My Cry Gets Up to My Throat:

Slow Museology and Collaborative Filmmaking in the Mandan Hidatsa Arikara Nation

From Museum Collection to Documentary Video

The relationships and materials that are being developed through collaborative museum anthropology are utilizing new media, producing new sources for historicizing the present, and developing new collections for museums and tribal communities alike.¹ This is exemplified in our collaborative work with members of the Mandan Hidatsa Arikara (MHA) Nation on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota, which began with a museum collection consultation that led to a co-directed research project in which community members requested video as an appropriate and preferred outcome of our oral history work together. As video equipment for amateur use has gained in quality and decreased in cost, complying with such requests has become far more possible than in the past. Our community partners understood we were not professional filmmakers, and did not expect a polished film. With a Sony HD Camcorder, a tripod, wireless mics and some portable lights – along with university student assistants – we were able to accomplish a video documentary that was approved and appreciated by the people with whom we worked.

Given the troubled history and relations among US tribes, anthropologists and collectors, and museums (Ames 1992; Clifford 1997: 188-219; Erikson et. al .2002; Jacknis 2002:19-72; Stocking 1985), this video project which included MHA tribal members and descendants of the MHA collection donor arose from a unique partnership in museum and anthropological practice in which collaboration is usually considered only between the museum and the tribe being represented. Our University of Colorado Museum of Natural History (UCMNH) houses a
collection of MHA items donated by the family of Reverend Harold Case, who worked at Fort Berthold from the 1920s to the 1960s. Rather than only assembling individual oral history interviews as an archive for the university and tribal museums, community members requested we produce an edited documentary from these interviews – which, in turn, created a need for a coherent narrative to emerge from our work. This narrative is represented in the video documentary titled *My Cry Gets Up to My Throat: Reflections on Reverend Case, the Garrison Dam, and the Oil Boom in North Dakota* (2014).

I have worked on other kinds of collaborative projects with indigenous peoples that produced such visual media as interactive websites (Shannon 2014b, 2012) and museum exhibits (Shannon 2014a), but this medium felt the most intimate and the most inviting to community editing – perhaps because this particular project was always intended primarily for internal community use, unlike the others. In any case, it became clear from the start and in the final screening that not only did the medium of video allow for increased access to research outcomes through online and DVD distribution, but it also increased the amount of feedback from and impact within the community. Unlike a scholarly article or book, or a website that requires internet connection or an exhibit that is located away from home, video is something entirely approachable in its form and familiar in its use. A group can review it together, at a time and place convenient to them, whether by DVD or online as streaming video. It is something they can pass out to others and pass on to later generations. It is commonly found both in a museum archive and on a living room shelf. And, as was evident in responses to the documentary we created, beyond the messages that were being communicated about the past and today, the sensory experience of seeing elders and hearing their voices was powerful and moving for MHA community members.
The Mandan Hidatsa and Arikara tribes, also known as the Three Affiliated Tribes or MHA Nation, have lived together since the mid-19th century after their populations had been drastically reduced in number through disease, intertribal warfare with the Dakota Sioux, and other hardships. Today, about half of the estimated 14,000 tribal members live on the Fort Berthold reservation which was established by the US government in 1870. Like other reservations in the United States, the MHA Nation is a sovereign tribal nation with its own constitution, government, police force, tribal courts, and health and education programs. From when MHA tribal representatives signed the Fort Laramie Treaty in 1851 to present day, the land base of the MHA Nation has been reduced from 12,500,000 to 457,837 acres (Berman 1988).

Contributing to this reduction in MHA Nation lands was the Garrison Dam, completed in 1953 by the US Army Corps of Engineers – another large scale event, like small pox in the 19th century, which community members identify as contributing to intergenerational trauma. The resulting reservoir covered 155,000 acres that was home to the most precious lands and settlements on the reservation. The resulting flood devastated the MHA community, inundating homes and forcibly relocating 90% of tribal members to other parts of the reservation (Berman 2003, Lawson 2009). Tribal members moved from the fertile Missouri River bottomlands to the harsher bluffs above, and were scattered into six different segments separated by the newly created lake. MHA community members were not only relocated to other areas of the reservation in 1953 but also to cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, and Denver as part of a broader US policy formalized in the Indian Relocation Act of 1956. This act aimed to move Native Americans away from reservations, provide them with employment assistance, and in so doing support the government’s policy of termination at the time which focused on dismantling reservations and terminating the government’s trust responsibility to tribes (Fixico 2000: 10).
Rev. Case was a missionary who lived at Fort Berthold during these times; he arrived to the reservation in 1922 and continued to work there for over forty years (Maxfield 1986). It was an especially traumatic time for the community in the 1940s and 1950s when the US government planned and constructed the Garrison Dam project. As historian Marilyn Hudson notes, “in the end the people, seeing that it was inevitable, agreed to the Garrison Dam” by voting for the project, and hoped in doing so they would get better value for their confiscated lands. 4 Tribal members in particular told us they wanted to better understand the life and times of a missionary who, as Elgin Crows Breast put it, “eased their pain” during this “difficult transition.” Or, as elder Ed Hall asked us to investigate, why would Rev. Case come so far from the comfort of his home on the east coast and stay a lifetime? In addition, as community members explained, the research we began in 2011 was timely given the subject matter and the age of those who personally knew Reverend Case: “Reverend Case’s memory lives on in the hearts and minds of many of our tribal members today, although most of them are over 55 years old today. That is why it is extremely timely that a project of this scope be initiated as soon as possible. Many of our people have health issues which has shortened our lifespan considerably, no doubt as a direct result of this massive relocation of our communities to the bench lands surround[ing] the Garrison Reservoir now called Lake Sakakawea.”

Through collaborative anthropology and in the resulting documentary, MHA community and Case family members reflect on Rev. Case, his role in the community, his assistance during a difficult time of transition for the MHA Nation, his efforts to stop the removal of the MHA Nation from their homelands, and how the times in which he lived influence how people think about what is happening in the community today. Connecting Garrison Dam project to the oil boom today, oral history shows how our experiences of the past shape how we understand the
present. As one community member stated, “The Oil Boom is the Garrison Dam of my generation.”

Our collaboration with MHA Nation members and the Case family has shown how museum collections, conceived of here as tangible/material culture and intangible/oral history video, can become a community resource to reflect on changes in the community over time. As My Cry Gets Up to My Throat illustrates, collaborative filmmaking can serve as an important method for understanding the past, acting in the present, and preparing for the future.

**NAGPRA as a Foundation for Research**

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (1990) was a watershed moment in relations between Native Americans and museums; it also paved the way for direct consultations with Native communities and their access to collections. Although originally it was met warily by some museum professionals as having the potential to “empty” museum collections, today it is increasingly being viewed as a productive way to build relationships with tribes. Our NAGPRA consultation with the MHA Nation laid the foundation for our oral history video project.

NAGPRA liaisons Calvin Grinnell (MHA Tribal Historian and President of the State Historical Society of North Dakota) and Elgin Crows Breast (MHA Tribal Historic Preservation Officer) visited our museum in 2007 for a consultation on Native ancestors or human remains; at the time, they had expressed interest in some ethnographic items in our collection that might also fall under the law. After I was hired in 2009, I invited them to participate in a NAGPRA consultation/documentation grant. In 2011 we were awarded the grant and began the consultation
process, which led to the repatriation of sacred objects in 2014 (figure 1). From our meetings together, we developed a working relationship that developed into a research partnership.

![Figure 1](image_url)

**Figure 1**: UCMNH Collections Manager Christina Cain, author, and Elgin Crows Breast preparing items to return to the MHA Nation. Photo by Jan Bernstein. Shared with permission from NAGPRA liaisons.

When I asked whether they wanted us to do any further research about the MHA collections in our museum, Calvin and Elgin invited me to meet with them at Fort Berthold reservation in 2011 to discuss possibilities for what that might entail. In October 2011 we met with the two of them, along with Marilyn Hudson (Three Tribes Museum administrator) and Ed Hall (Director, MHA Nation Tomorrow) at the Three Tribes Museum. With a firm commitment to developing a co-directed research project, we asked the group whether they wanted us to do any additional research about the MHA collection in our museum, and if so – on what? They all agreed on a particular subject that was a surprise to us: they wanted us to focus on the “life and
times of Reverend Case,” who had amassed the collection of MHA objects and whose family had donated it to our museum.⁹

This advisory group not only explained what they wanted us to research, but also how: they wanted us to conduct oral history video interviews. And, they insisted an edited documentary would be an important outcome of our work together.¹⁰ When we posed this to Rev. Case’s grandchildren, they wholeheartedly agreed to this focus and offered to digitally share their private photo collection in service of the partnership as well. Together with the MHA advisory group and the Case family, we determined the outputs of our work together to include: the return of sacred objects through NAGPRA; an oral history video archive about the life and times of Rev. Case to be housed at the UCMNH and the Three Tribes Museum; and, an edited documentary. In addition, we created a password protected interactive website for Case family and MHA community members that includes images of all MHA items in our museum collection, the documentary, and images from a new photographic archive created from digitized private Case family photos as well as over two thousand scanned archival photos of from the Rev. Case archives at the State Historical Society of North Dakota.¹¹ Little did we know this project would lead us to documenting the contemporary oil boom in North Dakota.

Collaborative Filmmaking Process

We ended up working in a comparable way to Sarah Elder’s “community directed filmmaking,” which she had done in the 1970s, later altering the name to “community collaborative filmmaking” in the 1980s (Elder 1995: 98). We experienced similar guidance from community members which led to a similar process of shared authorship, and we held similar concerns about representation and sensitivities to consent. However, due to prohibitive costs associated with
travel to the Arctic, Elder was unable to show the community with whom she worked the final cut of the film. Because the MHA community was only a twelve hour drive away, we were able to go up multiple times at different stages in the development of the documentary. And, showing the final cut of the video initiated important group discussions that led to an interest in us pursuing a second documentary project which we began in August 2015.

Whenever talking about collaboration, it is important to be precise about the roles of the participants. Our primary research partners were Elgin Crows Breast, Calvin Grinnell, and Marilyn Hudson. Elgin was mainly responsible for bringing the advisory group together during our first visit to Fort Berthold and he introduced us to most of the people interviewed on video, sometimes bringing them to the Three Tribes Museum where we had our video equipment set up. Calvin and Marilyn also introduced us to interviewees and provided regular feedback on our progress, including helping to identify appropriate themes, editing the narrative script and suggesting which video clips to include or exclude (and providing feedback on this article). My own role for the video project was interviewer, camera person, director and producer. I worked with a variety of students in these various capacities, most notably Lex Mobley, an undergraduate Film Studies major who edited the video. MHA community members understood I was not a professional, and we appreciated their graciousness and acceptance of a powerful story wrapped in a more amateur package than what a professional documentary team might produce.

While we had worked with our small advisory group to develop appropriate questions for our oral history interviews about Rev. Case, it was community members’ responses to my final interview question that started to shape the narrative into a cohesive and timely story. With the simple question, “Is there anything else you’d like to add?,” almost every person discussed the
oil boom. As James Bear put it, “the oil boom is another story that needs to be told.” At the final film screening in November 2015, community members discussed this and the idea was born for a second documentary, focusing on contemporary life.

The timeline and iterative process stretched over four years and is ongoing (figure 2). After our initial interviews, Lex and I selected clips based on common themes and showed them in community meetings in 2013. We developed a first draft narrative from feedback on these themes, and then developed a draft video without “b roll” and showed that the following year. It was important to convey to the various groups on the reservation that we screened this draft to that it was incomplete and awaiting their input. So the title at the start of the video was, “What do you think the title should be?” to encourage feedback and the sense that this was unfinished work. We received substantive feedback, such as removing one clip, and what kinds of “b roll” we might add to the stories being told. We also conducted additional interviews at this time, as word about the project was spreading.

In November 2014 we showed the final cut at various locations on the reservation. We then produced two versions of the documentary: an MHA Cut that is one hour long with lengthier interviews and additional information about our museum, the NAGPRA consultation, and the MHA collection; and, the Public Cut, which is 47 minutes long and edited for the general public who may not have as much background knowledge of the MHA Nation. All interviewees received copies of their raw uncut interviews and the MHA Cut. The Three Tribes Museum received 25 copies on DVD for free distribution, and we continue to get requests for additional copies of both versions from MHA community and Case family members. The two versions of My Cry Gets Up to My Throat were also posted at Vimeo and the interactive community website.
Co-Directed Research

Developing the questions, methods, and outcomes of our research together.

Figure 2: Project timeline.

- **2010**: NAGPRA grant, consultation process, and documentation begins (funding for registration and documentation).
- **2011**: CUHMH invites MHA Nation to conduct NAGPRA consultation regarding ethnographic collection.
- **2011**: CUHMH visits MHA Nation to determine interest and focus of research project.
- **May 2011**: Visit to MHA Nation, oral history video documentation begins.
- **May 2012**: CUHMH visits MHA Nation to screen draft of video documentary and get community feedback.
- **May 2013**: MHA community members invited us to return to do a sequel documentary following up on elders’ suggestions that “the oil boom is another thing that needs to be talked about.”
- **May 2014**: CUHMH visits MHA Nation on site.
- **Jan 2015**: CUHMH visits MHA Nation. Final video screenings in multiple venues for feedback and final editing suggestions. Request copies for use in schools.
- **2015-2016**: Two video cuts—one for public and one for MHA Nation—are distributed by DVD to all participants and additional copies to the Three Tribes Museum, and posted online for free at vimeo.
Documenting the Life and Times of Reverend Case

Missionaries have been both positive and negative figures in Indian history and in the history of the MHA Nation in particular. As a missionary, Rev. Case was part of a larger movement to bring a “civilizing” influence to Native Americans that was an additional way to break up Indian communities alongside federal government policies of termination at the time. There are some ways, however, that Case did not fit in that mold – such as taking an active stance on behalf of the community for political causes, being inspired by the work of action anthropologist Sol Tax, and encouraging people to be proud of their heritage. While they began with a mission to prepare people living on the reservation to “live in the white world,” Rev. Harold and Eva Case later interpreted Native experience to outsiders and advocated on their behalf (Maxfield 1986). Rev. Case’s wife Eva is quoted as saying in a 1965 article in the Bismarck Tribune, “We learned more from the Indian people than they did from us” (Case and Case 1977: 546). Rev. Case both defended missions and noted how rapid change and efforts to disrupt traditional ways in the community were a cause for concern, setting up his efforts in opposition to the US government, an antagonism that would grow as planning for the Garrison Dam got underway. He ran a letter-writing campaign against the Garrison Dam and created a video, Grandmother River, which he brought to the US Congress to try to dissuade them from approving the dam (figure 3).

Bobbi Larson, an MHA community member, high school teacher, and American Indian studies graduate, sums up well the complexity that we were challenged with capturing in our representations of this figure in her community (figure 3): “I guess you could say that I’m a missionary, coming home. And hopefully I can make an impact like Reverend Case did. You know, even though we're two different colors, I think we can still blend, you know. And from my studies about missionaries, I just honestly cannot say good things about them in the past. But
today, Reverend Case, I guess, when he's brought to mind, reminds me of what one missionary can do.” She sees the general figure of the missionary as negative but this specific man as someone who cared for her family.

Figure 3: Bobbi Larson, video still.

Marilyn Hudson points to this complexity while also explaining the importance of oral history as a method. She introduces the documentary by saying, “Not only has the role of the missionary, the role of the church, as well as many other things has changed in the last generation...the leadership has changed, Indian people have changed, the world has changed. So, when we entered the era of what they call political correctness, and a lot during the 60s, the revolution of a lot of political thought, religious thought and so forth - the role of the missionaries on Indian reservations also came under a certain amount of scrutinization.” She explains the value of her point of view as someone who lived through these times: “My own feeling is that you cannot analyze something unless you participated in it... unless you were
actually, say, a member of that congregation, a student at that school, a resident at that boarding school, and so forth - I don't really think you can speak with firsthand knowledge. So,” she concludes, “I think over the years a lot of our missionaries and churches have gotten, like, a bad rap from people who weren't there, to explain. My own opinion is that our churches and our missions did a good job in… attending to the sick, helping people in need - which they still do today.”

These opening comments to *My Cry Gets Up to My Throat* point to important messages that our partners want to share with their audiences, whether they are MHA Nation members or the broader public. The explain how and why the missionary is a complex figure in Native communities and highlight the importance of Native accounts of Native experience. Or, as Juanita Helphrey puts it at the video’s conclusion, “We have stacks of books…pages after pages of stories told from the Native American and years ago it wasn’t like that at all... And it’s gratifying to know that. So, the truth will be told, a perspective will be realized, I think, from our point of view – that’s the best part.” As Juanita suggests, telling MHA history from an MHA perspective is empowering and future-oriented.

Similarly, as Julie Cruikshank’s (2002) and Keith Basso’s (1996) scholarship eloquently demonstrates, stories and narratives are not just about the past – they are also vehicles for communicating something, often moral lessons, about the present to a specific listener. Oral history is a way of historicizing the present – it provides an understanding of the present by situating it with respect to experiences of the past. This became clear as elders recalled Rev. Case and their associated memories of living through the damming of the Missouri River and the inundation of their homelands in the 1950s, and then without prompting turned their narrative to
the oil boom in North Dakota, and on their reservation, today. By telling these stories through video, they can be viewed, interpreted, and discussed in community groups.

In *My Cry Gets Up to My Throat*, community members describe Rev. Case as a busy man, who always wore a suit, knew everyone’s name, and warmly greeted everyone he encountered. What has emerged from various oral history accounts is not so much Rev. Case’s role as a minister – though there is talk about that, and about his voice as he sang in church. But more so, there is an appreciation for the kind of man he was – and this is important – from a child’s perspective (figure 4). These elders were small children at the time, so it is no wonder their personal recollections mainly focused on such things as a firm handshake and the look of his clothes or the sound of his laugh, rather than the specific content of his sermons or his political views.

![Figure 4: Reverend Case with children near the school in Elbowoods which was later flooded by the Garrison Dam, video still.](image-url)
Community members also explain how the dam, and missionization, were part of a larger and systematic effort to break apart Native communities and force them to assimilate. For example, Bobbi Larson explains, “Getting back to Elbowoods, I sure wish we had that community, because then we were whole. Now we're spread all over... I believe that once they split the communities up - and see that's always been the government's way of killing us off. Just put it bluntly: exterminating us... what better way than to turn people against each other.”

They describe what it felt like to see their homes go underwater, getting relocated to unfamiliar places with unfamiliar people, feeling powerless to stop the government’s actions, and how Rev. Case was involved throughout.

Not included in the video, but along similar lines, Eva Case explains from her own perspective in 1969, “Garrison Dam. That story has been told so many times, I wonder if I need to repeat!” She goes on to explain, “The people were unaware of this until about 1947 when stakes began to appear marked U.S.B.M. Inquiry proved that what was happening – one Indian interpreted them as ‘You Scalawags Better Move.’ Move they finally did, but not without a fight in which Harold was deeply involved. He helped them form the Indian Defense Association – of which he was elected secretary. This involved much letter writing, hundreds of meetings, trips to Washington, D.C., and even then the fight to save their beautiful valley and ‘Grandmother River,’ was lost. But the price paid for the land for the lake was raised from $2 million to $12 million” (Case and Case 1977: 321). She concludes noting that while they couldn’t stop the dam, through their lobbying they at least were able to increase the compensation received by the tribe.
Historicizing the Present and the Dysplacement of the MHA Nation

What we learned from the process of conducting oral history about Reverend Case and the times in which he lived was that elders had a unique standpoint on understanding the oil boom in their community today. Their perspective, that can only be gained from their lived experience being at Fort Berthold in the 1950s, illustrated how their tribal community has been doubly displaced: through relocation in 1953 away from their homelands on the Missouri River bottom, and then today as they remain in place in their new home but are “dysplaced” (Jackson 2011) where their home no longer looks, smells, or feels familiar due to the oil boom. Or, in Bernadine Young Bird’s words, the oil boom makes her feel that it is “not our land anymore,” that we are “alienated” and that you “feel like a stranger in your own home” where we are “trying to get back in again.”17 The oil boom is “seen as a kind of an attack on us. In our own land. We’re not being displaced like the Garrison Dam, but we’re having to stay here and still live under those conditions.”18

As James Bear notes, there are many community members who don’t know this history, or understand how it shapes their lives today. Like many other interviewees, without solicitation, he moved from the past and the Garrison Dam to the oil boom today: “And to a lot of our leaders, to them, this lake's always been there. You know, to our young people, this lake's always been there. It's a place to swim, and you get the money and buy yourself a boat and enjoy that lake. But us older people know what's underneath that water. A lot of our cemeteries, our graves, our loved ones, our ancestors, are underneath that water.” He continues, “We wish that it would just simply go and dry up, then we can move back home. It'd probably be a muddy place to be, but it would still be our home. But we don't own it anymore either, so. So that's another reality that we have to live with.” He concludes, “I think the oil boom in itself is another story that
needs to be told. I think a lot of people got affected by it, you know, in more ways than one. Some people don't even have land, some people are not even benefitting off of it. But their grandparents probably had land underneath the river. So I think all the enrolled members should benefit from it because of our ancestry. You know, we own all this land, and when you hear the news, they're always talking about the Bakken. And nobody ever talks about the Indians owning all this.”

Bobbi Larson conjured the most vivid image of how these two periods in MHA history are related: “It's happening all over again.... The oil boom. It is destroying us... When they were going to flood Elbowoods, they didn't tell them... They went sneakily all over the place, put their little yellow flags up, and ended up, one day, saying, ‘Sign this paper.’ And that's why you see George Gillette crying as he signs that paper [releasing tribal lands for the Garrison Dam]: because he was choiceless. And you... [can] see it today, where [it’s] Marathon Oil: ‘Sign this paper.’”

Gerry Nagel explains how oil companies came to community members to buy their land, keeping a secret that oil development was being planned on it. Gerry explains, “You're sitting out there in a farm tractor,... you had everything you own, on the ground. You're putting your crop in. And this guy drives up in a suit, he's got all these papers for you. There's no oil wells around, he's leasing that land for five bucks an acre - what are you going to do? You're going to sign. And that's how it's done. But it's always way ahead of time. They [oil companies] have it all pretty well strategized where they're going to go, you know.”

Edwin Benson, often referred to as the “last Mandan speaker,” and who many community members seemed to particularly respond to when viewing the video, during our interview and without prompting said, “Let me just mention something that run through my mind here about a year ago or less…” He goes on in a way that, during screening sessions, clearly gave people
pause to think and sparked conversation. Mr. Benson says in the video that it gives him “the chills to see so many oil wells in North Dakota…I guess it’s all right to be rich… For some people it would be nice, cause they had it tough… and if they receive all this money to live nice, then that’s good, there’s nothing wrong with it. But it’s the idea of thinking of tomorrow, or the next day, or the next year, year after that – what’s going to happen. We don’t know that. See, nobody knows that.”

Community Screenings, Community Conversations

The documentary we created included a number of themes such as the complex figure of the missionary, the tension between forced assimilation and maintaining community, and the experience of the dam and relocation as feeling similar to the oil boom today for those who experienced both in their lifetime. Because elders have living memory of both the dam (figure 5) and the oil boom today (figure 6), they have a unique perspective than younger generations on what’s happening in their community and people responded to this through discussion in small groups after screenings. We conducted five draft video screenings in May 2014, and three final cut screenings in November 2014 (which still changed a bit before distribution based on feedback). A total of about 35 people participated in May, and around 20 in November.
Figure 5: Home being inundated by rising waters from the Garrison Dam at Fort Berthold reservation, 1953, video still.

Figure 6: Gas flare and tanks at Fort Berthold reservation, 2014, video still.
Draft Screenings, May 2014

At the United Church of Christ film screening, an MHA woman rose after the end of the film and asked, What is our goal with the film? What are you going to do with it? I replied that it is up to the community, it’s yours to use as you see fit. Juanita Helphrey suggested breaking it into chapters and adding reflection questions for use in schools. Group discussion followed that spanned a number of diverse topics from the care of cemetery grounds to oil and land rights.

After the movie we had lunch in small groups around several tables. Those at our table said to go on with the research and document the oil boom today. Another person mentioned that there are 14,000 enrolled members in the tribe now, including six millionaires; but the money is not reaching everyone. We talked for quite some time about the land issues – how the entire reservation was allotted, and there was never tribally controlled land, or a council, until after the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Many people had sold their allotted land to the tribe because in the past it was their only source of wealth. Today, older people get most of the oil money, one person explained, because they still own the land. Community members also talked about how young people don’t go to school and there is a lot of absenteeism throughout all the grades. Kids now don’t think education is necessary because they will be rich and won’t have to work when they grow up.

At an elders lunch at the Northern Lights Community Center (figure 7), Marilyn Hudson mentioned that before the dam was the last time they were really self-sufficient with no public assistance and then they moved to non-Native places like Parshall with no jobs. Today, there are more Indians than white people living there, she added. At a senior lunch hosted at the Arikara Cultural Center, a woman explained how Rev. Case had told her brother to get an education and
leave the reservation because Indian life was no longer; today her brother regrets taking that advice. She was told that Rev. Case later apologized for saying he should leave.

![Figure 7: Draft film screening at North Lights Community Center. Photo by author.](image)

The Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College President Twyla Baker-Demaray commented after the screening at the college, “This [documentary] would be a great advocacy or education tool for whoever is in our state legislature, Congressional representatives, the state as a whole.” And at the conclusion of the screening at the Three Tribes Museum, with tears in his eyes, Mr. Mandan said that the film had “brought up a lot of old wounds.” In response, I asked the group whether this was a story they were comfortable with, whether we should show it more publicly. Barabara Bear, widow of James Bear in the video, said yes definitely. Mr. Mandan added that it opened old wounds, but it is good to see and important. It needs to be remembered.
Final Screenings, November 2014

Ideas and concerns about home and questions about the oil boom came from elders and young people in the final screenings. At the Congregational Church in Parshall, Pastor Levine, whose congregations is mainly elders, commented that what home means is “something different for Native people.” People do return, she added, they came back after relocation, but it’s “hard to reestablish home. It’s still not here, it’s under the water,” echoing Mr. Bear’s comments in the video. At the Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College (formerly Fort Berthold Community College), several kids between the ages of eleven and thirteen were present. The screening became an opportunity for a mom to discuss this difficult time with her kids. Her eleven year old daughter had a couple great questions after the showing and was really interested in the subject matter: “What is fracking?” “Were the tribes consulted before the Bakken?” “Why do people suck?” This last one was great. The mom and I jointly answered all these questions, with the mom explaining everything from what she had learned about Garrison Dam to what the Keystone Pipeline is. Again, at this screening, it was agreed that a sequel about contemporary life should be produced, and the president of the Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College agreed that the tribal college would be our main partner in the next film project.

Slow Museology and the Power of Collaborative Filmmaking

A commitment to slow museology, collaborative anthropology, and the accessibility of low cost video production led to this documentary video. Ray Silverman explains that “slow museology” is essential to collaboration between institutions and indigenous communities and to the negotiation between “‘collaborative time’ and ‘institutional time’” (Silverman 2014: 13). Taking time to build relationships and trust is an important part of the process, as the outcomes are
collaboratively directed and often unanticipated, like this video project. We achieved this in part because we relied on several small grants over the years, rather than an artificial and compressed timeline determined by, say, a large grant (see Shannon 2014b).

Through the oral history project and video production process, from the perspectives of tribal members and the collection donor family who are both represented *My Cry Gets Up to My Throat*, there are major themes that emerged from our work together: the missionary and his role as a man, an activist, a representative of the church; US policy as a constantly shifting context over time that ruptured families, land bases, processes of knowledge transmission, and spiritual practices; the Garrison Dam as the inundation of homeland and relocation of MHA villages and an insidious imposition of assimilation policy; and oil as a second coming of outsiders to the community taking advantage of land resources. As our conversations continue in the MHA Nation, we are learning that the oil boom is consistently referred to at the biggest historical scale of major traumatic events in MHA history. When talking about the oil boom’s effects many people begin their explanation with small pox and the Garrison Dam. This suggests important ways in which community members are historicizing the oil boom today, that we are only just beginning to learn as we move forward for the sequel: first, that the fracking boom is considered to be one in a list of major traumatic disruptions and displacements in their history; second, that it is considered at a scale that the 1950s and 1980s oil booms are not; and, third, they explain that they’ve been through worse before and are here to tell the story.

It was powerful to see how first perspective narratives, ethnographic methods, and the visual – portable, sharable – medium of video can produce intergenerational capacity for action (cf. Turner 1991: 304), instigating community dialogue and requests for teaching materials for young people in schools. Visual media is a wonderful tool for telling stories from first person
perspective through Native voices and creating meaningful sources of knowledge for indigenous communities (as our first video shows). And, it is also an important medium for both reflecting on, and telling outsiders, about their experiences (as in the sequel). Through this process of collaborative filmmaking, community members seized the opportunity to reflect on the present in light of the past, and in turn through individual contribution and group discussion create a greater capacity for action to determine their future during another major transition period in their community’s history. We look forward to continuing the work about life today – supported by community members’ suggestions to continue storytelling with them and indicated by our open invitation in the tribal newspaper to the community to participate in doing so (Phleger 2015).
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Endnotes

1 It has been a pleasure working with our research partners in the MHA Nation and all of those who offered their time and thoughts in interviews for the oral history project. Thank you especially Marilyn Hudson, Calvin Grinnell, and Elgin Crows Breast for introducing us to the MHA community and for creating and tending the path to develop this project, making it successful, and connecting it to the rest of the community. Thank you to Gerry and Kathy Case for their contributions and for sharing their family’s personal archives with us. I also want to thank Christina Cain and Stephanie Gilmore at the CU Museum of Natural History, Ryan Wallace at Culture Code, CU History professor Lil Fenn, and my student collaborators: undergraduates Alexis White-Mobley and Kathleen Alexander, and graduate students Kendall Tallmadge, Willi Lempert, Evan Hawkins, and Jacey Bonavia. This essay also benefited from comments on drafts from Drew Zachary, Marilyn Hudson, and Calvin Grinnell. This project was made possible by a Consultation/Documentation Grant from National NAGPRA and three grants from the University of Colorado: an Implementation of Multicultural Perspectives and Approaches in Research and Teaching Award, an Undergraduate Research Opportunities Team Grant Award, and a Center to Advance Research and Teaching in the Social Sciences grant.

2 See trailer, MHA Cut (1hr), Public Cut (47min) here: https://vimeo.com/user34334571/videos (accessed 9/18/15).

3 As of August 12, 2015 the MHA Nation listed the total number of enrolled members as 14,663 (see census at http://www.mhanation.com/main2/departments/tribal_enrollment/TAT%20Census%20as%20of%208-12-2015.pdf, accessed 9/22/2015). In 2010, according to the North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission, the total population on the reservation was 5,915 (not indicated whether this includes non-Native or non-enrolled individuals) and the total number of enrolled members at that time was 10,400 (http://www.nd.gov/indianaffairs/?id=74, accessed 9/22/2015).

4 Personal communication, October 5, 2015.

5 Letter of support written by Calvin Grinnell for a grant application to support this research.

6 Twyla Baker-Demaray from meeting notes, as quoted in My Cry (2014).

7 NAGPRA is a law that empowers federally recognized tribes in the United States to request transfer of ownership of Native American human remains, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony from federally funded museums and institutions. For more information about this law, see http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/. For a reflection on the impact of NAGPRA on museum anthropology practice, see for example the special issue of Museum Anthropology titled “NAGPRA at 20: Museum Collections and Reconnections” (Vol. 33, Issue 2 Fall 2010).

8 All involved would agree that those who were asked by our advisory group to participate in the oral history project were people who had known and appreciated the Rev. Case and his efforts in the community; most were Congregationalists or Christians (this does not exclude them from engaging in other forms of spiritual or religious practice). No doubt a different narrative might have emerged had different people been selected by our research partners.
Rev. Case’s children donated his collection of Mandan, Arikara, and Hidatsa items to the UCMNH after he had loaned it several times for exhibitions and for safe keeping. Rev. Case presided over many weddings, births, and funerals. MHA community members explained that many of the collection items were likely gifts for performing these duties. Maxfield notes: “The missionary could be counted on to extend financial help in all kinds of emergencies. Case kept records of loans and sometimes accepted artifacts as security; at other times he bought rare items outright” (Maxfield 1986: 18).

Although I had no training in video and film production, I took a week long production class at Boulder Digital Arts to be better prepared for our next trip, when the video work would begin.

When staff at the State Historical Society of North Dakota viewed the MHA website, they offered to provide over 2000 scanned photos from their Case Collection archive that were not available online and had no associated information. The website provides a means to identify and name people and places in the photographs.

All three of these individuals can be considered professionals in the representation of their communities to outsiders (Shannon 2015), and are often those who are quoted in newspaper articles, anthropological essays (see Murray et. al. 2011), and historical accounts. They are supportive of and facilitate research, and researchers, who are interested in working with the MHA Nation.

Letter From Rev. Case to Joe Ben Wheat (UCMNH donor files), November 12, 1957: “One of these days perhaps we will have a more realistic handling of Indian Affairs. Just came back from the National Congress of the American Indians in Claremore Oklahoma. While there I heard Dr. Sol Tax give a most excellent address urging the powers that be to treat the Indian as a person, etc.” Sol Tax directed an “action anthropology” project at Fort Berthold from 1950-1953 to help aid the community in the inevitable relocation. Graduate students from the University of Chicago carried out the research.


Handwritten notes from interview, August 18 2015. I asked her about the idea of “displacement” and she agreed that was an appropriate way to describe how she felt.

Transcript of video interview with Bernadine Young Bird, August 21, 2015.

Transcript from video interview with James Bear, May 21, 2012.


Transcript of video interview with Edwin Benson, May 15, 2013