

# Dreams (a poem) Indigenous Futuring in the Theological Classroom (prose)

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## **Abstract**

This poem illustrates the author's struggle with identity formation, performance of identity, and (mis)recognition as a bicultural Cherokee/Dutch Irish educator in the theological academy and identifies dreams as a source of recovery of identity for the author. The prose that follows the poem describes the power of dreams in Cherokee and other Indigenous cosmologies and meaning systems, and identifies three ways in which Indigenous dream and other sources of Indigenous knowledge might be practiced implicitly and explicitly in the theological classroom.

## **Keywords**

Identity, Indigenous knowledge, Dreams, Theological classroom

## **DREAMS**

A new class of students, a new seminary full of colleagues, a new gathering of scholars

How will they read me?

Colonizer and colonized running through my bloodstream  
I need to display how white—and not white—I am at the same time

Isn't that the task?

I am both of those things—BOTH of those things

Tension and relationship  
Pushing and tugging

One piece of who I am trying to snuff out the other

To literally kill her

Whole person trying to stay alive through her dreams  
My whiteness leads to overperformance of my Cherokee-ness  
Not as like,

Look at me, I'm wearing turquoise and braids.  
See my "Phenomenally Indigenous" t-shirt???  
I'm Cherokee.

That feels like playing Indian in an old-timey Vaudeville act  
But like,

in every space I enter I have to  
define again and again  
what it means to be Cherokee

Still Vaudevillian  
Vaudeville depicts some strange stereotype of the American dream

Hmmm  
Do I have to do that?  
What would it look like to NOT  
do that?  
Is that a denial of my whiteness?  
Is that a denial of my ancestry?

The tension  
The tension

How to engage the tension  
The tension will always  
Be there

Dreams provide relief

I see Dad  
Trula  
Kay  
Pet  
Grandmothers all

They give me strength to stand in self-knowledge as a place of wholeness  
Then, waking life  
Back into the physical world

"If we'd known you were Cherokee from the beginning we would have engaged you differently."

What? How???

"I've always had great respect for Native American people."

Thanks?

"My grandmother always said we were Cherokee, but no one in the family wanted to recognize it."

Oh.

"Sometimes you look Native American and sometimes you don't."

Is that a compliment?

"Black Elk Speaks talked about how Indigenous people experienced dreams. They didn't experience them like we do today."

Experienced?  
Past tense?  
Who is "we?"  
Who is "me?"

Is there anything more whole than dreams?

## INDIGENOUS FUTURING IN THE THEOLOGICAL CLASSROOM

My dad had vivid dreams, full of adventure. He once fell out of bed with a thud, my mother tells, shouting, "I hit my head!" He dreamed he was Robin Hood, cavorting through the forest, fighting off foes as he stole from the rich to give to the poor. Dad's adulthood dreams of becoming Robin Hood, Tarzan, and Zorro often harkened to his childhood in the woods of Eastern Oklahoma, where he would pretend to be the hero in every story, saving his younger sister from certain peril.

In addition to being the source of great adventure, dreams were also the place where my Dad rekindled connection to his kin. His mother, Trula, and his grandmother, whom he called "Pet Mama," would come to him in dreams. Trula and Pet are our family's Cherokee matriarchs. They both loved reading, shared a sharp wit, and insisted upon telling the truth about history. They wanted to reclaim Oklahoma as Indian Territory and to facilitate reparations for the atrocities committed by the United States for the historic Trail of Tears. Trula and Pet invested deeply in my Dad's intellectual development and growth as a leader. For them, investing in Dad was a means of creating new trails for Indian people in Oklahoma. After both Trula and Pet had passed, Dad would tell of their presence with him during sleep, where they would comfort and encourage him.

Dad eventually became a leader in higher education in Oklahoma and in 2000 he received the Cherokee National Medal of Honor. He suffered a debilitating stroke at the age of fifty-seven. During the early days of intensive care for Dad's stroke, our family friend, Potawatomi/Muscogee (Creek) artist and healer Minisa Crumbo would bring Ayurvedic medicine into the ICU to treat him. During one of Minisa's visits a nurse exclaimed, "What is she doing in there??? Do I see smoke?" (Indians often snicker at the alarm that emerges when practitioners of Western medicine encounter alternative ways of healing.) Following Minisa's visit, Dad told us that Pet had been present with him. He felt her face close to his as he lay in the ICU bed: "Boy," she'd always called him Boy, "you're going to be okay." Dad cried. In his dream, conjured through ceremony, Pet Mama arrived as a source of comfort and reassurance. Dad's dream gave comfort to all of us as we inhabited the ICU waiting room, day after day, while he lingered in the space between life and death.

Ever since my dad's prolonged debilitation and eventual passing, I have struggled to understand my role in this lineage of everyday Cherokee freedom fighters. I never knew Pet England, and my life with Trula Tosh Jackson Walker only lasted three years. My Dad, Jerald Carter Walker, became debilitated early in my

adult life, so I never had the opportunity to talk with him about what it meant to be the descendant of both white Oklahoma farmers and Cherokee suffragists—about how to pursue freedom when who you are is all mixed up, the lineages of both colonizer and colonized residing in your bloodstream. My adult struggle—as a descendant of these people, as the mother of a Cherokee/Choctaw/Dutch Irish child, and as a theological educator—is how to make sense of the clash of these warring epistemologies within myself. What sources of knowledge are available to help me understand the legacies of my ancestors—the traumas they experienced that live in my body today, and the resources they developed to respond to the threat of being blotted out? How can I draw upon these resources myself to combat the white supremacist antagonism that exists within my being? How can the theological classroom become a space for anti-colonial praxis, given these tensions?

My dreams (both during sleep and in an awakened state) are where my relationships with Dad, Trula, Pet, my maternal grandmother Katherine Samsell Canfield, and all of my other ancestors, find life. Dreams where I encounter my ancestors help me to make sense of a world that demands creative adaptation and protection of kin. Our ancestors, the Cherokees who originated in Tennessee, North Carolina, and northern Georgia, and who walked the Trail of Tears, lived in a time where creative adaptation was essential for survival and preserving the lives and stories of our kin essential to existence. A spirituality that includes dreams, visions, and communing with our ancestors has protected Cherokee people for generations. Dreams are the place where I cull the knowledge of my ancestors, to understand how I fit into this lineage of resistance, creativity, and change.

### Indigenous Dreams, Indigenous Futuring

This piece is about engaging Indigenous dreams as a legitimate source of knowledge in the theological classroom and as a source of creative adaptation for Indigenous faculty and students. Most of the time, Indigenous knowledge is not recognized as a primary source in the theological academy. I dream of centering Indigenous knowledge as a valid source of wisdom—present in dreams, stories, song, dance, and more. Centering Indigenous dreams defies the dominant conception of what counts as valid knowledge in a scholarly community so influenced by coloniality and enlightenment notions of the real. This essay, then, is an anti-colonial dream in that it defies what dominates—it dreams of the creation of new spaces for teaching in which Indigenous knowledge might contribute to how we understand the real.

Drawing from my own Cherokee ancestral well I want to explore a Cherokee cosmology that gives birth to this understanding of dreams as real. I want to understand more deeply how the Cherokee cosmology that animates my relationship with Dad and my grandmothers intersects with my life as a theological educator. And I want to explore the implications of enlivening dreams as a source of knowledge in the theological classroom as it contributes to our practices of teaching and learning. Because, the truth is, though we're tiny in numbers (due to the aforementioned repeated attempts at extermination of our people and our cultures), Indigenous people from tribes that span North and South America are in the theological classroom. I want to actively dream about a future for theological education that centers Indigenous knowledge. I want to move theological education away from the casual attempts to engage Indigenous knowledge in the classroom as a sort of handmaiden to Christian theology when it seems cool, convenient, or like some sort of academic act of benevolence. I want Indigenous knowledge to exist as a central point of reflection about how generations of people have utilized dreams as part of the system of meaning making that has continued to preserve our existence amidst the colonial project that seeks our extermination.

I am referring to dreams in a number of ways here—for, though coloniality and “scholarly” lines of argumentation would have us pick one approach to attending to a concept in academic writing, I am working here with dreams as a multiform expression of Indigenous knowledge and human experience. Dreams are those cognitive and precognitive experiences of meaning making—which emerge in waking life and when we sleep, through ceremony and in daydreams—as an expression of aspiration, of hope, healing, and perseverance,

and as a partner in actualizing flourishing for humans and the natural world. Indeed, I am talking about the experience of dreams that many of us have during sleep (as my dad did), as well as the (day)dreams that emerge when we develop hopes and aspirations for ourselves for today and for future generations. I am also talking about the dreams of flourishing that we create through art, story, dance, and music, which allow us to imagine worlds that may have not yet come to fruition. I am talking about dreams as the visions conjured during ceremony, which invoke ancestral wisdom and sources of healing. I am talking about dreams, also, as an expression of vocation: of that thing which we can't not do, because it is soul work. And I am talking about dreams as Indigenous futuring—as medicine that assists us in creating a future that finds us alive and flourishing. In this sense, dreams are about aspiration and actualization.

This is a dream in the sense that I am envisioning something that is not yet—I am doing the work of Indigenous futuring. Dreams are medicine. Dreams have had the very real effect of helping Indigenous people to survive the colonial project. Because of dreams, we are still here. Because of my father's dreams, because of Trula's dreams and Pet's dreams, a future exists in which my Cherokee/Choctaw son knows who he is, knows where he comes from, and is able to utilize the resources of his ancestors and his community toward his own flourishing and toward the flourishing of his cousins.

Dreams, according to Navajo blogger Jaclyn Roessel, “remind [us] of the power we have yet to tap.” Indigenous futuring is “the restoring and acknowledgement of our sovereignty as Indigenous people to project and dream a future where we will not only exist but a future in which our dream medicine will continue to heal us.” Our sovereignty. Our SOVEREIGNTY. Is it not within my sovereignty as a member of this great tribe of Cherokee people to bring forth Indigenous knowledge in the theological classroom as a source of truth, regardless of who around me might accept that truth as real? To dream is to commune with our ancestors and to vision a future in which Indigenous people and Indigenous knowledge are centered. This is a future where we not only exist, but where our ways of being are centered, alive, and very much real.

### Understanding Indigenous Dreams

For many Indigenous people—including the Cherokee—dreams are not simply precognitive. Dreams are where the imagined and the real intersect. This is the medicinal power of dreams: they provide vision and then facilitate an embodied future. Dreams are where our vision for the future and our future intersect.

Because of the Cherokee people's complicated history as a tribe and in relation to the U.S. colonial project, our story lacks the kind of purity that scholars often desire for objects of academic study. Ethnographers and other scholars have attempted to study the structures of a Cherokee cosmology as it existed prior to Removal, but the push toward assimilation to white and Christian ideals, along with a 19th century split in the tribe, makes for a complicated Cherokee history. There is no original Cherokee cosmology upon which to hearken back, no pure way of being to which to return. Overlay this messy history with the non-Indian ethnographer's intent toward scholarly objectivity—observing Cherokee culture and practices from the impossible space free from colonial influence—and understanding Cherokee cosmology as some sort of pure or precolonial, authentic thing becomes nearly impossible.

Through their scholarly work, writers like Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo/Sioux), Lee Irwin, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) help us to shape a picture of an Indigenous cosmology of dreaming that, I believe, can lead us toward a fruitful future. This is a picture that weaves together a broad understanding of Indigenous dreams, via Gunn Allen and Simpson, with a specific understanding of the ways Cherokees utilize dreams, via Irwin. In describing this Cherokee Indigenous cosmology, I will engage both the general (Indigenous) and the specific (Cherokee), because as Simpson notes, “Although Indigenous peoples share many fundamental beliefs, our cultures are diverse.”

Through study of ethnographic accounts of Cherokee practices during the colonial period when the Cherokees resided along the U.S. Southeastern woodlands, along with study of spiritual guide books belonging to Cherokee shamans, Lee Irwin describes Cherokee cosmology as presenting an antagonism that exists between the human world and the natural world. Because of humanity's consumption of nature, ceremony is enacted in order to resolve the conflict between humanity's situation as part of the natural world and as a consumer of the natural world. Counter to classically white and Christian cosmologies that begin with some sort of "original harmony" or "paradise," Irwin notes that Cherokee cosmology seeks to find balance, relationship, and harmony between the human world and the natural world through healing rites and rituals. This is a "constant negotiation of relationships," between the human, natural, and cosmic realms. The healing rituals practiced by Cherokee shamans engage a cosmic realm governed by a female power, along with other cosmic ancestors. This cosmic power, called Agawela, is often referred to as the "Old Woman," or the "female power of the above." In order to bring the human and natural world into harmony following the human killing of animals or the disruption of nature, in order to sustain the tribe, ceremony is practiced, in order to restore harmony. Dreams are one element of ceremony that is employed by the Cherokee.

Irwin describes Cherokee dreams as "heralding events" that facilitate encounters between the dreamer and the cosmic realm. As a means of Cherokee healing, dreams are imbued with "sacred powers" that assist humanity in the continued struggle to remain alive. "Dreams were the experiential basis of Cherokee healing," Irwin writes. "The dream was a reality, not an image or indication, but a fully potent manifestation of the sacred powers that contested the behavior and motives of human interaction. Irwin further describes the function of dreams as an invitation to actualize a particular future, and dreams function as visitation by our ancestors who inhabit the cosmos. For Cherokees, these cosmic ancestors represent the animal clans upon which we organize our lineage.

Simpson also describes the function of dreams within Anishinaabe tribal culture: "the physical and the dreamed world are one . . . equally real." Within the context of teaching and learning in the Indigenous community, Simpson describes the function of dreams as an educational resource in which kinship, spirituality, and education are fused: "Dreams [are] repeatedly shared, interpreted, and used to make decisions . . . [dreams] determine how I've lived all my life, and how my parents lived." In describing the function of the dreamer, Paula Gunn Allen draws from the Kashia Band Pomo Indians. Also located in the matrilineal system, The Dreamer, as Gunn Allen describes her,

is the center of the psychic/spiritual unity of the people. She is the center, the hub of the wheel. It is by virtue of her gift, her ability, that the people live and are people, connected to one another in ways more than mere language, culture, or proximity can assure.

I name these elements of dreams within Indigenous cosmologies so as to illuminate their significance for me and for other Indigenous people (though other Indigenous people may experience dreams entirely differently than I do). Dreams function as a source for religious meaning making, helping to orient us in relationship to the natural world and to the cosmos. Dreams help us to determine our place, they help us to find wisdom about how to remain alive, and—through communion with our ancestors—they continually illuminate who we are. Dreams also have practical relevance. Dreams provide the vision and wisdom to move the aspirations provided by cosmic entities and our longing for wholeness to fruition, and via the dreamer, provide the literal gift and ability for our people to continue to exist. In both religious and practical ways, dreams facilitate our very being.

### **Indigenous Dreams as a Source of Knowledge for the Theological Classroom**

What would it look like for Indigenous wisdom captured in dreams and for other sources of Indigenous knowledge to become a visible presence in the theological classroom? How might this open up new avenues

for healing, and for life, for our Indigenous and non-Indigenous students? What is presented here are pedagogical dreams. These are dreams of the ways I have begun to imagine and—little by little—seek to embody Indigenous knowledge in the theological classroom.

1. The theological classroom as a space where education, kinship, and spirituality are fused; where Indigenous cosmologies are recognized and given explicit space.

I want to invite Indigenous students to name a meaningful cosmos, instead of sitting quietly in a classroom which operates under the implicit assumption—perhaps backed by a theological school's mission statement—that a triune God is the center of all that is. I want to invite both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to wrestle with the intersections of Christian theologies and Indigenous meaning systems as part of the implicit mission of a Christian seminary education.

I want to invite my students to name the great number of meaning systems and structures that reflect kinship, the notion that we are all relatives—that we are kin to one another and to the natural and cosmic realms, and that our meaning-making systems can either contribute to that connection and to life or can drain significantly from our connection to that and other sources of life. I want to provide recognition for all of my students that what we might consider pre-cognitive is indeed very real, contributing to our survival and flourishing.

Simpson writes that precolonial learning for Indigenous people was a practice that spanned generations, where children, elders, ancestors, and the natural world served as both teachers and learners, facilitated through practices of meaning making such as storytelling, dreaming, and ceremony. To this day, Indigenous students bring into our sanitized classrooms an entire cosmic realm that is present with them. They bring ancestors whose stories are captured through oral tradition and passed along from generation to generation. So often, the presence of these ancestors, their practices, and the stories they have told are sources of knowledge that remain invisible, unnamed, or dismissed in our classrooms.

I want my theological classroom to give recognition to and even invoke this constellation of life, which serves as the meaning structure that facilitates Indigenous students' learning as well as their overall flourishing. When I invite students to introduce themselves on the first day of class, I want to provide space for them to name the ancestors and communities who contribute to their identities, their practices, and their very being in the world. I want those cosmologies, ancestors, communities, and children brought to life through my students' expressions of identity and truth. I want them to identify, narrate stories about, and embody the practices of meaning making, of traditioning, and of healing that have helped to preserve their existence.

I want my classroom to give recognition to the fact that family is everything for Indigenous people, and therefore having children in and around the learning space is an extension of Indigenous kinship. In virtual space, this means not placing "no children" restrictions upon students who might be caring for children at the same time that they are attending class. In the physical classroom, I want to provide hospitality for the possibility that nuclear-family and extended-family children may need to come along with students to class every now and then. I want to provide space for children to feel comfortable in the classroom. I remember one of my doctoral professors holding the newborn daughter of one of my student colleagues while she taught, allowing the student to both tend to his baby and to his work. For me, this modeled the kind of hospitality that invites whole people—messy, crying, curious, playful people who require care—into the teaching and learning space. I am certainly not calling for all theological professors to provide direct care for the students in their classes, but I do want my Indigenous students to know that their bodies and souls, and all of their loved ones (whether physically present or not), are welcome in the learning space.

2. Educational practices provide recognition of and usher in engagement with multiple sources of knowledge, present in kin, ancestors, dreams, ceremony, nature, song, dance, and art.



Through pedagogical practices of recognition that invite students to name meaningful cosmologies and communities, I want to make space for and facilitate dreams of vocational flourishing for Indigenous students and for all others who occupy the natural world. I want to demonstrate engagement with spiritual and pedagogical practices that invite students to encounter cosmic and ancestral wisdom. I want students to talk about dreams—both those that we encounter during sleep and those that arise through our relationships and aspirations—and facilitate class activities that embody those dreams via storytelling, visual art, cooking, dance, poetry, gardening, weaving, and musical jam sessions.

I want to create kitchen-table spaces where out of conversation, story, and dreams emerge generative themes that become sources of data for research. I want these spaces to invite students to become both teacher and learner, mentor and apprentice, and to consider those everyday teachers—both human and beyond—that provide wisdom. Indeed, these are not only spaces where students are invited to dream, share, and eat, but also spaces where we can “plan and organize toward social and environmental justice.”

In short, I want to create space in the theological academy for students to name, develop, and enact their dreams. I believe this naming, developing, and beginning to live into our dreams supports a vision for a future of ministry that is about repair and restoration, and generates innovation and change that is rooted to our histories, our communities, and our ancestors.

3. Student research can draw from multiple sources of knowledge: writing assignments are supportive of circular, non-linear thinking, and primary resources derived from oral, ancestral, and spiritual traditions.

Lorisia MacLeod, a librarian at the Alberta Library in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada has developed citation templates for Indigenous oral teachings that allow the writer to record information that is not accounted for in citations for personal communications, which have often been used to cite oral teachings. Available for both APA (American Psychological Association) and MLA (Modern Language Association) style citations, MacLeod's work breaks ground for validating in academic discourse the ways that Indigenous meaning is generated and inherited orally from generation to generation. These developments prompt me to consider how we teach our Indigenous students to write. So often, we deduct credit from our students' work if the writing does not reflect a Western, linear, logical structure, starting with a thesis statement, followed by several well-developed points to support that thesis statement, ending with a conclusion. My Indigenous students often write in more of a circular, story-based structure, rather than a linear line of argumentation, and their summative work for many classes sits at the intersection of autoethnography and theological construction. I want to validate the meaning structures of my Indigenous students, and to continue to provide them scholarly tools that validate oral knowledge production and story-based knowing as valid theological scholarship.

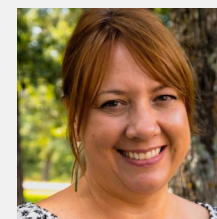
### A Visit from Dad

I recently had a dream in which my dad was present. In this dream, we were at our family cabin in Delaware County, Oklahoma. Dad had died, and as is customary in many Indigenous communities, his body was placed in a casket and kept in our home for a number of days prior to burial. My mother, my sister, my aunt and I stayed close to Dad's body. We ate, we chatted, we listened to Bob Wills and Gene Autry (Dad's favorite country singers) and talked about Dad. The communion with Dad's body was a chance to allow the reality of his death to settle in, to become part of our new reality.

At one point during this dream, I opened the lid of Dad's casket to view his body. Next to Dad snuggled a little girl with dirty-blond hair. She was comforted in the arms of her father. Both Dad and the girl opened their eyes and looked up at me. Then, they snuggled close to one another and closed their eyes.

I believe this dream was real. It was a visit from my father. Since my early adulthood, when Dad became debilitated, until I reached midlife, when I began to struggle to understand who I am as this contradictory, Cherokee and white mixed-race person, I have longed for Dad's wisdom and care. I have needed to hear Dad's voice, perhaps the only voice that might understand the contradictions I wrestle with. I've needed to know that someone else understands the particular tension that exists in being me. In that final gaze into the casket, seeing myself snuggled tightly next to my dad, I heard him say, “You know who you are, Ahnawake. Be that person.”

In essence, I have longed for the comfort and strength that my father displayed during his most able years to buttress me as I've undertaken my own journey of meaning and purpose. Indeed, Dad was the child of a white farmer, people who came to Oklahoma to claim land originally designated as Indian Territory. But he was also the son of Trula Jackson, the grandson of Pet England and Toshie Jackson, descendants of generations of Cherokees who have utilized dreams for self-understanding, for the restoration of harmony, for healing and strength amidst terrible hardship. This visit from Dad gives me strength, and propels me ever onward to find strength in the fact that I, too, am a descendant of Trula and Pet. Because of this dream, I move ever toward the possibility of embodying Indigenous knowledge in my home and in the theological classroom.



#### About the Author

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## Notes & Bibliography

<sup>1</sup> John G. Neihardt and Philip J. Deloria, *Black Elk Speaks* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Pet England was married for a short time to Toshie A. Jackson, my grandmother's father, and later married George Brunson. For that reason, I use her maiden surname, England, here.

<sup>3</sup> Leanne Simpson, "Stories, Dreams, and Ceremonies: Anishinaabe Ways of Learning," in *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education*, 11:4 (Summer 2000), 1-6.

<sup>4</sup> I am a citizen of Cherokee Nation, Tahlequah, OK. It is important to name my tribal affiliation, because thousands of individuals and "more than 200 non-recognized organizations" self-identify as Cherokee (Lindsey Bark and Chad Hunter, "Tribe to request that Cherokees referred to by enrollment, affiliation," in *Cherokee Phoenix*, March 1, 2022, 3). Naming my lineage through Cherokee Nation signifies that I am the descendant of those people recognized by the Cherokee Nation as having lineal connection to a Cherokee ancestor listed on the Dawes Rolls: Final Rolls of Citizens and Freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes. For more information on the Dawes Rolls, visit the National Archives or the Oklahoma Historical Society. Cherokee Nation is the largest of three federally recognized sovereign Cherokee tribes in the United States.

Bark, Lindsey, and Chad Hunter. "Tribe to Request that Cherokees Referred to By Enrollment, Affiliation." *Cherokee Phoenix*, March 1, 2022, 3.

<sup>5</sup> In the manuscript for her unpublished work, "AFTERTHOUGHTS for 'Doing the Work Our Souls Must Have,'" Katie G. Cannon writes, "Doing the work our souls must have with a deep kneading of spirituality and social witness urges folk to believe in and live into a richer future, to earn and appreciate our histories, and reminds all of us that we do have the resources to overcome the power of sin when we lean in to the power of our ministries and witness we receive from God. When we do so, justice claims, our search for meaning and a healthy sense of self, and salvation are subsumed under the overarching category of liberation as we integrate the pieces of our lives into a tapestry of lived possibilities." Cannon's understanding of soul work is consistent with a view of vocation that tells the truth about history, draws from spirituality, and seeks liberation for God's people. This urging of "folk to believe in and live into a richer future," speaks to the function of dreams, an essential part of an Indigenous spirituality, as part and parcel to vocational and existential flourishing. Katie G. Cannon, "Afterthoughts for 'Doing the Work Our Souls Must Have,'" 2009, scanned manuscript from the Katie G. Cannon Archives, Presbyterian Historical Society, <https://digital.history.pcusa.org/islandora/object/islandora%3A174979#page/5/mode/1up>.

<sup>6</sup> Jaclyn Roessel, "Dream Medicine and Reflections of the Future," *Grownup Navajo* (blog), April 22, 2018, <https://grownupnavajo.com/2018/04/22/dream-medicine-and-reflections-of-the-future/>.

<sup>7</sup> Roessel, *Grownup Navajo*.

<sup>8</sup> Lee Irwin, "Cherokee Healing: Myth, Dreams, and Medicine," in *American Indian Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1992), 237-257.

<sup>9</sup> As an North American Indigenous scholar, I feel constantly compelled to educate others about the fact that some sort of beautiful, pure, essential Indigeneity that often exists in the minds of non-Indians is not real, because Indigenous history and culture are often exoticized, commercialized, and exploited by mainstream North American culture (including the theological academy). Highlighting this messiness for non-Indian people every time I enter a new space is exhausting. Our stories, our histories, our practices as they exist in the everyday lives of Indigenous people (like me) are real. Part of my project of Indigenous futuring is to invite you to see the real, to grapple with its messiness, and to find in this mess some truth (however partial) for our collective work.

<sup>10</sup> Simpson, "Stories, Dreams, and Ceremonies," 1.

<sup>11</sup> Irwin, "Cherokee Healing," 240.

<sup>12</sup> Irwin, 240.

<sup>13</sup> Irwin, 240.

<sup>14</sup> Irwin, 241.

<sup>15</sup> Irwin, 241.

<sup>16</sup> Irwin, 241.

<sup>17</sup> Irwin, 247.

<sup>18</sup> Irwin, 247.

<sup>19</sup> Irwin, 248.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the Cherokee clanship system, see "The Cherokee Clan System," *Phoenix Archives*, February 10, 2006, [https://www.cherokeephoenix.org/education/the-chokeee-clan-system/article\\_a88fcc42-f3f8-5f33-b575-8cff7d3bffd2.html](https://www.cherokeephoenix.org/education/the-chokeee-clan-system/article_a88fcc42-f3f8-5f33-b575-8cff7d3bffd2.html).

<sup>21</sup> Simpson, "Stories, Dreams, and Ceremonies," 3.

<sup>22</sup> Simpson, 4.

<sup>23</sup> Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 204.

<sup>24</sup> Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, 204-205.

<sup>25</sup> Simpson, "Stories, Dreams, and Ceremonies," 1.

<sup>26</sup> Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, as my family was quarantined at home together, two parents with full-time jobs and a second-grader in the house, I found myself increasingly anxious about how to appear professional in Zoom meetings with my son so in need of my presence and help. I read the article, "Traditional Kinship Practices at Home: Being Child-Centered During the Pandemic," by blogger Andrea Landry. Landry encouraged Indigenous mothers to remember the importance of kinship in traditional Indigenous meaning systems. She reminded me that, for generations, Indigenous women have had children right next to them—even strapped to their bodies as babies—while working. She writes, "The idea of children being seen as a disruption to daily living was non-existent." Reading Landry's work was freeing for me. It became the beginning of my willingness to put down my anxiety of professional appearance, and to realize how fruitful for my son, me, and my work it would be for my son and I to co-exist as we pursued our work together. Andrea Landry, "Traditional Kinship Practices at Home: Being Child-Centered During the Pandemic," *Indigenous Motherhood* (blog), March 16, 2020, <https://indigenoumotherhood.wordpress.com/2020/03/16/traditional-indigenous-kinship-practices-at-home-being-child-centered-during-the-pandemic/>.

<sup>27</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Continuum, 1994), 83.

<sup>28</sup> Jennifer Ward, Cindy Gaudet, and Tricia McGuire-Adams describe the creation of "kitchen-table-style dialogue" where Indigenous women scholars "sat, talked, ate, and visited," as a means for expressing "communal responsibility" and generating data for research. Ward, Jennifer, Cindy Gaudet, and Tricia McGuire-Adams, "The Privilege of Not Walking Away: Indigenous Women's Perspectives of Reconciliation in the Academy," *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 9, no. 2 (2021): 3-24.

<sup>29</sup> Kim Anderson, "On Seasons of an Indigenous Feminism, Kinship, and the Program of Home Management," *Hypatia* 35 (2020): 211.

<sup>30</sup> Katherine Kornei, "Academic Citations Evolve to Include Indigenous Oral Teachings," *Eos: Science News by AGU* 102 (November 9, 2021), <https://eos.org/articles/academic-citations-evolve-to-include-indigenous-oral-teachings>.

<sup>31</sup> This is not what actually happened when my father died. He passed in the nursing facility that had cared for him for many years, and was cremated shortly thereafter. This dream, in one sense, was a retelling of the story of his passing—of how I long to have cared for my father in the midst of his passing.

<sup>32</sup> Ahnawake is the Cherokee name given to me by my grandmother, Trula Tosh Jackson Walker. It means "Bright Eyes."