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Investigation into the American Indian Identity Claims of Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr. and Emily C. Van Alst

With Special Consideration of the Impact of these Claims on Legitimate
American Indian Tribes and the Production of Knowledge about
American Indians

Determination: No American Indian Ancestry

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Introduction and Case Summary

Of all the cases of American Indian identity fraud that TAAF has investigated, few have been as convoluted, multigenerational, or impacted so many victims as that of professors Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr., and his daughter Emily C. Van Alst. Also like nothing TAAF researchers have seen to date is the high level of audacity and anti-Indian behavior this father-daughter duo has exhibited in reinventing themselves as supposed American Indians. Desperate to legitimize themselves as American Indians despite having no American Indian ancestry, Theodore and Emily have pursued a strategy for more than two decades of either maligning Indians by excessively deploying demeaning stereotypes about Indians, as has Theodore, or appropriating an American Indian identity, then insisting upon being the embodiment of so-called positive stereotypes of Indians, as has Emily.

This report should be read in conjunction with the outstanding reporting on the Van Alsts' false claims by Jacqueline Keeler in stories she released on October 4, 2026 and October 7, 2026 on her Substack.¹ Additionally, this report should be read in conjunction with the stellar essay on the Van Alsts that was posted on the Fake Indians blog on October 22, 2023.²

Theodore currently holds a position as Professor of Native American Literature at Portland State University. This is a named and endowed chair, carrying the moniker of "Tilikum," meaning "people" in the Chinook Indian language. Previously, Theodore served as chair of Native American Studies at the same institution. His work exploits and reinforces numerous damaging stereotypes of Indians, particularly the stereotype of the bloodthirsty, sadistic, savage Sioux who is born to rampage. Theodore's and his daughter's Sioux claims are striking for many reasons, one of which is that both claim to be *Sihásapa Lakota*, a subcategory of Lakotas who reside mostly on the reservations of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. The sole Lakota reservation that Theodore and Emily ever reference, however, is the more widely known Pine Ridge reservation of the Oglala Sioux Tribe where, according to our multiple Lakota consultants, few *Sihásapa Lakota* live. To validate his claims to being Sioux, Theodore offers readers a part of his alleged past that is largely unverifiable, factually implausible, and logically improbable. With no proof, he asserts in interviews, as well as by way of an author surrogate, that he was once an impoverished, drug-addicted criminal who supposedly led a Chicago gang, implicitly contending that these characteristics alone conclusively demonstrate that he is an Indian. TAAF researchers found that, in actuality, Theodore was born into a white middle-class family with extensive, multigenerational ties to law enforcement.

Similarly, for close to a decade, Emily, an assistant professor of Native North American archaeology at Washington State University, has portrayed herself in a way that could be likened to the modern embodiment of the centuries-old stereotype of a mystical Indian princess—one who is allegedly a *Sihásapa Lakota* from the Pine Ridge reservation of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. In addition to establishing that Emily has no American Indian ancestry, TAAF researchers found that Emily's actual birthplace is Maine, her childhood home is Connecticut, and Emily has never lived on an Indian reservation.

¹ Jacqueline Keeler, "The Pretendian Family Tree,"

<https://jacquelinekeeler.substack.com/p/the-pretendian-family-tree-multi>. "The Van Alsts, Sitting Bull, and the Canadian Exile Myth,"

https://jacquelinekeeler.substack.com/p/the-van-alsts-sitting-bull-and-the?r=1dfuy&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&showWelcomeOnShare=true

² Fake Indians Blog, "Little "Big" Wašiču," <https://ancestorstealing.blogspot.com/?view=classic>

TAAF was especially appalled to find that Emily claims, with no corroborating evidence, that she is a revered American Indian holy woman whom, according to her account, Oglala Lakotas at Pine Ridge have deemed an Elk Dreamer and Elk Maiden with spiritual abilities that rival those of the revered Lakota medicine man, Black Elk. She implicitly contends that she is more Lakota than nearly all actual contemporary Lakotas and claims for herself the authority to control and define Lakota culture. This includes the right to rematriate material culture that she claims as Lakota but which in fact belongs to one or more of about two dozen other Plains Indian Tribes. Emily implicitly addresses questions about who her Lakota relatives are by contending that her Lakota relatives are elk, plants, rock art, and additional more-than-human beings. TAAF researchers found no actual Lakotas or any other actual Indians or more-than-human beings who claim Emily or Theodore as relatives, and no legitimate American Indian Tribe that claims the Van Alsts as citizens.

Additionally, TAAF researchers found Emily's archaeology to be inaccurate, problematic, and fundamentally discreditable, so much so that, if her work is not firmly challenged, we believe it will almost certainly continue to do damage to the relatively new and important subfield of Indigenous archaeology and legitimate Indian archaeologists, as well as to the larger, more established subfield of Native North American archaeology. Accordingly, Lakotas, archaeologists, American Indian Tribes (especially Plains Indian Tribes), THPO officers, and interested others are encouraged to do a close read of Part III of this report, which is about Emily and her archaeology. The last eight pages of the body of this report, in particular, identify the numerous falsehoods that undergird and thoroughly define her archaeological analyses, especially those that are about rock art.

Theodore and Emily stand out from most other false claimants whom TAAF has investigated by claiming, erroneously, to have American Indian ancestry from a relatively large number of Indian Tribes and, more broadly, Indian ethnicities. Mostly, both Theodore and Emily have claimed to be Sishásapa Lakota. However, both father and daughter have also occasionally claimed to be Cherokee and/or Eastern Cherokee. Additionally, Theodore in particular has claimed to be Ho-Chunk, and, most recently, both Theodore and Emily have claimed to be Chippewa, Ottawa, and/or both Chippewa and Ottawa through membership in a hobby genealogy group that was formed relatively recently to clean up a cemetery but that today falsely claims to be a legitimate American Indian Tribe.

Despite their claims that they have American Indian ancestry, which TAAF researchers wholly debunk in this report, both Van Alsts have profited immensely from their false claims. Not only does Theodore occupy a prestigious named chair in Native American Studies, but also he has won several awards for his offensive, blatantly anti-Indian writing. For her part, Emily was able to land a tenure-track position at an R1 university during a period of particularly intense competition for such jobs before she even completed her doctorate. This success is no doubt due largely to how she exploited her false claims to being American Indian.

TAAF researchers were deeply disturbed to learn that University of New Mexico Press (UNM Press), a press that has published three of Theodore's short fiction collections and his first edited collection, has awarded Emily (whose publication record is quite limited) co-editorship of one of their book series—an honor that, almost without exception, is reserved for senior scholars who are highly productive and whose scholarship is pathbreaking. This UNM Press appointment is especially disturbing given that Emily has a history of citing pretendians extensively in her scholarship. Most likely, in selecting which "Indigenous" scholars receive UNM book contracts, Emily can be expected to continue to replace actual Indian scholars with pretendian ones. By awarding Emily a gatekeeper position in Indigenous Studies, as well as by publishing most of Theodore's anti-Indian books, UNM Press has once again profoundly betrayed actual American Indian people. Importantly, these blunders on the part of UNM Press have occurred in the

context of this Press's continued publication of the long-discredited "autobiography," *The Education of Little Tree*, by the notorious pretendian and Ku Klux Klan leader Asa "Forrest" Carter.³

Relatedly, just over a week before this report's release, Theodore announced another book deal, specifically with Vintage, that includes television and film rights. In this connection, it is worth noting that, to our knowledge, none of the notably few reviews of Theodore's books assess his writing as anything other than as praiseworthy. More than that, those reviews of Theodore's work—almost entirely by non-Indians, including at least one whose own claims to Indian ancestry are questionable—describe his writing as welcome additions to Native American and Indigenous literature. TAAF researchers could not have reached a more different conclusion: we found Theodore's writing to be egregiously anti-Indian and completely unworthy of publication, let alone literary acclaim. TAAF invites Lakotas, creative writers, professors and scholars of Native literature, Native literature students, and any other readers of this report who are interested in an extended, detailed critique of Theodore's books from an American Indian perspective to give particular attention to Part II of this report, which is about Theodore and his work.

TAAF conducted an investigation into Theodore and Emily Van Alst after having received several dozen requests over the past few years that TAAF either confirm or disprove the Van Alsts' claims to an American Indian identity. Following an initial review, TAAF determined that the Van Alsts had made unverified claims about their identity that were core to their professional activities and that the public had an interest in knowing whether these claims are true.

This case underlines the truth that the scholarship and literary production of pretendians must be understood against the backdrop of their false claims. It is TAAF's hope that scholars will see in this report a model for interpreting the ways by which false claims damage scholarship on American Indians and other Indigenous peoples, deform public understanding of American Indian Tribes, and undermine Tribal sovereignty.

TAAF invited Theodore and Emily Van Alst to provide us with documentary proof that they have American Indian ancestry. They chose not to respond at all to TAAF's invitation to substantiate or even discuss their claims to being American Indian.

³ While UNM Press now acknowledges that this book is a work of fiction, they also market the book positively, alleging among other things, that it "shares important lessons." What they fail to mention is that it reinforces damaging stereotypes about Cherokees. Even worse, it feeds myths that fuel the fraudulent appropriation of Cherokee identities, the most disturbing of which is the myth of a spiritual kinship between Cherokees and white supremacists due to their supposed shared experience of a "lost cause." Given UNM Press' apparent unwillingness to sufficiently contextualize this book, it should be pulled from publication and commitments made to publish actual Cherokee writers.

Part I: Genealogical Analysis

Introduction

American Indian identity derives neither from spurious descent, as is the case for the Van Alsts, nor from distant descent from long-deceased ancestors, as in other cases. It issues from belonging to a legitimate American Indian Nation—one that occupies the federal legal category of "Indian Tribe" in the United States and one that clearly satisfies the seven mandatory criteria for federal acknowledgment as an Indian Tribe that are outlined in 25 CFR Part 83. Anyone claiming an American Indian identity must be acknowledged as belonging to a legitimate Indian Tribe. TAAF found no evidence that Theodore Van Alst, Jr. and his daughter Emily Van Alst are members of a legitimate American Indian Tribe. In fact, Theodore and Emily Van Alst have never claimed to be members of a legitimate American Indian Tribe. While they have claimed to be members of the Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc, as explained below, this is not a legitimate American Indian Tribe.

However, to dispel any doubts whatsoever that the Van Alsts are not American Indian, TAAF researchers thoroughly explored the Van Alsts' genealogy. Contrary to common pretendian claims, legitimate Indian ancestry is not impossible to trace or mysteriously undocumented, and TAAF's genealogical team is well trained in professional genealogical methods and familiar with the documentary records of the particular Tribes relevant to this case, as well as being in touch with Tribal experts on kinship, culture, and history. Based on extensive research involving 1,778 individuals across, in some lines, as many as eight generations, TAAF's professional genealogists found zero American Indian ancestors.⁴ Readers of this report are strongly encouraged to read Part I of this report while consulting the report's appendix, which includes the genealogical fan charts and Ahnentafel that are products of the extensive research conducted by TAAF's team of genealogical researchers.

Claims to American Indian Identity

The identity claims of Theodore Van Alst, Jr. and Emily Van Alst have shifted over time. Over the course of the last twenty years, they have claimed to be Sihásapa Lakota,⁵ generically Cherokee, Eastern Cherokee,⁶ and Ho-Chunk.⁷ During the last several years, they have shifted to identify as enrolled members of a Corporation Posing as an Indigenous Nation (CPAIN).⁸ CPAINs are groups that claim to be legitimate, sovereign Indigenous Nations but are not. The CPAIN with which Theodore and Emily have affiliated themselves is The Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc,⁹ which is simply a tax-exempt nonprofit organization headquartered in Saint-Ignace, Michigan. Theodore is listed on the website of this non-profit organization as a member of a governing entity they refer to as the "tribal council."¹⁰ On her Washington State University faculty page Emily identifies herself: "I am an Indigenous archaeologist (enrolled member, Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians)."¹¹

This claim contrasts with some of Theodore's earliest public assertions of an Indian identity, which are that he is Lakota. He published a version of a story in his dissertation ("How quickly they forget":

⁴ A discussion of TAAF's genealogical research methodology and principles can be found in the appendix.

⁵ <https://www.umb.edu/naisa/host-institutions/>

⁶ <https://www.umb.edu/naisa/host-institutions/>

⁷ <https://cnair.northwestern.edu/about/cnairannualreport2019.pdf>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_organizations_that_self-identify_as_Native_American_tribes

⁹ <https://www.mackinacbands.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.mackinacbands.org/government>

¹¹ <https://anthro.wsu.edu/emily-van-alst/>

American Indians in European film, 1962–1976," page 99) that both he and his daughter Emily have used to legitimize their claims to a Lakota identity: "In the end, Tokei Ihito and his people head north to Canada. A story of a clan of Dakota people heading north to evade encroaching settlers and soldiers is not without possibility and can in fact be corroborated via oral history. Briefly, *my own grandfather described to me a similar story. His mother's parents, both from a Sihásapa band of Lakota, came into the US from Canada*" (emphasis ours).¹²

On August 5, 2019 on a *Life in Ruins* (episode 3, 5 min, 50 sec) podcast Emily provided another more detailed version of this legitimization story: "...basically, when the settlers came out and they were settling, my family left with Sitting Bull up to Canada. And when Sitting Bull decided to go back down to the United States, my family apparently decided not to do that. They didn't want to go back and deal with the government, so they stayed in Canada for a couple generations. And then they came down through Michigan and that's when one of my ancestors married a fur trapper with the last name Van Alst and that's how I have that last name." In this podcast, Emily reveals that she is not an enrolled citizen, but she unambiguously positions herself as a Lakota descendant.¹³

During his job talk presentation at Portland State University on March 2, 2018, Theodore explained his connection not just to the Lakota, but also the Leech Lake Chippewa and Cherokee: "On my dad's side, *we're Sihásapa Lakota descendants. We also have a grandmother from Leech Lake who enrolled back in the day....* My mom's side of the family is from [the] Tennessee, North Carolina border area. So, *we have all of those Cherokee stories in our family. And the names make sense, but the lines don't. But just in case we have a Cherokee grandma, thank you*" (emphasis ours).

Emily's first public assertion of an Indian identity was documented in an article published in *Yale News*: "During her first Lakota [language] lesson at Yale, Emily Van Alst '16 was asked if she wanted to introduce herself as a 'Lakota girl' or a 'Lakota woman.' Van Alst, *a Sihásapa Lakota and Eastern Cherokee*, hadn't given the idea much thought. ... Throughout high school in Connecticut, Van Alst had felt the opposite: isolated, ridiculed, and judged because of her indigeneity. Back then, she had pushed her identity away. But, after her freshman year at Yale, *Van Alst made the decision to introduce herself as 'Lakhóta Winyan hemácha yé,' a native woman. 'I've definitely grown from a native girl to a native woman at Yale,' she said. 'I take my culture as an opportunity to educate instead of pushing it away'*" (emphasis ours).¹⁴

Following that event, for many years and persisting to the present, Emily has asserted a Lakota identity. In an *Indian Country Today* (ICT) article and an editorial published in 2016, she identified as Sihásapa Lakota,¹⁵ and as a graduate student at Indiana University, she identified as Lakota.¹⁶ In the ICT article, she boldly proclaims, "By consistently having female Native voices in the media, I know that I am not alone. It is crucial that *our younger generation of Native girls, fellow Native women, and our Native elders*, as well as non-Native people, all see strong, resilient, and diverse Native women working in Indian country,

¹² Theodore Van Alst, "How quickly they forget," <https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/dissertations/AAI3335066/>

¹³ "Rock Artin' and Rollin with Emily Van Alst," <https://youtu.be/DFozXk7yZMY?si=jCFenKr852O9ZD87&t=346>

¹⁴ Rose Bear Don't Walk, "Walking Together," <https://yaledailynews.com/articles/walking-together>

¹⁵ Simon Moya-Smith, "Native Women of ICTMN, Part 1," <https://ictnews.org/archive/native-women-of-ictmn-part-i/>. Emily Van Alst, "Van Alst: Coddling White Privilege, Silencing People of Color,"

<https://ictnews.org/archive/van-alst-coddling-white-privilege-silencing-people-of-color/>

¹⁶ Learning NAGPRA, <https://learningnagpra.indiana.edu/about-us/personnel.html>

making a difference in our communities, all while defeating misinformation and stereotypes" (emphasis ours).¹⁷

Following her doctoral studies, Emily shifted to claim a "Mackinac Bands" identity in some venues, while maintaining a Lakota identity claim in her published scholarship (see below). In the 2023-24 Washington State University Anthropology Department Newsletter article about newly hired faculty, she describes herself as "an Indigenous archaeologist (enrolled member, Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians),"¹⁸ and on the Cleveland Archaeological Society website, she likewise claims "Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians" in an announcement for a lecture she presented on February 11, 2026. As mentioned above, she currently identifies on her faculty bio as an "enrolled member, Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians."¹⁹

Are these claims affirmed by the historical and genealogical record?

To begin, which Van Alst genealogical lines could contain American Indian ancestors? The TAAF genealogy team excluded the line of Theodore's grandmother, Patricia Maxine Meldrum. Recent ancestors in that line, back to the early 1800s, lived and died in the area around either Detroit or Bay City, Michigan. TAAF traced more distant ancestors in this line to Scotland, France, and Canada (Lachine, Quebec). At no point did any of their ancestors in this line claim to be Indian. Nor did TAAF researchers find any of their names on any of the Indian rolls or in any relevant records assembled in these areas.

The team also excluded the line of Theodore's paternal great-grandfather, Johannes Van Alst (born van den Aalst). Interestingly, Theodore and Emily disagree on Johannes's identity. While Theodore claims in his doctoral dissertation that Joannes was Sihásapa Lakota, Emily claims that he was a fur trader and does not suggest that he was an American Indian. TAAF confirmed that Johanness Van Alst was born in the Netherlands in 1856, and thus that he could not have been an American Indian.

The only remaining line in which there could possibly be the Sihásapa Lakota, Leech Lake Chippewa, Anishnaabe, and Ho-Chunk ancestry that the Van Alsts' claim is through Theodore's paternal great-grandmother, Mary Josephine Cote.

The only possible relevant line for the Cherokee claims, due to the geographic location of the Cherokees during a time period when the Van Alsts' ancestors lived near Cherokees, is through the line of Theodore's mother, whose ancestors lived in the southeastern U.S. For Emily, TAAF researchers also considered the line of her mother, Amie Gehring Van Alst, as a possible additional or alternative source of Emily's Cherokee claims.

1) Is it plausible that the Van Alsts are Sihásapa Lakota descendants?

TAAF researchers determined that the Van Alsts do not have any Lakota ancestors.

The Van Alsts' story about this is specific. They claim that their ancestors fled with Sitting Bull into Canada and did not return with him and other members of his band. Instead, according to Emily, they remained in Canada for a few generations, then moved south into Michigan. This story references a famous episode in the life of Sitting Bull. Following the defeat of General Custer at the Battle of Little

¹⁷ Simon Moya-Smith, "Native Women of ICTMN, Part I,"

<https://ictnews.org/archive/native-women-of-ictmn-part-i/>

¹⁸ <https://anthro.wsu.edu/newsletter/introducing-new-faculty-2023-24/>

¹⁹ <https://www.clevelandarchaeology.org/lectures>

Big Horn, the U.S. government deployed military forces to try to achieve the submission of the Lakota people. Sitting Bull refused to surrender and left with his people for Canada in May 1877. For four years, Sitting Bull and his followers remained in Canada near the U.S.-Canada border in the area of Wood Mountain. In 1881, they returned to the U.S. and surrendered to U.S. forces on July 19.

At issue is whether or not it is plausible that any of Theodore and Emily's ancestors accompanied Sitting Bull during his exile in Canada. Were any of their ancestors living in the vicinity of the Lakota in 1877 in what is today North and South Dakota? And were any of their ancestors living in Canada in the vicinity of Wood Mountain between 1877 and 1881?

Emily mentions that her alleged Lakota ancestors moved south into Michigan, where one of their "ancestors married a fur trapper with the last name Van Alst." TAAF researchers were perplexed by this claim that a Van Alst ancestor had been a fur trapper in Upper Michigan. The earliest Van Alst ancestor to have lived in Michigan was born in 1856 in the Netherlands, and thus would have begun his career as a fur trapper in the 1870s at the earliest, and would have likely married Mary Josephine Cote sometime in the 1890s. The fur trade in this part of Michigan was pretty much over by the 1850s. It is very likely that Emily Van Alst created this fabrication that Van Alst was a fur trader to make her story that a Van Alst ancestor married a Lakota woman more believable to non-Indians.

TAAF researchers deduced that this alleged fur trapper was most likely Johannes Van Alst; his spouse was Mary Josephine Cote. Mary Josephine Cote was born in 1875. If the claim that Mary Josephine Cote fled the Dakotas with Sitting Bull were true, Mary Josephine would have been born in the Dakotas and taken into exile in 1877 with Sitting Bull's people as an infant. Genealogical records prove that this could not be true. In fact, Mary Josephine Cote was born in Hampton, Michigan (immediately adjacent to Bay City) on August 2, 1875. There is no evidence that she ever identified as anything but a white woman. On her 1908 marriage certificate, she identified as white. On the 1880, 1900, 1910, 1930, and 1940 censuses, her race was identified as white. On her 1938 Social Security application, she identified as white. The 1880 census is significant because this is when the Van Alsts allege that she was living in Canada. Instead, this census proves that at that time Mary Josephine Cote was living at her lifelong home of Bay City, Michigan, which would be the ongoing Van Alst hometown.

Moreover, the records related to Mary Josephine Cote's parents do not support any connection between the Van Alsts and the Lakota people. Mary Josephine's father, Ignace F. Cote, was born in Quebec, Canada on 15 May 1835. Her mother, Mary Josephine Fortain, was born in Saint-Ignace, Michigan on 22 February 1850. The U.S. censuses of 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930 indicate that Ignace and his wife Mary Josephine, individually or separately, were living in Bay City, Michigan. There is no evidence to suggest that Mary Josephine Cote's parents were living anywhere near the Lakota people at any point in their lives, nor were they identified as Indians of any kind.

But what about Ignace Cote and Mary Josephine Fortain's parents? Is it possible that they have a genealogical connection with the Lakota? Ignace's parents, Toussaint Goulet Cote and Catherine Gauthier dit Delisle, were born in Canada at Beloeil (near Montreal) and St-Augustin-del-Desmarues (near Quebec City), respectively. Mary Josephine Fortain's parents, John Fortain and Mary "Minnie" La Guinard, were born in Quebec and Michigan respectively long before Sitting Bull sought exile in Canada. Due to the 3,000 mile distance of these locations from territory where the Lakota were living at the time, it is simply not credible that they could have any genealogical connection with the Lakota.

On Oct 7, 2026, Jacqueline Keeler posted on her Substack a discussion of the Van Alst Sitting Bull story.²⁰ We strongly recommend reading this post, as it makes crystal clear the violence done to American Indians when these stories are falsely claimed by non-Indians. In this post, Keeler explores and debunks an alternative theory of a Van Alst connection to the Lakota. This theory assumes that it was not Johannes Van Alst but instead his son Peter who married a Lakota woman. According to this theory, Patricia Meldrum (Peter's wife) is the person with supposed Lakota ancestry. Despite minor differences, TAAF genealogists fully agree with Keeler's finding that all of Van Alst's ancestors in this line were well established in Michigan *before* Sitting Bull and his people fled to Canada in 1877. Thus the claim that Patricia Meldrum first arrived in Michigan generations after this event could not be true. This can be confirmed by a review of the fan chart and Ahnentafel in the appendices of this report.

In sum, none of the Van Alsts' ancestors had even a remote connection to the Lakota people. TAAF researchers found no evidence to corroborate the story that the Van Alsts tell to validate their claim to being Lakota descendants. Instead, TAAF researchers found a plethora of evidence that the story of the Van Alsts having Lakota ancestors is *not* true.

2) Is it plausible that the Van Alsts have "a grandmother from Leech Lake who enrolled back in the day"?

TAAF researchers have determined that the Van Alsts did not have any ancestors "from Leech Lake who enrolled back in the day."

This claim is extremely vague. All it claims is that Theodore's grandmother is "from Leech Lake who enrolled back in the day." Notably, he does not identify which grandmother or clarify what she enrolled in. Presumably, he wants us to believe that it is an Indian roll and, more specifically, that it is a roll of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe.²¹ TAAF researchers found that none of the Van Alsts' ancestors are listed on any Leech Lake rolls. Moreover, the above discussion should make it abundantly clear that none of Theodore's grandparents, or any other ancestors, were from the general region of Leech Lake. Leech Lake is in north-central Minnesota. As detailed above, all of Theodore's paternal ancestors have firm roots in Michigan, Quebec, and the Netherlands. His maternal ancestors are from the Southeastern U.S. None of these locations are anywhere near Leech Lake in north central Minnesota. It is possible that the Leech Lake claim is rooted in the mistaken belief that the Van Alst's descend from Mrs. Joseph LeCuyer. In the response to the next question, question 3, as will be seen, this claim is proven to be false.

3) Is it plausible that the Van Alsts descend from an ancestor listed on the 1907 Durant Roll or other Mackinac Bands Census Rolls?

TAAF researchers found that none of the Van Alsts' ancestors are listed on the 1907 Durant Roll or any of the other Mackinac Bands Census Rolls.

The 1907 Durant Roll included individuals who had a right to payments as part of a U.S. Court of Claims settlement.²² Enrollment on the Durant roll was limited to people who descended from Ottawas and Chippewas who were party to the 1836 and 1855 treaties of Washington and Detroit. The Durant Roll is used as a base roll of the federally recognized Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians²³ and cited as the supposed base roll of the nonprofit organization and manufactured "tribe," the Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc.

²⁰ Jacqueline Keeler, "The Van Alsts, Sitting Bull, and the Canadian Exile Myth,"

https://jacquelinekeeler.substack.com/p/the-van-alsts-sitting-bull-and-the-r=1dfuy&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=web&showWelcomeOnShare=true

²¹ <https://www.llojibwe.org/>

²² <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/census/native-americans/m2039.pdf>

²³ <https://www.saulttribe.com/>

The claim that the Van Alsts have ancestors on one or more of these rolls is apparently related to their recent shift from their previous Lakota and Cherokee claims to their assertion that they are members of The Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc. Theodore now serves on the Mackinac "council," and both he and Emily now include "enrolled member" of this "Band" in their professional bios. As is discussed below, The Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc is not a real American Indian Tribe. Rather, this is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization that was incorporated under the guise of being a "tribe" in 2023 in Saint Ignace, Michigan, but actually first incorporated in 1998 as a local genealogy and American Indian cemetery maintenance group.²⁴ These rolls are listed as instruments that applicants can use to claim membership in this Corporation Posing as an Indigenous Nation (CPAIN). This "Mackinac Bands" group has no more claim on Tribal status than other social organizations such as the Elks, Shriners, or the fraternal Improved Order of Red Men, and with less commitment to community improvement.

The Van Alsts likely claimed descent from a person on one of these rolls to join this hobbyist club. Theodore's bio page on the website of this nonprofit organization asserted that "Ted Van Alst is proud to serve on the MBCOI Council, with a strong commitment to advancing the interests of the community. With *ancestral ties to the LeCuyers* and deep roots in the Bay City area, where he spent summers growing up" (emphasis ours). TAAF accessed this page on February 25, 2025. (It has since been removed.) Elsewhere Theodore has made unsubstantiated claims²⁵ that he is related to John Drew,²⁶ a prominent English fur trader who was active in the Lake Superior area in the early 1800s. Drew had an Ojibwe daughter, Mary Elizabeth Drew, who married Joseph Lequea LeCuyer. Five members of this family are listed on the 1836 Census of Ottawa and Chippewa Mixed Breeds: Mrs. Joseph LeCuyer and her children Rossette, Margaritta, Nancy, Amable, and Louis.

To be clear, the Van Alsts do not descend from either John Drew or Mrs. Joseph LeCuyer. Rather, the Van Alsts appear to be engaging in identity appropriation by way of a well-known strategy TAAF refers to as "ledger proximity." A LeCuyer family is listed on the ledger of the 1850 U.S. Census for Mackinac County, Michigan at domicile 279. To be clear, this enumeration is not an Indian roll but rather a U.S. census ledger. The LeCuyers are immediately followed in that ledger by the Fortain family at domicile 280. The Van Alsts *are* direct descendents of the Fortain family through Theodore's great-grandmother, Mary Josephine Cote. No one in the Van Alst line of the Fortain family appears on any of the legitimate Mackinac Bands rolls. In fact, TAAF could not find ANY of the Van Alsts' ancestors on these rolls.

Among the evidence TAAF compiled establishing that the Van Alsts descend from John Fortain and Minnie La Guinard (rather than Mrs. Joseph LeCuyer) is the death certificate (provided below) of his daughter, Mary Josephine Cote (née Fortain). The certificate indicates that Mary Josephine Cote's parents were John Fortin (Fortain) and Minnie La Guinard. Moreover, the person reporting the death, presumably a close relative of the decedent, was Mrs. Van Aalst (Van Alst). According to the U.S. Census, two Mrs. Van Alsts lived in Bay County Michigan in 1940, the year of Mary Josephine Cote's death. One was Mrs. Mary Josephine Van Alst (née Cote), Theodore Van Alst Jr.'s great-grandmother, and the other was Mrs.

²⁴ Articles of Incorporation, 759-658, "The Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians, Inc.," Michigan Department of Commerce-Corporations and Security Bureau, signed 26 October 1998. Ironically, the original articles note that "No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation," 3. However, their campaign to gain false federal recognition is in direct contravention of that legal declaration. TAAF encourages Michigan authorities to review the "Mackinac Bands" articles of incorporation to determine if the group has violated state law through its activities.

²⁵ Brandy Muz, "Writer Gets Back to His Roots During Residency,"

<https://www.mackinacislandnews.com/articles/writer-gets-back-to-his-roots-during-residency/>

²⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Drew_\(trader\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Drew_(trader))

Patricia Van Alst (née Meldrum), Theodore Van Alst Jr.'s grandmother. The only reasonable conclusion is that Theodore Van Alst is a descendant of John Fortain and Minnie La Guinard, and does not descend from Mrs. Joseph Le Cuyer, and thus the Van Alsts do not descend from anyone on the Durant Roll. This finding is even more significant because, to TAAF's knowledge Mrs. Joseph LeCuyer is the only person known to have been an American Indian from whom the Van Alsts have ever claimed descent.

WRITE PLAINLY WITH UNFADING INK - THIS IS A PERMANENT RECORD

SOCIAL SECURITY NO.		CERTIFICATE OF DEATH		State File No.	
If veteran, name war		MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH		10912165	
Bureau of Records and Statistics				Local File No. 83	
FULL NAME Mrs. Josephine Cote					
PLACE OF DEATH:			USUAL RESIDENCE OF DECEASED:		
County Bay			State Mich. County Bay		
Township			Township		
City or Village Bay City			City or Village Bay City		
Name of hospital			Street No. 1200 State St.		
(If not in hospital, give street address.)			If foreign born, how long in U. S. A.?		
Length of stay: In hospital			In this community		
Sex Female	Color or Race White	Single, Married, Widowed or Divorced	MEDICAL CERTIFICATION		
NAME OF HUSBAND or WIFE		Date of death Feb. 21, 1940			
Name Ignatius Cote		I hereby certify that I attended the deceased from Jan 8, 1940 to Feb 21, 1940. I last saw him alive on			
Birth date of deceased Feb. 22, 1850		1940 to Feb 21, 1940. Death is said to have occurred on the			
Age: Years 89 Months 11 Days 30		date stated above at 2:15 P. M.			
If less than one day		Duration			
Birthplace Mich.		Immediate cause of death Cerebral Hemorrhage & shock			
Usual occupation Housewife		Other contributory causes of importance			
Industry or business		Major findings and dates:			
Father Name John Fortain		Of operations			
Birthplace Unknown		Of autopsy			
Mother Maiden Name Minnie La Guinard		In case of violence, state if accident, homicide or suicide			
Birthplace Mich.		Date			
Informant Mrs. Van Alek		Where did injury occur? (Specify city, county, or state)			
Address Bay City, Mich.		In industry, home or public place?			
Burial, cremation or removal (Circle the word which applies)		Was disease or injury related to occupation of deceased?			
Place Bay City		Signature John A. Free, M.D.			
Cemetery St. Patrick's Date Feb. 24, 1940		Address 1711 Center Ave			
Funeral director's signature S. E. Blanchard					
Address Bay City, Mich.					
Filed FEB 9 1940		Local Registrar Robert T. Kane M.D.			

TAAF was also struck by the fact that this Chippewa claim does not in any way intersect with the longstanding Van Alst assertion of Sihásapa Lakota ancestry. This is troubling because TAAF researchers determined that the Van Alsts must be claiming that both their Sihásapa Lakota and Ojibwe ancestry came to them through the same person, Theodore's great grandmother, Mary Josephine Cote. The Van Alsts have not provided any explanation as to how this woman could have sought exile from the Dakotas with Sitting Bull and been of Mackinac Bands descent. TAAF researchers are at a loss to even imagine a

scenario in which this could possibly be true. The reasonable conclusion, consistent with all the evidence, is that it is *not* true.

4) Is it plausible that the Van Alsts descend from Cherokees who lived on the North Carolina-Tennessee border?

TAAF researchers have determined that the Van Alsts do not have any Cherokee ancestors.

This claim of the Van Alsts sometimes appears as "Cherokee" or "Eastern Cherokee." To TAAF's knowledge, the Van Alsts have never explained how their family is genealogically connected to the Cherokee people. Rather, the claim is vague, as it was during Theodore's Portland State University job talk: "My mom's side of the family is from [the] Tennessee, North Carolina border area. So, we have all of those Cherokee stories in our family. And the names make sense, but the lines don't. But just in case, we have a Cherokee grandma, thank you."

The Cherokee people have one of the most thoroughly documented genealogies in the world. If the Van Alsts' claim Cherokee descent, their ancestors should be easily identifiable as Cherokee in the vast genealogical records that are easily accessible. TAAF genealogists have thoroughly examined Van Alsts' genealogy, and they found no Cherokee ancestors. They did, however, find ancestors with manufactured Cherokee claims, thus indicating a deeper family tradition of trying to steal Indian resources through false stories of Cherokee ancestry.

As mentioned earlier, none of Theodore's paternal ancestors could possibly have been Cherokee. All of his ancestors in this line of his family lived in Canada and in the upper midwest of the United States. There have never been Cherokee settlements in either of these areas.

While Theodore's maternal ancestors lived in the American Southeast, none of these ancestors were Cherokees either. It is also worth noting that, contrary to Theodore's claim, while some of his ancestors did live in Tennessee and North Carolina, TAAF researchers found no evidence that any of them lived even remotely near the Tennessee/North Carolina border area.

TAAF found that the majority of ancestors on Theodore's mother's mother's line—the line of Ethel M. Davis—lived in Lauderdale County, Alabama. Although some Cherokees are reported to have lived in this general area for a short period of time after the American Revolution, they were gone by 1838 when the Van Alsts' ancestors were residing in Lauderdale County. Living as the Van Alsts' ancestors did amongst more than 10,000 other white people who were also living in this county at the time, all of the Van Alsts' ancestors in this line identified as white on military, death records and census reports. None were listed on the Cherokee removal roll (the Henderson Roll).²⁷ None were ever recognized by Cherokee leaders or other Cherokee record keepers as Cherokee, unlike the thousands of legitimate Cherokees recorded over multiple generations on many rolls, emigration lists, censuses, and other documents. Another roll, the Guion Miller Roll, was assembled following the U.S. Court of Claims decision of May 18, 1905 that divided a sum of \$1,000,000 to all Eastern Cherokees and their descendents (\$40 million today) to settle losses resulting from U.S. violations of treaties made with Cherokees before and after removal.²⁸ The Guion Miller Roll included all Eastern Cherokees who had a right to this distribution, and thousands of non-Indians submitted false claims to get access to the settlement money. None of Theodore's ancestors in Ethel M. Davis's line applied for inclusion on the Guion Miller Roll. This strongly suggests that they themselves did not believe they had any Cherokee ancestry, not even enough

²⁷ <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/microfilm/m1773.pdf>

²⁸ <https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/rolls/guion-miller-rolls>

of a story to make a false claim. If the Van Alsts' Cherokee claim is through this line, it would be a much more recent fabrication. TAAF has no reason to believe that the Van Alsts have exploited this instance of "proximity to Cherokees" to falsely claim a Cherokee identity. This is because the Van Alsts' Cherokee claim has never been *anything* but vague. To our knowledge, neither Theodore nor Emily has ever publicly or privately identified the name(s) of any ancestor or relative of theirs who was or is Cherokee.

With two notable exceptions (discussed below), TAAF likewise found that Theodore's mother's father's ancestors—the line of William Boyd Harrison—did not identify as Cherokee. Almost all of his ancestors in this line were from regions of Tennessee (Harden and Lawrence Counties, southwest of Nashville), and North Carolina (Mecklenburg County, near Charlotte) where Cherokee settlements were not located. Moreover, these locations are at a significant distance from the parts of Tennessee and North Carolina he claims, which is the border between these two states. On government records, these ancestors are always identified as white, and they were never included on the Cherokee rolls either by Cherokee leaders or by white authorities.

In this specific line there *are* a few instances of "proximity to Cherokees" rooted in attempts to claim Cherokee property, which might be the origin of the Van Alsts' false claim to a Cherokee identity. These are noteworthy because Theodore and Emily's ancestors, like Theodore and Emily themselves, made these claims to gain control of American Indian resources. The first is that Theodore's 4th great grandmother in the line of William Boyd Harrison, Sarah "Sallie" Davis (1815-1896), circa 1893 was found to be one of the thousands of white intruders on Cherokee Nation land in Indian Territory. The Cherokee Nation expelled her from the Cooweescoowee District (now five counties in northeast Oklahoma) because she was not Cherokee and was living on Tribal lands as a white intruder without the Nation's permission. The second is that Theodore's 3rd great grandfather, Joel Wilson Weatherford (1829-1906), did apply for inclusion on the Guion Miller Roll, as did *thousands* of other false claimants. Weatherford provided no genealogical evidence to support his claim for inclusion on this roll and access to settlement money. Instead, an affiant claimed that Joel Weatherford's grandfather, William Weatherford, was Cherokee entirely because he "dressed in his hunting shirt and moccasins." All that this establishes is that Weatherford may have worn a hunting shirt and moccasins (common clothing of the time), *not* that he was Cherokee. His application was rejected. Yet this performance of Indian-stereotype-as-identity anticipates Theodore and Emily in troubling ways.

Joel Weatherford's sister, Margaret Caroline Lutts, applied for inclusion on the Dawes Roll for the Cherokee Nation,²⁹ as did thousands of white claimants who manufactured false claims of Cherokee ancestry to steal allotment land from legitimate Cherokees. Her application was rejected by the Dawes Commission because they could not find any evidence that Margaret had "Indian blood" or any ancestors on any of the Cherokee rolls. It is noteworthy that TAAF did not find Guion Miller or Dawes Roll applications from either Joel's daughter, Ada Weatherford (1860-1936), or his grandson, Harvey Harrison (1882-1960). This suggests that, unlike their father and grandfather respectively, they did not believe that they had any Cherokee ancestry.

Because no other Van Alst ancestors have any connection to the Cherokees, it is likely that the stories of Cherokee descent in the Van Alst family originate with these attempts by ancestors to dispossess Cherokees of their property: specifically, Sarah "Sallie" Davis's attempt to claim land in the Cherokee Nation, and Joel Wilson Weatherford's attempt to claim a portion of the Eastern Cherokee land settlement. TAAF researchers and community-based Cherokee genealogists note that it is disturbingly common for people like the Van Alsts to make vague and unsubstantiated claims about "Cherokee stories in our

²⁹ <https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/dawes>

family" and a "Cherokee grandma." Close examination, however, often reveals that these claims, as appears to be the case for the Van Alsts, are rooted in efforts to dispossess Cherokees of their land and resources. This is a multigenerational strategy of graft that is passed down in white family lore with strong belief but zero evidence. (This exploitative family tradition seems to continue today with Theodore and Emily, who only became "Indian" when there were resources to be taken from legitimate Indian people.) This is yet another of many cases where an intruder's claim deforms into a family assertion. In other words, these vague and unsubstantiated claims are an offensive trope that frequently conceals an ugly family history of violence against the Cherokee people.

The evidence TAAF researchers found strongly suggests that this is the case for the Van Alsts. Their ancestors were not Cherokees—they were the *documented enemies* of Cherokees. TAAF researchers have encountered this in other cases that are currently under investigation and that also involve thefts of a Five Tribes identity. One generation of white settlers tries to steal Tribal resources with false claims. Then later, white descendants try again. Examples of this phenomenon include the story told by Louis Owens of his supposed Choctaw roots (which have been shown to be non-existent) and Chadwick Allen's entirely bogus story that he has Chickasaw ancestry. In all cases, there is documented evidence that these individuals and their families are not Indians at all but instead multigenerational white exploiters of the very Tribes they now say they are related to.

Either way, the Van Alsts have seemingly abandoned this Cherokee affiliation claim for the Lakota and Mackinac Band claims (although Emily seems more invested in the Lakota claim, as it is core to her research focus). The Van Alsts' demonstrably shifting claims provide further evidence that their assertions of American Indian ancestry are opportunistic and have been manufactured for financial gain, reputation, and self-interest rather than reflecting legitimate Tribal community connection.

5) Is it plausible that the Van Alsts have a connection to the Ho-Chunk Nation?

TAAF researchers have determined that none of the Van Alsts' ancestors lived in the historic territory of, or had any connection to, the Ho-Chunk Nation.

In a description of an event at Northwestern University held on December 7, 2018, Theodore Van Alst identified as a member of the Ho-Chunk Nation.³⁰ TAAF researchers could not find any theory as to how the Van Alsts could have a genealogical connection to the Ho-Chunk Nation. The historic territory of the Ho-Chunk Nation is located in Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri. As discussed above, Theodore's ancestors resided in the Southeast, Michigan, and Canada. None of his ancestors had a connection to Ho-Chunk territory. The addition of Ho-Chunk to the list of Tribes claimed by the Van Alsts is consistent with pretendian strategies of collecting and shifting Tribal affiliations. After investigating this claim, TAAF researchers concluded that it, too, is frivolous and has no merit.

6) Is it possible that Emily Van Alst has Cherokee, Lakota, Chippewa, or Ho-Chunk ancestry through her mother's line?

TAAF researchers determined that Emily does not have any Cherokee, Lakota, Chippewa, or Ho-Chunk ancestry through her mother's line either.

TAAF researchers traced Emily's maternal ancestors to Germany, England, Scotland, Ireland, New Brunswick, Vermont, and Maine. None of these countries, U.S. states, and Canadian provinces are anywhere near any of the aforementioned Tribes.

³⁰ Center For Native American and Indigenous Research, 2019 Annual Report, page 13, <https://cnair.northwestern.edu/about/cnairannualreport2019.pdf>.

7) *Theodore and Emily are enrolled members of the Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc. Does this then mean that they are claimed as members by a legitimate American Indian Tribe?*

This does *not* mean that they are claimed by a legitimate American Indian Tribe.

The Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc is not a legitimate American Indian Tribe. Rather, it is one the hundreds of Corporations Posing as Indigenous Nations (CPAINs)³¹ that exist in the United States and are an affront to the sovereignty of actual American Indian Tribes. The Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc is little more than an organized heritage hobby group with delusions of Tribal status and an aggressive interest in Indian rights and resources based on manufactured history and unprovable genealogical claims. Despite this and numerous other problems with the false claims of this group and similar groups to being Indigenous, nearly all members of CPAINs assert that their groups are real Indian Tribes.

The descendants of the *actual* historic Mackinac Bands were recognized as members of the legitimate federally recognized Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians in 1979 by an act of the Tribal Council. They are named in Tribal Code Chapter 11,³² along with the historical bands of Grand Island, Point Iroquois, Sault Ste. Marie, Garden River, Sugar Island, and Drummond Island. Because the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians is inclusive of the Mackinac Bands that are legitimate, by claiming political continuity with the legitimate Mackinac Bands, the Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc presents a direct challenge to the sovereignty of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Possibly because the CPAIN that Theodore and Emily claim was created so recently, the leaders of the federally recognized Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians have simply not yet completed the defense of their Nation against the theft of their identity by this CPAIN.

According to the website of this fake Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc group, "Mackinac Bands enrollment requires documented lineal decent [sic] and heritage to one of the seven historical bands whom the United States Government recognizes as the Mackinac Bands. These seven historical bands include bands eleven through seventeen of the Mackinac Bands. Mackinac Bands does not require a specific blood quantum, but one must have a Mackinac Bands ancestor (blood) *or have been adopted into the tribe*" (emphasis ours).³³ More information is difficult to access, as the group has removed key pages from their website. (Lack of transparency over membership guidelines is another sign that a CPAIN has dubious if not outright fraudulent claims and standards.)

TAAF researchers could not identify any of the Van Alsts' ancestors who were listed on any of these rolls (see the above discussion). TAAF researchers concluded that the Van Alsts were allowed to join and serve in a leadership capacity in this non-profit organization either because they misled the membership office into believing they were descendents of Mrs. Joseph LeCuyer, or by virtue of financed "adoption" into this group. As the process of adoption is not defined by the Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc, it is reasonable to presume that this CPAIN will "adopt" anyone willing to pay the required \$60 application fee or provide other financial support, regardless of whether they have *actual* Mackinac Bands ancestry. Even if the Van Alsts did have documented descent from Mrs. LeCuyer, it would beg the question as to why Theodore and Emily would choose to join a group of white hobbyists playing Indian instead of enrolling in the legitimate and well-established Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_organizations_that_self-identify_as_Native_American_tribes

³² Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Tribal Code (Chapter 11, Membership Ordinance), <https://www.saulttribe.com/government/tribal-code>

³³ <https://www.mackinacbands.org/enrollment>

Finally, the website of the Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians Inc CPAIN claims that it is a "State Recognized Tribe," but Michigan has no state recognition process. This statement seems to be a reference to the group's incorporation as a state nonprofit. Needless to say, this is far from legal or political recognition by a U.S. state that this group is an American Indian Tribal nation. Moreover, "state recognition" is itself already a legally dubious process given that the U.S. Constitution and U.S. federal law construes American Indian matters as under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government.

Part II: Theodore Van Alst, Jr.

Introduction

Theodore Van Alst, Jr. (1965–) was born to white middle-class parents Theodore Van Alst, Sr. and Joanne Van Alst (now Emmons, née Harrison). Theodore Jr.'s parents ended their relationship when Theodore Jr. was young. Theodore Sr. remarried in 1981 when Theodore Jr. was around sixteen. The woman who then became Theodore's stepmother was Maureen Van Alst (née O'Hara), a white woman who was born into a middle-class family from Chicago's South Side. Maureen died on March 2, 1996, and Theodore Sr., on July 4, 2005. TAAF research did not find evidence that Theodore Jr.'s father, mother, or stepmother ever publicly claimed to be American Indian, although it is very likely that unconfirmed stories of Indian ancestry passed orally within the family between generations.

For thirty-one years, Theodore Sr. worked in Chicago's financial industry, enabling his family to live in an apartment in the city's Rogers Park neighborhood. At the time the Van Alsts lived there, as is the case today, Rogers Park was (and remains) a quiet, peaceful part of Chicago known for its historic architecture, ready access to Lake Michigan beaches, competitive housing prices, and relatively spacious apartments and townhomes. Theodore Jr.'s stepmother Maureen appears to have been a stay-at-home mom during the period when she helped raise Theodore Jr (hereafter Theodore).

Educational History

Education has played an ironic role in Theodore's fraudulent creation of himself as an American Indian. In interviews, Theodore has discussed attending Sullivan High School in Rogers Park, which had a mixed academic reputation that suited his story of struggle. Conveniently, he leaves out his time at Lane Technical High School.³⁴ Then, as now, "Lane Tech," as it is called, has had—and continues to have—a very strong academic reputation. In fact, U.S. News and World Report gives the school a score of 99.55 out of 100 and ranks it as high as #3 in all of Illinois and #80 in the nation.³⁵ Notably, the school sits on a gorgeous thirty-three-acre campus, and students who have attended the school show a pattern of disproportionately going on to assume positions of wealth and power in Illinois and, more broadly, the U.S. One such example is Rod Blagojevich, who was later elected as the 40th governor of Illinois prior to his being convicted in 2011 for his involvement in a major corruption scandal. Another is John Podesta, who served as White House Chief of Staff under President Bill Clinton. When Theodore attended the school, Lane Tech called itself "the Indians," and it had an offensive Indian mascot, namely, a fake Plains Indian who performed in stereotypical "Indian" dress that included a war bonnet. The school maintained

³⁴ Emily McClanathan, "Theodore C. Van Alst Jr. paints a portrait of Native Chicago," *Chicago Reader* online, August 12, 2025, <https://chicagoreader.com/books/book-review/theodore-c-van-alst-jr-the-el/>.

³⁵ See U.S. News and World Report website:

<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/illinois/districts/chicago-public-schools/lane-technical-high-school-6572>.

the name, "the Indians," and their offensive mascot for as long as 100 years (until 2020). Most likely, Theodore avoids mention of his time as a student at Lane Tech because the privilege of attending a school with the strongest possible reputation for academic excellence contradicts the narrative he has concocted of having been an impoverished inner-city American Indian kid who experienced educational deprivation.³⁶

When Theodore was in the eighth grade, he invented what later became the signature character of his books, the character of "Teddy." In *Sacred Smokes*, Theodore discloses that a story he wrote about what appears to be an early version of the character impressed his eighth-grade teacher. Set in an amusement park, the 500-word story is told from the point of view of a foulmouthed punk on a middle-school field trip who remarks, among other things, "After the fucking bumper cars and the log ride, you're glad you drank whiskey instead of beer for breakfast."³⁷ According to Theodore, his English teacher awarded him an A for the story. This was surely a rare high grade for young Theodore, who ended up dropping out of high school. (If he left high school because of drug use and criminal activity, it is not because he lacked educational resources or opportunities or because of anti-Indian racism he supposedly experienced but rather because of his own bad choices as an unremarkable but bored and troubled middle-class white boy.) The tough, street-smart, and stereotype-ridden character of Teddy would later become the badly written foundation upon which Theodore built his career as a creative writer and university professor after he received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies from the University of Connecticut (UConn). Notably, as a white eighth-grader, Theodore did not identify the race or ethnicity of his young protagonist, which strongly suggests that, when Theodore first created Teddy, Teddy was white.

Perhaps the most impactful event that led to the resurrection and transformation of the character of Teddy was Theodore's doctoral work at UConn. Theodore's 2008 dissertation noted above is an uncritical look at stereotypes about American Indians as they were developed by a European writer who was himself a notorious and highly skilled identity shifter. Ironically titled "'How Quickly They Forget': American Indians in European Film, 1962-1976," this dissertation discusses American Indian representation in German and Italian cinema, focusing on the influence of the stereotypical "Winnetou" figure created by German writer Karl May and brought to life in film throughout the twentieth century. The dissertation reads as a guide to stereotypes about American Indians, doubtless helping shape the particular ways Theodore began validating his claims to being American Indian. Notably, German writer May shifted his own identity multiple times and, in fact, is identified as a notorious identity-shifter, making it plausible that he also served as an inspiration to Theodore.

In 2008 Theodore accepted a tenure-track position at UConn where he became a colleague in the same department as Dr. Margaret Bruchac, a professor whose "Abenaki" ancestry has been conclusively disproven by researchers associated with the legitimate Abenaki Councils of Odanak and W8linak and W8banaki in Canada.³⁸ Working in such close proximity to Bruchac, who at the time, as now, was falsely claiming to be Abenaki, and whose brother Joseph has made a lucrative career from his own false claims in Native American literature, likely had an impact on Theodore, inspiring him to follow her lead.³⁹ Earlier that year, Theodore had made his first public written statement of having Lakota ancestry, which

³⁶ Lane Technical High School Yearbook, 1979 (Chicago, Illinois), 69. While referred to as "Teddy Vanalst" in the photo caption, the table of contents makes clear that this is Theodore C. VanAlst (Van Alst). [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com). U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-2016 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

³⁷ The entire short story appears in Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr., *Sacred Smokes* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 44.

³⁸ Abenaki Heritage, Genealogies, <https://abenakiheritage.org/genealogies/joseph-margaret-bruchac/>

³⁹ Debbie Reese, "Is Joseph Bruchac truly Abenaki?" *American Indians in Children's Literature* blog, September 30, 2023, <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/2023/09/is-joseph-bruchac-truly-abenaki.html>.

was quoted earlier in this report, in a discussion in his dissertation about the East German film, *The Sons of Great Bear* (1966). Revisiting that statement is instructive. Theodore writes:

A story of a clan of Dakota people heading north to evade encroaching settlers and soldiers is not without possibility and can in fact be corroborated via oral history. Briefly, my own grandfather described to me a similar story. His mother's parents, both from a Sihásapa band of Lakota, came into the US from Canada. There are to this day bands of Lakota and Dakota who live on reserves, as well as individuals in cities, in Canada.⁴⁰

As Theodore's white family has no Dakota or Lakota ancestry on either side, his grandfather could not credibly have relayed such a story. While it's possible that his grandfather invented this fabrication, we find it far more likely that *The Sons of Great Bear*, Karl May's popular fiction, and other stereotypical works are the sources of Theodore's initial Lakota claim and that Theodore inserted the passage quoted above into his dissertation as an identity trial balloon to test what he could get away with. As discussed in the genealogy section of this report, in interviews and her own academic publications, Theodore's daughter Emily would go on to repeat this story of the family's fictive Lakota origins, though with slightly different details.

One TAAF researcher uncovered a probable connection between Theodore's financial situation during this period of his life and his choices first to resurrect Teddy, then to transform him from a white character to an American Indian one. As a newlywed with a young daughter (Emily), Theodore found himself in serious financial trouble. In 2000 he and his white wife Amie even declared bankruptcy, about which they may have felt some chagrin given that each of them had been born into financially stable white, middle-class families.⁴¹ The economic situation of the struggling couple remained precarious until Theodore began self-identifying as American Indian, legitimizing his false claim by changing Teddy's identity to American Indian and claiming that Teddy, the character he invented, is his younger self. Countless times Theodore has claimed that his stories about Teddy's adventures are true depictions of his own family and friendships. Thus Theodore has repeatedly claimed that Teddy is an author surrogate. In the aftermath of Theodore's shift from a white person to an American Indian one, Theodore and Amie did not just recover financially: the couple began thriving economically. Financial profit has long been a motive for those peddling false claims to being Indigenous.

When Theodore again began writing stories about Teddy, he began repeatedly referencing Teddy's identity as American Indian. To help ensure that readers do not overlook this aspect of his protagonist, in his stories Theodore often references the stereotypically "Indian" appearance of Teddy and his family. TAAF researchers found this striking given that Theodore's own phenotype is not stereotypically "Indian" but Theodore has often remarked that he created Teddy in his own image. In actuality, reflecting his Dutch ancestry, Theodore has very light skin, sandy blonde hair, and blue eyes, as does his daughter Emily.⁴² In contrast, in Theodore's books, Teddy has "brown and oily" skin, "long-ass" black hair, and describes himself as looking like a "half-breed."⁴³ In the book *Sacred Folks*, Teddy remarks that "the

⁴⁰ Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr., *"How Quickly They Forget": American Indians in European Film, 1962-1976*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies, University of Connecticut, 2008, 99.

⁴¹ Bankruptcies announcements, *Bangor Daily News*, Monday, July 17, 2000, Business section, A4.

⁴² The fact that the Van Alsts do not have a stereotypical American Indian phenotype is not in itself an issue. The phenotype of many actual American Indians is not stereotypical. The Van Alsts' phenotype is mentioned here because it is relevant to understanding one of the many ways by which, in rendering his author surrogate Teddy (and thus himself), Theodore obsessively deploys and reinforces non-Indian stereotypes about Indians and physical appearance as supposed markers of race.

⁴³ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 123, 53; Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr., *The El* (New York: Vintage, 2025), 19.

Creator [is] smilin' down on [Teddy's] summer brown ass."⁴⁴ Theodore describes a camping trip during which Teddy "got browner by the minute" in the blazing sun while the white man who had taken Teddy camping "pinked up so bad [Teddy] could smell the blisters."⁴⁵ Teddy describes his father—a character named Theodore Sr. after Theodore Jr.'s real father—as "my own brown dad," and his Aunt Jessie, as "dark like a walnut."⁴⁶ (Photos of Theodore Sr.'s brothers and nephews featured in the *Bay City Times* as a result of their police work clearly indicate that the Van Alsts are not in any way identifiably Indian and certainly not "brown" or "dark" as described in Theodore's fiction.) Additionally, during an event in which Teddy fills his mouth "with sugar and Doritos and pop," it is noted in the story that such consumables invite "hordes of [tooth] decay" that promise to "strip away *that one bit of whiteness* [Teddy] might still have" (emphasis ours).⁴⁷

Indeed, Theodore portrays Teddy as legible to a non-Indian audience as American Indian, which, again, is not the case for the author himself, but is a maneuver that helps Theodore establish Teddy as "Indian to the core" and thus as a person with a significant visible distance from whiteness. Fellow gang member Pepper calls Teddy a "fuckin' Injun," and another member, Little Man, calls him an "Indian-looking motherfucker," at one point asking Teddy directly, "You're like an Injun or something, right?"⁴⁸ Vassily, a Ukrainian character, asserts that Teddy has "a fat Indian face," and when Teddy happens to run past a gang member who collects intelligence about other gangs, the boy, who does not know Teddy, whispers, "C'mere Injun."⁴⁹ Yet another example is an event that takes place during a small gathering of Teddy's gang: Teddy's friends engage in "fake war whoops" they direct at Teddy.⁵⁰ Similarly, when police officers encounter Teddy, which is often (given that Teddy has altercations with police on an almost daily basis), even those officers who do not know Teddy recognize him as American Indian. During one such encounter, which exemplifies Teddy's experience as a frequent victim of anti-Indian racism, an officer calls Teddy a "little Injun," then pulls a plastic comb out of Teddy's back pocket and asks Teddy whether the comb is some "secret Injun shit."⁵¹ Deriding Teddy as "a smart-ass Injun," the cop whines to his partner, "This Geronimo [meaning Teddy] is getting on my nerves." Another time, based solely on Teddy's appearance, a cop asks Teddy, "so you're an Injun, huh?"⁵² Later, when Teddy flees up an alley following an incident, the pursuing officer calls out, "Hold it right there, Injun."⁵³ Yet another example appears in Theodore's newest book, *The El*. A Chicago Transit Authority supervisor describes Teddy, a boy he does not know, as "a longhair Indian kid."⁵⁴

Having established, repeatedly in his texts, that his protagonist Teddy is a physically identifiable American Indian and, furthermore, that Teddy and his family are, to Theodore's mind, "more Indian" than most other Indians due to their high Indian blood quanta, Theodore goes on to define Teddy and his family in terms of odious stereotypes about American Indians, as the discussion below shows. One American Indian scholar whom writers of this report consulted about Theodore's writing described Theodore's stories as "unreadable, racist gibberish," explaining, "There are certainly Native authors that I don't relate to when I read them...but I never look at [such texts] and feel maligned. Ted's [Theodore Van Alst Jr.'s] work seems actively harmful." While it may seem counterintuitive to see false claims to being

⁴⁴ Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr., *Sacred Folks: Stories* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2024), 30.

⁴⁵ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 35.

⁴⁶ Van Alst, *The El*, 144; Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 62.

⁴⁷ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 42.

⁴⁸ Van Alst, *The El*, 59, 75, 86.

⁴⁹ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 120, 64.

⁵⁰ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 83.

⁵¹ Van Alst, *The El*, 100.

⁵² Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 54.

⁵³ Van Alst, *The El*, 98.

⁵⁴ Van Alst, *The El*, 124.

American Indian as anything other than acts of admiration that American Indians should find flattering, in reality, there are few acts today that are more profoundly anti-Indian than stealing an American Indian identity. In fact, hatred of Indians thoroughly permeates the scholarship and other work of almost all, if not all, of those who falsely claim to be Indian.

The work of Theodore and his daughter Emily cannot be understood as anything other than expressions of unbridled loathing of and hostility toward American Indians—expressions that have done and continue to do significant, undeniable harm to American Indians. Theodore's writing, as will be seen, does little more than deliver to non-Indians, on a proverbial silver platter, vile stereotypes about American Indians that many non-Indians seem to find utterly convincing, thoroughly authentic, and undeniably true. Hence the popular appeal of Theodore's stories and why he has been installed in numerous successive leadership positions in Native American Studies and academia. To put a finer point on it, for many non-Indians, Theodore's writing confirms the veracity of their centuries-old constructions of American Indians as angry, dysfunctional, ignorant, broken, and bloodthirsty; as substance-abusing, incompetent, and poverty-stricken; and as unable to cope with modern society. It was thus unsurprising that, in researching the actual Simon City Royals gang that Theodore claims to have been a member of during his youth, TAAF researchers uncovered evidence that, during some parts of this gang's history, the Royals were a white supremacist gang.⁵⁵

Importantly, while Theodore's books are populated by a multitude of characters, only a few are American Indian. In fact, the only featured characters who are American Indian are Teddy and his family. This stands in an awkward, uneasy relationship with Theodore's claims that his writing addresses an "unexplored part of Indian Country" and that Chicago is "my Rez [Indian reservation]."⁵⁶ If Theodore and his family were indeed urban Indians, they would have been part of a large and diverse Indian community, but that community is missing from his fictional Chicago. Speaking through the character of Teddy, Theodore goes on to assert, "We [Indians have] been gangbanging' for about a century or more here [in Chicago]."⁵⁷ While it is offensive on its face to describe American Indian life from the late-19th century to the present in what is now eastern Illinois as "gangbanging," an inescapable truth is that, by claiming to be American Indian themselves, Theodore, as well as Emily, have in effect provided themselves cover to disrespect and disparage actual American Indians. Indeed, the particular way these two white professors playing Indian have insulated themselves from the hard-hitting criticism that should have been but, to our knowledge, has never been levied upon their work makes the work of this father-daughter duo especially nefarious.

Teddy

The teenage protagonist of four of Theodore's books, the character "Teddy," is angry, dysfunctional, broken, and bloodthirsty. He has no redeeming characteristics. Alternately strung out on acid, cocaine, heroin, beer, and tequila,⁵⁸ Teddy regularly engages in attempted murder and assault, and he does so in ways that make him a genuine sadist. Just for kicks, Teddy and fellow gang member Clint deliver life-threatening head injuries to an old man who is drunk and stumbling around near the railroad tracks but who is bothering nobody. After the attempted murder, Teddy says to Clint: "[Let's] just leave him there. Think about what it'll be like when he wakes up and the back of his head is frozen to the ice [when

⁵⁵Frank Main, "How a millionaire's gang fantasy blew up the west side," Chicago Sun Times, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2017/4/20/18386300/thaddeus-jimenez-millionaire-gang-fantasy-blew-up-west-side-n-o-love-money-gang>

⁵⁶ Official publisher synopsis, *Sacred Smokes*

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Sacred_Smokes/s15gDwAAQBAJ?hl=en; Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 194.

⁵⁷ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 26.

⁵⁸ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 28, 59, 25, 52.

the pool of blood under his head freezes]." Clint responds, "You're a cold motherfucker, Teddy."⁵⁹ Later, Teddy, unprovoked, chooses to strangle a friend whom he calls Idiot. Mesmerized by the effect of his murderous hands on this boy's life force, Teddy remarks, "I watched his face change colors, blue to green, watched as tiny red flares appeared in the whites of his eyes, capillaries or whatever getting blown out." Then, the boy Teddy was strangling "started to make sounds up in his nasal cavities," Teddy says, "*so I pressed harder*" (emphasis ours).⁶⁰

Such acts of sadism effectively render Teddy a bloodthirsty savage who thoroughly enjoys the act of killing and actively seeks out opportunities to harm others. As if to drive home the notion that Teddy's vicious acts of coldblooded violence make him a real Indian, Theodore constructs at least two characters, both of them cops, who independently (and in different books) refer to Teddy as "Geronimo."⁶¹ Such references show disrespect for an honored Chiricahua Apache leader. At the same time, they serve not only to validate Teddy as a real Indian but also to bring into relief the conflict that helps structure all of Theodore's books—the conflict between, on the one hand, white cowboys and sheriffs in the guise of inner-city police, and, on the other, the so-called "merciless Indian savage" in the guise of Teddy. This conflict is, at its core, the very conflict around which so many Hollywood Westerns were built (and before those, the frontier romances of Karl May that Theodore studied in his dissertation). As the popularity of and acclaim given to Theodore's books strongly suggest, this conflict, around which Theodore structures all of his stories, unfortunately continues to have great popular appeal.

Indeed, in one story, almost immediately upon boasting, "I have anger issues," Teddy rips a bottle of beer out of the hand of a man at a bar and smashes the bottle into the side of the man's head. "Then I'm on top of him," Teddy states in a matter-of-fact tone, "and my hands are around his throat and it's just those funny sounds coming out of him."⁶² Minutes later, the police (read cavalry) rushes into the Uptown bar (read Western saloon), pouncing upon Teddy in a skirmish that ends with Teddy being thrown in jail and booked for aggravated assault. Another time, Teddy plots a murderous revenge against a rival but fails to carry out the plan, presumably because the plan presents complex logistical problems arising from Teddy's lack of access to a car. Specifically, Teddy angrily vows to kill "this fucker's whole family. I'll burn down his apartment then catch a bus to Kentucky or whatever, take out his grandma and grandpa, too. Plus, all forty of his cousins in their knotty pine homestead."⁶³ Yet another expression of the bone-chilling brutality and sheer viciousness of Teddy occurs while Teddy is waiting for the "L" train on a subway platform. "Teddy pulls a chain out of his pocket and whacks [a] fucker across the nose. Messsy [sic]. Clean up on aisle nine and shit," reports Teddy's fellow gang member Hector.⁶⁴ Another onlooker and fellow gang member Pepper describes the incident as one in which Teddy "laid open some dude's face."⁶⁵

In addition to engaging in such unmitigated savagery, Teddy reveals himself in Theodore's books to be a kleptomaniac. On numerous different occasions, many of which Theodore describes in some detail, Teddy steals, among other things, beer, guns, cigarettes, the then-new X-Men toy, a Thor toy, a bike, a car, and "the pop bottles off the back porches" of his neighbors.⁶⁶ He even robs laundromats, where he "hit[s] the

⁵⁹ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 58.

⁶⁰ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 79.

⁶¹ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 84.

⁶² Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 48, 50.

⁶³ Van Alst, *The El*, 124.

⁶⁴ Van Alst, *The El*, 121.

⁶⁵ Van Alst, *The El*, 123.

⁶⁶ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 63.

laundry machines with a crowbar" to "clean out all the quarters."⁶⁷ Theodore portrays Teddy as a compulsive thief, a criminal for whom theft is part of his nature and who even thrills and delights in stealing—just like the white-invented horse-riding Indians in the old Hollywood Western movies. By portraying Teddy as a serial marauder and maniacal plunderer, Theodore deflects from the reality that, on a massive, truly unimaginable scale, settlers have stolen the land, children, resources, cultures, and languages of American Indian peoples, as well as, like Theodore has, our very identity.

In his books, Theodore systematically builds the character of Teddy by layering additional negative stereotypes about Indians atop the stereotypes of Indians that compose Teddy's foundation, namely the stereotype of Indians as vicious, violent, savages who are born to steal. One such additional layer is Theodore's construction of Teddy as "pathologically tardy to everything," a behavior and personal characteristic that Theodore incorporates into the character of Teddy several different times and in more than one of his books.⁶⁸ Through this construction, Theodore reinforces negative stereotypes of American Indians as always late and thus as unprofessional, unreliable, and unable to manage their time. Non-Indians have often used this stereotype to justify the giving of jobs and other opportunities to non-Indians instead of American Indians.

Another cluster of stereotypes Theodore incorporates into Teddy as he builds his protagonist pertains to personal hygiene. During a bar fight that Teddy instigates, Teddy taunts a man by giving him a big sardonic smile. Teddy asserts that the victim should be able to see Teddy's teeth even though, as Teddy admits, "I don't brush my teeth all that much."⁶⁹ Teddy's failure to regularly engage in one of the most basic acts of personal hygiene, brushing his teeth, suggests that others in Teddy's orbit likely regard him as foul or even disgusting. As if to call attention to Teddy's lack of dental hygiene and, more broadly, his dirty mouth, Theodore portrays Teddy as foul-mouthed. Indeed, Teddy uses gratuitous profanity almost every time he speaks. In one passage, for example, Teddy remarks, "Fuck this and fuck that, fuck it all and fuck you, fuck, that's rotten and fuck! What just happened, and fuck, look at that, and fuck, that's crazy, and fuck, I'm going to bed, and fuck, podcasts are just AM radio."⁷⁰ By repeatedly portraying his protagonist and one of the few Indians in his books as dirty, foul, and unimaginative, Theodore invokes the long history of stereotyping American Indians as dirty, disgusting, simpleminded, and repulsive. This helps Theodore persuade his audience that Teddy—and thus he Theodore—is authentically American Indian.

Teddy exemplifies other negative stereotypes about American Indians, as well, including the stereotype of Indians as ignorant and simple, as well as the stereotype of Indians as hating white people. Teddy describes himself and his family as "Indians in the city," which, Teddy explains, means that "[we are] ignorant in more ways that I can count."⁷¹ Later, Teddy admits, "I'm just kinda simple is all."⁷² The stereotype of American Indians as ignorant and simple, a construction rooted in the stereotype of Indians as primitive peoples, is particularly tired. Not only does Theodore portray Teddy and his family in terms of this stereotype, but also Theodore expends significant time and effort emphasizing just how much Teddy hates white people. Referring to "the white dudes on the subway" who, Teddy asserts, look "uncomfortable in their own pale skins," based on no knowledge whatsoever of these men, Teddy describes them as among the "people I hated in the world."⁷³ He also characterizes them as total "pieces of

⁶⁷ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 63.

⁶⁸ Van Alst, *The El*, 140; Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 44.

⁶⁹ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 51.

⁷⁰ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 24.

⁷¹ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 13.

⁷² Van Alst, *The El*, 99.

⁷³ Van Alst, *The El*, 144.

shit" before adding, "The quicker they got mugged and moved away, the better." In Theodore's stories, Teddy repeatedly disparages white people. At one point, fellow gang member Mikey remarks that Teddy doesn't "trust whiteboys [sic] under any circumstances."⁷⁴ By representing Teddy in these ways, Theodore invokes the stereotype of Indians as angry, resentful, vindictive, and grudge-holding—reminiscent of the ways Geronimo has been represented in popular culture. At the same time, Theodore also portrays Indians as themselves racist against not just whites but also against people of color, as Teddy regularly makes blanket judgements about white people and people of non-white ethnicities as undeserving of life. This maneuver deflects from the reality that in the United States there is a very long, well-documented history of racism *against* American Indians. Turning this history on its head, Theodore's books portray Indians, not settlers, as the incorrigible racists. At the same time, Theodore also strongly implies that hatred of whites is part of what makes an individual a real Indian. Such stereotypes undermine, among many other things, the work of Tribes to build successful Tribal businesses, particularly in the tourism and casino industries that white people patronize. Such stereotypes also undermine the ability of elected and appointed Tribal leaders to most effectively engage in the kind of sensitive diplomatic relations with the U.S. federal and state governments that have long been vital activities of Indian leaders.

Theodore goes on to portray Teddy as a less than stellar worker. When Teddy reaches his late teens, he struggles to remember when he last attended school, and he only occasionally works for pay. Sporadically and inconsistently, Teddy works as a restaurant worker, a bartender, a courier or trader, and a band manager. One constant is Teddy's failure to hold down a job. One day Teddy describes himself as "hungover at work," which he states is "a near-daily occurrence."⁷⁵ In this way Theodore reinforces the stereotype of the alcoholic Indian who is unaccustomed to work, is too lazy to work, and is an underperforming and unreliable employee. American Indians regularly combat such stereotypes in the workplace, which is expressed by, for example, non-Indians holding American Indians to different, higher standards in the workplace and regularly discounting the quality of the work Indians perform.

By reinforcing the stereotype of Indians as substandard and deficient workers, Theodore's writing serves to worsen for American Indians the experience of working in institutions run by non-Indians, whether they be businesses or universities. Another work-related stereotype Theodore invokes involves Teddy's clothing. Explaining that his job as a courier or trader requires him to dress up, one day at work Teddy remarks, "I had on a white dress shirt (don't laugh)." By making Teddy into a character who asks readers not to laugh at him when he dons professional attire, Theodore suggests that an American Indian in formal office wear is laughable. The underlying message is that American Indians do not belong in the modern workplace, especially as white-collar workers. Further, in his most recent book, Theodore suggests that American Indians, or at least real Indians, do not even want such jobs, a blanket contention that has the potential to dissuade employers from even considering American Indians for good, well-paying, white-collar jobs. Teddy remarks, for example, that he accepts only jobs that are "gangstery enough now and again to keep me interested for a minute, anyway."⁷⁶

Lest readers conclude that Teddy is culturally non-Indian, Theodore takes care to represent Teddy not just as racially and ethnically American Indian but also as culturally "Indian." By doing so, Theodore further distances Teddy from whiteness, thus persuading readers that Teddy's sadism, kleptomania, criminality, laziness, dirtiness, and his other negative characteristics stem solely from his cultural and racial Indianness. In one of Theodore's books, during a confrontation with the police, Teddy turns to one of the officers and says with great sarcasm, "*Hau mitakuyepi. Cante Waste nape ciyu,*" which in the Lakota

⁷⁴ Van Alst, *The El*, 95.

⁷⁵ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 46.

⁷⁶ Van Alst, *The El*, 136.

language means "Hello relatives. I greet you with a good heart and a handshake."⁷⁷ At other times, Teddy speaks Ojibwemowin. In addition to speaking at least two American Indian languages, Teddy possesses stereotypically "Indian" cultural beliefs about hunting. Specifically, he condemns how, as he puts it, after killing a deer, white people often leave behind parts of the animal.⁷⁸ Additionally, throughout Theodore's book *The El*, Teddy has visions of the trickster figure Coyote, who becomes an on-again, off-again companion of Teddy's as Teddy traverses the cityscape of Chicago. Frequently, Coyote whispers in Teddy's ear and calls him "youngblood."⁷⁹

One question that remains unanswered in this report is why Theodore chose to construct Teddy as wholly devoid of any redeeming characteristics, especially given Theodore's insistence that Teddy is his younger self. It's possible that Theodore regards gangsters and thugs as cool. Perhaps he admires their so-called hypermasculinity. It's also possible that, by portraying himself—or at least his younger self—as violent, vindictive, and as a sadist, Theodore intends to preemptively intimidate and silence anyone who might uncover the falseness of his claims to being American Indian and make this finding public.

Whatever the reason, Theodore uses his false claims to being Indian to pander to and reinforce the ugliest stereotypes about Indian people. We must remember that, as TAAF researchers found through genealogical work involving more than 1,700 of Theodore's ancestors and lateral relatives, Theodore Van Alst, Jr. has no American Indian ancestry. Theodore is a white man who intentionally reimagined his vile, violent, and selfish character Teddy as an Indian and who built a lucrative fiction-writing and editing career from that act of blatant anti-Indian racism.

Teddy's Parents

To underscore and amplify his claim that the character of Teddy's father is his own father, Theodore gives Teddy's father the same name as his own father, Theodore Sr., whom Teddy refers to as Pop. Theodore identifies Pop as Sihásapa Lakota, Leech Lake Chippewa, and Ottawa, and Teddy's mother as Eastern Cherokee (with Appalachian "hillbilly" heritage). These are the same Tribes with which Theodore himself has falsely claimed to be affiliated. Even though Theodore has, in addition, claimed to be Ho-Chunk, fortunately for the Ho-Chunk Nation and the Winnebago Tribe, in his books Theodore identifies neither Teddy's parents nor anyone else in Teddy's family as Ho-Chunk.

Teddy's parents are described in Theodore's books in some detail. Like their son Teddy, neither one of these adult characters has any redeeming characteristics. More than that, as will be seen, Theodore's depictions of Teddy's parents read like case studies of the kind of parents that 19th- and 20th-century federal officials might have included in a white paper as anecdotal evidence supporting the policy of removing American Indian children from their homes and placing them in boarding schools. Or adopting them into white families. Or both.

Theodore's portrayal of what he insists are the mostly truthful accounts of his own parents, as well as of himself, raises questions about the extent to which Teddy's parents are indeed mostly accurate depictions of Theodore's own parents. We know that neither one of Theodore's parents, one of whom is deceased (his father) and the other of whom (his biological mother) is still alive, was or is American Indian. We also know that Theodore's actual father worked for more than three decades in finance, whereas the father of Theodore's protagonist Teddy is a bartender. As for Theodore's biological mother and his stepmother,

⁷⁷ Van Alst, *The El*, 99.

⁷⁸ Van Alst, *The El*, 27.

⁷⁹ Van Alst, *The El*, 149.

TAAF researchers found no records of either woman's profession aside from housewife, whereas the character of Teddy's mother is a waitress.

At first, Theodore's author surrogate Teddy lives with only his mother and little brother. But after Teddy's mother kicks him out of the home at the age of thirteen, Teddy manages somehow to discover where his father lives, then moves in with him. Teddy's brother follows shortly thereafter. Teddy remarks, "If ever there was a pair [of people] who should've been separated so they didn't hate-fuck each other, it was those two [his parents]." ⁸⁰ As for the living conditions of Theodore's and Teddy's families, TAAF researchers found that Theodore significantly lowered the socioeconomic status of Teddy's family: while Theodore's actual family was solidly middle class, Teddy's family is deeply impoverished, as will be addressed later in this report. At one point, Teddy and his family live in public housing, ⁸¹ which, to our knowledge, Theodore's actual family never did. In reinventing his white family as an American Indian one, then, because Theodore makes this family American Indian, he then makes the abhorrent decision to render them as destitute and thus to simultaneously invoke and reinforce stereotypes about the socioeconomic status of American Indians.

TAAF researchers also asked but were unable to answer the question of whether, as parents, Theodore's actual parents were as badly behaved and incompetent as are Teddy's parents. If Theodore's actual parents were as objectionable as they appear to be in his books, why did Theodore not then truthfully portray them as white, especially given that there is such a wealth of stories about good white parents and an underrepresentation of stories about bad white parents? Conversely, if Theodore's real parents were actually adequate parents, if only minimally adequate, it would be truly despicable if, in reinventing these parents as American Indian, Theodore chose to represent them not just as deficient parents but as people who are wholly unfit to be parents. By portraying Teddy's Indian parents as utterly incapable of caring for their children, Theodore most likely seeks to increase the credibility of his claims that his parents (and also he) are American Indian and, more than that, that they are authentically American Indian.

Representations of how American Indian parents treat their children matter. There is a long, ugly history of the U.S. Congress and the executive branch using these representations to justify the removal of American Indian children from their homes and Tribes. ⁸² Today these same stereotypes are being used to undermine the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), the "gold standard" child welfare legislation designed to protect American Indian children. ⁸³ The debate over who should raise Indian children is, and always has been, a debate about Tribal sovereignty. By maligning and denigrating American Indian parenting, Theodore's work provides ammunition to those who oppose ICWA, Tribal sovereignty, and even the continued existence of American Indians. In this connection, it is worth reiterating that Theodore repeatedly claims that every one of his books offers a window into the life and experience of an actual American Indian family, not a fictional one and certainly not a white, middle-class family that Theodore has diabolically twisted into a highly dysfunctional and impoverished American Indian family.

Teddy's Father Theodore Sr.

Predictably, the most prominent characteristic of Teddy's father, whom Teddy calls "Pop," is that he is an alcoholic. In *Sacred Smokes*, Teddy says, "Pop came home drunk. Every night." ⁸⁴ In Theodore's book, *The El*, Teddy adds that Pop does not simply return home every night drunk; every night he passes out almost

⁸⁰ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 26.

⁸¹ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 55.

⁸² Native Governance Center, "Sovereignty Under Attack," <https://nativegov.org/news/sovereignty-under-attack/>

⁸³ B.I.A., Indian Child Welfare Act, <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ois/dhs/icwa>

⁸⁴ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 16.

immediately upon walking through the door.⁸⁵ As Teddy explains, "My dad would drink at a kid's birthday party, or a funeral, or at breakfast."⁸⁶ Teddy adds that Pop "could find any number of reasons to begin drinking after lunch."⁸⁷ One afternoon, young Teddy cannot locate his father. Pop is "probably still drunk from the night before," young Teddy concludes.⁸⁸ Building on the stereotype of the perpetually drunk Indian, Theodore adds numerous other layers of malignant stereotypes of Indians onto Pop as he constructs this Sihásapa Lakota, Leech Lake Chippewa, and Ottawa character. This is especially disturbing because Pop is the only featured American Indian character in Theodore's books who is a grown man. Predictably, the stereotype of the stoic Indian is one of the stereotypes Theodore incorporates into the character of Pop. While describing Pop as a "low-key bigot," Teddy remarks that Pop "never said a whole lot else, really"—except to insult and deride Teddy, as well as to make racist comments.⁸⁹ Theodore subsequently intertwines this stereotype with the stereotype of the perpetually drunk Indian such that they end up mutually constituting one another. "One time," Teddy says, Pop "didn't say a word for two whole weeks."⁹⁰ Teddy then admits that the only time Pop talks is when he's drunk.⁹¹

Being physically abusive is another characteristic Theodore gives Pop. This characteristic is also rather predictable given Theodore's pattern of constructing his Indian characters in terms of the most vile stereotypes of Indians. In one of Theodore's books, Teddy refers to his dad Pop while asking the question: "Did you, do you, have a dad who hits [you] so hard you flinch for your kids who aren't even born yet?"⁹² In a separate passage, Pop beats Teddy and his brother.⁹³ Another day, shortly before dinner Teddy describes Pop as "a truly mean son of a bitch."⁹⁴ Pop expresses his near-bottomless anger by engaging in violence not only toward his children but also toward objects. Pop puts his fist through a sink full of dishes, breaking them all.⁹⁵ He then proceeds to break every other dish in the house. On one of the rare occasions Pop takes his children to an inexpensive restaurant, specifically a diner, Pop, who is drunk at the time, becomes furious after having been served hash browns instead of home fries. He then dumps "at least a half-pound of shredded hash browns onto the gold-flecked linoleum floor," then flings the now-empty, heavy white ceramic plate right through the restaurant's front window.⁹⁶ When a restaurant worker calls the police but Pop refuses to leave the establishment, Teddy assumes the role of the parent, telling Pop, "Get your Injun ass out of the booth, and let's go."⁹⁷ Another time while Pop was eating at a diner, Teddy tells us that Pop passed out, face down, in a bowl of chili and began to drown.⁹⁸ Invoking the stereotype of the co-dependent American Indian woman, the waitress who rescues Theodore Sr. is the woman who later marries him. Theodore identifies this woman as Cherokee.

In addition to constructing Pop as an alcoholic who has anger issues and is physically abusive toward his children, Theodore depicts Pop as a neglectful and emotionally abusive parent, thereby driving home the point that this Indian father is egregiously unfit. Pop, who is divorced and is raising his sons as a single father, almost never stocks the refrigerator, kitchen cabinets, or pantry at their home with food. Teddy

⁸⁵ Van Alst, *The El*, 106.

⁸⁶ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 67.

⁸⁷ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 61.

⁸⁸ Van Alst, *The El*, 15.

⁸⁹ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 12-13

⁹⁰ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 13.

⁹¹ Van Alst, *The El*, 161.

⁹² Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 95.

⁹³ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 71.

⁹⁴ Van Alst, *The El*, 161.

⁹⁵ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 17.

⁹⁶ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 95.

⁹⁷ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 96.

⁹⁸ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 67.

reports that, when he gets hungry, he usually looks in the empty refrigerator, then eats "white bread with margarine and garlic salt in the broiler."⁹⁹ Teddy explains that this toast that he himself makes, together with Kool-Aid, is almost always his supper—unless he chooses to go out and steal tortillas from a nearby store. When Teddy does steal tortillas to consume for his dinner, he reports that his dinner then consists only of tortillas with salsa and sour cream. Teddy admits to almost never being fed meat (or a meat substitute); moreover, he describes "real butter" as a rarity in his home. Fruits and vegetables are, to our recollection, never mentioned. As for the emotional abuse Pop exacts on Teddy and his brother, Pop regularly calls Teddy "dumbass," with Theodore even choosing to end the book, *The El*, with Pop insulting his son Teddy in precisely this way. Additionally, Pop calls Teddy "a little shit," and one time when Teddy asks Pop to repeat what he just said, Pop barks, "Clean the shit out of your ears."¹⁰⁰ One evening after Teddy finds himself in a street fight, Teddy comes home with a deep stab wound in his arm, one that Teddy manages to wash and bandage himself. Later when Pop eventually stumbles home drunk, Teddy expresses disappointment that Pop "didn't even ask me about the big ol' bandage on my arm."¹⁰¹ Clearly, Teddy's father Pop, whom Theodore also renders a pyromaniac, is more concerned with "light[ing] stuff on fire" than he is with providing the most basic care to his two young boys.¹⁰² Indeed, Pop is both a pyromaniac and a criminal. Several times in Theodore's stories, Teddy casually references the multiple times Pop has spent time in jail.¹⁰³

Teddy expresses disappointment in Pop's parenting not only after Pop expresses zero concern about Teddy's physical well-being following Teddy's stabbing but also when the only present Teddy receives for his thirteenth birthday is a "brown glass bottle full of beer."¹⁰⁴ Throughout Theodore's books, Teddy acknowledges that he finds Pop's parenting inadequate. In one passage, he illustrates this by disclosing that Pop has only two rules: don't get arrested, and break up with a girlfriend instead of cheating on her. Patently dejected to the point of near hopelessness, Teddy then asks a rhetorical question that he laces with sarcasm: "How's that for guidance, for life rules, for structure, for love, and for warmth?"¹⁰⁵

Again, we must remember that TAAF researchers found that Theodore Van Alst is a white man who intentionally made drunk, abusive, neglectful, and bigoted Pop into an Indian.

Women, including Teddy's Mother

Women are mostly absent in Theodore's books except as shallow props for more fully developed male characters. The women in Theodore's writing tend to be limited to, at best, wise grandmothers, sexy girlfriends, and helpful waitresses. Many are only vaguely described background characters. The most fully developed female character in Theodore's books is Teddy's mother, though at no point, to our knowledge, does Theodore ever even give her a name. Teddy calls her "Ma." As mentioned above, Ma is Eastern Cherokee with stereotypically white-trash Appalachian roots as well, and she works as a waitress.

There is strikingly little information about Ma in Theodore's books. Virtually the only things we learn about this white woman whom Theodore portrays as Cherokee is that she is broke, she is a drug addict and abuser of other substances, her boyfriend is a drug dealer, and she is a neglectful mother. In *Sacred Smokes*, a police officer with apparent extensive knowledge of Ma informs Teddy that his mother "ain't

⁹⁹ Van Alst, *The El*, 106.

¹⁰⁰ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 96; Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 19.

¹⁰¹ Van Alst, *The El*, 161.

¹⁰² Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 15.

¹⁰³ Van Alst, *The El*, 15.

¹⁰⁴ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 24.

¹⁰⁵ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 76.

got no money for no vacations."¹⁰⁶ In another book, Teddy describes Ma as "all high on blues [fentanyl or oxycodone] and clears [methamphetamine]" after Ma has also just imbibed "six pots of coffee and Vivarin and twenty-eight smokes an hour with two in the ashtray at once."¹⁰⁷ At one point, Teddy reveals that he is aware, as are several police officers, that Ma's boyfriend is a low-life drug dealer who specializes in selling "blues" and "clears" (see above), as well as marijuana.

Like that of Pop, the parenting of Teddy's Cherokee mother can only be described as neglectful. In *Sacred Folks*, much to Teddy's horror, Ma, then "in the middle of her rambling, shit-talking day, Marlboro 100s whirling around her head," casually and irresponsibly gives permission to two complete strangers to take young Teddy and his brother out of the city on a camping trip.¹⁰⁸ Referring to the male member of the couple as "this fucker," and both the man and the woman as "hippies," Teddy responds with the quip, "She doesn't know this fucker from Adam, really, so of course she says yes, sends us away with this hippy and his weird hippy wife. What the fuck does she care? NO KIDS." Teddy adds that Ma then "consigns us to this giant mangy Viking-looking fucker, name [sic] DJ. It's your parents never so happy to be dropping you off with some people you ain't even know so they can get their freak on or pop some pills in peace or whatever they're into. Thanks."¹⁰⁹ To drive home how extremely neglectful, irresponsible, and unfit his mother is to be a parent, Teddy then adds that his Cherokee mother "doesn't even ask where we're going." Theodore renders the omission of this question by this Cherokee woman even more appalling by revealing that "the Viking" and his wife intend to take her two children out of the city.

Theodore tells several other stories in his books about the child neglect in which Teddy's Cherokee mother engages. When Teddy was a baby and he and his family were visiting Pop's parents in Bay City, Michigan (where the actual Theodore Sr. was born and where he and his wife relocated when he retired), Ma places Teddy in a stroller and rolls him into his grandparents' yard. The mother-and-son duo then encounter a bumblebee that Ma describes as "the size of a tennis ball." Subsequently, Ma "took off running," Teddy says, "*abandoning her baby* and running, running through the grass, going God knows where. Just running. Shiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiit [sic]" (emphasis ours).¹¹⁰ Other stories about Ma's bad parenting revolve around her kicking Teddy (and later his brother) out of her home, declaring at the time that it is young Teddy's responsibility, not hers, to identify the whereabouts of Pop if Teddy wishes to move in with his deadbeat father instead of becoming a homeless kid. About the event, Teddy reports that, at age thirteen, he "searched all around the North Side of Chicago [for his father]. Found him near Belmont and Broadway."¹¹¹

Other Indian Characters

The fourth and final character of the four American Indian characters that are addressed at any length in Theodore's books is Teddy's little brother, who, to our knowledge, is never even given a name in Theodore's stories. This child, who, like Teddy, is Sihásapa Lakota, Leech Lake Chippewa, Ottawa, and Eastern Cherokee, gets suspended for fighting at school. Later when the brother becomes an older teenager and young adult, Teddy reports that he is "perpetually unemployed," is issued multiple warrants for his arrest, and "sulks along, eternally pissed at the world."¹¹² Teddy describes his brother as "about as talkative as [Pop], saying mostly 'Give me a cigarette' or 'Go fuck yourself.'"¹¹³ Between his brother's

¹⁰⁶ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 28.

¹⁰⁹ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 28.

¹¹⁰ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 59.

¹¹¹ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 13.

¹¹² Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 29; Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 75.

¹¹³ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 75.

eyes, Teddy remarks, is a button labeled "self-destruct" that every few days his brother cannot help but push. Teddy adds that sometimes this button gets stuck on self-destruct.¹¹⁴

Through several stories Teddy tells about his brother, Theodore elaborates on his representation of the child, the youngest of the three featured Indian male characters in Theodore's books, as a criminal and in other ways a degenerate. Additionally, Theodore suggests that, just like everyone else in the family, Teddy's brother is a substance abuser—in this case a drug addict like their Cherokee mother. Teddy tells the story of a night during which his brother is high on PCP (Angel Dust). The brother takes a sledgehammer to the cinderblock wall of a local store around midnight, not managing to break through the wall until four hours later. Upon finally entering the store at 4:00 a.m., the brother "got himself some goddamn beers."¹¹⁵ Teddy also tells a story about when his brother "Batmanned through the skylight [of a local store] because he wanted a bike and he got one and also the gumball machines that he had to throw off the roof four or eight times to get six bucks in nickels."¹¹⁶

Theodore populates his books with a few background characters who are also Indian men, but the little we learn about these men indicates that, like all of the Indian characters in Theodore's books, they are all unredeemable and dysfunctional, with no concern for family or community, and with some even being sexually violent. For example, Teddy's maternal grandfather, who is Cherokee, is a pornographer.¹¹⁷ His Uncle Raymond, who is also Cherokee, is an ex-con and a pimp.¹¹⁸ Finally, on buses, trains, and elsewhere in the city, at times Teddy encounters some Lakota men. We learn very little about them, however, only that they call Teddy "Little Brother" because they recognize Teddy as Lakota, "laugh into their hoodies," "talk shit," and are loud.¹¹⁹

Remember that TAAF researchers found that Theodore Van Alst is a white man who intentionally crafted highly dysfunctional, destructive, and despicable characters into Indians.

Representations of Class in Theodore's Books

Theodore portrays all of the featured American Indian characters in his books as living in abject poverty. Teddy explains that he and the members of his nuclear family live in "shitholes" that include public housing, "roach motels, converted SROs [single room occupancies], dumpy apartments, [and] tiny studios."¹²⁰ In most of their slumlike dwellings, which "smell like cigarettes and stale beer," Teddy and his family members "jam three beds into the bedroom" and endure indoor temperatures that are near freezing.¹²¹ At one point Teddy remarks that members of his extended family who also live in Chicago (and who otherwise receive almost no mention in Theodore's books) also live in "shitheaps."¹²²

It appears that Theodore chose to portray Teddy's family (both his nuclear and extended family) as near penniless because he wished to increase the extent to which non-Indians would regard his family as "authentically" American Indian through the use of gratuitous stereotypes. Unfortunately, this worked—at least until now. TAAF researchers discovered that Theodore's actual family was far from impoverished as

¹¹⁴ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 75.

¹¹⁵ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 51.

¹¹⁶ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 51.

¹¹⁷ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 55.

¹¹⁸ Van Alst, *Sacred Folks*, 55.

¹¹⁹ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 72.

¹²⁰ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 73, 13.

¹²¹ Van Alst, *The El*, 160; Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 74, 76.

¹²² Van Alst, *The El*, 148.

Theodore has long claimed. Instead, Theodore's family of origin was solidly middle class. TAAF researchers found that, from 1981–1992 (the exact time period of Teddy's supposed gang activity), the Van Alst family lived in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood at 1634 West Chase Avenue, a charming brick low-rise structure. This building was a type of building that many agree helps define the distinctive streetscape of this tree-lined, middle-class neighborhood. Moreover, then, as now, the very building in which the Van Alst family lived offered middle-class families large apartments—some as large as 2,000 square-feet, as is Apartment 2W in their building. Only a fifteen-minute drive from this building where the Van Alsts lived is the third best high school in the state, which Theodore attended: Lane Technical College Prep High School, mentioned earlier. For at least the past half-century, except for a few blocks around nearby Howard Street and several pockets of urban blight, this neighborhood on the far north side of Chicago near Northwestern University and Loyola University has been widely regarded as comparatively safe. Indeed, around the time the Van Alsts lived there in the 1980s and early 1990s, one of their neighbors was Dixie Desmond, the widow of the Chicago Bears publicist Dan Desmond. Their other neighbors included actresses Julia Louis-Dreyfus (in the 1980s) and Tina Fey (in the early 1990s).

In researching Theodore's actual family, TAAF researchers also found that Theodore's family of origin, the Van Alsts of Bay City, Michigan, has a long association with law enforcement, a fact that does not square well with Theodore's claims in his book that "most of the time, it was just us [meaning he, his family, and his gang] against them [meaning the police]." ¹²³ In reality, Theodore's family of origin *was* the police. Theodore Sr.'s brother Gerald Van Alst (Theodore Jr.'s uncle) was an FBI National Academy graduate. He served with the Bay City Police Department from 1963-90. He was promoted to chief in 1976. From 1990-96, Gerald served as the sheriff of Bay County. Another of Theodore Sr.'s brothers (that is, one of Theodore Jr.'s other uncles), Michael Van Alst, also served in the Bay City Police Department. Additionally, when Theodore Jr.'s father Theodore Sr. relocated from Chicago to Bay County, Michigan in 1991, he worked for thirteen years at Burns International Security Services, a company that provides comprehensive guard and surveillance services. Finally, Theodore Jr. himself served in the U.S. Navy after dropping out of high school. With military service, police work combating gangs and crime, and even FBI training, Theodore's actual lived experience and the experience of his middle-class family of origin, unlike Theodore's portrayals of that life and family, have long upheld the status quo.

Rewards Reaped

Thus far, this report has demonstrated that Theodore's claims to being raised an impoverished American Indian are false. Theodore and his daughter are not American Indian. Rather, they are of solely white European ancestry and from solidly middle-class roots. Additionally, this report has shown that, as is almost always the case with the scholarship and other work of false claimants, Theodore's work is deeply degrading and anti-Indian, offensively stereotypical, and dangerous. His writing has done and continues to do significant harm to American Indians.

In surveying the almost two-decades-long career that Theodore has built on his false claims to being American Indian, claims that he has bolstered and continues to bolster through his writing, it is undeniable that he has benefited handsomely from falsely claiming to being Sihásapa Lakota, Leech Lake Chippewa, Ottawa, Eastern Cherokee, and Ho-Chunk. In the early 2000s, Theodore's false claims to being Lakota and Eastern Cherokee helped him pull himself, his wife Amie, and their daughter Emily out of bankruptcy. Then, these false claims, together with his stereotype-riddled, anti-Indian writing, netted him book awards. For his first book, *Sacred Smokes*, Theodore was awarded the Tillie Olsen Award for Creative Writing from the Working-Class Studies Association. For his next book, *Sacred City*, he was awarded the Electa Quinney Award from the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures. In

¹²³ Van Alst, *Sacred Smokes*, 42.

2025, his book, *The El*, received the prestigious CHIRBy Fiction Award from the *Chicago Review of Books*.

Clearly, it has been advantageous for Theodore to pursue a strategy of building his stories around only malignant, damaging stereotypes of American Indians. Obviously, these stereotypes still have great popular appeal, as Theodore's books appear to have a healthy readership and may be in relatively high demand. Evidently, Theodore's appallingly negative portrayals of American Indian children, parents, and families tend to strike non-Indians as remarkably authentic, confirming non-Indians' preconceived notions of who American Indian people are. Harmful works like Theodore's reinforce the public's view of inherent Indian damage, deficiency, and brokenness, especially when they are celebrated in elite literary and academic circles.

Theodore's acts of denigrating and disparaging American Indians have brought him other rewards, as well. In addition to numerous reading gigs and speaking platforms where he can publicly peddle his anti-Indian hate speech, colleges and universities throughout the country have inexplicably appointed Theodore to a rather large number of gatekeeper roles in Native American Studies and related areas involving and affecting American Indians. Indeed, for almost two decades, Theodore has been repeatedly selected over *actual* qualified American Indians for leadership positions in Native American Studies and Indian Affairs. The successive, rather lofty positions in higher education Theodore has been awarded have enabled him to, among other things, influence hiring, awards, and tenure and promotion decisions; impact faculty raises and teaching assignments; and exercise authority over students and pre-tenure faculty. In addition, as co-editor of the commercially successful Indigenous horror anthology *Never Whistle at Night* and its recent sequel, Theodore has also been in a gatekeeper position on deciding which legitimate Indigenous writers to publicize or silence, as well as which pretendians to publicly platform with this rare opportunity. By doing this work through his own false claims to being American Indian, he undermines the work of all legitimate Indigenous writers and does actual harm to those writers with real Tribal connections who trusted him to have editorial and personal integrity.

Theodore's first academic position, mentioned earlier, was his job as an assistant professor at the same university where he earned his doctorate in 2008, the University of Connecticut (UConn). At the time, UConn also appointed Theodore as co-chair of its Program in Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies—despite the fact that Theodore was then only an assistant professor. Subsequently, Theodore was appointed Assistant Dean of Yale College and Director of Yale's Native American Cultural Center, two intertwined positions he held during a famously tumultuous time in the history of the Center.

Theodore left Yale to accept a position as Chair of the Native American Studies Department at the University of Montana. While living and working in Montana, Theodore was also appointed a member of the State of Montana Commissioner of Higher Education's American Indian and Minority Achievement Committee. Currently, Theodore is the inaugural Tilikum Professorship of Indigenous Nations Studies, having recently also served as Chair of Indigenous Nations Studies, at Portland State University. Notably, the prestigious professorship he now holds was funded specifically to support "coalition building with universities in the Pacific Rim who are active in the advancement of Indigenous peoples." However, given the absence of public initiatives at PSU along these lines, it appears that Theodore has not used this position and these funds for their intended purpose. PSU authorities are advised to audit these accounts, as are authorities at other universities where Theodore has served in a leadership capacity with budgetary oversight.

Part III: Emily Van Alst

This section of the Van Alst report discusses the American Indian identity claims and scholarship of archaeologist and Washington State University Assistant Professor of Anthropology Emily Van Alst. Emily is Theodore and Amie Van Alst's oldest child. Following a brief biographical sketch of Emily, this section documents several of the ways Emily has profited from her false ancestry claims. Because these falsehoods that Emily is advancing about her identity are so detailed and elaborate, and the material harm to American Indian communities is so significant, TAAF researchers paid close attention to the content and construction of Emily's claims, together with her actions to boost the careers of other pretendians and sideline actual Indians. After a rather lengthy discussion of the damage Emily does as a knowledge producer; as a gatekeeper in Indigenous archaeology and, more broadly, in Indigenous studies; and as an individual who profits handsomely from her false claims to being American Indian, an extensive, close look at her scholarship is undertaken.

Emily's scholarship can be divided into 1) a corpus of assertions that are largely autoethnographic and highly fictionalized, and 2) a corpus of descriptions and analyses of rock art that are inaccurate, deeply problematic, harm Tribes, do violence to Tribal experience and histories, and distort the archaeological record. As will be seen, in her autoethnographic scholarship, Emily claims to be a revered American Indian holy woman whom, according to her account, Oglala Lakotas at Pine Ridge have deemed an Elk Dreamer and Elk Maiden with spiritual abilities that rival those of the revered Lakota medicine man, Black Elk. Especially in these parts of her scholarship, Emily implicitly contends that she is more Lakota than nearly all actual contemporary Lakotas, and she claims for herself the authority to control and define Lakota culture. She extends such claims through her archaeological work that centers on rock art. Among the many serious problems with Emily's archaeology is that she misidentifies the group affiliations of the creators of the centuries-old rock art she studies and weaponizes her inaccurate conclusions in ways that, among other things, erase the contributions of numerous Tribes, jeopardize these Tribes' ability to sustain their claims to their own material culture, and warp the archaeology record. Additionally, in one of her articles Emily preaches that obtaining approval from a Tribal IRB is "necessary," vital, and essential to practicing an archaeology that is "ethical," yet TAAF found no evidence that Emily has ever obtained Tribal IRB approval for her research—only evidence that she has never gotten permission from the Oglala Sioux Tribe (or any other Tribe) to conduct research on their lands with their citizens. Returning to the parts of her scholarship that are the most autoethnographic and fictionalized, Emily implicitly addresses questions about who her Lakota relatives are given that no Lakota and no Tribe claim her as kin. Arguing that there exists recognition of not just humans but also more-than-human beings as members of an imagined American Indian "polity" called *hehaka oyate* or Elk People (in which she says she is a member), Emily contends that her Lakota relatives are elk, plants, rock art, and other more-than-human beings.

From an extensive, detailed examination of Emily's scholarship, TAAF researchers found that the quality and quantity of her scholarship do not justify the oversized reputation and relatively high visibility Emily has received, especially for an assistant professor in the fourth year of an academic appointment. Unbelievably, it appears that Emily's scholarship may not be considered wholly discreditable in the subfields of archaeology, Indigenous archaeology, and Indigenous studies. After all, Emily won a tenure-track job at PSU, academic journals and peers who evaluate her scholarship for publication in those journals greenlight the publication of her work, the University Press of Florida published a co-edited volume she produced, and a respected press in Indigenous studies (UNM Press) awarded her a prestigious co-editorship of a book series. The disconnect between the quality of her scholarship and the acclaim she has received left TAAF researchers little choice but to conclude that Emily's visibility in

academia and particularly in the subfield of Indigenous archaeology derives from the many ways Emily has exploited her false claims to being American Indian.

As for the question of how Emily's claims compare to those of her father, TAAF researchers found that, while the claims of both bear a strong resemblance to one another, Emily does not merely echo her father's false claims. For the past fifteen years, Emily has based her academic career on a fabricated Indigenous identity that in many respects is uniquely her own. TAAF researchers' analysis of Emily's words, actions, and scholarship reveal that Emily has used her scholarship to assert understandings of Lakota identity that do not only distort Lakota culture and harm Tribes; Emily's scholarship also undermines the sovereignty of the Lakota people, other Plains Tribes, and, by extension, all legitimate American Indian Nations.

Biographical Sketch

Emily Van Alst was born in Presque Isle, Maine in 1993. While still a child, she and her family moved to Connecticut, where Emily graduated from high school in the early 2010s.¹²⁴ In 2016, she received her BA in Anthropology and Archaeology from Yale University.

While she was an undergraduate at Yale, Emily decided to publicly identify as a Lakota woman. Her time at Yale overlapped with the period of time when her father, Theodore, served as Assistant Dean of Yale College and Director of Yale's Native American Indian Center. It is well known that this was a tumultuous period in the Center's history. People who were involved in the Center during and in the aftermath of this period and whom TAAF researchers interviewed alleged that Emily used her position as the director's daughter to control which Native students had access to the Center and its programs, as well as which Native students received favorable (or unfavorable) treatment from her father and other Yale administrators.

In the late 2010s, Emily enrolled in an anthropology doctoral program at Indiana University. After receiving her Ph.D. in 2023, Emily began her current position as an assistant professor in the anthropology department at Washington State University (WSU). At WSU, Emily also maintains a formal affiliation with the Program in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, as well as with the Center for Native American Research and Collaboration.

Using False Claims to Secure "Gatekeeping" Positions

In the short time that Emily has been a faculty member at WSU (she is currently in her fourth year as an assistant professor), she has used her false claims to being an American Indian to secure a position as a "gatekeeper" in the growing subfield of Indigenous archaeology. That is, she has secured positions that empower her to decide who will receive valuable publication and other opportunities. This can be illustrated by Emily's most significant publication to date, a volume she co-edited that is entitled, *Indigenizing Archaeology: Putting Theory into Practice* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2024). Emily describes this work as "the first volume dedicated only to early-career Indigenous scholars and their research."¹²⁵ She makes it clear that she counts herself as among these early career Indigenous scholars. As co-editor, Emily was empowered to help decide which other scholars would be considered to

¹²⁴ Rose Bear Don't Walk, "Walking Together." *Yale Daily News*, December 1, 2013. <https://yaledailynews.com/articles/walking-together>.

¹²⁵ Emily C. Van Alst and Carlton Shield Chief Gover, "Indigenizing Archaeology: Putting Theory into Practice," *Indigenizing Archaeology: Putting Theory into Practice*, edited by Emily Van Alst and Carlton Shield Chief Gover (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2024), xxvi.

be leading early-career Indigenous archaeologists. By selecting her own chapter for inclusion in this volume, as well as chapters authored by at least three other scholars whose claims to being American Indian are known to be false, she usurped from actual American Indian junior scholars valuable publication space and deceived the legitimate Indians associated with the volume, including her co-editor. Moreover, this volume was reviewed in significant publications in Native American and Indigenous Studies, thereby expanding Emily's scholarly profile beyond archaeology.

Similarly, the University of New Mexico Press (UNM Press) recently accorded Emily a virtually unheard-of honor for an untenured faculty member: it appointed her co-editor of its flagship Indigenous Archaeology Methods and Practice book series. Such positions are almost always reserved for senior tenured scholars with substantial professional experience in the methods and practices addressed by the series. Emily shares this honor with archaeologist George Nicholas, a distinguished professor emeritus at Simon Fraser University. Given that Dr. Nicholas is not himself Indigenous and Emily is so junior but has proven herself to be quite aggressive in seeking positions of power, it is a virtual certainty that Emily was appointed to this role based partly on her eagerness to be seen as a major voice in the field, her claim to being Indigenous, and her associated claims to having relevant cultural knowledge. Emily and Dr. Nicholas's work on this series has involved issuing a call in April 2026 for book proposals for their series, then beginning their work of evaluating those proposals and selecting which works to include in their series.

This role as a book series editor at one of the top presses in Native American and Indigenous Studies has made Emily into a powerful gatekeeper in both that interdisciplinary field and her subfield of archaeology. With this appointment, Emily has secured an influential role in determining which, if any, actual Indigenous scholars are awarded a book contract and are granted other publication-related opportunities by UNM Press.

Emily's appointment to this role has raised questions among scholars as to how such a junior scholar, and one who has made false claims to an American Indian identity, managed to secure such an influential position. Emily is said to have explained this puzzle to others by revealing that UNM Press told her they enjoyed working with her father Theodore so much that they wished to award his daughter a leadership role at the Press. This is but one more example of how Theodore's history of identity fraud has had harmful impacts that reach beyond the field of Native American literature and further compromise the integrity and reputation of an academic press.

Citing and Promoting Other Pretendians

American Indian scholars approached TAAF with a long list of concerns about Emily, including the concern that she would continue to use her position as a gatekeeper to advance the careers of other pretendians and undermine the careers of actual American Indian scholars. Then, as now, TAAF evaluated this concern as a very valid one. Pretendian scholars are known to bolster fellow pretendians who will support their false claims and undermine real Indians who might call these claims into question. TAAF researchers interviewed American Indian scholars who recounted their interactions with Emily. Their descriptions of her actions suggested, at best, a pattern of failing to support American Indian colleagues, and, at worst, a pattern of actively working to undermine them. Consistent with the fear that Emily would continue to elevate the work of scholars who make false American Indian claims, a review of Emily's publications revealed that Emily has frequently cited pretendians and scholars who have made unsubstantiated claims to an American Indian identity. In fact, in her publications, Emily has cited such authors at least 55 times.

For example, Emily cites as many as eight times the work of a senior archaeologist, Dr. Margaret Bruchac, who was hired the same year as Emily's father Theodore at the University of Connecticut. Bruchac's claims to Abenaki ancestry were found to be false in an investigation commissioned by the Abenaki Council of Odanak in Quebec.¹²⁶ This extensive genealogical investigation revealed that Bruchac possesses zero Abenaki ancestors. In both anthropology and literary studies, Bruchac and her family have been working for decades to redefine Abenaki identity in ways that are eerily similar to the ways the Van Alsts are trying to redefine American Indian identity in the very same disciplines.

Other scholars who have made unsubstantiated claims to being American Indian whom Emily frequently cites includes Lindsay Montgomery,¹²⁷ Linda Sue Black Elk (née Bishop),¹²⁸ Grace Dillon,¹²⁹ and no less than four others. Like Emily, these scholars are engaged in efforts to redefine American Indian identity to not only include but to fully center their own manufactured identities, and to use those manufactured identities to access resources and opportunities meant for actual American Indians. These scholars are widely known to be pretendians by other scholars in archaeology and Indigenous studies. Emily is almost certainly aware that these individuals are not American Indians.

The frequency and zeal with which Emily not only cites the work of pretendians but also refers to them as Indigenous when they are not suggest that Emily may be actively working to redefine who is Indigenous so as to affirm her own false claims. It is widely known that an American Indian is a person who is enrolled in a legitimate federally recognized American Indian Tribe and whose belonging to that Tribe has been established through enrollment and/or citizenship. Emily's scholarship suggests that she instead champions the notion, which is popular among pretendians, that an American Indian is a person who merely chooses to identify as such and need not have any proof that they have American Indian ancestry, much less belong to a legitimate Tribal Nation. Frequently, Emily acknowledges as American Indian such scholars as Sonya Atalay, Grace Dillon, and Zoë Antoinette Eddy, who have, to TAAF's knowledge, never claimed citizenship or membership in any Tribe, nor have they, to TAAF's knowledge, offered any verifiable evidence affirming that they have American Indian ancestry.¹³⁰ To our knowledge, at no point in her career of more than two decades, during which she has won grants as large as \$30 million for her work in the area of "Indigenous knowledge," has Atalay ever substantiated her claims to being American Indian or ever even named a Tribe with which she is even nominally affiliated. Yet in Emily's publications, Emily cites Atalay as many as twenty-seven times.

¹²⁶ Abeanki Heritage, Genealogies, <https://abenakiheritage.org/genealogies/joseph-margaret-bruchac/>

¹²⁷ While Montgomery formerly identified as American Indian on her faculty webpage, after the issuance of a TAAF report about her, she edited out that claim. Instead, her website now states, "I come at this [her work] as a multi-racial (Scottish & African American descent) middle class woman," then adds, "I position myself as an ally [of Native Americans]." <https://tribalallianceagainstfrauds.org/lindsay-martel-montgomery>

¹²⁸ TAAF, "Linda Sue Black Elk," <https://tribalallianceagainstfrauds.org/linda-sue-black-elk-1>

¹²⁹ Dillon's daughter, Elizabeth LaPensée, is the subject of a report about her false claims to being American Indian. The report found that La LaPensée is of 100% European ancestry. By extension, LaPensee's mother, Grace Dillon, must also be of 100% European ancestry. Michigan State University "pretendian" Report, December 2021 (unpublished).

¹³⁰ Sonya Atalay has repeatedly claimed to be "Anishinaabe-Ojibwe" and "an Indigenous archaeologist" (<https://www.umass.edu/social-sciences/about/directory/sonya-atalay>), or simply "Anishinaabe." These are not American Indian Nations (Tribes). They are instead two ethnic groups composed of over 100 legitimate Indigenous Nations across Canada and the U.S. Grace Dillon claims Anishnaabe descent (<https://grist.org/fix/author/grace-l-dillon/>). Zoë Antoinette Eddy claims descent from one or more groups under the category "Algonquin Anishinaabe," and a Tribe, Wendat, without referencing their current name (<https://miskobagizi.com/about-the-creator/>).

At several points in her scholarship, Emily does more than simply cite the work of pretendians and affirm their false claims to being Indigenous: she significantly boosts their work and, by extension, their reputations as scholars. For example, the entire framework of Emily's article on beadwork is based on the work of pretendian Grace Dillon. Emily deploys Dillon's notion of Indigenous futurisms to posit that an American Indian "identity" can exist outside of an American Indian community.

Similarly, Emily dignifies and amplifies the work of several scholars who are enrolled in CPAINs, which, again, are "Corporations Posing As Indigenous Nations." These are not legitimate Indigenous Nations. Among the members of CPAINs whom Emily regularly cites are Lydia Curliss¹³¹ and Margaret Spivey-Faulkner.¹³² Given that Emily herself recently affiliated with a CPAIN, she may be especially eager to promote scholars who are members of CPAINs so as to affirm her own identity as a member of a CPAIN and thereby further undermine the sovereignty and rights of actual Tribes.

In interviews with TAAF researchers, witnesses disclosed what many described as the significant hostility Emily has displayed toward actual American Indians in academia. This, together with the pattern of citation choices Emily has been making in her scholarship, give every indication that, for her UNM book series, Emily is likely to select and promote the scholarship of pretendians over the scholarship of actual American Indians. In so doing, Emily is highly likely to advance a strategy that is common among pretendians: erasing and replacing real American Indian people with fake Indians and, even more disturbingly, promoting dangerous scholarship that legitimizes these individuals' false claims by undermining the sovereignty of legitimate American Indian Tribes.

Profiting from False Claims

Emily has profited greatly from her false claims to being American Indian throughout her career from anthropology graduate student to university faculty member. Although the most recent CV of Emily's that TAAF was able to obtain dates only to the year Emily graduated from Indiana University, this document attests to the fact that, *as a graduate student*, Emily received \$76,460.00 in funding that prioritized underrepresented minorities and first-generation students in spite of Emily being neither one. Emily is of solely white European ancestry, as Part I of this report on Theodore and Emily's genealogy demonstrated.

¹³¹ Lydia Curliss claims to be a "member of the Nipmuc Nation of Massachusetts" (<https://sites.brown.edu/pembrokeorallhistory/2023/06/14/lydia-curliss-staff/>). Massachusetts has only two federally recognized Tribes: the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe. All other groups in Massachusetts who identify as "Indian tribes" are CPAINs. To TAAF's knowledge, Curliss has not specified which, if any, Nipmuc CPAIN in Massachusetts she is a member of: the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band or the Chaubunagungamaug Band of Nipmuck Indians. The Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band (under the name 'Nipmuc Nation') and the Chaubunagungamaug Nipmuck Band applied for Federal Acknowledgement (<https://www.bia.gov/as-ia/ofa/resolved>) as an Indian Tribe. Both groups were found to fail to meet the mandatory criteria for federal acknowledgment as an Indian Tribe. Decades earlier in 1974, the Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band was recognized by the executive order in the State of Massachusetts without undergoing a rigorous review of their claim to being a legitimate Tribe. Even so, Curliss is unlikely to be enrolled with this group, as she then would almost certainly identify as an enrolled member of that particular CPAIN.

¹³² Margaret Spivey-Faulkner claims to be a citizen of the Pee Dee Indian Nation of Beaver Creek (https://outercoast.org/current_staffulty/maggie-spivey-faulkner/) This is a South Carolina state recognized group, not even a state-recognized "Tribe." According to the State of South Carolina, an "Indian Group" is "a number of individuals assembled together...composed of both Native American Indians and other ethnic races...[who are] not all related to one another by blood" (<https://advance.sc.gov/south-carolinas-recognized-native-american-indian-entities>) Note that, according to this definition, one need not possess American Indian ancestry to be a member of such a group. By any measure, this is not a legitimate American Indian Tribe. Instead, it could be described, using Philip Deloria's terminology, as a collection of individuals who are "playing Indian."

She is thus a woman from a racial and ethnic background that is overrepresented in academia. Moreover, although sometimes women in academic fields in which women are underrepresented have been accorded prioritized status for such funds, almost never has anthropology been construed as such a field. One poll found that eighty-three percent of working anthropologists are women.¹³³ Finally, Emily is clearly not a first-generation student. Her father Theodore has a Ph.D. and has, in fact, run programs in Ivy League and other research institutions.

During her first year of graduate school, Emily received the Indiana University Graduate School Graduate Scholars Fellowship (\$20,000), a fellowship that prioritizes students who are underrepresented minorities. For the next three years, she received the same fellowship, which awarded her funds totalling \$5,000 for each of these three years. Additionally, Emily received a Wenner Gren Foundation Dissertation Fieldwork Grant (\$16,460), a grant based in part on applicants' commitment to fostering an inclusive vision of anthropology, and the Indiana President's Diversity Dissertation Fellowship for underrepresented minorities (\$25,000). It is a virtual certainty that since Emily became a WSU faculty member, she has continued to apply for and receive fellowships and grants that prioritize underrepresented minorities.

Emily has wedded her false claim to being American Indian so closely to her academic persona that it is hard to imagine that she has not in some way leveraged this claim in her quest for funding and all other scholarly opportunities. Beyond being admitted to Yale and to a first-rate Ph.D. program explicitly as an American Indian student, she was offered a highly competitive tenure-track faculty position at an R1 university. Additionally, Emily's writings suggest that she has been fueling her academic career partly by arguing that she should be accorded a privileged position, especially as compared to her non-Indian colleagues, within the subfield of Native North American archaeology. For example, paraphrasing another scholar, Emily writes, "for an Indigenous archaeology to truly work, non-Indigenous archaeologists must relinquish their control over Indigenous heritage."¹³⁴ Emily uses such rhetoric to uplift herself, her voice, and her work. In particular, she contends that American Indian scholars such as herself "offer particular culturally relevant frameworks of interpretation" in contrast to non-Indigenous archaeologists, who do not.¹³⁵ In this and other ways, and similar to her father's strategy throughout his lucrative career, Emily argues that she should receive special attention, recognition, and opportunities based on her claims that she is Indigenous and has "insider" cultural knowledge, a strategy Emily has used to successfully leverage numerous professional opportunities. It goes without saying that Emily has been using this strategy despite the fact that she is not American Indian and she lacks the Indigenous cultural knowledge that derives from the experience of being American Indian. Moreover, Emily has misled American Indian and other graduate students into believing they would be mentored by an actual American Indian.

False Claims and Scholarship

Part I of this report conclusively demonstrated that Emily's unsubstantiated claims are not supported by any historical and genealogical facts. Reviewing these claims here will help unveil how such claims cannot be disentangled from Emily's scholarship. That is, Emily's claims to American Indian ancestry, like those of her father, are not personal matters that are incidental to her scholarship. In fact, Emily's and her father's shared and distinct problematic claims to an American Indian identity shape their approach to

¹³³ Career Explorer, "Anthropologist Demographics in the United States," <https://www.careerexplorer.com/careers/anthropologist/demographics/>

¹³⁴ Van Alst and Shield Chief Gover, "Indigenizing Archaeology," xxviii.

¹³⁵ Emily C. Van Alst, "Elk Images and Elk Traditions: (Re)Contextualizing Lakota Rock Art as Sites of Continued Cultural Knowledge and Resiliency," Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Indiana University, 2023, 115.

scholarship and writing in ways that can be understood only as efforts to harm Indian people and directly challenge and undermine the sovereignty of American Indian Nations.

The earliest evidence TAAF researchers found of Emily falsely claiming to be American Indian dates to 2013 when she was twenty years old. That year, Emily told a reporter for *The Yale Daily News* that she was "Sihásapa Lakota and Eastern Cherokee."¹³⁶ She added that, in high school, she "pushed her identity away," partly because, as she put it, she was "isolated, ridiculed, and judged because of her Indigeneity."¹³⁷ While in graduate school, Emily leaned most heavily into her untrue claim to being Lakota, as will be discussed at length below.

In the three years since receiving her Ph.D., and since relocating more than 2,000 miles from where she attended graduate school, Emily has added additional false claims to her existing claims of being Lakota and Cherokee. Specifically, she has begun claiming to be Ojibwe or Anishinaabe and, less frequently, Ottawa. For example, one of the lines of an article she authored in 2023 about beadwork begins, "As a Lakota/Anishinaabe woman, I . . ."¹³⁸ Another example is her 2025 article "Reclaiming Our Voices: An Indigenous Archaeologist's Feminist Approach to Rock Art and Heritage," which appeared in the edited volume *Working as Indigenous Archaeologists: Reckoning New Paths Between Past and Present Lives*.¹³⁹ In the byline of this article, Emily identifies as an "enrolled member of the Mackinac Bands of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians," a claim she has also recently added to her WSU faculty website. Yet throughout the text of this article, Emily addresses only her Lakota claim, repeatedly referencing it in the article with no mention at all of the "Mackinac Band" claim that is displayed so prominently in the article's byline. This disconnect is striking. It is also no doubt confusing to readers unfamiliar with the fact that there is no truth to Emily's claims that she belongs to any of the legitimate Tribal nations she has claimed to be affiliated with. That said, as is discussed elsewhere in this report, the "Mackinac Band" that she says she is affiliated with is not a legitimate American Indian Nation but instead a manufactured CPAIN that is legally incorporated in Michigan as the nonprofit "Mackinac Band of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians, Inc." In no way should this private non-profit organization be construed as anything that even remotely resembles an actual legitimate Tribal Nation.

Emily's newfound claim to "belong" to a band of self-identified Chippewas and Ottawas is particularly odd given the cultural differences between Chippewas and Ottawas, on the one hand, and Lakota Nations, on the other, as well as the environmental differences that distinguish the homelands of these respective peoples. Also odd about Emily's shifting claims to being American Indian is her willingness to throw her self-defined identity as a "Lakota" out the window—especially after she spent more than a decade investing so heavily in this identity—for the chance to claim to be a member of a CPAIN.

In fact, Emily repeatedly writes about her putative Lakota identity but almost never about the Chippewa and Ottawa American Indian identities she now claims. For example, she opens her Ph.D. dissertation with a story that revolves around a time, she contends, "when I was *home* in Pine Ridge, South Dakota"

¹³⁶ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 115.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Bear Don't Walk, "Walking Together."

¹³⁸ Emily C. Van Alst, "(Re)writing and (Re)beading: Understanding Indigenous Women's Roles in the Creation of Indigenous Futurisms," *The Routledge Handbook of CoFuturisms*, edited by Taryne Jade Taylor, Isiah Lavender III, Grace L. Dillon, and Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay (New York: Routledge, 2023), 162.

¹³⁹ Emily C. Van Alst, "Reclaiming Our Voices: An Indigenous Archaeologist's Feminist Approach to Rock Art and Heritage," *Working as Indigenous Archaeologists: Reckoning New Paths Between Past and Present Lives*, edited by George Nicholas and Joe Watkins (New York: Routledge, 2025), 557.

(emphasis ours).¹⁴⁰ With the possible exception of the period when she was conducting her Ph.D. research, the Pine Ridge reservation of the Oglala Sioux Tribe is not and has never been Emily's home. TAAF researchers found no evidence that Emily has ever lived in South Dakota, much less on the Pine Ridge reservation. Furthermore, Emily does not have the Lakota ancestry, much less the citizenship in this American Indian Tribe that would allow her legitimately to lay claim to their reservation being "hers" or to the Pine Ridge reservation as being "her home."

Emily's telling of the opening anecdote of her dissertation also contains the line, "After months of cold dreary winter, it was especially nice to see family again."¹⁴¹ She then mentions "taking care of my nieces and nephews." These lines on the first two pages of her dissertation are among the myriad times in her scholarship when Emily describes her family as residing on the Pine Ridge reservation of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Repeatedly and consistently in her work, Emily misleads readers into believing that she has biological kin on this reservation. For example, in her single-authored article that appears in her co-edited volume, Emily references the interviews she conducted on this reservation, explaining, "I utilize my Auntie and Uncle's kitchen table as a physical space to interview them . . . it is fundamental that the place in which interviews take place can be done in a space that makes my family comfortable."¹⁴² In another publication, she asserts, "As a Lakota archaeologist and with the encouragement of my [Lakota] family, I began . . . to investigate how long we [Lakotas] have practiced this [Elk] ceremony and how and why our ancestors created the [ancient] images" discussed.¹⁴³ About the question of how long Lakotas have been practicing this ceremony, several times Emily discloses that "her community" did not begin practicing the ceremony until 2015, but she strongly suggests that the ceremony has a longer history that she vows to make a part of the official scholarly record through her research. Yet another example appears in Emily's book chapter, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research: Indigenous Archaeological Methods to (Re)contextualize and (Re)claim Rock Art Sites." Emily writes, "By asking questions focused on cultural knowledge with my family, we can get to culturally informed interpretations together."¹⁴⁴ (Regarding this particular article, several of those whom TAAF interviewed claimed that it plagiarizes the work of Cutcha Risling Baldy's *We are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies*.¹⁴⁵ TAAF did not investigate this allegation but strongly encourages readers of this report to evaluate this charge, especially given that the charge was made by several different scholars.)

TAAF's genealogy team found no evidence that any of Emily's biological kin live on the Pine Ridge reservation or on any other Indian reservation. This includes all of Emily's lateral kin, as well as her direct lineal ancestors. Additionally, when TAAF researchers consulted Oglala Sioux Tribal members who live on this reservation, none were aware of any Lakota family who had adopted Emily (or Theodore). That said, if Emily (and Theodore) had been adopted by a Lakota family, which they do not appear to have been, that still would not then make them Lakota. When it was revealed that singer Buffy Sainte-Marie was falsely claiming to be Indigenous, a Cree family on the Piapot First Nation reserve in what is now Saskatchewan, Canada stepped forward to affirm that decades earlier they had adopted Buffy. Yet this

¹⁴⁰ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 2.

¹⁴¹ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 1.

¹⁴² Emily C. Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research: Indigenous Archaeological Methods to (Re)contextualize and (Re)claim Rock Art Sites," *Indigenizing Archaeology: Putting Theory into Practice*, edited by Emily C. Van Alst and Carlton Shield Chief Gover (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2024), 132.

¹⁴³ Van Alst, "Reclaiming Our Voices," p. 560.

¹⁴⁴ Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research", 133.

¹⁴⁵ Cutcha Risling Baldy, *We are Dancing for You: Native Feminisms and the Revitalization of Women's Coming-of-Age Ceremonies* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2018).

adoption did not and does not make Buffy a Cree person. Or Indigenous. It simply makes her an adopted member of that particular family.

It is almost impossible to overstate the brazenness with which Emily appropriates a Lakota identity in her scholarship. Referring to Lakotas, Emily writes, "Our homelands are much of the Northern Plains"¹⁴⁶ and asserts, "our traditional practices . . . have survived for hundreds of years."¹⁴⁷ Reinforcing these misrepresentations of herself as Lakota, elsewhere in her scholarship she adds, "I love being able to reconnect to rock art sites that our ancestors created."¹⁴⁸ She also writes, "As an Indigenous archaeologist, I must make sure our culture survives for the next seven generations."¹⁴⁹ Another of the written assertions Emily makes suggests that she is conversant in the Lakota language, a claim she no doubt uses to bolster her false claim that she has Tribal cultural knowledge deriving from the experience of being Native. For example, in one publication, Emily states, "In Lakota, we do not have a word for art, but we do have the concept of 'bringing out the beauty.'"¹⁵⁰ Claims to fictive adoptive kinship are common among pretendians who have infiltrated Indigenous communities and imagine that their immediate personal relationships automatically give them deep cultural insight or entitlement to represent themselves as if they are actual community members.

Undermining Tribal Sovereignty

When as a young adult Emily began leaning especially heavily into her false Lakota claims, she faced the substantial challenge of making this claim credible. Indeed, Emily has no biological kin who are—or who ever were—enrolled in *any* American Indian Tribe, no biological kin who maintained Tribal relations over time, and no Lakota or any other American Indian ancestry. This made it virtually impossible for her to be claimed by any of the seven legitimate Indigenous Nations with substantial numbers of Lakotas.¹⁵¹ Almost without exception, being claimed by an Indian Tribe means being accorded citizenship in that Tribe.

Citizenship in an American Indian Tribe is no trivial matter. By federal and Tribal law, and by virtue of their sovereignty, Indian Tribes have exclusive jurisdiction over determining who is a citizen of their Nations and thus who is, in this case, Lakota. A common refrain in Indian Country, "you can't claim us if we don't claim you," articulates the reality that it is anathema to, in this case, a claim to be Lakota without being enrolled in a legitimate Tribe of Lakotas. With some very limited exceptions, to identify as Lakota without such citizenship is a serious act of disrespect toward all Lakota Nations, toward the Tribal constitutions under which these Nations have chosen to govern themselves, and toward the officials in these Nations' governments who determine who under Tribal law is a citizen of their Nation. Indeed, in most cases claiming to be Lakota without citizenship in a legitimate Tribe of Lakotas is understood as an act of undermining the sovereignty of all legitimate Lakota Nations and, by extension, all legitimate American Indian Tribes.

¹⁴⁶ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 13.

¹⁴⁷ Van Alst, "(Re)writing and (Re)beading," 172.

¹⁴⁸ Van Alst, "Reclaiming Our Voices," 558.

¹⁴⁹ Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art," 134.

¹⁵⁰ Van Alst, "(Re)writing and (Re)beading," 172.

¹⁵¹ There are six legitimate Native Nations in the US and one in Canada that are composed substantially of Lakotas. They are the Oglala Sioux Tribe, The Rosebud Sioux Tribe, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, the Fort Peck Assiniboiné and Sioux Tribes, and the Wood Mountain First Nation.

In an unsettling effort to legitimize her false claims to being Lakota, Emily has been advancing the dangerous and reprehensible notion that the relevant collective authorized to legitimize her alleged Lakota identity *need not be an American Indian Tribe*. Instead, Emily contends that such a collective can be a "community," even a community in the loosest sense of the word. It goes without saying that this position and the actions that derive from this position also undermine Tribal sovereignty, in addition to being disrespectful to American Indian people and being fundamentally anti-Indian.

The specific "community" that Emily says she "already ha[d]" when she began conducting her research in the 2010s is, as she puts it, "an extended family circle that I practice ceremony with."¹⁵² These are people whom, she deceives readers into believing, she is "related to" "through kinship or familial ties,"¹⁵³ which is factually untrue. She adds that this "community" of hers is "on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation," a rhetorical move that privileges the reservation over the sovereignty of Oglala Sioux Tribe. Emily then writes, "My community [on the reservation]. . . practices a ceremony called the Elk Dance or Elk Ceremony," which, she says, this community began practicing in 2015. By depicting "her community" as engaging in traditional Lakota ceremonies, Emily strives to construct herself not just as a real Lakota but, more than that, as a real American Indian person who is traditional and thus who is, as she problematically implies, more Indian than most other American Indian people. To further legitimize herself as a real American Indian person who is "more Indian" than most real Indian people, Emily asserts, "A critical part of this [Elk] ceremony [sic] is the role of the *elk maiden* [sic]. . . It was important that I hold the role of an *Elk Maiden* for my community" (emphasis ours).¹⁵⁴ Multiple times in her publications, Emily iterates this improbable contention, providing readers with the mistaken impression that she is a traditional Lakota spiritual leader and thus that her claims to being Lakota and, more broadly, American Indian, are unimpeachable. Moreover, by using the word "maiden," Emily fetishizes and softens Native women. An "Elk Maiden" is an Indian Princess by another name.

About the Lakota spiritual leadership position Emily says she holds, it is a formidable one in her mind. An Elk Maiden is one of the Elk Dreamer Society's few "holy women," Emily explains—"both feared and respected by the people for the spiritual power [She] possess[es]."¹⁵⁵ Emily avers that, during the Elk Ceremonies that "her community" began practicing in 2015, it is she who "holds the sacred pipe"¹⁵⁶ and carries "sacred medicine,"¹⁵⁷ adding that, on the Pine Ridge reservation, she is regarded as a Lakota "knowledge keeper."¹⁵⁸ In so doing, Emily diminishes *actual* knowledge keepers. She also weaponizes fictional magic for white feminism, no doubt in an effort to make her outlandish claims unimpeachable. Equally if not more unbelievably, Emily asserts that, by serving in this position, she "sustains the life of the [Lakota] nation,"¹⁵⁹ partly because, as she puts it, "an essential aspect of [her] role" is healing.¹⁶⁰ Yet another feature of this role is, Emily claims, the mandate that she inhabit a profoundly spiritual place, one that is "between the stars and the earth" and that requires that she "walk as *wakayan* or 'sacred' at all

¹⁵² Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research," 129.

¹⁵³ Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research," 129.

¹⁵⁴ Van Alst, "Reclaiming Our Voices," 560. Note that sometimes in her scholarship Emily capitalizes "Elk Maiden," and other times she does not. TAAF researchers capitalize the term except when directly quoting Emily during the times when she does not capitalize the term. In those instances, TAAF researchers insert "[sic]" to indicate that this is an instance when Emily has chosen not to capitalize the term.

¹⁵⁵ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 30.

¹⁵⁶ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 24.

¹⁵⁷ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 30.

¹⁵⁸ Van Alst, "Reclaiming Our Voices," 562; "Elk Images," 3.

¹⁵⁹ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 33.

¹⁶⁰ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 47.

times."¹⁶¹ In this way, Emily represents herself as being a young Lakota woman who acquired as part of her birthright a special privileged status in a Lakota social hierarchy, albeit a privileged status and a social hierarchy that is likely a figment of Emily's own imagination. Emily thus fashions herself as a princess who is American Indian—the stereotypical "Indian princess"—who resembles the princesses of Europe in that, as part of their birthright, they occupied, as they continue to do, a privileged status as a royal.

Consistent with Emily's objectives, which seem to include disempowering Tribes and repudiating their sovereignty because she likely feels that it is Tribes who stand in the way of her living out her fantasies of being American Indian and a revered Lakota spiritual leader, only rarely in her publications does Emily use the terms "Tribe" or "Tribal Nation." Instead, she uses the term "community" almost exclusively—as if she is endeavoring to erase Tribes as sovereign nations and replace them with "communities." Communities, of course, are rarely if ever sovereign and thus are non-threatening and in many cases politically innocuous. As such, it follows that "communities" are cultural collectives that people like Emily, who appear to deeply resent Tribes, are likely to find appealing, especially as a replacement for an actual legitimate Tribe. Indeed, as part of Emily's apparent strategy to replace "Tribe" or "Tribal Nation" with "community," Emily uses the word "community," often with the possessive "my," as many 124 times in her doctoral dissertation.

Emily's construction of "her people," or, as she puts it in the Lakota language, her *oyate*, has shifted over time. Indeed, recently Emily has identified a new community as hers. Significantly, this new community is largely untethered from the Pine Ridge reservation. In a 2026 article, Emily terms this new community *hehaka oyate* or Elk People.¹⁶² She explains that this community, which, in her mind, confers upon her the identity of a Lakota, is a collection of individuals who are "primarily Lakota, *but also other Indigenous communities*" (our emphasis).¹⁶³

In sum, Emily, who has zero American Indian ancestors, began her career by vesting an alleged community on the Pine Ridge reservation with the authority to deem her a Lakota. Then, she disinvested that alleged community with this authority and transferred it to a community she describes as multitribal, a community that, significantly, is not grounded in any particular Tribal homeland and lacks treaty rights, political sovereignty, and any other reality of contemporary Tribal Nations. Almost certainly, such a maneuver serves the purpose of distancing and protecting herself and perhaps also her father from any oversight the Oglala Lakota Tribe may have chosen to exercise—or may choose in the future to exercise—over her claims to being Lakota and her associated actions. Emily's ongoing strategy of trying to replace "Tribe" with "community" undermines Tribal sovereignty and disrespects Tribes. More than that, it is a subversive attack on Tribal Nations.

Might a Lakota Family Have Adopted Emily and Possibly Also Theodore?

During TAAF's multi-year investigation of the Van Alst case, researchers and the individuals whom TAAF interviewed seriously entertained the possibility that Emily and possibly also Theodore may have been adopted by a Lakota family on the Pine Ridge reservation. Significantly, there is a Lakota practice in which an individual can be made a *hunka* relative by a Lakota family. As one Lakota explained to TAAF researchers (who protect this consultant's identity by changing the kin titles they mentioned): "The *hunka* ceremony is for Lakota. An example is that my father and his siblings lost both of their parents so they

¹⁶¹ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 37.

¹⁶² Emily Van Alst, "Beholding Through Being: Understanding the Phenomenal Agency of Indigenous-Made Imagery," *World Art* 16, 2(2), 297.

¹⁶³ Van Alst, "Beholding Through Being," 297.

were *hunka* [joined] to another Lakota family to still have that family support. It's Lakota making relatives with other Lakota for many reasons that don't make sense to have it done with a non-Lakota." As was addressed earlier in this report, if Emily and Theodore were made *hunka* relatives of a Lakota family, a possibility addressed below, that would not then make Emily or Theodore a Lakota or American Indian, a reality that was made clear in the case of pretendian Buffy Sainte-Marie.

TAAF found zero evidence that Emily or Theodore were ever made *hunka* relatives of a Lakota family—only evidence that Emily and her father were *not* ever made *hunka* relatives. First, TAAF carefully reviewed all of Emily's scholarship and her other writings, including her social media posts. Never once does Emily claim to have been made a *hunka* relative. Instead, she represents "her Lakota family" as composed of her actual consanguineal and affinal kin, a claim that the extensive genealogical research TAAF conducted on Emily and her family exposed as untrue.

Next, several of the Lakota consultants whom TAAF interviewed for this investigation shared with TAAF researchers a critical fact about the *hunka* ceremony: as the Lakota consultant quoted above disclosed, the *hunka* ceremony is reserved for those with Lakota ancestry. Given that Emily (and Theodore) have no Lakota ancestry, according to the analysis our Lakota consultants provided, Emily and Theodore are simply not eligible to be made *hunka* relatives of a Lakota family.

The strongest evidence TAAF researchers found that Emily (and Theodore) have not ever been made *hunka* relatives of a Lakota family draws from Emily's assertions that she has participated in "the Elk Dance ceremony and other ceremonies related to the larger elk *tiospaye* [extended Lakota family] since 2016."¹⁶⁴ Consequently, for the time period between the 2010s and the present, TAAF researchers reviewed numerous obituaries of Lakotas that were published in newspapers, including in *The Lakota Times* and the section of the Oglala Sioux Tribe's website entitled "The Holy Road—Full Obituaries." Particular attention was paid to the obituaries of members of the Lakota family whom Emily claims as her family but never with any proof that they are in fact her family. TAAF found that Lakota obituaries often list the survivors of the deceased as including both their biological relatives and the individuals, if any, whom their family chose to make *hunka* relatives. Moreover, *hunka* relatives are nearly always, if not always, clearly labeled in these obituaries as *hunka* kin rather than as biological kin.

The results of this research lay bare what may be the smoking gun indicating that Emily and Theodore were not ever made *hunka* relatives: not once do Emily and Theodore ever appear as relatives, either as *hunka* relatives or as biological ones, in *any* Lakota obituary, including in the obituaries of Lakotas who are members of the particular Lakota family whom Emily claims as her immediate kin.

As for the question, then, of whether Emily and Theodore may have been made *hunka* relatives of a Lakota family, the conclusion of TAAF researchers is that almost certainly Emily and Theodore were not made *hunka* relatives of any Lakota family. Moreover, no public claim of belonging has ever been reciprocated in that important way or, to our knowledge, in any other way. If testimony emerges from this Lakota family that Emily and Theodore were indeed made *hunka* relatives, one inconvenient fact for Emily (and Theodore) remains: any claim to Lakota ancestry that the Van Alsts may have conveyed to a Lakota family in order to gain *hunka* status would be false. Therefore, any attempt by the Van Alsts to present themselves as such would be both factually fraudulent and both relationally and culturally abusive.

¹⁶⁴ Van Alst, "Reclaiming Our Voices," 560.

Defining and Controlling Lakota Culture

Some of the material presented above speaks to the fact that Emily's scholarship reveals a strong interest on her part in defining and controlling Lakota culture, objectives that, as was seen above, are tied up in the specific ways by which Emily constructs her false Lakota identity. Indeed, as part of her construction of herself as a powerful Lakota spiritual leader, Emily contends that she has had and continues to have spiritual visions. Mostly Emily refers to these visions as "dreaming," during which she claims that the spirits, specifically Elk Spirits, speak to her.

One of TAAF's Lakota consultants provided critical insight into the question of who in the Northern Great Plains has visions, and the knowledge they provided TAAF raises serious questions about the veracity of Emily's claims. This Lakota explained that the ten different Lakota medicine men in South Dakota with whom they discussed this question agreed with one another that the spirits in their area, by which these medicine men mean North America, speak only to people with American Indian ancestry because American Indians have long and unbroken genealogical connections to this continent, especially as compared to Europeans and other immigrants who set foot on North American soil less than six centuries ago. The medicine men with whom our Lakota consultant spoke further explained that American Indians' deep, ancestral connections to the lands of North America are a precondition for spirits to approach, then initiate and continue communication with selected exceptional American Indians.

By claiming to have had visions during which the spirits regularly speak to her, then, Emily likely imagines that, among other things, she is providing compelling evidence that she does in fact have Native ancestry. In essence, Emily contends that the *spirits* offer corroboration of her claims to having American Indian ancestry even if no Tribe does.

Building on this notion, in her work Emily advances the proposition that she is not only an Elk Maiden but also a *hehaka kağa*, an Elk Dreamer. She imagines such roles as connected. As a *hehaka kağa*, Emily asserts that she is one of the select few Lakotas to whom the spirits provide, as anthropologist Robert Lowie has called them, "revelations." Emily strongly implies that her dreams/visions/revelations are an additional qualification she brings to her role of providing spiritual and cultural knowledge, as well as guidance, to the Lakota people.

By claiming to be a *hehaka kağa*, a traditional spiritual leader who receives and shares revelations with the Lakota people, and by making the spiritual and cultural knowledge she allegedly acquires through those visions a focus of her scholarship, Emily constructs herself as both the subject and object of her research. At the same time, Emily suggests that she is the living legacy of "Lakota Dreamers" that include the celebrated Black Elk. As she explains, the "Dreamers of the past" such as Black Elk "are connected to the dreamers [sic] of the present," which include her.¹⁶⁵ Third, Emily implicitly contends that, as a Dreamer, it is she who helps shape the content and character of Lakota ceremonies, specifically the Elk Dance. The revelations that the spirits give Dreamers, Emily asserts, create a mandate for Dreamers such as herself to honor that vision through ceremony.¹⁶⁶ In this case, Plains Indian Elk Dancers, of which Emily contends that there are ten, perform ceremonies in which they "act out" Emily's visions and the visions of at least one other spiritual leader.

Emily grounds much of the spiritual and cultural knowledge that her visions allegedly provide her in the ethnographic literature about Elk Dreamers and, more broadly, the animal dreamer societies documented

¹⁶⁵ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 121.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Van Alst, "Elk Images," 20, and in the definition of *hehaka kağa*, xi.

during the 19th- and 20th centuries. She explains that written knowledge of the dreams/visions/revelations of Lakotas and other Plains Indian Dreamers is extant in accounts provided by Black Elk; anthropologists Clark Wissler, Alice Fletcher, and Robert Lowie; and Anglican priest Peter J. Powell.¹⁶⁷

Emily's scholarship suggests that she likely sees her claim to being a *hehaka kağa* as serving multiple purposes. Likely, she sees it as corroborating her claims to having Lakota ancestry and to being a traditional Lakota whom the spirits regard as a particularly esteemed and exceptional Lakota. Next, she likely sees her *hehaka kağa* position as augmenting the power she accrued by serving as an Elk Maiden, allegedly helping make her into an even more formidable spiritual leader who shapes the content and character of Lakota ceremonies. Perhaps most seriously, Emily's claims to being a *hehaka kağa* advance her apparent objectives of defining and controlling Lakota culture. In her scholarship, Emily asserts that one of her goals is to "reright [sic] the history of Lakota people,"¹⁶⁸ "revitalize traditional knowledge about our histories,"¹⁶⁹ and "revitalize our culture."¹⁷⁰ She adds that her work will enable Lakotas "to practice ceremonies in the way our ancestors intended."¹⁷¹ To this point Emily explains that the Elk knowledge she allegedly obtains through visions is highly revealing of the ways past Lakotas intended Lakota ceremonies to be performed.

As a reminder, recently Emily abandoned her alleged identity as Lakota in order to affiliate with a CPAIN from a completely different cultural and geographic region. How does that shift now align with her longstanding claim to being a Lakota Elk Dreamer?

Using "More-than-Human" Relatives to Corroborate False Claims

According to Emily's scholarship, when the Elk Spirits speak to her, they are recognizing her as a relative. Similarly, when Emily collects wild bergamot plants "to aid in elk ceremonies [sic]" for which she serves as an Elk Maiden, she is interfacing with her "plant kin."¹⁷² "Plants," Emily avers, "are essential relatives who provide food, medicine, and knowledge."¹⁷³ Emily explains that "her community," the *hehaka oyate* or Elk People, recognize non-humans, especially elk and plants, as among their members. Our "kinship networks," she emphatically asserts, "incl[ude] plants and animals."¹⁷⁴ Further, Emily portrays such "conceptions of ancestors and non-human community members" as "critical," not trivial.¹⁷⁵ Through such constructions, Emily treats elk and plants as relatives who provide further corroboration of her claims to being Lakota. The implication is that, if she did not have Lakota ancestry, she would not then be able to have the relationships that she does with these more-than-human members of the Elk People community. In other words, while Emily may not have human kin in the Elk People community, she contends that she is nonetheless intimately connected to this alleged American Indian community through her elk and plant kin.

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, Van Alst, "Elk Images," 28–29.

¹⁶⁸ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 8.

¹⁶⁹ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 562.

¹⁷⁰ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 168–69.

¹⁷¹ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 11.

¹⁷² Van Alst, "Elk Images," 162.

¹⁷³ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 45.

¹⁷⁴ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 17.

¹⁷⁵ Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research," 128.

As if she assesses this trans-species argument about her belonging as insufficient, Emily also contends that the petroglyphs she studies, which are discussed at length below, are her kin. They are, as she puts it, her "more-than-human kin."¹⁷⁶ Consequently, Emily says she refers to rock art sites "not just [as] landscapes" but also as "kinscapes."¹⁷⁷ Significantly, Emily uses the term *kinscape* without crediting Sami Lakomäki, who is the term's originator,¹⁷⁸ or the Indigenous scholars who have made especially productive use of the term.¹⁷⁹

In one of Emily's most recent articles, "Beholding Through Being: Understanding the Phenomenal Agency of Indigenous-made Imagery," Emily shares information about renowned medicine man and leader, Black Elk. Her assertions have implications that are startlingly audacious. Emily writes, "Black Elk explains that for many, [rock art] images cannot be seen; it takes a person with cultural and spiritual knowledge to interpret the images for the community, acting as a mediator between this world and others."¹⁸⁰ To this statement Emily adds that "Lakota people" have told her that "people with a spiritual role as mediators need to interpret the markings."¹⁸¹ Given Emily's construction of herself as a Lakota with cultural and spiritual knowledge, as well as with a spiritual role as a mediator between the spiritual and everyday world, it is unsettling that Emily uses the words of Black Elk and other Lakotas to validate herself as the primary interpreter for all Lakotas of the rock art she describes as Lakota-created.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ Van Alst, "Beholding Through Being," 295.

¹⁷⁷ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 164.

¹⁷⁸ Sami Lakomäki, *Gathering Together: The Shawnee People through Diaspora and Nationhood, 1600– 1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 229– 30.

¹⁷⁹ See, for example, Nicole St. Onge and Brenda Macdougall, "Kinscapes and the Buffalo Chase: the Genesis of Nineteenth-Century Plains Métis Hunting Brigades," *The Greater Plains: Rethinking a Region's Environmental Histories*, edited by Brian Frehner and Kathleen A. Brosnan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021); Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Wilfried Laurier Press, 2018).

¹⁸⁰ Van Alst, "Beholding Through Being," 303.

¹⁸¹ Van Alst, "Beholding Through Being," 304.

¹⁸² There is at least one additional qualification Emily uses seemingly to further support her elaborate constructions of her alleged Lakota identity. This qualification revolves around the meaning of Emily's apparent ability to do quillwork. Quillwork refers to the art of using porcupine quills, often in conjunction with beads, to adorn items such as clothing and jewelry. While discussing in one of her scholarly articles her own and others' quillwork and beadwork, Emily draws on the scholarship of historian Colette Hyman, who interviewed Dakotas for her book, *Dakota Women's Work*. Emily quotes a Dakota woman elder who told Hyman, "Quillwork is profoundly difficult, and women who mastered the art were seen as important and sacred" (Quoted in Van Alst, "(Re)writing and (Re)beading," 163, from Colette Hyman, *Dakota Women's Work*. [Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Historical Society, 2012], 35). Emily explains this assertion using additional statements made by this consultant of Hyman's, specifically a quote Hyman includes in her book and Emily uses in her article: "Beading could be done by anyone at any time, but not quill work," the Dakota elder told Hyman (Ibid.). "Quillwork and other 'fancy work,'" the consultant further explained, "partook of those attributes of *wakan*: it was ancient knowledge handed down from generation to generation of women to another; the talent to do this work came from a mysterious being who appeared in a dream" (Ibid.). Emily portrays herself as a Lakota woman who is proficient in quillwork in a post that she made on Twitter, now X, as well as in her scholarship. On Twitter, now X, Emily posted a picture of herself with the caption, "That face when you're reading archaeology theory while porcupine quills are soaking in your kitchen sink" (X post, Emily Van Alst, February 19, 2018). As part of that post, Emily added the hashtags "indigenouacademic" and "lakotagirlproblems" (X post, Emily Van Alst, February 19, 2018). Significantly, TAAF researchers found no place, whether in her scholarship or in her social media accounts, where Emily explicitly claims that her ability to do quillwork is one of the reasons Lakotas see her, as she claims they do, as "important and sacred." Yet by including these quotes in an article she wrote about her own and others' beadwork and quillwork, and by making a Twitter post announcing her ability to do quillwork, it follows that Emily likely hopes readers will jump to this conclusion.

Research Ethics

For *The Oxford Handbook of Global Indigenous Archaeologies*, Emily published a scholarly article, entitled "Ethics Versus Ethical Codes." Additionally, she has given several scholarly presentations about ethics, and she regularly weaves discussions about ethics into her publications about rock art, beadwork, and other topics.

For the most part, the points that Emily makes about research ethics consist of simple, overarching allegations that archaeologists are unethical. In fact, it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that Emily's discussions about research ethics are little more than sweeping indictments of archaeology. Emily appears to use her self-serving critiques of archaeology to help justify her argument, introduced above, that non-Indians need to step aside in order to clear the way for Indigenous archaeologists, such as herself, to control and dominate Native North American archaeology. Yet with Emily at the helm of this work, it is likely that the work would occur without delving into specific case studies and without engagement with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) who are tasked with protecting Tribal heritage and cultural materials. Another likely reason Emily may have regularly taken up the topic of ethics in her writing is to deflect from her own unethical behavior.

In Emily's published work about research ethics, she characterizes archaeology as "a scientific method of colonialism used to study the deep past,"¹⁸³ explaining that archaeologists enact and "perpetuat[e] the structural violence of colonialism" in several different ways.¹⁸⁴ She adds that "American archaeology" has "a patronizing attitude toward 'others'"¹⁸⁵ and "a sketchy record of support for Native sovereignty."¹⁸⁶ She also decries the "failures of archaeologists to adhere to ethical codes,"¹⁸⁷ asserting that, due in part to the actions of archaeologists, "the cultural heritage of Native communities is constantly under threat."¹⁸⁸

Also in her publications, Emily condemns archaeologists' use of communities "to extract research merely for [archaeologists'] professional benefit," extractions that, she adds, "endanger" her own and other Indigenous communities.¹⁸⁹ Archaeologists often simply "opt-out of working in the community's interest,"¹⁹⁰ she explains. Emily then implores archaeologists to "accept the role of helping communities, not hurting them,"¹⁹¹ a statement that TAAF researchers found striking given the significant harm Emily herself has been doing to Lakotas and others.

As regards her colleagues, specifically those who, like her, specialize in rock art, Emily writes, "Many archaeologists who study rock art seem to be missing the critical knowledge from descendants."¹⁹² With the word "descendant," Emily emplaces "descendants" over actual, real Lakotas or other Northern Plains

¹⁸³ Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research," 130.

¹⁸⁴ Emily C. Van Alst and K. Anne Pyburn, "Ethics Versus Ethical Codes," *The Oxford Handbook of Global Indigenous Archaeologies*, edited by Claire Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 2.

¹⁸⁵ Van Alst and Pyburn, "Ethics," 3.

¹⁸⁶ Van Alst and Pyburn, "Ethics," 6.

¹⁸⁷ Van Alst and Pyburn, "Ethics," 5.

¹⁸⁸ Van Alst and Pyburn, "Ethics," 6.

¹⁸⁹ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 130.

¹⁹⁰ Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research," 130.

¹⁹¹ Van Alst and Pyburn, "Ethics," 6.

¹⁹² Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research," 138.

people. At the same time, she alleges that her colleagues tend to overlook or dismiss knowledge that present-day Lakotas possess, such as the "Elk Knowledge" that she herself allegedly acquired through dreaming and the knowledge she gained through her alleged experience as a Lakota spiritual leader. Through such assertions, Emily offers implied admonition of her colleagues for not interviewing *her* for insights into the meanings of Northern Great Plains rock art. This follows from her apparent belief that, due to her alleged visions and her alleged position as a Lakota spiritual leader, she is more knowledgeable about Lakota cultural and spiritual knowledge than nearly all living Lakotas. Indeed, Emily presents herself as having, as she puts it, "the critical knowledge" with which to most accurately interpret rock art, knowledge that, according to her, her fellow faculty rock art analysts choose to dismiss.

To try to chart a path forward for her subdiscipline in the realm of ethics, in several of her publications Emily makes recommendations for how to induce archaeologists to behave more ethically and thus how to transform archaeology into a subfield that is less ethically compromised. She writes that, first, "what is needed is a clear and empirically grounded understanding of how archaeology (or any science) can be complicit in structural violence."¹⁹³ Next, she calls for "a formal way to either identify or address ethical violations,"¹⁹⁴ suggesting that perhaps the American Anthropological Association should develop a policy for "sanctioning members" who engage in unethical practices.¹⁹⁵

A third recommendation she makes, this time solely for archaeologists who study Native North America, is for archaeologists to seek and obtain approval not only from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of their university but also from the IRB of the Tribe that is the focus of their work. "It is *crucial* to gain IRB approval [from the Tribe]," Emily writes (emphasis ours).¹⁹⁶ She describes "Tribal IRBs [as] a complicated but *necessary step in ethical archaeology*" (emphasis ours).¹⁹⁷ She explains that the Tribal IRB is "an institutional way to protect tribal communities from physical and emotional harm done by potentially unethical research,"¹⁹⁸ adding that Tribal IRBs "regulate external appropriation of Indigenous knowledge, insure ethical practice, and protect community members from western research."¹⁹⁹

By excoriating her colleagues for disrespecting Indians when they fail to obtain Tribal IRB approval for their research, Emily focuses attention on the unethical actions of her colleagues toward American Indians, thereby deflecting attention from herself and her own unethical practices. Likely, she hopes that the attention she pays to the failures of her colleagues will shield her from being scrutinized for her own breaches of ethics. As was discussed earlier, these breaches of ethics of Emily's include, for starters, falsely claiming to be American Indian, claiming the right to define and control Lakota culture, and undermining Tribal sovereignty. Moreover, the recommendations Emily makes about the actions archaeologists need to take to behave in ways that are more ethical are actions that Emily herself does not take.

One of her recommendations for practices that, she insists, archaeologists must undertake but that she herself does not undertake—and, to the knowledge of TAAF, never has undertaken—is obtaining Tribal IRB approval for her research. When Lakotas whom TAAF researchers consulted for this case spoke with

¹⁹³ Van Alst and Pyburn, "Ethics," 2.

¹⁹⁴ Van Alst and Pyburn, "Ethics," 2.

¹⁹⁵ Van Alst and Pyburn, "Ethics," 3.

¹⁹⁶ Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research," 131.

¹⁹⁷ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 132.

¹⁹⁸ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 134.

¹⁹⁹ Van Alst and Pyburn, "Ethics," 7.

TAAF about Emily's failure to obtain Tribal IRB approval for her research, initially TAAF researchers were somewhat confounded. As was seen above, Emily argues very strongly in her published work that Tribal IRB approval is vital. She even goes so far as to describe it as both "crucial" and "necessary" for "ethical archaeology."

Yet TAAF researchers found in Emily's unpublished doctoral dissertation confirmation that Emily did not obtain Tribal IRB approval, despite strongly implying in several of her publications that she did. In her unpublished dissertation, Emily discloses, "I wanted to make sure that Tribal IRB permissions were granted first, but because of timing and other issues impacting the [Oglala Sioux Tribe Research Review Board] . . . that permission was never obtained."²⁰⁰ Later in the document, Emily asserts, it is "extremely difficult to seek tribal IRB approval within a time frame relevant to research, especially graduate student research,"²⁰¹ revealing that she prioritizes research agendas over respecting Tribal IRB processes. By contrast, other archaeologists, including some graduate students, have discussed their own extensive and drawn out discussions with Tribal IRB boards and Elders, thus exposing Emily's excuses as hollow rationalizations for her own ethical failures.

Emily also reveals that, "Within my own work, the needs of the community I work with, the timing of the [Oglala Sioux Tribe] Tribal IRB, and the expectations of the graduate school were at odds with one another, making it impossible."²⁰² One Oglala Lakota who recently served as a Tribal government official told us that, to his knowledge, in the years since completing her dissertation, Emily does not appear to have sought, much less obtained, approval from the Tribe to conduct her research. Yet Emily nevertheless conducted and presumably continues to conduct research on the reservation of the Oglala Sioux Tribe.

Scholarly Productivity

Most of this report's discussion of Emily's work pertains to the quality of her research, which TAAF found to be strikingly substandard. As was seen, there are significant, serious problems with the intellectual merit of Emily's largely autoethnographic and clearly highly fictionalized work. This is also the case with her archaeology, as will be seen below. In conjunction with TAAF's assessment of the quality of Emily's scholarship—and in anticipation of questions that may emerge upon this report's release about her scholarly productivity given her selection as co-editor of a UNM book series, TAAF researchers also evaluated Emily's scholarly productivity. Scholarly productivity is an important and loosely quantified measure of a scholar's performance in academia that is based on metrics such as the number of a scholar's academic publications, particularly their peer-reviewed publications. Nearly all, if not all, disciplines very highly regard peer-reviewed scholarly articles. Some disciplines treat each peer-reviewed single-authored book as a proverbial brass ring, and most accord some weight to edited volumes. While book chapters are a step below peer-reviewed journal articles, they are nevertheless treated as important scholarly contributions, unlike some other publications such as encyclopedia articles. Due to the nature of archaeological research, which is often collective, and due to archaeology's publishing conventions, which support producing articles with multiple authors, archaeologists tend to produce a high number of publications relative to their peers from most other disciplines. Significantly, a professor's scholarly productivity is almost always evaluated only in relation to scholars in their discipline.

Having found no other instances of an untenured scholar like Emily being accorded such a lofty position as that which UNM Press has bestowed upon Emily, TAAF researchers expected Emily to have an almost

²⁰⁰ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 118–19.

²⁰¹ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 133.

²⁰² Van Alst, "Elk Images," 134–5.

unbelievably large number of publications. This level of productivity would then suggest that Emily may indeed be a rising star in archaeology, which would, in turn, help explain why UNM Press accorded Emily a leadership position at their Press.

However, by the standards of archaeology, which are standards with which TAAF is very familiar, TAAF found Emily's scholarly productivity, addressed below, to be subpar, albeit not significantly so. This suggests that the leadership position that UNM Press accorded Emily is not based on her scholarship. Instead, it is likely based substantially or possibly even solely on Emily's claims to being American Indian and perhaps also on the Press's alleged positive working relationship with Emily's father Theodore. Most likely, leaders at UNM Press believed, erroneously, that they were doing right by American Indians by offering a young American Indian scholar a truly unbelievable opportunity to boost her career, though without any verification of her Tribal affiliation or cultural claims.

While keeping in mind that, in archaeology, the expected number of publications is high compared to other disciplines, TAAF researchers tabulated the total number of Emily's publications based on the list of publications posted on Emily's faculty website. Emily does not post her CV on her faculty website, which is somewhat unusual. Although not having access to Emily's current CV carries the potential of possibly impeding TAAFs' ability to fully assess Emily's scholarly productivity, particularly if her website is not up to date, the most recent publication on Emily's website dates to this year: 2026. This indicates that the list is indeed up to date, or at least that it was updated very recently. Additionally, the title of the list on Emily's faculty website is "Selected Publications," which suggests that the list may not be complete. However, the posted list contains an encyclopedia entry. Almost certainly, a very low-level scholarly publication such as an encyclopedia entry would not be included on a list that is anything other than a complete list of scholarly publications. This, together with Emily's posting on her list several articles that were published as recently as this year, increased TAAF researchers' level of confidence that Emily's faculty website is at least a close-to-complete listing of her scholarly publications.

Now in the fourth year of her tenure-track appointment, Emily appears to have published eight articles. Five are peer-reviewed journal articles, and three are book chapters. Moreover, for one of her five peer-reviewed journal articles, Emily is the twelfth of as many as thirteen authors, indicating that her contribution to this publication was minimal. In addition, Emily has co-edited a volume, and she has an encyclopedia entry. (TAAF researchers did not count the encyclopedia entry toward her total number of peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters because encyclopedia entries are so often not counted in either category; invariably, they are given very little and sometimes no weight in anthropology departments.)

Then, using publicly-available information that young archaeologists posted about themselves and their work on their own faculty webpages, TAAF researchers compared Emily's publication record to those of three other archaeologists at the same career stage as she. This exercise helped confirm TAAF's finding that Emily's scholarly productivity is relatively low. In fact, Emily's productivity seems to be low enough to raise the possibility that, when Emily undergoes her upcoming review at WSU, she may not even clear the threshold for the minimum number of publications required for her to receive tenure and promotion at her institution.

For the purposes of this report, TAAF anonymized the three junior archaeologists to whom Emily's productivity was compared so as to preemptively avoid doing harm to these junior scholars by including them in a report about an archaeologist whose behavior has been and continues to be unethical and even dangerous. One of the three junior archaeologists to whom Emily was compared is an assistant professor

at a small liberal arts college. They received their Ph.D. the same year as did Emily. They have seventeen articles, twelve of which are peer-reviewed. Thus they have more than twice as many publications as Emily and 2.4 times the number of peer-reviewed publications as she. A second junior archaeologist to whom Emily was compared also received their Ph.D. the same year as Emily. Like Emily herself, they are an assistant professor at a large R1 public university but not at WSU where Emily is employed. They have eleven articles, six of which are peer-reviewed. Thus, their scholarly productivity is also higher than Emily's, though not significantly so.

A third young archaeologist at the same career stage as Emily whose publication record was also compared to hers is likewise an assistant professor at a large R1 public university that is not WSU. They have substantially more publications than Emily: they have published twenty-six articles, including eighteen peer-reviewed articles, whereas Emily has eight articles, five of them peer-reviewed. Additionally, whereas Emily has a co-edited volume, this scholar has two books under contract, one of which is single-authored. While they received their Ph.D. earlier than Emily, and thus comparing her record to theirs is less fair than comparing hers to the first two scholars, according to their faculty webpage they are nevertheless at the same career stage as Emily: this scholar, too, is identified on their faculty webpage as an archaeologist at the assistant professor level.

As the above discussion suggests, the third scholar more closely fits the profile of a scholar who, despite being so junior, has a chance, however miniscule, of being selected to edit a book series at a top press specializing in their geographic area and theoretical interests. They have well over three times the number of publications that Emily has. Additionally, they have a long list of awards they have received for the quality of their scholarship and their leadership in the field. Yet not even they have been awarded an editorship of a book series in archaeology. Unfortunately, UNM Press decided to instead accord that honor to a scholar who falsely claims to be American Indian.

TAAF finds it unfathomable that UNM Press continues to publish and market books by not only the Van Alsts, as they have done repeatedly, but also by other authors who claim to be American Indian but who are not enrolled in a legitimate federally recognized Tribe. UNM Press and many other presses commit grave acts of disrespect when they treat mere self-identification as American Indian and/or membership in a state-recognized or an unrecognized CPAIN as verification that a prospective or current author of one of their books is American Indian. By so doing, UNM Press (and other presses who behave similarly) fully participate in and are wholly complicit in the violence that such inherently anti-Indian acts do to real Indian Tribes. As such, like most universities, who also bury their proverbial heads in the sand on this issue, UNM Press and other presses who engage in this irresponsible behavior position themselves as the enemies of Indian Tribes and of Tribal sovereignty.

Quality of Scholarship

This section of the report returns to the matter of the quality of Emily's scholarship, with a focus on the quality of Emily's archaeology. As will be seen, Emily's archaeology is centered on rock art, which is human-created markings or drawings on natural-stone canvases that are often oversized. In assessing the quality of Emily's rock-art-focused archaeology, TAAF researchers were struck by how unrigorous, under-theorized, and disconnected from the robust scholarship of actual Indigenous archeologists Emily's archaeological research is. No doubt helping explain the serious problems that TAAF researchers found with Emily's archaeology is the contention that Emily is so preoccupied with bolstering her own false claims to being American Indian that she regularly loses sight of almost all else. More to the point, TAAF researchers found that, for the most part, Emily's research findings serve neither science nor the truth but instead Emily's own personal quest to legitimize herself as a Lakota and to carry out related anti-Indian actions, which include disrespecting Tribes and violating their sovereignty. Accordingly, several of the

most serious problems with Emily's archaeology are that she attributes the creators of this art to the wrong group, her interpretations of the meanings of this art are not credible, and she weaponizes her publications toward the end of interfering with the rights of Tribes to claim their own artifacts and other cultural heritage.

Emily's archaeological work substantially involves studying rock art petroglyphs in the Northern Great Plains of what is now the U.S. Referred to as petroglyphs, rock art, or rock art petroglyphs, these creations are relatively durable images in rock that humans create by chiseling or scraping away from a rock panel selected areas of the rock's outer layers. Pigments are also sometimes applied to the images. At two of the twelve rock art sites Emily studies, archaeologists have determined that American Indian people created the sites' rock art during what archaeologists call the Paleoindian and Archaic Periods, which span the years between approximately 13,000 BCE and 1,000 BCE (formerly BC). For the remaining ten sites she studies, archaeologists have dated the creation of the sites' rock art by American Indian people to what archaeologists call the Plains Village Period, a period that spans the years between approximately 1,300 and 1,700 CE (formerly AD). The twelve rock art sites Emily studies span three states: Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota.

In studying these sites, Emily's methodology is first, to look at the petroglyphs *in situ* (on site), if possible, which she did for seven of the twelve sites. Then, for the seven sites Emily visited, she photographed the petroglyphs. Later, using the photographs either that she took (at seven of the sites) or that others took (at five of the sites), she drew by hand onto paper the images from the rock panels at the twelve sites. After identifying and recording some of the plants growing near the sites (which yielded data she has yet to meaningfully incorporate into her analyses), Emily analyzed and interpreted the meanings of the rock art images. TAAF researchers found it striking that a consequence of Emily's methodology is that, as compared to the methodologies used by many of her archaeologist peers (especially excavation), the methodologies Emily uses allow her to complete her data collection in a fraction of the time and at a fraction of the cost of, for example, an archaeological excavation. This begs the question, among other questions, of why, relative to her peers, Emily's scholarly productivity is not higher.

Emily chooses to construe the rock art she studies not only as art but also as knowledge and history,²⁰³ which struck TAAF researchers as prudent. Unfortunately, however, in the case of Emily's work, this serves only to increase the amount of damage Emily does as an indirect result of her incorrect identification of the group that created the art. Emily begins by arguing that all of the art at the twelve sites, which, again, span the three states of Wyoming, Montana, and South Dakota, was likely done by Lakotas. She writes, "Today the *heheka oyate* ["Elk Nation"] is aware of these images. The community understands where these images are located, as well as how extensive *our traditional Lakota homelands were*" (emphasis ours).²⁰⁴ As will be discussed below, Emily then calls for public agencies such as the National Park Service, together with the private landowners who possess two of the sites, to rematriate all of the acreage on which these images are located to Lakotas.

Primary sources and historical research reveal with high levels of certainty that, contrary to Emily's assertions, none of the rock art at any of the twelve sites Emily studies was Lakota-created. Emily herself acknowledges that the most recent of the petroglyphs she studies was created in 1700 CE at the latest, and that most were created far earlier—with some dating to between 11,000 and 6,000 BCE. Lakotas were not anywhere near any of these locations during the time period of 11,000 BCE to 1700 CE, making it impossible for them to have created any of the rock art Emily contends that they created. Indeed, scholars

²⁰³ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 117.

²⁰⁴ Van Alst, "Reclaiming Our Voices," 562.

and culture bearers of multiple Tribes generally agree that, after crossing the Missouri River during the last leg of their journey from the central Mississippi Valley through the western Great Lakes then on to points west, Lakotas arrived in the Black Hills for the first time in the late 1700s CE. Among the many sources that affirm the accuracy of this approximate timeline, a timeline that enjoys a robust consensus among scholars, is the primary source of the Wintercount of an Oglala Lakota leader named American Horse.²⁰⁵

Wintercounts are pictographic histories that were and are usually painted on bison hides. They are a means by which historians from several of the American Indian peoples of the Great Plains documented, as they continue to do, a sequence of years by depicting, in succession, the most important event of each yearlong period between first snowfalls. Until the U.S. government obtained control of the American Horse Wintercount, which, regrettably, is currently in the possession of the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Archives, Lakota leader American Horse was the keeper of this valuable primary source of Lakota history that had been created by his family.

The American Horse Wintercount documents the period that begins in 1775-76 CE and ends in 1878-79 CE. Appropriately given that the Black Hills has long been and continues to be, as Lakota scholar Nick Estes puts it, "the heart of the Lakota universe,"²⁰⁶ at the center of the bison hide Wintercount, which is historically where Lakota historians begin their documentation of the sequence of years they record, one of American Horse's ancestors recorded the event of the arrival of the first Lakota to the Black Hills. According to this Lakota-authored account, the date of Lakotas' arrival in the place that many of them believe the Creator always intended them to be, a place called *He Sapa* in the Lakota language, is 1775-76 CE.²⁰⁷

Five of the twelve sites Emily studies are in the Dakotas, specifically in and west of the Black Hills. American Indian Nations of Pawnees, Arikaras, Mandans, and Shoshones lived in this area prior to 1700 CE. Almost without a doubt, the rock art at these five sites that Emily studies was created by artists and historians from one or more of these sovereign Nations, not by Lakotas. Again, this is because the art at these sites, which are the easternmost of the ones Emily studies, dates to 1700 CE at the latest, and Lakotas did not move this far west until the late 1700s CE. The assertions in Emily's publications about which group created the rock art she studies, then, are false. Her archaeology is inaccurate. Furthermore, the assertions Emily makes about the authorship of the twelve rock art panels she studies are fundamentally dangerous. Alarming, her publications produce a record that completely erases the irrefutable claims of other American Indian Nations to these areas and to the histories of these areas. If left unchallenged in the record, such erasures have a high likelihood of being weaponized against these American Indian Nations by the NAGPRA Federal Advisory Review Committee, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Congress, and others.

The remaining rock art sites Emily studies—seven of them—are in Wyoming and Montana, much too far west for Lakotas to have created them by 1700 CE at the latest. Instead, most of the rock art in these areas was produced either by Northern Caddoan speaking peoples, specifically members of the Pawnee and Arikara Nations, or members of the Mandan Nation.

²⁰⁵ Candace S. Greene and Russell Thornton, editors, *The Year the Stars Fell: Lakota Winter Counts at the Smithsonian* (Washington, DC and Lincoln, NB: National Museum of Natural History Press and University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

²⁰⁶ Nick Estes, "The Battle For the Black Hills," *High Country News*, January 1, 2021, <https://www.hcn.org/issues/53-1/indigenous-affairs-social-justice-the-battle-for-the-black-hills/>.

²⁰⁷ Greene and Thornton, editors, *The Year the Stars Fell*.

At one of these far western sites that Emily studies, the Castle Butte site, archaeologists have determined that the rock art was created by Crows, not by Lakotas.²⁰⁸ At one point deep in her work, Emily herself even acknowledges that the rock art at this site was Crow-created.²⁰⁹ The vital matter of the harm Emily has been doing to the Tribal Nations who are likely the actual creators of this rock art is addressed below.

It is, of course, possible that, for the five sites in the Dakotas that Emily studies, Emily simply assumed, erroneously, that Lakotas created the art at these sites based solely on the fact that the reservations of as many as five of the six Tribes in the U.S. with substantial populations of Lakotas are located in North and South Dakota. This faulty and ahistorical thinking, however, cannot explain why Emily credits Lakotas for creating the rock art at the other sites she studies—that is, at the seven sites in Wyoming and Montana. If Emily was simply attributing creatorship of rock art to the Tribal Nation whose reservation is geographically closest to the location of the rock art, she most certainly would not have credited Lakotas, as she does, with creating the rock art at the Spirit Lake site in Montana that she studies. This site is located on the Northern Cheyenne reservation.

The evidence suggests that Emily may be so laser-focused on legitimizing her claims to being Lakota that she may be grasping at any opportunity, however outrageous and implausible, that provides her with a platform on which to communicate her false claims that she is Lakota and that she possesses Lakota Elk Knowledge from her experiences as an Elk Dreamer and Elk Maiden. Validating her false claims to being Lakota is clearly something of an imperative for Emily—to the point that it effectively prevents her from acknowledging the truthfulness of the answers to questions that may strike most as rather innocuous, such as the question of with which Tribal Nation(s) might the individual(s) who created a particular rock art image have been affiliated?

It seems likely that, for Emily, nearly any Northern Great Plains rock art image must be labeled as Lakota-created so as to provide her with yet one more opportunity to legitimize her false claims, which Emily does, as detailed below, with nearly every commentary she makes about rock art. Lest any reader jump to the erroneous conclusion that Emily is honoring Lakotas by claiming to be Lakota and by claiming that rock art in three different states is Lakota-created, she is not. Instead, she is undermining the sovereignty of all Tribal Nations of Lakota people by failing to respect the sovereign rights of these Nations to determine their own citizenries and by, in most cases, only grudgingly acknowledging that these Nations are in fact sovereign Nations. Indeed, the name Emily most often uses when discussing the creators of rock art, "Lakota," is not the name of a sovereign Nation; it is the name of an ethnic group. Furthermore, often when Emily discusses rock art, she conflates the terms "Lakota" and "Elk People." This maneuver struck TAAF researchers as yet another effort on Emily's part to undermine the sovereignty of the Tribal Nations within which Lakota people live. Repeatedly, Emily frames Lakotas as an ethnic group composed of members who are affiliated not with a Tribal Nation or Nations but rather with a loosely defined social organization, the Elk People, that does not have sovereignty and is not a Nation. Sovereignty is material, built out of histories that predate treaties with non-Indian people but that also include these treaties and involve law and self-governance. In contrast, Elk People are mystical beings that are not recognized by many Lakota. Moreover, it appears that Emily developed this construction of the Elk People solely to legitimize her claims to being American Indian.

²⁰⁸ Timothy P. McCleary, *Crow Indian Rock Art: Indigenous Perspectives and Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2015).

²⁰⁹ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 56.

Another troubling aspect of the part of Emily's work that focuses on rock art is that, by identifying the wrong people group as the creators of the rock art she studies, Emily contorts and warps scholarly (and other) understandings of American Indian cultural and artistic expression on the Northern Great Plains during the period from 11,000 BCE through 1700 CE. Then, she makes matters worse, amplifying the negative consequences of her blunder, when she treats rock art as knowledge and history, as well as art. While construing rock art as more than just art is not, on its face, problematic and likely would even help advance understandings of the meanings of rock art, doing so with incorrect attributions of who created these images has the unfortunate effect of warping and contorting understandings not just of cultural and artistic expression but also of the experience, knowledge, and histories of the many American Indian Nations who were living in or traversing the Northern Great Plains during this period.

Interpretations of Rock Art

In her scholarship about her research on the Pine Ridge reservation of the Oglala Lakota Tribe, Emily discloses that "her community" began practicing the event that lies at the heart of her claims to being Lakota, the event of the Elk Ceremony, as recently as 2015. She also discloses that, from the outset, the goal of her archaeology has been to prove that this ceremony actually has a longer history than it may seem. It is likely that Emily believed that, if she were to produce scholarship that declared that the Elk Ceremony predates the mid-2010s, and especially if her work were to assert that the ceremony predates that mid-2010s by a very long time, she would then elevate the standing of the event upon which much of her claim to being Lakota rests, thereby strengthening the foundation of her false claim to being Lakota.

Consequently, Emily explains that, in interpreting the meanings of the rock art she studies, she used a "diachronic approach" that "connect[s]" the particular Elk Ceremony that "her" Lakota community began practicing in 2015 to the ancient rock art images she studies.²¹⁰ Nevermind that almost certainly it was not even Lakotas who created any of the art at any of the sites. And nevermind that the art from at least two of the sites may date to as early as 1100 BCE, which makes the temporal gap that separates the time from when some of the art was created to the time from when Emily began serving as an Elk Maiden more than three millennia. How credible is it that consultants would be able easily to identify the specific meanings of art created more than 3,000 years earlier (together with art created no more recently than 325 years ago) based solely on the fact—which, moreover, is incorrect—that they descend from the artists who created the art?

Further, the meanings that Emily assigns to this art draw most heavily from Emily's own supposed Elk Knowledge and experience, not from the treasure trove of knowledge and experience that many actual Lakotas have. As the creators of this art were American Indian, and given that Emily has no American Indian ancestry, clearly Emily does not descend from any of the artists whom she erroneously identifies as Lakota. Nevertheless, Emily insists that it is she—and possibly she alone—who is able easily to identify the true meanings of the art because, as she contends, she is Lakota and, more than that, she is a special Lakota to whom, as she explains in her work, the Lakota ancestors "chose" to show the art.²¹¹

Unfortunately, Emily either fails to see or flat-out dismisses these and other challenges to the underlying assumptions of her archaeology. In the end, she contends that her most important scholarly contribution is that "[her research] shows that the Elk Ceremony has existed in different iterations for at least 700 years."²¹² In so doing, Emily uses her scholarship—together with her doctorate and her faculty position

²¹⁰ Van Alst, "Beholding Through Being," 298, 294.

²¹¹ Van Alst, "Beholding Through Being," 306.

²¹² Van Alst, "Elk Images," 165.

that help make credible her false claim that her work is actual scholarship—to legitimize her disturbing perversion of the meanings of rock art at a dozen different sites across the Northern Great Plains. At the same time, Emily twists almost beyond recognition the actual histories and knowledge of the American Indian Nations of the Northern Great Plains. Clearly, Emily's scholarship poses a threat to Lakota culture, history, and knowledge. Moreover, alarmingly, it appears that Emily has found an effective way—specifically, via scholarship—through which she can attempt to define and control Lakota culture.

Harms to Other Plains Indian Tribes

The harm Emily does to Lakotas is matched only by the harm she does to the many American Indian Tribes with legitimate claims to the art at the twelve sites Emily studies. These may include, among other Indian Tribes, The Northern Cheyenne Tribe, The Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes, The Crow Tribe of Montana, The Northern Arapaho Tribe, The Kiowa Indian Tribe, The Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, The Blackfeet Tribe, The Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, The Pawnee Nation, The Duckwater Shoshone Tribe, The Eastern Shoshone Tribe, The Ely Shoshone Tribe, The Timbisha Shoshoni Tribe, The Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, The Fort McDermitt Paiute and Shoshone Tribe, The Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, The Comanche Nation, and The Fort Belknap Indian Community of the Fort Belknap Reservation of Montana. By misidentifying as Lakota the artists and historians who created the rock art Emily studied at as many as twelve sites across three U.S. states, she erases some of the cultural, artistic, and intellectual contributions made by members of these Nations. In so doing, she culturally impoverishes these Nations and in other ways seriously disrespects them and their accomplishments.

Equally concerning, the assertions Emily makes in her work interfere with the rights of these Nations to claim some of their artifacts and other aspects of their cultural heritage. Indeed, Emily describes her archaeology as "(re)connect[ing] one particular Lakota family group with a part of their archaeological heritage."²¹³ Conflating as she often does the terms "Lakota" and "Elk People," Emily further asserts—practically the same breath—that she is "reclaiming these elk petroglyphs" for her "*Hehaka Oyate*" or Elk People.²¹⁴

Emily then turns to what she describes as "the ultimate goal" of her archaeology: "reclaiming rock art sites."²¹⁵ As she explains, "my efforts to reclaim my community's sacred sites, especially those with rock art panels"²¹⁶ is part of a larger process of reclaiming "our [Lakota] heritage."²¹⁷ Rather ominously, she then adds that, "because rock art should and cannot be moved from its original place, the only way to repatriate this part of our cultural heritage [is] that rock art and, by extension, the land where rock art rests, must be rematriated."²¹⁸ Almost certainly Emily means that the art and these lands should be rematriated to Lakotas, which, of course, would do violence to the claims of approximately twenty American Indian Tribes to this art and its rock canvases. Emily's heinous acts are best understood as nothing more than acts of white academic colonialism under the guise of cultural restoration.

Yet another serious problem with Emily's archaeology is that she oversimplifies and flattens the meanings of the rock art in the twelve sites she studies. In order to validate her own alleged identity as an Elk

²¹³ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 10.

²¹⁴ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 9.

²¹⁵ Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research," 126.

²¹⁶ Van Alst, "Reclaiming Our Voices," 558.

²¹⁷ Van Alst, "Elk Images," 10.

²¹⁸ Van Alst, "Indigenizing Rock Art Research," 134.

Dreamer and Elk Maiden, she greatly diminishes the tremendous diversity and complexity of life and art in the Northern Great Plains past. The rock art images Emily studies are, in actuality, a powerful testament to the great diversity, complexity, and richness of human existence in this region during this time period. Yet Emily runs roughshod over this truth, oversimplifying and flattening the meanings of rock art in a vain attempt to prop up her own ridiculous fantasies of being a Lakota spiritual leader.

In these and other ways, Emily gravely distorts scholarly and cultural understandings of American Indians, particularly of American Indians of the Northern Great Plains. At the same time, she reinforces scholarly and popular understandings of American Indians as simple, primitive peoples. Such constructions are dangerous and cause for much concern. They have been used to help justify the theft of our lands, countless assaults on our cultures and languages, and efforts to annihilate us.

Pretendian Pipelines

At many different junctures of this investigation into the bad acts of Emily Van Alst, TAAF researchers have puzzled over the question of how Emily has managed to achieve the success that she has in academia. How could her doctoral dissertation—which TAAF researchers read very closely, as they did all of Emily's work—possibly have been approved? How could a university, particularly a respected R1 university, have possibly offered Emily a position, especially the highly competitive tenure-track position in anthropology that Washington State University offered her? And, perhaps most confounding of all, how could any of Emily's publications have possibly gotten through peer review? How could any scholar have possibly attested that the manuscripts Emily submitted for review actually merit publication as scholarship?

Following the distribution of advance copies of this report prior to its release, a scholar in Native American and Indigenous studies who received such an advance copy provided TAAF researchers with an important clue that may eventually help answer such questions. This scholar pointed to evidence of the lasting and ongoing harm resulting from pretendians completely dominating the space of Tribally connected scholars and advisors with commitment to genuine American Indian Tribal Nations, sovereignty, and history. In the case of Emily, who studied at Indiana University, it is possible to see how deeply embedded pretendian scholars become as they move through ranks of academia, building a network of students and colleagues that often elevate and promote themselves, their students, and their own questionable practices. In doing so, pretendian scholars often circumvent and disrupt the often well-intentioned guardrails put in place to bring Indigenous scholars and community to the table in vital conversations that include NAGPRA and other Indigenous community and cultural protections.

What we see in Emily's case, then, is something that might be understood as a pretendian mentoring pipeline. In that pretendian pipeline, students with unsubstantiated and sometimes intergenerational false claims to Indian identity work with established pretendian scholars, who are themselves mentored by scholars who likewise use their fictional claims to Indigenous ancestry as an avenue to a lucrative career that can gatekeep or advance handpicked future scholars who will not challenge them and their work. It is a dangerously enduring lineage of scholars and scholarship that has profound implications for American Indian students and scholars who try to intervene or disrupt how non-Indian scholarship is developed, disseminated, and weaponized at institutions already hostile to Indian knowledge and research. Almost as a rule, these scholars and their non-Indian enablers never install or support real American Indian people in positions of power, resources, or intellectual authority. Together the participants in these pipelines (perhaps in conjunction with the members of other pretendian pipelines) form pools of peer reviewers who are willing to attest to the scholarly merit of work authored by pretendians and in other ways help fuel the careers of pretendians.

While this issue requires more attention that it can be given in this report, it seems important to consider how Indiana University's "Learning NAGPRA project"²¹⁹ demonstrates how the pretendian pipeline functions in the case of Emily, who was a graduate student participant of the project. Among the many members of this project are those who have completely unsubstantiated and, in some cases, wholly debunked claims to being American Indian including Emily herself, Marge Bruchac, Brian Joseph Gilley,²²⁰ Desireé Martinez, and Gregorio Gonzales, to name but a few.

Notably, the initial PIs of the "Learning NAGPRA Project" attempt to take accountability for the fact that they self-identify as "mostly white women," and in doing so, provide on the project's website a valuable window into how this pretendian pipeline developed. First, they note that, beginning in the mid-2010s, the project received NSF grant #1449465. At the time, a standard type 1 institutional award made under this specific NSF program ranged from \$400,000 to \$600,000. (NSF renewed this grant as NSF grant #1540447, likely for the same large sum as was initially awarded.) The project website then includes the following statement:

The project team at Indiana University comprise mostly white female academics with experience in Euro-American anthropology, teaching archaeological ethics, studying teaching and learning, museum work, and repatriation. As such, we admittedly lack the perspective that Indigenous people have on the magnitude of historical trauma and oppression, and the harm of separating people from their land and their belongings. Brian Gilley (Alabama Creek [sic], Cherokee [sic]) joined as co-PI and his perspectives on restorative justice and Indigenous pedagogy spurred and focused the directions that the project took. We all however, recognized the lack of appropriate pedagogy to teach about NAGPRA and repatriation to primarily non-Indigenous students, who we realized would become the future teachers about NAGPRA to university students. The IU team is responsible for organizing and performing research through survey and interview, organizing research presentations, convening and facilitating meetings and the three Collegiums, collectively working on learning, and building this website.

For his part, in his first book, *Becoming Two-Spirit*, Brian Joseph Gilley directly acknowledges Circe Sturm as playing a key role in his success as an anthropologist when he explains that he is "grateful to Circe Sturm for energizing my interest in anthropology when I was not sure about continuing." TAAF investigators conclusively demonstrated that Circe Sturm is a pretendian with a long history of making false claims to Mississippi Choctaw and Cherokee ancestry. One has to wonder what it means that Sturm mentored Gilley, who was then asked to join the "Learning NAGPRA Project" as some kind of knowledgeable interlocutor to offer "Indigenous pedagogy" given that Sturm has falsely presented herself as an American Indian scholar and Gilley has shifting claims that deserve more attention even as they both produced research that has undermined American Indian Tribes and sovereignty. With a direct line from Sturm to Gilley to Emily, TAAF researchers have to ask, in what ways do pretendians circumvent, infiltrate, corrupt, and/or undermine the very structures in place to ensure ethical research oversight by replicating and reinforcing not only their own false claims but those of their students? And what does it mean that they insinuate themselves into positions of domination and control over vital issues such as the protection of American Indian graves, ancestors, rock paintings, and ancestral belongings?

²¹⁹ Learning NAGPRA, <https://learningnagpra.indiana.edu/about-us/personnel.html>

²²⁰ Brian Gilley was apparently brought on board as co-PI precisely because he identified as Alabama Creek and Cherokee. Please note that, over the course of his career, Gilley has also identified as Chickasaw/Cherokee, Choctaw, and Poarch Creek. To our knowledge, Gilley has never substantiated any of these claims to being Indian.

Part IV: Concluding Comments

Theodore C. Van Alst, Jr. and Emily C. Van Alst are not American Indians. They are white people who have exploited and used negative stereotypes about Indians to enrich themselves at the expense of American Indians. No legitimate American Indian Tribe recognizes them as members, citizens, descendants, or relatives, and no Tribe has recognized Theodore's and Emily's ancestors as Indians or relatives in any historical period.

The Van Alsts have deceived friends, students, colleagues, and communities for decades and manipulated their relationships to legitimate American Indian people for access and personal power and authority. They have stolen from actual American Indian people through deceitful and continually changing stories about Lakota, Eastern Cherokee, Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Ho-Chunk ancestry, fictional identities constructed over decades and reinforced through their derogatory and dangerous creative writing and scholarship. They are white gatekeepers playing Indian in academia and mainstream publishing. They hoard resources and opportunities and use their power to deny these same things to legitimate Indians while rewarding their friends, including multiple scholars who themselves falsely claim to be American Indians. Their work actively harms American Indians and other Indigenous people individually, and it directly and indirectly attacks the sovereignty of American Indian Tribal Nations.

Theodore's and Emily's numerous bad acts cannot stand. TAAF calls for both of the Van Alsts to resign from their faculty positions in Native American and Indigenous studies. They cannot be permitted, among other things, to continue to create a toxic environment for actual American Indian community members, students, faculty, and staff on campus or in arts spaces or academic disciplines. Further, TAAF calls for both Theodore and Emily to repay with interest the monies they have accrued through their false claims, and to return all grants and awards they have received as a result of falsely self-identifying as American Indian. TAAF further calls for Theodore and Emily to unreservedly disavow their false claims, apologize to American Indians, and find ways to redress the considerable harm they have done to their students and colleagues, to American Indians generally, and especially to the specific Tribes they exploited for profit.

The sheer length of time that Theodore and Emily have engaged in their delusional masquerade while neither of them has ever faced any public consequences for their behavior is of grave concern to TAAF researchers, as it is to an untold number of other American Indian people. TAAF researchers received reports and impact statements from many who had been victimized by the Van Alsts. Some had tried to bring complaints to university, publishing, and administrative authorities but were ignored, gaslit, undermined, or unsupported.

The shocking audacity of the fraud perpetrated by Theodore and Emily Van Alst and its decades-long duration make clear that universities, academic associations, and academic and mainstream publishers have grossly failed American Indian students, writers, scholars, university staff, and other community members by not having policies with teeth in place to deny pretendians access to resources, positions, or power.

Although the Van Alsts should face swift and clear consequences for their deception, TAAF holds all those who have made Theodore's and Emily's actions possible fully accountable for the harms this father-daughter duo has inflicted on American Indian Tribes and their citizens by not addressing the Van Alsts' actions sooner.

Accordingly, TAAF calls on all academic and arts programs, organizations, publishers, and institutions with which the Van Alsts have been associated and that have enabled their harms to do the following:

- Publicly disavow the Van Alsts and their past, present, and future professional association with them;
- Review past and existing practices and develop clear, enforceable policies for verifying American Indian ancestry claims to prevent this from happening again;
- Audit Theodore's and Emily's use of funds and other resources, confirming that they have been used for the purposes intended, and, if not, undertake a process of recovering those funds for their proper use;
- Create securely funded programs to support *actual* American Indian students, scholars, and writers in the fields of American Indian literature and archaeology;
- Rescind any awards and recognitions given to the Van Alsts during their fraud-based careers; and
- Publicly acknowledge their own part in the Van Alsts' many harms and identify clear pathways for genuine restitution to American Indian people.

Finally, TAAF is appalled that the fields of anthropology, archaeology, Native American and Indigenous studies, and American Indian literature have not called out Theodore and Emily Van Alst long ago for their false claims to being American Indian, derogatory representations of American Indians, misrepresentations of American Indian experience, violence against the sovereignty of legitimate American Indian Tribes, damaging sub-standard scholarship...and the list goes on and on. Moving forward, these disciplines must do better, as must university administrations, academic and trade presses, and other organizations and entities that have contributed to the success that Theodore and Emily Van Alst have enjoyed for two decades.

Appendix

Genealogical Research Principles and Methodology

The TAAF research team follows recognized genealogical standards, particularly the principles embodied in the Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS). The objective is not to prove or disprove a predetermined conclusion, but to establish what the available evidence can reliably demonstrate about an individual's ancestry, family relationships, and historical identity.

When a research request is received, our team must first establish a basic biographical profile of the individual being researched. This includes approximate age or date of birth, place of birth, places of residence, education, occupation, marriages, and other publicly documented biographical information. The purpose of this initial stage is to distinguish the subject from other individuals with similar names and to establish a reliable starting point for genealogical research. We also look for information that may identify parents, siblings, spouses, children, and other relatives who can provide additional avenues for documentary research. Where appropriate and legally permissible, we consult reputable background-information sources to corroborate the initial identifying information and to establish additional research leads. Information obtained during this stage is treated as a starting point or investigative lead rather than as genealogical proof in itself.

Once the subject has been adequately identified, we begin constructing a documented family tree, working backward generation by generation. We do not assume that an online family tree, published genealogy, obituary, or other secondary source is correct simply because it appears authoritative. Such material may provide valuable clues, but significant relationships are independently tested against the underlying records whenever possible. For each generation, we seek to establish the identity of parents and other relevant family relationships before proceeding farther backward. This creates a documented chain of relationships rather than simply attaching increasingly distant ancestors to a pedigree. As the tree develops, we investigate collateral relatives and the broader family network. This can include siblings, spouses, children, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins (lateral ancestry), and other associated individuals. This is particularly important when records contain ambiguous names, inconsistent ages, common surnames, migration patterns, or incomplete documentation. Family members can provide independent records and contextual evidence that help distinguish one individual from another. We also use the FAN principle—examining a person's Friends, Associates, and Neighbors—when appropriate. Researching the surrounding community can reveal relationships and geographic patterns that are not immediately apparent from the direct family line.

Our team then examines the records most capable of establishing the relevant facts. Depending upon the period, location, and research question, these may include birth and death records, marriage records, census reports, church records, land and property records, probate and estate files, military records, immigration and naturalization records, school records, newspapers, court records, cemetery records, institutional records, and other archival material. We evaluate not merely what a record says, but who created it, when it was created, why it was created, what information the informant was in a position to know, and whether the record is original or derivative. This distinction is critical. A later record repeating an earlier claim does not necessarily constitute independent confirmation. Multiple online trees, for example, may appear to corroborate one another while ultimately deriving from the same undocumented source.

When investigating a claimed American Indian ancestor, the team specifically attempts to establish an unbroken documentary chain connecting the living subject to the alleged ancestor. The research therefore proceeds generation by generation: subject → parent → grandparent → great-grandparent → earlier

generation → claimed American Indian ancestor. Each relationship is independently evaluated. If the documentary evidence establishes a person's parents but the next generation cannot be reliably established, we stop the ancestral chain at that point rather than filling the gap with an assumption. This is one of the most important safeguards against accidentally transforming a possibility into a genealogical fact.

Once a documented family tree has been developed, our team investigates the specific claim of American Indian ancestry. We look for evidence identifying the alleged ancestor as an individual belonging to, associated with, or documented within a particular Indigenous community or Tribal Nation. Depending upon the historical period and circumstances, potentially relevant evidence may include federal and tribal records, agency records, Indian census or enrollment records, allotment records, treaty-related records, correspondence, reservation records, church records, vital records, court records, land records, historical newspapers, and other archival sources. We also examine the historical context surrounding the alleged identity in addition to geographical locations of Tribe and their movements over time. In addition, terminology in historical records can be inconsistent, derogatory, abbreviated, or imposed by non-Indigenous record keepers. Consequently, we do not treat the presence or absence of a particular racial designation on a single document as conclusive without examining the broader body of evidence. Conversely, an individual's family story, surname, physical appearance, location, or an unsupported assertion of tribal ancestry is not treated as documentary proof. At this stage, we move from collecting records to analyzing them. We compare evidence from different sources and ask whether the records are genuinely independent of one another. We consider chronological consistency, geographic proximity, ages, occupations, family relationships, naming patterns, migration, and other identifying characteristics. Our team actively searches for evidence that could contradict the working hypothesis. This is important because genealogical research should not consist of collecting only records that support a desired conclusion. A sound conclusion must survive attempts to disprove it.

Conflicting information is documented rather than ignored. For example, different records may provide different birthplaces, ages, names, racial classifications, parental identities, or relationships. We evaluate the reliability of each piece of information based upon the circumstances under which it was created and the likelihood that the informant possessed accurate knowledge. The question is not simply, "Which record agrees with my theory?" Rather, it is, "Which evidence is most reliable, and why?" Where conflicting evidence cannot be resolved, we document the conflict and state the limitation rather than presenting an uncertain conclusion as established fact. This approach is consistent with the GPS requirement to identify and resolve significant conflicts in evidence. We maintain a distinction between a claim, a clue, evidence, and a genealogical conclusion. A family story may be an important research lead. We never immediately discredit a subject's family story. Instead, we take it into consideration until documentation either proves or disproves a story. Also, an online family tree may provide a useful hypothesis. A record may provide evidence. But none of these, standing alone, necessarily establishes a genealogical relationship. Our researchers' conclusion must arise from the cumulative weight of the evidence. This distinction is particularly important in research involving claimed Indigenous ancestry because family traditions can persist for generations while becoming detached from their original historical context. The existence of a family tradition does not make it meaningless, but it does mean that the tradition should be treated as a hypothesis to investigate rather than as proof. We also distinguish between documenting an individual's ancestry and determining whether that person is a citizen or member of a particular Tribal Nation.

Tribal Nations are sovereign governments, and their citizenship or enrollment requirements are determined by the individual Nation. Genealogical research can establish whether a claimed ancestral relationship is supported by historical documentation, but a genealogist should not substitute a genealogical conclusion for a Tribal Nation's own determination of citizenship or belonging. Accordingly,

our research focuses on what the historical and genealogical record can demonstrate while respecting the authority of Indigenous communities over their own citizenship and identity.

The final stage is a written analysis of the evidence. We summarize the documented lineage, identify the relevant evidence, explain significant relationships and conflicts, distinguish documented facts from unresolved questions, and state what conclusion the evidence supports. If the evidence establishes the claimed ancestral relationship, we explain why. If the evidence does not establish the relationship, we explain where the documentary chain fails and what evidence would be necessary to establish it. If the available evidence remains inconclusive, our team reports it as inconclusive rather than converting uncertainty into either a positive or negative assertion. In this respect, the research is ultimately about evidence rather than advocacy. Our responsibility as genealogy researchers is to follow the records wherever they lead, apply the same evidentiary standards regardless of the outcome, and communicate both the strengths and limitations of the research. The methodology therefore follows the five fundamental elements of the Genealogical Proof Standard: reasonably exhaustive research, analysis and correlation of evidence, and resolution of conflicting evidence.

[illegible]

Generation 1

1: Emily Cora Van Alst was born on 4 Nov 1993 in Presque Isle, Maine, USA.

Generation 2

2: Theodore Charles "Ted" Van Alst was born on 9 Jul 1965.

3: Amie Melissa Gehring was born on 17 Sep 1967 in Portsmouth, Virginia, USA.

Generation 3

4: Theodore Charles "Ted" Van Alst Sr was born on 29 Jun 1942 in Bay City, Bay, Michigan, USA and died on 4 Jul 2005 in Bay City, Bay, Michigan, USA.

5: Joann Harrison was born on 18 Aug 1945 in Florence, Lauderdale, Alabama, USA.

6: James Steven "Jim" Gehring was born on 22 Oct 1946 in New York, USA.

7: Diana M. Parks was born on 7 Aug 1946 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 1 Jan 2013.

Generation 4

8: Peter Enos van Alst was born on 23 May 1910 in Hampton, Bay, Michigan, USA and died on 29 May 1991 in Hampton, Bay, Michigan, USA.

9: Patricia Maxine Meldrum was born on 3 Mar 1916 in Bay County, Michigan, USA and died on 8 Jan 1991 in Bay City, Bay, Michigan, USA.

10: William Boyd Harrison was born on 26 Jan 1907 in Parker County, Texas, USA and died on 13 Sep 2001 in Florence, Lauderdale, Alabama, USA.

11: Ethel M. Davis was born on 7 Jul 1907 in Wayne, Tennessee, USA and died in 1996 in Florence, Lauderdale, Alabama, USA.

12: Clifford John Gehring was born on 6 May 1912 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA and died on 14 Dec 1963 in Erie, New York, USA.

13: Arolene Hall Albee was born on 3 Apr 1911 in Le Roy, Genesee, New York, USA and died in Oct 1983 in Erie County, New York, USA.

14: Charles Edward Parks was born on 23 Feb 1916 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 10 Dec 2002 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.

15: Iris Elaine Nelson was born on 18 Dec 1926 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 4 Apr 2005 in Mars Hill, Aroostook, Maine, USA.

Generation 5

16: Johannes Josephus "John" van den Aalst was born on 6 Mar 1856 in Wamel, Gelderland, Netherlands and died on 4 Nov 1938 in Bay City, Bay, Michigan, USA.

17: Mary Josephine Cote was born on 2 Aug 1875 in Hampton, Bay, Michigan, USA and died on 10 May 1944 in Bay City, Bay, Michigan, USA.

18: David William Meldrum was born on 6 Aug 1885 in Michigan, USA and died in 1962 in Bay City, Bay, Michigan, USA.

19: Laura Caroline Grant was born in 1888 in Bay City, Bay, Michigan, USA and died in 1962 in Ecorse, Wayne, Michigan, USA.

20: Harvey Wilson Harrison was born on 28 Jul 1882 in Hardin County, Tennessee, USA and died on 16 Jun 1960 in Hardin County, Tennessee, USA.

21: Ellen Luthishie Lee Shelby was born on 6 Mar 1883 in Hardin, Tennessee, USA and died on 15 Dec 1978 in Hardin County, Tennessee, USA.

22: Robert Luther Davis was born on 19 Mar 1880 in Wayne County, Tennessee, USA and died on 17 Apr 1940 in Florence, Lauderdale, Alabama, USA.

23: Margaret Ann "Missie" Daniel was born on 7 Dec 1885 in Coosa, Alabama, USA and died on 7 Jul 1913 in Wayne, Tennessee, USA.

24: John Batholomew Christian Gehring was born on 15 Mar 1869 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA and died on 23 Apr 1939 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA.

25: Caroline Christine Oehm was born on 2 May 1877 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA and died on 4 May 1964 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA.

- 26: Frank Elias Albee was born on 25 Jan 1883 in Le Roy, Genesee, New York, USA and died on 5 Jun 1944 in Welland, Niagara, Ontario, Canada.
- 27: Eva Beatrice Hall was born on 2 Feb 1886 in Tonawanda, Erie, New York, USA and died on 29 Oct 1956 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA.
- 28: Warren E. Parks was born on 24 Oct 1886 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 18 Sep 1956 in Houlton, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- 29: Donnie Burns was born on 9 Mar 1887 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 15 Oct 1961 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- 30: Charles L. Nelson was born on 9 Jul 1886 in Monticello, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died in Apr 1950 in Houlton, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- 31: Cora L. Miller was born on 29 Sep 1889 in Blaine, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 25 Mar 1983 in Mars Hill, Aroostook, Maine, USA.

Generation 6

- 32: Peter van den Aalst was born on 11 May 1823 in Gelderland, Netherlands and died on 31 Okt 1913 in Leeuwen, Gelderland, Nederland.
- 33: Kaatje Catharina Herckenrath was born on 2 Jan 1824 in Appeltern, Gelderland, Netherlands and died on 11 Jan 1900 in Gelderland, Netherlands.
- 34: Ignace Cote was born on 15 May 1835 in Quebec, Canada and died in 1914 on Hampton Bay, Michigan, USA.
- 35: Mary Josephine Fortin was born on 22 Feb 1850 in St. Ignace, Mackinac, Michigan, USA and died on 21 Feb 1940 in Bay City, Bay, Michigan, USA.
- 36: Robert William Meldrum was born on 21 Mar 1835 in Caro, Tuscola, Michigan, USA and died on 10 Jan 1906 in Fairgrove, Tuscola, Michigan, USA.
- 37: Mary Freton was born in 1845 in Michigan, USA and died on 13 Aug 1920 in Essexville, Bay, Michigan, USA.
- 38: Patrick Grant was born in Abt. 1855 in Ireland and died on 24 Oct 1907 in Wayne, Michigan, USA.
- 39: Caroline Barber was born in 1859 in Varney, Ontario, Canada and died on 30 Apr 1932 in Detroit, Wayne, Michigan, USA.
- 40: John Bell Harrison was born on 4 Nov 1860 in Hardin, Tennessee, USA and died on 8 Feb 1941 in Hardin County, Tennessee, USA.
- 41: Ada Viannah "Eliza" Weatherford was born on 28 Sep 1860 in Hardin County, Tennessee, USA and died on 12 Jan 1936 in Hardin County, Tennessee, USA.
- 42: James Lewis Shelby was born on 16 Sep 1843 in Hardin, Tennessee, USA and died on 4 Feb 1919 in Hardin, Tennessee, USA.
- 43: Martha Minerva Kilburn was born on 9 Oct 1855 in Lawrence County, Tennessee, USA and died on 20 Mar 1921 in Savannah, Hardin, Tennessee, USA.
- 44: William Henry Davis was born on 12 May 1841 in Laurens County, South Carolina, USA and died on 7 Jul 1906 in Lutts, Wayne, Tennessee, USA.
- 45: Lucinda Adeline Martin was born on 23 Dec 1850 in Wayne County, Tennessee, USA and died on 6 May 1930 in Florence, Lauderdale, Alabama, USA.
- 46: Eason Blue Daniel was born on 14 Feb 1863 in Coosa County, Alabama, USA and died on 27 Aug 1944 in Sylacauga, Talladega, Alabama, USA.
- 47: Mary Ellen Morris was born on 10 Oct 1866 in Coosa County, Alabama, USA and died on 22 Dec 1941 in Coosa County, Alabama, USA.
- 48: John Georg Elias Gehring was born on 16 Oct 1835 in Bayern, Germany and died in Aft. 1892 in New York, USA.
- 49: Louise Heidelberg was born in Abt. 1844 in New York, USA and died on 9 Aug 1888 in Buffalo, New York, USA.
- 50: Christof W. "Christopher" Ohme was born in Abt. 1850 in Mecklenburg, Germany and died on 16 Apr 1927 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA.

- 51: Caroline "Carrie" Vollmer was born in Abt. 1850 in Germany and died in Bef. 1910 in Erie, New York, USA.
 - 52: Elias O. Albee was born on 7 Jun 1841 in Norfolk, St Lawrence, New York, USA and died on 5 Jul 1912 in Le Roy, Genesee, New York, USA.
 - 53: Anna Elizabeth Pinder was born in Aug 1844 in England and died on 29 May 1913 in Le Roy, Genesee, New York, USA.
 - 54: George H. Hall was born in Sep 1860 in Long Island, New York, USA and died in Aft. 1940 in Wheatfield, Niagara, New York, USA.
 - 55: Sarah L. Hall was born in Mar 1859 in Monroe, Orange, New York, USA and died in Aft. 1930 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA.
 - 56: Roderick Richard Parks was born in Apr 1856 in Houlton, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 29 Sept 1928 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
 - 57: Victoria E. Prior was born in Nov 1857 in Canada and died in Aft. 1920 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
 - 58: Charles E. Burns was born in Aug 1854 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died in 1932 in Aroostook, Maine, USA.
 - 59: Harriett "Hattie" Bradbury was born in Nov 1866 in Maine, USA and died in 1933 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
 - 60: Marshall Nelson was born in Aug 1843 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 2 Jan 1903 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
 - 1/261: Elizabeth "Betsy" Alterton was born in Sep 1848 in Carleton, New Brunswick, Canada and died in 1943 in Aroostook County, Maine, USA.
 - 62: William Miller was born in 1833 in Canterbury, York, New Brunswick, Canada and died on 11 Sep 1904 in Aroostook County, Maine, USA.
 - 63: Lorinda Gilman was born in 1850 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 1 Nov 1892 in Blaine, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- Generation 7**
- 64: Hendrik van den Aalst was born in Abt. 1785 in Leewen, Netherlands and died on 19 Sept 1861 in Leeuwen, Netherlands.
 - 65: Megchelina Nagelmaeckers was born in Abt. 1784 in Megen, Netherlands and died on 20 Aug 1872 in Limburg, Netherlands.
 - 66: Jan Joseph Kaspar Herckenraath was born on 25 Nov 1775 in Venlo, Limburg, Netherlands and died on 14 Jul 1828 in Appeltern, Netherlands.
 - 67: Petronella van Elk was born on 5 Feb 1788 in Leeuwen, Gelderland, Netherlands and died on 23 Jan 1841 in Appeltern, Gelderland, Netherlands.
 - 68: Toussaint Côté was born on 1 Nov 1787 in Beloeil, La Vallée-du-Richelieu, Quebec, Canada and died on 24 Feb 1883 in St-Camille Wolfe, Québec, Canada.
 - 69: Catherine Gauthier was born on 5 Mar 1795 in St Augustin de Desmaures, Quebec, Canada and died on 5 Jul 1858 in St-Hilaire, La Vallée-du-Richelieu, Quebec, Canada.
 - 70: John Fortin Fortain was born in Abt. 1828 in Canada.
 - 71: Mary "Mennie" La Guinard was born in Abt. 1830 in Michigan, USA.
 - 72: Robert William Meldrum was born on 19 Oct 1807 in Detroit, Wayne, Michigan, USA and died on 8 Apr 1891 in Harrison, Macomb, Michigan, USA.
 - 73: Mary Ann Moras was born on 29 Nov 1808 in Clinton, Macomb, Michigan, USA and died in Nov 1866 in Harrison, Macomb, Michigan, USA.
 - 74: John Baptiste Freton was born on 5 Feb 1820 in Detroit, Wayne, Michigan, USA and died on 6 Nov 1895 in Bay County, Michigan, USA.
 - 75: Mary Poitevin was born in 1824 in Canada and died on 14 Oct 1898 in Bay County, Michigan, USA.
 - 76: Patrick Joseph Grant was born in Abt. 1815 in Ireland and died on 25 Aug 1890 in Brookhaven, Lincoln, Mississippi, USA.

- 77: Mary Frances O'Brian was born in Abt. 1825 in New York, USA and died on 15 Nov 1907 in Brookhaven, Lincoln, Mississippi, USA.
- 78: Mathew Barber was born on 15 Dec 1814 in Macclesfield, Cheshire, England and died on 19 Jul 1895 in Grey, Ontario, Canada.
- 79: Elizabeth "Eliza" Barber was born in abt 1827 in Macclesfield, Cheshire, England and died in 1878 in Grey County, Ontario, Canada.
- 80: Archibald Daniel Harrison was born on 9 Sep 1831 in Wayne County, Tennessee, USA and died on 14 Sep 1877 in Hardin, Tennessee, USA.
- 81: Mary Jane McGee was born on 5 Aug 1833 in Lawrence, Tennessee, USA and died on 28 Jan 1892 in Hardin, Tennessee, USA.
- 82: Joel Wilson Weatherford was born in May 1829 in Wayne County, Tennessee, USA and died in 1908 in Lutts, Wayne, Tennessee, USA.
- 83: Sarah Elizabeth Franks was born on 22 Aug 1839 in Hardin, Tennessee, USA and died on 17 Oct 1918 in Savannah, Hardin, Tennessee, USA.
- 84: Elisha "Eli" Shelby was born on 17 Jan 1793 in Charlotte, Mecklenburg, North Carolina, USA and died on 26 Nov 1854 in Lowryville, Hardin, Tennessee, USA.
- 85: Rebecca White Baker was born on 25 Nov 1800 in Georgia, USA and died on 25 Nov 1872 in Lowryville, Hardin, Tennessee, USA.
- 86: Joel Kilburn was born in 1820 in Lawrence County, Tennessee, USA and died in 1866 in Hardin County, Tennessee, USA.
- 87: Emeline Davis was born in 1825 in Lawrence County, Tennessee, USA and died in 1880 in Hardin County, Tennessee, USA.
- 88: Jesse Davis was born in 1800 in Laurens, South Carolina, USA and died in 1880 in Wayne, Tennessee, USA.
- 89: Elizabeth Hill was born in 1800 in Virginia, USA and died in Aft. 1860 in Wayne, Tennessee, USA.
- 90: Benjamin B. Martin was born on 3 Sep 1810 in South Carolina, USA and died on 28 Feb 1868 in Wayne County, Tennessee, USA.
- 91: Hannah McCannon was born in 1807 in North Carolina, USA and died in Aft. 1860 in Wayne, Tennessee, USA.
- 92: James Kibble Terry Daniel was born on 3 Jun 1822 in Jackson County, Alabama, USA and died on 29 Jul 1895 in Marble Valley, Coosa, Alabama, USA.
- 93: Margaret Jane Shaw was born on 7 Jun 1822 in North Carolina, USA and died on 12 Mar 1900 in Marble Valley, Coosa, Alabama, USA.
- 94: Zachariah Simpson Morris was born on 12 Feb 1843 in Coosa, Alabama, USA and died on 28 Jun 1920 in Birmingham, Jefferson, Alabama, USA.
- 95: Epsey Ann Clark was born on 5 Aug 1843 in Randolph, Alabama, US and died on 25 Jul 1882 in Coosa County, Alabama, USA.
- 96: Georg Bartholomaeus Gehring was born in 1802 in Leutershausen, Germany and died in 1872 in Buffalo, New York, USA.
- 97: Anna Christian "Christina" Bergoldin was born in 1806 in Froschmuhle, Germany and died in 1870 in Buffalo, New York, USA.
- 98: Georg Heidelberg was born on 27 Nov 1811 in Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany and died on 27 Mar 1888 in Erie County, New York, USA.
- 99: Magdelena Kiefer was born in 1814 in France and died on 26 Aug 1896 in Erie County, New York, USA.
- 100: Frederick Antoni Ohme was born on 23 May 1833 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany and died on 18 Jul 1892 in Tonawanda, Niagara, New York, USA.
- 101: Sophia Anna Oehm was born in Abt. 1827 in Macklenburg, Germany and died in 1874 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA.
- 102: Casper Vollmer was born on 15 Okt 1815 in Germany and died in 1858 in Buffalo, Erie, New York, USA.

- 103: Anna Barbary "Barbara" Schleifer was born on 26 Jan 1819 in Württemberg, Germany and died in 1874 in Buffalo, New York, USA.
- 104: Isaac Albee was born in 1807 in Vermont, USA and died on 2 Dec 1892 in Cowlesville, Wyoming, New York, USA.
- 105: Sophronia "Sophia" Lincoln was born in 1805 in Bennington County, Vermont, USA and died on 23 Sep 1876 in Bennington, Wyoming, New York, USA.
- 108: George Hall was born in Feb 1840 in England and died in Aft. 1900 in Erie, New York, USA.
- 109: Helen Hall was born in 1844 in Castleton, Roxburghshire, Scotland and died on 10 Dec 1927 in Tonawanda, Niagara, New York, USA.
- 112: Thomas Parks was born on 1 Jun 1814 in Hodgdon, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 17 Apr 1890 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- 113: Mary Mercy Dutton Bradstreet was born on 19 Nov 1810 in Freedom, Waldo, Maine, USA and died on 8 May 1890 in Bridgewater Corner, Aroostook County, Maine, USA.
- 114: James Prior was born in 1822 in Oxfordshire, England and died on 22 May 1898 in Williamstown, Carleton County, New Brunswick, Canada.
- 115: Margaret Emery was born in Abt. 1829 in Ireland and died in 1859 in Carleton, New Brunswick, Canada.
- 116: John Burns was born on 15 Jul 1805 in Ireland and died on 20 Feb 1884 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- 117: Mary Hodge Hogg was born in 1819 in Ireland and died on 2 Apr 1908 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- 118: Lewis Osgood Bradbury was born on 16 Sep 1838 in New Limerick, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 26 Jan 1911 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- 119: Sarah "Sally" Hayes was born on 18 Nov 1836 in New Limerick, Aroostook, Maine, USA and died on 26 Mar 1919 in Bridgewater, Maine, USA.
- 120: Dennis Nelson was born in Abt. 1807 in Maine, USA and died in Aft. 1870 in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- 121: Hannah McMaster was born in Abt. 1809 in Maine, USA.
- 122: Charles Alerton was born in 1821 in Carleton, New Brunswick, Canada and died on 20 Sep 1853 in Aroostook County, Maine, USA.
- 123: Eunice Lunt was born in 1822 in Fredericton, York, New Brunswick, Canada and died on 12 Dec 1866 in Aroostook County, Maine, USA.
- 124: Thomas Miller was born on 21 Aug 1791 in Fife, Scotland and died on 29 Dec 1856 in Woodstock, Carleton, New Brunswick, Canada.
- 125: Mary Vye was born in 1803 in New Brunswick, Canada and died on 18 Jan 1872 in Woodstock, Carleton, New Brunswick, Canada.
- 126: James Gilman was born in abt 1794 in Maine, USA and died in Bridgewater, Aroostook, Maine, USA.
- 127: Mary Weade was born in 1811 in New Brunswick, Canada and died on 11 Jun 1902 in Aroostook County, Maine, USA.