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# "Strike them hard!" The Baker Massacre play

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Lethbridge, Alta. : University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education, 2009

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**“STRIKE THEM HARD!” THE BAKER MASSACRE PLAY**

**RAMONA BIG HEAD**

B.Ed., University of Lethbridge, 1996

A Project  
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
of the University of Lethbridge  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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**FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
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In memory of Apaisapiaakii (Galina)

## Abstract

The oral tradition of story-telling among the Blackfoot is still strong. However, in order to keep the tradition alive for future generations, educators are beginning to step outside the box to allow for innovative ways to bring the stories back to life for students. By writing a play about the 1870 Baker Massacre, and staging it with Blackfoot students from the Kainai Board of Education school system, I have successfully found another way to engage First Nation students from Kindergarten through grade 12. This is the first time the story of the Baker Massacre has been told from the perspective of Blackfoot children. A good portion of the research was taken from oral accounts of actual descendents of the survivors of the massacre. Most of the survivors were young children, including my great-great grandmother, Holy Bear Woman. The Baker Massacre became a forgotten and lost story. However, by performing this play to an audience of approximately 1000 over the course of six performances, including a debut performance in New York City, there is a good chance that this story will not fall into obscurity again. The process of researching, writing and staging this play also had a major impact on my own personal healing and well-being. I lost my oldest daughter to suicide in 2006. The historical trauma of the Baker Massacre triggered my own personal trauma of my daughter's suicide. However, as painful as the process was, I gained a new-found strength to continue on with my own healing journey. The personal narrative that accompanies this play honours the process of playwriting, while the play celebrates the product. The play is about the resiliency of the ancestors of the Blackfoot. By sharing their story, my hope is that our Aboriginal children today will recognize that they come from a powerful ancestry who never gave up.

## Acknowledgements

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To my good friend, Aippiomahkaa (Dwayne). Thank-you for encouraging me to be innovative and open-minded. And thank you so much for introducing me to this story and place.

To my colleagues from Kainai High School: Aapamaanski (Delia), Iitoomistiaakii (Crystal) and Eric. Thank you for helping me breathe life into the script.

Finally, to my great-great-grandmother, Natohkyiaakii (Holy Bear Woman). You never gave up and neither will I.

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## PART I: PERSONAL NARRATIVE

*Ainnoota ki Maistakatsi*

It was 1988, and my grandfather, Ainnoota (John Bare Shin Bone Sr.), was dying in the hospital. I went with my dad, Maistakatsi (Peter Big Head), to visit him. I sat near the window allowing the men in the room to carry on their conversation. I didn't say anything at all during that visit. When we left his room, we slowly made our way down the long hallway and stepped into the elevator. As the elevator doors shut, I finally released the panic stricken thoughts that were scrambling to get out. I turned to my dad with eyes wide open, like a child that needs to say something before it's too late. "He's dying!" I exclaimed to my dad. "He's dying!" I repeated. And more slowly with a wave of guilt, I added, "And I didn't listen to him." My anxiety stemmed from the fear that this man was dying with so much knowledge about my ancestry. I was afraid that, with his death, many of the Blackfoot or more specifically our Kainai ways would be gone too. I will never forget the look of peace on my dad's face as he looked down at me like a father who is impressed with his child. His voice was reassuring as he placed his arm on my shoulder and replied, "Don't worry, I did." By the time the elevator doors opened, my stress had diminished. I felt a deep sense of security knowing that my dad had taken the time to learn the stories and our Blackfoot ways.

It's been six and a half years since my dad passed away. In the last few years of his life, I took in everything that he had to share with me. My identical triplet daughters, who were born in 1986, received their Blackfoot names from my dad's vision quest to Chief Mountain. Aahsowamisoo which is translated as *ascending or climbing the mountain successfully* was given to Aloni. Itspaikitstakiaakii or *high holy offering woman*

was given to Shawnee. And, Aahsainnisoo or *descending the mountain successfully* was given to Oshana. My youngest son, Jesse, took my dad's childhood name Kai'stippo. My grandmother Ksikawotaan (Annie Bare Shin Bone) said this name makes reference to *sneaking upon an enemy camp*. However, when Jesse asked my dad what the name meant, the answer he got was "Side-walk."

In the past few years, I have been more aware of my role of the listener. However, as a mother of seven and a grandmother of eight, the time has come to pass on the knowledge and stories to my own children and grandchildren.

#### *Aippiomahkaa*

A colleague of mine at Kainai High School, Aippiomahkaa (Dwayne Donald), came up with the idea to develop an Elder Mentor Program at our high school. I was excited to get involved in this innovative school-based project. The purpose of this program was to bring in local elders so they could pass on their knowledge to our students. It was 2001 and I had been teaching for five years. Aippiomahkaa had been teaching for three years before me. He taught the high school Social Studies courses and I taught the high school English and Drama courses. We eventually combined our Social Studies and English courses and team-taught a humanities course. As a result, we were able to try new ideas with our students.

Because of the success of the Elder Mentor Program, we managed to come up with some innovative ideas that covered the curriculum, and satisfied our administration while infusing traditional Blackfoot or Kainai ways of knowing. Some of the activities in the Elder Mentor program included Blackfoot storytelling, drum making, traditional

cooking, berry picking, shawl making, sweat lodge ceremonies and visits to significant Blackfoot sites.

### *Aakakstiimaan*

The Elder Mentor Program taught me the importance of *aakakstiimaan* or traditional Blackfoot protocol. *Aakakstiimaan* is a concept that encompasses the notion of respecting boundaries. These boundaries include our relationship to ourselves and to others.

It is important to note that the term *others* also includes those beyond the human realm. Traditional Blackfoot ways of knowing teaches us that there is also a relationship with Naapi Naato'si (Grandfather sun), Ko'komiki'somm (Grandmother moon), Ipiisowaahs (Morning star), Sspommitapiiksi (Sky beings), Ksaahkomitapiiksi (Earth beings), Soyiiitapiiksi (Water beings), and Naatoyiitapiiksi (those who have gone before us into the spirit world) that we need to both honor and respect.

A few weeks after my dad died, I unexpectedly ran into one of my dad's relatives who was also a close friend, Makoyiipoka (Bruce Wolf Child). He took me aside and said he had something important to tell me: "Your dad is now in the spirit world. You can now call on him, through prayer, anytime. He is in a place where he can assist you. He can help you more than he ever could while he was on this earth. All you have to do is call his name, Maistakatsi." There are many instances where I have called on my dad to help me get through some difficult circumstances.

According to Kinakksaapo'p (Narcisse Blood), my mentor and a respected Kainai elder, when you don't know or don't honor these boundaries, you can do more harm to yourself and to others. In other words, there is simply a way of doing things, and

depending on the task, the protocol can be either simple or complex. For instance, whenever we were planning an activity for the Elder Mentor Program, the elders would have an impromptu round table discussion that could last for an hour. The entire time, the students and teachers would be silently sitting and waiting for a decision. At that time, I was very naïve about the Blackfoot ways and didn't realize the importance of aakakstiimaan. As a result, I would get impatient and wanted to stand up and say: "Let's get on with it! We're wasting valuable time here." My colleague, Aippiomahkaa, on the other hand, always seemed to be enraptured with the whole process. He was listening, at a time when I wasn't.

I have since realized, as I look back, that although I wasn't actively listening, there were fundamental teachings taking place that I could not recognize at that time. Eight years later, when I seriously began the research for my M.Ed project, this lesson in protocol would become an integral part of my life that enabled me to successfully complete my project.

In order to establish credibility, it is important to acknowledge traditional Blackfoot teachers. Our elders and traditional teachers, who took part in our Elder Mentor Program, were all from the Blood Tribe. They included the late Matsowakaipiyaakii (Rachel Crying Head), the late Komii (Irene Day Rider), Makoyiipoka (Bruce Wolf Child), Siipistta'pi (Bernard Tall Man), Matsistaotoikamo'saakii (Rita Tall Man), Ihkitopiawa'kima (Joe Spotted Bull), Misami'nikki (Lucy Black Plume), Kayippohpaataki (Reggie Black Plume) and Kinakksaapo'p (Narcisse Blood). These Kainai elders took both students and teachers on a journey that surpasses all of my classroom experiences since then.

*Otsito'totsahpiwa*

The traditional Blackfoot territory extended from the Rocky Mountains to the west, the Sweet Pine, or Sweet Grass Hills to the east, to the North Saskatchewan River, and south to the Yellowstone River. The Blackfoot Confederacy transcends the 49th parallel or the Canada-United States Border, which is relatively new to the Blackfoot. The Blackfoot would often refer to the Canadian-U.S. border as the Medicine Line because it was so powerful that it could stop the U.S. soldiers in pursuit of Blackfoot warriors fleeing north. The Blackfoot Confederacy consists of the Kainai (Bloods), the Siksika (Blackfoot), the Aapatohsippiikani (North Peigan), and the Aamsskaapipikani (South Peigan or Blackfeet) in Montana.

The fall of 2001 marked the second year of our Elder Mentor Program. One of the first events planned was a field trip to the site of the 1870 Baker Massacre near Shelby, Montana. Appioomahka and Kinakksaapo'p were quite adamant that we take our students and elders to this site. As for me, I had never heard about the Baker Massacre. A few days before our field trip, I was given a story to read about one of the survivors, Kyo'tokan (Bear Head), who was 12 years old at the time of the massacre (Shultz, 1962, pp. 282-305). I simply put the article aside and went along for the trip. I had no idea the journey I was about to embark on.

Kinakksaapo'p began to tell me the story. He explained that the Blackfoot referred to the site as Otsito'totsahpiwa (the place where they were burned). The location of the Baker Massacre is along the Bear River, approximately ten miles south-east of present-day Shelby, Montana. The Bear River was re-named the Marias River by Meriwether Lewis during the famous 1804-1806 Lewis and Clark expedition across what

is now the western United States. The location of the massacre was a place called “the Big Bend of the Marias River where Joseph Kipp [a 22 year old scout hired by the army] had reported seeing the encampment of Mountain Chief some days before” (Phillips, 1996, p. 77). However:

For many years, the Baker Massacre was said to have taken place at Dead Indian Coulee, a place which is located about 18 miles down the Marias from Fort Conrad [16 miles southeast of Shelby]. However painstaking research of the terrain, military accounts by participating officers, and contemporary newspaper reports, convinced the writer that Dead Indian Coulee was not where the engagement took place. After several years of searching, I finally found the true site at the big bend of the Marias, about 5 miles below Fort Conrad. Here, the terrain fits exactly the descriptions of the military reports and, with a metal detector, I was able to find indisputable evidence in the shape of scores of empty and loaded .50-70 cartridges scattered along the tops of the bluff. Harry Stanford, who came to Montana in same year as Schultz and who made five trips over the Whoop-Up Trail, always claimed the massacre took place in the big bend and that Dead Indian Coulee received its name when a band of Crees were killed by Piegans at that spot in 1881. Harry was correct. (Poulio, 1978, p. 36)

The actual site of the massacre “probably lies within the flood-pool of today’s Tiber Reservoir” (Roll, 1978, p. 21).

Natowapiisaakii (Carol Murray), the Tribal History Project Director at Blackfeet Community College in Browning, Montana tells a story of how the old people on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation referred to the Baker Massacre site as “the bad place,” or a

place where something bad happened. Kinakksaapo'p added that, in the past, Otsito'totsahpiwa or the Baker Massacre site was avoided by the Blackfeet. No one wanted to go near this site which marked one of the darkest moments in Blackfeet history.

*In the early morning hours of January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1870, during minus 30 degrees weather, General Eugene M. Baker and his troops, under the direction of General Phil Sheridan, of the U.S. Cavalry attacked a peaceful Blackfeet camp, along the Marias River killing approximately 217 mostly elderly women and children (Phillips, 1996, p. 82), many of whom were also suffering from the deadly disease, smallpox. The order was given by General Sheridan, "Tell Baker to strike them hard!" Baker was originally looking for Mountain Chief's camp. However, he found Chief Heavy Runner's camp first. Prior to this expedition, Baker was given a direct order that Heavy Runner was a peaceful chief and he and his people were not to be molested. However, after five days marching in sub-zero temperatures, Major Baker and his troops came across Heavy Runner's camp, and although he was clearly informed that this was the wrong camp, he struck anyway.*

As we walked through the massacre site with our students and elders 131 years later, I could feel the somber atmosphere of the place. It was a beautiful fall afternoon, yet I felt a sad presence and heaviness at this site. I, along with my students, sat and listened to one of the direct descendents of the massacre, Darren Kipp, the son of Darrell Kipp, tell us his great-grandfather's story. Darren Kipp's great-grandfather, Last Gun, was the youngest son of Chief Heavy Runner. After the massacre, Last Gun and his

sisters were taken in by Joe Kipp, the same scout who led Major Baker's troops to Chief Heavy Runner's camp.

As the story unfolded before me, all I could feel was anger. The anger was followed by feelings of frustration and helplessness. To attempt to articulate my feelings was futile. I simply did not have the voice for it. The final blow was when Kinakksaapo'p informed me that one of our ancestors was also a survivor. Natohkyiakii (Holy Bear Woman) was a young girl at the time of the massacre. Most of the survivors were children. Natohkyiakii and the other children, who were orphaned that morning, trekked in freezing cold temperatures to nearby camps and to Fort Benton which was nearly 90 miles away. I sat there and asked why didn't I know about this? A massacre of this magnitude should never have been forgotten. My grandmother is 90 years old and she is a grand-daughter of Natohkyiakii, yet I had never heard this story until the fall of 2001.

As we drove away from the site, the only thought I had on my mind was that this story needs to be told. At that moment, I knew that someday I would put this story on stage.

### *The Best Way I Know To Tell A Story*

During my first year teaching at Kainai High School, our school underwent a major retro-fit. Part of the retro-fit included a brand new auditorium complete with a stage. I stood on that stage and was determined not to let this first year go by without utilizing it. At the next staff meeting, I stood up and announced that I was going to direct a play at our school. I had never directed a play before and I had no idea what I was getting myself into. So, you can imagine the raised eyebrows and stunned silence at that staff meeting.

The play I chose was *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock* by Drew Hayden Taylor (1990). As I went through the stresses that accompany a directing debut, something magical was also happening. The original lead for my play backed out three weeks before show time. After countless measures, including begging, to get this young man to reconsider, he would not budge. I was in a state of panic because all the posters for the debut performance at the new Kainai High School auditorium had gone out into the community *with my name on them*. The entire staff at our school were working together to make this production happen. Committees had been organized for a dinner theatre and tickets were already being sold. The costumes and set had been completed. Plus, we had already been rehearsing for a month. When I realized that my lead actor was not going to change his mind, I walked home completely discouraged and wondering how I had managed to get myself into such a mess. I dropped my body on my couch and silently sat there for a long time letting out a huge sigh from time to time. My oldest son, Carl Brave Rock, was sitting on the other end of the couch totally oblivious to my plight as he sat watching *The Simpsons*. Carl was in grade 11 and he was also the president of student council at the high school. He seemed like a popular kid at school. I turned to him examining his physique and natural good looks. I was picturing him on stage with the other actors. I knew that he was extremely intelligent and I honestly believed he could do anything he set his mind to. I must have been staring at him for some time when he slowly turned to me with a slightly annoyed look, the kind that teenage sons frequently give to their mothers, and blurted out "What?"

I burst into tears. I wanted to get his sympathy first before he heard my request. I told him about my crisis that only he could get me out of. I pleaded with him to take on

the lead role. If he would only do this one thing for me, I would be forever indebted to him. I was pulling out all of the manipulatives that a parent uses to convince a teenage child. His first reaction was “Are you kidding? I can’t act!” I responded by telling him that I would never ask him if I didn’t think he could do it. I told him that of all the students at Kainai High School, he was the only one who could do it. After a few minutes, his answer was “Okay, if I have to be in your play, then so does he!” He pointed to his cousin Jimmy Big Head who was sitting with his back to us while working on the computer. Jimmy was also in grade 11. He was a star athlete and basketball player on the Kainai High School Warriors basketball team. Jimmy was a classic “jock” at our school. Throughout my entire conversation with Carl, Jimmy had been pretending to ignore us, but you could tell he was having a hard time holding back his laughter. As soon as I turned to Jimmy, he stopped snickering. As Carl returned an evil smile to Jimmy, I was enthusiastically explaining how it was totally possible for Jimmy to be in the play. I didn’t have a role for him, but I would think of something. Jimmy said, “Okay, I’ll be in your play, as long as I don’t have to talk and I can wear a mask or something to cover my face.” I quickly replied “Done!” Carl finally agreed as well. Then from out of nowhere, Galina, my daughter, who was in grade nine at that time, jumped into the conversation, “How come they get to be in your play? I want to be in your play too!”

Carl took the lead role of *Rusty*, and Jimmy and Galina were two mystical eagles who were written into the play. Both eagles had no speaking roles and the costumes included masks. The other two actors were Ippisowaahs Crop Eared Wolf and Amber Weasel Head who were *Keesic* and *Michael* respectively. My youngest daughter, nine year old Saya, got the job as prompter. I had the entire script written on ledger size paper

and Saya's role became extremely important. Years later, Saya would tell me that she had the entire script memorized word for word.

*Toronto at Dreamer's Rock* was a huge success. Our opening night was to a packed house. We were invited to perform at various conferences and venues across Alberta and into Montana. We toured with this play for a year. For the first time in Kainai High School history, we entered the 1998 Southern Alberta High School Drama Festival. We didn't win, but Carl was given the prestigious recognition as the honorable mention for best actor out of the 12 high school productions at the festival. Our cast and crew also met the playwright, Drew Hayden Taylor. One of the results of that first production was that Carl went on to write, act in and direct many other productions at Kainai High School. Most of the subsequent plays I directed over the years were written by Carl after he had graduated. Today, Carl is studying at the *Centre for Indigenous Theatre* in Toronto.

The drama program at Kainai High School became popular because two of the *coolest* boys in our small school were on stage. Soon, I had more boys than girls in my drama classes and plays. Also, the basketball players, both boys and girls, would be reminding me not to start auditions until after basketball season was over. My youngest son, Jesse Brave Rock, reminisces how he looked forward to the end of basketball season because of the spring productions. At 6'10", Jesse became one of the tallest priests ever in our play, *Ugliest Girl Meets Elvis: a Residential School Saga*, written by Carl and me.

I have experienced many other magical experiences with my own children and my students throughout the years. Students that had no other place in our school became shining stars on our stage at Kainai High School. Students with learning disabilities and

unfortunate home lives found a place of belonging and safety on our stage. Students from other schools began transferring to our school just to be on our stage. Students simply stayed in school and graduated because of their experiences on our stage. By 2008, I had directed approximately 22 productions involving well over two hundred students. The drama program at Kainai High School has become widely recognized and sought after. In 2003, our production of *Ugliest Girl Meets Elvis: a Residential School Saga* went on to represent the south at the Provincial High School Drama Festival in Red Deer, Alberta.

As a result of the success of working with children on stage, I knew that my play about the 1870 Baker Massacre could only be staged by children. My rationale is that since most of the survivors of the massacre were children, then it only makes sense that children tell the story. Plus, I had a feeling that magical things would happen with this play, and the magic that did happen surpassed everything that I had ever before experienced with my plays at Kainai High School.

When I finally made the decision to put the story of the 1870 Baker Massacre on stage, I felt confident that I could do it. Directing plays is not that difficult, the challenge, for me, was writing the play. I had never undertaken such a task. Most of the original productions that I had worked on previously were done in collaboration with my son Carl and my students. In spite of all the trepidation I felt, I knew that my soul was not going to rest until this play was written and staged. It was a story that I needed to tell, and the best way I know how to tell a story is to put it on stage.

### *The Journey Begins*

In the fall of 2007, Kinakksaapo'p (Narcisse) and I drove to Browning, Montana. I had asked him to help me make connections with the people who could help me with

my research on the Baker Massacre. At our first stop, we met with Natowapiisaakii (Carol Murray) at Blackfeet Community College. My first impression with this woman was one of awe. She had long black hair and the features on her face were distinctly Blackfeet. When she spoke, her words were delivered with such deliberation and directness that I knew instantly that this woman had the same kind of passion I had for the story of the Baker Massacre.

Her journey began in the late 1970s when she attended Northern Montana College in Havre, Montana. One of her professors suggested she do a research paper on the 1870 Baker Massacre. She had not heard of this event until that time. Her professor sent her home, to Browning, to ask the elders what they knew about the story. As she drove around her community seeking out the elders who could assist her, she was taken aback by the responses she encountered. One grandmother, refused to talk about the massacre for fear that if she told the story, “The Bulls will come and get me!” Carol later uncovered that “the bulls” referred to an ancient Blackfeet society of enforcers or community police. This grandmother was afraid she would be taken to jail for mentioning the massacre. Carol expressed how unbelievable it was for people to still be afraid of something that happened a hundred years earlier. That was when she knew that the Baker Massacre had deeper consequences for the Blackfeet. This massacre had successfully kept the Blackfeet quiet for a century. However, Carol was not deterred and continued her journey.

Some of the stories that Carol uncovered were told in the oral tradition by the few elders who would speak to her. These were stories that would never be found in any textbook. She shared the stories of the massacre with stoic elegance. At the onset of

the attack, which took place early in the morning of January 23rd, 1870 during one of the coldest winters on record, many of the young children ran to the nearby river banks. They did not have time to take any winter clothing with them. The children frantically dug into the frozen river bank with bare hands to make a hole to crawl into for shelter from the flying bullets. Two young girls were found hidden in the tall grass freezing and shivering. One young girl was told by her mother, who had a baby in her arms, to run! As this young girl was about to run out of the tipi with her little sister, a bullet hit her little sister in the forehead. As she turned to her mother, she witnessed another bullet penetrating the baby and also piercing her mother as well. So, this young girl was forced to run out of the tipi alone. Another little girl ran to a nearby tipi and hid under a backrest. She could see through the slits of the backrest and witnessed soldiers rip open the tipi and begin shooting indiscriminately at anyone that moved. I made sure these stories were included in the play.

As she related the events to Kinakksaapo’p and me, it was extremely difficult to hold back the painful tears. I thought to myself “How could she tell these stories without shedding a tear?” It was later on, during my own journey, I realized that Carol could tell the stories without falling apart because she was doing something to make sure the story and place would never be forgotten. Since 1992, when Carol became the president of Blackfeet Community College, she has been taking the entire student body to the Baker Massacre site. Prior to that, she and her family visited the site every year since she first encountered the story of the massacre. For 30 years, Carol and her husband have been visiting the Baker Massacre site every January 23rd, arriving at 8:00 a.m. when the time of the slaughter began in 1870.

Later on that afternoon we went to visit Apinakoi'pita (Darrell Kipp), a co-founder of The Piegan Institute in Browning, Montana. Apinakoi'pita is a grandson of Chief Heavy Runner's son, Last Gun, who survived the massacre. We didn't call ahead, so Apinakoi'pita was not expecting visitors that day. He walked into his office to find both Kinnaaksapo'p and I waiting for him. He quickly put a pot of tea on for us. We informed him the purpose of our visit was to help me get some information on the Baker Massacre.

Apinakoi'pita spoke of how his grandfather was a young boy of five at the time of the massacre. Apinakoi'pita made it clear that this was not an event that took place hundreds of years ago and that he is a direct descendent, a *grandson* of one of the survivors.

Joe Kipp was a scout hired by the U.S. army to guide Major Baker and his troops through the rugged Blackfeet territory. A few days earlier, Kipp had tracked the site of Mountain Chief's camp. Major Baker had orders to strike Mountain Chief's band. However, by the time Baker and his troops arrived at the site, Mountain Chief's band had been replaced by Heavy Runner's camp. When Joe Kipp realized that they were at the wrong camp, he informed Major Baker, but was threatened into silence.

After the massacre, Kipp collected Heavy Runner's children, and took them back to Fort Benton. Kipp later married Chief Heavy Runner's oldest daughter, Double Strike Woman, and raised the other two, Spear Woman and Last Gun whom he re-named Dick Kipp.

Apinakoi'pita remembers when his grandfather, Last Gun, would get drunk, he would load his gun and go after old man Joe Kipp. However, one day, Last Gun informed

his wife that he was no longer going to drink and be angry anymore. Apinakoi'pita told us that from that time on, his grandfather never took another drink and never talked about the massacre again.

At the end of our visit, Apinakoi'pita walked over to his filing cabinet which spanned the entire length of his hall entrance. He knew exactly what he was looking for. He came back with a stack of files. These files included numerous newspaper clippings, photocopies and a thesis on the Baker Massacre. He handed the stack over to me. My eyes widened in amazement as I went through his collection of material and I quickly assured him that I would make photocopies and return his material promptly. He laughed and scolded me for even thinking such a thought. He simply told me to use this material and return it when I was done. His parting words were "Go and write this play, my girl." I walked out of his office with the widest grin on my face. I could not believe how willing he was to part with a collection that, I'm sure, took years to compile.

*The Only Good Indian Is a Dead Indian*

I had heard the phrase, "the only good Indian is a dead Indian," but I had no idea where it stemmed from. But, I soon found out, as Hutton (1982) states, "nothing is so closely identified with Philip Sheridan's western career than [this] infamous remark....and [it] has become synonymous with Sheridan's Indian policy" (p. 32). In 1869, U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant appointed General Sheridan as the lieutenant general in command of the Division of the Missouri, "a vast area extending from Chicago on the east to the western borders of New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, and Montana on the west and from the Canadian boundary on the north to the Rio Grande on the south" (Hutton, 1982, p. 33). Sheridan's command also included traditional Blackfoot territory. I made a point to

include this blatantly racist remark in a few scenes of my play because I wanted the audience to clearly understand the sentiments of General Sheridan towards the Native American tribes.

By the time of Sheridan's appointment, which was a direct result of U.S. President "Grant's penchant for cronyism" (Hutton, 1982, p. 33), he had already established himself as an Indian fighter and Sheridan's philosophy of war "made no distinction between combatants and non-combatants" (Phillips, 1996, p. 43). The events of the Baker massacre, and the devastation left behind were rooted in a U.S. army strategy and attitude that goes way back:

The philosophy of total warfare, while not originating in the Civil War, gained favor in the United States Army largely because of it....The campaigns against the Seminoles in Florida during the 1830's and 1840's, for example, had demonstrated in classic style the devastating impact that total war could have on a native people. In these campaigns, the army triumphed by, in historian Robert Wooster's words, "applying the principles of total warfare, in which enemy leaders were take prisoner under flags of truce, women and children killed and captured, and crops, homes, and possession ruthlessly destroyed..."

But in the Civil War, the army gave the philosophy of total warfare even greater scope. During the latter half of this conflict, the Union army, led by such generals as William T. Sherman, Philip H. Sheridan, and Ulysses S. Grant, had waged war not merely against the Confederate army, but against the Confederacy's very infrastructure....Sheridan also advocated a total approach to

warfare as a means to break the back of the Confederacy. In a report...Sheridan justified his soldiers' penchant for looting occupied territories:

“...As war is a punishment, if we can, by reducing its advocates to poverty, end it quicker, we are on the side of humanity.”

Consequently, the army's doctrine as it applied to the Indians throughout the West essentially mimicked the successful total war campaigns that had gone before.

The chief goal of the campaign was to destroy the tribes' material possessions, food supplies, and belligents by annihilating targeted villages. Because the army could seldom bring the warriors to battle to accomplish its objectives, the army, under the leadership of men like Sheridan and de Trobriand, opted to bring the battle to the Indians' encampments. (Phillips, 1996, pp. 43-50)

One of the more infamous examples of Sheridan's strategies on Indian warfare was the November 1868 Lodge Pole massacre of a Cheyenne village on the Washita River. This attack was carried out by General George Armstrong Custer under the direction of General Sheridan. Both the Lodge Pole and the Baker massacres were executed in the same heartless manner. The attacks were in the early hours of a cold winter morning; women and children were not spared; and the village was burned in the aftermath. The only difference was that General Custer ordered his men to execute the Cheyenne horses, while Major Baker and his men stole the Blackfoot horses.

One fact that I found extremely disturbing was that General Custer would play the *Garry Owen* song during his attacks. Apparently, this song was an old Irish limerick that made an impression on General Custer.

“*Garry Owen*” became the battle song of the 7th, Cavalry and was played during expeditions, campaigns, battles, and ceremonies, to the delight of its members and onlookers alike. It was the final song heard by Custer and his cavalry before marching to the Valley of the Little Big Horn. (Hatch, 2002, p. 123)

I had first heard this tune while watching the movie *Little Big Man* (Penn, 1970). In this movie, the tune was playing during the Washita River massacre scene. I had assumed that this scene was a director’s choice for dramatic effect. I was shocked when I realized this actually took place. So, when I was writing the scene of the actual massacre at Heavy Runner’s camp, I chose to use this music too. It still sends chills up my spine when I hear the *Garry Owen* song today.

Hutton’s (1982) article provided me with some important background information that unveiled the bigger picture surrounding the events leading up to the Baker Massacre. For example, one of the scenes in my play depicted General Sheridan and President Grant discussing Sheridan’s plot of taking over control of Indian affairs. This conversation, at least the way I portrayed it, probably never took place. However, it did establish the fact that General Sheridan and President Grant were close comrades, dating back to the American civil war, and decisions that would ultimately affect the Blackfoot were being made in far off Chicago and Washington.

Hutton (1982) also points out that in the aftermath of the Baker Massacre; the results were not what Sheridan had anticipated:

Once the events [of the Baker Massacre] in Montana went awry, he [Sheridan] bull-headedly compounded his errors by defending the actions of the soldiers in the field. As a result he alienated the humanitarian friends of the Indian, destroyed

the army's chances of gaining control over Indian affairs, and won himself the sobriquet of Indian-hater. (p. 33)

As I was conducting my research, I came across some information that took me by surprise. I assumed that all the new-comers in the United States agreed with the army's actions on the Native Americans. It was a good feeling when I discovered that a few men in Washington deplored the actions of the Baker Massacre.

The first to take up the pen in defense of the Piegans was Vincent Colyer, secretary to the Board of Indian Commissioners. Colyer charged in a letter read in the House of Representatives that Baker's troops had killed but fifteen warriors, the remainder of the 173 slain being noncombatants. Fifty of these noncombatants, claimed the outraged secretary, had been children under the age of twelve, many of whom "were in their parents' arms". Furthermore, Colyer claimed that the village had been defenseless because of a raging smallpox epidemic. Colyer's sources for this information were both army officers:

Lieutenant William Pease, the Blackfoot agent headquartered at Fort Benton, and Lieutenant Colonel Sully. (Hutton, 1982, p. 39)

Major Baker submitted a report two months after the massacre and in it he "asserted that but fifty-three of the 173 Indian dead were women and children, and that every effort was made by officers and men to save the non-combatants" (Hutton, 1982, p. 41). However Hutton (1982) goes on to report that:

Many in the nation were far from satisfied, and the army would eventually pay a high price for Baker's victory. The *New York Times* supported Colyer's description of the Marias attack as a "sickening slaughter" and declared that

Baker's own report only confirmed that characterization. The editors of the *Times* went on to demand that the control of Indian affairs be retained by the Department of the Interior rather than be turned over to the brutal militarists as recommended in a bill before Congress.

Wendell Phillips, the famed Boston abolitionist now working for Indian rights, declared Sheridan's hands to be "foul with Indian blood, shed by assassins who acted under his orders and received his approval." "I only know the names of three savages upon the Plains," Phillips trumpeted at a Reform League meeting "Colonel Baker, General Custer, and at the head of all, General Sheridan." (p. 41)

I gave Phillips the last words in my play. He succinctly stated how I feel about General Phil Sheridan.

#### *The Story-tellers' Power*

Although most of the written research on the Baker Massacre was from non-Blackfeet perspective, I found that most of the viewpoints were unbiased and fair. However, I did come across one source that was difficult to read and extremely upsetting. In the introduction of Ege's (1970) book, Russell contends that this work is "impartial and definitive" (p. II). Yet there were many instances in Ege's (1970) work that were clearly prejudiced. Right from the opening pages of Ege's (1970) book, I was shaking my head in disgust especially as I read the following:

Several years ago, I [Ege] was visiting in Montana's Glacier National Park and was witness to a humorous incident that clearly reflected the Blackfeet attitude to the white intruder of the 1850-70 era—tolerant, apparently friendly, aloof, but *willing to compromise for personal gain* [italics added].

Several tribal families, replete with full and elaborate costumes and lodges, were camped adjacent to the spacious hotel at East Glacier. Theirs was a commercial venture and they entertained park visitors with native drumming, singing and dancing. When “the hat was passed,” it was only after observing tourists had been treated to an authentic and colorful performance.

Shortly after noon, one of the older male dancers retired to a shady spot on the edge of the lake fronting the hotel....

He was enjoying his lunch in restful, shaded solitude when approached by a well-upholstered Eastern matron, complete with camera, bulging shorts and floppy straw hat. The lady, in a most condescending voice, asked the Indian if he would pose as a Blackfeet fisherman, illustrating how the bygone native caught his fish. Smiling and gracious, the tribesman accepted the three silver dollars she offered and in stoic elegance, dangled a length of soiled string into the clear waters of the lake....In an amazed voice, she asked, “is that really the way the Blackfeet caught fish?” The swarthy Indian proudly replied, “Look, Lady, the Flatheads were fishermen—we Blackfeet were horse thieves!”

*And, horse thieves they were* [italics added]....Before the white man began a large-scale infiltration of Montana Territory, the affiliated Blackfeet, Blood and Piegan tribes *were satisfied to pilfer the stock* [italics added] of the Crees, Gros Ventres, Assiniboine and Crows. Their midnight round-ups of a neighboring tribe’s four legged property were the cause of countless bloody encounters between the Blackfeet and their adversaries. If the Blackfeet raiding party was of

sufficient size and determination, they often returned to their villages with fresh scalps adorning stolen horses. (pp. IV – V)

Ege (1970) goes further to share his take on the effects of the whiskey trade, “The Blackfeet coveted no war. However, the once influential chiefs, a *majority lulled and dull-witted* [italics added] by over-indulgence in trade whisky, were complacent in their delirium” (p. VI).

My sickening feeling stemmed from the language or rhetoric that filled Ege’s (1970) account regarding my ancestors. As I delved further into Ege’s (1970) discourse, I stunningly began to realize that this author was clearly defending the U.S. military and, in particular, Major Baker’s actions on that cold January morning of 1870:

Within the military, a wide difference existed between the headquarters, ordering a campaign against certain groups of Indians, and the execution of that order in the field by battalion or regimental commanders....During the Indian Wars, the troop commanders in the field were charged with the execution of their orders in accordance with the rules of *civilized warfare* [italics added] and with the least possible loss of men and equipment....the field commanders were to use every means at their disposal to insure prompt and complete victory over the enemy with the least possible loss to the government....

“Experience,” that costly teacher, taught field commanders that it was virtually impossible to bring a highly mobile, *completely unregimented* [italics added] force of Indian warriors to battle anywhere except on a terrain of the Indian’s choosing....

The answer, and Custer learned this at the battle of the Washita in 1868, was to attack the hostiles where they lived—in their villages. Pre-dawn tactics after silent night marches placed the element of surprise in the troop commander’s favor. Quite naturally, military attacks of this nature, although they *may have seemed* [italics added] cruel, saved countless lives among the troops [Baker’s troops only suffered one casualty during the massacre]. They also resulted in the deaths of non-combatants, particularly women and children. Consequently, every field commander whose dedication to duty precipitated his attack on a hostile Indian village, was labeled “squaw killer” by Eastern *sympathizers* [italics added] who had never been nearer an Indian than the corner cigar store. (pp. VII – VIII)

As I read through the previous passage, I could feel a cold chill running through my veins. All I could picture in my mind were the children, including Natohkyiaakii (Holy Bear Woman), running for their lives. Was my great-great grandmother one of those children frantically digging, with bare hands, into the frozen river bank? Or was she one of the little girls, frozen with terror, shivering in the tall grass while this unbelievably traumatic incident was unfolding before her?

In the quiet of my little apartment, I laughed out loud as I read the conclusion of Ege’s (1970) forward:

It isn’t the purpose of this book to either condone or condemn the actions of those who played key roles on the Upper Marias River in 1870....It is hoped that this book will lay bare the reasons for Major Baker’s lop-sided victory over the Peigan Indians without providing an excuse for those who prompted it. (p. IX)

According to oral accounts, the main reason for Baker's "lop-sided victory" was that the men from Chief Heavy Runner's camp had gone out hunting the previous day (Shultz, 1962). Not surprisingly, Ege (1970) had a response to this claim:

Rumors were spread that Baker's attack was successful only because all the braves in the encampment were "out hunting." Preposterous. It must be remembered that during the ten days preceding Baker's attack the temperature had failed to rise above the zero mark and was usually far below. It is highly improbable that any hunting parties were afield during this extreme weather. (p. 49)

By the time I was 22 years of age, I was a single mother of seven children ranging in ages from four months to seven years old. When my kids were hungry, I went to great lengths, without any regard of the weather, to get food for my children. To say that it is "preposterous" for the braves to be out hunting is completely out of line.

In response to Lieutenant General Phil Sheridan's January 15th, 1870 telegraph: "If the lives and property of the citizens of Montana can best be protected by striking Mountain Chief's band, I want them struck. Tell Baker to strike them hard" (Ege, pp. 118-119). General de Trobriand, commander of the military District of Montana, gave Major Baker the following orders:

In compliance with instructions from superior headquarters you will proceed with your command, without any more delay than may be required by the present condition of the weather, to chastise that portion of the Indian tribe of Piegans....

The band of Mountain Chief is now encamped on the Marias River, about seventy-five miles from this post, at a place called the Big Bend, and can easily be

singled out from the other bands of Piegans, two of which should be left unmolested, as they have uniformly remained friendly, viz., the bands of *Heavy Runner* [italics added] and Big Lake—those two chiefs, with Little Wolf are the three who met with General Sully at the agency a short time ago. (Ege, 1970, pp. 119-120)

All of the oral accounts and the written texts tell the same story of how Joe Kipp, the scout who was hired to lead the troops to Mountain Chiefs camp, upon discovering that the army was surrounding the wrong camp,

at once said to Colonel Baker: “Colonel, that is not Mountain Chief’s camp. It is the camp of Black Eagle and Heavy Runner. I know it by its differently painted lodges.” And he was right. Since he had been there a few days previously, Mountain Chief’s band had moved down the river about ten miles, and this band had come down and occupied the deserted campground.

Said Colonel Baker: “That makes no difference, one band or another of them; they are all Piegans and we will attack them.” And then to one of his men: “Sergeant, stand behind this scout, and if he yells or makes a move, shoot him.” And finally: “All ready men. Fire!” (Shultz, 1962, pp. 303-304)

I could hardly contain my anger as Ege (1970) defends Baker’s blatant attack on a peaceful camp by suggesting that it could have been anyone’s camp including those Peigan who were “known to be at least partially hostile” (Ege, 1970, p. 46):

During the survey of the dead, Doane noted that, based upon positive identification by Kipp and Cobell, Big Horn and Red Horn were among the slain....The man who had first appeared in the Indian camp, and who was so

unceremoniously shot down was undeniably the friendly Heavy Runner....Baker had specific instructions to leave unmolested the village of Chief Heavy Runner but to press his attack on the escapee, Black Eagle. When the shooting was over, it was determined that all, friend and foe alike, had been united in the same village. Writers and historians alike, intent on a verbal crucifixion [sic] of Major Baker, have constantly referred to the camp as "Heavy Runner's village."

Inasmuch as all three were principal chiefs of the Blackfeet Nation, why not Big Horn's or Red Horn's village? (p. 46)

Obviously, no effort was made to understand the dynamics of leadership among the Blackfeet. Why do we know that Isokoyoomahka (Heavy Runner) was a great chief? The Blackfeet still sing one of his honor songs today, it is known as the Grey Horse Society song. I first heard it sung on January 22nd, 2008 at the Blackfeet Community College. The singers and drummers were Paul Old Chief and Kenny Old Person from the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. Thank goodness I came across other historians who did not agree with Ege:

The historiographical debate on the attack has centered on the question of whom Baker opened fire upon on 23 January 1870.... Robert Ege...claims that the encampment contained hostile Indians and therefore should not be classified as friendly. In making this argument, however, Ege accepts at face value the claims made by Major Baker and Colonel de Trobriand after the attack and disregards the accounts of the Piegans who survived. To Baker and de Trobriand, the soldiers had not attacked Heavy Runner's band as such, but rather a hostile band led by Bear Chief and Big Horn. Baker avoided altogether any mention of Heavy

Runner in his two reports on the attack. In marked contrast to Baker and de Trobriand's version of events, several Piegan survivors of the attack, including three of Heavy Runner's children, are united in their belief that Heavy Runner's band was indeed present at the encampment site. Joseph Kipp, the mixed-blood scout, also supported the claim that the soldiers had decimated Heavy Runner's band....

Bear Chief and Big Horn's bands apparently sequestered themselves with that of Heavy Runner as the cold winter coupled with the small pox plague began to take its toll on the Piegan people. This would explain their presence in the encampment at the time of the attack. Both the Piegan and the soldier's accounts agree, however, on the fact that Mountain Chief's band, the supposed target of the operation, escaped unscathed to Canada. In light of this fact, Baker and de Trobriand's claims of success seem suspect and self-serving, and Ege's argument appears specious. (Phillips, 1996, p. 97)

Ege (1970) went to great lengths to defend the U.S. cavalry, specifically Major Baker. This fact served as a huge motivating factor for me to complete my play.

I must add that all was not lost in Ege's (1970) account of the Baker Massacre. This text soon became an invaluable resource, not from his obviously erroneous opinions, but from the appendix that he provided. In this section were the actual letters and telegrams from the principal players leading up to the Baker Massacre. These proved to be very useful in constructing the voices of my characters for the play. In fact, much of the dialogue in the play was taken out of these telegrams.

The entire discourse of Ege (1970) exposed how powerful a story-teller can be. Up to this point, the world had only heard the story largely from a non-Blackfoot perspective. The time had come for the voices, of those whose ashes remain at this site along the Bear River, to be heard. My fury became a raging river that could not be damned by compliance to one man's version of a story that ultimately became my story.

*Kyo'tokan*

When I began to seriously pay attention to the stories of the Baker Massacre, I finally read Kyo'tokan's (Bear Head's) account. Kyo'tokan shared his story with Shultz (1962). The two had met in 1879 and according to Shultz (1962), "became lifelong friends" (p. 282).

In 1935, Kyo'tokan requested that Shultz write his story:

Apikuni [Shultz], how fast we old ones are dying off. Of those of us who survived the massacre of a great camp of our tribe by the white soldiers, sixty-five winters ago, only four are now alive: my cousin... Comes-with-Rattles, and I; Heard-by-Both-Sides Woman and Good-Bear Woman. Well, I am going to tell you again of that terrible wrong that we suffered, and I want you to write it for the whites to read; for the whites of this time to learn what their fathers did to us." (Shultz, 1962, p. 282)

As I read this passage, I felt a deep sense of sorrow because here was an old man, who had survived the massacre, sharing his story *for the whites*. Yet, in a few years, many of his own relatives, among the Blackfoot, would have no recollection of this traumatic event that had such a huge impact on the Blackfoot. Almost 66 years after Kyo'tokan told his story, I would hear the story for the first time and another seven years later before the

play would be written and staged. So, 138 years later, the world would finally be told this horrific story on stage.

Kyo'tokan offers a deeper insight into the events leading up to the massacre from the Aamsskaapipikani (South Piegan) side. He introduces key players in the events leading up to the Baker Massacre. Owl Child was a "strong willed" (Shultz, 1962, p. 287) man who was married to one of Kyo'tokan's sisters. Owl Child was also "a man of terrible temper" (Shultz, 1962, p. 294).

Kyo'tokan shares the story of his father's untimely death at the hands of Owl Child:

In my twelfth summer, my father gathered a large war party to go against the Cutthroats (Assiniboines), and this time left me to care for our family during his absence. Owl Child was one of those who went with him. Near the mouth of Little (Milk) River the party discovered a camp of the enemy, successfully fought them, and then Owl Child claimed to have killed a Cutthroat who without doubt had been killed by my father. They quarreled about it, and Owl Child, crazily angry, killed my father. When the party returned, bringing us the terrible news of his death, Owl Child was not with them. He had gone to his own relatives in Mountain Chief's camp." (Shultz, 1962, pp. 294-295)

Kyo'tokan made a vow to "put an end to him, my father's killer." (Shultz, 1962, p. 298)

Kyo'tokan also tells the story of a deadly feud that existed between Owl Child and Malcolm Clarke who was also known as Four Bears. According to Ege (1970), Clarke was originally from Fort Wayne, Indiana. He was dismissed from West Point military academy because his "fiery temper, impulsiveness, stubbornness and rash behavior began to manifest....Malcolm would have graduated with the class of 1838. As

it was, several fist fights, a challenge by Clarke and an unfought duel, brought about his dismissal” (p. 2). As Clarke made his way west he became:

well known in Piegan circles....He first came to Montana as a fur trader and made his name in the region working for the American Fur Company along the Missouri River. He married Owl Child’s cousin....and eventually settled on a ranch at Wolf Creek with his wife and four children. By 1869, the Anglo-American considered him to be one of the territory’s more influential citizens. (Phillips, 1996, p. 11)

Kyo’tokan relates the story of how Owl Child was *shamed* by Malcolm Clarke during the annual Sun Dance where the entire Blackfoot nation would have been present:

On that first day of our getting together to build the lodge for Sun, it was told all through our great camp that Owl Child had been struck and knocked down by Four Bears, a white man married to *Kahkokimah Ahki* (Cutting-off-Head Woman) of our tribe, and that Owl Child was now saying that he would soon go back up to Wolf-Also-Jumped Creek to kill the man. Four Bears had made love to his (Owl Child’s) wife, tried to get her to leave him; then had beaten him when he was unarmed. For that, Four Bears must die. (Shultz, 1962, p. 298)

At this point, the infractions between the Blackfeet and settlers were getting more intense in the Montana territory. A brother of Mountain Chief and others had gone to Fort Benton and were murdered. According to Kyo’tokan:

All of our bands kept in frequent communication with one another and so in time we got some bad news. It was that Mountain Chief’s band had gone to Many-Houses (Fort Benton) to trade, and there some drunken white men – Grouse,

Night Watcher (Henry Kennerly), Real White Man (Peter Lukins), and others—had, without cause for it, hanged Heavy-Charging-in-the-Brush and shot and killed Bear Child and Rock-Old-Man, three prominent members of the band. That made us feel very sad, very angry. We decided to trade no more at Many-Houses. (Shultz, 1962, p. 299)

The final incident that ultimately sealed the fate of Heavy Runner's camp was when Owl Child and his warriors went to the Clarke Ranch, in the Prickly Pear valley near present day Helena, on a vengeful rampage. On August 17th, 1869 Malcolm Clarke was murdered and his son, Horace, was severely injured with a bullet wound to the face. (Phillips, 1996, p. 13) Much is written about the Clarke murder, but little is known about the reaction of the Blackfeet. Kyo'tokan provides insight:

It was not long after the murder of our three men at Many-Houses that visitors brought us more news: Owl Child, leading a few of his friends, had gone up to Wolf-Also-Jumped Creek and had himself killed Four Bears. I was present when Heavy Runner and other leading ones of our band got together to talk about it. They agreed that Owl Child had been justified in killing him. Much as I hated Owl Child for killing my father, I had to admit that he had had good right to kill this fire-hearted, quarrelsome, white man. Four Bears had tried to steal his woman; and failing that, had struck him, beaten him. In no other way could Owl Child have wiped out that terrible disgrace. Well, that was naught to me. I was not forgetting my vow: the time was coming when I would make Owl Child cry for what he had done to me and mine. (Shultz, 1962, p. 299)

At this point of my research I began to get overwhelmed. I knew that I needed to establish enough of the background information, yet I also had to be selective on which scenes would get staged. One concern I had was, since I wanted children to stage this play, how was I going to approach the love triangle between Owl Child, his wife and Clarke? I also had to take into account another version told to me by Natowapiisaakii (Carol Murray). She said that Clarke *raped* Owl Child's wife and as a result she became pregnant with his child. A question that I struggled with was how much of the violence did I want to stage? All I wanted at this point was to tell the story. Nevertheless, I felt that all of the key players needed to be exposed for what they were.

I soon became discouraged because, I felt, this same story been told before? How many times had scenes of Indian massacres hit the big screen? What impact did this have? Was I simply just telling another story that was like all the rest? The impetus to keep going was the fact that this was my great-grandmother's story, and in essence, it became a part of me. I did not want to become desensitized to this story because I wanted my children and grandchildren to honor their relatives the way Kyo'tokan did.

#### *What Would Shakespeare Do?*

The day finally arrived when I knew that I was ready to put this story into a script. But, a few more weeks would go by before I actually wrote anything. I kept telling myself that I was a director not a playwright. I struggled with the creative process. I knew I needed help. Enter University of Lethbridge professor, John Poulsen. I have come to admire John's passion for drama and theatre. I knew I could count on his guidance. He pointed me in the direction of *Martini* (2007) which gave me the insight and confidence I needed to write this play.

In the past, I had this view that a writer was one who lived in total obscurity and isolation. A writer, in my view, was one who lived apart from the rest of the world and came up with amazing ideas by him or herself. I knew that I didn't fit into this perception. First of all, as a mother of seven and a grandmother of eight, there was simply no way that I could sit in isolation for too long. In fact, for many years, if I wanted isolation the only place of solitude was my bathroom. I can honestly report that I didn't get too many brilliant ideas on my toilet. Therefore, I sure appreciated Martini's (2007) view that "One of the best things one can do as a writer of any kind is to observe closely and participate fully in life, because it provides you with a template for your material" (p. 5). By going out to the Baker Massacre site and building relationships with people who were experts on the story, I knew I was on the right track.

As a director of many productions over the past 12 years, I am very much aware of the audience. The audience is vital to any production. In fact, the audience is the sole reason we put on plays. If the audience doesn't show up, or doesn't like the play, then we know that we've somehow failed. In all my years of directing plays, I've had an audience walk out of my show once. It was a devastating feeling for both myself and my high school cast members. Hence, I've come to respect my audience immensely.

However, there are sometimes when a story needs to be told regardless of what the reaction of the audience may be. I read that Henrik Ibsen had to face tremendous public condemnation for his plays which included such masterpieces as *A Doll's House*:

Before his death in 1906 Ibsen was to write more plays and to return to Norway an honoured man of letters, but his work of these central years generated storms of controversy wherever it was staged in Europe and England. In Norway, some

respectable folk regarded him as completely ‘indecent’ because he made a public spectacle of taboo subjects. (Stevens, 1993, p. xi)

In the play, *A Doll’s House*, by walking out on her family, the main character, Nora, had done something that was definitely not acceptable behavior for women of that era.

At that time the family, under the husband’s rule, seemed to many people the last bastion of middle class stability. A dramatist who would publicly degrade that institution was committing a kind of social treason. When Nora slammed the door shut at the end of Act III, it sounded to some ears like an anarchist’s pistol shot aimed at the very heart of middle class morality. (Stevens, 1993, p. xii)

I was relieved when Martini (2007) stated that “there is no room for delicacy in playwriting” (p. 7). The thought of the Baker Massacre story being told from a Blackfoot perspective is exciting, yet I must admit, there was a bit of fear lurking in the background because I didn’t want my audience to walk out on me again. However, I have gained some confidence in the fact that:

All his life Ibsen admired the free individual who could defy public opinion and be true to himself. The meanest words a character in an Ibsen play can utter are, “I dare not because of what people will think.” The bravest are like those of Nora in the last act of *A Doll’s House* when she decides that she can no longer live with her husband:

*Helmer.* To desert your home, your husband, and your children! And you don’t consider what people will say!

*Nora.* I cannot consider that at all. I only know that it is necessary for me.

In walking out of Torvald Helmer's house she left the confines of "decent" society, abandoned all her rights as a "respectable" woman, and became an outcast, an outsider. But in Ibsen's terms, to go outside in this way is to find one's truest inner resources. To be outside the social corral is to see within oneself.

(Stevens, 1993, p. viii)

I am in no way comparing myself to Henrik Ibsen. I am simply sharing the inspiration from his work as a playwright. I felt as though, I, too, was treading into uncharted territory with my play. However, I received a good deal of support and knowledge from Martini's (2007) work because he emphasized the importance for budding playwrights to study and read as many plays as they can. This is why I was so intrigued with Ibsen's plays.

Martini (2007) added to my motivation through his discussion regarding "non-western and non-European" writers. He talks about the:

difficulties faced by playwrights of colour ... The stories, they were informed, appealed to too small a demographic. The plays were too specific, too limited, too marginal. They didn't fit the theatre's mandate to entertain.... [as a result, it became] discouraging to attend play after play and not find your history, your gender, your culture or your point of view represented.... or some sense that your point of view is honoured and celebrated. (p. 22)

As I read through this discourse, it became evident that the Baker Massacre story must be told.

Throughout my years of teaching drama at Kainai High School, I have taken my students to see plays in Lethbridge, Calgary and New York City, and never, in all these

years, have my students watched a play that reflected their own people or culture on these stages. Martini (2007) is very encouraging when he points out that:

There are many very fine female voices to be found in playwriting, as well as many writers from non-western, non-European backgrounds....the audience is more diverse than it has ever been, and there is a need for, and a genuine yearning for new visions, new stories, new voices. (p. 22)

As you can see, the timing is right for my play.

One of the issues that I've come across, time and time again, throughout my years of studying literature and teaching high school English courses is the fact that there is a definite distinction in storytelling between western or non-aboriginal writers and aboriginal writers. We've all been taught the widely accepted and formal version of plot structure in western plays which consists of structural elements such as the exposition where the inciting incident occurs, then you have the rising action or initial conflict, which leads to the climax and then on to the falling action, and then, finally, we have the resolution where everything is as it should be. However, in First Nation's storytelling, this standard plot diagram just doesn't seem to fit.

Martini (2007) does point out the standardized plot structure and encourages us to follow the established structural framework. However, it became evident that it was going to be difficult to fit my play into the suggested structure. The story behind the Baker Massacre is very complex and I find that there is not just one, so called, climax, but more of a series of turning points throughout the story. I was having a difficult time trying to decide who the actual protagonists were. For instance, one may think that the obvious "bad guys" were the U. S. army. However, there were also some notorious

characters such as Owl Child who definitely played a huge role in this whole incident. The standard plot structure just doesn't work for this play. My only source of consolation was when Martini (2007) suggested that when a playwright is up against a wall he or she should simply ask: "What would Shakespeare do?" (p. 20) From my studies of Shakespeare's works, he would simply turn to the supernatural by bringing back a dead father, or conjure up some witches with supernatural powers.

### *Searching For the Voices*

A choice I made from the onset of writing this play was that I wanted the story to be told by Blackfoot children. Since the majority of the survivors were children, it was only fitting that they tell the story. Most of the research is from a non-Blackfoot perspective. I had found some survivors' stories through old newspaper accounts and through some of their living descendents. However, the material was limited. I was struggling to find the voices of the children who survived the massacre. I needed to dig further into other sources in order to find that voice.

If I were a survivor of the Baker Massacre, what would I say? What words would I use to describe my experiences? Which part of the story would I share? What would I not share? At this point it became clear that I needed more insight. I chose to look at more recent and well documented stories of young people who had survived mass trauma in other parts of the world.

As painful as it was to expose myself to the horrific atrocities experienced by survivors of the 1994 Rwandan Holocaust (Ilibagiza, 2006), the 2001 civil war in Sierra Leone (Beah, 2007), the WWII Jewish Holocaust (Wiesel, 1958), and South Africa

during the Apartheid era (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003), I felt that I needed to go there to get a feeling of what it was like for survivors of mass trauma.

The experiences of these survivors of genocide and war were indeed horrific and traumatic. However, I found a general theme permeating throughout all of the four memoirs. Forgiveness seemed to be a necessary focus for these survivors. Simply telling their stories was not enough. In fact, it was just the beginning. They needed to be able to forgive in order to move on with their lives. The most profound example came from Immaculee Ilibagiza (2006) when she shared her account of meeting the man who had brutally *hacked* her brother and mother to death during the 1994 Rwandan Holocaust. I was deeply moved by her account, “He looked up at me for only a moment, but our eyes met. I reached out, touched his hands lightly, and quietly said what I’d come to say. I forgive you” (p. 204).

If I were one of the survivors of the Baker Massacre, would I be able to do the same thing? Would I have been able to reach out and touch the hand of General Sheridan, Major Baker, or any of the soldiers and say those same words: *I forgive you*? The amazing thing about Immaculee’s experience is that this meeting with the man who had killed her family members happened only a few months after the holocaust. The emotional scars were still very raw and yet she was able to find forgiveness in her heart. I came to the conclusion that I, too, had to find that same forgiveness if I wanted peace in my soul. It may seem silly to think that I would have to forgive something that happened 138 years ago to my ancestors five generations back. But, on those nights when I was forced to stop writing because I would be wailing uncontrollably, I knew I needed to let it all out before I could move on.

Beah's (2007) experience as a boy-soldier in Sierra Leone speaks to the incredible resiliency of children who've gone through tremendously traumatic experiences. He proved that we can heal from the worst experiences that exist in this world. He was rehabilitated and thus believed that "children have the resilience to outlive their sufferings, if given a chance" (p. 169). By that same token, the children who survived the Baker Massacre also possessed that same resiliency. They also found ways to go on. We, the descendents of the survivors, are proof that they never gave up. I am here because a young 12 year old girl kept putting one foot in front of the other on that cold winter in January 1870.

*Natohkyiaakii ki Akaistii'skaakii*

The voices of the Blackfeet survivors of the Baker Massacre were limited. One key voice that I did not have was the voice of Natohkyiaakii (Holy Bear Woman). Obviously, she would be one of the main characters in my play. But, the challenge was finding her amidst all of the other survivors. My grandmother had no stories she could tell me of her. Ootahkooksikinakim (Wilton Good Striker), a prominent elder from the Blood Reserve, and a descendent of Holy Bear Woman shared the only story I've heard. Tsinaaki (Rosie Red Crow) told him that Holy Bear Woman's mother placed her in the teepee liner of her lodge and that was how she survived. According to Tsinaaki, Natohkyiaakii was a very young child at the time of the massacre. However, I chose to portray her as an older child of 12 years old.

I wanted Natohkyiaakii to have a prominent role in my play, but I just could not come up with anything until I read Ilibagiza's (2006) memoir. Because the Blackfoot are a visionary people who believe in dreams and visions, I could relate to Ilibagiza's mother

who had gone to a psychic months before the genocide took place. This was the psychic's eerie prediction:

I see thunderstorms around us now, but these are just baby storms....The mother storm is coming. When she arrives, her lightening will scorch the land, and her thunder will deafen us, and her heavy rain will drown us all. The storm will last for three months and many will die. Those who escape will find no one to turn to—every friendly face will have perished. (p. 29)

Chills ran down my spine as I read this account.

I, too, have been gifted with dreams. Just before my daughter Galina died, I dreamt that meteors were falling out of the sky and everything was in turmoil. I couldn't get to my house. It seemed as if these meteors were deliberately preventing me from reaching my house. A few days later, my daughter died in that same house. I had come home too late.

My Blackfoot name is Akaistii'skaakii (Many Sweat Lodge Woman). I dreamt that Makoyiipoka (Bruce Wolf Child) and I were walking together on a bright sunny day and he gave me that name. Not long after that dream, Makoyiipoka and I followed through with the dream, and I received that name on November 11th, 1999 at the annual Head-Dress Society pow-wow on the Blood Reserve. He said that it was fitting for him to give this name because, over the course of his life, he had performed many sweat lodge ceremonies.

For as long as I could remember, I have always had dreams. Many of them were very powerful and I've sought out medicine pipe bundle owners and medicine men for interpretations and directions. My daughters, Galina and Saya, are also gifted with

dreams too. Then, I began to notice that Teesh Ansch, Galina's daughter also has the same gift. One day, about a week after Galina died, Teesh Ansch came up to me and said, "Grandma, I dreamt about my mom last night." "And what was the dream about?" I asked. "She said she's not dead!" Teesh Ansch was only three years old when Galina died and everyone was trying to explain to her what happened to her mother. Well meaning people were telling Teesh Ansch that her mother was dead. I think Galina wanted her daughter to know that she was very much alive in the spirit world. I sat Teesh Ansch down and tried my best to explain that her mother's spirit was indeed not dead.

There had to have been some supernatural warning signs leading up to the Baker Massacre. Then the thought hit me. What if the gift of dreams is hereditary? What if Natohkyaakii had the same gift and it was passed down to me, my daughters and my granddaughter? I had finally found the voice for Natohkyaakii. As a result, I wrote a scene with her telling her grandmother about a bad dream she had. Since, I didn't know the name of Natohkyaakii's grandmother; I gave her my name, Akaistii'skaakii:

### SCENE 3

#### *Holy Bear Woman's Vision*

*Setting: Heavy Runner's camp. Grandmother, Many Sweat Lodge Woman, is preparing supper. Enter twelve year old Holy Bear Woman with fire wood. She begins to help her grandmother. Holy Bear Woman obviously has something on her mind.*

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Grandmother, Sweat Lodge Woman, I had one of my dreams last night. I've been thinking about it all day.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

*(takes her grand daughter very seriously)* Oh, my girl, Holy Bear Woman, what have you seen?

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Grandmother, you know that I am afraid to share my dreams when they are bad. I don't want to be responsible for bringing bad luck onto our people.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, the grandmothers have gifted you with dreams and visions since you were only three winters old. Our people have come to rely on your visions for direction and warnings.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Yes, grandmother, I am aware of that. It's just that, sometimes, I feel . . . if I share my dreams, then bad things will happen. Maybe if I keep my dreams to myself, the bad visions won't come true.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, *(puts her arm around Holy Bear Woman)* I know that you carry a heavy load for one so young. But, you must remember, that only the strong ones are gifted with powerful visions. You were chosen because the grandmothers recognized something special in you.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Grandmother, I saw things last night that made my blood freeze. I am afraid for you and everyone else in this camp. I don't know what to do about it. *(she lowers her head and begins to cry)* I can't stand the thought of losing you. Grandmother, I'm afraid to go to sleep because of the images I see.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, what is there to be afraid of? You know that Creator sees our path long before we will ever walk on it. The grandfathers give us visions so that we will know which path to take. My girl let the wind blow your fears away and tell me what it is that makes you so sad.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

*(reluctantly)* It was cold, freezing cold; the kind of cold when everything is snapping in the air. My legs felt like they were being pierced with hundreds of porcupine quills. My fingers were thick with that nothing feeling. I was walking, but I wasn't moving. My feet were covered with thick black blisters that ached with every step I took in the snow. Everything around me was quiet and still, like a deer just before the arrow pierces its heart. And then I turned around to see where I came from. . . *(begins sobbing into her grandmother's bosom)* Oh, grandmother, I cannot bear to speak of it anymore.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, I know this is hard, but I am here. I will always be here.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Grandmother, I saw nothing but thick smoke coming from our camp. I heard babies crying like they had no mothers. I walked into the fog and I couldn't find you or anyone else in the family. I could smell death everywhere. I walked to the river, and the ice was completely red, frozen with blood. The heavy sound of horses breathing hard filled my ears. I looked for you, but when I found our teepee, it was raging with flames that were screaming towards the sky. Grandmother, I think you were still inside the teepee... *(crying and holding her grandmother tightly)*

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, *(taking a deep breath and choosing her words carefully)* this is indeed a bad omen. I will take you to Chief Heavy Runner and you will tell him of your disturbing vision. He will paint your face with the protective red ocre. Don't worry, we will make preparations for you to dance at the sacred Sundance this year. There is nothing to fear, the grandmothers and grandfathers will always be here to protect us.

Do you remember what they always tell us? They tell us that we must never forget who we are. You come from a powerful people who have survived many dreadful things and we will continue to live through many more. Now, my girl, Holy Bear Woman, you must allow this dream to flow down river. Here *(takes off her bone necklace and places it on her grand-daughter)* my grandmother gave this to me when I was about your age. Now, I pass it on to you. This has been my protection all my life and now I pass it on to you.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

*(frantically)* But, grandmother, I don't want to take away your protection. You need it, especially since it was you that I couldn't find in my dream.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

Shh...my girl. I have lived a full life. I cannot ask for anything more these days. You, on the other hand, have so much to live for. You know that things are rapidly changing for our people. I am too much of a Blackfoot woman to change my ways. You are still young. It will be much easier for you to adapt to the changes that face our people.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

I don't want to change. I'm a Blackfoot woman, too. Why do I have to adapt? Why can't I live my life like you did? What will happen to us grandmother?

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, you are one of the strong ones. You are a survivor. Never lose faith. Creator has many plans for you. You will be a source of strength for future generations. Remember who you are. You are a Blackfoot woman first! No one can ever take that away from you. Creator did not put you here for no reason.

Remember that. Now, let's make our way to Chief Heavy Runner and warn him of this disturbing vision.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Yes, grandmother...

*Drum Beat: all exit*

This became one of the most endearing scenes in the play because I had finally found the voice I was searching for.

*The Journey Continues*

On Wednesday, January 23rd, 2008, it was exactly 138 years since the massacre happened. It was a cold morning as I stood on the bluffs overlooking the Bear River where Isokoyoomahka (Chief Heavy Runner) and his people were camped. The following is an excerpt from my journal entry of that day:

*Today marks the 138th anniversary of the Baker Massacre or the Bear River Massacre. I left my apartment early in anticipation of attending the Blackfeet Community College's commemoration events. Today, we will meet at the actual site of the massacre on the Marias River.*

*Something happened this morning that put my day into context. It also made me more aware of our connection to the natwiitapiiksi or our Grandfathers and Grandmothers in the spirit world. I pulled into the local confectionary in town to get some water and hot chocolate for the two hour trip to the Baker Massacre site. I was aware of the time and I wasn't looking forward to the winter driving conditions that lay ahead for me. With my hot chocolate in hand, I struggled to unlock my truck door. I put the hot chocolate on the middle console and then proceeded to take off my coat. As I was about to get into the truck, my*

*hot chocolate flipped backwards and the lid popped off splashing the drink all over the floor. I took a deep breath and without my usual impatience, I simply began cleaning up the mess. I walked back into the store for some paper towels and to get another cup of hot chocolate. I came back to the truck and continued cleaning, and as I was wiping up the floor, a thought crossed my mind. There must be a reason for this. No sooner had the thought left, when a young man approached me asking me for a ride to the local horse plant where he worked. He was late and needed a ride to work. The horse plant is a good five kilometers out of town. On a nice day this would be nothing, but in minus 18 degrees, five kilometers might as well be a hundred. It was cold and he had already walked at least seven or eight blocks. I knew why my hot chocolate spilt. As I drove him to work, I joked "You must have some powerful grandfather; they made sure I waited for you." This set the stage for my day.*

*After I had picked up some tobacco in Browning, I was set. I drove to Blackfeet Community College and met Natowapiisaakii (Carol Murray). I hadn't seen her since our first visit back in the fall and I was happy to see her. Natowapiisaakii's passion about Blackfeet history and the Baker Massacre in particular is extremely powerful and infectious. She has made it a personal mission for her community to never forget this tragedy. Because of her dedication and research on this topic many of this generation are experiencing a reawakening of this story.*

*I drove behind Natowapiisaakii's truck as we made our way to the site. We parked on top of the bluffs overlooking the Marias River. We were one of the first*

*to arrive, but there was already a bonfire blazing. Carol and I walked to the edge and she took the time to show me where the site was and how they came to this conclusion based on the accounts of the soldiers and others who were present on that day. She explained that the government dammed the river and clear cut all the trees. I had been to this site a couple of times before and it never occurred to me that there were no trees. I didn't even think about it. I was just so accustomed to seeing this site as it is today, not as it was back then. I really need to think in context of the year 1870. She also said that there had been three or four major floods to the area and, as a result, the original river had been considerably altered.*

*She pointed out the path where the U. S. Cavalry drove their cannons down into the camp. She said that Isokoyoomahka (Chief Heavy Runner) walked on the ice carrying his paper. That's where he was shot. His body was found frozen on the ice. She also named Black Eagle as the other body that was identified lying next to Isokoyoomahka. Again, the ice is something that never occurred to me before. I had only visited this site in the late summer and early fall, so I hadn't really given much thought to the cold. Standing there on January 23rd made such a difference. This day made me acutely aware of the things that I never would have thought of otherwise.*

*As we turned around, more and more people began showing up. I counted eight school busses. Of the approximately 200 people who arrived that morning, there was a mixture of young children, adults and elders present. The young ones, of course, took off down the hill. I stood there and smiled as I watched little boys*

*wrestling in the snow. They seem oblivious to the cold. My mind flashed a quick glimpse to 138 years ago. It was mostly children who survived the massacre; children probably not much different from these little ones. The thought crossed my mind that the little boys were probably wrestling in the snow the day before the massacre, totally oblivious to what fate had in store for them the next day.*

*I found a quiet place on the bluffs where no one else was at and made my tobacco offering. My prayer, spoken in my own Blackfoot language, became very emotional. It was at that moment that I began to feel the magnitude of the events. I prayed to the grandfathers, and called on Isokoyoomahka and Natohkyiaakii to guide me as I begin to write this play. I humbly asked them to help us today to be just as strong and resilient as they were.*

*After my prayer, I made my way back to the crowd. Apomahkaa (Leonard Bastien), an Aapatohsiipikani (North Peigan) elder, gave a beautiful prayer and tobacco was handed out for everyone to make an offering. The drummers began singing Isokoyoomahka's honor song. This song is definitely going to be in my play.*

*I was so inspired. In my prayer, I asked those who were taken into the spirit world on January 23rd, 1870 to help us today. The world needs their strength. I need their strength and guidance.*

I did not realize how important those prayers would become in the months that followed, because I was taken into painful depths that I never thought I'd be able to climb out of.

I started my M.Ed program in September 2004, and I began to experience a reawakening of my career in education. I took that year off and completed the requisite

eight courses necessary before I would venture into writing a thesis. In the fall of 2005, I was back full-swing into my high school English and Drama classroom at Kainai High School, and I just couldn't get my thesis off the ground. The entire school year went by in a flash and I still didn't have anything substantial towards my thesis.

The following fall semester of 2006 started out just as hectic as any other year. However, my world came to a screeching halt on October 28, 2006 when I found my daughter, Galina, dead in my basement. She had hanged herself. Needless to say, another year would go by before I could even think about continuing my M.Ed program.

After a full year on the healing path, I began to breath and I saw the sky again. I wanted to complete what I had started in 2004. By this time, I knew that I wanted to write the Baker Massacre play. And on January 23rd, 2008, after I had asked the Aamsskaapikani (South Piegan) elders for their blessing, I officially became a playwright.

### *The Journey Becomes Painful*

The most difficult part of this story is to write the scenes from the actual massacre. When I would begin to write the scene, it would trigger my own personal tragedy of my daughter's suicide. For example, Kyo'tokan's account was heart-wrenching. It was difficult for me to read his account, but in order to move forward, I had to uncover the layers of atrocities that took place on that fateful morning in 1870:

Chief Heavy Runner ran from his lodge toward the seizers [soldiers] on the bank. He was shouting to them and waving a paper writing that our agent had given him, a writing saying that he was a good and peaceful man, a friend of the whites. He had run but a few steps when he fell, his body pierced with bullets. Inside the

lodges men were yelling; terribly frightened women and children, screaming – screaming from wounds, from pain as they died. I saw a few men and women, escaping from their lodges, shot down as they ran. Most terrible to hear of all was the crying of little babies at their mothers' breasts. The seizers all advanced upon the lodge, my seizer still firmly holding my arm [Kyo'tokan was captured minutes before the attack]. They shot at the tops of the lodges; cut the bindings of the poles so the whole lodge would collapse upon the fire and begin to burn–burn and smother those within. I saw my own lodge go down and burn. Within it my mother, my almost-mothers, my almost-sisters. Oh how pitiful were their screamings as they died, and I there, powerless to help them!

Soon all was silent in the camp, and the seizers advanced, began tearing down the lodges that still stood, shooting those within them who were still alive, and then trying to burn all that they tore down, burn the dead under the heaps of poles, lodge-skins, and lodge furnishings; but they did not burn well.

At last my seizer released my arm and went about with his men looking at the smoking piles, talking, pointing, laughing, all of them....I sat before the ruin of my lodge and felt sick. I wished that the seizers had killed me too. In the center of the fallen lodge, where the poles had fallen upon the fire, it had burned a little, then died out. I could not pull up the lodge-skin and look under it. I could not bear to see my mother, my almost-mothers, my almost-sisters lying there, shot or smothered to death. When I went for my horses [earlier that morning before the attack], I had not carried my many-shots gun. It was there in the ruin of the lodge. Well, there it would remain. (Shultz, 1962, pp. 301-302)

Samakiinakii (Spear Woman), a daughter of Chief Heavy Runner, shared this account:

at dawn, her family was aroused by barking dogs. Then someone came with word to her father, Heavy Runner that the soldiers were coming. All was excitement and fright in the camp. But Heavy Runner bid them to be quiet; that there was nothing to fear. He was friendly to the whites and would show them his “name paper.”

He walked quietly toward the soldiers with his hands uplifted. In one of them was the paper which he had been assured was a pledge of safety, held where it could be seen. A shot from a soldier pierced his heart and he fell dead, clutching the paper to his breast....

The soldiers then began firing at every Indian in sight. Everywhere was confusion as those in the camp vainly looked for protection. All the warriors and able-bodied men had left some days before on a hunt, only some old and sick men were there.

Spear Woman herself rushed into a tent where there were a number of sick and dying people. She hid under a backrest on one of the beds. While she lay there, she saw a knife cut a slit in the tepee [sic] and a soldier thrust himself through the opening. He fired at every moving body. Finally, when convinced that no living creature remained, he withdrew. He had not seen the small Indian girl who, in terror, had watched him in his bloody deed.

Spear Woman remained paralyzed with fright behind the back rest. Shots, screams and wild outcries raged on every side. After a long time, the noise of the conflict died away although the smell of powder still lingered. At last, she left her

hiding place and dared to look out. She found that the soldiers had left. Soon she saw an old uncle and then they found her mother who, with three more of her children, had managed to escape.

The mother decided to go to Fort Benton, although she had no horse, and there were only scant provisions to be had. However, to remain in the camp was to perish. They started along the trail which the soldiers had made in the deep snow. Now and then they found some of the reserve provisions the soldiers had thrown away and with these they kept alive. It took several days of painful travel to reach Fort Benton. Once there was a noise and the brave mother crept forward to see what it meant. When she returned, her baby which one of the daughters had stayed with had died. ("Massacre of Piegan in 1870," 1932)

I came to realize that all traumatic experiences are somehow related, whether it is unresolved historical trauma or more recent traumatic experiences. This next excerpt is my journal entry just after I had finished reading about the actual massacre:

*I still find it extremely difficult to read the story of the actual massacre. The images in my head and the sounds I hear consume me. Amid the sounds of guns, I hear heavy breathing of those running for their lives. I hear the screams of women, children and babies. I see red blood everywhere. I hear the silence of those who were killed instantly. I see Galina hanging in my basement. I hear my own screams as I panicked in fear. I hear the banging on the washer and dryer as I tried to get help. I didn't feel the cold on my bare feet as I ran outside screaming for help. My God! This is so hard! The pain is unbearable. A mother should never have to see her dead child....*

The connection between the Baker Massacre and my daughter's death was strong. One event triggered the other. The pain I felt from both of these traumatic incidents was of the same magnitude.

I began to understand why I *could* write this play. My own personal trauma had given me the gift I needed to write. I know what it feels like to be so terrified and helpless when death is right in front of me. I felt the same feeling of shock and trauma as Kyo'tokan, Samakiinakii and Natohkyaakii. My body was numb and lifeless as I sat there in the aftermath of Galina's death. I will never compare my tragedy to the Baker Massacre, I only know that it is possible to experience that same kind of shock and pain today.

There are a few scenes in the play that stand out for me. One scene, in particular, takes place just after the massacre. It was widely reported that there were thousands of Blackfeet warriors ready to retaliate. In this scene I had a nameless warrior speaking on behalf of all his comrades who were ready for battle. As I was writing this scene, I could feel the anger and bitterness in his voice. He wanted so badly to do something, anything, to get back at the U. S. army. Tears were streaming down my face as I was typing his words:

*Many of our relatives have been wiped out. Never have the Blackfoot confederacy experienced a massacre of such magnitude. We have always defended our children, our mothers, our grandmothers, our wives with such fierceness. When have we ever known of such an atrocity? When have we ever allowed others to come into our territory and terrorize our children? These relatives of ours were defenseless. Their warriors were out hunting for their families and when they*

*arrived with their horses carrying an abundance of meat, they were welcomed not by honor songs, but by the smell of death. Many of them are among us today. Tears will be shed for many generations to come. This is indeed a dark time for the Blackfoot people. I stand with thousands of my brothers; we are ready! There are still many of us and few of them. We can wipe them out in the same manner they did to Heavy Runner's people. We've come to you, our leaders, to give us your blessing to avenge this massacre!*

I thought about my children and my precious grandchildren. I, too, would immediately want revenge if anyone deliberately harmed them. I recall feeling the same way when my daughter, Galina, died. However, because her death was a suicide, there was no one to lash out at. So, I chose to take it out on God. I remember saying things like: *"You could part the Red Sea, you could bring Lazarus back from the dead, and yet you could not have stopped my girl from going down those stairs and doing what she did?"* I also remember shouting, *"I devoted my whole life to you and this is the thanks I get?"* I was extremely bitter. I felt that someone had to pay for my daughter's death.

However, once I began to work on my own healing, I was able to accept things as they were. I knew I had to heal from the bitterness that had enveloped my soul.

There is no way that I would have been able to write the response from the elder to the young warrior if I had not worked on myself:

*My sons, we know that this is hard for everyone. We predicted a harsh winter this year, but little did we know the magnitude of this prediction. We, your leaders, share in the grief. We, too, have lost many relatives this day. But, we have also lost many more in the past few years due to the white mans' diseases and whiskey.*

*We know the pain of losing many of our precious children prematurely. Nothing will ever take away the pain of losing a child, or a mother, or a grandmother, or a wife. Perhaps if we were younger, we would share in your feelings for revenge. But, my sons, you must learn from this. These newcomers do not see us as real people. They have no idea who we are, or the strength we possess. But, we know. We know exactly who we are. We are Nitsitapii, the real people of this land. Without us, they, too, will not survive. But, as long as we are here, the people on this land will continue to flourish. Let us take the deaths from this massacre and use them, not as a senseless defeat, but as our greatest source of strength. Look at the children who've survived. Many are with us today. They will carry on our ways. The survivors of the Baker massacre will be a magnitude of strength for future generations. We must always think of the many generations to come. They will look to us someday and receive the same inner strength to carry on as a people. My sons, iiyiikaakimaat, try hard. The seizers, or the army, have proven their heartlessness. We must not put any more of our innocent women and children into their hands. They will not stop until every last one of our children is wiped out. Therefore, we cannot give you our blessing to go to war. We need to consider those yet to be born. They will look back on us this day and they will understand why we didn't retaliate. We chose not to retaliate, not out of cowardice, but out of love for our future children and grandchildren. Our grandchildren possess the fire that will keep our Blackfoot legacy burning forever.*

If I had given up, what would have happened to Galina's two children? Joseph and Teesh Ansch were only two and three years old when their mother died. Today, I cherish every moment I have with them. I am looking forward to their future. I want to be a part of their lives. I want to see them play sports, dance at pow-wows, graduate from school, get married and have children of their own some day. Just last month, Teesh Ansch said to me, "*Grandma, when I grow up, I'm going to have a little baby girl. And, I'm going to name her Galina, so you won't have to be lonesome for your girl anymore, okay?*" Silent tears were shed at that moment as I smiled and gave my five year old granddaughter a hug. The experience of writing this play really did give me the opportunity to heal from the two traumas, the Baker Massacre itself and the death of my daughter Galina.

Just above my computer is a beautiful snapshot of Galina and Teesh Ansch. Teesh Ansch is only a few months old and Galina is cuddling her while smiling into the camera. Whenever I stop typing, I always look up into this picture. I'm sharing this because when I first starting writing this play, I would look up and feel sad and lonely for my daughter. As I've gone through the entire process of writing this play, I have been able to let go of the pain and anguish of the Baker Massacre. I honestly think that I would be able to utter those words of forgiveness to Sheridan, Baker and the soldiers. I can look up at my daughter's picture feel peace in my heart. It's almost as though I've been able to let go of her too. I can sit and talk to her out loud. I've told her to move on and progress where she's at. I don't know what she's doing in that spirit world, but I imagine she has things to do. I've told her to let go of us too. I know that she will be invaluable where she's at. I can picture her being a wonderful support to other spirits who have left this world in the same manner as she did. In fact, in the two years since she's been gone I have counted at

least eight people who have committed suicide in our community. I've also encouraged her to forgive herself and to love herself.

*The Aftermath*

It was reported that a scout Joe Cobell, an Italian immigrant, who was married to Mountain Chief's sister fired the first shot that killed Heavy Runner (Phillips, 1996, p. 80). Gibson & Hayne (n.d.b) give more detail on this account:

Joe Cobell boasted to his daughter's husband, Joe Connelly, that he shot Heavy Runner because the chief had taken some Cobell horses and wouldn't give them back—and the Army wouldn't help because they didn't want to get in bad with friendly Piegans. This was Joe's way of getting even—and getting hold of more horses than he had lost [he reported losing six]....

Joe told Butch Henkel [another son-in-law] about it. 'Over 200 in the camp were killed, many women and kids and old people, because most of the warriors were away. It sure taught them a good lesson—and I got their horses!' this caused a lot of bad feelings. Butch didn't like Joe much after that. And everyone knew that most of the horses were Heavy Runner's. (p. 13)

According to Phillips (1996), "Congress never launched an official investigation of the massacre on the Marias River, and none of those responsible for carrying it out were ever censured or cashiered" (p. 94).

The only positive consequence resulting from this massacre was that Sheridan did not get complete control of Indian Affairs:

Illinois Senator John Logan suddenly reversed his position on the transfer bill declaring: "I have always believed the War Department to be the proper place for

the Indian Bureau; but I went the other day and heard the history of the Piegan massacre, as reported by an Army Officer, and I say now to you Mr. Speaker, and to the country, that it made my blood run cold in my veins. It satisfied me; and I shall therefore move to strike out this section at the proper time and let the Indian Bureau remain where it is.” (Hutton, 1982, p. 42)

According to Horace Clark, a son of Malcolm Clark, who accompanied Baker and his troops on this expedition, “it [was] an undeniable fact that Col. Baker was drunk and did not know what he was doing” (Gibson & Hayne, n.d.b, p. 8).

Hutton (1982) reports that:

De Trobriand had clearly specified in written orders that Baker was not to molest Heavy Runner’s band, and yet the major, despite the warning from scout Kipp, destroyed that very group of Piegans. It can either be assumed that Baker was so anxious for glory that he was determined to destroy the largest village he could find, or that, as Kipp later charged, the major was so drunk that he ignored the warning. Baker was either willfully disobedient or incompetent and did not deserve to have his actions sustained. Despite official support that he received from his superiors, the Marias massacre destroyed Baker’s career. Thereafter known in army circles as “Piegan” Baker, he never rose above his rank in 1869 of major, and seems to have taken more and more to the bottle for solace. In August 1872, while escorting surveyors for the Northern Pacific Railroad, Baker’s command was surprised in camp by a Sioux war party but he was so drunk that he refused to acknowledge that a battle was in progress; prompt action

of other officers saved the command. It was for such an officer that Sheridan sacrificed so much. (pp. 42-43)

It was later reported that Major Eugene Baker died at the age of 48 from cirrhosis of the liver (Gibson & Hayne, n.d.a, p. 3).

As for me, the process of writing and directing this play brought me to a place that I can only describe as peace. The tobacco I placed on the banks of the Bear River on January 23rd, 2008 has become the most meaningful offering I have ever given to my ancestors.

### *Letters*

*To my dear students which includes my children and grandchildren;*

*You are the reason why I chose to go through this painful process. I never wanted you to stumble across this story of our ancestors and ask the same question I did: "Why didn't I know this story?"*

*As painful as it is to look at the atrocities that permeate throughout our Blackfoot history, you must understand that in order to reconcile ourselves with our past, we must acknowledge it first, and then work on accepting it.*

*I give you this story with a charge that you keep this story alive. Continue to tell this story until the anger and pain begins to subside. Do not let future generations forget, most importantly do not forget yourself.*

*Many of you are descendents of the survivors. Remember the strength and resiliency of the children who kept putting one foot in front of the other despite the freezing cold and the devastating loss of their loved ones. You are a testimony*

*of the powerful force of our people. Don't ever give up. We're still here! We're still here!*

*Walk with your head held high with the dignity and grace of your ancestors who walk beside you.*

*Your teacher, mother and grandmother.*

*To my fellow teachers and directors;*

*I hope my experience has not deterred you from taking on a project such as this. It is my hope that you will take this work and add to it. Once it is in your hands, the story becomes a part of you. You are welcome and encouraged to share this story with your own students, children and grandchildren.*

*As you know, I've come a long way from directing my first play. But, I'm living proof that anyone can do it. Don't ever lose sight of the fact that you are a shining light to your students. They will look to you for the answers. Be confident that you can answer even the painful questions about this story.*

*The arts are a powerful tool when they are used in the classroom. There is no better way to connect with our students than the arts.*

*As you can see, this story adds to Blackfoot identity and culture while enhancing the healing process.*

*I have been extremely fortunate to have found a means of expressing my pain of losing my daughter to suicide. I encourage you to talk about suicide with your students because this is a serious issue that is not isolated to First Nations communities. We are all affected.*

*For the day that you decide to stage this play I will already give you my blessing. In Indian theatre we don't say "Break a leg!" Instead we say "Make a Wounded Knee!" Your friend.*

*To my dear Galina;*

*I love you more and more everyday. I know if you were here, you would not have missed my opening night for anything! You would have been in the audience taking it all in. Afterwards, you would have come backstage and hugged me and congratulated me. You would have been my sounding board throughout this process. You would have been so proud of me.*

*Yet, as I write this, I know that you were there on opening night! You were in the audience. You did hug and congratulate me. You were my sounding board and you are proud of me.*

*My girl, you gave me the strength to do this. I didn't think I could carry on without you, but you gave me the courage to keep going.*

*I dedicated this play to you, my girl, because you were the gifted writer. You were the story-teller. You were the creative one. You were the one who was not afraid to tell the painful stories.*

*This project has been one of the most memorable accomplishments in my life and I can't wait until the time comes when I can sit with you and tell you all about it.*

*You are in a place with the ancestors, and I hope they aren't too mad at me for the way I chose to tell their story. If they are... can you take care of it?*

*Until we meet again,*

*Mom.*

*From Broadway to Browning*

In July 2001, I took a group of Kainai High School students to New York City. We were there just eight weeks before the Twin Towers went down. It was the trip of a lifetime, or so I thought.

When I began researching and writing my play, I thought that I would stage it only in Blackfoot country. I had promised the community of Browning, Montana that I would bring a production to them on January 23rd, 2009. Those were the only two communities that I was thinking of when I wrote the play.

In April 2008, at the encouragement of my supervisor, Dr. Cynthia Chambers, I submitted a proposal to Performing the World 2008, a conference in New York City. The following month I received a notification of acceptance to this conference. I immediately submitted another proposal to my administration, our Parent Advisory Committee and our Kainai Board of Education. They were all extremely supportive. *All I had to do was raise the money.*

In June 2008, I held open auditions for the entire school district. I wanted to include the younger students. A total of 23 students auditioned. Some sang with their front teeth missing, some did monologues, some danced and some read poetry. The following week I went to my planning committee and declared that, since we didn't have money anyway, we were taking all 23 children to New York City.

Rehearsals began in July 2008. I was still working on the play. After rehearsals, I would run home and work on the next scene for the next day. Plus, I was lobbying everyone I knew for money. Our budget had turned out to be quite substantial because I wanted all the children to be accompanied by their parents or guardians.

In September 2008, we had a major breakthrough with our funding. We took the entire cast, their families and community leaders and elders to the Baker Massacre site. Natowapiisaakii (Carol Murray) and Maistoaki (Lea Whitford) from Blackfeet Community College were there to share the story. Many of our leaders and elders had not heard of this story until that afternoon. Both Natowapiisaakii and Maistoaki shared the story with so much passion that I'm sure everyone who was present that day felt the same emotions I felt the first time I visited the site. Needless to say, by the end of the day, we had the funding in place. With the financial help from our Blood Band Chief and Council, the Kainai Board of Education and the Alberta Lottery Fund we were able to take a total of 73 people to New York City where we had the debut of our play.

*"Strike Them Hard!" The Baker Massacre* play opened at Performing the World 2008 in New York City on October 4th. There were delegates from all over the world. The conference organizers had to book an additional show because of the high demand for our play. It was an honor to share this story with the world. When we arrived back home, we had two sold-out performances at the Historic Empress Theatre in Fort Macleod, Alberta. I was overwhelmed with the support from our local community. The response was amazing! On January 23rd, 2009, things had come full circle. I fulfilled my promise to bring the play to the Blackfeet Reservation in Browning, Montana. We performed at the Bear River Massacre Commemoration hosted by Blackfeet Community College. For 139 years, the Baker Massacre has been relatively obscure. Those who do know the story can relate to the following statement:

Make no mistake: the Marias "incident" wasn't an insignificant skirmish. It matched Bear River, Sand Creek, the Washita, the Nez Perce, and the Wounded

Knee disasters in scale and weighty consequences. Custer's debacle at the Little Big Horn, at midpoint in the sequence of massacres, has been chronicled so microscopically that there is even a biography of Capt. Myles Keogh's HORSE, "Comanche." Yet today, over a century and a quarter later, there isn't a single book in print about the Baker Massacre, and – aside from a decorous chapter here and there in a half-dozen Western histories and a couple of journal articles – most historians have totally ignored the event, even when their stated topic has been the "Indian Wars." (Gibson, n.d. p.2)

Today, there is a full-length play that chronicles all of the significant events, including the Blackfeet perspective, leading up to the massacre. With all our shows combined, we have performed this play to approximately 1000 people. Therefore, there is a good chance that the traumatic events that took place on January 23rd, 1870 at Chief Heavy Runner's camp will not be forgotten ever again, especially among the Blackfoot.

*My Original Cast and Crew*

I will never forget the journey with these children, their families and my colleagues. All of the cast were Blackfoot. Many were also direct descendents of Natohkyaakii. This play was indeed a dream come true for all of us!

Cast:

Albert Wolf Child: Drummer, Owl Child, Ely Parker, Soldier, Congressman  
Daniel Voorhees.

Everett Wolf Child: Drummer, Old man, Mountain Chief, Black Bear, Gray  
Eyes, Gray Wolf, Soldier.

- Mason Cross Child: Chief Heavy Runner, Malcolm Clarke, Warrior during Blackfoot council.
- Marvin Calf Robe Jr.: First Rider/Bear Head, Rock Old Man, Eagle's Rib, Elder from Heavy Runner's camp, Big Lake, Boys Fancy Dancer.
- Latasha Calf Robe: Fair Singing Woman, Old Lady Black Bear, General de Trobriand, Mother with baby who gets shot during massacre, Girls Fancy Dancer.
- Mercedes Weasel Head: Mother making moccasins, Grouse/James Quail, Helen Clarke, Mother nursing baby during massacre, General William T. Sherman, Girls Jingle Dress Dancer.
- Lacey Plume: Girl making moccasins, Settler at Fort Benton, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Girl dancing in snow, Child digging in river bank during massacre, Girls Jingle Dress Dancer.
- Dasan Crow Shoe: Boy making moccasins, Peter Lukins, Black Weasel, Elder from Heavy Runner's camp, Little Wolf, Boy with bow and arrow, Child digging in river bank during massacre, Boys traditional dancer.
- Simone Smith: Mother teaching winter count, Many Sweat Lodge Woman, Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Sully, Girls Jingle Dress Dancer.
- Harmonie Smith: Child learning winter count, Holy Bear Woman, Isabel Clarke, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Gray Wolf's wife, Girls Jingle Dress Dancer.

- Carson Rex: Child learning winter count, warrior, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Nathan Clarke, Boys Grass Dancer.
- Jalen Vielle-Shouting: Child learning winter count, Settler at Fort Benton, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Girl playing with doll, Child digging in river bank during massacre, Girls Fancy Dancer.
- Shaylynn
- Strikes With A Gun: Mother combing child's hair, Blue Bird Woman, Lieutenant W.B. Pease, Spear Woman's Mother, Vincent Colyer, Girls Traditional Dancer.
- Raquel Healy-Wells: Child combing hair, Settler at Fort Benton, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Girl dancing in snow, Child digging in river bank during massacre, Girls Jingle Dress Dancer.
- Joey Blood: Young man tending horses, Horace Clarke, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Elder during Blackfoot council.
- Austin Standing Alone: Young man tending horses, Bear Child, Bear Chief, Big Nose/Hiram Baker, Boy with bow and arrow, Soldier, Boys Traditional Dancer.
- Mandy Creighton: Mother braiding sweet grass, Henry Kennerly, Cutting Off Head Woman, Settler at Fort Benton, General James Hardie, Joe Cobell, Girls Jingle Dress Dancer.
- Trissly Black Water: Child braiding sweet grass, Settler at Fort Benton, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Girl dancing in snow, Girl who get shot in forehead during massacre, Girls Fancy Dancer.

Jaden Smith:	Child braiding sweet grass, Warrior, Jackson, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Boy wrestling in snow, Boy who escapes massacre, Boys Chicken Dancer.
Gus Calf Robe:	Boy who steals doll, Warrior, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Boy wrestling in snow, Gray Wolf's son, Child digging in river bank during massacre, Boys Chicken Dancer.
Sacha Beebe:	Girl with doll, Settler at Fort Benton, Settler at Fort Benton, Girl playing with doll, Spear Woman, Wendell Phillips, Girls Fancy Dancer.
Dawn Buckskin:	President Grant, Settler at Fort Benton, Major Eugene Baker, Girls Traditional Dancer.
Tamara Fox:	General Phil Sheridan, Settler at Fort Benton, Elder in Heavy Runner's camp, Joseph Kipp, Girls Traditional Dancer.
Wilton Good Striker:	Elder – Prologue.
Narcisse Blood:	Elder – Epilogue.
	Crew:
Ramona Big Head:	Director
Delia Cross Child:	Costume design and poster artwork.
Crystal Good Rider:	Costume design, Front of house services, programs, tickets.
Eric Spencer:	Sound design, tour manager.
Teena Calf Robe:	Costume design and backstage manager.

Charlton Weasel Head:        Sound design.

Sandra Vielle:                Back stage manager.

This cast and crew were a huge part of my journey with this play. Lasting memories and friendships were created throughout this whole process. I will never forget these people. I am deeply indebted to each of them. They were a key part of my healing journey.

*You Are a Nitsitapiaakii First!*

When I was about 18 years old, I went for a drive with my dad. As we pulled into Standoff on the Blood Reserve, the discussion was getting deep. I was asking my dad to give me direction in my life. I wanted to know exactly what I should do with my life. He looked at me and smiled. He said “I can’t tell which path to take. That’s for you to figure out. I’m not going to tell you take this path or don’t take that one. The only thing I’ll tell you is that you are a Nitsitapiaakii [a Blackfoot woman] first!” I’m forty-two years old and I think I’m beginning to know what he meant.

I no longer get panic attacks when an elder passes on. Instead I honor the gifts he or she has left our community with. My grandmother, Ksikawotaan (Annie Bare Shin Bone) is a grand-daughter of Holy Bear Woman and she will be 91 years old this year. She was the mother of ten. My dad was her oldest son. I am just one of her hundreds of grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Somewhere along the line, every one of her progeny has heard portions of her story. We have all sat with her at one time or another and listened. I know that the knowledge that she possesses will not leave with her in death. I feel peace because I am doing my part in ensuring that our future generations have access to our history from our Blackfoot voices.

As of today, February 28th, 2009, I am still getting requests for more performances. I think I'll enjoy this ride for a bit longer.

### *Epilogue*

The writing of this narrative has also become a huge component in my journey with the Baker Massacre play. When it was suggested that I write a personal narrative to accompany my play, I was a bit apprehensive. As a director, I always felt that my productions should stand on their own. I never felt the need to speak about my plays. I was quite satisfied with sitting in the back row during a performance. My validation came from the audience's reaction. However, as I fumbled with how to approach the narrative, my supervisor and I had lengthy discussions about how important this work would be for future teachers and potential playwrights. Therefore, I approached the narrative with an attitude that this was an essential piece that needed to be included with the play.

After a brief discussion with John Poulsen, he suggested that I use the examples of directors' cuts on their movies. Most DVDs now come with a second DVD that has the director speaking about his or her work for the entire length of the movie. I enjoy this insight into their work. This is an example of how the process becomes just as valid as the product.

I have often been told that I'm a good story-teller. So, I decided to chronicle my journey of the Baker Massacre as a story. This gave me the opportunity to rise above it all and look at it from a distinct vantage point. I began to recognize just how vital this project was to not only my own personal life, but to arts education as well.

I was worried, however, that it might be too much. For example, I wasn't sure if the reader could handle how I juxtaposed the scene of the massacre with the

flashback of my daughter's suicide. I admit that writing this narrative was an extremely emotional and draining experience. At times, I would have to walk away from the computer and simply allow myself to cry. I was once told that every tear we cry for our loved ones who've passed on honours them. I will probably be honouring my daughter for the rest of my life. As I look back to that Saturday when I wrote a total of 35 pages of this narrative, it feels good. I cannot express enough how important it is to allow a place for our own personal healing in the professional work that we do. I have always been a transparent person; my life is an open book. So, maybe it's easier for me to share my personal experiences than it is for others. Nevertheless, I'm very grateful that I had this venue to express myself. This entire process has turned out to be a special gift for me and my family.

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“Strike Them Hard!” The Baker Massacre

Ramona Big Head

University of Lethbridge

CAST OF CHARACTERS  
(in order of appearance)

Chief Heavy Runner  
First Rider/Bear Head  
Fair Singing Woman  
President Ulysses S. Grant  
Grant's Servant  
Lieutenant General Philip Sheridan  
Many Sweat Lodge Woman  
Holy Bear Woman  
Owl Child  
Blue Bird Woman  
Malcolm Clarke  
Horace Clarke  
Old Man  
Henry Kennerly  
Grouse/James Quail  
Peter Lukins  
Rock Old Man  
Bear Child  
Mountain Chief  
Black Weasel  
Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Sully  
Lieutenant W.B. Pease  
Cutting Off Head Woman  
Helen Clarke  
Isabel Clarke  
Old Lady Black Bear  
Jackson  
Eagle's Rib  
Bear Chief  
Black Bear  
Colonel General deTrobriand  
Hiram Baker "Big Nose"  
Ely Parker  
Major Eugene M. Baker  
Little Wolf  
Big Lake  
Gray Eyes  
Inspector General James Hardie  
Joseph Kipp  
Joe Cobell  
Nathan Clarke  
Gray Wolf's son  
Gray Wolf  
Soldier

Spear Woman

Warrior

Elder

General William Tecumseh Sherman

Vincent Colyer

Congressman Daniel Voorhees

Wendell Phillips

## SCENE 1

## Heavy Runner Names Bear Head

*Setting: Chief Heavy Runner's camp. Sounds of crackling fire of the camp will be heard. Flute music will be played in the background. Vignettes of the children will be highlighted. Little boys will be wrestling on the ground; a boy will be taking care of his horse; girls will be playing with dolls; girls will be taking care of younger siblings; an elder will be teaching children using winter counts. Enter Heavy Runner and First Rider. Everyone quietly makes room for them and sit attentively facing them.*

*Heavy Runner:*

Oki, my nephew and now my son. That thief, Owl Child, has stolen your childhood and forced you into becoming a man. The entire camp knows of his treachery in taking the life of your father and my beloved brother, Bear Head.

*First Rider:*

Uncle *(hesitantly)* . . . father *(with anger and determination)* I have made a vow to kill Owl Child for taking my father's life. I have listened to my mother's cries for several moons now. She and my sisters have not been able to let my father's spirit go.

*Heavy Runner:*

My son, you know that I will be the first one to put a bullet into Owl Child's heart if he sets foot in this camp. He has no honor among our people. But, we must carry on and allow Creator to determine our path. You know that Creator will see to it that Owl Child's actions will come back on him. Now, we have important business to attend to.

*Enter Fair Singing Woman, along with her daughters, with a buffalo hide and lays it at Heavy Runner's feet. She stands next to her son, First Rider.*

*Heavy Runner:*

Now we will take care of the naming transfer ceremony. *(Puts his hand on First Rider's shoulder)* My son, your father was my younger brother. Bear Head has left many heavy hearts in our camp. He was a great warrior and leader among the Blackfoot. Bear Head provided for you, *(points to Fair Singing Woman who is crying)* your mother, Fair Singing Woman, and your sisters in such a way that your family never had to feel the pangs of hunger. He has taught you well. I remember when he took you on your first war party, you were only eight winters old at that time. Wasn't that the time you came home with your first rifle?

*First Rider:*

*(smiling shyly)* Yes, I also counted coup and took that Gros Ventre's scalp that day.

*Heavy Runner:*

Your father brought home many trophies from his war parties. I have personally witnessed his prowess in sneaking into a Crow camp and successfully capturing the finest buffalo runner tied next to its teepee. My new son, Owl Child may have stolen your childhood, but he cannot take your father's spirit away from you. You are now worthy to take your father's name. As of this day, you will leave behind your childhood name of First Rider and be known from this time forward as Bear Head. All who are in the vicinity of my voice, from this day forward you will call on Bear Head. Bear Head is the name you will call when you are in need. *(he pushes Bear Head and begins singing the honor song. At the end of the song, he prays)* Creator, bless this young man . . . Bless him with the same strong spirit that his father possessed. Bless young Bear Head with the strength he'll need to survive whatever hardships come his way. Bless him with a long life and the courage to carry on his father's name with honor. *(Fair Singing Woman and daughters makes a trilling sound).*

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 2

## Grant and Sheridan Meet

*Setting: President Ulysses S. Grant's office at Washington. Enter President Grant. He sits at a table. Enter servant.*

*Servant:*

Mister President, General Philip Sheridan is waiting in the foyer to see you.

*Grant:*

Oh, yes. Send him in.

*Enter General Sheridan*

*Grant:*

*(walks up to Sheridan and offers a generous handshake)* General Sheridan, to what do I owe this most pleasant surprise?

*Sheridan:*

Mister President, sir . . .

*Grant:*

Cease! *(to servant)* Bring us a bottle of whiskey. *(to Sheridan)* It's been too long since we've shared a drink my ol' friend and comrade. *(motions Sheridan to sit at the table).*

*Sheridan:*

Yes sir. It's hard to get a good shot of whiskey out west.

*Enter servant with whiskey and two glasses.*

*Grant:*

*(raising his glass)* To the best darn Indian fighter and lieutenant general in command of the Division of the Missouri.

*Sheridan:*

*(raising his glass)* To cronyism at its finest.

*Both take a good swig of the whiskey.*

*Grant:*

Aah! Now, my friend, I know you too well. You did not come all this way for the whiskey and fine company. Let's get down to business. What is the true nature of your visit?

*Sheridan:*

Sir, since my appointment as lieutenant general in command of the west, I have become an expert in the ways of the savages that occupy my territory.

*Grant:*

Of course, that is why I, personally, made certain of your promotion to this position.

*Sheridan:*

Thank you sir, and as you know, it is a most grievous challenge to our government's goal of reforming these savages from their outdated way of life into an agricultural society.

*Grant:*

Yes, vast amounts of dollars and resources have been spent trying to convert these people into farmers, but it just doesn't seem to sink into their minds the importance of settling into homesteads and letting go of their nomadic ways.

*Sheridan:*

These heathens don't like the idea of hard work. I believe the problem lies in the fact that these blood thirsty savages have only one profession: warfare. And, every last one of them belongs to it. They can never resist the natural desire and instinct to join in a fight or an all out war if it happens to be in their vicinity.

*Grant:*

Another Indian war is the last thing we need right now.

*Sheridan:*

I agree and I firmly believe that there is only one solution to deter this natural inclination to war.

*Grant:*

Which is?

*Sheridan:*

Which is that is every Indian, including the squaws, must be severely punished for all their crimes.

*Grant:*

Isn't that what your protégé, Custer, did in '68 on the Washita River?

*Sheridan:*

Exactly! However, since then, in spite of all the attempts made by our government to control this wild and savage race, we have still fallen short of complete compliance with our more superior and civilized laws.

*Grant:*

*(smiling)* I assume you have the ultimate solution to this Indian problem?

*Sheridan:*

*(firmly)* Protection for the good and punishment for the bad.

*Grant::*

Your point is?

*Sheridan:*

My point, sir, is that the Department of the Interior has no business in Indian Affairs! This old Indian ring has proven to be quite inept in the control of this primitive people. Their, so called, admirable system of civilizing and providing for the wild tribes is constantly being thrown into chaos by the impractical, unbusinesslike actions of some of the men engaged in carrying it out.

*Grant:*

I agree. There has to be a more efficient manner of dealing with these savages.

*Sheridan:*

There is. I have the interest of the Indian at heart as much as anyone, and sympathize with his fading out race. But, many years of experience have taught me that in order to civilize and Christianize the wild Indian, it is not only necessary to put him on reservations, but it is also necessary to exercise some strong authority over him.

*Grant:*

And how do you envision this “strong authority” playing out?

*Sheridan:*

The only possible way this could be done is through our distinguished army. Therefore, I implore you, sir, to transfer the control of Indian Affairs over to the War Department where it rightfully belongs. I can assure you that this transfer will save both lives and money.

*Grant:*

Now, Phil, you are aware that the politicians are currently working very closely with the missionaries from the various denominations in the hopes of producing a good Indian race.

*Sheridan:*

Sir, with all due respect, *(smiling)* the only good Indian is a dead Indian!

*Grant:*

*(laughing) I'll drink to that!*

*Both laugh as they raise their glasses for another shot of whiskey.*

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 3

## Holy Bear Woman's Vision

*Setting: Heavy Runner's camp. Grandmother, Many Sweat Lodge Woman, is preparing supper. Enter twelve year old Holy Bear Woman with fire wood. She begins to help her grandmother. Holy Bear Woman obviously has something on her mind.*

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Grandmother, Sweat Lodge Woman, I had one of my dreams last night. I've been thinking about it all day.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

*(takes her grand daughter very seriously)* Oh, my girl, Holy Bear Woman, what have you seen?

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Grandmother, you know that I am afraid to share my dreams when they are bad. I don't want to be responsible for bringing bad luck onto our people.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, the grandmothers have gifted you with dreams and visions since you were only three winters old. Our people have come to rely on your visions for direction and warnings.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Yes, grandmother, I am aware of that. It's just that, sometimes, I feel . . . if I share my dreams, then bad things will happen. Maybe if I keep my dreams to myself, the bad visions won't come true.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, *(puts her arm around Holy Bear Woman)* I know that you carry a heavy load for one so young. But, you must remember, that only the strong ones are gifted with powerful visions. You were chosen because the grandmothers recognized something special in you.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Grandmother, I saw things last night that made my blood freeze. I am afraid for you and everyone else in this camp. I don't know what to do about it. *(she lowers her head and begins to cry)* I can't stand the thought of losing you. Grandmother, I'm afraid to go to sleep because of the images I see.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, what is there to be afraid of? You know that Creator sees our path long before we will ever walk on it. The grandfathers give us visions so that we will

know which path to take. My girl let the wind blow your fears away and tell me what it is that makes you so sad.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

*(reluctantly)* It was cold, freezing cold; the kind of cold when everything is snapping in the air. My legs felt like they were being pierced with hundreds of porcupine quills. My fingers were thick with that nothing feeling. I was walking, but I wasn't moving. My feet were covered with thick black blisters that ached with every step I took in the snow. Everything around me was quiet and still, like a deer just before the arrow pierces its heart. And then I turned around to see where I came from...*(begins sobbing into her grandmother's bosom)* Oh, grandmother, I cannot bear to speak of it anymore.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, I know this is hard, but I am here. I will always be here.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Grandmother, I saw nothing but thick smoke coming from our camp. I heard babies crying like they had no mothers. I walked into the fog and I couldn't find you or anyone else in the family. I could smell death everywhere. I walked to the river, and the ice was completely red, frozen with blood. The heavy sound of horses breathing hard filled my ears. I looked for you, but when I found our teepee, it was raging with flames that were screaming towards the sky. Grandmother, I think you were still inside the teepee... *(crying and holding her grandmother tightly)*

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, *(taking a deep breath and choosing her words carefully)* this is indeed a bad omen. I will take you to Chief Heavy Runner and you will tell him of your disturbing vision. He will paint your face with the protective red ocre. Don't worry, we will make preparations for you to dance at the sacred Sundance this year. There is nothing to fear, the grandmothers and grandfathers will always be here to protect us.

Do you remember what they always tell us? They tell us that we must never forget who we are. You come from a powerful people who have survived many dreadful things and we will continue to live through many more. Now, my girl, Holy Bear Woman, you must allow this dream to flow down river. Here *(takes off her bone necklace and places it on her grand-daughter)* my grandmother gave this to me when I was about your age. Now, I pass it on to you. This has been my protection all my life and now I pass it on to you.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

*(frantically)* But, grandmother, I don't want to take away your protection. You need it, especially since it was you that I couldn't find in my dream.

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

Shh...my girl. I have lived a full life. I cannot ask for anything more these days. You, on the other hand, have so much to live for. You know that things are rapidly changing for our people. I am too much of a Blackfoot woman to change my ways. You are still young. It will be much easier for you to adapt to the changes that face our people.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

I don't want to change. I'm a Blackfoot woman, too. Why do I have to adapt? Why can't I live my life like you did? What will happen to us grandmother?

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman:*

My girl, you are one of the strong ones. You are a survivor. Never lose faith. Creator has many plans for you. You will be a source of strength for future generations. Remember who you are. You are a Blackfoot woman first! No one can ever take that away from you. Creator did not put you here for no reason. Remember that. Now, let's make our way to Chief Heavy Runner and warn him of this disturbing vision.

*Holy Bear Woman:*

Yes, grandmother...

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 4

## Owl Child Gets Shamed

*Setting: Blackfoot camp of Mountain Chief. Enter Blue Bird Woman running. She is followed by her husband, Owl Child.*

*Owl Child:*

*(grasping his wife)* Blue Bird Woman, what is the matter? Why are you frightened?

*Blue Bird Woman:*

Oh my husband . . . *(she looks over her shoulder and then sobs into his chest)*  
He's here, he followed us . . .

*Owl Child:*

*(angrily shaking her by the shoulders)* Who's here? What are you talking about?

*Blue Bird Woman:*

Oh, Owl Child *(sobbing)* Four Bears . . . Malcolm Clarke is here and he's looking for you.

*Owl Child looks over his wife's head as Malcolm Clarke and his son Horace enter. Clarke and Owl Child glare at each other. Horace is swinging a whip. Blue Bird Woman glances back at Clarke fearfully and hides behind Owl Child.*

*Owl Child:*

*(in a low angry voice to Clarke)* Four Bears, what are you doing here?

*Malcolm:*

I came to retrieve my property that was taken from my ranch during your hasty departure last night.

*Horace:*

That horse you have tied to your teepee bears our brand. I never thought you would steal from your own relatives. How could do such a thing? After my father and mother treated you with so much kindness and generosity at our ranch?

*Owl Child:*

*(to Horace)* Cousin, you should not speak of things you know nothing about. This does not concern you or your mother.

*Enter a few young warriors who slowly surround them. They are intently watching the entire course of events.*

*Malcolm:*

*(getting nervous)* Look, the horses you borrowed I can forgive, but not my spy-glass. That spy-glass is one of my most valued possessions.

*Owl Child:*

Valued possessions? What do you know of valued possessions? You helped yourself to my most valued possession, so I returned the favor. It is very fortunate for you that you are married to one of my most respectable cousins, Cutting Off Head Woman. If it weren't for that fact, your scalp would be hanging from the top of my lodge pole.

*Horace:*

Be careful, Owl Child, remember that is my father that you are addressing. No one talks to my father that way.

*Owl Child:*

*(ignoring Horace)* You pale faces come onto Blackfoot territory. You take over the land. You infect us with your filthy diseases. Yet, that is not enough. You disrespect us further by taking our women also. Your blood has corrupted our race. We were once pure human beings. Now many have become nothing but a rotten stench of a man because of beasts like you!

*Horace:*

Who are you calling a beast? *(strikes Owl Child with a whip)* I warned you not to talk to my father that way. You are nothing but a dog!

*The warriors standing nearby get riled up because of the unforgivable insult. They are ready to strike the Clarkes. An elderly man steps forward.*

*Old Man:*

Enough! This has gone too far. There will be no bloodshed today! *(to the Clarkes)* Take your stock and leave. We don't want any trouble in our camp.

*Owl Child glares at the Clarkes as they prepare to leave. When he turns to face his comrades, they bow their heads not willing to make eye contact with the shamed man.*

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 5

## Murder at Fort Benton

*Setting: Fort Benton. Enter Henry Kennerly, Peter Lukins and whiskey trader, James Quail aka Grouse. A whiskey trade is taking place; all three men have been drinking.*

*Kennerly:*

*(as he's giving money over to Grouse for a jug of whiskey)* C'mon Grouse, yer be honest wit me. Dis betta be da good stuff. Nut dat lye and turpentine ya put in da injuns' fire water.

*Grouse:*

Aah, ya know me, I da neva cheat ya Kennerly. My whiskey is sold as far north as Fort Whoop Up.

*Kennerly:*

Whaddya think, Lukins? Does dis Grouse strike you's as da honest type?

*Lukins:*

I don't care none fer dat, so long as I get a good shot of whiskey.

*Kennerly:*

*(takes a swig of the whiskey and his face contorts as he swallows)* Yee haw! Eecordin' to ma calculayshuns, dis here jug contains da best damn whiskey to eva come into Fort Benton. *(he hands the jug over to Lukins who also takes a drink).*

*Grouse:*

Ain't it too bad 'bout dem two herders outside a town?

*Kennerly:*

Don't be remindin' me 'bout doze kin' a 'trocities.

*Lukins:*

Da way I figger, doze two guys was da best darn ranch han's dis side a da Missouri.

*Grouse:*

Ya, I heard day was mutilated in a bad way.

*Kennerly:* You jus' wait 'til I get ma chance.

*Lukins:*

As fer as I'm concerned, dem damn injuns is gonna get what's comin' to 'em.

*Grouse:*

Between you's 'n me, I done believe in an eye fer an eye, an a tooth fer a tooth.

*Kennerly:*

You darn rights! *(pulling his gun out and aiming it at an invisible target)* I has to say dat I agree wit good ol' Phil H. Sheridan...the only good injun...

*All three:*

is a dead injun! *(they take more swigs of the whiskey while laughing and swinging their guns around).*

*Enter Mountain Chief's brother, Rock Old Man and the young Bear Child. Both are carrying a load of furs to take to the trading post.*

*Kennerly:*

Well, lookee wat we gots here boys...

*Kennerly, Lukins and Grouse surround the two Blackfoot.*

*Lukins:*

Wat da heck ya think yer doin' in dese parts? Ya knowd yer kin' is nut welcome here.

*Rock Old Man:*

We don't want no trouble. We were sent here by Culbertson. All we came for is to trade these hides for the goods and supplies we need and then we'll be gone.

*Grouse:*

I'm done tradin' wit your kin'

*Rock Old Man:*

*(looking him straight in the eye)* I'm not looking to trade for whiskey.

*Grouse:*

Wat da hell! Ya some kin' a uppity injun? All you is is nuthin' but a damn lazy drunk! All yer kin' is good fer is sucking on a jug o' fire water. Heck you'd even done trade yer own mudder fer dis here jug.

*Rock Old Man and Bear Child try to make their way past the three men. The white men pull out their guns and get them ready to shoot. Rock Old Man grabs Bear Child and makes sure the boy is behind him as he faces the killers. Rock Old Man slowly walks backwards away from the killers.*

*Kennerly:*

You's gonna pay fer doze two herders ya done mutilated last week.

*Rock Old Man:*

*(fully aware of the dangerousness of the situation) We don't know anything about that. We've been out hunting in the mountains for the past month (holding up the furs in hopes that that will convince the killers).*

*The killers follow Rock Old Man and Bear Child as they exit stage left. A crowd of curious on lookers from the fort appear entering stage right. Shots are heard off stage. The crowd reacts to the brutal murders on the streets of Fort Benton. Kennerly, Lukins and Grouse walk back towards the crowd laughing and celebrating their deed.*

*Kennerly:*

*da only good injun...*

*All three:*

*is a dead injun...*

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 6

## Mountain Chief Gets Word of Murders

*Setting: at Mountain Chief's camp. Enter Mountain Chief and Owl Child walking together in heated conversation.*

*Mountain Chief:*

*(examining Owl Child's black eye)* This Four Bears, Malcolm Clarke, is going to get what's coming to him.

*Owl Child:*

My hatred for this man will never end until I have his scalp in my hands.

*Mountain Chief:*

Don't worry, we'll get him. The only ones I'd be worried about are his sons.

*Owl Child:*

If it wasn't for their mother, Cutting Off Head Woman, Four Bears would be a rotting corpse in the ground with my bullet in his heart.

*Mountain Chief:*

I despise all whites. They have encroached on our territory; they are killing our buffalo, which will soon pass away. They have treated my nation like dogs. There is nothing in common between us, yet our women keep taking them in like they're some kind of a trophy to adorn themselves with.

*Owl Child:*

And the ones that reject them are taken against their will.

*Mountain Chief:*

Last year, I made it known to their government chief, William J. Cullen, at Fort Benton that I wanted all the useless white trouble makers to be run out of our territory. And that I shall no longer be responsible for the deadly deeds committed by my young men. For we, the Piegan, have been made to suffer for the bad deeds of other tribes. We do not wish these pale faces to come to our villages. If we desire to trade, we will go into their forts, dispose of our robes and leave.

*Owl Child:*

Yet, many of us are denied free access to roam our traditional territory. We have been confined to small tracts of land where the hunting is scarce.

*Mountain Chief:*

The Blackfoot Confederacy has always fiercely defended this land. We have been successful in keeping out the Crees, the Crows, the Gros Ventres and the Kootenay, then what is to stop us from keeping out these pale faces? They

encroach upon Blackfoot land and simply take what they want without any regard for our people. Creator put us here on this territory as far north as the North Saskatchewan River, south to the Elk or Yellowstone River, west to the backbone of the world, the Rocky Mountains and east to the Sand Hills. Yet, these disease-infested newcomers have the gall to enforce their ways and their laws onto the Blackfoot.

*Owl Child:*

I wish I was there with you that day when you spoke to their chief Cullen. I would have killed anyone who laid a hand on you.

*Mountain Chief:*

I was a fool to think that I could address those uncivilized savages that day. Although my outer scars have healed from that beating, my inner being shall never be at peace until every last one of these napiikoaksi, these white newcomers, have been expelled from Blackfoot territory. I also declared that if any more cases of small-pox occurs among our people, I will personally kill every white man I meet on the prairie!

*Sounds of horse's hooves galloping fast towards Mountain Chief and Owl Child.*

*Owl Child:*

Look! Here comes your son, Black Weasel on his horse.

*Mountain Chief:*

Look how fast he comes. I have a bad feeling about this.

*Enter Black Weasel*

*Black Weasel:*

*(out of breath and in a panic)* Father, there you are. *(out of breath and can hardly speak)* I came as soon as I heard.

*Mountain Chief:*

*(impatient and getting angry; bracing himself because he's already anticipating bad news)* Quick, tell me my son, what is the news?

*Black Weasel:*

I am deeply sorrowful to be the bearer of such dark news... I just received word from Fort Benton... Your brother, Rock Old Man and your nephew Bear Child were mercilessly shot in cold blood on the streets of the fort in broad daylight.

*Mountain Chief:*

*(enraged and makes a blood curdling scream)* I told my brother not to go there. Never trust the white man. *(regains composure and in the deadliest of voices)* Who is responsible for taking my brother and nephew's life?

*Black Weasel:*

I heard it was three men; Henry Kennerly, Peter Lukins and that snake, known as Grouse, James Quail. They said it was in retaliation for those two herders killed last month.

*Owl Child:*

What? Everyone knows that those two were killed by our enemies, the River Crows. Fort Benton has just killed two innocent people.

*Mountain Chief:*

From this point on, no white settler will ever sleep in peace. No white settler will ever travel freely on Blackfoot land. No white settler will ever feel secure in our territory. I will hunt down this Kennerly, this Lukins and this Quail until all three of their scalps are tied to the top of my teepee pole. The blood of my brother is screaming from the ground for justice – the Blackfoot way!

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 7

## Sully Dismisses Fort Benton Murders

*Setting: Helena City, Montana at General Alfred Sully's office. Enter Sully composing a letter to Indian Commissioner Ely Parker.*

*Sully:*

*(reading the letter he's just written)*...I feel it my duty to report to you that I fear before long we may have serious difficulties between Indians and whites in this Territory.... there lies a serious threat and Montana's tiny garrisons would be easily overwhelmed by the thousands of potentially hostile Indians within striking distance of the territory. However, I must point out that, in my opinion, the white whiskey traders are as much to blame for the recent troubles as the Indians. There is a white element in this country which is rowdy and lawless in character. And, the traffic in whisky with Indians, in this Territory, is carried on to an alarming extent. This frequently causes altercations between whites and Indians, resulting often in bloodshed; and they occur in sections of the Territory where the civil authorities acknowledge themselves to be powerless to act, nothing but military force can put a stop to it...

*Enter Blackfoot Indian Agent, Lt. W.B. Pease*

*Pease:*

Sir, may I have a word with you?

*Sully:*

Good afternoon, Lieutenant Pease. Please, do come in. I am just finishing up my latest correspondence to Indian Commissioner Ely Parker in Washington. I am deeply worried about the current state of affairs.

*Pease:*

Yes, sir. I agree that we are in a very precarious situation. I have just received word of the identity of the perpetrators that gunned down those two Indians on the streets of Fort Benton.

*Sully:*

Lieutenant Pease, you know that I am completely disgusted with the cowardly murder of a harmless old man and a boy and I am also aware of who the perpetrators are. However, like I've disclosed to the officials in Washington, although I'm sure that we have enough evidence to arrest Kennerly, Lukins and the whiskey trader Quail, also known as Grouse, but you know as well as I do, that there is no way in hell that we will ever obtain any kind of conviction in any territorial court in Montana.

*Pease:*

I agree sir, but as the Indian Agent of the Blackfeet, what can I tell these people? My fear is that, if there is no justice done for these murders, there will be a large scale retaliation. You are aware that one of the two Indians killed was the brother of Mountain Chief. You and I both know that Mountain Chief will not rest until all three of these men responsible for his brother's death are killed.

*Sully:*

Look, I have just written an appeal to the government requesting more troops for the Montana Territory. Maybe, the sheer number of a sizeable military force will prevent anymore depredations in this area by both the Indians and these notorious whiskey traders. As far as going after Kennerly, Lukins and Quail, we will just be wasting our time. Besides, we both know that the Indians are just as guilty of murdering innocent lives. Heck, I've got settlers breaking down my door demanding that we do something about the horse thievery that's been going on for months. When are these Indians going to realize that those old antiquated ways of achieving honor and wealth are dead? By resisting our ways, they are only perpetuating a lifestyle of poverty and ignorance. I want you to get in touch with Alexander Culbertson. Isn't he still up there among the Bloods? I heard he was married to one of them. Perhaps he can provide valuable information regarding the Blackfoot situation on the British side.

*Pease:*

Yes, sir.

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 8

## Clarke Murder

*Setting: Malcolm Clarkes' ranch on the Little Prickly Pear. Enter Cutting Off Head Woman and daughters, Helen and Isabel. The women set up the table and clean up the supper meal that had just taken place. The old lady, Black Bear comes in and sits in a chair in the corner; she is making moccasins. Enter Malcolm, Horace and Jackson. Horace takes off his pistol holder and places it on a shelf.*

*Malcolm:*

*(taking off his hat, Isabel runs to her father and takes his hat)* It sure is good to see that the cattle are back in order, Jackson.

*Jackson:*

Yes, sir. They just followed me up the creek and into their pasture like they knew where home was.

*Horace:*

I sure hope Nathan has just as good o' luck with them lost horses up in the Bear Tooth Range.

*Malcolm:*

Your brother knows what he's doing. I wouldn't worry too much about him. Come to think of it, I don't recall seeing that ol' mare come in tonight. Jackson, why don't you take a walk to the creek to make sure she makes it back okay.

*Jackson:*

Yes, sir. *(exits)*

*Malcolm:*

*(to Helen)* Daughter, how about a game?

*Helen exits and re-enters with the backgammon board game. She sets up the game in front of her father as he sits at the table.*

*Helen:*

Are you sure you can handle being beaten again, Father?

*Malcolm:*

After a good hard day's work, I think I can handle anything tonight.

*Cutting Off Head Woman and Isabel sit next to Black Bear and mother combs daughter's hair. Malcolm and Helen settle in for a game of backgammon, while Horace sits in front of the fireplace rolling some cigarettes. The sudden sound of*

*dogs barking jolts everyone to attention. Isabel is the first to run to the door followed by Cutting Off Head Woman.*

*Cutting Off Head Woman:*

*(from off stage) Oki, tsikii. Hello cousin, come in. Who are you with? Bring them in with you.*

*Enter Cutting Off Head Woman, Isabel along with the visitors, Owl Child, Eagle's Rib, Bear Chief and Black Bear.*

*Owl Child:*

*Oki, it's good to see you again. (warmly embraces his cousin, Horace. He then turns to Malcolm and offers a handshake. Malcolm is genuinely touched by this gesture of renewed friendship)*

*Malcolm:*

*Owl Child, I am glad to see again. You look like you're holding out okay these days. (turning to the others) Eagle's Rib, it's been too long (Eagle's Rib shakes Malcolm's hand and a sinister smile crosses his face) You two look like your wives are taking good care of you (both Bear Chief and Black Bear shake Malcolm's hand without smiling).*

*Helen:*

*(as she embraces Owl Child) Oh, oh, our horses are again stolen. (both she and Owl Child share a laugh).*

*Cutting Off Head Woman:*

*I hear noises, are there any others out there?*

*Owl Child:*

*Mountain Chief's son, Black Weasel, is with us, but he's too shy to come in.*

*Malcolm:*

*He's got nothing to be shy of. Black Bear, take Bear Chief with you and go fetch the young man. Tell him if he doesn't come in, he'll miss out on Cutting Off Head Woman's famous stew and bannock.*

*As the two warrior exit, the others set the table up for the visitors. Owl Child and Eagle's Rib sit at the table with Malcolm. When the others return with Black Weasel the men begin to eat. Black Weasel is obviously nervous and is careful not to make eye contact with anyone. Horace enters the room with some whiskey and begins pouring some for the visitors.*

*Malcolm:*

*So, Owl Child, what do we owe this visit for?*

*Owl Child:*

I have brought some horses for you and a message from Mountain Chief.

*Malcolm:*

Horses! Thank you for this kind gesture. I will see to it that you are properly compensated. And a message from Mountain Chief you say?

*Isabel:*

I am so sorry about what happened to his brother, Rock Old Man and young Bear Child...

*Owl Child:*

Hush! We didn't come here to talk of such things! *(everyone is stunned into silence by this outburst. Black Weasel covers his eyes and begins to cry. Everyone thinks it's because of the loss of his uncle. Isabel gets up and gets Black Weasel a cup of water. Eagle's Rib is clearly agitated. He is walking around picking up items and examining them)* Mountain Chief is inviting you to his camp.

*Malcolm:*

Yes, I think I will take up Mountain Chief's offer. I have some business to do up north in a few weeks.

*The visitors prepare to leave. Cutting Off Head Woman and Old Lady Black Bear give the visitors some prepared food to take for their journey. Malcolm gives them some tobacco.*

*Horace:*

I will see you men to your horses. *(he gets up and begins to look for his pistol)*. Where did I put my gun?

*Helen:*

What is the use of a firearm? You are with friends.

*Malcolm:*

Go on son, you're in good hands.

*Horace, Bear Chief, Black Bear and Black Weasel exit. Eagle Rib and Owl Child linger for a moment. Malcolm leads the way out the door. Eagle Rib is behind him and just before he exits, he pulls out his rifle. The sound of a gun being prepared to shoot is heard. We hear a gun shot as Owl Child lets out a war cry and pulls out his axe and follows out the door. The women scream in terror and huddle in a far corner. We hear more gun shots and war cries. The thundering sound of horses from outside permeates the cabin. Helen runs out the door and comes back in with a bloody Horace who has been shot in the face.*

*Helen:*

Quickly! Hide him. I think they're coming back. (*Isabel and Old Lady Black Bear take Horace into another room*)

*Helen goes back outside and calls for help. Isabel and Old Lady Black Bear rush to help her drag her dead father into the cabin. Cutting Off Head Woman remains cowering in the corner. She is too traumatized to move. The women drag in Malcolm and while Helen is holding him in her arms, Owl Child, Eagle's Rib and Bear Chief enter and begin to trash the cabin. They knock over the table and chairs. Old Lady Black Bear stands up to the men.*

*Old Lady Black Bear:*

The man you murdered tonight was your best friend. You have committed a deed so dark that the trees will whisper it, and before the sun reddens these mountains, a hundred horsemen will be here to avenge his death!

*Bear Chief:*

Yes, what the old woman says is true. I didn't come here to make war on women and children...let us go!

*Owl Child:*

(*to Old Lady Black Bear*) Malcolm Clarke, this so called Four Bears, was never my friend. Did you think I would let him get away with shaming me the way he did? (*Owl Child makes a move with his axe towards Old Lady Black Bear. Bear Chief and Eagle's Rib hold him back*) Before another moon is seen I shall be with you. I want your blood!

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 9

## Sully and de Trobriand Argue Over Murders

*Setting: Helena City, Montana in General Alfred Sully's office. Enter Sully and de Trobriand.*

*Sully:*

General de Trobriand, you are the commander of the district of Montana. And you know as well as I do that we need to deal with the Clarke and Quail murders as soon as possible.

*de Trobriand:*

Yes, I'm aware of my assigned duties here in this territory. So, before you do anything rash, we need to establish the situation according to all the facts. Now, regarding this Quail, wasn't he one of those allegedly involved in the killing of Mountain Chief's brother and nephew on the streets of Fort Benton?

*Sully:*

Yes, he was very well known to all the people here, but he was never convicted for the crime. According to my sources, he had lost some horses and mules and went out looking for them. His body was later found pierced with arrows and horribly mutilated.

*de Trobriand:*

I wouldn't be so quick to take in every word that you hear floating around here, Sully.

*Sully:*

*(exasperated)* The citizens are living in a state of terror! They believe that unless these incidents are speedily suppressed, it will culminate in a general massacre of our outlying settlements.

*de Trobriand:*

There are many false and exaggerated reports spreading throughout the territory respecting the Indians in Montana.

*Sully:*

General, these are not false reports...

*de Trobriand:*

Oh, really? Did you by any chance go out to the murder site and witness the so called mutilated body yourself?

*Sully:*

No, I...

*de Trobriand:*

With the exception of the Clarke murder, which was clearly the work of Owl Child and his band of renegades, whenever a murder, such as the Quail murder, takes place, it is taken for granted that it is the work of Indians. The precise details of the Quail murder were reported to me by Major Hanna, of the Pay Department, who received them direct from one of the residents of the place where the murder was committed. It turns up that the said murder was, according to all probabilities and circumstantial evidence, committed by white men, and that the Indians had nothing whatever to do with it. The murdered man, Quail, or Grouse as you call him, was known to have on his person a gold watch and the sum of four or five hundred dollars in greenbacks, all of which were stolen when the body was found. It is not true that the body was scalped. It is not true that it was cut or mutilated in any way. It is not true that the horses of the man were stolen; they were all found grazing quietly within some three or four hundred yards of where he fell, and no Indian was seen anywhere near the place all that day. As far as I'm concerned, any report of Indian disturbances in this district since that date and up to this present time is absolutely false, and without foundation whatever! At any rate, Quail had it coming to him. Someone was bound to get to him sooner or later.

*Sully:*

Sir, regardless of that fact, I have a petition signed by many very prominent citizens of this territory. They are demanding that you put into the field 200 cavalry and drive to back to their reservations the bands of Indians now scattered throughout the territory. In addition, they are requesting that you station parties of troops at the principal passes through which the Indians make their incursions.

*de Trobriand:*

There is a French proverb which says that "the prettiest girl can give but what she has." So with any military commander. He cannot furnish more troops than he has under his command. Since I assumed command of this district, in June of last year, my infantry force, as you well know, has been scarcely sufficient to garrison the posts and absolutely inadequate for other duties, such as escorts, guards, patrols, etcetera. Now you go back to your citizens and tell them that it is my duty as military commander, and my greatest desire to extend the protection of the national government to *all* the residents of this Territory! (*he exits*).

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 10

## Big Nose Warns Heavy Runner

*Setting: Heavy Runner's tipi. Enter Heavy Runner and other leaders of his band along with "Big Nose" (Hiram Baker). They are seated and are just finishing smoking a pipe.*

*Heavy Runner:*

On behalf of our camp, I would like to thank you, Big Nose, for coming out this way to trade with us. The cartridges for our guns were getting low. Your goods will go a long way in this camp.

*Big Nose:*

It is my pleasure to come to your camp, Heavy Runner. Your people have always traded nothing but quality buffalo robes and furs with me. But, I must not leave your camp without warning you of the news that is spreading like wildfire among the white settlers. It is said that the whites are getting more and angrier over the killing of Four Bears, Malcolm Clarke. They are now working hard to get the seizers or the army to come in and revenge his death.

*Heavy Runner:*

The killing of Four Bears does not concern us. If the whites want to get revenge for it, they should kill Owl Child. He is the one responsible for the killing of Four Bears.

*Big Nose:*

Yes, I agree with you Heavy Runner, but to the whites it makes no difference. They see all Indians as one and the same.

*Heavy Runner:*

Owl Child is no longer welcome in this camp. He is responsible for the death of my brother, Bear Head. Owl Child has no honor in this camp. You tell the whites that any warrior in this camp will shoot him dead at first sight. Tell the whites that they will find Owl Child in the camp of Mountain Chief. As far as I'm concerned, we have nothing to worry about. This is not our battle; it belongs in the arms of Owl Child and Mountain Chief.

*Big Nose:*

I will do my best to pass on your message.

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 11

## Parker Comes to Fort Shaw

*Setting: Helena City, Montana in General Alfred Sully's office. Enter General Sully who is frantically making preparations for a very important meeting. Enter Pease.*

*Pease:*

Sir, General de Trobriand and Parker, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, are on their way here to see you.

*Sully:*

Yes, yes, Pease. I am aware of their visit. I haven't slept for nights worrying over this meeting. Have you heard back from Alexander Culbertson? I am depending on his assessment of this whole sordid affair with the Piegans.

*Pease:*

Yes, I received this wire from him this morning. *(reading a telegram)* "These depredations have been committed by a portion of younger rabble over whom the chiefs have no control, and nothing but the strong arm of the government can control."

*Sully:*

Well, I could have told you that myself! Did he at least offer any assistance? This man has been dealing with these people since 1838. He's even married to one of the Blood women! *(in a tone of desperation)* Does he offer any solutions to the current situation?

*Pease:*

Well sir, he is planning to spend the winter months here and would like to have the pleasure of meeting with you in person in order to give you all the reliable information on the Indians that you may want.

*Sully:*

We may not have time to wait until this winter. You know as well as I do that we are in a very precarious situation. The Sioux nation is reportedly roaming about this territory. They, too, are getting increasingly hostile.

*Pease:*

From what I have learned, sir, there is, so far, only a small band of the Piegans that have been responsible for the depredations committed lately. Most are moving north for fear of being falsely accused of these acts of violence. In fact, sir, some mischief-making whites are largely responsible for the false reports. Most of the Piegans, the Bloods in particular, are very anxious to come to this agency and comply in all respects to the conditions of the treaty made with them

last year, provided they can be fed and taken care of, according to the promises made them.

*Sully:*

Yes, and the Crows, too, are extremely disgruntled because the food and provisions, which they were promised in their treaties, have yet to come forth from our government. The last thing we want is an all out Indian war!

*Enter General de Trobriand and Commissioner Parker*

*Sully:*

General... Commissioner, please (*he motions them to sit down*). I am very pleased that you could make it out here on such short notice.

*Parker:*

General Sully, the Department of the Interior is anxiously awaiting your report of the current situation here in the Montana territory.

*Sully:*

Sir, I fear we will have to consider the Blackfeet in a state of war! Therefore, I would urge upon you the necessity of applying for an immediate increase of military force in Montana to prevent this. There is no section in the country that has more Indians in it than Montana. I can safely say that from about fifty thousand to sixty thousand men, women, and children is the total of Indians frequently located here; and yet there is, if I am not mistaken, no section of the Indian country that has fewer troops stationed in it.

*Parker:*

What is the general feeling of the local citizens?

*Sully:*

I am told by those who have lost stock that the Indians ride up boldly in the daytime and in the presence of citizens and take what animals they please. Of course, they all come to me with their complaints, thinking it is my duty to punish the Indians and recover their stolen property. According to reports, there are already over four hundred horses and mules known to have been stolen lately. That number, at one hundred and fifty dollars each, will make an expensive claim against the government.

*Parker:*

General de Trobriand, what is your opinion on this matter?

*de Trobriand:*

During my journey to and from Fort Ellis I saw many different people, had long talks with most of them, and neglected no opportunity of gathering full and reliable information about the *real* facts (*pointedly looking at Gen. Sully*) which

gave rise to the excitement in regard to Indian hostilities. The first fact which I think must be admitted by all, is that there is actually no Indian war in the Territory. Depredations are committed, even murders are perpetrated, but by whom? By a handful of roaming thieves and murderous red vagabonds, belonging principally to the Piegan tribe, and doing mischief not in any concentrated force, but in small parties of few men; Furthermore, I don't believe much in the genuineness of the fear expressed by the people along the road from Helena to Fort Ellis. Everywhere I saw them attending to their usual business, travelling with their wives or children, driving isolated wagons with twelve or fourteen oxen, without arms, and without any apparent concern about the Indians.

*Sully:*

Sir, my reasons for apprehending trouble are that war parties of Indians from the Powder River country, the British possessions, and from Idaho and Washington Territories, frequently visit this Territory and often commit depredations on the whites. Then, the whites retaliate by killing any Indians they may chance to meet...sometimes in the most cowardly and brutal manner. From reliable reports, that increase daily, it is a wonder to me that open war with the Indians has not broken out already!

*de Trobriand:*

*(ignoring Sully)* As for the Indian tribes as such, the Pend d'Oriettes are friendly and peaceable, and the Blackfeet and the Bloods remain quiet so far on their reservations. So with the Mountain Crows, so with the Bannocks, and even so with one-half at least of the Piegans, who disclaim any complicity with the small bands of their tribe which, under the lead of the half-breed, Star, and the Indians, Peter Owl Child, Bear Chief, a son of Mountain Chief, Black Bear, and Black Weasel, murdered Mr. Clarke, and are, I believe, responsible for two other murders and several depredations which took place lately. If, therefore, nothing happens to alter the condition of things, the capture or death of these few men is the principal object to be aimed at, and would, in my opinion, suffice to restore security through the territory. This is what I propose to do as soon as possible through a cavalry expedition.

*Parker:*

General de Trobriand, what is the current state of your troops?

*de Trobriand:*

Be rest assured, that with what little I have, I will put, without delay, to the best use. And no efforts will be spared, on my part, toward restoring security to the white residents, and visiting the guilty Indians with the punishment they so richly deserve. Still, all considered, it is my impression that, if any serious danger is to be apprehended, it would come more properly in the direction, of the Yellowstone River, where hostile Sioux are roaming, more than anywhere else.

*Sully:*

*(to Parker)* Sir, if I may, I would like to propose that I be given the authority to pay a visit to the Blackfeet chiefs, including the notorious Mountain Chief, and demand that the murderers and stolen property found within their camps be turned over to our government authorities. Of course, I would need to be furnished with the necessary military assistance required to accomplish such an endeavour.

*Parker:*

How much time will you give them to bring in the said offenders?

*Sully:*

Two weeks should be sufficient, sir.

*Parker:*

Inform them that if they are not surrendered within that time frame, the army troops will be sent in to punish the entire tribe. General De Trobriand, your troops will provide the escort.

*de Trobriand:*

Yes, sir, but I seriously doubt this scheme will work. Nevertheless, I will carry out your command.

*Parker:*

Then it is settled. And, I will continue to closely monitor this situation.

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 12

Piegan Baker

*Setting: General Sheridan's office in Chicago, Illinois. Enter Gen. Sheridan and Major Baker*

*Sheridan:*

*(enthusiastically)* Major Eugene Baker, how would like to be known as Piegan Baker? I am giving you the opportunity of a lifetime. You are the most excellent man to be entrusted with this assignment.

*(Sheridan begins pouring whiskey for his visitor)*

*Baker:*

*(not sure what Sheridan is talking about, yet is very intrigued by his words)* Sir?

*Sheridan:*

Based on reports from the Indian agents in Montana, General Sully, Mr. Pease and Mr. Culbertson, on the subject of depredations by the Piegan tribe of Indians, we have been given the approval by the General of the Army, General William Tecumseh Sherman to punish these marauders.

*(While Sheridan is talking, Baker is drinking his whiskey and holds out his glass for another shot)*

*Baker:*

*(equally enthusiastic)* Sir, my troops are always on standby for a good ol' injun killin' pow-wow.

*Sheridan:*

That's my boy! I have to admit, I was beginning to worry about our comrade, General de Trobriand. Lately, he was beginning to sound like an Indian lover. However, my fears were laid to rest when his latest report came in over the wire. He clearly stated that no better time or opportunity has presented itself to punish the parties guilty of the murders and depredations committed last summer. The offenders are encamped with Mountain Chief and are within easy reach from Fort Shaw. de Trobriand's plan is to strike Mountain Chief's camp first, by surprise, and killing or capturing those who may be found there. According to de Trobriand, this attack would serve not only to chastise the culprits, but also serve as a warning to prevent others from committing the same depredations.

*Baker:*

Yes, sir. That sounds like an excellent plan.

*(Baker continues drinking his whiskey and holds his glass out for yet another shot. Sheridan keeps pouring Baker's glass without missing a beat)*

*Sheridan:*

However, as you are well aware, we have so few troops in Montana, on account of the expiration of enlistments. As a result, we have been unable to do much against these Indian marauders. But the regiments are now filling up, and I think it would be the best plan to find out exactly where these Indians are going to spend the winter, and about the time of a good heavy snow, I will send you out to strike them.

*Baker:*

Just give me the order sir!

*Obviously, needs his glass filled again*

*Sheridan:*

To simply keep the troops on the defensive will not stop the murders. We must strike where it hurts. About the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, they will be very helpless, and if where they live is not too far from Fort Shaw or Fort Ellis, we might be able to give them a good hard blow.

*Baker:*

*(holding his glass up in a toast )*Aah! Total warfare at its finest!

*Sheridan:*

It will be of no use to make the attempt unless the positions of the villages are known. Then the greatest care should be taken to keep the Indians from gaining any information on the subject. It will be impossible to strike these murderers unless the greatest secrecy is maintained.

*Baker:*

*(a bit drunk and holding his crotch and crossing his legs because he desperately needs the bathroom at this point)* I'm your man, sir. I would be honored to serve you in this engagement.

*Sheridan:*

*(boldly)* Major Eugene M. Baker, your name will go down in the annals of history along side General George Armstrong Custer and, yours truly, General Phil Sheridan as the best darn Indian fighters in history!

*Baker:*

*(desperately needs the bathroom and is in much distress)* Yes, sir... aah... may I...

*Sheridan:*

*(oblivious to Baker's current plight)* Well? Piegan Baker? What do you have to say about that?

*Baker:*

May I be dismissed, sir? *(without waiting for an answer, he staggers off stage).*

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 13

## Sully Meets with Chiefs

*Setting: Blackfeet Agency on the Teton River, 35 miles from Fort Shaw. Enter Superintendent Sully, Lt. Pease, Heavy Runner, Little Wolf, Big Lake, Gray Eyes.*

*Pease:*

*(to the chiefs)* The Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Montana Territory, General Alfred Sully would like to welcome you today. He would also like to thank all of you for coming to meet with him today. *(to Sully)* Sir, may I present Chief Heavy Runner, Chief Little Wolf, Chief Big Lake and Chief Gray Eyes from the Bloods. *(Sully and the chiefs greet each other with a handshake)*

*Sully:*

Welcome, please sit. *(once everyone is seated, he looks around with a puzzled look)* I was hoping more chiefs would come to meet with us today. Where is Mountain Chief?

*Pease:*

Sir, I have been informed that many of the other chiefs are too drunk to travel at this time. As for Mountain Chief, no one seems to know his whereabouts.

*Sully:*

Since the others could not make it to this important meeting, I trust that you will pass on my message to them *(the chiefs nod in agreement)*. We might as well get on with it. Our government is tired out with the repeated aggressions of your people. To protect the lives and property of white settlers, the Great White Father is determined to make war against you.

*Heavy Runner:*

I want you to make it known to your Great White Father that we are not responsible for the conduct of the Aamskaapiipiikaanii or those Blackfeet Indians that are committing the aggressions that you are talking about.

*Little Wolf:*

We are innocent, and if war must be made, we do not wish to be involved.

*Sully:*

You may be innocent, but your young warriors are guilty. I am counting on the leaders to stop them from committing these crimes. To date, our settlers have lost hundreds of livestock due to the horse thievery that went on this past summer.

*Big Lake:*

For many generations, our warriors achieved greatness by acquiring as many horses as possible through raids on our traditional enemies such as the Cree, the

Crows and others. The loss of that way of life is felt among our young men, who are still trying to achieve the greatness of their fathers and grandfathers. Today, the temptation for our young men to steal is so great that we cannot always control them.

*Gray Eyes:*

They also have a ready market for all that they can drive across the Medicine Line. And fine American horses and large mules bring a good price.

*Sully:*

I want to make it clear that we have acquired permission from the English government to cross the line with our troops. You tell your young warriors that we will not stop at the international boundary or the Medicine Line, as you call it. We intend to chase them until every last one of them is in our custody! (*The chiefs look at each other in obvious astonishment to this unprecedented threat*). I want your cooperation in bringing these wanted men to justice.

*Pease:*

The following Blackfeet men are wanted for theft and murder in this territory: Mountain Chief; Owl Child; Star; Crow Top; Cut Hand; Eagle's Rib; Bear Chief; Under Bull; Red Horn; Bull's Head; White Man's Dog and Black Weasel.

*Sully:*

If you fail to comply and the wanted men are not brought to justice, the Great White Father will send many soldiers to make war on the Blackfeet nation and capture the offenders.

*Heavy Runner:*

We cannot promise to deliver up the men who are connected with late murders, because we simply cannot overtake them. However, I promise that I will kill them, if I can, and bring in their bodies.

*Gray Eyes:*

I will go back to my camp, and with my men, we will move north and bring back all the stock we could get. If we can, we will turn the offenders over to you, and I promise to return all horses stolen from white settlers.

*Sully:*

Good! We have an agreement. If you fail to comply with this agreement, and carry out your good intentions, I will recommend to the commander of the district to be ready to strike if necessary! You have two weeks to accomplish your task!

*Heavy Runner:*

It is interesting that you give us a deadline for which to accomplish all that you ask. Yet, our people have yet to see the promises made by your Great White Father. Where are the provisions and supplies that were promised to the

Blackfeet? This winter is one of the hardest I can remember. Many of my people are dying from starvation and smallpox. You must remember that this land that you are making your demands on today, is where the Blackfeet have been put by our Creator. Your people are still new to this territory. Yet, my ancestors, on whose dust you now walk, have occupied this territory for many generations. Our traditional hunting grounds have been encroached upon by your white settlers, and, as a result, our once rich, hunting grounds have been greatly diminished. We do not wish to rely on your hand outs, but the reality is that, at times, we have no choice. Agreements were made on both sides. Your nation approached my nation and we agreed to share this territory. Both nations smoked a medicine pipe together and my people, the Blackfeet, continue to honor the words spoken on that pipe. Your people seem to put much emphasis on that piece of paper upon which many of our leaders have marked with an X. So, today, I am asking that you give me and my fellow chiefs another piece of paper that states that we are friendly. We have made it clear that we are not responsible for the murders and theft that you have talked about. We want your Great White Father to know that we are peaceful people. We do not wish to go to war. Our people are suffering enough. All that we ask is that we not be molested by your soldiers. We wish to be left alone to live in peace on our own land.

*Sully:*

*(as though he has heard it all before)* Fine. Pease will draw up the paper.

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 14

## Hardie Comes to Fort Shaw

*Setting: Fort Shaw. Enter General Sully, General de Trobriand, Inspector General James A. Hardie, and Joseph Kipp.*

*de Trobriand:*

General Sully, may I present to you Inspector General James A. Hardie. Hardie has been sent here from General Sheridan to assess our current situation. I have also invited Mr. Joe Kipp. Kipp here knows this area just as well as any Indian in this territory. He is also very familiar with the various clans among the Blackfeet. I can't think of any man more knowledgeable on the Blackfeet than this man.

*Sully:*

Inspector, Mr. Kipp. It's good to see you here. Finally, Washington has responded to my petitions.

*Hardie:*

General Sheridan eagerly awaits the reports from this territory. I hear that you have met with the Blackfeet chiefs.

*Sully:*

Yes, sir, I have. I made it clear that the army would be ready to strike if necessary. I also gave them a deadline of two weeks in which to comply with my orders.

*Hardie:*

What were your orders?

*Sully:*

I demanded that they turn over the guilty parties along with the stolen horses. I also threatened that we would cross over into the British territory if necessary.

*(Hardie and de Trobriand share a surprise look at each other)*

*Sully:*

*(quickly adds)* I know that I was bluffing, but it sure made an impression on the chiefs. They begged not to be involved in the war and promised to turn over those responsible for the depredations on our white settlers... if they did not kill them first.

*Hardie:*

Your deadline is fast approaching. What is the alternative if they do not meet the deadline? General de Trobriand?

*de Trobriand:*

Impunity encourages the Indians. Therefore, I recommend prompt chastisement. I believe that Mountain Chief's camp could be hit without molesting our friends from either the Piegans or the Bloods.

*Sully:*

I suggest that we capture Mountain Chief and hold him hostage until the tribe turns over the offenders.

*Hardie and de Trobriand both look at Sully as if he's gone mad. They are both taken aback by this outrageous suggestion*

*Hardie:*

*(to Kipp)* Go to the Indian camps, learn of the mood of the Indians, and report back to me.

*Kipp:*

Yes, sir. Right away *(exits)*.

*Hardie:*

We must remember that it is our duty to provide security to the whites, no matter how severe. We must not shrink from what the occasion calls for. Our primary object is to stop the aggression for the future, not to punish for the past. We must bring these reckless and deluded savages to their senses. Once my assessment is done, I will defer to General Sheridan. However, I suspect that to surprise an Indian band and capture prisoners, without bloodshed, would be impractical. A single blow on any guilty band would suffice. The opportunity for success is now presenting itself. The question that I shall pose to Sheridan is whether chastisement or capture for hostages should be the design?

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 15

## Strike Them Hard!

*Setting: General Sheridan's office in Chicago. The sound of a telegram fills the air.  
Enter: General Sheridan. He stands ominously at the back of the stage, overlooking the following scene. Enter Blackfeet children playing in the foreground. Soft drumming and singing is heard. Two boys are wrestling in the snow. Little girls are playing with their dolls. One boy is shooting a bow and arrow into a hoop. One girl is dancing in the snow. The drumming stops abruptly and all the children freeze in character.*

*Sheridan:*

If the lives and property of citizens of Montana can best be protected by striking Mountain Chief's band, I want them struck. Tell Baker to strike them hard!

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 16

## Baker's Troops Leave Fort Shaw

*Setting: Fort Shaw Enter General De Trobriand and Major Baker.*

*de Trobriand:*

It has now been two weeks since the time that General Sully gave his orders to the Blackfeet chiefs. To date, we have received no word from these chiefs. We have no choice but to order a military action. In compliance with instructions from our superiors at headquarters, you will proceed with your command. Do not delay anymore than may be required by the present condition of the weather. You are to chastise that portion of the Indian tribe of the Piegans, which, under Mountain Chief, committed the greater part of the murders and depredations of last summer and last month in this district.

*Baker:*

Yes, sir.

*de Trobriand:*

Our scout, Joe Kipp, reported that the band of Mountain Chief is now encamped on the Marias River, about seventy-five miles from this post, at a place called the Big Bend, and can be easily singled out from other bands of Piegans.

*Baker:*

Yes, sir.

*de Trobriand:*

Now, there are two bands which should be left unmolested, as they have uniformly remained friendly. These are the bands of Heavy Runner and Big Lake. Those two chiefs and Little Wolf are the three who met General Sully at the agency a short time ago.

*Baker:*

Right. Of course, sir.

*Enter Joe Kipp, Joe Cobell, Horace and Nathan Clarke.*

*de Trobriand:*

I have hired these men to assist you on this mission. They are all very familiar with this territory. Kipp here has successfully tracked the designated camp of Mountain Chief. He will be your guide on this mission. Joe Cobell, a sure shot, will also be of great assistance to your mission. These two young men are the sons of the late Malcolm Clarke. They are determined to avenge their father's murder. Therefore, I have allowed them to accompany you on this mission. They, too, will

be of valuable assistance. Depart with your troops at once. You should arrive at the designated target by the 23rd of January.

*Major Baker's troops make ready to leave Fort Shaw with fan fare. Garry Owen flute music begins to play. The soldiers begin marching. It is obviously a very cold day. The settlers have come out for this big send off. Many are cheering and waving as the soldiers pass by. General de Trobriand and General Sully join the crowd and salute the soldiers. Baker's troops begin their four day trek in sub zero temperatures. The soldiers have blankets and buffalo robes over their woolen coats and stop frequently to prevent frostbite. As the soldiers are marching from the fort, many are taking huge drinks of whiskey in order to stay warm.*

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 17

## Gray Wolf's Camp

*Setting: Gray Wolf's camp. Enter Gray Wolf and his family. They are aware of the soldiers who are fast approaching their camp.*

*Gray Wolf's son:*

Father, what is happening? Why are those seizers coming at us?

*Gray Wolf:*

My son, stay close to your mother. Do not be afraid. I will speak with them.

*(Enter Major Baker and his soldiers. They surround Gray Wolf's family)*

*Baker:*

*(obviously drunk and slurring his words. To Kipp)* Ask them where we can find the camp of Mountain Chief. If they do not comply, tell them I have ordered my men to shoot at once.

*Kipp:*

Where is Mountain Chief camped?

*Gray Wolf:*

*(very frightened)* He is camped about six or seven miles downstream.

*Kipp:*

*(to Baker)* Sir, the camp we are looking for is a few miles downstream.

*Baker:*

*(to one of his soldiers)* Keep watch at this camp. I do not want them warning the others. *(to another soldier)* You and your troops will make your way to Riplinger's North West Fur Company. We must provide protection from any acts of retaliation.

*Baker exits with some of his men. The remaining soldiers point their guns at Gray Wolf's family and march them off stage.*

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 18

## Massacre of Heavy Runner's Camp

*Setting: Heavy Runner's camp. The sound of horses running is heard in the distance. Enter Bear Head and two other young boys from the camp. They are out early checking on their horses. The dogs begin barking wildly. While the other two boys are fooling around, Bear Head notices the fast approaching army. The two boys notice Bear Head and stop playing. When they realize what they are looking at, the two boys run away. Bear Head is frozen in his tracks. Enter Major Baker, Joe Kipp, Joe Cobell, Horace and Nathan Clarke and other soldiers. They surround the young boy pointing their guns at him.*

*Kipp:*

Is this Mountain Chief's camp?

*Bear Head:*

No, his camp is further down. This is Heavy Runner's camp.

*Kipp:*

*(is extremely surprised and addresses Baker)* Sir, we are at the wrong camp. This is not Mountain Chief's camp. This is Heavy Runner's camp. See? *(pointing)* That tipi belongs to Heavy Runner.

*Baker:*

*(very drunk and slurring his words)* That makes no difference, one band or another of them; they are all Piegans and we will attack them.

*Kipp:*

But, sir, this is not the camp that we are ordered to attack.

*Baker:*

*(exploding in anger, addresses one of his soldiers and points to Kipp)* If this man makes another sound, I order you to shoot him on the spot! *(this silences Kipp)*

*The soldiers surround both Kipp and Bear Head and march them off to the side. Kipp and Bear Head both helplessly watch as the massacre begins. All the while, the soldiers, including Baker, continue to take huge drinks of their whiskey. As the soldiers get into position, one of them approaches Major Baker.*

*Soldier:*

Sir, what about the children?

*Baker:*

My young man, nits make lice.

*Soldier:*

I don't understand sir?

*Baker:*

Spare no one.

*In the camp, Heavy Runner is preparing to make his way out to the soldiers. His young daughter, Spear Woman, runs to her father.*

*Spear Woman:*

Father, I am frightened.

*Heavy Runner:*

Be quiet. There is nothing to fear. I will show them my name paper. They will know who I am. They will not harm us once they see this paper. *(He walks quietly toward the soldiers with his hands uplifted and clearly holding his paper for them to see)* I am Heavy Runner, I am friendly to the whites. Do not shoot my people! We wish only peace with the whites!

*Joe Cobell takes aim and fires the first shot. Heavy Runner falls dead to the ground. The soldiers begin firing at everyone. The sound of gun fire and screaming is heard everywhere. The sound of babies crying is distinctly heard. There is mass confusion and everyone is running for cover. The Garry Owen music begins to play throughout the entire massacre. Smoke fills the stage. Spear Woman runs to her father who is dead on the frozen ice. A woman runs to Spear Woman and drags her away from her father's body. The woman is shot in the hand and she stumbles off stage with Spear Woman.*

*A mother screams at her two children to run. As they make their way out, the younger child gets shot in the forehead. The older child turns back to her mother and witnesses a bullet shot through the baby's head and into the mother's heart. The child runs in terror.*

*Many Sweat Lodge Woman and Holy Bear Woman run for cover. Many Sweat Lodge Woman is shot in her abdomen. She drops to the ground and pushes Holy Bear Woman away and yells at her to run. Holy Bear Woman, tries to help her grandmother, but is unsuccessful. She runs offstage.*

*A woman, with a baby, stumbles onto the scene. She lays on the ground frozen with terror. The woman is nursing her baby.*

*Spear Woman crawls into a tipi and hides underneath a backrest.*

*Children come running from stage left. They kneel down on the ground and frantically dig into the river bank and crawl inside the bank for cover.*

*The soldiers come into the camp and begin shooting at everyone lying on the ground. They walk around and do not see Spear Woman hiding under the backrest. One of the soldiers approaches the woman who is nursing her baby. The woman holds her baby up for the soldier. She begs the soldier not to kill her baby. The soldier shoots both the woman and her baby.*

*Major Baker comes stumbling onto the scene.*

*Baker:*

*(drunk and tripping over himself)* Burn everything! Robes, lodges, food, lice, everything! *(Addresses a soldier)* What are you looking at? I gave you an order, now move! *(he continues to stumble about still drinking his whiskey).*

*Smoke fills the entire camp. The sound of fire and an eerie wailing noise is heard above everything.*

*Baker goes to Chief Heavy Runner's body and picks up the paper still clutched to his chest. He looks at the paper and then rips it to shreds. He stumbles off stage. The soldiers begin rummaging through the camp and taking what they deem valuable and tossing other useless items aside. The soldiers are drunk and they begin laughing as make their way through the ruins..*

*The soldiers begin rounding up the survivors. They gather them together and surround them. One of the Piegans tries to escape and is shot by the soldiers. He falls to the ground dead.*

*Baker enters and a soldier approaches him.*

*Soldier:*

Sir, we have rounded up 5000 head of horses.

*Baker:*

*(barely audible)* Good work, my man... keep up the good work.

*Soldier:*

Sir, we have found a good number of the Indians infected with smallpox. I don't think it would be wise to take them as prisoners.

*Baker:*

*(obviously drunk and incapable of making a decision)* Yes, yes, a victory! Have a shot, on me...*(gives the whiskey flask to the soldier. Then he stumbles off stage talking to himself)* Piegan Baker! That's me...Piegan Baker!

*Enter Joe Cobell and Joe Kipp*

*Kipp:*

*(very discouraged and full of remorse and guilt)* This is the wrong camp! It was supposed to be Mountain Chief's camp. They were here a few days ago...honest! I tracked them to this site.

*Cobell:*

I knew that if that Indian got to Baker, there would be no fighting. We sure taught them a good lesson, and I got their horses!

*Kipp:*

It was you. You shot the first bullet, didn't you?

*Cobell:*

There was no way I was going to let them get to Mountain Chief. I promised my wife that I wouldn't let anything happen to her brother.

*Kipp:*

Well, you can let your wife know that you kept your promise. I just received word that they found Mountain Chief's camp a few miles downstream. It was totally abandoned in haste. They've all escaped into Canada.

*Cobell:*

I can finally reclaim my horses from Heavy Runner.

*Kipp:*

How many horses were you looking to reclaim?

*Cobell:*

Seven head.

*Kipp:*

Seven head? I just counted 217 dead bodies! (*looking directly into Cobell's eyes*)  
217 dead Piegan women and children for seven head of horses... God help us...(*exits*).

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 19

## Blackfoot Council

*Setting: a Blood camp nearby. Enter a delegation of Blackfoot elders and warriors. A young warrior speaks*

*Warrior:*

Many of our relatives have been wiped out. Never have the Blackfoot Confederacy experienced a massacre of such magnitude. We have always defended our children, our mothers, our grandmothers, our wives with such fierceness. When have we ever known of such an atrocity? When have we ever allowed others to come into our territory and terrorize our children? These relatives of ours were defenseless. Their warriors were out hunting for their families and when they arrived with their horses carrying an abundance of meat, they were welcomed not by honor songs, but by the smell of death. Many of them are among us today. Tears will be shed for many generations to come. This is indeed a dark time for the Blackfoot people. I stand with thousands of my brothers; we are ready! There are still many of us and few of them. We can wipe them out in the same manner they did to Heavy Runner's people. We've come to you, our leaders, to give us your blessing to avenge this massacre!

*An elder stands and speaks.*

*Elder:*

My sons, we know that this is hard for everyone. We predicted a harsh winter this year, but little did we know the magnitude of this prediction. We, your leaders, share in the grief. We, too, have lost many relatives this day. But, we have also lost many more in the past few years due to the whitemans' diseases and whiskey. We know the pain of losing many of our precious children prematurely. Nothing will ever take away the pain of losing a child, or a mother, or a grandmother, or a wife. Perhaps if we were younger, we would share in your feelings for revenge. But, my sons, you must learn from this. These newcomers do not see us a real people. They have no idea who we are, or the strength we possess. But, we know. We know exactly who we are. We are Nitsitapii. The Real People of this land. Without us, they, too, will not survive. But, as long as we are here, the people on this land will continue to flourish. Let us take these deaths from this massacre and use them, not as a senseless defeat, but as our greatest source of strength. Look at the children who've survived. Many are with us today. They will carry on our ways. The survivors of the Baker Massacre will also be a magnitude of strength for future generations. We must always think of the many generations to come. They will look to us someday and receive the same inner strength to carry on as a people. My sons, *iiyiikaakimaat*, try hard. The seizers, or the army, have proven their heartlessness. We must not put any more of our innocent women and children into their hands. They will not stop until every last one of our children is wiped out. Therefore, we cannot give you our blessing to go to war. We need to

consider those yet to be born. They will look back on us this day and they will understand why we didn't retaliate. We choose not to retaliate, not out of cowardice, but out of love for our future children and grandchildren. Our grandchildren possess the fire that will keep our Blackfoot legacy burning forever.

*Drum Beat: all exit*

## SCENE 20

## Debate in Washington

*Enter Baker, Cobell, de Trobriand, Sheridan, Sully, Sherman, Vincent Colyer, Indiana Congressman Daniel Vorhees, and Wendell Phillips*

*Baker is standing in the center of the others who are debating the massacre. Sheridan and supporters of the Baker massacre are on stage left opposite Sully and those who were protesting the massacre on stage right.*

*While this debate is going on, the children, who survived the massacre, enter from behind and make their way in between the two parties and walk slowly downstage center. The debate carries on as these children are slowly walking in sub-zero temperatures towards Fort Benton or the other surrounding Blackfoot camps.*

*Cobell:*

Baker's troops marched nearly 30 miles and still fought a three-hour battle after an all night advance!

*de Trobriand:*

*(jubilantly)* This expedition has been a complete success. Most of the murderers, and marauders of last summer have been killed. I personally recommend Major Baker for a brevet. He deserves a promotion!

*Sheridan:*

This will end Indian troubles in Montana. I cannot commend too highly the spirit and conduct of the troops and their commander, Major Baker. One of the results of this severe but necessary and well-merited punishment of these Indians is the prospect of future security for the citizens of Montana.

*Sully:*

I refrain from making comments on the reported unnecessary and uncalled – for cruelty on the part of the soldiers. I have seen the reports of Colonel Baker's attack on the Indians, where it states that one hundred and seventy-three were killed. How many of these killed were men? It has been reported to me that there were only twenty or thirty, the rest women and children.

*de Trobriand:*

I should be sorry to think that you could put any faith in the idle rumors and false reports spread by some whiskey smugglers from Benton!

*Sherman:*

I prefer to believe that the majority of those killed in *Mountain Chief's* camp were warriors, that the firing ceased the moment resistance was at an end,

*Colyer:*

According to Lieutenant William Pease, Baker's troops killed but fifteen warriors, the remainder of the one hundred and seventy-three slain were non-combatants. Fifty of these non-combatants were children under the age of twelve; many of whom were in their parents' arms. Furthermore, the village was defenseless because of a raging smallpox epidemic.

*Sheridan:*

I see that Mr. Vincent Colyer is out again in a sensational form, deceiving the kind-hearted public...to further the end of the old Indian ring of the Department of the Interior. The old Indian ring has set itself to work to get possession of Indian Affairs, so that the treasury can be more successfully plundered...

*Vorhees:*

I shall wash my hands of all responsibility for this system of warfare. It cannot be justified here or before the country; it cannot be justified before the civilization of the age, in the sight of God or man.

*Phillips:*

I only know the names of three savages upon the plains – Colonel Baker, General Custer, and at the head of all, General Sheridan!

## Scene 21

## We're Still Here!

*(Child enters with a hand drum and begins singing Heavy Runner's honor song. The children enter the stage as if they were still walking the 90 miles to Fort Benton: the first ones will still be in that day, the next ones will show a progression of walking through time; from the early 1900's to today's modern dress: a fancy dancer, a traditional dancer, a graduate, an athlete, a doctor, etc... Finally, we'll re-enact Chief Heavy Runner walking from back stage center to down stage holding the paper in his hand)*

*Blackout*