

Contemporary Indigenous Oral Tradition:

A Bicycle Story for the People

by

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## ABSTRACT

Oral Tradition is a concept that is often discussed in American Indian Studies (AIS). However, much of the writing and scholarship in AIS is constructed using a Western academic framework. With this in mind, I embarked on an approximate nine hundred mile loop that circled much of the ancestral lands of the Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone of Nevada. I passed through sixteen towns, stopping at ten reservations (Walker River Paiute Tribe, Yerington Paiute Tribe, Stuart Indian School, Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, Lovelock Paiute Tribe, Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone, Duck Valley, Yomba Shoshone, Fallon Paiute-Shoshone) and two colleges (University of Nevada, Reno and Great Basin College). At each location I engaged with community members, discussed prevalent themes in American Indian Studies, and in riding my bicycle, I was able to reconnect with the land. To guide my bicycle journey, I used a theoretical framework consisting of four components: history, story, Red Power, and the physical body. Using these concepts, the intent was to re-center the narrative of my experience around the Paiute-Shoshone community of Nevada as opposed to me as an individual actor. Ultimately, this thesis embodies theoretical scholarship in a pragmatic manner in an effort to provide an example of *contemporary* Indigenous Oral Tradition.

This thesis is dedicated to the Paiute and Shoshone people of Nevada.

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## PREFACE

April 26, 2016

Have you ever been mad enough to kill? I have been angry before, but never like I was that early morning on April 26, 2016. My nerves were a wreck. My heart raced and I couldn't relax. I'd been in this state for nearly five hours. I lay in bed and tried meditation strategies. Nothing worked. I thrashed about and gnashed my teeth. I paced the hallway in my grandmother's house. It was nearly two in the morning. I felt like I had felt many times before: Like no one cared. What was the point? I could kill myself, I thought. This was not a new thought. I'd thought about suicide many times since I was a child. *No one cares*. This is what I told myself. This was my narrative.

Some time later I was on my knees in the living room. I pounded the tile floor with my fist. My cheeks were blotted with tears. Then it hit me. The sensation coursed through my body. Where once I had felt weak and defeated, I suddenly felt full of strength and motivation. I don't have to kill myself, I thought, I can kill him. I'm going to kill him. This is what I told myself. I was no longer passive. I was proactive and I moved like a man with intention. I rushed and put on my jeans and boots. I rifled through the cupboard above the washing machine and when I found the hammer, I held it firmly in my grip. It was a sufficient weapon.

I drove rapidly to the house. I raced across the reservation, pounding the steering wheel, Mother fucker! I was going to kill him, my own brother. I was intent on that. I had housed and repressed so much anger, self-doubt, shame, and frustration that I thought it would never resurface. But here it was, now, racing back to the forefront of my consciousness. I had to do something.

Hours before any of this, I was at my mom's house, eating and trying to process the events of the bicycle tour that I had just finished. My brother and his girlfriend showed up after dinner. I was on guard. With my brother around, I had always felt like that. And then it happened. My brother twisted his face up in that smug, arrogant manner and out of his serpent's mouth he said, "How much weight did you lose, man? You're looking skinny as shiiiiit." I sat on the couch, I could feel my heart rate quickening, and the sudden balling up in my stomach. But I said nothing. I did what I had always done when dealing with my brother's taunts. I endured. I went back in time. I was a skinny rez kid again, standing alone and ashamed, feeling weak, as my brother showed out for his friends. You're a cry baby! You're a pussy! Hey stupid! Hey dummy! Hey bitch! You're a dork!

This is what he had always told me. This was his narrative.

All my life my brother's only objective has been to make me feel weak and stupid. He was doing it again and he didn't even know it. On my bicycle tour, my mind was free to meander for hours on end. I had encountered memories. The memory of almost thirty years ago was with me on my bicycle tour, when he did what he did to me, and all the subsequent years, enduring his bullying and manipulation. It finally came to this. What is the breaking point? How had I let it linger for so long? Thirty years! I could've smashed his head in long ago.

I drove up to the house not caring if I woke whoever was inside. I took a moment to think. A moment of clarity. Then I was opening the door and entering the house, yelling, Where you at? No answer. Nothing. Confusion. Hey, where you at? I'm here! Here I am! I had wisely left the hammer on the passenger seat in the truck.

The small moment before I entered the house allowed me to think of my family in Arizona: my pregnant wife, daughter, and son. It was a moment to breathe. What was I trying to accomplish? Was I really going to kill this person and sacrifice everything for one small moment of reckless passion? But at that moment, no one was there. I had come for a fight only to be left with my thoughts. I looked about briefly and then retired back to my grandmother's house. I was spent physically and emotionally. Once back at my grandmother's I lay on the couch watching reruns of *Seinfeld* and attempted to fight off a sleep that felt much like a dogged drunkenness, my mind and body heavy with years of repression.

## INTRODUCTION

Approximately three years prior to any of this, I was mindlessly packing customer orders at one of four Amazon.com warehouses in Phoenix, Arizona. I had been employed at Amazon for nearly four years. It was an okay job, by any standards. You were paid for the hours you worked, and so it was fair in that sense. Personally, I was not made for such monotonous work. That's when the injuries started to happen. I did not injure myself at work, but I believe it was indirectly related to work. I chalked it up to fatigue. Here's what happened: I was at the gym doing dips with forty-five pounds tethered to my waist when I felt a snap in my chest. I figured my pectoral muscle was fucked and I would be forever subject to lightweights and pushups, if anything at all. After surgery and about a month of lamenting my injury, I figured I would become a long distance runner. I mean, you don't need strong pectoral muscles to jog. So I went to work on that, running. But that was short lived. My Achilles tendons were in pain all the time. One day while trying to do sprints at the park, I felt a sharp pain in my calf muscle. It was no good. All the standing and walking at the warehouse left me with little room for anything else.

I worked four ten hour shifts at Amazon.com. During the holiday seasons, I typically worked fifty to sixty hours a week. What's more is that my Achilles tendons were beginning to develop scar tissue. I developed a condition called Achilles tendinopathy. Basically, I was overusing my legs and not giving them enough time to rest. The tendon was incurring micro tears that would develop scar tissue. And then I would develop more micro tears, more scar tissue. It's a vicious cycle, especially for someone like me who can't stand doing nothing. But I tried resting it. That is, I didn't do anything outside of work. I didn't run, box, lift weights, or ride my bike. So I put on



weight. I went from about one hundred ninety pounds to two hundred fifteen pounds in six months or so. Something had to give. My body was reacting to the monotony of warehouse labor. It was sending me signals that something had to change. How long could I ignore it? I needed a way out of my warehouse job. But what could I do? My education and work experience didn't really put me in a marketable position. Well, I thought, what if I went back to school?

In 2009, I had graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno where I majored in English. I wanted to be a writer. I wanted to suffer and write. I sort of detested education and classes and homework, the whole thing. I wanted to live life and have adventures. When I wasn't on one of my adventures I wanted to hole up on the reservation where I grew up, living a sort of hermitic life. Well, I could suffer, sure I have no problem doing that, but I couldn't allow my wife and kids to suffer. So I found work. Anything would suffice. There was consistent pay and we had health benefits. What more could a young man want with life? But all the time on my feet was catching up to me. My legs were beginning to hurt non-stop. There were visible lumps on my Achilles tendons. They hurt to the touch. I took a medical leave of absence. I waited, went to a specialist, then physical therapy. The doctor and the physical therapist didn't tell me anything that I hadn't already read in medical journals. I knew the research. I knew the therapy. I paid over five hundred dollars for information that I already knew. It's all bullshit, I thought. Doctors, the institution of education, they just want money. They want the illusion of superiority. I was frustrated and angry. Where's the God damned fire? I asked.

*The fire* was the name I had given to that mysterious need to write. The fire had gone. It had been convoluted in the mire of work, bills, career, family, health benefits,

student loans...you name it. Sometimes it's a song that triggers a memory, or a phrase, or the simple act of sitting alone somewhere reading a book. Sometimes it comes through in fictionalized versions. Sometimes it's a bit of dialogue or a poem or simple description of events. In those moments when the mind is one with the words, there is no sense of time. The only thing that matters is the words, one following the other to create sentences and paragraphs. The fire had gone. I sat in front of my computer and put words on the screen. I scribbled in my notebooks. It was all shit and I knew it.

I remember the day when the thought came to me. No doubt, I was on a caffeine rush when the idea hit me. Packing customer orders at the Amazon.com warehouse where I used to work, one must find ways to pass the time. My method usually involved drinking copious amount of bad coffee brewed in these huge canisters in the break room. A ten-hour shift of mindless monotonous work can be bad for one's mind. I had to find a way out. Most of the ideas I had became fantasies, a default daydream to dull the passing of my time at work. And that's where it ended. One must be realistic, I reasoned. One becomes dependent on the job and the health care benefits. If I was a different person, perhaps I would have simply applied for a manager position and began my slow, arduous ascent up the corporate ladder. I've had two close friends follow a similar trajectory at their respective jobs. I did not want to become some corporate man. I was a God damned artist! I needed to be free. The artist and fighter in me could not so easily concede defeat. I suppose that's when the idea took hold of me and didn't let go. I wanted a way out. I wanted adventure. I wanted to write and inspire American Indian people in the process. At that moment, amidst the whirl of conveyors and the infinite customer orders waiting to be processed, I decided I would ride my bicycle from reservation to reservation across

Northern Nevada. I wanted to speak to Native youth about my life and my struggles. I wanted to see the land in a more intimate way. I wanted to meet people in different reservations and listen to their stories. And, I was going to do it by bicycle.

I began my love affair with bicycles when I was a child. First, there was the BMX bike that my dad had bought for me when I was twelve. It was a GT Interceptor, all chrome. I still remember lusting after it in the bike shop in Carson City. My dad put it on layaway. Then there was the Kawasaki KX 80 that my mom bought for my brother and me. While it was not a bicycle, it was still a two-wheeled machine. The dirt bike opened my teenage eyes to a unique sense of freedom and adventure. Suddenly, propelled by a two-stroke engine, the environment became a vast playground of exploration. I saw the world as a series of trails and jumps. On car rides I looked out at the landscape and imagined riding on a non-stop trail. The once desolate, semi-arid desert-landscape around the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Indian Reservation transformed into a place of wonder.

After the dirt bike broke down, I didn't ride a bike of any kind until I was 22, then a freshman at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). I wanted a bicycle to ride with my four-year-old daughter who had just learned to ride without training wheels. I went to Wal-mart and bought a full-suspension city bike. The bicycle was an odd mix of indulgence in unnecessary, cheap technology, but it had two wheels. Down the road from my mom's house, my daughter and I played follow-the-leader outside of the tribal offices. I stopped at one point and thought, This is fun. About a year after that, as a sophomore at UNR, I walked into the Reno Bike Project, a community bike co-operative, and with the staff's help I assembled a bicycle. It was an old road bike that I had converted to a fixed gear, a simple, single speed machine that does not allow one to coast.

After riding that bike for a few days, I was reminded of those teenage years on a dirt bike, exploring my environment, seeking a new trail, and feeling absolutely free.

These concepts of freedom, adventure, and environment are the foundation behind my thesis project. I understood that riding a bicycle could be the vehicle to escaping my warehouse job, where I felt like my mind and body were under constant attack. It could be the vehicle to seeing the land in a more intimate way, to connecting with people on different Indian reservations. However, to begin riding my bike without any direction or purpose would be a disservice to me, and the communities that I visit. If I were to complete the project that I envisioned, I would need more knowledge and planning. I would need a philosophical base from which to begin.

At the time, I didn't know that the thought of riding my bike around my home state would compel me to apply to graduate school, but it was a necessary part of the process. The American Indian Studies (AIS) program at Arizona State University introduced me to different theory and scholarship that were pivotal in the development. Before I departed on my bicycle tour on April 2, 2016 I had concocted a "Theoretical Framework that would guide my thinking." The framework consisted of four concepts: history, storytelling, The Red Power Movement, and the physical body. The idea was that I would focus on history and link that to storytelling. I would emphasize that history is basically a story and thus, in order to reclaim those stories we, as Indigenous people, must begin to write our own stories. In this section I was also going to highlight how stories are powerful beyond mere entertainment. Much of the knowledge in the present day has been framed through this lens of unbiased, scientific rhetoric. With this framework I wanted to challenge that notion and re-center the discussion of knowledge

around stories. Secondly, I wanted to argue that this act of reclaiming stories and re-centering knowledge around stories is an Indigenous way of thinking and by this becomes a political act. The very act of thinking and acting in an Indigenous way challenges the master narrative. I wanted to highlight some of the events of the Red Power Movement during the sixties and seventies, especially focusing on my father's involvement in the American Indian Movement. Lastly, I wanted to end on the fact that knowledge, wisdom, intellect, whatever it's called, can also be housed and expressed in our bodies. I believe that most people have been fooled into believing that all knowledge is purely of the mind. When this happens people become too cerebral and focus on intangible things. There is also the present day focus on technology and acquiring the latest trend. All of these things contribute to the body being viewed as a tool of physical means rather than a tool of physical intellect. With the distancing of the body, so too the land becomes equally as foreign. That is why it is more important now to use our bodies as expressions of intellect. This is not merely a push for Indigenous people to be more active. I'm not saying get outside and move and run and jump because it's part of a healthy lifestyle, what I am arguing is that if you lose touch with your body by sloth or because your too focused on other things like career, money, etc, you will lose your ability to connect with the land and the people.

The goal of this thesis is to use these four concepts and write a personal narrative of my bicycle tour. The thesis reads like a story, which it is. Rather than the typical academic style I've chosen to write a story. I've chosen to use myself as a vehicle of analysis. That is, in a very literal manner, I've used my physical body and put it through a demanding experience. The "text" that I am using is then the totality of my experience. It

is the land, the weather, the people, the environment; it is the small towns, the cities, the interstate and back roads; it is, in simple terms, everything that I am as an Indigenous writer, artist, and intellectual. I have tried to keep in mind everything that I have learned in my formal education and simultaneously forget everything that I've learned in formal education. I wanted, in a sense, to strip myself bare and venture out into my ancestral homelands of Nevada and see what happens. There is talk of the significance of oral tradition in American Indian Studies, and one of the things that I wanted to identify in my thesis was how does one accomplish that and what does the oral tradition look like in a modern day context. What follows is a summary of my bicycle trip. This thesis is a practice in "Contemporary Indigenous Oral Tradition."

SATURDAY APRIL 2, 2016

SHURZ

Initially I was supposed to leave on my bicycle tour the first day of April, 2016. True to its name, April fools! I left on April 2. This was in part due to the fact that my wife, son, and I arrived on the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Indian reservation at ten the previous night. We had driven from Phoenix, Arizona to Fallon, Nevada so my wife could drop me off at my childhood home on the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Indian Reservation. We broke up the drive by stopping in Las Vegas to visit my wife's family, eat, and rest. We stayed longer than we expected and arrived on the reservation later than anticipated.

Once we arrived on the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone reservation, we pulled up to my grandma's house. After she passed away in 2009, the house had remained sealed in time. My mom and aunt had cleaned up a few things and gotten rid of some others, but for the

most part, the house looked as it did when my grandmother was alive. In the china cabinet next to the living room door, there were those creepy glass dolls that my grandma had since she was a child. There were antique bottles and other knick knacks. The furniture was the same and while it didn't wear on me, it did bother me. "Why don't they change it?" I questioned. "Grandma and grandpa are gone, and we can't do anything about it." There were dead flies littered across the tile floors. A thin coat of dust covered the counters and table. You had to run the water for a good while until it stopped smelling like rotten eggs. The paint on the outside had faded to a drab yellow. Dried weeds from the previous summer surrounded the outskirts of the house. The tool shed was dilapidated, the sliding door closed and locked to keep out any thieves looking to steal my grandpa's tools, tools that were covered in rust, dirt, and spider webs. I wanted to take a match to it, burn the whole thing down. Perhaps this Paiute tradition of burning the deceased one's belongings would help my family heal and move on from my grandparents's passing.

This gradual change began when my grandpa died in the spring 2003. When he passed our family lost a piece of its foundation. Nothing has felt right after that moment. My grandfather, Mike Dyer, had been the center piece of the family. He was a rancher and cattlemen. My grandfather's hard work and diligence had paid off in the long run and when I was a child it seems that he acquired financial stability with this ranching business. He had acquired land from his father, Frank Dyer. My great grandfather Frank Dyer was one of the many Western Shoshone families that chose to relocate from their original homelands in order to acquire land for ranching.

After my grandma passed in 2008, we were without any foundation at all. No one addressed this and the fact that my family ignored it, angered me even more. How do you heal without acknowledgment? The family, my mom and her siblings were living separate lives for the most part. My brother found solace in the weight room and a new a girlfriend every couple years. Me, I kept thinking about writing and adventure. “I want to write,” I told my wife over and over again. “That’s all. If I could wake up and write and then hang out with my family, that’s all I need.” I wanted to feel happy about the reservation where I grew up, but I couldn’t. I was angry and frustrated. We had plans to move back soon. I wanted to help take care of the farm, get some animals: cows, chickens, pigs, and sheep; a new horse for my son. I wanted to fall off the grid and leave the mainstream ideas of success behind. I wanted to be like my grandpa, the foundation for my young family, a source of strength and reliability. I wanted to wake up with the sunrise everyday and look east, to the sacred Fox Peak.

After lamenting to my wife about this she said, “Kenny, you’re not your grandpa.” And then it dawned on me, I wasn’t and I would never be. I was me and I needed to get to work on that.

The truth was that I was again feeling apprehensive about leaving on my bicycle tour. I hadn’t been away from my wife and son for more than a week. That fact coupled with the nature of my project, I was getting cold feet. Thoughts circled through my head, “It’s dangerous riding on the road. What if something happens? Are you guys going to be okay?” After my wife told me that I wasn’t my grandpa, I felt a little better. I was feeling ready to embark on this one thousand mile bicycle journey around my home state of Nevada. I was ready to challenge myself once again. The feeling was similar to other



moments in my life: completing the manhood ceremony, stepping into the boxing ring for the first time. However, I didn't know that the trip was going to culminate and end in an emotional confrontation. Every important incident in my life was funneling down to this—my daughter's birth when I was nineteen, moving to Germany, moving back to the rez, college, boxing, getting married, my son's birth, graduate school, quitting my job at Amazon.com, and embarking on a solo bicycle tour from reservation to reservation around Northern Nevada. It was all happening so that I could garner the strength and courage to confront this person who tried to destroy me. Only, I didn't have a clue it was leading up to this. I was only thinking of adventure. Life is curious like that sometimes.

On the morning of April 2, 2016, I packed up my bicycle. I stuffed my things into two rear panniers and a saddle bag that I fixed to the handlebars. This was the first time I had gone on an extended bike tour and I wasn't sure exactly what I would need or what would be absolutely necessary. I had heard or read somewhere a seasoned bicycle tourist say, "Bring what you think you'll need. If later you find that you don't really need it, you can mail it back home." Rather than question every little thing, if I thought it might be useful, I put it in one of my bags, if not, I left it behind. With my equipment finally packed, I said bye to my wife and son and began pedaling towards the town of Fallon.

It was awkward riding my bike fully-loaded. I estimated that I had fifty pounds of gear, but that was an educated guess at best. At a 215-pound body weight, I was really taxing the limits of my road touring bike. My first stop was the tribal cemetery where my grandparents were buried. I wanted to pay my respects and tell them what I was doing.

I was still getting used to the handling of my bike when I rolled onto the tribal cemetery. I leaned my bike against a wooden fence and walked over to their graves. I

offered water and lit some sage which felt odd. Before I left I had decided that I would do these things: burn sage, make offerings, and pray. A long while back I had left behind these acts and focused on literature. Literature had become my religion and spirituality. But I wanted to get back to it. I wondered if the physical act, the repetition of these small ceremonies would have an effect on me.

I left some beef jerky for my grandpa and some peppermint candy for my grandma. As I left, I was shocked to see the Budweiser can that I had left for my grandpa last time I was home. I never had the opportunity to drink a beer with my grandpa while he was alive. The last time I was home, in January 2016, I told my wife I wanted to have a beer with him. So we went to the store, bought some Budweiser, and I sat in front of his grave and drank the can of beer. I popped open the other can and put it in the dirt next to his headstone. It's sort of a controversial thing to do I suppose, especially since my grandpa liked his beer. As a child I'd seen him so drunk he could barely walk, slurring his words, his face and eyes reddened. I was scared of him then, not because he was mean or violent, but just because he was drunk. Years later when he was in the hospital for the last time and probably knew he was going to die, he told me, "Stay away from that beer. Don't drink. It'll kill ya." I had and have mixed feelings about sharing that beer with my grandpa. Finally, after his passing, and now that I'm an adult with a family of my own, I wanted to have one drink with him. So I did, and that was that.

I said goodbye to my grandparents and pedaled off toward Fallon. I was worried about highway 95 from Fallon to Shurz. It's the main road that travels north and south through Nevada. Truckers, and anyone traveling from Las Vegas to Reno or visa versa, uses 95. On top of the heavy traffic there is not a very large shoulder. I would essentially

be riding on the white line. My first stop was Shurz where I would stay with some relatives. We were planning to have a bar-b-que. My wife said that she would like to come, so the deal was that if I didn't like the way the roads and the traffic looked, I would call her and she would give me a ride to Shurz.

The going was slow. I had gone on only one test ride fully loaded. A week before I left Arizona a former bike racing friend of mine took me on a fifty mile ride from Phoenix to a nearby lake. That training ride taxed me. My legs were cramping and I struggled to get up the hills. I was afraid that I would hit a wall out here on tour and be stranded or worse, dehydrated and in need of medical assistance. So I took it slow. I remembered the advice I had read online, "It's not a race." So I lumbered along. When I was on the outskirts of Fallon my wife called. "Where are you at?" When I told her, she said, "That's it?"

"Yeah," I said. "It's slow going here. Just putting along."

"I'm at the Safeway. Do you want to ride with me?"

I didn't need long to think about it. I was still reluctant to leave my wife and son.

"Yeah," I said, "I'll meet you at Safeway."

I rode the rest of the way. In total I did about fifteen miles. It was a good warm-up for what was to come.

I stayed with the Williams family in Shurz, Nevada. I am related to them in a few different ways, the most obvious is through my grandpa and great aunt Lilly Bright. We bar-b-cued and talked. My mom and daughter showed up just as the food was done cooking. "Right on time," my mom said. At dinner my relatives asked me questions:

What are you doing? Why? What's your thesis about? Where are you going? Do you know people where you're going? Do you need anything? Where you going to sleep?

Truthfully I was still trying to figure a lot of these things out. What was my thesis about? Is it really about this theoretical framework? Can I talk about decolonization to my family and relatives? Could I be so theoretical and academic? Would they think I was some radical militant like my father? What was I hoping to accomplish? What the hell was I doing after all?

They were interested and concerned. They wanted to help and I appreciated that. My aunt Mary called people she knew in Yerington, my next stop, to see if I could camp out in their backyard. After dinner there was a conversation about water rights. I wondered if I should film it, try to get some footage. My great aunt had said that the Indians were at the end of the line so they didn't get any water to irrigate their land. The white farmers in Yerington were getting all the water for their crops. My mom said something similar about the water in Fallon, how the white ranchers are angry because the Indians are getting the water first.

Before my mom left she asked me, "Are you going to stay at home then?" I could tell she was worried. "No," I said, "what the heck, I can't jump ship right from the get go." I said bye to my mom and daughter. That night we stayed with my cousin Shannon and her three kids. My wife and son spent the night with me in Shurz.

SUNDAY APRIL 3, 2016

YERINGTON (24 MILES)

In the morning we ate breakfast and I packed up my bike. The artist Mitika Wilbur was supposed to be in Shurz doing a presentation. I thought it might be interesting to see her talk. We drove to the technology center in Shurz and waited for her for about a half hour. I needed to get on the road though. Mitika arrived just as I was leaving. I said a long goodbye to my wife and son. I pedaled off, over the bridge and looked at Walker River. It was dry, no water, just like my Great Aunt had said.

It was difficult to leave my wife and son. They were going to stay the night in Fallon and then drive back to Phoenix. While I didn't have a long distance to go, there were some significant hills that I had to climb. I too was worried about the amount of traffic. The plan was to take alternate route 95 to Yerington and that's exactly what I did. Before I left, my aunt Mary had told me that I could stay with a co-worker of hers named Michelle. I was to give her a call once I arrived in Yerington.

The ride was easy going until I hit the first long climb. The road gradually increased in elevation and I geared down, spinning fast in a lower gear. Climbing hills on a bike is very challenging especially with fifty pounds of gear on a touring bike. The key is to spin rather than push through a high gear. At one point I passed signs that pointed to Weber Reservoir. I left my fishing pole in Phoenix. If I had more time, perhaps I would've brought it along and done some fishing. However, I had a schedule to keep. There was this feeling that I had to keep moving, pushing forward. I took short breaks when I got tired, eating the snacks that I brought along. On the long up hills, I alternated between pushing my bike and riding.

I rolled into Yerington around 6:00 pm. It had taken me about four hours to ride that distance, an hour longer than I estimated. Once there I rode to the Yerington Paiute

Tribe Smoke Shop, bought some Gatorade, sat outside on a bench smiling and thinking. I was really doing it. I was officially off and on my own now. I had been thinking about this moment for over two years and here it was finally. For me it was a victory. It was like my first boxing match. I had spent large parts of my life doubting myself and then suddenly I was in the boxing ring, in front of my family, friends, and strangers, ready to fight. And I was alone. Crawling through those ropes and standing in the ring trusting myself, believing, it was a big moment for me. Even though I lost that first fight, I had gotten something much more important. I found my anger.

Emotions can be fickle things sometimes. They can be hard to discern, but emotions are physical signals that attempt to communicate certain things. Emotions prepare the body, as in the fight or flight response. But why did I need to find my anger. Where had it gone? And why was I in need of it? For a long time I had gotten accustomed to losing. I did not find it comfortable, but I sort of dealt with it as an inevitable part of my life. I was always the underdog, trying not to lose. Rarely was I in charge, winning at something. I was never playing to win, always on defense. After I lost my first boxing match I was truly angry. I was out running the next day. My swollen, blackened eye was a source of constant frustration. My boxing coach Greg Rice had always said, "We don't fight to compete. We fight to win." Good coaches have a certain intuition and Greg Rice was the best. After a few fights he told me, "You're scared. You're scared you're going to get tired. You got to leave all in the ring, Kenny. I'll carry you out if I have to. Leave it all in the ring." And he was right, to a degree. Perhaps I was scared of getting fatigued and losing the fight, but maybe, on a subconscious level, I was more worried not that I would win, but that I would be in control of the fight. I had no problem trying not to lose,

but it was an entirely different mentality compared to fighting to win. It's passive versus proactive. In my life, I had been conditioned to think of myself as small, insignificant. Being in control was foreign and uncomfortable to me. I was holding myself back. Why though?

Recently, I told my wife that I used to hunch when I was a kid. I was usually taller than most of my friends and I used to make myself smaller so I would appear to be the same size as my friends. "Isn't that weird?" I asked. And then suddenly I became aware of the emotional and psychological damage that I had to endure. I am now thirty-five years old and it's taken me thirty years to begin to understand how I harbored and manifested being sexually abused as a child. I am still in the process of becoming aware of such nuances and fighting the pathological thinking that has plagued me for most of my life. Now that I was out on this bicycle tour, alone again, with my thoughts, doing something physically demanding, I was reminded of how powerful I could be.

After a bit of reading and scribbling in my journal I called my connection in Yerington, Michelle. I told her who I was and what I was doing and asked if I could camp out in her backyard. She said yeah and that she would meet me at the smoke shop. Once she arrived we shook hands and I followed her to her house and put my bike and gear in her garage. I met her husband, Levi, a burly Lakota man with long hair. I met her kids, two girls and two boys. Levi was pretty reserved when I introduced myself. We sat on the couch watching TV for a bit. When I asked about his weight lifting set and punching bag in the garage, he began to open up. We talked about boxing and working out. I mentioned the hoop he had out in the backyard and we went outside to shoot around. We played a couple games of one-on-one. Ancient Indian tradition. I won the first and Levi got the

second game. Later, Michelle bought us some burritos and we ate dinner and Levi talked about tribal politics and his family. I could tell Michelle and Levi were really invested in their family and I admired that. After dinner I took a shower and fell asleep on the couch watching boxing.

In the morning, Levi and Michelle took me to breakfast at one of the casinos. I thanked them for everything and they wished me luck and told me to keep them updated. I left in the morning around 9:30. I had a long day ahead.

MONDAY APRIL 4, 2016

DRESSLERVILLE (GARDNERVILLE/MINDEN) (54.4 MILES)

I left Yerington feeling good. I had a great experience with Michelle, Levi, and their kids. This was going to be my first long ride at just over fifty miles. It wasn't an extreme amount of mileage but there was over fifteen hundred feet of elevation change. I would need to do a considerable amount of climbing on this ride. In Minden I was going to meet up with my college friend and boxing teammate, Francisco Torres. The previous day, Levi had told me that there was a long steep climb and he said that if I could do that then I would be okay for the rest of my trip.

The ride was pleasant. There wasn't a lot of traffic. For the first part of the ride I rode alongside the Walker River. I again thought of fishing. I stopped after a couple hours and scouted the river, looking for good fishing holes. I was sure I could've snagged some trout for dinner. "Damn," I thought, "I should've brought my fishing pole." The road snaked through a scenic canyon. It was nice looking country and I tried to remember that I was out here to think about the land and the history of the Paiute and Shoshone



people. Around Yerington was Paiute land. Very soon though, as I huffed and puffed over the hills, I would be entering Washo country. After about three hours I pulled over to eat my snacks. I pulled out my map and found my location. I had thought I was about halfway, but on the map I was only about a quarter of the way. This fact demoralized me some, but I took a few breathes, ate my food, drank some Gatorade, and pushed the distance out of my head. I would need to keep pedaling until I got there and that was all that mattered.

After riding for a couple more hours, just west of the town of Wellington, it appeared. The road went up into the mountains. This was the climb that Levi had mentioned. When Levi told me about it I wasn't exactly sure where it was at, but there was no doubting that this was the mountain pass he had been talking about. I was already pretty tired. But I welcomed the challenge and charged ahead.

The thing about riding a bike uphill is that you can't really see where the climb ends. The small undulations and turns in the road can limit the distance of your vision. When you're tired and you just want to get to the top of the climb, the turns and ups and downs can create the illusion of the top of the hill. You may push a little harder, thinking that the end is near. But after you push the pedals up to that point the road unveils and you see that the climb doesn't end, not by a long shot. So then what happens is you're more tired than you were and now you still have to deal with the mental fact that there's still a long way to go. This is what climbing that mountain pass was like. It was a valuable lesson, but something that I learned in hindsight. I had learned that when the climbs come to just take them, get into a rhythm. If you're constantly looking for the end of the climb it will only make it harder and you'll exhaust yourself.

I alternated between riding and pushing my bike. It was a long climb and there was no shoulder. I had to ride in the road. When I heard vehicles coming I would pull off to the side of the road and wait for them to pass. I don't know how long it took me to get to the top but when I did it felt good. The road leveled out and then it went down. I coasted downhill fast, relishing the speed, the wind and the rest. I rolled into a long valley and cruised onward.

Through Smith Valley the road gradually rose upward. I had to pedal in a much lower gear than I wanted to. It was windy too. The wind pushed me from side to side. I was getting frustrated. After about an hour I stopped and ate some jerky. I lay down for about thirty minutes, thinking and watching the clouds slowly drift overhead. I noticed drivers in vehicles eye-balling me curiously. I laughed to myself, "What they must be thinking?"

I finally made it through Smith Valley and got onto 395 headed north. I thought I was close until I passed a sign that said I had eighteen more miles to go. I grunted onward. I stopped at a RV park that had a store and bought a can of soda, hoping the caffeine and sugar would give me enough energy to enjoy the rest of my ride.

The scenery had changed a bit as I increased in elevation. Pine trees lined the highway and I rode onward. The smell of the trees and sage brush reminding me of camping as a child. I reached the road that led to Dresslerville, but too tired, I pushed forward with my mind on getting something hot to eat.

I stopped at a pizza joint and ate. I was exhausted. My face was sunburned. My legs felt like I'd been hit with a few left hooks. But I was happy. I called my friend Francisco from the UNR boxing team.

Francisco showed up in a police cruiser. He was a Douglas County sheriff. Francisco was always smiling. Even in college after he lost a fight, he would always be smiling and laughing. I envied his good natured disposition. We hugged. He gave me his address and said that he would be home later, but his wife and kids were there. I ate my pizza, read some of *The Hobbit* and wrote a little in my notebook. After that I rode the few miles to Francisco's house and met his wife and two kids.

Later that night, Francisco came home and I went on a ride along with him. He showed me a bit about his job as a sheriff. We took a few calls. He flashed the lights at some white kids walking down the road. He said, "When I was in LA on gang training, that's what all the cops did to people walking on the street." I laughed as the confused kids looked at us. We also stopped at a house where there was something to do with stolen jewelry. I was hoping Francisco would arrest someone, but when we drove to the location where the suspect was last seen, no one was around. After a couple hours he dropped me off and I fell asleep.

In the morning I took a shower and we went to breakfast. We talked about boxing and our late coach Greg Rice. After breakfast I took off. I was headed to Carson City next.

TUESDAY APRIL 5, 2016

CARSON CITY (16.5 MILES)

The ride to Carson City was easy. It was relatively flat. The road had a nice large shoulder. Apart from all the cars and the garbage on the highway the scenery was beautiful. I finished the ride in about two hours. Once in Carson City I rode to the Stewart

Indian School and cruised around the campus there. Some of the buildings were in use, but some are boarded up. I had an eerie feeling there and I recalled that my paternal grandparents, Raymond Redner and Albina Redner, had met at Stewart Indian School when they were teenagers. My great grandmother Eva Williams (Cushman) also went there for a stint as well. The story is that she got really ill and they sent her back home. Once back in Fallon she got healthy and then rather than go back to Stewart she walked to the public school in Fallon and attended school there.

After cruising around the Stewart Indian School campus I slowly rode through the town of Carson City. I stopped at the Ranger station and talked to the people there, asking about camping spots between Carson City and Reno. The man there told me there was a small lake that you could camp next to. I took a few maps with me and continued north. I had wanted to get in touch with one of my friends from the Indian Basketball tournament days. We had played ball together all through high school and for a while after. He was from Carson City. He was a talented athlete now competing in mixed martial arts. His father had been a good amateur boxer at Stewart Indian School, just missing the chance to go to the Olympics. The phone number that I had for him wasn't working, so I was forced to move on.

#### WASHOE LAKE (9.1 MILES)

The road out of town was a long, steep climb. I had dawdled in Carson City too long, not knowing what to do with all the free time. Eventually I reached Eastlake road. I meandered on the back road, glad to be away from all the cars. After a bit I reached the state park, paid the fee and set up camp. It had not been a lot of miles, but all the free

time had confused me. Back in Phoenix, married with a teenage daughter and a two-year-old son, my time was nearly always accounted for. I was unaccustomed to having the freedom to choose what I would do with the time. Maybe because of this it felt like a long day, and I was tired. I made a fire, brewed some tea, ate some snacks, and waited for the sun to set.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 6, 2016

RENO (25.1 MILES)

It was my first time camping out. I was worried that I would be uncomfortable. In order to prepare I'd been sleeping on the floor at my apartment in Phoenix. I think getting used to a firm bed helped me. I slept fine. I woke in the morning, excited and happy to get on the road. I ate an apple with peanut butter and drank some tea. Then I was on the road again.

The ride was enjoyable. The miles quickly passed under my tires. After a few hours I rolled into south Reno. I had attended the University of Nevada, Reno for my undergraduate degree. It felt odd to be back in Reno. I couldn't rightly say what felt odd though. It had something to do with time. Things looked familiar yet different than I expected, not that I expected anything. I pedaled slowly north on Virginia Street. I stopped and got some breakfast at an *Ihop*. I don't know if it was the fact that I was getting in better shape but the greasy food didn't rest well in my stomach. I pedaled on headed toward the Reno Bike Project, a community bike project that allows people to work on their bicycles and purchase used bikes and parts. The Reno Bike Project was

where I first assembled my first bicycle. With the help of the staff there I learned how to work on bicycles and trouble shoot any issues.

My touring bicycle was having trouble switching up to the larger cogs on the chain ring. I wanted to fix this. It was becoming a source of frustration and on a few occasions I had to get off my bike and manually change the gears. At the Bike Project, with the help of the staff I gave my bike a tune-up: cleaned and lubed the chain, spaced out the rear rack, and replaced the front gear cable. I had incorrectly routed the gear cable on the front derailleur. This was causing the difficulty in switching gears. After a bit of test rides, the guy helping me spotted the problem. I hung out at the bike project for a bit, working on my bike and then I paid the four dollars to rent the work space and headed toward the University of Nevada, Reno campus.

I always liked working on things as a kid. I would follow my grandpa around his tool shed, watching him work on different things. I always liked the look of my hands when they were stained with grease, the creases in my skin darkened, under my finger nails the remnants of dirt and grease. I liked the smell of ball bearing grease. It made me feel like a man. My grandfather was an austere man, a working man. My work now was nearly always academic in nature except when I worked at a few unskilled labor jobs like my most recent job at Amazon.com. My hands were soft. The calluses on my palms had formed from lifting weights and not from work. I wondered what kind of man I had become.

I pedaled to the University and went to The Center for Student Cultural Diversity. I had been in contact with Sandra Mitrovich, the advisor for the Native American Student Organization. I was supposed to talk to the American Indian students. About what? I

wasn't really sure. I figured I would talk about my project a bit and highlight some of the themes. It wasn't anything formal. Sandra was out of town that day, at an education conference in Pyramid Lake. I had not heard from her in about a week. One of the difficulties in my project was the timing. Because I was riding a bicycle it was hard for me to say with certainty where I would be at any given time. Anything could derail my plans: weather, sickness, and mechanical issues. I left a message for Sandra to get in touch with me. I sat outside the Learning Center, reading, drinking coffee and charging my phone and gopro camera. After a while I went down to the English department to see if any of my professors were there. I talked to a former professor of mine, Mary Webb. I was happy she remembered me and that she was interested in my project.

After that I rode my bike around for a bit, still unsure what to do. Eventually I got a room at the Circus Circus, my first hotel stay of the trip. Later that night I spoke with Sandra. We made plans for Friday. It was Wednesday night. That meant that I would have to stay in Reno for an extra day. I didn't want to pay for an extra night in the hotel, so I reluctantly got in touch with my brother.

THURSDAY APRIL 7-FRIDAY APRIL 8, 2016

The next day I stayed at my brother's apartment. Of course, as he walked by me, his head bent over, he said, "How much you weigh now? You're looking skinny." He laughed that same snickering, shoulder shaking laugh that I knew so well. I wanted to punch him.

"Shit." I said. "I'm 210. You want to go a few rounds, or what?" He just laughed. I knew he didn't want to see me standing in front of him with my fists up. We had sparred a few times when I was actively boxing. It wasn't even a challenge for me. I let him throw

punches while I danced around and tried to work on putting combinations together. That was before I really understood how to sit down and commit to my punches. When I first started boxing I was a true boxer—stick and move. After about ten fights I started to understand and gain confidence in my punching power. After about ten more fights I was working on angles and footwork. If I had wanted to, I could put him on his ass with a couple different looks. He wouldn't get out of the first round. I knew that for sure. It frustrated me that he could get under my skin though. Somehow, even though I was smarter and a better athlete, he knew how to treat me like a little brother.

I did laundry, took a shower, and watched some movies. In the morning I ate some cereal and then pedaled to the campus. I hung out for a bit and then at 2:00 pm I spoke to the students during their meeting. I told them about my project and my theoretical framework. We took a few pictures and I found out I was related to one of the students, a Shoshone girl whose family was from Reese River, where my grandpa's parents were from. She gave me some good advice.

I told the group that I was nervous about camping next to Pyramid Lake. When I was a kid we had camped out next to a different lake, Walker Lake, and I had a horrifying dream. I dreamt something in the lake, a woman, was trying to drag me out of my tent and into the water. The Paiute call these Pa oha, which means Water Baby. Water Babies are creatures that live in bodies of water and they lure people into the lake by making crying sounds and then drown them. Now I want to make it clear that I have never believed in water babies. When I was teenager and camped out next to Walker Lake and had that terrible dream, I was not thinking of water babies and no one said anything about water babies. I don't know what it was that came out of the lake, whether it was a water



baby, some water spirit or whatever; whether you want to call it a dream or nightmare or something else, I don't know. But I do know that the experience had a profound effect on me and is something that I will never forget. That dream scared me and now I'm always reluctant to sleep next to bodies of water. Marissa, the Shoshone girl, had told me to go down to the water, ask for permission to sleep there, and wash my face with the water. "They'll leave you alone," she said smiling. I thought about it and said, "Thanks, that's a good idea."

After the meeting, Marissa called a friend that she knew and then told me that there were people waiting for me in Pyramid Lake. "Tonight?" I said.

"Yeah," she said.

"Damn, I better get on the road then." I said bye to Marissa and Sandra and thanked them for letting me speak to the students. After that I quickly got on the road. It was about 3:30 pm.

#### PYRAMID LAKE (48 MILES)

I left the UNR campus in a rush. It was not extremely late, but I was expected to be in Pyramid Lake that night. At about 50 miles I estimated it would take me five to six hours to get there. That would put me in Nixon, the small reservation just south east of the lake, at about 9:00 pm. If the ride took longer I could feasibly get there at 10:00pm or later. Riding on a back road at night on a Friday was not something that I wanted to do. It increased the danger. I had lights and reflectors but one can never predict drunk or distracted drivers.

I knew that Reno was going to be the only big town that I would visit. After Reno I would be venturing into small rural locations. I stopped at an electronic store to buy an extra battery and memory card for my gopro camera. I also bought a Coke and a candy bar in case I needed the extra energy to arrive at my location before it got too dark. I sat outside for a bit adjusting my gear and eating some trail mix. And then I was off.

Pyramid highway was good until I started to reach the end of the city limits. The road narrowed until there wasn't a shoulder at all. Where the white line stopped was also where the black top ended. I would need to ride in the road. I put on my safety vest and turned on my blinking red light. This was one of the things that I worried about before leaving. I wanted to be as safe as possible but I also liked the fact that I was alone and could only rely on myself.

The weather was perfect, slight overcast, no wind. The urban sprawl turned into rolling hills and I began to enjoy myself. If I heard cars approaching from the rear, I would slow down and ride on the dirt. At times I even pulled off the road and stopped to let vehicles pass. Despite the narrow road this was the most enjoyable ride of the trip so far. I'm sure my body had acclimated to the long days in the saddle. I was getting stronger. I noticed that I didn't need to eat or drink as much. My body was becoming more efficient. I'm sure the elevation and extra cardiovascular activity had forced me into better shape as well. The miles rolled away and I looked at the sky, the mountains, and kept my eyes peeled for wildlife. I spotted a herd of antelope, their white rear-ends bounding away as I rode by. I stopped and tried to get a picture of them but I was too slow. Maybe, I thought, they don't want their photo taken. After a few hours the road turned and I headed east. Pyramid Lake would not be far.

The ride was taking longer than I thought. And then I remembered the long, difficult ride I had done from Yerington to Dresslerville. I pushed the distance out of my head and tried to be in the moment: the weather, the rhythmic rotation of my pedals, the sounds, the sights, my breathing. I tried to keep it all in mind and at the same time empty my mind and simply be. Back at UNR Marissa had told me that she would text or call me with the information: who I was supposed to get in touch with, where I was supposed to go. I checked my phone periodically.

About three hours from the time I left, I reached the junction that turned into NV 446. I had a good view of the lake and I was happy to finally be in Paiute country. I had left behind the Washoe land and my spirits were high. It was around 7:00 pm and I still had no idea who was waiting for me or where I was supposed to go. I checked my phone frequently for service. I thought I was getting close to Nixon, but I had about 14 more miles to go. For me, that meant about one and a half hours on the bike. I was getting worried because I didn't want to be on the road when it got dark. I rode onward.

When I had cell phone service I got in touch with Marissa. She said that whoever she had been in contact with wasn't answering their phone and she didn't know what was going on. She said it sounded good when I left but now no one was answering their phones. I laughed and told her that I was going to set up camp somewhere. She told me that her friend's family would have breakfast for me in the morning. I thanked her and then began scouting for a good camping spot.

Once I found a good spot I set up my tent and then went down to the lake and did what Marissa had suggested. I offered some water, lit some sage, asked for permission to sleep next to the lake, and washed my face.

I felt better after that small ceremony. Water plays an important role in the spirituality of the Paiute and Shoshone people. My Shoshone great grandmother used to wash her face every morning and say a prayer about cleansing. In this semi-arid climate water can be hard to come by. I thought of these things as I sat down in the near dark.

After the sun had gone down I lay in my tent reading The Hobbit. I felt that Bilbo Baggins would be an appropriate companion as I embarked on my journey. At about 9:30 pm I got a call from a man asking me if “I was that guy riding my bike.” I said yes and he asked me if I needed anything because someone on *facebook* had said that I was out by Pyramid Lake and I didn’t have any food, water, or shelter. It’s funny how stories change. I laughed and told him that I was fine. He then told me that his in-laws would have breakfast for me in the morning. I thanked him and he told me that if I ever needed anything to give him a call, he was only in Reno. His name was Donald and I was thankful and a little amused that people on social media were talking about me. This was something that I didn’t really anticipate. There is indeed a community on social media and they use that medium to communicate. I never really liked the idea of sharing my life through the internet but I was beginning to see how it could be an effective way to reach a lot of people fast.

SATURDAY APRIL 9, 2016

In the morning Donald called me again and said that breakfast was ready. I had slept in longer than I wanted to. I didn’t have any bad dreams. “Right now?” I asked. “Yeah,” Donald said, “whenever you’re ready.” I said okay and then hurried to pack up my things. I didn’t want to be rude and show up too late. I hurried and threw my things in my bags

and set off down the road. I had about five more miles to get to Nixon. I was pushing it hard at first and then I settled into a rhythm and cruised along. It was raining slightly and the cold morning air felt nice. I was riding for about forty-five minutes when a white station wagon passed me and then slowed and pulled over.

As I rode up a big Indian man with long grey hair got out of the vehicle. I slowed down and he said, "Put your bike in the back."

I paused for a second and then asked, "Am I having breakfast with you?"

"Yeah," he said.

"Oh, okay. I'm Kenny," I said and reached out to shake his hand. "Thanks."

"Jack."

We had to put the seats down in the back to fit my bike. After that we drove to his house. I met Jack's wife, Mary. She had breakfast ready for us: eggs, biscuits and gravy, and bacon. Jack gave me a cup of coffee and I sat at the table, grateful. There's something about the cool morning air and drinking a cup of hot coffee on the reservation that I really enjoy. It's the quiet environment, the inflection of the rez accent filling the room, the laughter and stories. It's not something to be missed.

I again thought that it would be good to get some of this on camera. After all I had been thinking about making a documentary. But I didn't feel comfortable recording people that I had just met. I also wondered what it would do to the conversation, how would the presence of a camera affect us? I decided that I didn't want to record the people that I met. I would only record myself. So much for the documentary.

When Donald, the guy who called me last night, had told Jack about me the night before Jack had asked, "Well, is he a Native brother?" and Donald had said, "He's a

Cherokee brother.” We got a laugh out of that. I sat at the kitchen table talking and listening to Jack tell stories. When I told him my name he said, “Redner? Russ Redner?”

I said, “Yeah, that’s my dad.”

Jack was amused. “Russ is your dad?” I said yeah and told him that I had not spoken to my dad in about eight years. It turns out that Jack had played ball against my dad back in the day. When I asked if he was a good ball player Jack said, “Yeah, he was. He was a decent player.” I had wondered if my dad’s stories about his ball playing days were true.

Jack is Lakota from Rosebud. His wife Mary is Paiute from McDermitt. I stayed there for a couple hours. Mary gave me some stuff she had made: a bracelet and earrings. “For your wife,” she said. Mary also gave me some medicine, a root called tosa’a in Paiute. You can make tea out of it and drink it. It helps with cold symptoms. I smelled it as soon as she gave it to me and thanked her. I had not used tosa’a since I was a child. At noon there was a sobriety powwow at the Nixon gym, so I said I was going to go check that out. Jack gave me a ride to the gym and I thanked him again and said good-bye. He told me that if I needed anything or if I was in Nixon to give him a call.

At the powwow the people looked at me curiously. A few times someone would ask me, “Are you that guy riding his bike?” And I would say yes and they would ask to take a picture. I also saw some of my relatives from my dad’s side, my uncle Raymond and my cousin Roy Jr. I was happy to see them. I had not seen them for quite some time. When I was a teenager I sang with them in their drum group, Golden Eagle. Too much time had passed though. My father had changed into someone else and I’d forgotten all the powwow songs that we used to sing.

I hung around the powwow for a few hours. People had come up to me and asked about what I was doing and then they would pass me some money by shaking my hand. The generosity of Indian people always made me feel humble. At around 4:00 pm I said bye to my relatives and a few friends and took off. Fernley was about 20 miles away.

#### FERNLEY (17.5 MILES)

I rode south on state route 447. There was no shoulder so I had to ride in the road again. There was a slight breeze and I could smell that it was going to rain. At a historical marker a woman named Deb pulled over and took a picture with me. We shared some good laughs while we talked for a few minutes. About ten miles before I reached Fernley my uncle and cousin pulled over and I talked to them for a little bit. We took some pictures and then I took off. I could see storm clouds ahead. I could hear thunder and see lightning at random intervals.

I put on my rain coat and rode right into the storm. It was windy and my pants and shoes soaked through. It was the first time I had encountered any weather. I was elated. I smiled. I yelled. I pedaled hard. It was a cloud burst and the rain quickly subsided and turned into small hail. I rolled into Wadsworth and then took the route to Fernley. Once in Fernley I called my friend from high school, Junior.

Junior and I had been my friends since seventh grade. I had talked to him previously and asked if I could spend the night at his house. "Of course," he said. He was married with three kids. I was at a pizza joint eating and thinking about the days that had passed. It had only been about a week, but it felt much longer. The perception of time had changed. Fernley marked the point where I would begin to delve into much longer days

in the saddle. Previously I had been doing twenty to fifty miles a day. Now I would begin doing sixty to eighty miles. I wondered how my body would respond to the extra distance.

After a couple hours Junior showed up. I shook hands with him and he said, “What are you doing?” He smiled.

“I don’t even know anymore, man.”

“Huh?”

We smiled. Damn it was good to see him. I had not seen him for about a year. After that we went to his uncle’s house. He said there was a boxing match on HBO. Manny Pacquiao versus Timothy Bradley. It wasn’t a real intriguing matchup. It was the third time these two were meeting and everybody expected Manny to win. My friend Junior is Filipino though and his family, like most Filipino families, are huge Manny Pacquiao fans. The fight was okay. Manny cruised to a unanimous decision victory while I enjoyed the Filipino food.

SUNDAY APRIL 10, 2016

In the morning I was reluctant to get on the road. I think that I was feeling tired. It was also raining off and on all morning. My basketball shoes had not completely dried out from the previous day and I was not excited to go venturing out into the rain. The exhilaration of being out in the elements had passed. So I stayed an extra day. I called the contacts that I had in Lovelock, my next destination, and told them I wasn’t going to make it until Monday night.



It felt good to relax. I was growing more accustomed to the free time. This was one of the intended purposes of my trip. I wanted a reprieve from the hustle bustle of modern life. Back in Phoenix it felt like I was constantly on the go. Now that I had been on the road for just over a week I was beginning to feel my mind slow down, I could think more clearly, I was beginning to become in tune with my emotions, my body. I knew when I needed to eat, drink, and sleep. One component of my theoretical framework was becoming more apparent to me, the physical body. I wondered if the escape from the overpopulated city, the internet, and the need to constantly do things had allowed me to sense a better communication with my body.

I relaxed at my friend Junior's house. I played with his daughters and joked with his wife Hailey. It was a really enjoyable time and I relished in the fact that I had made good friends and those friends had become good, family oriented people. I also knew that I had to get on the road the next day. I had a long haul ahead and I was aware that this would be my furthest distance as of yet.

MONDAY APRIL 11, 2016

LOVELOCK (61.1 MILES)

Originally I had wanted to venture off the roads and take some back roads and dirt roads. If I had stuck to that plan, I would've taken a mountain pass from Nixon to Lovelock. It was about seventy miles of dirt roads. I had never been on this back road and when I asked people about the route at the Nixon powwow they said, "It's an old Indian trail. It goes through the mountains." That was not enough information to make me feel confident about taking that trail so I decided to stick to the roads and go to Fernley. It was

worth the detour and extra miles though. I got to hang out with one of my high school friends and see his family.

Early in the morning Junior had to go to work, so he dropped me off at Starbucks. I ordered some coffee and got something to eat. I was reading The Hobbit and thinking about what I could write about my trip so far. Nothing really came to mind other than to simply jot down a quick rundown of events. I sat there for a few hours not really worried about the time or that I needed to get on the road.

Sitting next to me there was an older white man reading The Bible. Everyone that came in he complimented and said, “God bless you.” At one point I could feel that he was looking at my bags. “Are you traveling somewhere?” he asked. I told him what I was doing and he seemed impressed. “Well, God bless you,” he said. I thanked him and asked if I could take a picture with him. He said, “Of course,” and we posed for some pictures. I sat there for a while and thought about religion, how Christianity had been used to colonize the Americas, how Christianity had been used in the laws and federal Indian policy. How American Indians have been talked about in history as savages because they weren’t Christian believers. After a bit I gathered my things and left the Starbucks.

One thing that had become apparent to me was the infrastructure of modern society. It was set in place. So far I had eaten at a few pizza joints. I bought coffee at Starbucks. I bought my food and snacks from the grocery store. These businesses, these institutions, had rooted themselves into the environment. They were as much a part of the landscape as the vegetation or the mountains. It had become normalized to become dependent on these conveniences. I couldn’t see any way around it. I needed these businesses to survive. This fact frustrated me some.

I left around 9:30 am. I had about sixty miles to go and I estimated I would be in Lovelock around 4:00 or 5:00 pm. I would take Interstate 80 all the way to Lovelock. I had looked up the rules that governed bicycles and on most of the roads bicycles were legal except in a few locations. There were many vehicles traveling as I made the ride to Lovelock. However there was a nice large shoulder, but the interstate was littered with garbage. It's filthy. There's trash everywhere and bottles of suspicious yellowish liquid.

After about an hour of riding I was very uncomfortable. My neck ached and my butt hurt. I realized that I was shrugging my shoulders as I cruised along. I tried to relax them but it was difficult. Perhaps it was a bad habit. I wondered if my riding position was too upright. If this was true, I was putting a lot of pressure on my soft parts.

I rode on for another hour or so and then I had to pull over and make some adjustments. I lowered my saddle and moved it forward. I lowered the handlebars and tilted them down some. This position felt better. My feet were no longer falling asleep.

After about thirty miles, I stopped at a rest stop, decided to take a break, and eat some of my snacks. As I was coasting into the rest stop, I heard someone yell, "Hey, bro! How far are you going?"

The general rule when bike touring is to not tell people where you're going. However, I didn't know that then.

"Uh, just to Lovelock," I said.

"Oh, not far then."

"Nah, about thirty miles."

"Oh, okay."

I cruised around and sat at a table. The two young white men in a white car rolled around the parking lot. The passenger had dreadlocks and when they pulled up to the parking spot in front of the table where I was seated, I could smell marijuana. The driver was a young man with short dirty blond hair. He kept eyeballing me and I tried to ignore them, act as if I wasn't aware of their presence. They got out of the vehicle and went to use the restroom. I watched them. I considered taking off but then I realized I had just told them where I was going. There's no way I could speed down the interstate and arrive in Lovelock before they caught up with me. Maybe they were just some potheads on a road trip. Perhaps I was worrying myself over nothing.

They came back and I finished eating my snacks. I called the contact I had in Lovelock, Patty and Birdman. Patty didn't answer and I left a voicemail. After a bit the driver said, "Hey man, are you Native?"

"Yeah," I said.

"Me too."

I was skeptical. "Yeah, what tribe?" I asked.

"Cherokee and Taino."

"Where's Taino from?" I knew the Taino people were from Puerto Rico but I wanted to see if he knew that.

"Puerto Rico," he said.

"Oh, okay." A Cherokee brother, I thought and remembered what Jack had said. I snickered to myself.

The driver said something about his dad being a seventh generation pipe carrier or something. I don't know I wasn't really paying attention since every white person you

come across claims Cherokee ancestry. I guess he could be Cherokee, I thought. Maybe he knows his history, language, and stories. That would make him Cherokee. I mean, after all, that's why I was out here on the road, to learn more about the Paiute and Shoshone history, language, and stories. Maybe I was judging this person by his looks. Or maybe I wasn't.

I was annoyed that I was worried about these people, Cherokee or otherwise. I packed up my things and set off. I rolled by their vehicle looking at them intensely.

"See you later, man," I said and pedaled on.

"Take it easy, bro." He said.

I got on the highway thinking about the interaction with those men. After a little while I figured it was not a big deal and I felt much better. I was enjoying the ride. White clouds floated overhead amid a blue blanket. The miles went by easily. After about a half-hour a vehicle beeped its horn at me and the white car with the Cherokee brother passed. I saw an arm jet out and wave. I waved and the car disappeared in the distance. "There they go," I said.

After about seven hours I rolled into Lovelock. I had only been through Lovelock but never actually stopped there at the Paiute Reservation. I had heard that it was a rough place. Sure, I thought as I rolled into town, like every reservation. But when I got there I realized that indeed it was a rough place. The reservation or colony only constituted three small streets on the south side of the town. There were abandoned houses covered with graffiti. The windows were busted out and boarded up.

I was pretty tired from the ride. It was the longest of my trip so far. It wasn't that the ride was extremely hard but rather that it took about seven hours. I stopped at the

Tribal offices and laid down on a bench in the front. I called Patty and got another voicemail. I left a message and then sent her a text message. I waited. After a little while Patty got back to me. I told her where I was and she said she would be there shortly.

While I was waiting there a tall white guy came out of the tribal gym and asked if I was the guy riding my bike. I told him I was. He asked about my ride, how far I'd ridden, where I was going, why I was doing it. I answered his questions. He said, "The kids usually come in after school and play basketball. I'll gather them so you can talk to them." I thanked him, and just about that time Patty showed up with Bird.

Patty is a member of the Lovelock Paiute tribe and her warm smile makes you feel at ease. I liked her immediately. We shook hands and she introduced me to Birdman. Bird carries the same welcoming nature as Patty. They were a fitting couple. They made me feel welcomed. We walked down the road and Patty told me we were going to see Helen Williams.

Helen Williams is the last person who can speak the *Koopa Dicutta* dialect. *Koopa Dicutta* literally means "Duck Eater." But in the present it is tied to the colonial institution and means "Lovelock Paiute Tribe." We walked down the street to Helen's house. They had prepared food for me. I told Patty and Bird about my trip, where I was going, what I had planned. I admitted that I did not have a whole lot of plans. The idea was to get out on my bike and go and see what happens. I wanted to experience the environment, the people, and the adventure without too many restrictions. I wanted things to develop in a natural way.

I left my bike in Helen's yard and we went inside. A young lady that I knew from Fallon went into the back room and guided Helen down the hall way. Helen is blind and

deaf in one ear. Helen sat on the couch. Bird told Helen who I was and what I was doing.

“He’s from Fallon,” Bird said, “Toi Ticutta (Tule Eater).”

“Oh,” Helen said.

I wanted to give Helen a hug. She was a small, kind-looking, Paiute woman. I held out my hand awkwardly trying to shake her hand, but also knowing that she was blind and I would have to ask. “Hi,” I said, “it’s nice to meet you. Can I shake your hand?”

“Oh,” Helen said, “do you have to?”

I was taken aback for a second.

Bird and Patty laughed.

“She’s just joking,” Patty said. Then to Helen she said, “He’s a very good looking man, Helen.”

“Oh,” Helen said and took my hand in both of hers.

Everybody got a good laugh out of that. I smiled. It was nice to see an elderly woman with such a good sense of humor.

I talked to Helen for a little bit. She asked who my family was and I told her. She did not know any of my family. She asked if I was just Paiute or some Shoshone. I told her I was Paiute and Shoshone.

“So do you speak Paiute or Shoshone?”

“Ah, no,” I said. I hated to admit this but it was true for most of my generation.

“Well, what are you some kind of taibo (white) Indian?”

“Uh, I guess,” I said. “I only know some words and stuff.”

“All the bad words I bet.”

“Yeah,” I said.

“Like what, chaboo (butt)?”

“Yeah,” I said, “I know that word.”

Everybody laughed.

“What do you think about Indians who can’t speak their language?” I asked.

“Terrible,” she said without hesitation.

“It’s not his fault,” the young lady said from the kitchen.

“My grandparents never spoke to me in Paiute or Shoshone,” I said, “just words and stuff.”

“Yeah,” the young lady said, “Same with me.”

“Terrible,” Helen said. She was a lively woman.

The conversation paused for a second and I thought about my bicycle trip again. How I wanted to learn the language, stories. How I wanted to reconnect with the land. Are these goals possible? I thought. What happens to a collective group of people who have forgotten their language, their stories, and their history? Do they still exist? How do we relearn these things and then pass them on to our children? How do we instill the importance in our children to continue this sacred knowledge and pass it on to their children?

After a little more conversation we sat and ate some food. There was spaghetti, salad, beans, frybread, and cake. It was a good meal and I sat next to Bird and he told me how he and Patty had met. He said that he teaches hand game songs to the youth all around Nevada. Hand game is a traditional Paiute and Shoshone gambling game. Bird said that the kids learn the songs and through this they learn Paiute language.



After dinner we walked down to the tribal gym. There were four teenage boys in there listening to rap music and playing basketball. When I walked in, the man that I had seen earlier turned the music off and told the kids to gather around. They ran up, three Paiute boys, all-teenagers. The last boy jogged up, "I'm white," he said. I laughed, "That's okay, man." I said. "I don't discriminate." I told them who I was, gave them a little background: high school, baby, college, and now graduate school. I told them what I was doing, my bicycle trip and told them about some of the themes that I was highlighting: history, land, storytelling, political action, and the physical body. They were quiet and then I said, "Now I'm going whip your ass at basketball." The boys laughed.

We went and played a game of "twenty-one." They were surprised that I could play. My legs were done though. I could feel they didn't have the same bounce or explosiveness that I'm used to. We played ball for about an hour. The long ride and the kid's energy wore me out though. "I'm done," I said. "You guys are too young for me." I walked over to where Bird and Patty had set up some chairs. They had gathered some of the younger kids to play some hand games. I had seen people playing hand games but never really understood how to play. I sat down and Bird told one of the young girls to explain the game to me.

She was about ten years old and she explained the rules of the game quickly. I hadn't really caught everything she said, but I figured I would pick it up as the game went along. "Careful," Bird said, "she'll take your money." The young girl smiled. "She's tough, man." Basically, there are two teams and they take turns singing songs and hiding the "bones" in their hands and the other team has to guess which hand has the "bone" with the stripes on it. There are sticks that represent the number of guesses the other team

gets. If you guess correctly, you get the other teams sticks. If you get all of the other team's sticks, you win the game.

It was nice to see these young kids singing in Paiute. They were into the game too. It was something that they were really competitive at. I could see their young minds working, thinking, and singing. This was it, I thought, Bird and Patty had created a framework to teach the culture to young people. There were even some white kids littered in with the Indian kids. Bird had told me later, "We don't turn anyone away. Some white kids will come and we'll teach them how to play hand game. But we'll teach all of them to respect the songs and the language."

We played for a while. Some other people from the community trickled in. One lady I met knew who my mom was. Our team lost the game and we shook hands with the other team. After that we went to the beading class. There was another lady who had seen me on social media and she wanted to take a picture with me. I had become some sort of celebrity. I hung out there for a little bit and Patty asked if I wanted to go back and relax. I told her I did. I was tired. It had been an amazing experience in Lovelock. When we got back to their house Bird said, "Lovelock has a reputation, but when people come here we try to show them another side." It was true what he said. But I also saw that Patty and Bird were making a concerted effort to help the community. I admired them and their work.

TUESDAY APRIL 12, 2016

WINNEMUCCA (73.3 MILES)

In the morning Patty made us breakfast and I drank some coffee and we had a good conversation. Patty and Bird took me to see the head start kids and I spent a little while there talking to the kids about the land and how we need to take care of it. After that I thanked Patty and Bird for everything. It had truly been an incredible experience. As I rode away they sang a Paiute travel song called, “Where am I going?” I pedaled down the road thinking, “Where am I going? What is this all leading to?”

I left Lovelock around noon. It was later than I had wanted to get on the road. The need to get moving forced me to press on. Patty and Bird did not know anyone in Winnemucca and truthfully I had not known any Paiute or Shoshone people that had been from there. That’s a bit ironic since Winnemucca gets its name from Chief Winnemucca. And Sara Winnemucca Hopkins is probably one of the most well-known Paiute people. Sara Winnemucca was the first Indigenous woman to publish a book in the United States. She did this not for her career or fame but to advocate for her people, the Northern Paiute, whose lands and resources were being overrun by the influx of miners, settlers, and those seeking gold in the neighboring state of California. She used writing to help her people. There’s mixed feelings about Sara Winnemucca Hopkins though. Some say she was an assimilated Indian. There’s even a statue of Sara Winnemucca outside the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C.

The ride was lackluster. I cruised along I-80, next to one of the great thru-ways of the United States. Interstate 80 runs across the continent from San Francisco to New Jersey. Just another example of Indigenous land bisected and demarcated. Cars and truckers zipped by. It was frustrating to think that I was out on this great trip only to be confined to the highways and roads. My lack of knowledge of the land and inexperience

of surviving out in the harsh Nevada landscape limited my ability to venture off road. I had wanted to go off road during my trip, at least a little bit. Perhaps in McDermitt I could venture off road, try to find my way one hundred miles east to Owyhee.

The ride took about seven hours. I rolled into Winnemucca around 6:00 pm. I called my wife and gave her an update. She asked where I was going to stay for the night. I said that I didn't know. Maybe I would get a room. She looked up some prices and said that Motel 6 was the cheapest. So I headed down the road, following her directions and got a room. I was happy to be in my room, finally a moment of solitude. The only thing I didn't like was the cemetery right across the street. I lit some sage and smudged the room. After that I went down the street and got something to eat. I went back to the room and lay down, watching TV. Is this what my trip was about? After all I wanted to see the land. Was this not part of the land now? These small towns, big cities, highways, and back roads—the infrastructure of this country—it was rooted in place now. There was no changing that. And what was our role as Indigenous people? How do we assert our presence in this infrastructure? After all the policies and years of genocide, how can we rise up and stake our claim as a permanent piece of the country?

I moved about slowly pondering everything. I did some laundry later that night and took a shower. I lay in the stiff sheets and feel asleep.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 13, 2016

FORT MCDERMITT (73.3 MILES)

In the morning I ate a greasy breakfast at a coffee shop. It made me feel sick. I bought some fruit and vegetables from the grocery store, filled up my water and left

Winnemucca around 10:30 am. I was on the move again and I was feeling uneasy about the town of Winnemucca and wanted to put it behind me. It felt like there were no Indians around. It was an odd sensation. Perhaps it was the cemetery across the street. I don't really know what it was, but I felt like there was an absence there. I could feel it in my body. Marissa, my cousin from UNR had said, "This is really cool what you're doing. While you're out there you can pray for the land and help it heal. And if you recognize the land it will recognize you back." Was I recognizing this absence that manifested itself?

I knew that the Humboldt River was close by and that the white settlers followed the Humboldt on their journey westward. Well known Nevada fur trappers and explorers followed this river such as John C. Fremont and Peter Skene Ogden. One of Ogden's goals was to deplete the river of its beaver population to make it less desirable. This route eventually became known as the California Trail, the primary route for people headed to the gold fields in California. The influx of people to this region decimated the important plants and animals that the Northern Paiute and Western Shoshone used for their livelihood.

I loaded up my things, checked out of the motel, and pedaled down the road. I got on US-95 North towards McDermitt. Right at the city limits I saw a Humboldt county sheriff parked on the side of the road. I pulled over and said hello. I asked if there were any camping spots between Winnemucca and McDermitt. He didn't know. He asked where I was going. I told him and he said, "You know that's like seventy miles?"

"Yeah," I said. "I know. If I don't make it today, I was going to camp out somewhere. Is it legal to camp up that way?"

The sheriff smiled “I don’t think it really matters,” he said. “If you’re out there somewhere I don’t think anyone is going to say anything to you.”

I thanked the sheriff and rode off. I had a long way to go. I was hoping to make it before it got dark. I wasn’t sure about this road. I had never been up this way before. Before I departed on my trip I had contacted one of my friends, Derek Hinkey. Derek was from McDermitt. Derek and his brother Tyler had been good amateur boxers and now lived in Las Vegas. Both Tyler and Derek had short stints as professional fighters. I always admired them and their boxing abilities. I figured I would give Derek a call as I got closer to McDermitt.

The ride was pleasant for the most part. There was a fair amount of traffic though and that annoyed me. I was happy to leave Winnemucca. For some reason I didn’t like it there. I suppose if there ever was a “white town” Winnemucca wouldn’t be a poor candidate. Most of the small towns in Nevada could presumably be “white towns.” Most of the tribes in Nevada were tied to the towns they were closest to. For instance, my tribe, the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone is demarcated by the town of Fallon. This is true of nearly every tribe in Nevada: Yerington Paiute, Reno-Sparks, Battle Mountain, Elko, and so on. Whatever had been the name for these areas, were now erased and replaced with these towns. Even the indigenous people are now known as and refer to themselves as defined by the colonizer. But what does that do to the consciousness of the people that are erased and redefined? How do the subsequent generations understand their cultural identity when it has not been defined by their own people?

After climbing a very steep hill I sat down and watched the clouds overhead. Two hawks soared way up in the sky and I worried that it would rain. I trudged on, tired but

happy to be out on the road. I wasn't sure how far I had ridden but I figured to be about half way. That meant that I had about four hours to go. I rode on for about another hour and sure enough it began to rain. I stopped and put on my rain coat. The rain coat was fine except that when you're doing something active like riding a bike the rain coat's material doesn't breathe. So then you begin to sweat. You end up keeping out the rain but sweating. So you get wet no matter what. I was beginning to think it would be much better to just let the rain get me wet rather than close myself off from the environment. It didn't rain hard and after about a half hour it stopped. I rode for a little longer and pulled off to the side of the road to eat lunch and relax. I lay on the ground and watched the clouds for about a half hour.

After lunch I cruised onward. I had been riding for a while when a lady in a car slowed down and waved at me. I waved back and smiled. I was in good spirits. I pulled over and decided that I would give my friend Derek Hinkey a call. Before I left on my trip he had said that if he had time he would make the drive from Las Vegas to McDermitt to show me around his home. When he answered I told him that I was on the road and I would be there around 8:00 pm. I asked if he was going to be there and he said no. He told me there would be a group of people waiting for me on South Reservation road and they would have food for me and a place to stay. I thanked him and then I took off. It felt good knowing that people were excited and supportive of my trip even though they didn't really know what I was doing. I didn't even really know what I was doing other than riding around Nevada and thinking about everything.

There was a slight descent and I put my bike in its highest gear and pedaled easily onto the reservation. When I reached South Reservation road there was supposed to be a

group of people waiting there but there wasn't anyone around. I rolled up to the gas station, leaned my bike up against the wall, and walked in. I raised my hands when I entered the gas station and said, "I made it."

The two cashiers looked at me bewildered. Then one girl said, "How long did it take you?"

I told her about eight hours. I talked with the cashiers for a little while, used the restroom, and drank a Gatorade. I called Derek Hinkey and told him no one was around. He said, "Oh shoot. I don't know what happened. Let me call you back." I guess he was going to make some calls. The distance from Winnemucca to McDermitt was the longest I had ridden at seventy-five miles. This fact made me happy. I was looking forward to the hundred miles I would have to ride later on in my trip.

Derek texted me and told me someone named Tildon Smart was going to meet me at the gas station. Tildon was the former chairman of the Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Tribe. He's a big jovial guy. When he walked into the gas station I introduced myself. He said, "I don't know what happened to the plans to meet you out here." I laughed. He said, "We weren't sure when you were going to get here." He said that they were coming up with a plan. I told him that I just needed some place to put up my tent. He said, "It gets cold up here." He told me they were going to get me a room and make some arrangements so I could talk to the high school kids. I was under the assumption that everything was already worked out. I had spoken to Derek's mom who was a teacher at the school. She said that she would talk to the principal and make the arrangements. The fact that the plans had not worked out did not bother me.



I was just happy to be on the road. In fact, I rather enjoy when plans go awry, it breaks up the monotony and adds a sense of unknown.

After the plans were all figured out I had to ride the extra five miles to the town of McDermitt. They got me a room at a place called “Diamond A.” When they told me the name of the motel I thought, “Sounds like a brothel.” Perhaps it used to be.

When I got to the motel I reiterated that I just needed a place to camp out. They insisted, so for that night I slept in the motel. I got some food at the casino, “Say When.” I was beginning to feel odd about the whole trip. I wanted to connect to the land, the people, and the culture but I here I was eating at a casino and staying in a motel again. What happened? It seems that I couldn’t escape. If I wanted to I would have to ride off road, through mountain passes, and stay to the back roads. This might help get more familiar with the land, but how was that solitude going to get me in touch with the people and the culture? After I finished eating I went back to the room and fell asleep on the floor. The bed had a funny smell.

THURSDAY APRIL 14, 2016

In the morning I woke up and took a shower. The thought of the greasy casino food turned my stomach. I ate some fruit, nuts, and jerky from my snacks. At 10:00 am I was supposed to give a presentation to the high school kids. I was looking forward to this opportunity. Tildon said he would meet me at the school to help out with the kids.

I stood in front of about thirty high school students. About three fourths of them were American Indian. I told them about my project, how I was riding my bike around Nevada, how I wanted to connect with the land, the people, and the culture. I talked about

the four themes of my theoretical framework: Land/history, story, political action, and the physical body. And finally I talked about my own experiences of growing up. I talked about some of the struggles that I had to deal with: growing up in a single parent household, family members abusing drugs and alcohol, and being sexually abused as a young child. I talked about how the abuse affected me for a long time, how at times it still does, how I have to constantly keep fighting the negative emotions and thoughts that plague my mind. At the end I said that in spite of all the difficulties that I was still here.

There was a good response from the students. They asked about my trip: where do I sleep, what I eat, how much water I drink, and how many miles I can ride in one day. Afterwards some kids came up to me and took pictures and asked me questions. One kid asked me what reservation has the best frybread.

After the talk at the high school I went with Tildon to get something to eat. A family had prepared some stew and frybread for me. I got the feeling that I always get when I share a little bit about my life, that maybe I was too open and honest. Had I made myself vulnerable? Had I revealed too much? There was something in the process of telling the story that helped me though. Perhaps I was trying to make sense of everything myself. Indeed, I had been carrying these emotions for most of my life and now in a very literal sense I was carrying this story on my bike journey. And what was my story? Clearly my life was not finished and how will this story end? I wanted to be the writer and editor of my story and after all those years of carrying the shame and frustration of being sexually abused I was fed up harboring this pain.

I ate the food with Tildon and some other people from the McDermitt Paiute Shoshone Tribe. It was around 12:00 pm when we finished. A Paiute man said some prayers for me and I took some pictures with them and then I took off.

It was much later than I wanted to get on the road. I figured I would roll into Winnemucca around 8:00 or 9:00 pm. Originally, I had wanted to take the back roads to Owyhee but when I asked Tildon, he said, “You don’t want to do that. Not this time of year.” The finality of his statement deflated my adventurous spirit. The route would’ve taken me one hundred miles crisscrossing the Nevada, Oregon, and Idaho border.

I felt exhausted. There was something about McDermitt that felt odd. I couldn’t quite place it. I pedaled south, retracing my route from the previous day. My thoughts were everywhere and I realized there was a slight incline to the road because I had to gear down to my lower gears. The wind was blowing. It wasn’t going to be a pleasant ride.

Suddenly I remembered why McDermitt felt odd to me. My grandpa told me once, that one of his older brothers was killed by a Mexican. My grandpa said, “After that I hated all Mexicans. I went to the bar and got in a fight with a Mexican.” My grandpa’s older brother was stabbed to death in McDermitt. No one was ever arrested for the murder and the word was that a Mexican killed my great uncle. Could this family trauma have been passed down through stories without me being conscious of it? Was this historical trauma?

Right about that time it began to hail. The wind was blowing hard. I put on my rain coat, laughed, and pedaled onward. The cars were zipping by and I wondered if the hail would subside. It didn’t take long before someone pulled over.

It was a red Dodge SUV, a man rolled down the window and shouted, “Hey are you alright? Do you need a ride?”

It didn’t take me long to think about it, “Yeah,” I said, “if you’re offering.”

“Sure,” he said. He pulled his vehicle over farther on the side of the road, got out and opened up the back of his SUV.

I took off the front wheel of my bike, unhooked my panniers, and put it in the back. Once everything was packed up I sat in the passenger seat and we took off.

The man said that he saw me and my rain coat and my bike and figured I was okay and that I might need a ride. I laughed and he asked what I was doing. I told him and he was interested. He said that he was driving from Montana and he had to drive across the Crow Agency. Why do some people assume that all Indians know each other? I nodded as an acknowledgement. He was a kind man and we talked casually as we made the drive from McDermitt to Winnemucca.

He dropped me off at the Motel 6 that I had stayed at previously. I was grateful for the ride. It saved me a lot of time and energy. I relaxed at the motel. In the morning I would be on the bike again.

FRIDAY APRIL 15, 2016

BATTLE MOUNTAIN (53.3 MILES)

The ride to Battle Mountain was uneventful. It was kind of overcast, a slight breeze, and sprinkling off and on. I made it to Battle Mountain around 5:00 pm. I stopped at the Smoke Shop and talked to the cashier for a little bit. I asked about the reservation and she said that it was right next to the smoke shop. I cruised around the colony right next door. There was no one around. I left the colony and wondered if there were any suitable places

to camp out. I rode through the small town and stopped at a motel. I went in and asked how much, went back outside and sat on the curb. I looked at the highway and watched the cars zip by. There was road construction and the cars were forced to one lane. They were partially riding on the shoulder and I wondered if that would impede on my space as I rode my bike. I definitely didn't want to ride on the freeway, with construction, and cars zipping by at seventy miles an hour. I went back in and got a room for the night. I went to a pizza shop for dinner. It wasn't good and I drank a soda and waited for the next day to arrive.

SATURDAY APRIL 16, 2016

ELKO (70.5 miles)

In the morning I ate the continental breakfast, drank a cup of coffee, loaded my bike and took off. It was a Saturday and I hoped that the construction crews would be off on the weekends. When I got on the road, I was right. The roads were marked off with orange cones and such, but there were no construction workers in sight. This gave me a whole lane to ride in that was marked off with orange cones.

The ride was pleasant. The weather was perfect and there wasn't a lot of traffic. The scenery was beautiful and I happily pedaled northeast on Interstate 80. There were a lot of hills though and I knew that I would have some significant climbs throughout. For some reason this didn't bother or worry me all that much either. In fact, I welcomed the challenge. I knew that I could finish this ride strong. There was a confidence that I gained from having ridden to McDermitt. No distance seemed out of reach and no climb worried me.

Three hours was about my limit. After that riding became uncomfortable. I needed a rest. I stopped at a rest stop. At the rest stop a man with kids said to me, “We saw you back there. You must be hauling ass man.” I laughed and said, “Yeah, I guess.” It sure didn’t feel like I was going all that fast, but I suppose I was moving at a constant pace. I was consistent and hardworking, so maybe that was the real reason I could cover the distance. Perhaps that was the real way to accomplish anything.

I ate my snacks and drank some water. I looked out at the clouds and gave my wife a call. I updated her on what had transpired in the last few days. I told her where I was at and where I was headed. She wanted me to keep her abreast of everything. This was difficult because I often found myself without cell phone service. I talked to her for a while and relaxed. After about forty-five minutes I got on the road again. I was in the mountains now and there were some serious climbs. I took them head on.

It felt good to get to the top of a summit and look back at what you had just climbed. This was a real pleasurable and difficult ride. At one point a vehicle passed me and honked the horn. An arm shot out the window and I waved. “Must be some Indians,” I thought. As I crested another summit the vehicle was there waiting for me. “Who’s this?” I wondered. As I got closer a woman got out of the passenger side and took out her phone. She was either taking some video or trying to capture a photo. When she came into a clearer view I realized it was my aunt.

“Hey, nephew.” She said.

“Hey,” I said and smiled. “What are you guys doing?”

My uncle Buck got out of the driver side and he had a big smile on his face.

“Buck,” I said. “Man, I haven’t seen you in years.”

We shook hands and hugged.

“What are you guys doing?”

“We’re headed up to Owyhee for a peyote meeting.” My aunt and uncle are Native American Church members.

“Oh, yeah, that’s where I’m going too.”

We talked for a while. They joked with me and gave me some water, jerky, and trail mix. After about fifteen minutes they took off and I was forced to pedal onward.

I had more hills to climb and as I got closer to Elko, the sun began to set. It was getting dark and the light that I had must’ve gotten wet or something because it no longer worked. I pulled out my head lamp and wrapped it around the handlebars. It was a makeshift solution but it would work for the time being.

I pedaled hard for the simple reason that I wanted to push it as I approached my destination. The last hour of the ride wasn’t the most fun but I reached Elko around 8:30 pm. The sun had completely set and I was tired. I got another motel room, ate a little food, took a hot shower, and fell asleep.

SUNDAY APRIL 17, 2016

OWYHEE (97.2 MILES)

I was looking forward to this moment in the trip. I had never ridden one hundred miles in one day before and I wanted to mark this off of my bucket list. I knew that I would need the calories and energy but I was feeling tired and sick. I had pushed my body pretty hard in the last week and I wondered if I just needed some rest. I didn’t have that luxury though. I was supposed to be in Owyhee the next day to do a presentation at the school. I

got a big breakfast at Denny's and forced myself to eat it. I drank two cups of coffee and a glass of water.

I went back to the room and packed up my things and got on the road. The road out of Elko on state route 225 starts inclining as soon as you leave. And it seems that it doesn't end. I climbed and climbed. The road was unforgiving and I was frustrated and tired right from the start. After almost two hours I finally reached the summit. In that time, I had only gone about seven miles. It was going to be a long day.

I pedaled onward and the road rolled. For every downhill section there was a hill waiting for me on the other side. I alternated between coasting downhill and climbing. The wind started blowing too and my bike shifted from side to side with each strong gust. I had no idea how fast I was moving. This was the first time I had encountered strong, consistent wind and I didn't really know how to deal with it mentally. No matter how hard I pedaled I couldn't gain speed and if I didn't keep a constant pace the wind would slow me down to walking speed. There was also the sound of the wind incessantly blowing. Whoosh! Non-stop! It was maddening and I tried to maintain my composure. Just keep pushing, I told myself. I was taking too many rests though, and I felt tired. I gulped at my water but still felt thirsty. I ate the jerky my aunt had given me.

There was also an All-Indian men's and women's basketball tournament in Owyhee. Teams from Nevada, Idaho, Wyoming, and surrounding states typically made the trip. After about three hours a vehicle pulled over. Tyler Hinkey got out the car with his girlfriend and his son. It was good to see them. I had not seen them in a long time. I smiled and hugged them. They gave me some juice and snacks. I told them about my trip



thus far. “You’re crazy,” they said. And then Tyler said, “Be careful man, up there in the canyon we saw a mountain lion. And you never see them out in the day.”

“Really?” I said. This worried me some. I was sure that mountain lions were pretty skittish but I suppose they could attack if they were real hungry or felt threatened. We said bye and I pedaled north while they drove down south. I kept thinking about that mountain lion though and I didn’t have any weapons of any kind. I just had a multi-tool with a small blade on it. I took it out of my bag and slipped it in my pocket. After a while I figured that a multi-tool was going to do very little against a mountain lion and I probably wouldn’t be fast enough to get it out anyway. If I did get attacked by a mountain lion the best I could do is use the pliers to pluck out the big cat’s whiskers. Just like that cartoon, Tom and Jerry, I thought and laughed.

My spirits were lifted a little after that. I pedaled onward. The wind was relentless and the hills were nonstop. I kept moving forward though and at the state route 226 junction I stopped and pulled out my map. I wasn’t sure how far I’d gone. According to the map I’d only gone about thirty miles in five hours. I rested for a little while took a breath and trudged onward.

It was taking much longer than I anticipated.

After a few more hours my aunt and uncle came driving in the opposite direction. They had some deer, choke cherries, and other food. I sat down and ate. They asked how it was going. I told them that it was slow going with the hills and the wind. They gave me some water to drink and I thanked them again. Uncle Buck said, “After these hills it’s starts flattening out. It’s all downhill.”

I laughed. “I hope so. I might have to camp out next to the road somewhere.”

I said bye to my aunt and uncle after a much needed rest.

I was serious about camping out next to the road though. It looked like I wouldn't be able to make it to Owyhee or accomplish the hundred mile ride that I had hoped.

Onward I rode and tried to keep moving, keep pedaling. My sense of time and distance had been messed up and I could no longer keep a mental grasp of how long it had been or how far I had gone. Still I pushed the pedals and the bike moved where ever I pointed it.

I kept hoping my friend Vinnie Reymus would drive by. I had hoped to meet up with him in Carson City, but his phone wasn't connected or something. I knew that he was at the basketball tournament in Owyhee though. It was only a matter of time before we crossed paths.

As I coasted down one hill and grunted up the other side I saw a car quickly pull over. I knew it was them. A crew of young Indian guys got out of the car. I had been friends with Vinnie since high school and we had played ball together, traveling all over Nevada, California, Idaho, and Oregon. I sprinted up to the car and skidded on the gravel.

"Gee!" they said.

I laughed and dropped my bike on the ground.

"What's going on, man? How you feeling?" Vinnie said.

"Man, I'm fucking tired."

"I bet."

We talked for a while. Another car pulled over and some guys I knew got out of the car. They gave me a Gatorade and I thanked them and took a long drink.

Vinnie said, "What made you want to do this?"

"I just want to see the land," I said, "talk to the people, and visit the reservations."

“Fucking Kenny, man. You’re crazy. I saw it on *facebook* and I was like, ‘Yeah. That’s Kenny.’”

I smiled, “Yeah. It’s awesome, man.”

We talked for a little while longer. I wished I could have stayed there longer, shooting the breeze. Again though, I felt that I needed to get going. I still had the hope that I would be able to make it to Owyhee before the day ended. I said bye to my friend Vinnie got on the bike and pedaled off.

The rest of the ride was pretty miserable. As the sun started to set it got cold. I put on my coat and my gloves. There were these huge privately owned farms and all of the land was fenced off. For miles and miles barbed wire lined the road and there were no dirt roads or public land to set up camp. I kept eyeing the area looking for a good place to set up my tent. Nothing looked suitable though. I walked down an empty ditch, hoping for a clearing, something that was hidden from the road. Nothing. I circled around a big wide space where some tractors were parked. It was possible to do some stealth camping, but I knew that I wouldn’t be comfortable overnight. I cursed and pushed onward.

At one point I saw a farmer doing some work in a ditch. He said, “Where you headed?”

“I’m trying to get to Owyhee,” I said. “I don’t think I’m going to make it before it gets dark though.”

“Fifty miles,” he said.

A few miles back I had passed a sign that said I had forty miles to Owyhee.

“Good luck,” the rancher said.

I didn't say anything and pedaled off. Stupid white ranchers, I thought. They think they own everything.

I looked at the sun and estimated about thirty minutes before the sun completely set. I was still looking for a place to camp. I checked my phone periodically. Whenever it looked like I had service I tried to call my wife. I got through at one point and asked her what I should do.

"Don't you have some in Owyhee that you can call?"

"Yeah," I said.

"Call them and then call me back."

I called Kip Simpson in Owyhee. He was my connection there. I got the voicemail and left a message. I called my wife back. She said, "What are you going to do?"

"Just keep riding and then set up my tent somewhere," I said.

"I don't like that," she said.

"I don't either, but what am I going to do?"

I reassured my wife that I would be alright. Then I took off. What else could I do?

I was scouting a camping spot when my phone rang. I ran over to my bag and hurried to take my phone out. I answered the phone and a voice said, "Mr. Redner. This is Kip Simpson."

"Oh, man." I said, "I'm happy you called. I'm out here somewhere and I'm supposed to be in Owyhee tomorrow. I was wondering if you could come pick me up?"

"Where are you at?"

"Uh...I don't know. There's some snowcapped mountains to the west..."

Kip laughed, "There's snowcapped mountains everywhere."

“I don’t know where I’m at, man.”

Kip asked me if I passed Wild Horse Reservoir. I said no. He asked if I passed the Bureau of Land Management office. I said yes. “Okay, you’re about halfway.”

Halfway! I thought. I had been on the road for ten hours. In that time, I’d only gone about fifty miles. “Damn,” I said, “I thought I was farther than that.”

“Yeah, you’re about halfway. Give me about forty minutes.”

“Okay, I’ll just keep riding. You’ll see me. I got lights and reflectors.”

I called my wife and gave her an update. “I feel better about that,” she said.

“Me too,” I said.

I set off again. Just about that time a car passed, slowed down, and made a u-turn. The tinted window rolled down and a girl I knew sat in the driver seat. Shana Thomas had gone to the University of Nevada, Reno the same time I had.

“Shana,” I said. “Are you looking for me?”

“I’m just checking,” she said and smiled.

I had been in contact with Shana for about a month. Shana had been a teacher and then went on to get her master’s. She was now a counselor at the school in Owyhee. She was facilitating the presentation I was doing at the school the following morning.

“Are you going to make it?”

“Yeah, Kip Simpson is coming to pick me up.”

“Okay, that’s good.”

“How far am I?”

“You got about fifty miles.”

“Really?” It was hard for me to believe that I’d only gone fifty miles in ten hours.

“Okay,” Shana said, “I’ll see you tomorrow then.”

“Alright, thanks for checking on me.”

Shana rolled up the window and drove off. I set off too, pedaling north. After about ten minutes I passed an open area where a sign read, “Enjoy your public lands.” It was a perfect spot to set my tent. Figures, I thought.

I pedaled onward.

After another thirty minutes or so I spotted lights ahead. The vehicle slowed and made a u-turn. There they are, I thought. I rolled up and a tall man got out of the truck. He put the tailgate down and helped me load my bike in the back.

“Thanks man,” I said and shook his hand.

Once in the truck Kip gave me water and some fruit.

“We got you a room at the Feather Lodge.”

“Oh, okay. Thanks for everything.”

Kip took me to his house. I met his wife Lori. They fed me and then Kip took me to my room for the night. He said, “Give me a call in the morning. We’ll get some breakfast. Get some rest.”

I put my bike in the room, took off my dirty clothes, changed into some pajamas and fell asleep.

MONDAY APRIL 18, 2016

In the morning I took a shower and tried to call Kip. My phone didn’t have service though. I went to the front office and asked if I could use their phone. They didn’t have one. I looked at the clock on the wall. “Is that the time?” I asked.

“Yeah,” the lady said.

“Dang, we’re on mountain west time?”

“Yeah.”

I left the room, went back, gathered my things and checked out. I was supposed to be at the school at 10:00 am. It was 9:30 am. I was still on Pacific Time and thought I had an extra hour.

I walked over to the school. Kip was already there. He told me he had some things to do and he was going to meet up with me later. I told him about the time difference and he said, “Oh, yeah. I forgot to mention that.”

Shana Thomas showed me around the school. They had a small picture of me and a short description of my bicycle trip. I laughed, “Look at this guy,” I said.

Shana said, “Yeah, I copied that off of the *facebook* post.” She took me to the gym where I was going to be speaking to the students. I waited around for a bit and I wondered if I would choke up like I did in McDermitt. Bringing up the sexual abuse I had suffered always filled me with emotions. First I was overtaken with shame, and then after that passed my emotions carried over to frustration and anger.

I was beginning to get nervous as the kids shuffled in. When the time came Shana introduced me and she told them, “Now listen to him and be respectful.” It was a warning. I introduced myself and told them about my bicycle trip, what I was doing. I told them a little about myself and how I had encountered difficulties. And then I told them how I had been the victim of sexual abuse as a child. I told them how it always affected me and how it probably would always be there. But then I told them that I kept pushing and kept trying. For some reason I was feeling better. I had harbored these

emotions nearly all of my life and now I was telling my story. I was releasing the pain, anger, and frustration through the act of storytelling.

After the talk I answered questions. Some of the kids asked about my bike trip: How far did I ride? How long did it take to ride from Elko? Where did I sleep? How far am I going to ride in total? I answered the questions and afterwards some of the kids came up and looked at my bike.

A teacher came up. She shook my hand and gave me twenty dollars. She said, “Here this is for you.” I could see that she was shaken up. “When something like that happens, it changes us forever.” She looked at me in the eyes. I nodded and she shook my hand firmly. She was on the verge of tears. Then she turned and walked out of the gym.

After the talk I went with Shana to a classroom to talk to some more kids. I went deeper into my thesis project and talked about the four themes that were supposed to be guiding my thinking. I had concocted this “theoretical framework” but as the trip proceeded I was beginning to see that the project had taken on something different. The trip was beginning to be about the power of storytelling.

I tried my best to talk to these high school kids about land, history, storytelling, political action, and the physical body. It was the story that held my attention. After I was finished with the talk I went outside and took some pictures with the students. As the rest of the students went off to their next classes one student hung outside with me and Shana. Shana told me that the student was a poet and at first she was shy. Then she opened up and she shared one of her poems with me.

After a little bit Kip showed up and he took me to lunch. He showed me around the reservation. We drove to the Idaho border. He showed me the tribal buildings and the



recreation center. Kip is a big guy, six foot six inches and probably close to three hundred pounds. He said back in the day he was a ball player. He told me that after he hurt his back he put on a lot of weight. "Back in my ball playing days I was 220." I asked if he knew my dad.

"Yeah, Russ Redner. I knew Russ."

"Was he a good ball player?" I asked.

"Yeah. He could really jump. That's what I remember most. God, he could jump."

Kip asked about my dad, where he was at, how he was doing.

I told him that I didn't keep in touch with him anymore. I told Kip that I had made some attempts but felt that my dad didn't really care all that much so I just stopped trying to maintain a relationship with him.

Kip didn't say much.

We went to Kip's house later in the day. He prepared dinner and we relaxed, watched TV, and I shot around on the little basketball hoop they had outside. Kip told me that he would get me another room for the night and then give me a ride to Elko tomorrow. I didn't object. It felt good to relax.

We ate dinner and then Kip gave me a ride to the Feather Lodge and I turned in for the night.

TUESDAY APRIL 19-WEDNESDAY APRIL 20, 2016

In the morning, Kip took me to breakfast. We sat with two older men. Kip introduced me.

"What's your name?" one of the men said.

"Kenny Dyer-Redner," I said.

“Dyer? Mike Dyer?”

“Yeah,” I said. “That was my grandpa.”

“I knew Mike,” The man said, “He was my roping partner.”

“Jones,” He said. “I’m Bob Jones.”

“Oh, yeah. Your name sounds familiar.”

“Yeah, I knew Mike.” He smiled. “This one time we were roping down there in Nixon and I got all drunk. The next day I wouldn’t wake up and then they said to just leave me there. But Mike felt bad for me. He got me up, gave me some coffee, and we ended up winning the team roping down there.”

I laughed. It felt good to hear stories about my grandpa.

The other man there said, “You used to run with Red Storm, huh? With Vinnie and them guys.”

“Yeah,” I said.

“I remember you. You guys had a tough team. Kenny Redner, yep. I remember you. Do you still play ball?”

“No, not much. I kind of stopped when I started boxing at UNR.”

“Oh, okay.”

He asked what I was doing now. I told them about how I was in graduate school down in Arizona, how I was riding my bike to the different Indian reservations around Nevada. After that I sat there and drank coffee and listened to the men talk, listened to them tell their stories. I wondered how I would be when I got their age. How would the world look? Would I be on some reservation somewhere or would I be in some urban

environment, sequestered away from my Paiute and Shoshone relatives, wrapped up in books and writing.

After a bit we took off. I had to be in Elko to do a presentation at the Great Basin College. Kip drove me down. We took the back way to Elko. He said that there was better scenery. He was right. The only thing that irked me was the huge ranches. I told Kip about when I was riding up two days ago, when it started getting dark I was looking for a place to go camping and there was nowhere to go because of all the privately owned land. He said, “Yep. These farmers got million dollar operations.” As we drove he pointed out the mansions that the farmers lived in. “And his son lives down here.” He pointed out another mansion. I immediately thought of the south, how the slave owners resided on these huge farms, living in mansions and collected money off of slave labor and the land. It made me mad all over again. I didn’t say anything though.

One thing that I was aware of was how fast we were moving. On the bike ride the mountain and landmarks were with me, but in the car we zipped by, the landscape merely an image through the windows.

After about an hour and a half we pulled into Elko. We stopped at a casino to use the restroom. Then we went searching for the college. Kip had to pull it up on his phone. After we found the college I went to meet Dr. Laurie Walsh. She was my contact there. Dr. Walsh is an anthropologist. She was kind and excited for my presentation. She took me to the room where I would be presenting and asked if I needed anything. She handed me a water.

I thanked her for everything and then I set to work writing some things on the board: definitions for colonization and decolonization, my theoretical framework, an

illustration of the route I had ridden. I also wrote the names of some key scholars: Eve Tuck, Patrick Wolfe, Glen Sean Coulthard, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, and Lemmy DeBruyn. These were some of the scholars that were going to make up the meat of the theoretical framework. As the time approached people began to show up. I was a little nervous but I knew that with this audience I would be sticking mostly to the academic stuff and that was easy as far as I was concerned.

When the time came I introduced myself and told them about my project. I highlighted some of the themes and then went into the theoretical framework. At the end they asked questions. There were a few Shoshone students. There were some faculty and others from the college. It was a pretty good showing and I think that most people were interested with what I had to say. An older woman spoke to me in Shoshone. I had to tell her that I didn't speak Shoshone. She translated what she said and told me that she liked what I was doing. She said it was important for the young people to be aware and learn the language and take care of the land.

At the end Dr. Walsh was so impressed with what I had to say that she contacted a friend of hers that works for the local news. She asked if I wanted to do an interview. I said, "Yeah, sure."

"Okay, good, because I already called them."

I laughed, "Yeah, that's fine."

Kip stuck around for the presentation.

Dr. Walsh took us to lunch and then the news reporter showed up and I did a short interview. After that I said bye to Dr. Walsh and she said that if I needed anything to just contact her. I thanked her.

Me and Kip took off. He had to get some groceries and I was supposed to get on the road. I was going to ride the short distance to Carlin, Nevada. It's about twenty miles south west of Elko. We parked in the Walmart parking lot and I got my bike out. I shook hands with Kip and he told me to stay in touch. I thanked him and we hugged and then I took off.

I was feeling sick and wasn't up for riding anywhere so I got a room for the night. I ate some soup and fell asleep. In the morning I was worse. My head ached, I felt cold and shivered. I walked to the grocery store and bought some over the counter drugs. I went back to the room, took the pills and fell back asleep. I paid for another night at the room. I quarantined myself in the room.

APRIL 21, 2016

CARLIN (23 MILES)

I headed out for Carlin around lunch time. I was still feeling lethargic but I knew that I had to get on the road. I was growing weary and I missed my family. I wanted to be done with this trip. Maybe it was the arduous attempt to get to Owyhee that had made me sick. Nevertheless, I packed up my things and headed out the door. The ride started out fine. There was a slight decline and the sun was out. But after thirty minutes or so the wind started. It blew me from side to side. I still couldn't deal with it. I was getting frustrated.

That's when I saw someone walking towards me. Look at this guy, I thought. As I got closer I realized it was an older white man.

I stopped when we reached each other. "Hey," I said, "how's it going? What are you doing?"

He was pushing a cart with the United States flag attached to it. He had on a reflective vest and he seemed genuinely happy. He told me his name was Pete and he was from Richmond, Virginia. Every spring and fall he walks across the United States. He picks up where ever he leaves off at. He said that he just has to finish Nevada and in the fall he'll walk across California and then he'll be done. "And I'm eighty-two years young," he said, "so I think I'm doing pretty good."

"Wow," I said. "That's amazing." I told him about my project.

"That's good," he said. "It's always good for the kids."

We took some pictures and then Pete took off, walking northeast while I pedaled southwest. As I left Pete said, "Keep up your good work."

My work, I thought. What is my work? Is it writing? Is it storytelling? Is it working with youth? Where do I belong in this world? In the Indigenous world, where do I fit in?

After that chance meeting with Pete, I began to feel better. Wind or no wind I was happy to be out and moving. I cruised on for about an hour or two and into a canyon. I stopped and ate a grapefruit. I relaxed in the shade for a bit. Then I was on the road again and soon rolled into the small town of Carlin.

I was getting sick of motels so I ventured on. There didn't seem to be any good camping. I stopped at a gas station on the edge of town and asked if there was any place to camp out. The cashier said that she did not know. I rode out to the edge of the town and looked at the road that led south to Eureka. It didn't look promising so I called my wife. She said, "You should just get a room for the night." I pedaled back into town and reluctantly got another room.

FRIDAY APRIL 22, 2016

EUREKA (92.4 MILES)

I woke in the morning and ate breakfast the hotel provided. I was still feeling a little sick but I felt much better than I had a few days ago. After breakfast, I took a shower, loaded up my bike, and left. I did not want to see the inside of another motel or hotel for a long time.

At nearly one hundred miles, I knew that I had a long haul ahead. This was another opportunity to attempt hitting a hundred mile mark. The challenge excited me and I set off on another adventure.

The road was easy going and pleasant. There was very little traffic and I figured that would be the case for the majority of the ride. There weren't any major cities around and I assumed that the traffic would reflect that. Again, I worried about the wind. I could handle the hills and the distance, but the wind was relentless. It made everything all that more difficult. There was only a slight breeze and the sun was out. I felt good and strong and I pedaled on, enjoying myself.

Like the ride to Owyhee, there was a huge ranch. It stretched for miles and miles. Barbed wire fencing lined the road and every so often, there was a small sign that read, "Private property, no trespassing, no hunting, fishing, or camping." It was aggravating. I looked around at the mountains, the plants, the small streams. Shoshone land, I thought. Is it still Shoshone land? Could we claim this as our own? Are there sacred sites hidden back in these hills? Yes, I thought. You God Damn right this is our land. It will always be Shoshone land.

I moved on as my thoughts circled. The ride took me up some decent climbs and around the mountains. I had a good view of the land and it was enjoyable. After a couple hours, I stopped and ate lunch. I rode on and as I left the mountains and ventured into a long valley the wind started up. At first, it was only slight but as I rode onward, the wind got stronger.

I rode like this for a time, maybe two hours. I had to stop at one point because the sound of the wind was driving me crazy. The constant whoosh in my ears, the wind stunting my progress, the clouds, the rain, the cold—it was all zapping my energy and motivation. I looked for some place to set up camp, but in this long valley, there was no place to go. I had descended to a lower elevation and there were no trees in sight. Right now, my only option would be to set up camp next to the road. The only way I was going to do that, would be if the sun was setting and I had no chance of reaching my destination. I moved on.

After a while, I saw a sign that said, “Sheep Creek,” and a dirt road headed west. I took the road and ventured off to find a camping spot. It felt good to get off the main road. I stopped and found a spot where I had the hint of cell phone service. I figured it would be good to tell my wife what I was doing and where I was going. The cell phone service was spotty and it took a few attempts to get through. Once I did, I told my wife where I was and what I was doing. She said, “Be careful and call me in the morning.”

I road onward, but the mountains were a good distance and I didn’t want to ride that far just to campout. I circled around and found a decent spot hidden from the road. I set up my tent and covered my bike. I was still frustrated from the wind. I lie down in my tent, and fell asleep. It was about 4:00 pm. When I woke up the sun was about to set. I got



up quickly and walked around a bit. It wasn't the most ideal place to camp but it was probably the best I was going to find. I didn't feel like making a fire so I ate some of my snacks, drank some water, and set about reading my book. It was raining a little and as the sun set and it grew dark, the rain continued. I had misplaced my headlamp and had to use the flashlight on my phone. The battery on my phone was low and I didn't want it to die so I turned it off. It felt strange in complete darkness. I rifled through my bag and found my ipad. I read some of the things I had saved. There were pdf documents, scholarly articles, and some of my fiction writing. I chose to read my own writing.

I laughed at my stories. They were about me, of course, growing up on the reservation. The characters were my family and my cousins. The setting was the reservation where I grew up. In one story, a young boy and his older brother fight to impress their drunk grandfather. In another a teenage boy tries to cope with the fact that his girlfriend is pregnant. In yet another, a young boy reasons that being sexually abused is, "Not a big deal at all. It's happened to many boys, many children. And it was only *once!* It's nothing really."

That night, as I lay in the dark, I thought about my life. How it had all led to this moment. Rain constantly pattered my tent. The stories I had written were about me and yet, in the way that fiction writing functions, weren't about me. They were true and not true at the same time. They were specific and universal. While I had enjoyed meeting and speaking with the different people I had met, I was happy to be alone. Content in solitude, in that peculiar way that only an artist can be happy when she or he is creating or thinking creatively. Yielding to the muse! I had not made any definite plans for my trip. Even my supposed theoretical framework was a contrived academic iteration. It

wasn't real. It was mired in the language of scholarly thought. It wasn't a true representation of who I was and who I want to be. I am an artist.

I am artist in part because of my nature but also because of my environment. After I had been sexually abused I lived in a constant state of fear, shame, and guilt. I lived a half-existence, a fractured part of who I should have been. These emotions manifested themselves through my actions as a child, teenager, and man. I preferred and still prefer being alone. I would rather suffer in solitude than speak up. I doubt my abilities. I always fear that someone is trying to take advantage of me. I suffer from bouts of depression. My boxing coach's words come to mind, "You're scared, Kenny."

I have been able to cope with these emotions in part through my athletic ability. My physical talents have allowed me to channel my anger, they have been a source of release, and finally as a means to resist pathological negative thinking. Without athletics there's no telling what kind of person I would be today. A drug addict? Certainly. An alcoholic? No doubt. A sex offender? Most likely. There's also a strong case that I would have put a bullet in my head. It's true that I've thought about it since I was a child. For most of my life, I blamed myself for what happened. I wasn't strong enough. I wasn't mean enough. How could I be so stupid? I was constantly telling this narrative to myself. This was the story that I had created. However, I was able to deal and continue to deal with these thoughts and emotions through my physical abilities, and now artistic talents. These skills provide the necessary resistance that keeps me moving, that help me to continue.

I fell asleep late in the night. I'm not sure what time it was but I lay awake thinking about what seemed like everything.

SATURDAY APRIL 23, 2016

I woke in the morning feeling much better. I had an okay night's sleep. It had rained all night. I got up and began packing up my things. Under my tent a small puddle had collected on top of the tent footprint. The floor of my tent, my sleeping pad, and part of my sleeping bag were wet. This irritated me. I packed everything up and shoved it into my panniers. It was an untidy packing, but I was frustrated and wanted to get on the road.

I ate a little of my snacks: peanut butter, fruit, candy, and drank some water. In the water, I added a little packet of emergen-c. This would provide some vitamins and electrolytes. After everything was packed, I called my wife. She asked how it went last night. I told her how it rained all night. I told her how I misplaced my headlamp and had to sit in the pitch black.

“Are you leaving now?” she asked.

“Yeah,” I said, “I probably got about seven hours to reach Eureka.”

“Okay, be careful and call me if you can.”

“Okay, love you.”

“Love you too.”

With that I set off again. It was still windy but not as bad. I fretted over this for a little while and then I figured that there was nothing I could do about it and there was no sense in getting angry. I pedaled onward. The ride was frustrating at first, and it was cold. The wind was not strong but it blew cold air into my face. I took off my helmet and put on my beanie. Very few cars passed by. The road seemed to stretch on and on. I rode for a few hours before I decided to pull over and eat my lunch. I ate a grapefruit, jerky, and

mixed nuts. I used my small stove to brew some tea. The tea warmed me and I felt good and relaxed.

I spread my coat on the ground and lay down. It was nice there, but after a bit it got cold again. I put on my gloves and set off. I still had a long way to go. It was relatively flat and there were no cars and while the weather was not the best, it still felt good to be out on the road. It rained a little here and there. Once I finally crossed the long valley I climbed a mountain and when I reached the summit I took another break. A car passed and the driver and passenger looked at me curiously. I smiled. They simply drove onward. This seemed like such a secluded place. It reminded me of the opening to Sherman Alexie's book *Reservation Blues*, "In one hundred and eleven years since the creation of the Spokane reservation in 1881, not one person, Indian or otherwise, had ever arrived by accident" (3)<sup>1</sup>. Indeed no one would accidentally find himself out here. It would be a purposeful pursuit. And so, what was I doing out here? A lot had happened in the last three-and-a-half weeks. I had ridden almost one thousand miles and yet it had all happened so quickly. What, if any, sense could be made of this endeavor? I was supposed to film a ton of things, interviews and daily video logs. I didn't do that. I was also supposed to write in my journal. I didn't do that either. I tried to do both, but interviewing people made me feel uncomfortable and writing in my journal felt robotic. Now that I was close to the end, it seemed my only purpose was to get back to my wife and kids.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexie, Sherman. *Reservation Blues*. New York: Grove Press, 1995.

The day grew long and I was tired from the hours in the saddle. I pedaled onward. I stopped at a historical sign and snapped a few photos. I knew that I was getting close but my legs were spent and I struggled to finish those last ten miles.

Eventually I pulled into Eureka. I rode down the main road. I stopped at a restaurant and ate a French dip with fries and a salad. After that I called my wife and told her I made it to Eureka. It had taken me about eight hours.

“What are you going to do?”

“I don’t know. I’m sick of motels. I want to camp out somewhere.”

“Is there any place to set up your tent?”

“I don’t know. Not really.”

“You better just get a room again.”

“Yeah. Probably.”

I told her that I loved her and I wanted to go home. She said that she missed me and that she needed me to come home too.

I looked around, cursed and then got a room at a motel. Once in the room I took out my wet tent, sleeping pad, and sleeping bag and hung them up to dry. I took a shower and settled in for the night.

SUNDAY APRIL 24, 2016

AUSTIN (69 MILES)

I woke up the next day and got breakfast at the restaurant across the street. I went back to my room and began packing my things. I couldn’t find my sunglasses so I retraced my steps and asked the people if anyone had turned in some sunglasses. I didn’t hold out

hope though. I had to count them as a loss. I filled up my water bottles and took off. It was about 10:00 am. My mom had texted me and asked when I was going to be in Austin. I told her around 5:00 pm. She said that some people from the Yomba Shoshone tribe would be waiting for me. They were going to have food ready for me. My mom said that she would be there with my daughter.

I ventured off on another long day in the saddle. Physically I had held up pretty good. My right knee was a little sore. I tried to adjust my setup so that I would be comfortable. But, after a certain amount of time, riding a bike can just be uncomfortable and there was no real way to get around that. My limit was about three hours. After that mark I needed to get off and rest. The ride to Austin was long. It was made longer by the fact that you could see the road stretched out for miles. There were these huge valleys and you could see everything.

It was overcast and dark storm clouds hovered overhead. I was happy about this because I had lost my sunglasses. If the sun was out I would need to find a way to shade my eyes. That wasn't necessary though. It was cold in spots and it sprinkled small rain drops every once in a while. After a few hours I stopped at a rest stop and ate my lunch. It was too cold to sit still for too long though so I was forced to move on.

A little while after my break I crossed paths with two bicycle tourists heading the opposite direction. We chatted for a bit. The couple had started in Sacramento, California and were attempting to get to Raleigh, North Carolina. I told them about my trip how I had visited several different Indian reservations around Nevada. After a few pictures we said bye and went our separate ways.

I could see in the distance the mountain range that would lead me into Austin. I had been on the road for about five hours. I was tired and the incline in the road made it all the more difficult. I alternated between pushing and riding my bike. Once I got to the foot of the mountain range I knew that the difficult part had just started. I saddled up and pushed the pedals. I was eager to reach the campsite where my mom, daughter, and others from the Yomba Shoshone tribe would be waiting for me. I pedaled hard, forcing myself to stay on the bike. I was tired but I continued to pedal up the mountain. It started raining and still I pushed forward. To the left the mountain range rose up, beautiful, topped with snow and covered in fog. My grandfather's parents had come from this region of Nevada. It was in a sense, my ancestral home. I thought of my grandpa, of my great grandparents and the many ancestors that I had never met. It must have been the difficulty of the ride, the rain, and the fact that I was reaching the end of the trip, but I broke down right there and started crying. For what I couldn't really say. I got off my bike, sat on the ground and wept for what was gone, for my grandparents, for Paiute and Shoshone people. I wept for myself, for having to endure. I wept for the stories.

Once I gathered myself I saddled up again and set off. I still had a little ways to go before I reached my destination. Or was this it? Is this what I was looking for, this small emotional break? Had I been in search of this moment? Why had it taken so long to reach it? How could I know? I had approached this project like a story. I had a vague plan, but it was the act of exploring that would reveal the truth to me. Suddenly, like the act of writing a story, a bit of our subconscious would be revealed. It wasn't the process of building an edifice but rather the persistent chipping away that revealed what I was looking for. But I didn't know it then. I was simply riding my bike and thinking.

Eventually I reached the Bob Scott campground where my mom, daughter and others were waiting for me. They had a stew prepared. The young woman from UNR, Marissa, was there with her family. She gave me a cup of coffee. It was great to see everyone. I hugged my mom and daughter. Some of the Hooper and Street family were there. They were all relatives of mine, though I didn't know them real well. Johnny Bob was there as well. He was the spiritual leader of the Yomba Shoshone tribe and before we ate dinner he said a prayer and sang some songs in Shoshone. He asked me what I was doing. I told him how I was riding my bike to different reservations to see the land and meet different people. He asked if I was talking to people about the Ruby Valley Treaty which promised a reservation for Shoshone people near Elko, Nevada but was never upheld. I told him that I hadn't but I was familiar with the Ruby Valley Treaty. He said it was good what I was doing. He told me that as I go along I could pray for the land. "Offer water," he said.

It was cold. They had a big fire going and it felt good to stand next to the heat. As the sunset, everyone began to get ready to leave. I set up my tent and got everything prepared for the night. I said bye to everyone and thanked them for everything. Tomorrow I would try to make it back to Fallon. It was just over one hundred miles. I thought though, that perhaps I would stop at the Middle Gate Station. This would mean that it would take me two days to get back to the reservation in Fallon, but I wouldn't need to ride a hundred miles. I could split the ride into two fifty mile rides.

I sat down and waited for the fire to die out. That's when it started snowing. I called my wife and told her where I was at and that I was camping out for the night. I told her that it was snowing pretty good.



“Is it cold?” she asked.

“Yeah, but it’s not too bad.”

“Are you going to be okay for the night?”

“Yeah, I’ll be fine.” I said.

We talked for a little while longer and then I told her I would call her in the morning. I sat outside for a bit, and when I was certain the fire was going to die out, I retired to my tent for the night. I was awake for a while reading the book I bought in Eureka. It was hardboiled, detective fiction. It reminded me of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, though I didn’t know anything about this author, Mickey Spillane. It was entertaining though. The snow kept on for hours. I peeked outside and big snowflakes were wafting through the air. The ground was covered in snow and I laughed. It was going to be interesting tomorrow, trying to figure out how to ride or walk in all this snow.

MONDAY APRIL 25, 2016

In the morning, I woke up to about three inches of snow on the ground. I had woken up through the night to knock the snow off the top of my tent. I wasn’t excited about the prospect of walking in the snow. It had probably turned to slush on the roads. There was no way I could ride with the bike that I had. My bike was a road oriented machine. While it could fit wide tires, it couldn’t fit the kind of tires that could handle slippery slush. I looked at my basketball shoes. They weren’t water resistant in any way. Sloshing around with wet feet is annoying. I called my wife again.

She asked how I slept. I told her about the snow. I told her that there was snow everywhere. I asked her what I should do. She said, “I don’t know.”

“I could hoof it to Austin and then see if someone will give me a ride.”

“How far is it to Austin?”

“I don’t know. Five miles maybe, all uphill.”

I told her that I would think about it and then give her a call back. I sat in my tent. I put on my shoes and tip toed out. I wanted to survey the scene. Maybe the roads were clear. I couldn’t tell from my campsite, but I did see cars passing by every so often. That meant that the roads were okay to drive. I went back to my tent and sat there for a bit, thinking. I was pretty much done with my trip. All I was trying to do was get back to Fallon so I could make my flight back to Phoenix. It had been twenty-four days since I left my grandma’s house. Nearly a month had passed and I had ridden most of it, or at least attempted to ride. I saw the land, I met different people, and talked to some Native youth. I figured that this last stretch wasn’t all that important. I called my mom.

I told my mom that it had snowed pretty good and I didn’t feel like riding in it. I asked if she could come pick me up. She said that she had some things to do but that she could be here in a few hours. After that I called my wife and told her that my mom was going to pick me up. I waited there and read my book.

It seemed like it didn’t take my mom long to get there. I quickly packed up my things and put my bike in the back of the truck. And then we took off.

Austin was still quite a distance away. My estimation of five miles was fairly accurate. In a car that distance is nothing to raise an eyebrow at, but on a bike, uphill, and in the snow it’s a completely different story. We stopped at the gas station and I bought a

cup of coffee. There I saw two young girls loading up their bikes onto a flatbed truck. I walked up and introduced myself to them. We laughed at our luck, bicycle touring in the snow. She said they were going to get a ride to Middlegate. I told them I called my mommy to come pick me up. She said, "Shutup, you did not call your mom." I laughed and admitted that my mom did indeed come to rescue me. I explained that she didn't live too far away and I was nearing the end of my tour. We traded stories about the road and then I said bye to the two young ladies and got in the pickup with my mom. We cruised west on highway 50 and I looked at the landscape as we zipped by. I imagined riding it. It was windy and cold. There were some hills and then long valleys. I had reached the end of my trip. We rolled back onto the reservation. This was where I had grown up, this is the place that I called home. But, that notion of home was changing and I couldn't exactly explain how or why.

## CONCLUSION

APRIL 27, 2015

The next day I woke up at 7:30 and met up with one of my cousins for breakfast. I couldn't concentrate though. I kept thinking about the previous night, when I was moved beyond madness. Like I said, I had been angry before, but never like that. There was motivation behind that anger. Perhaps it was what I was searching for all this time? Maybe beyond the American Indian Studies program and this project, is it possible that I was destined to explore the Nevada landscape by bicycle, to interact with the people; maybe it was the great swaths of time riding my bike, looking at the mountains, seemingly thinking about nothing; maybe it was the physical act of occupying my body

with the rotation of the pedals, occupying the forefront of my consciousness that allowed me to dig deeper into my psyche? Was I searching for freedom from the burden that has shackled me nearly all of my life?

When I was thirteen, my father took me to Oglala, South Dakota to complete the Lakota manhood ceremony. My father had close ties to the Lakota people from his days in the American Indian Movement and, before he converted to Islam in 2001, he identified spiritually as a Lakota. He felt that it was important that we (my brother and I) learn these things as well. What happened up on that mountain top, what I experienced is for me to make sense of. However, when I came down after two days and two nights without food or water, the Holy Man gave me a Lakota name. Roughly translated into English, it means, “He who is surrounded by his enemies.” The name, as explained to me, was taken from my father’s life, when he was in Vietnam and he was surrounded by enemies. The Holy Man also explained to me that the name would take on a different meaning for me. I have thought about that name from time to time. I did not know how to make sense of it until recently. It has been through this process of reflection, reading, and writing that allowed me to derive meaning.

For a long time I have blamed myself for a great many things, most namely for the sexual abuse I experienced as a child. Not only that but I blamed everyone around me too: my mother and father. I was angry and in many ways still carry that pain with me, shoved deep down. I wanted to flee the reservation and never look back. I was going to do that with basketball or football. But, when it came down to it, when the clock was ticking down, when the game was on the line, I doubted myself. I was scared. It wasn’t like I had a reason to think this. Everyone around me believed in me (I had over thirty

recruiting letters from Division-I schools!). It was my mind. I was “surrounded” and the “enemy” was me. How did the Lakota Holy Man know that? How did he predict that?

After eating breakfast with my cousin I went back to my grandmother’s. I packed my things. I was going to leave again, ride my bike sixty miles to Reno to catch my flight back to Phoenix. But first I had to confront my brother. I drove to my mom’s house and there my brother and I got into a cursing match while my mom cried. I left after that, saying, “I’m never coming back.”

I had bicycled approximately 900 miles. It was not nearly the amount of mileage that I had wanted to accomplish. But in the end, it wasn’t really about the bicycle tour. The tour was just the means and the bike was just the vehicle. But, the bicycle allowed me to experience the land in an intimate way, it helped me meet and make friends with different Indigenous people on different reservations. I didn’t know it at the time, but I was experiencing story in real time. I was living a story. It was the process of an artist. It was an idea. It was the process of healing through storytelling. And in the end it was the story that helped me see. It was the story that led me here, to these conclusions.