by being out of balance with nature or the self. The Medicine Wheel can be used to show how we must take care of the four parts of our being (while moving through the four life stages of infant, adolescent, adult and elder) in order to stay in balance or maintain wellness, within an holistic approach." (Pepion, 1994:3)

It is important to mention in summary of Native Peoples' use of the wheels, within their holistic view of the world which tends towards inductive reasoning, that there is acceptance of the wheel, simply, as sacred. This is in sharp contrast to the deductive reasoning of the dominant society which tends to fragment (or analyze) things into their smallest component in order to obtain meaning, as noted by Prof.Pepion.

"Sacred Circles" or Medicine Wheels are important places of power for Native Peoples today, in continuous use, supporting Native ritual tradition in specific sites constructed by the ancestors.

MEDICINE WHEEL CEREMONIES WITHIN A NEW AGE CONTEXT

There is tremendous diversity represented in New Age uses of the wheel, whether facilitated by those of so-called "Indian ancestry" or simply by someone calling themselves a "medicine woman\man." These ceremonial uses include any of the following: as a site for prayer, for purification through smudging, for communication while holding a talking stick, for healing, for meditation, for full moon ceremonies, for an harmonic convergence, or practically anything, within the circular space commonly referred to as "The New Age Peace Symbol."

The interviews with Meria Heller, Rev. Samsel and the newspaper articles quoting Sedona District Forest Ranger, Bob Gillies, support the fact that there is tremendous diversity in the use of the wheels, while lacking consistency as regards a common ritual. Additional problems are created however, in the construction of the wheels where none previously existed, particularly on Federal lands, as noted in Chapter 4 of this thesis on "mixed-use." The construction is ritualized, as part of the ceremony, which may or may not be imitative of Native American rituals. However the construction or duplication of the symbol itself, is imitative as a form

of appropriation which is problematic, particularly when referred to as a "Medicine Wheel."

Kehoe's article, "Primal Gaia: Primitivists and Plastic Medicine Men" further supports and gives the origins of how romanticized, idealized notions regarding native peoples, have been influential in causing stereotypical thinking, as manifested in what is termed "cultural primitivism."

"The discontent of the civilized with civilization. That discontent gives rise to one of the strangest, most potent and most persistent factors in Western thought - the use of the term "nature" to express the standard of human values, the identification of the good with that which is natural. The belief that there exists founts of true goodness and knowledge among savage peoples goes back to the earliest documents of Western thought, as in Homer's Iliad (c. 700 B.C.) and The Europa of Ephorus in the early fourth century, B.C." (Kehoe, 1990:194)

Never mind the fact that the reservation system has been forced on indigenous peoples, as "children of nature," living "authentic lives of genuine culture," away from the polluting influence of "civilization." (ibid)

This type of "Western Primitivist" thinking provides the very

foundation for Anglos in their desire to create imitative ceremonies, in attempts to duplicate what is believed to be the "true spirituality" of Native Americans; add to this, the need to fill the void that exists in those not affiliated with their own traditional religion, which causes a deprivation of meaningful religious ritual.

The words "to appropriate," as defined in Webster's Dictionary, mean "to make one's own." This is essentially the intent of non-Indians, as promoters and participants in ceremony or ritual founded in Native tradition. The "appropriation" and construction of a Medicine Wheel, and any imitative ceremony conducted within the sacred space constitute profanity. Again, referring to Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, the meaning of "profane" is to put to a wrong use, desecrate or violate something sacred.

THE STANCE OF THE NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY, AS EVIDENCED THROUGH RESOLUTIONS PASSED

These "mis-uses" have not gone unnoticed. Surprisingly, as far back as 1980, 1982 and 1984, Native Elders were aware of problems created by those selling sacred ceremonies and the naivete of those paying participants. The December, 1990

article "Spiritual Hucksterism" by Ward Churchill, printed in an alternative magazine named "Z" is a landmark as regards getting the attention of the American public and reporting accurately just what Native Americans think about the peddling of their spirituality.

On Oct. 5, 1980, the "Resolution of the 5th Annual Meeting of the Traditions Elders Circle, Northern Cheyenne Nation, Two Moons' Camp - Rosebud Creek, Montana," came into existence. The purpose of this resolution was basically to warn non-Indians of those professing to be Indian "spiritual leaders," while offering a list of Native American names and addresses that non-Indians could write to in order to check out the credentials of so-called medicine people. It was suggested that each person should "ask the following questions before participating in a ceremony:

1. What Nation does the person represent?
2. What is their Clan and society?
3. Who instructed them and where did they learn?
4. What is their home address?

"The medicine people are chosen by the medicine and long instruction and discipline is necessary before ceremonies can be done. These procedures are always in the Native tongue; there no exceptions and profit is not the motivation. There

are many Nations with many and varied procedures specifically for the welfare of their people. These processes and ceremonies are of the most Sacred Nature. The Council finds the open display of these ceremonies contrary to these Sacred instructions. We concern ourselves only with those people who use spiritual ceremonies with non-Indian people for profit. There are many things to be shared with the Four Colors of humanity in our common destiny as one with our Mother the Earth. It is this sharing that must be considered with great care by the Elders and the medicine people who carry the Sacred Trusts, so that no harm may come to people through ignorance and misuse of these powerful forces." signed by eleven Elders representing differing Indian nations. (Churchill, 1990:96)

A second warning came in September of 1982, from the Elders of the First American Indian Tribunal held at D.Q. University. Having made little headway, the Circle of Elders of the Indigenous Nations of North America, the representative body of traditional indigenous leadership on this continent, requested that the American Indian Movement (AIM) undertake to end the activities of those described as "plastic medicine women\men."

The Southwest AIM Leadership conference in Window Rock, Arizona, was the location where yet another resolution was passed, using words that were hard to ignore. Its title was "AIM Resolution, Sovereign Din Nation, Window Rock, Arizona," written on May 11, 1984.

The importance of the message contained here cannot be stressed enough, in support of the thesis statement that the appropriation of the symbol of the wheel and subsequent use, in conjunction with imitative Indian ritual is profane. The supportive document is as follows, reproduced almost in totality:

"Whereas the Spiritual wisdom which is shared by the Elders with the people has been passed to us through time immemorial; and
Whereas the Spirituality of Indian Nations is inseperable from the people themselves; and
Whereas the attempted theft of Indian ceremonies is a direct attack and theft from Indian People themselves; and
Whereas there has been a dramatic increase in the incidence of selling Sacred ceremonies, such as the sweat lodge and the vision quest, and of Sacred articles, such as religious pipes, feathers and stone; and
Whereas these practices have been and continue to be conducted by Indians and non-Indians alike, constituting not only insult and disrespect for the wisdom of the ancients, but also exposing ignorant non-Indians to potential harm and even death through the misuse of these ceremonies; and
Whereas the tradtional Elders and Spiritual leaders have repeatedly warned against and condemned the commercialization of our ceremonies;
Whereas such commercialization has increased dramatically in recent years, to wit:" (ibid)

At this point the article continues on to name many of the non-Indians who have defrauded Indian peoples of Sacred objects and as sellers of ceremonies, while also giving their fees. Some of the names quoted are, "Osheana Fast Wolf, Brook Medicine Ego (their word), Sun Bear and the Bear Tribe Medicine Society, Wallace Black Elk, Grace Spotted Eagle and Quanda." (ibid)

The warning expressed at the end of the resolution, is consistent with the militant stance that AIM has taken in the past;

"Now to those who are doing these things, we send our third warning. Our Elders ask, "Are you prepared to take the consequences of your actions? You will be outcasts from your people if you will continue these practices" ..Now, this is another one, our young people are getting restless. They are the ones who sought their Elders in the first place to teach them the Sacred ways. They have said they will take care of those who are abusing our Sacred ceremonies and Sacred objects in their own way. In this way they will take care of the elders.

We resolve to take care of our Elders and our traditions, and we condemn those who seek to profit from Indian

Spirituality. We put them on notice that our patience grows thin with them and they continue their disrespect at their own risk." (ibid)

As Russell Means put it at that time, "These people have insisted on making themselves pariahs within their own communities, and they will have to bear the consequences of that. As to white people who think it's cute or neat or groovy or keen to hook up with plastic medicine men\women, to subsidize them and promote them, and claim you have some fundamental "right" to desecrate our spiritual traditions, I've got a piece of news for you. You have no such right. Our religions are ours. **Period.** We have very strong reasons for keeping certain things private, whether you understand them or not. And we have every human right to deny them to you, whether you like it or not.

"You can either respect our basic rights or not respect them. If you do, you're an ally and we're ready and willing to join hands with you on other issues. If you do not, you are at best a thief. More importantly, you are a thief of the sort who is willing to risk undermining our sense of the integrity of our cultures for your own perceived self-interest. That means you are complicit in a process of cultural genocide, or at least attempted cultural genocide, aimed at American Indian people.

That makes you an enemy, to say the least. And believe me when I say that we're prepared to deal with you as such." (ibid)

Danger exists not only in the implied consequences of the AIM Resolution and in the words of Russell Means, but also in the manipulation and use of Indian ceremonial objects. According to the late Matthew King, an elder spiritual leader among the Oglala Lakota,

"Each part of our religion has its power and its purpose. Each people has their own ways. You cannot mix these ways together, because each people's ways are balanced. Destroying balance is a disrespect and very dangerous. This is why it is forbidden. Many things are forbidden. The forbidden things are acts of disrespect, things which unbalance power. These things must be learned, and the learning is very difficult. This is why there are very few real "medicine men" among us; only a few are chosen. For someone who has not learned how our balance is maintained, to pretend to be a medicine man is very dangerous. It is a big disrespect to the powers and can cause great harm to whoever is doing it, to those he claims to be teaching, to nature, to everything. It is very bad..." (ibid)

The words of the Native peoples speak for themselves in

their expression of what it means to them to see indigenous ceremony peddled to a naive segment of the Anglo culture in its quest for "authentic" spirituality; a dangerous business, quite literally.

"In our tribe (Blackfeet), one can only gain the "right" to do things if it is transferred from an elder or person who has the proper authority to do so. And that authority or right only comes from the Creator through visions, dreams or a spiritual process. And when one has the right to use a symbol it has to be exactly as transferred and only for those purposes set forth by the elder." (Pepion, personal correspondence: 12-11-1995)

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To summarize this chapter on definition of each culture's use of the wheel, it is blatantly apparent that there cannot be a retention of original spiritual meaning, in an appropriated symbol or imitative ceremony. This is supported in the words of the varying Elders, Russell Means, Prof. Pepion, and the late Matthew King, all indigenous peoples. The list could be much more extensive but the intent is very clear that there can be no transference of spiritual meaning, as

represented in the use of appropriated spiritual symbols. "It is forbidden." (ibid)

The New Age movement will continue on, with elements of it very positive in a genuine desire for individual, spiritual growth. The negative aspects, however, such as the promotion of and participation in imitative or duplicative ceremonies, done by those not authorized to do so, need to be questioned, even challenged. We need to live with a sense of ethic, as a culture contained within the space we call North America, respectful of Native peoples' spiritual heritage, including ritual with all its inherent symbols, and to uphold their right to privacy, not in a patronizing manner but as a reflection of integrity.

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