



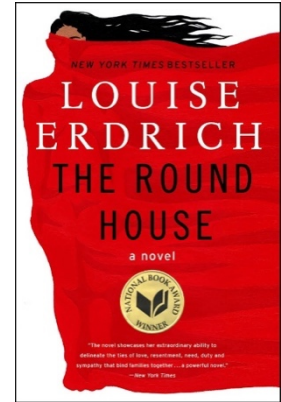
## Louise Erdrich's *The Round House*:

### A Teaching Guide

*The UO Common Reading Program, organized by the Division of Undergraduate Studies, builds community, enriches curriculum, and engages research through the shared reading of an important book.*

## About the 2017-18 Book

On a North Dakota Anishinaabe Reservation, 13-year-old Joe's mother, Geraldine, is raped and the assault rocks his family's solid foundation. Joe's search for answers—and justice—reveals dark truths about the U.S. legacy of federal Indian policy, systemic injustice, and the ongoing struggle for tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and security. Erdrich's powerful tale is at once a coming of age story, a story of indigenous survival and community, and an important American story that all of us need to hear.



## About the Author

**Louise Erdrich** is author of fifteen novels as well as volumes of poetry, children's books, short stories, and a memoir of early motherhood. Her novel *The Round House* won the National Book Award for Fiction. *The Plague of Doves* won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Her debut novel, *Love Medicine*, won the National Book Critics Circle Award. Erdrich has received the Library of Congress Prize in American Fiction, the prestigious PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction, and the Dayton Literary Peace Prize. She lives in Minnesota with her daughters and is the owner of Birchbark Books, a small independent bookstore.

## About this Guide

This guide offers the UO teaching community resources to support students' engagement with *The Round House*. It brings forward the novel's major themes and key contexts – along with suggested source materials, concrete activities, and discussion questions. It also raises the meaningful teaching challenges and opportunities *The Round House* presents.

Are you using the book in your class, program, or student group? [Let us know!](#) Email [commonreading@uoregon.edu](mailto:commonreading@uoregon.edu)

Wanting to know more about how to use the book in your class, program, or undecided if you are ready to use the book? Contact the UO Teaching Engagement Program at [tep@uoregon.edu](mailto:tep@uoregon.edu) or Common Reading Faculty Fellow, Julie Voelker-Morris, at [jvoelker@uoregon.edu](mailto:jvoelker@uoregon.edu).

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## **Foundations: Keywords, Themes, and Contexts**

After a series of provocative opening questions about the book, the eight units of this guide explore *The Round House* through a variety of lenses. Each content area offers specific teaching ideas, including companion texts to Erdrich's work and suggestions for further study. The units are:

**Place/Land/Home**

**Justice and the Law**

**Settler Colonialism**

**Gender-based Violence**

**Indigenous Feminisms and Indigenous Love**

**Decolonization and Solidarity**

**Identity, Traditions, Culture**

**Representations of Native Peoples in Art and Popular Culture**

At the end of the guide is a quotation index and list of additional resources. Faculty are encouraged to apply and adapt these ideas. We hope that they serve as springboard for new ideas. Additional teaching tools, including articles, interviews, and discussion questions are posted in the [online resources](#) on the Common Reading website.

If you have resources to add to the list, [please share them with us!](#)

## **Big Questions for *Round House* Readers**

by Kirby Brown (Cherokee Nation), Assistant Professor of English and Native American Studies

**Narrative Voice/Perspective:** Though the action of the novel centers around the sexual assault of Geraldine Coutts, Erdrich narrates the story through the voice and experience of her son, Joe. What do you make of this decision? What does Joe's perspective offer readers? What are the limitations of this narrative voice? How does this choice speak to questions of sexual violence and their effects on survivors and their families, communities, and nations?

**Temporality and Setting:** The events in the story take place in the late-1980s, but it is narrated by Joe twenty years after the fact. What is the significance of this retrospective narrative? What might it suggest about the cascading, intergenerational effects of sexual assault for survivors, families, communities, and nations?

**Imagery and Framing:** The novel opens with a discussion of roots, invasive plants threatening the integrity and stability of the Coutts home, and the constant battle to keep them at bay. How does this opening image speak across to the larger dynamics of violence, vulnerability, jurisdiction, and justice at work in the text?

**Representing Sexual Violence:** Geraldine's assault is the central "event" that drives the plot of the novel, but Erdrich refuses to represent this act of violence except through the clues Bazil, Joe, and others gradually put together throughout the text. What is accomplished by this refusal? What might this choice suggest about the novel's focus and object of critique (the event vs. the contexts and aftermath related to it)?

**Genre and Narrative:** In some ways, the novel reads as a coming-of-age narrative of an adolescent Ojibway boy into manhood which is transformed by a horrific act of sexual violence in a legal/crime drama that radiates into the entire family/community. What do you make of this interruption of the coming-of-age story in the specific contexts of this novel? What does it suggest about the problems and possibilities of "coming-of-age" at the intersections of place, race, class, gender, identity, politics, indigeneity, and the law?

**Endings and Resolutions:** The novel refuses to provide readers any neat resolution to its conflicts and their larger implications. Why is this? What narrative work does this refusal perform within the contexts of gender, jurisdiction, justice, and settler sexual assault which organize the text? What might this suggest about the novel's "takeaway" for readers? What actions, emotions, and attitudes does it provoke?

**Humor:** Though the overall dynamics of the novel are emotionally heavy, there is nonetheless a great deal of humor peppered throughout—i.e. jokes about adolescent boy anatomy, scenes of leeches in inconvenient places, debates over science fiction film franchises, mischievous elders who constantly speak in sexual innuendo, chases through yards, etc. In what ways does humor function in the novel?

What does it offer the narrative? What does it suggest about indigenous community cohesion, resilience, and survivance?

## Place/Land/Home

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Topics within Place/Land: Traditional/Ancestral Territory; Reservation; Home; “Indian Country”

It is important to know and acknowledge who has lived on the land and contributed to the histories and identity of a place—respecting the past and ongoing presence of indigenous peoples is essential to establishing reciprocal relations between tribal nations and other governments.

### Significant Readings and Resources

- [Broken Treaties](#) documentary from Oregon Experience provides an excellent introduction to the historical and contemporary experiences of Native communities in our region.
- David E. Wilkins and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark, “A Tour of Native Peoples and Native Lands,” from *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*, 3rd edition, Rowman and Littlefield, 2011, esp. 17-32.
- Invasion of America: maps, treaties, animated videos demonstrating indigenous land loss from 1784-present. ([www.invasionofamerica.org](http://www.invasionofamerica.org))
- Mishuana Goeman, “Land as Life: Unsettling the Logics of Containment,” from *Native Studies Keywords*, Ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja, University of Arizona P, 2015. 71-89.
- “[Native Community History of Eugene Area](#)” by anthropologist and Native history research Dr. David G. Lewis (Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde) gives specific information about the historic treatment of the tribes of the Willamette Valley and how they are reclaiming their voices today. Topics include the role of Native people as Willamette Valley migrant farm workers, the government policy of termination (terminating tribal recognition and rights....), and efforts to reclaim their voices today.

### Discussion

Consider Canada’s legacy of institutional racism against its First Nations peoples and Canada’s 1998 Statement of Reconciliation. In what ways is Canada’s treatment of its Native people similar and different to that of Native peoples in the United States? At official functions at Canadian universities, the master of ceremonies acknowledges the First Peoples on whose land the function is taking place. Can this act of recognition and acknowledgment change the dialogue or set a particular tone for events? If so, how? Do you think such a practice would change the conversation about race, capitalism, and resources in the United States? If so, how? Imagine for example, if acknowledgment to Native peoples were paid prior to

the first bell of the New York Stock Exchange....

### Activity

In the British Museum and the BBC's *History of the World through 100 Objects* series, the "North American Buckskin Map" program considers European conquest of North America through illegal land deals by the British colonial government and the Wabash Land Company with the Piankashaw Indians. Two different ways of understanding the world become clearer in viewing this map, the program argues: mapping as a technique of control and, alternatively, mapping to reflect the relevance, importance, and value of objects and places to their communities rather than geographic accuracy. For most indigenous communities, association with the land is integral to soul of the people—the land isn't viewed as a commodity to be owned. Learn more at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/-UqCYd\\_4Rfy85epzSvpaQA](http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/-UqCYd_4Rfy85epzSvpaQA)

After viewing the map and listening to the program, draw a geographically accurate map of a places that are significant to you. Next, draw a map that acknowledges the same places of the first map but shows their importance to you based on your values and beliefs. Compare these two maps. What do you notice as similar and different? How does this comparison assist you in understanding value and influence of place and land as tied to a specific person or group of people?

### Significant Resources on Traditional/Ancestral Territory, "Indian Country," Reservation

- David E. Wilkins and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesik Stark, "A Tour of Native Peoples and Native Lands," from *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*, 3rd edition, Rowman and Littlefield, 2011, esp. 17-32.
- Mishuana Goeman, "Land as Life: Unsettling the Logics of Containment," from *Native Studies Keywords*, Ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja, University of Arizona P, 2015. 71-89.
- Invasion of America: maps, treaties, animated videos demonstrating indigenous land loss from 1784-present. ([www.invasionofamerica.org](http://www.invasionofamerica.org))

### Discussion

In many cases, Native tribes' words for the land they knew were replaced by the names of the colonizing white settlers. For example, the [Kalapuya tribes](#), whose traditional homelands were in the Willamette Valley, called the mountain *Champ-a te* ("Rattlesnake Mountain"); the European colonizers named it Spencer's Butte. What the Kalapuya called *Ya Po Ah* ("The High Place"), European colonizers gave the name Skinner's Butte. These two iconic landmarks in our community are a perfect place to start recognizing our local native history and reflecting on what's in a name.

What do we learn about these two places from the Kalapuya names for them? Why would this information be important to know? What do we learn about the places from the names bestowed upon them by the European settlers? What can be inferred from these names about the differing perspectives on the natural world and land ownership of Native people and White settlers?

### **Activity**

If you have lived in [Washington](#), [Oregon](#), or British Columbia, many geographic names which come from the Northwest's Native peoples are familiar to you: Yachats, Tillamook, Klamath Falls, Klickitat, Issaquah, Walla Walla, Seattle, to name a few.

Research a Native-language place name in your community. What does the name tell you about the location? What is its etymology? In what ways does the name continue to be relevant? How has the name been coopted by colonized language? Present your research to a community group.

### **Home**

The novel begins with Joe weeding around the foundation of his parents' house, and throughout the book acutely-described architectural spaces—the houses of Joe's friends and family, the round house, the hospital, etc.—provide essential elements to the story.

### **Discussion**

As Joe looks back and narrates the story which happened in his youth, he vividly remembers aspects of his childhood home (including the feeling of elation that came from having it to himself at times, p. 22) and the houses of the people around him. Linda and Sonja also reminisce about their childhood homes. What sensory memories or objects do you associate with your childhood home(s) or of the home of a friend or relative whose home you were familiar with as a child?

### **Activity**

As you read, write or sketch notes describing the homes of the characters in the book. Joe's house (pp. 24 & 147) and his mother's garden (pp. 85-86). Cappy's house, which was "built and messed up from scratch" (pp. 34 & 223). Angus' house in the projects, where money ran out during building, with its television bought by bingo win (p. 19). Linda's home with its dog, tv, couch, and fireplace (pp. 118 & 297), as compared to the memories of her childhood home (p. 117). Sonja & Whitey's house smelling of Pine Sol, lemon polish cigarettes, fish, and full of noise (pp. 137, 166-167). What do the houses reveal about their inhabitants?

### **Activity**

*What does home mean to you?* This question was posed to readers of *Real Simple* magazine. [Their responses are here.](#) (Note how their respondents interpret “home” as a physical place and also a feeling.) How would the characters in *The Round House* reply to *Real Simple*’s poll? Select 3 characters from the book, and using what you know of their voices, personalities, and life stories, write each’s answer to this question. (You may also want to respond to the question from the perspective of another person: you.)

Alternatively, study your own home, the homes of friends or family, homes in your neighborhood, homes by famous architects, or others (such as those documented by [photographer Ingrid Hernández](#) in the outskirts of Tijuana, Mexico). In what ways does a home reflect on the cultural heritage, economic status, family life, values, etc. of its inhabitants?

## Justice & the Law

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Topics within Justice & the Law include: Myth, Truth and Deception in US History; Legal and Legislative History; Sovereignty and Tribal Nationhood/Tribal Governments; Treaties, Jurisdiction: Tribal/State/Federal “Checkerboard”; Legal/Structural/Discursive Vulnerability

### Myth, Truth, and Deception in US History

It may strike some students how much of the American history presented in *The Round House* is unknown to them or different from the celebratory accounts they’ve encountered in school. James W. Loewen’s book [Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong](#) investigates the role of history textbooks in our national education. Loewen argues that much of what passes as history has been crafted to tell a proud national story (a mythology with its heroes), and in doing so glosses over, or omits entirely, more difficult facts and events. He writes, “Historically, American Indians have been the most lied-about subset of our population” (p. 99).

### Discussion

What do you know/think you know about the colonizing of America and its consequences to this day? Are these facts or opinions? This exercise can help you get a sense of where students are starting from, and what information, ideas, or misconceptions they may be carrying with them into the reading of the book.

### Activity

Select an historical figure (Christopher Columbus, Pocahontas, etc.) who is often mythologized or idealized and invite them to uncover and present a more factual historical portrait of this person and the context of his or her actions. Identify references to the historical figure in current news stories. How is this person represented? What aspects of his or her contribution are most discussed? Are there important

stories that are omitted or stories that are distorted about this individual in the textbook and popular references? If so, why might that be?

Further research this figure using UO Libraries database sources to find peer-reviewed articles. What do you learn about this figure that is not found in current news stories or popular, perhaps non-peer reviewed resources? How does this research provide a fuller portrayal of the figure? In what ways does this portrayal differ from K-12 textbook or popular treatment of this individual? What implications does this have for our knowledge about our American history and our current national conversation about race?

## Legal and Legislative History

### Significant Laws

- Doctrine of Discovery
- Marshall Trilogy (1830s)
- *Ex parte Crow Dog* and Major Crimes Act (1885)
- General Allotment Act (1887)
- *Lone Wolf vs. Hitchcock* and the Doctrine of Plenary Power (1903)
- Indian Reorganization Act (1934)
- Termination: HR 108 & PL 280 (1953)
- American Indian Civil Rights Act (1968)
- Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) (1978)
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978)
- *Oliphant v Suquamish* (1978)
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) (2012)

### Significant Legal Perspectives

- Kimberly Robertson, "[The 'law and order' of violence against Native women: A Native feminist analysis of the Tribal Law and Order Act](#)" from *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 5.1 (2016): pp. 1-23.
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Pilot Project (with other pilot projects): <http://www.ncai.org/tribal-vawa/pilot-project-itwg/pilot-project>

## Discussion



Is the legal system impartial? Is Joe's act of violence justified? Write a persuasive paper, perform a speech or monologue, or run a mock trial to make your case. Compare the different conceptions of justice presented in the book.

### Activity

Compare tribal jurisdiction laws from the time of the novel (late 1980s) and now. Draw, map, or similarly create a representation of the changes in laws.

### Resources on Sovereignty, Tribal Nationhood / Tribal Governments

- Chris Anderson, "Indigenous Nationhood," *Native Studies Keywords*, Ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja, University of Arizona P, 2015, pp. 180-98.
- Amanda Cobb-Greetham, "Understanding Tribal Sovereignty: Definitions, Conceptualizations, and Interpretations." *American Studies* 46.3/4 (Fall-Winter 2005): 115-132.
- Joanne Barker, "Gender, Sovereignty, Rights," *American Quarterly* 60.2 (2008). 258-66.
- Vine Deloria, Jr. and Clifford Lytle, "Domestic Dependent Nations" from *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*. U of Texas P, 1998. 16-27.
- Tribal Nations and the US: <http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes>
- David E. Wilkins and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesik Stark, "Indigenous Peoples Are Nations, Not Minorities" and "Tribal Governments from *American Indian Politics and the American Political System*, 3rd edition, Rowman and Littlefield, 2011, pp. 33-50.
- [US Government to Pay \\$492 Million to 17 American Indian Tribes](#)
- [Why Native Americans don't want reparations](#) by Daniel R. Wildcat (Yuchi member of the Muscogee Nation), professor at Haskell Indian Nations University
- [American Indians Seek Control, Not Reparations](#) by Matthew L.M. Fletcher (Grand Traverse Band), Professor of Law & Director of the Indigenous Law & Policy Center at Michigan State University

### Discussion

What do you know about the Native peoples whose land we now call Oregon? What do you know about the how state and U.S. government policies and laws have impacted the lives of the tribes in our region? How are members of these tribes fighting today for the dignity, justice, sovereignty of their tribes?

### Resources on Treaties, Law and Jurisdiction (Tribal, State, Federal; "Checkerboard")

- Fletcher, Matthew L.M. ["A Short History of Indian Law in the Supreme Court."](#) *Human Rights Magazine* 40.4 (2014).
- Tribal Court Clearinghouse. ["General Guide to Criminal Jurisdiction in Indian Country."](#) Tribal Law and Policy Institute.
- Leanne Simpson, "The Place Where We All Live Together: A Gendered Analysis of Sovereignty."

*Native Studies Keywords*. Ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja. University of Arizona Press, 2015.18-24.

### Discussion

Erdrich's novel is concerned with questions of justice. What are the elements of justice that Erdrich asks readers to consider? How does she see questions of justice overlapping with questions of jurisdiction? With gender? Consider close readings of the text that help you identify the elements of injustice and justice that Erdrich sees, their historical underpinnings, their contemporary manifestations, and possible ways to address them.

### Activity

The novel models various modes of justice—legal, religious, cultural. Explore, perhaps even map out, these different visions and consider what they each have to say about understandings of and responses to violence/injustice.

## Settler Colonialism

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Imperial powers, through sending designated colonists, ambassadors, or other representatives, gave new names and meaning to places as a means of establishing authority and regulation through non-indigenous socio-political structures. These structures—religious, educational, agricultural, and other institutionalized methods—changed the location and practices of sociocultural power, governmental and familial relationships, geographic expanse, and overall standing and influence of both indigenous and settler populations.

### Significant Resources

- Introduction: <https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/settler-colonialism/>
- "Colonialism." *Native Studies Keywords*. Ed. Stephanie Nohelani Teves, Andrea Smith, and Michelle Raheja. University of Arizona Press, 2015.271-83.
- Linda Christensen, "[Uncovering the Legacy of Language and Power](#)" in *Teaching for Joy and Justice: Re-imaging the Language Arts Classroom*. Oregon Writing Project at Lewis & Clark College.
- Nikole Hannah-Jones, "[Dying Languages: Last of the Siletz Speakers.](#)" *Newhouse News Service*.
- Judith Thurman, "[A Loss for Words: Can a Dying Language Be Saved?](#)" *The New Yorker*.
- Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (2006): 387-409.

## Language

Imperial powers have seen indigenous first languages as challenges to their power and authority to assert sociopolitical, religious, or other means of structured control.

For example, if we look at a [map of Oregon](#), even from just a few years ago, we would have seen a number of place names with the word “squaw” in them. Meaning “woman” in Algonquin, this word is now used as a racial slur against Native women. Oregon tribal nations and tribal nations across the country have been fighting to [reclaim these place names](#) with names that acknowledge the land’s precolonial history and honor Native peoples. After years bearing the name Squaw Creek Overlook, the site near Pendleton has been restored to the Umatilla’s traditional name for the place: Isqúulktpe. Meaning “Throat-Slitting Place,” Isqúulktpe Creek Overlook is the site of an important historical event in the tribe’s history, when a group of Umatilla women gathering roots there successfully thwarted an attack on them by an invading tribe, killing their attackers.

## Discussion

When seeking a name for Alton Baker Park’s now named [Whilamut Natural Area](#) (237 acres of riverfront along the Willamette River in Eugene and Springfield, dedicated for passive recreation and habitat restoration), the city worked with the Kalapuya in the naming process. In Kalapuya, “Whilamut” (pronounced wheel-a-moot) means “where the river ripples and runs fast.” This name was chosen in collaboration with the Komemmma Cultural Protection Association of the Kalapuya Tribe as a gesture of honor and respect for the tribal members who hunted, fished, and gathered camas bulbs on the land that is now the Whilamut Natural Area. See also the [Whilamut Passage Bridge Naming Ceremony](#).

Do you think it was important to restore Native place names to these sites? Why? What does it show about the city’s and state’s acknowledgement of its indigenous people, their history, and relationship to the land they knew?

## Activity

The University of Oregon as the University recently has deliberated on whether keep the names Deady and Dunn Halls, or to rename these buildings due to their namesakes’ racist ties. Read the [Historians’ Report on the History of Matthew P. Deady and Frederick S. Dunn](#). Also read [President Schill’s decision to dename Dunn Hall](#) and [President Nominates First Black Graduate of A&AAA in Renaming of Former Dunn Hall](#). Finally, read the [letter outlining Schill’s recommendation to keep the name Deady Hall](#).

Role play that your class is in the position of the Board of Trustees. Act out a discussion or debate about the topic. Who agrees with these decisions? Who disagrees? Why and why not? Vote to keep the names or rename the buildings. If you would recommend renaming, for whom would you name the building(s)? Specific details from the historians’ report should be cited to inform arguments and decision making.

Finally, no matter the outcome of the role playing vote and discussion, how would you make the history of these places and buildings known? Design a display, public art piece, or other element to ensure that all UO students and visitors to the building learn this history. Propose your project to the university president and board of trustees.

## Indian Schools

Joe mentions his mother attended boarding school with her sister Clemence and LaRose. LaRose mentions that Mayla had been at boarding school in South Dakota (pp. 171-173). Such schools were used as a means to indoctrinate language, behaviors, attire, and other practices of European immigrants and settlers onto the indigenous, native populations throughout the United States.

Indian schools were started by [Richard Henry Pratt](#) who believed that Native American children could be assimilated into White culture through education. He founded the [Carlisle Indian School](#) in Carlisle, Pennsylvania in 1879 to “kill the Indian...and save the man.” Indigenous youth were forced to separate from their families, forbidden from wearing their traditional dress, speaking their Native language, and participating in traditional ceremonies. Often, they were abused if they did not conform to demands.

Visual examples of this forced assimilation in boarding schools are found in historical documents such as these photographs:



Photo credit: John N. Choate

([http://www.californiaindianeducation.org/indian\\_boarding\\_schools/pictures/Torlino\\_Before-After\\_Portraits.jpg](http://www.californiaindianeducation.org/indian_boarding_schools/pictures/Torlino_Before-After_Portraits.jpg))



"Carlisle Indian Industrial School Group Photos [Photographs]," in Children and Youth in History, Item #290, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/primary-sources/290> (accessed June 7, 2017). Annotated by Susan Douglass. For more on analyzing assimilation photos from the Carlisle School, visit <http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/sites/all/files/docs-lessonplans/CIS-LessonPlan-AnalyzingPhotos.pdf> & <http://www.radiolab.org/story/photos-before-and-after-carlisle/>

### Chemawa Indian School, Salem, Oregon

Oregon played a part in this history with the [Chemawa Indian School](#) in Salem. Marsha Small's thesis, "A Voice for the Children of Chemawa Cemetery," for example, [shares her study](#) indicating there are possibly hundreds of unmarked burial sites at Chemawa. It was the second such boarding school to be established (1880) and is the oldest continuously operating Native American boarding school in the United States.

### Significant Resources: Stories of Living in Indian Schools

- Métis Residential and Day School survivors speak in "[Nobody's Children](#)," a documentary produced by the Métis National Council.
- [The Survivors Speak](#), a report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, part of the Commission's [final report](#) on Indian Residential Schools. (Canada issued a statement of [National Apology to Former Students of Residential Schools](#) in 2008.)
- [Zitkala-Sa](#) (Yankton Sioux), 1876-1938, also known as Gertrude Bonnin, wrote of her experience attending the White's Manual Labor Institute, a boarding school in Wabash, Indiana. Read excerpts from her "[The School Days of an Indian Girl](#)."

### Discussion

Recognizing the legacy of education as a weapon to decimate Native cultural practices, efforts are being made to right—and rewrite—this narrative within Native communities and in the education of students.

For example, The UO College of Education's [Sapsik'w'alá Education Program](#), a partnership with Oregon's [nine federally recognized tribes](#), prepares American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) as teachers whose

knowledge, skills, and cultural sensitivity will bring about long-term improvements in the elementary, middle and high school educational experiences of AI/AN youth.

During 2017, the Oregon legislature and governor passed a law transforming what Oregon K-12 students are taught about the state's Native peoples, their history, and enduring contemporary culture. [Oregon Senate Bill 13](#) "directs [the] Department of Education to develop curriculum relating to Native American experience in Oregon and to provide professional development related to [this] curriculum." Writing in favor of the bill, Leilani Sabazilian (UO College of Education) and Shadiin Garcia wrote, "Students learn a great deal from what isn't taught. When curriculum neglects tribal sovereignty or treaty rights, a legal and political bedrock upon which conversations and curriculum about Native people should rest, students are tacitly taught to disregard Native sovereignty and rights." What other U.S. states or other countries have laws encouraging learning about indigenous peoples of a place, historically and contemporarily?

### **Activity**

Contemporary artist Gregg Deal (Pyramid Lake Paiute) performed his "[Indian Voice Removal Act 1879 to 2016](#)" at the Smithsonian Institution. In this performance, the artist, dressed in traditional attire, stands inside a tipi and answers questions from visitors. But rather than reply directly to the askers, Deal speaks to the interpreter (a white man), who, in turn, translates—poorly—for the public. This work clearly expresses the importance of listening to Native peoples tell of their experiences in their own words.

Invite students to select a text that strikes them as culturally important. Ask students to translate it for a different audience—say a formal academic audience or a townhall meeting. What is lost or gained when you translate to a different genre, difference audience, different language?

### **Gender-based Violence**

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Louise Erdrich paints complicated portraits of her characters, their family lives, and their relationships. There are some characters who fulfill socially expected gender roles. Others disrupt or challenge such expectations. Characters represent complicated ways of living and expressing both love and anger, power and weakness, in domestic relationships.

Sexual and gender violence is a women's issue, a men's issue, a family issue, a community issue. Erdrich makes this point by selecting Joe, the victim's son, as narrator for the story. Through his voice, we learn the devastating impact of the assault on his family and the years spent reconciling what happened and trying to figure out how to tell his story.

Gender and sexual violence are crimes to which Native communities are disproportionately vulnerable—and victimized by perpetrators of a race different than the victim at statistically significantly higher levels than the national average.

Native women are particularly vulnerable to experiencing sexual violence, making this an issue of gender violence as well. “American Indians are 2.5 times more likely to experience sexual assault crimes compared to all other races, and one in three Indian women reports having been raped during her lifetime,” write Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes in the U.S. Department of Justice’s 2000 [\*Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women\*](#).

Watch the [UO Today interview with Sarah Deer](#) (Muscogee Creek Nation), legal scholar, MacArthur Fellow, and author of *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*, for an essential background to understanding how this pocket of vulnerability has been made possible.

Geraldine’s decision to talk about the rape is an important one. By sharing their stories, Native women bring about social and legal change. Such stories are being shared in a variety of ways. For example, the Native American Women’s Health Education Resource Center produced a graphic novel, [“What do I tell my daughter when she is raped,”](#) teaching the ABCs of rape encounters.

Other stories are told on a national stage such as when we hear [Lisa Marie Lyotte](#)’s story as she introduces President Obama at the Tribal Law and Order Act (2010) signing ceremony.

### Significant Resources

- Amnesty International, [Maze of Injustice](#)
- Faye Blaney, “Finding Dawn: A Guide for Teaching and Action,” <http://www.onf-nfb.gc.ca/sg/100567.pdf>
- Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America*. University of Minnesota Press, 2015.
- Louise Erdrich, [“Rape on the Reservation.”](#) *New York Times*, February 26, 2013.
- Rachel Flowers, “Refusal to Forgive: Indigenous women’s love and rage,” 32-49 in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 4, No. 2, 2015.
- National Congress of American Indians, “Policy Insights Brief: Statistics on Violence Against Native Women,” NCAI Policy Research Center, February 2013, [http://www.ncai.org/attachments/PolicyPaper\\_tWAjznFslemhAffZgNGzHUqIWMPKCDj\\_pFtxeKEUVKjubxfgpGYK\\_Policy%20Insights%20Brief\\_VAWA\\_020613.pdf](http://www.ncai.org/attachments/PolicyPaper_tWAjznFslemhAffZgNGzHUqIWMPKCDj_pFtxeKEUVKjubxfgpGYK_Policy%20Insights%20Brief_VAWA_020613.pdf)
- Rayna Green. “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture.” *The Massachusetts Review* 16, no. 4 (October 1, 1975): 698–714.
- Jo Harjo (Muscogee Creek Nation) [“A Poem to Get Rid of Fear”](#)
- Dian Million, “There is a River in Me: Theory From Life,” 31-42 in *Theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson & Andrea Smith (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).
- Monique Mojica, “Stories from the Body.”
- Pam Palmater, “Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls.” *Indigenous Nationhood: Empowering Grassroots Citizens*. Fernwood Publishing, 2015. 121-50.
- Julie Tharp, “Erdrich’s Crusade: Sexual Violence in *The Round House*,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 26.3 (October 2014): 25-40.
- Eve Tuck and C. Ree. “A Glossary of Haunting.” *Handbook of Autoethnography*. Ed. Stacey

- Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis. Left Coast Press, 2013. 639-58.
- Tribal Law and Policy Institute Reports and Resources:  
<http://www.home.tlpi.org/violence-against-native-women-publicatio>
- Women’s Earth Alliance & Native Youth Sexual Health Network, [\*Violence on the Land, Violence on Our Bodies\*](#)

## Discussion

Jamie Black, a Métis multidisciplinary artist based in Winnipeg, also seeks to raise awareness and visibility of the plight of this community through [The REDress Project](#). In this installation red dresses are displayed in public spaces to mark missing and murdered indigenous women across Canada. [Watch a video on the project](#). What is the impact of displaying these dresses in public spaces so that viewers happen across them in their daily routine? What does this work bring to mind for you? Is this project a more or less effective act of conscience raising than a protest or other act might be?

## Activity

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), about which Louise Erdrich writes in a *New York Times* editorial [“Rape on the Reservation,”](#) is up for reauthorization in 2018 .

Review the changes to the Violence Against Women Act. See

- PUBLIC LAW 113–4—MAR. 7, 2013 – **Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013** (<https://www.congress.gov/113/plaws/publ4/PLAW-113publ4.pdf>)
- White House Summary of the Law by Valerie Jarrett available at <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2013/03/07/no-one-should-have-live-fear-violence>
- Department of Justice overview for changes to tribal jurisdiction in these matters, see <https://www.justice.gov/tribal/violence-against-women-act-vawa-reauthorization-2013-0>

Trace the reauthorization of VAWA and the provision enabling tribal courts to prosecute non-Native perpetrators.

After reviewing these resources, write letters or meet with your representatives to discuss the 2018 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. Visit <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials/> to find ways to contact your elected officials.

## Indigenous Feminisms & Indigenous Love

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Themes: Indigenous Feminisms, Model Relationships

In [We Should All Be Feminists](#) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie states that, “A feminist is a man or woman who says, yes there is a problem with gender as we see it today and we must fix it.” We are socialized into conceptions of masculinity and femininity, how to raise boys and girls and gender nonconforming youth.



We are also afforded opportunities to resist and challenge standards of gender socialization through a variety of feminisms showing ways to move toward gender equity.

### **Significant Resources on Indigenous Feminisms**

- M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey, "American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance in North America." *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*. Ed. M. Annette Jaimes. South End Press, 1992. 311-44.
- Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).
- Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Native Women* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 2000).
- Cheryl Suzack, Shari Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, Jean Barman (eds), *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture* (University of Washington Press, 2011).
- Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy," *Feminist Formations* 25.1 (Spring 2013): pp. 8-34.

### **Discussion**

What are the structural/legal vulnerabilities and representational/discursive vulnerabilities of Native women that Erdrich confronts in this text? How do these become collective experiences, and what is the significance of these collective experiences for understanding Native American lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In constructing responses, consider close readings of the text that help you identify the elements of structural and representational vulnerability that Erdrich sees, their historical underpinnings, their contemporary manifestations, and the ways they become part of a collective experience.

### **Activity**

Track debates within feminisms, drawing specific attention to Native and Indigenous Feminisms and points of alliance and divergence with other feminisms.

### **Model relationships**

Until Geraldine's rape, the incident that destabilizes Joe's family's secure foundation, Joe's was "the perfect family...you would never run away from" (p. 96). They were relatively well off by the reservation standards. Joe's father, Bazil, had always loved Geraldine, and they had never spent a night apart, nor "sought protection from each other's illnesses" (p. 78).

Joe's Uncle Whitey and Aunt Sonja's relationship is good when it's good, but Whitey drinks and is physically and verbally abusive towards Sonja (pp. 165-178).

In the book we also get a glimpse into the home life of Joe's Aunt Clemence and Uncle Edward, a perspective on relationships from Father Travis, and experience the different experiences of the families of Joe's friends, Cappy, Zach, and Angus.

### Discussion

As young men, growing up and growing into themselves and their own sexuality, who are the models for Joe and his friends' understanding of relationships? In what way do these models positively or negatively affect Joe and his friends and shape their view of healthy, loving relationships?

How does Mooshum's tale (p. 179+) of Akikwe (Earth Woman) and Mirage and their son, Nanapush present another example of a model relationship? "She was generous, but took her children, and did not go back to her husband" (p. 187).

## Decolonization & Solidarity

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### Significant Readings

- Eve Tuck, Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization* Vol. 1, #1 (2012). <http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/view/18630>
- Inés Hernández-Avila, "In the Presence of Spirit(s): A Meditation on the Politics of Solidarity and Transformation," 530-538 in *This Bridge We Call Home*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa & Analouise Keating (New York: Routledge Press, 2002).
- Harsha Walia, "Decolonizing Together: Moving Beyond a Politics of Solidarity Toward a Practice of Decolonization." *The Winter We Danced: Voices From the Past, the Future, and the Idle No More Movement*. Ed. the Kino-nda-niimi Collective. ARP Books, 2014. 44-51.
- Corey Snelgrove, Rita Dhamoon, and Jeff Corntassel. "Unsettling settler colonialism: The discourse and politics of settlers, and solidarity with Indigenous nations." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3.2 (2014): 1-32.

## Discussion

The most important architectural structure in the story is the round house. What is the significance of the round house? The origin story of the round house comes from the legend of Nanapush and the Buffalo Woman (p. 214). Representations of survival, protection, reverence (respect) for nature/land, place bring people together (as coming together to hunt the buffalo once did). The round house was built in a community “to keep their people



together ask for mercy from the Creator, since justice was so sketchily applied on earth” (p. 315) and was valued as “the body of your mother and it must be respected the same way” (p. 315). How is the round house used for ceremonial activities? How does the round house represent solidarity? Decolonization? How is that view challenged by events in *The Round House*?

Round House (side view), Tuolumne Rancheria, The Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians (California), 1947  
<https://mewuk.com/cultural/historical-events/>

The violation in the round house reverberates as a severely vicious crime. Think of how other hate crimes targeting people in their places of worship in churches, synagogues, mosques, shrines, or of pilgrims on their pilgrimages, or during times of religious ceremonies/celebrations, holidays. Why are sites of religious significance selected as targets for these hate crimes? What are ways in which communities associated with religious sites reclaim their spaces following a hate crime?

## Identity, Traditions, Culture

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Themes: Ojibwe/Chippewa/Anishinaabe Life; Foodways; Material Culture

### Significant Resources regarding Ojibwe/Chippewa/Anishinaabe Life

- Brenda J. Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*, New York: Viking, 2012.
- Bezhigobinesikwe Elaine Fleming, “Nanaboozhoo and the Wiindigo: An Ojibwe History from Colonization to the Present,” from *Tribal College: Journal of American Indian Higher Education* 28.3 (Spring 2017).  
<http://tribalcollegejournal.org/nanaboozhoo-wiindigo-ojibwe-history-colonization-present/>
- Grace Dillon, “Windigo,” [http://web.pdx.edu/~dillong/Windigo%20\(Dillon\).pdf](http://web.pdx.edu/~dillong/Windigo%20(Dillon).pdf) (provides cultural, historical, literary, and bibliographic contexts in indigenous traditions and popular culture).
- Basil Johnston, excerpts from *The Manitous, Ojibway Tales*, and *Ojibway Heritage*.
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, [“Historical Overview.”](#)

- [“Waasa Inaabidaa--We Look In All Directions,”](#) a comprehensive historical and dynamic contemporary portrayal of the Anishinaabe-Ojibwe (Chippewa) nation. Includes video episodes, maps, and resources for the classroom.

## Discussion

Twins in tribal cultures are often productive and destructive, with one often doing great things for people and one doing awful things. One digs rivers the flow in both directions, but then the other comes along and makes it only flow downstream. What is the significance of Linda Wishkob being twins with Linden Lark? How is one treated in comparison with the other? How does one act in comparison with the other?

In the wiindiigo story, it tells of a great hunger, of starving times, or of some other event that makes a human crave human flesh and death. In this case, Lark is the wiindiigo, and only his relatives are supposed to kill him, so Linda at least helps Joe kill him. Consider the following two passages:

"For while the wetiko is a legendary terror and demon of the woods with many forms, it is also an affliction well known to Indigenous peoples: a sickness often born of hunger, cold, and the long darkness which can bring not only madness - but a hunger for human flesh..." - *Val Napoleon, et. al. in Mikomosis and the Wetiko*<sup>[1]</sup>

"Wiindigo had diffused their political power since the old days, their system of replication had become more complex and they'd hired public relations experts...they were brilliant instead of just scary, and they found a way to convince people to buy disconnection." - *Leanne Simpson in Islands of Decolonial Love*<sup>[2]</sup>

What do these passages suggest about Lark's character and role within the story told in *The Round House*?

## Activity

[This I Believe](#) is a national conversation around philosophy and the beliefs that guide us in our lives. The project's subject index includes many themes relevant to *The Round House*, including "responsibility," "place," and "injustice". Listen to stories by Native American storytellers in the personal essays in "This I Believe":

- [Zac Broken Rope's](#) memory of growing up in a family of German and Native American ancestry
- Luis' story "[Native Pride](#)" on his ancestral pride (Sioux) and what his father has passed down to him
- Martha's story of "[Cherokee Pride](#)" and the strange twist of history that now "looking Indian" is desired and not shunned.
- [The days of our elders](#) by John-Paul Fairbanks

Seek out stories of your own. Invite your family or elders in your community (a neighbor, a professor, a friend) to share a story that is important to their identity. Select the one of the stories to document in writing, film, visual art, or another format. Or write your own This I Believe essay based on the interviews you conduct.

Alternately, consider the events of the story in *The Round House* small or large. Select one event in the narrative that presents a moral, ethical, legal, or personal dilemma. Write a “This I Believe” style essay responding to it from your own perspective. You might, for example, argue about the following questions:

- Was it right for Linda to donate a kidney to Linden? Do “bad” people deserve our compassion and charity? Did Linden deserve it? Did Linda have an obligation? On family (and duty), on the spiritual, on justice, and affirmation of self.
- How did Cappy try to make things right by trading shoes with Joe? What are the sacrifices friends make for each other? How is pain shared? What is the expression and power of love? What are differences between wanting and having?
- Should Geraldine have lied and made up a place for the crime? Is lying in some circumstances the right thing to do? Is it important to maintain your personal values and morals even in the light of a flawed system? Is it easier just to do nothing at all?

### **Foodways**

Food features prominently and serves a number of functions beyond mere sustenance throughout the book: Grandma Thunder’s Indian tacos, Clemence’s pies, Linda’s banana bread, hamburger soup at Mighty Al’s, Whitey’s sandwiches, Basil’s purposely disastrous stew which succeeds in cheering them up and gets Geraldine to start cooking again.

Food is described and seen as comfort, as healing, as celebration, as tradition, as ritual, as connection, as metaphor, as well as love for those who are dear to us.

### **Discussion**

What foods are associated with the above categories (comfort, healing...) in the book? Are there particular patterns in the presentation and sharing of these foods for these particular purposes? What makes a celebratory food different than a healing food, for example? In your own personal experience, what foods do you associate with each category? Are any of these associations that Joe also shares?

## Activity

Identify a food that is significant in your life. When did you first eat it? Who made/makes it for you? Who taught you to make it? For whom do you make it? When do you eat it? Is it connected to a particularly holiday, celebration, memory, or experience? Do you still eat it now? Is the same as you remember? Do you share it with others? Do others associate this food in the same way as you, or it is something more personal to your life? Write a portrait of this food and its meaning for you.

Create an anthology of recipes and stories that make evident the connection between food and what food means to you beyond sustenance alone. You might use recipes and stories from your own family, draw them from *The Round House*, or interview others to collect their stories.

## Material Culture

Material culture connects us to our culture, family, history, and tradition. A significant image of material culture that recurs throughout the book is that of quilts and blankets. Some examples: Joe pulls down a plaid quilt over Geraldine in the car on way to hospital after her assault (p. 7); Bazil is covered in a quilt in the car after his heart attack (p. 248); Joe realizes what he must do while in car under his own soft quilt (p. 249). There are multiple mentions of blankets (pp. 88, 80-81, 95, 182-183, 202, 316), and Joe awakes on the couch under an afghan (p. 263). Mooshum's story of his father features a blanket when "casting off Michif ways" (p. 202). (For a discussion of this passage see: [http://www.jamiechavez.com/blog/2013/04/maybe-you-knew-this-metis-michif-and-a-diaspora/.](http://www.jamiechavez.com/blog/2013/04/maybe-you-knew-this-metis-michif-and-a-diaspora/)) These images of the quilt and blanket are often about comfort, understanding, regeneration, and solidarity in relationships.

Design a blanket or quilt that represents the intricate nature of these relationships and their meaning.

## Activity

The objects of material culture we hold onto contain our stories, connect us to people and memories, communicate our identity, and reflect our values. Throughout the book, Erdrich points to significant objects in her characters' lives that are significant to their relationships with other people.

As you read the book, track what objects Joe keeps to represent the people important to him or ways in which they inspire him to be a better man. For example, one of Joe's treasured possessions is a round black stone (a "sacred Thunderbird egg") his friend Cappy gives him after Geraldine's attack (p. 21). Joe carries it with him in his pocket (p. 280) and searches for the stone after the accident (p. 317). Joe keeps the fountain pen his lawyer father used to sign cases (p. 52). He keeps Sonja's tassel (p. 223). What do these objects mean to Joe? Did they mean the same to the person who gave them to him? (How) do the objects' meanings change with time? Conversely, you could consider what objects he casts away, discarding the physical memento.

## Activity

Three object activity (adapted from Dr. Paul Bolin, professor of art education at the University of Texas at Austin). Bring to class and be prepared to share three objects that respond to the following statements:

- An object that you carry with you always.
- An object you received as a gift.
- An object you own that once belonged to someone else.
- An object that represents your aspirations.
- An object that is part of your professional identity.
- An object you should throw away but don't.
- An object that provides you comfort.
- An object that ties to your heritage or culture.
- An object that reminds you of something important.
- An object you coveted.
- An object that is very old.
- An object you purchased new.
- An object you won.

Invite a volunteer to share the story of one of their three objects. Then invite whomever has an object story connected to the first one to share their story, so that the narrative continues naturally. Continue the telling of stories until all the objects have been presented. This activity is an excellent way for students to reflect upon what makes material culture meaningful, what culturally represents themselves and others, and connects them to each other through story, building a sense of community in the classroom.

## Representation in Art & Popular Culture

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Popular culture, media, and artistic portrayals of Native American life are highly varied. Indigenous artists represent themselves and their communities in unique ways. Yet representations of Native communities have often been stereotypical and focused on historical rather than contemporary people. What are ways in which Native bodies, cultural and ceremonial practices, language and participation in community cultural life are portrayed in film, gallery exhibits, theatre, comic books, dance or other visual or performance based genres? How do these representations imagine what it means to be Native American today? What makes for a complex and non-stereotypical representation?

### Significant Resources on Representations of Native Women in Literature and Popular Culture

- E. Pauline Johnson. "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction." *Toronto Sunday Globe*. May 22, 1892.

- Paula Gunn Allen. "Answering the Deer: Genocide and Continuance in the Poetry of American Indian Women." *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. 2nd ed. Beacon Press, 1992. 155-65.
- M. Elise Marubbio, *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film*, U of Kentucky P, 2006.
- Chris Finley, "'Decolonizing the Queer Native Body (and Recovering the Native Bull Dyke): 'Bringing Sexy Back' and Out of Native Studies Closet,'" from *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, eds. Qwo-li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, Scott Lauria Morgensen, University of Arizona P, 2011, pp. 31-42.
- Images of women by Native artists in the collection of the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum of Contemporary Arts:  
<http://econtent.unm.edu/cdm/search/collection/mcna/searchterm/women/order/creato>

## Literary and Cultural Production and Representation

### Films

- Christine Welsh, *Finding Dawn*, 2006. (documentary)
- Elle-Maija Tailfeathers, *A Red Girl's Reasoning*. 2012. (short film, revenge fantasy)
- Steven Lewis Simpson, [Neither Wolf nor Dog](#). 2017. (nonfiction film)
- Jeff Barnaby, *Rhymes for Young Ghouls*. 2013. (narrative, postapocalyptic haunting)
- Jaime Black, REDress/REdress Project. (documentary, traveling art installation)
- Marie Clements, *Un-Natural and Accidental Women and Others* (film version of the play, directed by Clements, see below)
- Danis Goulet's (Cree/Metis) *Wakening* (short film, Cree culture heroes Weesagechak and Wetigo, postapocalypse): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbmi2ff3MBk&t=449s>

### Literature and Drama

- Monique Mojica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*. 1998. (drama; hemispheric, transhistorical representations)
- Mary Kathryn Nagle, *Sliver of a Full Moon*. 2013. (drama; survivor stories)
- Ruth Muskrat Bronson, "The Serpent." 1922. (short story; revenge/retribution narrative)
- Elizabeth Lapensee, *Deer Woman*. 2015. (short comic; culture hero narrative; survival and self-defense)
- Diane Glancy, *The Woman Who Was a Red Deer Dressed for the Deer Dance* (short play about identity-making, generational (re)connection) in *Seventh Generation*, 1999
- Marie Clements, *Un-Natural and Accidental Women and Others* (play about unprosecuted murders of Native women in Vancouver BC / women-healing-women ensemble)
- Marie Clements, *The Girl Who Swam Forever* (intersections of place, gender, identity)
- Spiderwoman Theatre, *Material Witness* (collaborative piece focused on violence against indigenous women) <http://spiderwomantheater.org/>
- Spiderwoman Theatre, *PowerPipes* (urban indigenous women / resistance to violence & erasure) in *Seventh Generation*, 1999.
- Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl, *The Story of Susanna*, (women in recovery / Pacific Islander) in *Seventh Generation*, 1999



### New Media

- 1491s, *To the Indigenous Woman* (Long Format Poem)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4Up0drnXX4>
- White Buffalo Calf Women's Society, "It Ends Where It Begins," PSA video on domestic violence.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-luJWp2\\_Sl&app=desktop](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-luJWp2_Sl&app=desktop)
- Compare this work to Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña's "[The Couple in the Cage](#)," 1992-1993. For more on this piece see [Artists in Conversation: Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña](#) by Anna Johnson.

### Visual Art and Architecture

- Rebecca Belmore, *Fringe*. 2008.
- Jaime Black, REDress/REdress Project. Ongoing.
- Elizabeth LaPensée, <http://www.elizabethlapensee.com/>
- Rebecca Belmore, <http://www.rebeccabelmore.com/home.html>
- Photography of Dugan Aguilar, <http://lenscratch.com/2015/10/dugan-aguilar-she-sang-me-a-goodluck-song/>
- 

### Critiques

- Pocahontas [https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/03/the-enduring-legacy-of-the-pocahontas-myth/520260/?utm\\_source=atltw](https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/03/the-enduring-legacy-of-the-pocahontas-myth/520260/?utm_source=atltw)
- Hollywood Indians: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jay-tavare/native-american-actors\\_b\\_846930.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jay-tavare/native-american-actors_b_846930.html)
- Indians of the Midwest (a project of the Newberry Library, Chicago) includes a section [Indian imagery](#) including [stereotypes](#), Native people [challenging these stereotypes](#) (of [sports imagery](#) and through [tribal museums](#)), and "[why non-Indian Americans think about Indians the way they do, and what are the consequences.](#)"

## Discussion

James Luna (La Jolla Band of Mission (Luiseño) Indians) is a performance artist who created his "[Take a Picture with a Real Indian](#)" performance in front of Washington, D.C.'s Union Station.



Luna notes, "standing at a podium wearing an outfit, I announce: 'Take a picture with a real Indian. Take a picture here, in Washington, D.C. on this beautiful Monday morning, on this holiday called Columbus Day. America loves to say 'her Indians.' America loves to see us dance for them. America likes our arts and crafts. America likes to name cars and trucks after our tribes. Take a picture with a real Indian. Take a picture here today, on this sunny day here in Washington, D.C.'" And then I just stand there. Eventually, one person will pose with me. After that they just start lining up. I'll do that for a while until I get mad enough or humiliated enough.'" <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/q-and-a-james-luna-74252076/>

- What statement is the artist making?
- How is the public implicated in the performance? What do participants' actions say? Bare their raw beliefs, cultural superiority, racism,
- What does the general public know about Native Americans, authenticity, a "real Indian"? Where do they derive these mental images and interpretations of those images?

## Activity

Popular Culture: *Star Trek – Next Generation*

When you read *The Round House*, did you pay attention to the chapter titles? Look at them again. Each chapter title mirrors episode titles of the television series, [Star Trek: The Next Generation, Seasons 1 and 2](#). Learn more about how you might choose to interpret these chapter/episode title pairings by looking at

the [analysis of one blogger here](#). Now, host a viewing party to watch the four Star Trek: TNG episodes titled “Hide and Q” (Season 1, Episode 10), “The Big Good-bye” (Season 1, Episode 12), “Skin of Evil” (Season 1, Episode 23), and “The Child”( Season 2, Episode 1). After viewing these episodes, post your own analysis and interpretation the last four chapter titles and plot lines in a manner similar to that of the blogger.

**Please also note that the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art has developed an [excellent Visitor’s Guide](#) to their Common Reading exhibit, *Conversations in the Round House: Roots, Roads, and Remembrances*, affiliated with *The Round House*. The guide includes biographies of and quotes from the artists featured in the exhibit along with guided and exploratory activities associated with artworks in the exhibit. We highly recommend taking students and discussion groups to the museum to engage further with the book through the artwork.**

## Appendix A: Quotation/Narrative Event Index Reference Guide for *The Round House*

This quotation index reference is not meant to be exhaustive but acts as a starting point for readers seeking to guide discussions on select themes found in the book.

### Coming of Age

- From the moment Joe and his father spring into action to tend to Geraldine after her rape, Joe's relationship with his parents changes. Joe, who had "almost never challenged [his] father in word or deed" (p. 7), now asserts himself in his relationship with his parents. And tormented by questions and the pursuit of justice, Joe, now with secrets and plans of his own, for first time is "leading a life apart from [his] parents" (p. 80).
- "Kids don't know their parents' history," Linda Lark tells Joe (p. 299). Joe had not known that his father was known for being a good shot in his youth. Joe has the romantic notion that his father argues big legal cases, but comes to the shocking realization that "My father was punishing hot dog thieves and examining washers—not even washing machines—just washers worth 15 cents apiece" (p. 48).
- Father's heart attack "I knew what happened when you let a parent get too far away" (p. 244)
- "I love you" (p. 71), parent/child relationship and Joe's anger. Joe "a boy doted on by women" (p. 25)

### Cultural Crossings

- Golf course, rich white vs. reservation (p. 27)
- Refusing to shake hand on the reservation, something you'd never do (p. 98)
- Double-goer (p. 119)
- "Because you're white" Linda's Indian sister blames her for breaking mother's vase (p. 118)
- "White people are watching us" (p. 141)
- Casting off Michif ways: blanket, language (pure, not mixed with French), powwow outfit, Catholicism—first to go (p. 202)
- Code switching. Dropping the ds (p. 206)
- Randall's powwow outfit, the significance of what it's made of and when and how it is used (p. 269).

### Foodways

- Seen as cure in the wiindigoo story, p. 214
- For Joe and his parents, the dinnertime routine was the family's ritual. Basil would return home from work, put his arms around Geraldine as she was preparing dinner, call Joe in to set the table. This, in many ways unremarkable, daily routine of sharing food together formed a regular rhythm of their lives, bringing their family together. "We were not churchgoers. This was our ritual" (p. 43); Eating as a family again (forced) by Geraldine's bedside, p. 151
- Whitey feeding Joe, p. 289
- Linda feeding Joe, who is ravenous like after an illness, p. 298.

- Mooshum's party, p. 208
- Powwow, pp. 273 & 277.
- Joe and Bazil prepare "rough sandwiches" for themselves but a neater, nicely-presented one to carry upstairs to Geraldine, p. 44
- The extended always ready to feed the boys

### **Jurisdiction**

- Which police? (p. 12)
- evidence "relevant" to the police or they just gave up (p. 64)
- *Shows who and what matters*
- Golf course land debate between town and tribal council
- Tribe doesn't have jurisdiction over white man (p. 196)

### **Justice & Accountability**

- Hanging tree; none went on trial (p. 140); Linden's great uncle part of lynching party (p. 211)
- "drown her together so no one had to take the blame," legend of Akii (p. 181)
- "wiindigoo justice must be pursued with great care" (p. 187)
- Traditional Anishinaabe justice, cowboy justice of Western, Gabir, suing BIA (p. 196)
- tribal justice—Whitey, Joe, Randall, Uncle Edward beat up Lark (p. 247)
- Not vengeance, justice (p. 260)
- Built the round house "to keep their people together ask for mercy from the Creator, since justice was so sketchily applied on earth." (p. 315)
- Many kinds of justice, traditional precedent (using Native American tradition—wiindigoo)—as a legal argument (p. 306)
- *reparations, B.C. public ceremonies acknowledging whose land*

### **Land/Place**

- "Attacked at the foundation" (house, treelets) (p. 1) and a metaphor for the family's, their people's trauma
- Cemetery and spirits, "filled with complications" (pp. 99-100)
- SD Governor Yeltow stores nuclear waste on Native lands (p. 166).
- Whose land? Church access to beach gated off, Angus' aunt's rosary, "Church given land in time of our desperation" (p. 188)
- "Reservation year," government promises broken, animals gone (pp. 179-180); fencing off hunting grounds, starvation (p. 184)
- The fish, all the animals miss the buffalo (p. 182), whole ecosystem disturbed

- “Discovered” (p. 228)

### **Legal cases**

- Handbook of Indian law, treaties as with foreign nations (p. 2)
- Lark case (pp. 49-50), Lark saga and court case for guardianship of Linda (pp. 51-52)
- Couldn’t practice relation prior to 1978 (pp. 59-60)
- Round house case death of drunk (pp. 54-55)
- Ex Parte Crow Dog, Major Crimes Act of 1885, and especially Public Law 280 (p. 142)
- Indian Child Welfare Act (p. 157)
- “He said we have no standing under the law for good reason and yet have continued to diminish the white man and to take his honor.” (p. 161)
- Indian law illustrated in casserole (pp. 227-230)

### **Medicine, Native vs. Western**

- Beliefs about body and mind
- Sweat lodge & hot pepper “medicine” (pp. 36-40)
- Linda’s infection of the spirit and healing (pp. 126-127)
- The monster (mother) inside Linda made her ill in hospital “she could not destroy me” (p. 300)

### **Problematic Language**

- “You Indians” insult in hospital waiting room and how Joe’s mother raised him not to “look down quiet with [his] anger and say nothing” (p. 8)
- The Larks are the sort of people who trot out their relationships with “good Indians,” whom they secretly despise and openly patronize, in order to prove their general love for Indians, whom they are engaged in cheating.” (p. 50)
- SD Governor Yeltow collects beadwork to honor the noble savage but stores nuclear waste on Native lands (p. 166), bigoted treatment of Indians & PR stunts (p. 157)
- Linden to Joe: “Even an Indian boy like you can have a good family and get that sort of start, I guess. And maybe it will let you draw even with a white kid your own age, you know? Who doesn’t have a loving family.” (p. 171)
- Off reservation grocery store, store clerks watched with suspicion, took money with contempt (p. 242)

### **Native spirituality**

- Mooshum: “someone throwing their spirit at you” (p. 133)

- Doodem/doodemag/ajijaak – luck, shorebirds (p. 133), the turtle and the crane (pp. 147-148); what clan (*doodem*) means about your place in the world and your connection to other beings (pp. 153-154)
- Mooshum’s story (p. 179) – Akiikwe (Earth Woman) and Mirage, wiindigoo, casting spirits, possessed
- The ghost (pp. 80-81) and father’s response, rational but things he never told me “attracted to disturbances” (pp. 81-82). cf. Randall’s vision.
- The fish, all the animals miss the buffalo (p. 182), whole ecosystem disturbed
- Double spirit, Linda (p. 296)
- Monster inside (p. 300)
- Christian spirituality: Good comes from evil—Father Travis’ talk with Joe (p. 254)

## Representations of Women and Men

Representations of women in *The Round House*. (And how they’re seen by men.)

- “Women don’t realize...our pulse is set to theirs. Her absence stopped time.” (p. 3) “My mother hadn’t ever realized that cranes are very predictable and cease their hunting at a certain hour and return to their roosts.” (p. 148)
- Geraldine’s account of the attack (pp. 158-159); says attacker to Mayla: “you should be crated up and thrown in the lake for what you did to my emotions”....but couldn’t drown her with the car (“that’s love,” p. 161)
- Women in Star Trek (p. 20)
- “Women” – Sonja, Zelia (pp. 224-225)
- Physical/sexual/verbal/emotional abuse
- Beauty/ugliness
  - Verbal abuse, beauty-ugly (p. 125)
  - “Linda was magnetically ugly” (p. 110), Linda says Linden crushed her in womb so she’d be spared in life, perfect by deforming (p. 123)
  - Beautiful/ugly (even the clock is referred to as ugly)

Representations of men in *The Round House*. (And how they’re seen by women.)

- Entitlement, how men talk about women, power disparities and taking advantage, Linden and young intern (pp. 124-125)
- The male characters in Star Trek (p. 20)
- “lots of men cry after they do something nasty to a woman” (p. 222)
- in advertising, mascots: Hamm’s beer Indian (p. 66)

## Reservations

- Golf course, rich white vs. reservation (p. 27)
- Reservations exist because (p. 52)

- White settlers and reservations; cemetery and spirits, “filled with complications” (pp. 99-100), “white men appeared and drove them into the earth” (p. 100)
- “Reservation year,” government promises broken, animals gone (pp. 179-180); fencing off hunting grounds, starvation (p. 184)
- Influenza pandemic struck reservation the hardest (p. 155)
- The fish, all the animals miss the buffalo (p. 182), whole ecosystem disturbed
- Died for lack of what was promised while officials gained wealth on stolen rations; vs. now, plenty, fat Indians (p. 202)
- Grocery store (p. 242) on reservation “like a regular store”

### **Sound and Silence**

Throughout the book there are recurring images suggesting noise and silence.

- The stopped clock (pp. 23-24).
- A motionless shorebird (p. 134).
- Soren, the FBI special agent, “perfectly still and watchful” with “quiet” hands (p. 142).
- Whitey and Sonja’s car and house (in good times), “a pod of noise” (p. 166).
- Then arguments and ensuing silence (pp. 171, 174).
- An “endless lake of silence” remembered by Father Travis during JFK’s assassination (p. 152).
- The “loud silence” after shooting Lark, when “all sound, motion, had stalled in the sullen air” (pp. 282-283).
- At other times there are sensation of loud noise.
- Akii screamed, then quiet (p. 181).
- Mother shrieks (p. 226).
- Lark’s high squeal (p. 282).
- A need for noise, a pod of noise (Whitey & Sonja’s car/house, p. 166)
- Whitey & Sonja’s argument (p. 169).
- The ensuing silence between Whitey & Sonja (p. 171, 174).
- Whitey’s violence against Sonja (p. 175).
- Frozen. Motionless. Sensations of numbness. Linda’s numbness after Grace Lark calls (p. 121). Geraldine and the attack (pp. 158-159), frozen, motionless, silence.
- Joe’s numbness after punching Whitey (p. 175).

### **The Church & Assimilation**

- Zelia—from Helena to convert the Indians, none lived in tipis, had skin lighter than her own (p. 192)
- How church got land (p. 188)



- Temptation vs. instinct (pp. 194-195). “I sat rooted, struck into an odd panic by his words”
- Catholicism and the reservation (p. 249-250)

### Who is an Indian? (pp. 29-30)

- *cf. other racial laws – Black, Jewish, etc.*
- Geraldine’s job, tribal enrollment applications, names, family trees, complicated, “shake the branches of other trees,” ...incest, rape, nuns, white farmers... (p. 149)
- Mexican (you’re Indian, too)—to Zelia (p. 192)
- Batoche siege 1885 & Louis Riel (p. 201), full-bloods, mixed-/half-breeds
- Who enquires about tribal applications (p. 212)

### Connection to clan, land, language, and tradition

- The Round House description and history (p. 59-60)
- What clan means about your place in the world and your connection to other beings (pp. 153-154)
- Clan and laws, p. 214

### Adoption

- Adopting in, adopting out (Linda’s story)
- Violence enacted upon the family through separation, violation (Linda being removed from her adopted family, p. 116)
- Yeltow training to adopt Indian child (pp. 156-157)

### Survivance

- Father Travis’ accounts of surviving US Embassy bombing in Beirut in 1983 and being a witness to JFK’s assassination.
- Linda donating kidney to Linden
- Geraldine’s great-aunt surviving influenza pandemic and making way back to her siblings with aid of the turtle.
- Survivors of the reservation years (p. 185)
- Nanapush survives storm inside buffalo (p. 186), bring back meat to family and relatives.
- Men were ashamed they had tried to kill Akii. Many were saved. (p. 187)
- When Linden does not show up on the first day of Joe’s stake out at the golf course, Joe is overwhelmed with relief, euphoric, full of life, “amazed at the detail and life” in nature around him (p. 281).
- “The sentence was to endure” (p. 317)

## Oral tradition

- The importance of the oral tradition in Native cultures and the passing down of stories, knowledge, and ways of doing things.
- How tradition and stories are passed down
- Passing down knowledge of the sweat lodge ceremony from Mooshum to Doe to Randall (p. 37)
- Uncle Shamengwa against recording; music stays alive by learning from previous generation. If ancient harpist is drowned he takes his music to the grave without a trace. (p. 156)

## Folklore

Mooshum's tale (p. 179+) – Akiikwe (Earth Woman) and Mirage, fish felt sorry for her & gives Akii the hunting song for the buffalo (p. 181).

## Life stories

- Cappy asking Father Travis because he wants to find out about the other person, to hear his story, “a silent willingness to listen” (p. 107)
- Bazil telling Father Travis' story of witnessing JFK's assassination (pp. 152-153) and what might not have happened if... “...some nights he lay awake wondering how many unknown and similarly inconsequential accidents and bits of happenstance at this moment were occurring or failing to occur in order to ensure he took his next breath, and the next.” (p. 152).
- Joe wanting to know Linda's story (p. 114)
- Father Travis tells Cappy to ask girls about themselves (p. 275)

## Model Relationships

- Until Geraldine's rape, the incident that destabilizes Joe's family's secure foundation, Joe's was “the perfect family...you would never run away from” (p. 96).
- They were relatively well off by the reservation standards. Joe's father, Bazil, had always loved Geraldine, and they had never spent a night apart, nor “sought protection from each other's illnesses” (p. 78).
- Joe's Uncle Whitey and Aunt Sonja's relationship is good when it's good, but Whitey drinks and is physically and verbally abusive towards Sonja (pp. 165-178).
- In the book we also get a glimpse into the home life of Joe's Aunt Clemence and Uncle Edward, a perspective on relationships from Father Travis, and experience the different experiences of the families of Joe's friends, Cappy, Zach, and Angus.