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Nesper and Pickering paper

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The Ojibwe from Lac du Flambeau and the Lakota are both engaged in a struggle to “resist, endure, and thrive” incorporation by maintaining and using their culture. Flambeau’s struggle is to retain their treaty rights and through that their cultural identity is reborn. The same can be said for the Lakota people of South Dakota who would rather be culturally intact than better off economically. They choose to be richer in culture than financially. Cultural ways are important for Lakota people and they fight to thrive culturally even if they are considered in the so called “periphery”. Both tribes are fighting to maintain, conserve, and re-introduce their native culture to their younger generations.

In *Walleye War* by Larry Nesper, the Ojibwe of Lac du Flambeau fight to retain their cultural identity and treaty rights. According to treaty rights signed in 1837, 1842, and 1854 by the federal government, the Ojibwe have the right to spearfish off the reservation on ceded territory and they fought for those rights against the state of Wisconsin, basically their tribal council, and the citizens of Wisconsin. However, they relate this happening in relation to their prophecy of the seventh fire, when a time of lost traditions would be renewed. So in their fight for treaty rights they know that in this time their lost cultural traditions will be revived so they have a spiritual ideal that will prevail.

The Lakota are constantly being drawn into the world economy even though they try to resist by their cultural lifestyle of minimizing their need for cash through bartering,

trade, gardens, etc. They had more of a cash economy, and tribes began exporting resources such as coal, uranium, etc. for cash. However some thought the reservations were artificial economies because most of their money comes from the government.

The protesters became hostile and cruel because they felt the Ojibwe were getting special rights, and because of the environmental and economic threat by the Ojibwe in their time to spearfish since it was spawning season in the springtime. They crowded the boat landings with brutal signs saying for example, "Spear a squaw save a walleye" and they shouted demeaning, abusive language at Ojibwe spear fishermen like "you timber niggers" because they thought they were taking all the fish, it was a threat to their fishing tourism. When in reality they kill a lot of fish themselves just for sport and yet nobody says anything or it's not bad when they do it. The Ojibwe people spearfish for cultural reasons, they are providers for the people, they feed the community since most can't spearfish themselves so to them it's a part of survival whereas most northern Wisconsin people it is just a sport, that supports the tourist economy.

In their battle, the Ojibwe use cultural and political aspects to fight for their treaty rights and spear fishing movement. It started out political and then evolved into a more cultural characteristic. I say it started out political because the Ojibwe wanted their treaty rights officially upheld by courts since Wisconsin had been neglecting them, because once their treaties became upheld it gives them their sacred rights which leads to the revitalization of identity which ties into the cultural aspect. They began asserting identity as Native people.

Their spear fishing battle was non violent and symbolic because of their cultural aspects and because of their prophecies, rituals and the ogitchida. They would bring the

drum to the boat landing and sing and offer tobacco before they went spear fishing. When they brought the drum protesters couldn't tap into that sense of Ojibweness. It was also oppositional and even to non-Indian arguments. The Ojibwe had a sense of superiority that this was in the Ojibwe's order of doing things. They started answering in Ojibwe rather than English, and saying we're doing something that is essential to our well being. This battle began to show the differences of being Indian and non-Indian. It asserted the moral superiority of their values, as spiritual people connected to identity. They fight for their spear fishing because they were created to do this and it is not for tourism. Their ancestors spear fished and so will they, its part of their culture. The non-Indian people didn't realize that spear fishing was a significant cultural quality for Ojibwe life. The men carried on the regenerative life of the people and they do this today by spear fishing. It was the men's right of passage into manhood. So it provided even a more significant role in their struggle for treaty rights. The Walleye war gave men empowerment and the concept of warrior hood was reborn, and Ojibwe men became "Walleye Warriors".

The Lakota are the same in the sense of that threat of manhood. The men of Lakota origin are constantly relating to that tension of what they are suppose to do to become a good man in this society, when they are used to that warrior-ness theology.

Another way it escalated from political to cultural was the shift in the leadership of the tribal council to those who practiced treaty rights. The tribal council was more worried about selling out, selling the Ojibwe's sovereignty. They became involved in negotiations with the state to sell out treaty rights for money. However, most tribal members said, "If you take this money you're selling out your identity, and you're no

longer Ojibwe”. The result was the formation of the Wa-Swa-Gon Treaty Association (WTA). The WTA was a community organization, “it opposed accommodating the state’s interests through leasing off-reservation subsistence rights and worked instead to reorient tribal members toward more traditional cultural values and goals” (Nesper, 112). An important aspect of the WTA was its logo: a flaming birch bark torch circled by the group’s name. “The use of the old name and the appropriation of the visual symbol of the torch were intended to revive the traditional cultural identity of the reservation and recall the practice of hunting and fishing at night” (Nesper, 113). Lac du Flambeau is named after spear fishing. It sought membership in those of families who spear fished, those who were excluded from or at the margins of the tribe such as non-Indian spouses, Ojibwe’s from other reservations, neighbors, and their goals were to bring attention to the tribal council and what they were neglecting to do to help the Ojibwe people like preserve treaty rights, more communication between tribal members and council, take care of elderly, etc. They began advocating for the things the tribal council was neglecting. They set forth to promote Flambeau’s distinct cultural heritage, and they stressed identity of people really concerned about culture and reached out to people getting less benefits from the tribe and asked them to join their cause. They also brought their battle to AIM’s attention (American Indian Movement) to seek help and they made it about racism and injustice, and they take it out of the hands of people in the battle and made it know nationally. However, they made AIM their allies not their boss.

Throughout this ordeal there was a sense that it became factional. Like a division among the Ojibwe, in a sense more of a traditionalist vs. progressives. The traditionalists were the spear fishing group and those who were more or less culturally intact. Whereas

the progressives were usually those who lived off the reservation and were willing to sell out their rights, and those who were mostly “mix blood”. The same can be said for the Lakota people. There was also a split culturally. The traditionalist were the one’s who lived on the land and were not willing to relocate to cities or work in factories. Whereas the progressives were getting the majority of the jobs because they were more assimilated into the white way of life and less into Native culture.

In the end it was a reframing of the spear fishing Ojibwe, representing the warriors and the people who went out and fought for treaty rights. It brought about the regeneration of the people culturally. I also felt that the actions and behaviors of the protesters demonstrated that they were morally superior over the Indians. The spear fishermen were taken aback at the vicious non-Indian protesters actions. The Indian spear fishermen then called AIM and the media so that the world could see that racism was alive and at a fever pitch in northern Wisconsin.

In comparison the Lakota are constantly unintentionally being drawn into the world economy. Most chose not to embrace the economic system but they were forced to because they have few benefits. So they become involved in the economic system, through healthcare, public assistance, disability, and social security. Most choose to resist but are continually debating the idea of embracing the world system for the sake of their children or younger generation, but are then faced with the threat of losing cultural ties.

Both the Ojibwe and Lakota are trying to resist, endure, and thrive in this lifestyle of non-Indian people while maintaining their cultural beliefs and way of life. The Ojibwe resist through fighting for their treaty rights, and the Lakota to keep their cultural ways without being drawn into the world economy.