



## TRACES OF THE ANIMAL PAST: METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN ANIMAL HISTORY

Edited by Jennifer Bonnell and Sean Kheraj

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# Hearing History through Hoofbeats: Exploring Equine Volition and Voice in the Archive<sup>1</sup>

*Lindsay Stallones Marshall*

When asked about the relationship between the Lakota people and horses, Lakota language teacher Albert White Hat replied, “we don’t have any word for ‘animal’ in our language. Animal as I understand means a second-class citizen that doesn’t have a mind. . . . We call them ‘oyate’—nations.”<sup>2</sup> Oyate is the same word used to describe human groups within the Oceti Sakowin, such as the Oglala Lakota Oyate. This is not the language of metaphor or poetry. Lakota teaching does not encourage adherents to think of non-human animals as if they are nations; it teaches that they are nations. In stark contrast to the modern Euro-American sharp division between humans and non-human animals, Lakota teaching instead presents more-than-human animals in a relationship of mutual dependency beyond mere material need with humans. Most historical writing about Lakota Nation, however, presents horses the way most Euro-American writing does, as expendable resources without volition of their own.

Animal history too often fails to consider the Indigenous point of view of human-animal relations. In large part, this is because in animal

history scholars must wrestle with a foundational question: Is it possible for humans to see the past through the eyes of another species? Reporting the past from the points of view of different humans is fraught enough with potential to misunderstand, misinterpret, and obscure voices from the past without considering the interpretive barriers that an inter-species study presents. If we were to write without considering this question, animal history would be nothing more than a form of speculative fiction rooted more in the historian's imagination than in historical animals' experiences.

However, there is equal danger in assuming that humans cannot investigate animal points of view. This risks what Robin Wall Kimmerer calls another form of anthropomorphism by treating animals as alien beings who can only be understood as a collection of stimuli and responses driven by instinct for physical survival.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the assumption that humans are so fundamentally different than non-human animals that interpreting any thought or emotion from them is mere human projection is itself deeply anthropocentric. More importantly, such a view denies the validity of ways of knowing beyond the modern Euro-American epistemological framework. To say that Albert White Hat's teachings about Horse Nation are simply metaphorical, or to dismiss Indigenous knowledge as unscientific and therefore non-academic, is not simply too narrow a methodology for animal history; it is also an approach deeply rooted in intellectual traditions of white supremacy.

As Sandra Swart notes in her chapter in this volume, archives are constructed by humans and reflect a human story that includes the biases, weaknesses, and prejudices of the humans who constructed them. Conventional historical methods reproduce white supremacist frameworks for studying animal history because white supremacist epistemologies that exclude Indigenous knowledge permeate the archive. Therefore, scholars cannot simply apply conventional historical methods to the study of animal history in the archive, especially as recent developments in ethology help Euro-American science catch up with Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge does not, of course, need ethologists to confirm its findings; it is, however, useful for addressing skepticism from settler scholars to note the fact that Euro-American knowledge systems that have long dismissed Indigenous knowledge seem to be finding their way to

similar conclusions. Most archival sources for animal history were constructed by people who dismissed Indigenous knowledge. In order to ask new questions about old sources, animal historians need a new lens of analysis. Given their near-constant presence in North American history, and therefore their ubiquity in the archive, horses provide an excellent model for developing and testing this lens. By using a multi-disciplinary approach that draws from environmental history, animal behaviour science, Indigenous knowledge, and horsemanship traditions from multiple cultures' histories, historians can use archival documents to recover how horses exerted their volition on historical events.<sup>4</sup>

Using a horse-centred lens raises new questions about settled (and settler) narratives. To push against analytical frameworks that have historically ignored Indigenous knowledge, I chose to prioritize Indigenous knowledge in the construction of a horse-centred lens of analysis, focusing specifically on teachings from two Indigenous nations known especially for their horsemanship: Comanche Nation and the Oceti Sakowin.<sup>5</sup> Centring the horse as a historical actor challenges settler epistemologies that sharply divide human and animal experiences, and expands historical methodologies that prioritize Euro-American archives and interpretations. To demonstrate this horse-centred analysis, I focus on two examples of culturally specific interactions between horses and people in the nineteenth-century US West: a Comanche wild horse capture in the 1840s and the Battle of the Greasy Grass in 1876.

### *Constructing a Horse-Centred Lens of Inquiry*

Scholarship that effectively analyzes the complex narratives surrounding horses and the military, political, social, and economic human systems they inhabited already exists. Both the New Indian History and the New Western History turns inspired scholars of the US West to consider the environmental histories of older narratives. Scholars like Dan Flores, James Sherow, Andrew Isenberg, and Pekka Hämäläinen incorporated horses and their social and ecological impact in writing Indigenous histories. My suggestion is not to discard their body of work, but rather to move beyond the human-centred framework that their work employs, a framework that offers rich analysis of equestrian histories in the US West but that employs Euro-American epistemologies, which can obscure or misrepresent

historical horse-human interaction.<sup>6</sup> What is lacking in human-centred analysis is a lens to examine horses' experiences beyond strict Eurocentric categories of experience, to capture a between-the-ears shot of the horse in the archive, especially when the humans recording them were looking elsewhere. This horse-centred analysis is not meant to be an interpretation on its own, but rather a corrective lens for probing settled narratives. When we neglect to take the central role of the horse seriously, historians leave valuable questions unexamined and entire methodologies untapped.

Understanding the role of historical animals through archival documents is an act of recovery that requires scholars to interrogate the points of view of the humans who constructed those documents and those who preserved them. Scholars must contextualize the animal subject in time and space as completely as possible before we can pursue questions about the role of these subjects in historical events. This requires constant evaluation of the processes and ideologies that shaped how humans created and catalogued archival animals. When these human sources assumed horses were incapable of exercising volition, for instance, their archival reproductions of those horses reflected that assumption. The archives therefore assume those logics, take them up, and reproduce them. It is the job of animal historians to question that foundation, and we must challenge conventional historical methodologies to do so.

In order to design a horse-centred lens of analysis, I examined principles from Indigenous knowledge, the European classical equitation tradition, "natural horsemanship," recent developments in animal behaviour science, and my own experiences as an equestrian.<sup>7</sup> Just like human-historical action, horse-historical action is deeply rooted in the specificity of time and place. Analyzing historical sources with horses as the subject requires careful attention to those variations in specificity, and it would be unwise to assume that horses interact with humans in the same way regardless of time and place. However, comparing records across multiple human cultures and times, I have identified two guiding principles that tend to influence horses' interactions with humans: horses are fundamentally relational and they are expert communicators.

As herd animals, horses are fundamentally relational beings; every interaction they have centres on their relation to the other members of the herd. They have long offered that bond to humans. Comanche and Oceti

Sakowin teachings already focus on the relational interaction of all beings, enabling members of those nations to form close relationships with their horses. Sitting Bull descendant Moses Brings Plenty describes his Nokota gelding, a descendant of Sitting Bull's herd, as a brother. Their shared ancestral bond forms a unique, profound relationship.<sup>8</sup> Peter Lengkeek, organizer of the Dakota 38+2 Memorial Ride to address historical trauma experienced by members of Dakota Nation caused by the mass execution of Dakota men after the 1862 Minnesota War, tells the story of when Dakota horses, poised for slaughter by the US military, broke free and rather than escaping ran to their human companions, each horse carrying their own rider to safety before collapsing of exhaustion themselves.<sup>9</sup> The closeness of that relationship and the horsemanship feats it produced often struck Euro-American observers as mystical. But if Euro-Americans thought mysticism was the only explanation for Plains peoples' prowess as equestrians, it was because they had forgotten their own horsemanship traditions.

European and American horse trainers have written extensively about the centrality of relationship. Some of the earliest surviving writing on the subject comes from Xenophon's *The Art of Horsemanship* (fourth-century BCE). Describing the best way to train a horse, Xenophon writes, "See to it that the colt be kind, used to the hand, and fond of men when he is put out to the horse-breaker. . . . [C]olts must not only love men, but even long for them."<sup>10</sup> That ethos is foundational to the European classical tradition, repeated across the centuries in writings by masters like Guérinière, Pluvinel, and Podhajsky. These relationship-focused practices have become especially popular in recent decades, reintroduced in the teachings of Ray Hunt, Bill and Tom Dorrance, and Buck Brannaman. As ethology continues to uncover the mechanics of the horse-human bond, Euro-American science and experience reinforce the long-held belief that horses offer relationship to human companions.<sup>11</sup>

The second guiding principle for analyzing historical horse-human interaction is communication. Humans and horses forge such strong relational bonds in part because horses seek relationship and humans respond, but it is our ability to communicate that allows the relationship to flourish. That communication is intensely physical, especially in the case of horseback riding. Lynne Ferguson, who runs an equine-assisted

therapy program rooted in Comanche horsemanship, urges her students to work with minimal tack, removing as many barriers between horse and human body as possible. Doing so, she says, horse and human can learn to communicate so closely that a horse will respond to changes in the rider's breathing patterns.<sup>12</sup> Xenophon would agree, having written that a rider could temper a high-mettled horse by controlling his own body when in contact with the horse.<sup>13</sup> Inter-species communication between humans and horses relies on what equestrians often call "feel," either direct or indirect contact between horse and human in which both beings respond to each other's energy through movement. Explaining feel, Bill Dorrance writes that a horse "will respond to a person's indirect feel, which means that he will either react to or ignore a person's presence—and how a horse responds depends entirely on the person."<sup>14</sup> As Sandra Swart reported from her experience riding in Mongolia, establishing feel with one horse does not necessarily transfer to another. Humans and horses, as individuals, negotiate this communication together through direct and indirect contact. Feel is a profoundly physical and emotional communicative connection made possible by the evolutionary development of the modern horse and meticulous study and practice on the part of the human.

In recent decades, ethological studies have deepened their exploration of the extent of horses' role in engaging in this communication. By examining horses' sensory laterality and signalling to humans in controlled experiments, animal behaviourists and sociologists have analyzed horses' volition in engagement with humans. A 2010 study of equine visual laterality found that horses prioritize human activity above other stimuli, and a 2018 study indicated that the sensory laterality horses displayed suggests their responsiveness to human activity not as stress, but as attention and a desire to respond quickly.<sup>15</sup> Beyond simply waiting for commands, other researchers found that horses prompt humans for assistance and even make judgements about whether a human is able to assist with a problem.<sup>16</sup> In the past few years, studies have highlighted horses' abilities to read and exhibit complex facial expressions, and even to request to be blanketed on a cold day.<sup>17</sup> These studies demonstrate what people who work with horses have long reported: horses are not merely expert communicators; they appear to have a special aptitude for communicating with humans and a desire to do so.

Both Comanche and Oceti Sakowin horse teaching and historical practice emphasize the importance of being in good relation with individual horses and entering their communicative world in order to partner with them. Horsemanship traditions from Europe and North America reflect the same principles, dating as far back as the fourth century BCE, and ethological advances have increased scholarly focus on the horse's ability to intentionally participate in these relationships. Using these principles as analytical guides, centring horses in archival documents raises new questions about horse volition in historical events.

### *Centring Horses in Comanche Wild Horse Capture*

Some of the most foundational documentation about the history of the US West in the nineteenth century comes from Europeans and Euro-Americans, like Balduin Möllhausen and George Catlin. More recent scholarship on horses in the US West moves beyond the romanticized claims of these travel writers, but it does not yet question their fundamental characterization of the horse-human interactions they observed. That has left recent environmental histories of equestrian cultures in the US West grounded not in Indigenous histories, but rather Euro-American impressions of them.<sup>18</sup>

Both Catlin and Möllhausen, impressed as many outsiders were by Comanche equestrian expertise, wrote specifically about Comanches capturing and “taming” wild horses. In 1844, Catlin reported observing Comanches on horseback capture wild horses with ropes, writing “the Indian dismounts from his own horse, and holding to the end of the laso, choaks [*sic*] the animal down, and afterwards tames and converts him to his own use.”<sup>19</sup> Möllhausen's 1858 *Diary of the Mississippi* describes the same practice but elaborates further: “the mustang falls half-suffocated; a leathern thong is quickly passed round his forelegs, and then the lasso round his throat so far relaxed as to avoid quite choking him. The Indian then fastens a rein to the lower jaw of his prisoner, breathes several times into his open nostrils, takes the fetters from his neck and feet, and jumps upon his back.”<sup>20</sup> Centring the horse reveals how observers' assumptions about both horses and Comanche people led them to misunderstand what they were observing.



Both Catlin's and Möllhausen's descriptions of the practice made practical sense from the perspective of people who view interaction with animals as primarily an exercise in authority. These accounts do not, however, make sense within the context of Comanche horsemanship. For example, Möllhausen presents a distinctly European description of horse-human interaction defined by dominance when he describes the horse as a prisoner, but in the same sentence reports a practice that refutes that characterization. When horses meet for the first time, they often breathe into each other's nostrils. The Comanche man Möllhausen describes was entering the communicative world of the horse and presenting himself as a companion, not a master. This technique was common and continues in practice today. Comanche educator, poet, and artist Juanita Pahdopony reports that Comanche Tribal Chairman Wallace Coffey used this method to calm a nervous wild horse during a commemoration event in Texas in 1995. Trainer Chris James demonstrated the method to Comanche children at the 2001 Comanche Youth Horse Program.<sup>21</sup>

Catlin's and Möllhausen's misunderstandings begin with relationship. In the mid-nineteenth century Euro-Americans considered domestication to be a necessary foundation for horse-human relationships. However, domestication itself is a concept rooted in Euro-American notions of hierarchy, power, and a division between humans and animals. Making a relationship with a horse contingent upon the ability to control and benefit materially from that horse both prioritizes Euro-American cosmology and denies the horse as a full participant in that relationship. Given wild horses' familiarity with the people who shared their home, Comanches' reliance on wild horses for their livelihoods, and Comanches' superior horsemanship on the hunt and in battle, it is unlikely that choking out a horse could have been the foundational practice of Comanche wild horse catchers.

Horses have long memories, especially when those memories are connected to pain. As far back as the fourth century BCE, Xenophon cautioned against using violent force against a horse, especially a frightened horse, because "when horses are at all hurt at such a time, they think that what they shied at is the cause of the hurt."<sup>22</sup> Trainers across the spectrum of equestrian arts caution against approaching a horse in anger or administering correction with physical violence. In 2018, a team of researchers

reported that horses even remember facial expressions they've seen from specific human individuals and responded negatively to humans who exhibited angry facial expressions in the past even if they wore neutral ones at the moment.<sup>23</sup>

The skepticism inspired by a horse-centred examination of Catlin's and Möllhausen's reports also provides support for views expressed in Comanche sources. According to Comanche author Weyodi, elders report that Comanches used ropes to capture wild horses but did not choke horses into submission because that would make it impossible to earn the horses' trust.<sup>24</sup> Clinton Smith, a former Comanche captive, even reported that as he and his brother were taken back to camp upon their capture in 1871, their captors roped a wild horse and tied the captured boys onto it. By the time they returned to camp, the horse had stopped bucking and stayed with the Comanches.<sup>25</sup> While no human of any culture is incapable of animal cruelty, to attack a wild horse in the way Catlin and Möllhausen describe is inconsistent with Comanche horsemanship history. Möllhausen is careful to end his account by saying "wildly and cruelly as the Indian appears to go to work on such occasions, he is extremely cautious not to break the spirit of the mustang in taming him, for in that case the flesh would be all he would get by his dangerous and exhausting labour."<sup>26</sup> Such a statement makes no sense from the horse's point of view. A first impression of pain and violence would make a horse reluctant to connect with humans, and people whose entire culture relied on close relation with horses would certainly understand that.

Reading Catlin and Möllhausen with horse behaviour at the centre strips away the colonial structures that cloud both the authors' and contemporary historians' understandings of historical Comanche horsemanship. Most powerfully, reading against the colonial structures embedded in these narratives suggests that, at some level, horses chose to partner with the Comanche Nation. Catlin's and Möllhausen's observations make sense in the context of a European-influenced horsemanship tradition that was already beginning to give way to an era of mechanization in which horses were primarily valued for the material labour they could produce and, outside the *haute école* (High School of equestrian arts) and precision of cavalry training, brute force through rough handling and harsh equipment was a means of coercing horses into offering their labour.<sup>27</sup> But

centuries of horse experience insist on the horse's volition in relationships with humans.

### *Centring Horses at the Battle of the Greasy Grass*

A horse-centred approach can also probe calcified narratives about historical events whose historiographies are well-trodden ground. In the post-Civil War history of the US West, few incidents have attracted more historical attention from professionals and amateurs than the Battle of the Greasy Grass. A curious footnote to that fateful day, however, indicates an unexplored lens of analysis of the battle and its outcome that has implications for all cavalry-driven military history.

On the day when George Armstrong Custer tried to repeat his genocidal action at the Washita and ordered his famously catastrophic attack on the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe summer camps along the Greasy Grass River, a young private in Marcus Reno's command suffered an unusual fate. Reno ordered a charge into the valley that he was forced to abruptly halt as the size of the gathered Indigenous nations became clear. Company M came to a halt except for one horse and rider. The horse carrying Private James Turley refused to halt and carried his rider straight into enemy lines. In an interview with the *Hardin Tribune* in 1923, Company M officer John M. Ryan reported that Turley "could not control his horse which carried him toward the Indian camp."<sup>28</sup> Turley was found in the aftermath of the Seventh Cavalry's defeat, his own knife hilt-deep in his right eye, his horse missing.

For the US press, Custer's shocking demise overshadowed Turley and his horse. Historians, too, have long overlooked his story. Despite intense scouring of the battle's history conducted by veterans, professional historians, and fanatical amateurs, Turley's misfortune is only mentioned a handful of times, most notably as an aside in the letters of veteran Frank L. Anders and Custer researcher R. G. Cartwright. They report the incident inaccurately without even naming the unfortunate private, saying merely in an account of the soldiers lost in Reno's unit "I am not counting the two men who were carried into the Indian camp due to unruly horses."<sup>29</sup> And in the course of the battle, one private losing control of his horse at its fringes is hardly the turn of the tide.

Scholars and battle enthusiasts have long speculated about the role of horses in the Seventh Cavalry's defeat at the Greasy Grass. Jody Hodgins' chapter highlights the value of examining popular animal health manuals to better understand the historical reality of animal histories, and cavalry history is no exception. Veterinarian Elwood Nye posited that Custer's unusual cruelty on the march contributed to poor horse condition, which explained their defeat. Not only does that argument seek to discredit the considerable military prowess of the combined Indigenous forces who resoundingly prevented Custer's attempt at a second genocidal attack, but it flies in the face of clear evidence. As John S. Gray argues in his veterinary history of the battle, Custer's horses, while likely deprived of adequate water and forage on the day of battle, were otherwise well-tended under the care of Dr. Charles A. Stein.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, other commanders of the US cavalry, such as Alfred Terry and George Crook, were notorious for mistreating cavalry horses yet did not suffer a defeat on the scale of Custer's.

Surprisingly, especially in light of the long history of European cavalry traditions, to which the US cavalry aspired, as well as Steven Kearny's *The Cavalry Manual* (1840), which stipulated gentle treatment of cavalry horses, Gray neglects to examine the possibility that horses could be a determining factor in the battle's outcome. Frederick Benteen's relief force was late to arrive, Gray argues, even after noting that Benteen's tardiness was due to a delay caused by mishandling of the pack train. Horse condition was irrelevant to the battle because Custer's men mostly fought on foot that day, Gray argues, without asking why trained cavalry men would so readily abandon their hungry and thirsty mounts.<sup>31</sup> Turley's experience that day suggests that turning attention to the horses themselves might reveal a more complicated narrative.

Private Turley was a twenty-five-year-old recruit who joined the Seventh Cavalry in October 1872. His entry in the Register of Enlistments records him as a labourer from Troy, New York. Census records from 1860 identify Turley's father as a local tavern keeper in Troy, born in New York, and do not indicate that the children attended school. Like so many members of the cavalry who came from the working class back East, James Turley appears to have been too young for the Civil War draft; after taking on manual labour in the industrializing town, he joined the army to head

west after the war. It is unclear whether Turley's work or early life involved horses, but he was assigned to Company M of the Seventh Cavalry.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to the horses' hunger, thirst, and weariness that day, sources indicate other factors that could explain Turley's inability to control his horse. First, many privates in the Seventh Cavalry had little training with horses. In April 1876, Seventh Cavalry Lieutenant John M. Ryan was court-martialled for mistreating a private who cut a harness off a horse rather than properly removing it, indicating that the men in his unit might not all have been experienced horsemen.<sup>33</sup> Second, and to the chagrin of several of the Seventh's officers, Custer reshuffled the mounts in each company right before the column left Fort Abraham Lincoln in May 1876. Custer assigned the same colour horse to each member of the company to allow commanders to clearly see the location of different companies on the battlefield. This practice presupposed that horse and rider pairings were interchangeable. A trained cavalry mount could easily work with a responsive rider but given the reported advantages of a strong relationship between horse and rider, especially when facing the superior horsemanship of the Plains nations, which was based on that relationship, the practice could easily have put Custer's troops at a disadvantage, especially for the greenest privates.

Sources do not record why Turley's horse bolted, whether out of fear, defiance, or even thirst. Company M was the "mixed" company to which leftover horses from the other colour-coordinated units were assigned; even if Turley was riding the horse he had ridden since his recruitment four years earlier, it is possible that the reshuffle caused conflict among the horses that distracted Turley's mount as they were in full charge. Regardless of why the horse bolted, seeking to understand his motivation could illuminate other horse-human interactions on the battlefields of the US West. If cavalymen believed that coercion was effective communication, historians could analyze battlefield failures in an entirely different interpretive context. If cavalymen did understand the concept of relation, the slaughter of Indigenous nations' horses at places like Tule Canyon was much more nefarious than simply depriving their enemies of means of resistance and subsistence. These questions can only be answered by leading historical horses from the margins of the narrative into the centres of their texts.

## *Conclusion*

Turley's horse did not turn the tide of battle at the Greasy Grass but acknowledging his volition as a full participant in the battle can dramatically change our understanding of it. Centring horses as relational beings and sophisticated communicators who materially influence historical events rightly reorients methodologies and epistemologies that have long considered the value of their bodies and labour but not their minds, wills, and partnerships. This reorientation also challenges narrative frameworks that characterize horses, and by extension their Indigenous human companions, as interlopers on the land with which they remain in relation. Such an approach pushes against Euro-American historical practices that cast skepticism upon Indigenous histories, as well as scientific knowledge that fails to account for Indigenous knowledge in its theories. Therefore, centring horses and their experiences in historical narratives is a powerful tool for decolonizing historical research.

As it is in so many other areas, Euro-American science is catching up to Indigenous knowledge in its understanding of the horse-human relationship. Historical methodology can follow the same path to develop interpretations of historical events that account for the full participation of horses in relationship with their human partners. A horse-centred analysis is one of many species-specific animal history methods that offer historians greater opportunity to complicate our narratives and weave seemingly disparate pieces of narrative together, a necessary step to understanding the interactions of the past as they happened to the best of our ability. In addition, as J. Keri Cronin reminds us, the animal images we study have real-world consequences for how humans treat animal bodies. Centring horses as historical actors makes us better historians in the archive and better relatives to our horse companions beyond its walls.

## NOTES

- 1 This work exists because of teaching, support, and encouragement from the late Juanita Pahdopony, Kathleen Brosnan, Sandra Swart, and Elizabeth Hameeteman; the generosity of Lynn Schonchin, Jr., Moses Brings Plenty, Lynne Ferguson, and Patrick Allori who shared horse knowledge with me; the generosity of Dianne Stewart, the late Noel Powers, Marie Elgenberg, Susan Patten, and Carrie Hare who shared their teaching and horses with me; my husband Nate who makes both my time in the saddle and writing about it possible; and the many horses who with infinite patience have taught me better ways to be human. I was able to write this chapter because I was employed by a land-grant university on land forcibly taken from Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. My hope is that this work contributes to efforts to disrupt the narratives that perpetuate that dispossession.
- 2 *We Are a Horse Nation*, directed by Keith Brave Heart (2014; Mission, SD: Sinte Gleska University Media), film.
- 3 Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 57–58.
- 4 I use the word volition rather than agency to capture the cognitive process implying horses' intent.
- 5 The seven nations of the Oceti Sakowin should not be conflated as historians have long done under the word "Sioux." However, in recent years, members of Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota Nations have come together to share horse teachings common among them through the documentary *We Are a Horse Nation*, Horse Nation of the Oceti Sakowin exhibit, and the upcoming documentary *Inspired*. I approached their collective teachings as they presented them.
- 6 Scholarship about Indigenous horse economies developed entirely new ways to think about the interrelated fields of Indigenous, environmental, and military histories in the US West, including works like James Sherow's "Workings of the Geodialectic: High Plains Indians and Their Horses in the Region of the Arkansas River Valley, 1800–1870," *Environmental History Review* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1992), 78–79; and Dan Flores' "Bringing Home All The Pretty Horses: The Horse Trade and the Early American West, 1775–1825," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 58, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 3–21, 94–95. However, much of the literature about horse pastoralism in North America relies on data from settler colonial institutions, like the Bureau of Land Management. As ecologist Patrick Duncan reports in *Horses and Grasses: The Nutritional Ecology of Equids and Their Impact on the Carmague* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1992), most equine nutrition studies rely on data from domestic equids. Indigenous sources that contradict Euro-American reports of horses' failing health or overgrazing are not yet central to this body of literature.
- 7 The movement came to be collectively referred to by the name "natural horsemanship," though its modern founding practitioners and many current instructors reject the term.
- 8 Moses Brings Plenty. Image and text posted to Facebook by CANA Foundation, 29 March 2019. Personal interview at Natsu Puuku Tribal Horsemanship Camp, 17 May 2019.
- 9 *We Are a Horse Nation*, 2014. The Dakota 38+2 Memorial Ride is a healing ceremony held each December in which participants ride over 330 miles from the Lower Brule

- Reservation in South Dakota to Mankato, Minnesota to memorialize the forty Dakota men hanged at the end of the Minnesota War (sometimes called the US-Dakota War) in 1862.
- 10 Xenophon, *The Art of Horsemanship*, trans. by Morris H. Morgan (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006), 21.
  - 11 Multiple studies on horse cognition have demonstrated that horses are capable of distinguishing between familiar and unfamiliar humans visually, olfactorily, and auditorily, and that they can do so through cross-modal recognition, allowing them to identify familiar humans through a range of multi-sensory cues even if one sense occurs in isolation from the others. Jessica Frances Lampe and Jeffre Andre, “Cross-modal Recognition of Human Individuals in Domestic Horses (*Equus caballus*),” *Animal Cognition* 15 (2012): 623–30. These studies support true recognition on behalf of the horses, nullifying any concerns about the Clever Hans effect in which a horse might respond favourably to a human as a means of friendly communication rather than recognition.
  - 12 Lynne Ferguson, personal interview, 16 March 2017.
  - 13 Xenophon, 52.
  - 14 Dorrance, 1.
  - 15 Kate Farmer, Konstanze Krueger, Richard W. Byrne, “Visual Laterality in the Domestic Horse (*Equus caballus*) Interacting with Humans,” *Animal Cognition* 13 (2010): 229–38; Kate Farmer et al., “Sensory laterality in Affiliative Interactions in Domestic Horses and Ponies (*Equus caballus*),” *Animal Cognition* 21 (2018): 631–37.
  - 16 Monamie Ringhofer and Shinya Yamamoto, “Domestic Horses Send Signals to Humans When They Face with an Unsolvable Task,” *Animal Cognition* 20 (2017): 397–405. The study tested horses’ signalling to humans in order to find hidden food. Researchers found that horses altered their communication with humans based on whether or not the horse saw where the human hid the food.
  - 17 Leanne Proops et al., “Animals Remember Previous Facial Expressions that Specific Humans have Exhibited,” *Current Biology* 28 (2018): 1428–32; Cecilie M. Mejdell et al., “Horses Can Learn to Use Symbols to Communicate Their Preferences,” *Applied Animal Behavior Science* 184 (2016): 66–73.
  - 18 For example, studies of the ecological impact of horse pastoralism in Plains environmental history prioritize Euro-American data and often rely on conjecture. In “Workings of the Geodialectic,” for instance, James Sherow argues that US Army horses were “better conditioned” than Indigenous horses because they were fed on grain and hay rather than prairie grass and cottonwood. But Sherow’s argument is built on the assumption that “if Army horses suffered from the heat, then surely Plains Indian horses endured similar distress.” Though he cites Army sources that detail the struggle Army horses had when forced to adapt from grain to grass, it does not follow that Indigenous horses were similarly undernourished simply because they fed on available forage, especially when Indigenous sources report otherwise. See Sherow, “Workings of the Geodialectic,” 78–79. Likewise, Pekka Hämäläinen argues that horse “nomadism” (a problematic characterization in itself) caused ecological catastrophe on grasslands ecologies and bases the claim in similarly settler colonial studies. “The Rise and Fall of



- Plains Indian Horse Cultures,” *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 3 (December 2003), 833–62.
- 19 George Catlin, *Letters and notes on the manners, customs, and condition of the North American Indians* (London: David Brogue, 1844), 142.
  - 20 Balduin Möllhausen, *Diary of a Journey from the Mississippi to the Coasts of the Pacific* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858), 186.
  - 21 Personal interview, 24 February 2017; “Comanche Youth Horse Program,” home video recorded by Lynn Ferguson in the summer of 2001. This DVD copy is in the author’s possession.
  - 22 Xenophon, 38.
  - 23 Proops et al., 2018.
  - 24 Weyodi Squid, personal email, September 11, 2019. Pahdopony referred me to Weyodi for details about historical practices of horsemanship among Comanche people.
  - 25 Clinton L. Smith and Jefferson D. Smith, *The Boy Captives* (Bandera, TX: Frontier Times, 1927).
  - 26 Möllhausen, 187.
  - 27 Pooley-Ebert’s chapter comparing Chicago and rural Illinois workhorses contains a sobering examination of the cruelty and disposability of horses in Chicago. Andria Pooley-Ebert, “Species Agency: A Comparative Study of Horse-Human Relationships in Chicago and Rural Illinois,” in *The Historical Animal*, ed. Susan Nance (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), 148–65.
  - 28 *Hardin Tribune*, June 22, 1923.
  - 29 Frank L. Anders to R. G. Cartwright, June 13, 1954. John M. Carroll, ed. *The Frank L. Anders and R. G. Cartwright Correspondence: Volume 3* (Bryan, TX: John M. Carroll, 1982), 51. From available sources, it is unclear why Anders suggests this happened to two men instead of one, but he may be referring to Second Lieutenant Benjamin Hubert Hodgson who was killed near Turley in the Valley Fight. Sources indicate Hodgson was killed crossing the ford, but do not mention him losing control of his horse.
  - 30 John S. Davis, “Veterinary Service on Custer’s Campaign,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (Autumn 1977): 249–63.
  - 31 Dismounting to fight on foot was a common cavalry strategy during the wars for westward expansion, but the fact that Custer’s men killed their mounts in order to use them as cover suggests that this was an act of desperation.
  - 32 “United States Census, 1860,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCW7-FKC> : February 18, 2021), James Turley in entry for James Turley, 1860; “United States register of Enlistments of the US Army, 1798–1914,” database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QJDR-3777> : 3 March 2021), Henry Turley, 29 October 1872; citing page 17 of volume 76, Troy, New York, United States, NARA microfilm publication M233 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), roll 40; FHL microfilm 350, 346. James Henry Turley goes by both names in different records, but testimony from members of Company M confirm it is the same person.
  - 33 John M. Ryan, *Ten Years with Custer: A 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalryman’s Memoir*, ed. Sandy Barnard (Terre Haute, IN: AST Press, 2001).