

2000

## An Analysis of the Rhetoric of Wilme Mankiller

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE RHETORIC OF WILMA MANKILLER

BY

LYNDA D. PETERS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

2000

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller, first woman elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Although some research has addressed Native American oratory, this study is the first to this writer's knowledge, that critically evaluates the public discourse of Mankiller. This analysis reveals a distinct relationship in the characteristics of the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller that are inherent in the unique cultural heritage of Native American oratory.

A study of Native American oratory in general, a study of Cherokee oratory, and a study of the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller were conducted. This analysis employed the neo-Aristotelian approach in order to evaluate the public discourse of Mankiller. The rhetoric of Mankiller manifests characteristics germane to the rhetoric of some of her Native American predecessors. The findings of this examination lead to some conclusions that identify characteristics that are distinctive of the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The study of Native American oratory has been a dormant area of scholarship. The inactivity of scholarship and my interest in Native American cultures and communication studies inspired this research. I want to thank several individuals for their help. Dr. Stephen Wood, without your support for my sentiments for this study and your careful and steadfast guidance, my concept of this study could not have culminated into this thesis. Your encouragement and objectivity provided me a context in which to pursue excellence. Dr. Lois Cuddy, I am grateful for your astute and constructive criticism which provided me a context in which to refine this thesis. Dr. Kevin McClure, your assurance and candor were invaluable during this process. Dr. Lynne Derbyshire, you introduced me to the scholarship of “woman’s voice” within the context of public and private sphere. Limitations and conflicts which have and still exist within the historical and cultural confines of womanhood offer boundless possibilities to pursue in my further studies. Dr. Robert Schwegler, thank you for your patience and interest in the completion of this thesis. Dr. Sandra Ketrow, thank you for your firm belief that I would “create my own path.”

I also want to thank Dr. Kateri Alexander for providing me with the audiocassette of Wilma Mankiller’s keynote address presented at the program, “Creative Options: A Day for Women.” I thank Gina Olaya for her assistance.

To Wilma Mankiller, I am most respectful. The eloquence of her rhetoric and her person serve as an inspiration to all people.

Finally, I want to thank my best friend, my husband, for your love, understanding, and unfaltering confidence. I know you spent many long and lonely hours while I was isolated in a stimulating world of research and writing.

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## Introduction

This thesis analyzes the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller, first woman elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. To do this, I have divided the thesis into two main sections. Part I (chapters 1 and 2) includes an historical overview of Native American oratory and cultural history of the rhetoric that provides the context within which to consider Wilma Mankiller's contemporary rhetoric. Part 2 (chapters 3, 4 and 5) is the rhetorical analysis and includes a discussion of the methodology, a review of the relevant rhetorical literature, and the analysis of two of Wilma Mankiller's speeches.

The thesis employs the neo-Aristotelian method based on the works of Thonnsen (1944); Black (1978); Cathcart (1981); Foss (1996); and Andrews (1998). The three major elements of the neo-Aristotelian approach are examined: (1) reconstructing the context in which the rhetorical artifact occurred; (2) analyzing the artifacts; and (3) assessing the impact of the artifact on the audience in light of the various options available to the rhetor (Foss 27). To reconstruct the context the rhetor, audience, and occasion will be studied. To conduct the analysis of the rhetorical artifacts the five classical canons of rhetoric will be examined: (1) invention; (2) organization; (3) style; (4) memory; and (5) delivery will be examined.

The rhetorical artifacts examined consist of two speeches presented by Wilma Mankiller--(1) "Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation" delivered at Sweet Briar College, April 2, 1993; (2) keynote address delivered at California Lutheran University, March 6, 1999 (with audiocassette)--and a personal interview conducted on May 19, 2000.

Chapter One provides an overview of Native American oratory that identifies historical and social reasons for oratory in Native American societies and illuminates some of the outstanding women and men orators of the "Golden Age of Indian Eloquence." Chapter Two provides a synopsis of Cherokee history, a background of Cherokee culture and discusses the role of rhetoric in Cherokee culture. Chapter Three provides an

explanation of the neo-Aristotelian method employed to examine the rhetoric of Mankiller and provides a review of the extant literature from 1935. Chapter Four examines the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller via the neo-Aristotelian approach. Chapter Five offers my conclusions of the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller.

It's a fine time for celebration because as we approach the twenty-first century, the Cherokee Nation still has a strong, viable tribal government. Not only do we have a government that has continued to exist, we have a tribal government that's growing and progressing and getting stronger. We've managed not to just barely hang on, we've managed to move forward in a very strong, very affirmative way. Given our history of adversity I think it's a testament to our tenacity, both individually and collectively as a people, that we've been able to keep the Cherokee Nation government going since time immemorial.  
(Wilma Mankiller, inaugural speech, 1991, from Mankiller 1993a: 255)

## **PART I      HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**



## CHAPTER ONE

Why will you take by force what you may obtain by love?  
Why will you destroy us who supply you with food? What  
can you get by war? . . . We are unarmed, and willing to give  
you what you ask, if you come in a friendly manner . . . I am  
not so simple as not to know it is better to eat good meat,  
sleep comfortably, live quietly with my women and children,  
laugh and be merry with the English, and being their friend, trade  
for their copper and hatchets, than to run away from them . . .  
Take away your guns and swords, the cause of all our jealousy,  
or you may die in the same manner. (Powhattan 1609 in Armstrong  
1971:1)

### Rationale

Although researchers have has studied Native American oratory, this thesis will be the first, to this writer's knowledge, that critically evaluates the public discourse of Wilma Mankiller, first woman elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. With dignity, honesty, and wit, Mankiller's oratory unfolds the story her life, the history and survival of the Cherokees, her growth into the role of leadership, and the growth and change she brought to the Cherokee people. Mankiller has influenced, inspired, and educated audiences through her public discourse.

The study of Mankiller and her rhetoric is unique and important. If we chronicle and critically evaluate the oratory of important Native American women, we reveal an unappreciated and dormant arena with rich potential for current and future research. An untapped arena such as this creates the potential for a rich spectrum of contribution to the scholarship of public discourse. This analysis brings Mankiller into the realm of academic recognition and her rhetoric into the realm of academic criticism.

Mankiller's rhetoric is ephemeral. Most of her speeches are delivered without manuscript and seldom have been transcribed or recorded. Currently, only two speeches have been preserved and they are both used in my analysis.

The intention of this thesis is not to compare the rhetoric of Mankiller to other Native American orators, female or male. The thesis illuminates Mankiller and her public discourse as significant and effective and provides an insight into the unique cultural heritage inherent in Native American oratory.

### **Overview of Native American Oratory**

Oratory was important in Native American tribes including the Plains Indians, Navajo, Dakota Sioux, Aztec, Pima, and Cherokees. Native American culture is rooted in oral tradition. Oratory within Native American societies encompassed a variety of public speaking occasions which included tribal speeches, peace negotiations with other tribes, war rituals, religious ceremonies, storytellings, and treaty-making with European settlers. In addition to the importance of oratory, Native American women were valued and they shared in tribal and council responsibilities, and participated in public discourse as speakers.

Historical accounts, letters, diaries and journals have revealed that the Native American was a rhetorical agent. Documents have revealed that the Indian was forced “to move from strong assertions of his natural rights to appeals to what he could only hope was common humanity” (Armstrong xiv). Native American oratory has been described as eloquent (Kennedy 88, 95; Sorter 227-236; Sandefur 289-290; Scholten 243; Armstrong xx; Jones 16, and others), as forceful and convincing (Balgooyen 16) and as effective and fluent (Buswell 323): “Transcripts of government hearings and treaty negotiations supply plentiful and consistent evidence in support of the characterization of the Indians as the equal, and perhaps the superior of the white politician or official in speech making ability” (Camp 812). “The Indian was a gifted, often brilliant language craftsman” (Turner 236).

The earliest record of Native American oratory can be found in *The Florida of the Inca*, Garcilaso de la Vega, written between 1567 and 1591, published in 1605 (Kennedy

(84). Translated by Varner and Varner in 1951 the romantic account states, “. . . these speeches were so eloquent that the Governor (De Soto) and those who accompanied him were more impressed by the utterance of the Indians” than by their physical endurance (Varner 160).

Camp (1978) and Kennedy (1998) expose two contrasting representations of the Native American and their speech characteristics: “The popular characterization of American speech activity generally types the Indian as a stony near-mute. At his most negative, the Indian is seen as uncivilized, dull-witted, and often comically incoherent. At his most positive, crowned with the aura of nobility, the Indian is stoic, a silent type, and enigmatically wise” (Camp 811). Kennedy states, “[c]olonial inhabitants of eastern North America commonly regarded the Indians as dirty, ignorant, and cruel savages while at the same time they repeatedly commented on the eloquence of the natives, stressing their innate nobility, their dignity . . .” (85). These impressions of the Native American and his rhetorical practices reveal conflicting images. However, “[a]s a speaker, among his own people, he was held in great esteem” (Balgooyen 38). Further, “[e]very respected warrior was expected to speak on matters of policy if he had a strong opinion” (38).

In many of the tribes in the western United States, the highest goals that individuals could obtain were supernatural powers through visionary experience and social status through war achievements. To maintain traditional values, Indians spoke of these achievements publicly. Tribal members often gathered by the summons of the village herald whose task it was to call together the people for public meetings: “Chiefs had no tenure or immunity from criticism; they were respected for their achievements but anyone could and did speak, and sometimes new leaders emerged who led off a part of the group to form an independent faction” (Kennedy 95). In Plains Indian tribal life the public speaker was synonymous with the good citizen (Balgooyen 13).

The most common Native American speech was a recount of real war battle exploits. Young boys learned to recite by giving accounts of make-believe battle

conquests: “The central ceremony for social occasions was the coup-counting speeches of the warrior who had touched the enemy, stolen horses, or executed some prescribed heroic deed” (Balgooyen 13). Although war tales were the most prevalent content of Indian address, child-naming ceremonies, ceremonies honoring favorite sons, or ceremonies dedicating new lodges included oratorical exhibitions.

Oratorical exhibitions such as lodge dedications have continued. Pio Pico was the last of the Mexican governors of California (Jones 115). Although California was admitted into the Union in 1850 the palatial residence never had an American flag raising ceremony (116). In 1930 a service club of the local community decided to rectify this omission (116). Warcaziwin, a full blooded Sioux woman, was invited to speak at Pio Pico’s residence (116). On this occasion of the belated raising of the American flag over the governor’s estate, Warcaziwin spoke eloquently:

He came representing what is known as the Age of Iron.  
I am told . . . that you cannot measure culture chronologically.  
You cannot say that because one people all belong to the Stone  
Age they have not made their contribution to human culture.  
As a matter of fact, when the white reached these shores they  
had just arrived at the emergence of what historians have  
termed the Dark Ages. (Jones, 1965:116)

Lindsay (47, 62, 115) has described Navajo oratory as more of a form of self-expression than a method to persuade others. Navajo worldview incorporates a strong respect for the integrity of the individual, and this in turn affects the Navajo concept of public speech: “The Navajo purpose of speech making was seldom to convince directly or to move to action, but rather to express thoughts and feelings about those things which affected the speaker or his relatives” (Lindsay 114). Navajo orators, in both formal and informal situations “devoted much of their remarks to explaining who they were and what they had experienced or felt” (Kennedy 96). Characteristic of Navajo oratory is for the speaker to reveal facts about himself and the issues, yet the audience is to draw their own conclusions (Kennedy 97).

The Dakota Sioux Indian held his position in the tribe by his oratorical powers in addition to his ability in war (Buswell 323). Mr. Jesse Williamson, an observer of the growth of Dakota territory who knew Indian leaders intimately, expressed to Mrs. Buswell in a letter dated July 8, 1930, “[o]ratory was one of the arts most highly prized by the Indians. Many of the chiefs held their positions by virtue of their oratorical ability, though something more than oratory was doubtless required” (323).

According to Kennedy (100), the most sophisticated forms developed by Native Americans are to be found in the records of oratory as practiced in Mexico at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century. Formal speech was of great importance in Aztec culture both in public and private life. According to Kennedy, “[a]t some time in the past there had apparently been a creative period in oratory in which new speeches were composed; by the sixteenth century, examples of each form had been canonized and were memorized for verbatim delivery on appropriate occasions though the traditional style was apparently sometimes adapted to new situations” (101).

Although the Pima Indians in Arizona also had a tradition of memorized oratory, Aztec speeches were far more sophisticated reflectives of their more complex level of civilization. The Aztec had a system of schools for training priestly and warrior classes not found elsewhere in North America. Memorization of speeches was a part of the curriculum. Boys were thoroughly instructed in proper speech and in proper salutatory etiquette. In Aztec society those who were elected to high priests, lords, leaders, and captains were superb rhetoricians and held in high regard (Kennedy 101).

Both the Aztec and the Greek according to Kennedy are comparable in the study of polite discourse (102): “An important difference, however, between the Greek and Aztec forms is that the Greek learned rhetorical techniques from written texts and practiced its application in original speeches adapted to specific occasions, whereas the Aztec learned the proper modes of speaking from oral tradition and . . . delivered the same speeches verbatim” (102). Further, the tone of Aztec epideictic differs greatly from that

of the Greek which reflects differences between the two cultures. Aztec speeches were critical of the addressee whereas Greek epideictic is often enhanced by flattery. Although no examples are given, according to Kennedy, "Aztec oratory is harsh, austere, and fatalistic, whereas Greek is frequently playful and human" (102).

Native American women did not generally occupy menial positions in Native American society. Iroquois and Creek women were often chosen as leaders of their clans or tribes (Jones 113). Plains Indian women were loved and honored and their advice was coveted (113-114). Williamson's letter to Buswell makes reference to Mrs. Kettle, wife of a Yankton chief, who delivered long and eloquent addresses at some of the Councils (Buswell 323).

Prior to European contact and the influence of the whites on Cherokee culture, women were important and prominent in town government and shared in the responsibilities and rights of the tribal organization (Mankiller 1993a, 19). Pueblo women not only shared an equal status with men but owned the homes in which they lived after marriage (Jones 114):

For centuries in Europe both children and women occupied a low social position. On the other hand, they, the white men, found the Indian woman and child occupying a very high social position. (quoting Warcaziwin, Jones, 1965:116)

Native American women have spoken frequently and eloquently on behalf of their tribes in matters of government or policy. Celsa Apapas, a Cupeno woman depicts this oratorical role (Jones 114-115). According to Jones, the discovery of gold in 1850 prompted a gold rush which prompted the federalization of the lands of California. Land ownership and relocation became the focus of government. Allocation and removal became the fear of these California Indians. Civil courts were set up with the power to determine land ownership. The people of San Luis Rey Valley were soon notified that their lands had been purchased by an eastern company. A long council followed at which Celsa Apapas, fluent in Spanish and English as well as her native tongue, was chosen to

interpret the words of Cecilio Blacktooth, “captain” of the Cupenos. An excerpt from her translation follows:

If you give us the best place in the world, it is not so good  
for us as this . . . This is our home . . . We cannot live anywhere  
else. We were born here and our fathers are buried here . . .  
We want this place and not any other . . . (Jones, 1965:115)

Though eloquent, her words were futile. The valley was taken over by whites and the Native Americans were removed.

Kennedy notes that Sacajawea and Sarah Winnemucca are famous for their great verbal skills and eloquence (95). Carl S. Dentzel states in the introduction to *Aboriginal American Oratory*, “Sacajawea was a diplomat of the first order. Her superb woman’s intuition, coupled with her ability to size up a situation, made her a perfect negotiator. As an interpreter, translator, and wise speaker, Sacajawea has become one of the great legends of all time--a tribute to the American Indian as well as to all womanhood” (from Jones xi).

In 1878-1884, Sarah Winnemucca, a Paiute, and in 1879-1882, Bright Eyes, a Ponca, were spokeswomen for their tribes which had been arbitrarily removed from their lands by United States soldiers (Scholten 233). Both of these women traveled from the east coast to the west coast giving speeches which created public consciousness of the struggles of their people and “stirred up agitation that changed laws, if not practices regarding the Indian” (234).

Beginning in 1883, Mohonk Mountain House in upper New York state, served as a conference center on Indian concerns (Jones 118). In October, 1929 the theme of the conference was “How to Safeguard the Indian Home” (118). Mrs. Gertrude S. Bonnin, president of the Indian Defense Association, was invited to speak (118). Bonnin, whose Indian name was Zitkala-Sa, left the Sioux reservation in her teens and pursued an education under the department of speech at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana

(118-119). In her junior year she represented Earlham in the all-state intercollegiate oratorical contest and won second place. “It was noticed that her face showed in delicate but firm lines the cut of her Indian extraction . . . As she began to speak . . . her voice was clear and sweet; her language was that of a cultivated young woman” (119). This oratorical event would have occurred about 1899.

At the Mohonk Mountain House conference thirty years later, Zitkala-Sa, “without notes or script, clearly and concisely revealed the true facts of Indian home life--a definite surprise to many of the whites present” (Jones 119). An excerpt from this speech follows:

We send our little Indian boys and girls to school and when they come back talking English, they come back swearing. There is no swear word in the Indian languages, and I haven't yet learned to swear. (Jones, 1965:120)

Jones provides us with a perspective that summarizes the fundamental nature of Native American oratory:

The Indian was a *doer* more than a *talker*, but when there were words to be spoken he could utter them with a direct simplicity that went straight to the heart of the matter, shaming and confounding the white man's circumlocution. Yet anger and scorn, pathos and irony were not unknown to him. And whoever claims that the Indian has no sense of humor is ignorant of the truth. (Jones xviii)

### **Outstanding Native American Rhetors**

Outstanding Native American rhetors have existed throughout history. Dentzel confirms that these individuals should be elevated to their rightful place among the world's great orators in all times and places (from Jones xv). Some of the famous orators Jones places in “The Golden Age of Indian Eloquence” (41) include Pontiac, Chief John Logan, Joseph Brant, Red Jacket, Tecumseh, Geronimo, Chief Joseph, and Little Carpenter (43).

**Pontiac**, a chief of the Ottawa, from early childhood to his martyred death was an inveterate enemy of the English (Jones 43). Pontiac was the most famous leader in the eighteenth century in the struggle for unity among Native Americans against white



encroachment (Kennedy 89). As adapt “at organization as well as a master of the fine art of oratorical appeal” Pontiac, by the early 1760’s, propagated his conspiracy against the white man’s advances (Jones 44). The following is an excerpt of an oration given by Pontiac to a formal council. He was uninformed of the 1763 Peace of Paris and launched the following against the Canadians as traitors to his cause: “If you are English, we declare war against you” (42).

Logan, the Mingo was intensely loyal to the whites until 1774 when neighboring white villagers killed about a dozen of Logan’s tribe among them his mother, sister and brother (Armstrong 27). Jones suggests that this much debated speech of Cayuga Chief, John Logan, because of its “poignant eloquence may well be ranked with Demosthene’s *Oration on the Crown* and William Jennings Bryan’s *The Cross of Gold*” (50). This “oration” was not a formal presentation because it had no audience. It was a message of self-vindication “pinned to the head of his war club” and delivered to Governor Dunmore of Virginia in 1774 (49). According to Sandefur, “[i]t was Thomas Jefferson’s report of this speech in his *Notes on Virginia* printed privately in Paris in 1784 which rescued the oration from obscurity and set off an argument lasting over a century” (289) . . . . Jefferson presented the oration as an example of the ‘genius and mental powers’ of the American Indian and their use of speech as a means of personal influence and persuasion (289) . . . . Jefferson’s publication of the speech aroused no comment until 1797 when a Mr. James Fennel, ‘an elocutionist’ recited the version to an audience in Philadelphia. Luther Martin, an ardent political foe of Jefferson, took exception to the speech and charged publicly that no such Indian oration had ever been given” (289). Logan’s speech, despite its question of authenticity, is a forceful plea of self-vindication:

I appeal to any white man to say, if he ever entered Logan’s cabin hungry, and he gave him no meat; if ever he came cold and naked, and he clothed him not.

During the course of the last long and bloody war, Logan

remained idle in his cabin, an advocate of peace. Such was my love for the whites, that my countrymen pointed at me as they passed and said, 'Logan is the friend of the white man.'

I had even thought to have lived with you, but for the injuries of one man, Colonel Cressap, who last spring, in cold blood, and unprovoked, murdered all the relatives of Logan, not even sparing my women and children.

There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any living creature. This called on me for revenge. I have sought it: I have killed many; I have glutted my vengeance; for my country I rejoice at the beams of peace.

But do not harbor a thought that mine is the joy of fear. Logan never knew fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one! ( Jones, 1965: 49-50)

**Joseph Brant**, a chief of the Mohawk, half-breed, Indian-reared was active on behalf of his people. Brant fought in the Revolutionary War against the Americans (Armstrong 30). Of his numerous speeches, Jones (47) cites the petition he gave to the Court of St. James in 1785 regarding an extensive land grant for his people north of Lake Erie as the premier exemplar of his oratorical talent: "Presented in clear, forceful English, despite his Mohawk background," Jones suggests that this speech merits oratorical worth for its intense style and choice of words (48): "We can retreat no further . . . we have resolved to leave our bones in this small spot" (45). Brant was made sachem in 1807 (Armstrong 42). Shortly before his death in that same year he touched on the topic of law in a letter to an unknown correspondent: "The estates of widows and orphans are never devoured by enterprising sharpers. In a word, we have no robbery under color of the law" (42).

**Red Jacket** was an eighteenth century Seneca chief and member of the Iroquois Confederacy whose interests he served throughout his life (Jones 51). According to Jones, “[w]ithout a doubt the most outstanding orator of the eighteenth century was Red Jacket (51). Noted by Jones “[the fame of this distinguished chief rests on little else than on his supreme gift of speech, the impelling power of his words. In this regard he stood head and shoulders above the leading spokesmen of his day” (51). Jones notes that Red Jacket once exclaimed, “A warrior! I am an orator! I was born an orator!” (53).

The most famous of Red Jacket’s speeches is his reply to a missionary named Cram who was sent by the Boston Missionary Society to convert the Senecas to Christianity in 1806 (Kennedy 92): “With traditional Indian politeness and dignity and forceful logic, Red Jacket had revealed the hypocrisy and bigotry of the missionary endeavor” (93). The following excerpt illustrates politeness, dignity and forceful logic:

Brother, continue to listen. You say that you are sent to instruct us how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to His mind; and, if we do not take hold of the religion which you white people teach we shall be unhappy hereafter. You say that you are right and we are lost. How do you know this to be true? We understand that your religion is written in a Book. If it was intended for us, as well as you, why has not the Great Spirit given to us, and not only to us, but why did He not give to our forefathers the knowledge of that Book, with the means of understanding it rightly. We only know what you tell us about it. How shall we know when to believe, being so often deceived by the white people? (Andrews, 1989:123)

**Tecumseh**, Shawnee chief (1812), was as fearless as a warrior as he was as an orator (Jones 86). Tecumseh’s plan was to organize all Indian tribes of the West into one confederacy. The following excerpt from Tecumseh’s oration before Governor William Henry Harrison is a bold threat and acknowledges that since the Greenville treaty in 1795 was made, Shawnee, Winnebagoes, Delawares, and Miamies had been killed

(84- 85): “Our object is to let our affairs be transacted by warriors” (86). In 1811 in an effort to persuade Indians to unite in a southern confederation, Tecumseh voiced prophetic warnings: “Will we let ourselves be destroyed in our turn, without making an effort worthy of our race? Shall we, without a struggle, give up our homes, our lands, bequeathed to us by the Great Spirit?” (Armstrong 45).

**Geronimo**, an Apache chief, delivered a speech at a conference with federal authorities in 1886 (Vanderwerth 238-241). In this famous presentation Geronimo projects his desire to live peacefully and his objection to treatment that he had received (238-241). In justifying his actions Geronimo used a “striking example of argument from probability” (Kennedy 97):

To prove to you that I am telling the truth, remember I sent you word that I would come from a place far away to speak to you here, and you see us now. Some have come on horseback and some on foot. If I were thinking bad, or if I had done bad, I would never have come here. If it has been my fault, would I have come so far to talk to you? (Vanderwerth, 1971:241)

**Chief Joseph** of the Nez Perce, a peace-loving tribe in the Idaho highlands, was the last to resort to the warpath (Jones 109). In 1863 and in 1877 the Nez Perce were confronted with the demand for removal. Having brought his people within fifty miles of the Canadian border, their objective point, facing starvation, and with most of his warriors killed, Chief Joseph surrendered (111). Jones cites these words which were “scrawled in English” and brought to General Howard, commander of the United States forces, as one of the finest examples of Indian eloquence. Jones further states that “the gripping power of these words is matched only by those which fall from the lips of the Galilean on Golgotha’s Hill” (111):

Tell General Howard I know his heart. What he told me before I have in my heart. I am tired of fighting. Our chiefs are killed. Looking Glass is dead . . . It is the young men who say yes or no. He who led the young men is dead.

It is cold and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food, no one knows where they are-perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead. Hear me, my chiefs. I am tired, my heart is sick and sad. From where the sun now stands I will fight no more forever. (Jones, 1965:111)

Chief Joseph later told of the promises made to him at the time of his surrender and of his bitter disillusionment when the agreement was promptly forgotten and his people were shipped to Kansas, where many died, and then to Indian Territory where many more died (Armstrong 115): “General Miles had promised we might return to our country with what stock we had left . . . I believed General Miles, or I never would have surrendered” (115).

**Little Carpenter** (Attakullaculla) was a Cherokee Chief who represented his people in council through the troubled years which preceded and followed the American Revolution (Jones 62). In 1755 Little Carpenter spoke the will of his people at the great council held in Hopeville where a treaty was made with the British and the Cherokee Nation (62).

A treaty had been entered into between the Cherokee people and the province of Old Virginia which guaranteed safe conduct of certain Cherokee emissaries en route to and from French trading centers in Canada so long as white settler’s interests were safeguarded (Jones 64). Violence however was committed by someone; both sides blamed each other. A five year war resulted with much devastation to Cherokee land and loss of life. The Cherokees asked for peace. On September 23, 1761 a treaty was signed which stipulated that the Cherokee Nation would cease their relations with the French and swear allegiance to the King of England (Woodward 78-79).

Little Carpenter's speech defines the perceptions held by the Cherokees toward the white, and perhaps this speech is the one that serves as accurate foreshadowing of the troublesome relations between the Cherokees and the whites which would occur over the next two centuries:

You live at the water-side and are in the light. We are in darkness; but hope that all will yet be clear.

I have been constantly going about doing good, and though I am tired, yet I am come to see what can be done for my people, who are in great distress.

As to what has happened, I believe it has been ordered by our Father above. We are of different color from the white people. They are superior to us. But one God is father of us all, and we hope what is passed will be forgiven. God Almighty made all people. There is not a day but some are coming into, and others going out of the world.

The Great King told me the path should never be crooked, but open for every one to pass and repass. As we all live in one land, I hope we shall all love as one people. (Jones, 1965: 64-65)

According to Jones, this speech might be regarded as both evasive and weak:

Little Carpenter first acknowledged the racial superiority of whites: "This in itself was tantamount to surrender" (65). Jones cites that Little Carpenter next mentioned he was tired (65). Jones queries, "[t]ired of what? Naturally he and his fellow chiefs suffered in seeing their villages destroyed, the cornfields laid to waste, and their people killed. Of these losses they were tired. Only such could bring the Cherokee Nation to submission" (65). Jones suggests that in what Little Carpenter said, the Cherokees "accepted their fate" (65). "The Indians were great believers in the overshadowing providence of the Great Spirit" (65). Little Carpenter and his fellow chiefs acknowledged the sovereignty of the "Great King" as they perceived sovereignty (65). Perhaps in Little Carpenter's perception, all would continue to "live in one land" and all would "love as one people"

(65). These assumptions, based on Attakullaculla's perception, were perhaps taken for granted by this chief and the Cherokee people.

According to Strickland, the Cherokees believed that through the power of the spoken word they could negotiate (293). Despite eloquent rhetorical strategies employed by the Cherokees to prevent their removal from their ancestral lands in Georgia, the Carolinas, and Tennessee, to Oklahoma in 1838, their rhetorical appeals failed. The Jacksonian era event, "The Trail Where They Cried," depicts the failure of rhetoric, regardless of its eloquence, when the beliefs of a minority group run counter to prevailing social attitudes and are unsupported by the group in power (309).

Turner has suggested that oratorical expression may be the direct product of the Indian's contact with the European settler (236-237). "Incapable of conquering true wilderness, the Europeans were highly competent in the skill of conquering other people, and that is what they did. They did not settle a virgin land. They invaded a resident population" (Jennings 15). When we consider the relationship between the Native American and the European settler, throughout history, two concurrent themes run deep. The first is simply, land. Whose was it? Who wanted it? What was the sacrifice in the process? The second is the attempted destruction of a life source itself, and therefore, a culture.

### **Conclusion**

Oratory is not the purview of any single race, creed, or gender. Throughout history black, yellow, white, and red, women and men, have spoken eloquently, and from their hearts. Language spoken from the heart, in whatever tongue it may be spoken, can influence beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Like the poet's pen, the skills of the orator inspire the human mind and heart. Thus, engaging in critical rhetorical analysis of significant Native American oratory is important work for rhetorical scholars. Further, this thesis argues that Chief Wilma Mankiller should join the list of great Native American orators.

This chapter provided an overview of the historical and social reasons for oratory in Native American societies. Oratory within Native American societies encompassed a variety of public speaking occasions which include tribal speeches, peace negotiations with other tribes, war rituals, religious ceremonies, storytellings, and treaty making with European settlers. The chapter identified some of the outstanding women and men orators and their rhetoric of the “Golden Age of Indian Eloquence.” The chapter illuminated some of the characteristics distinctive of Native American rhetoric which have been examined by previous scholars. The next chapter provides a foundation upon which one can build an understanding of Cherokee history and culture.



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## CHAPTER TWO

After every major upheaval, we have been able to gather together as a people and rebuild a community and a government. Individually and collectively, Cherokee people possess an extraordinary ability to face down adversity and continue moving forward. We are able to do that because of our culture, though certainly diminished, has sustained us since time immemorial. This Cherokee culture is a well-kept secret.  
(Wilma Mankiller, Wife, Mother, Grandmother, Chief 021400)

This chapter provides an historical background of the Cherokees, a background of Cherokee culture, and discusses the role of rhetoric and its significance in Cherokee culture.

### Synopsis of Cherokee History

Archaeological and linguistic evidence indicates that the Cherokees migrated in pre-historic times from present day Texas or northern Mexico to the Great Lakes area (Woodward 19). Depicted in hieroglyphics, the Delawares recorded a prehistoric migration of the Cherokees (Woodward 19). Throughout the reign of three Delaware chiefs, the Delawares fought and conquered the Cherokees (19). Archaeologists have discovered Indian burial mounds in Ohio, Illinois, Virginia, and Tennessee presumably fashioned by the ancient Cherokees (Talleghis) which supports the Delaware tradition of victory over the Cherokees (19). Wars with the Iroquois and Delaware tribes pushed the Cherokees southeast to the Allegheny and Appalachian mountain regions in North and South Carolina, Tennessee, northern Georgia and Alabama where the Spanish explorer, Hernando DeSoto, encountered them in 1540 (17-19).

“Tribal traditions assert that the powerful and warlike Cherokees have always held the vast region of the Alleghenies, and what is today Virginia, western North and South Carolina, eastern Tennessee, northern Georgia and northern Alabama” (Woodward 18). The Cherokees maintained that their domain had been given to them by the Great Spirit (18). Until the nineteenth century Cherokee orators referred to a migration period and

recited the history of Cherokee tribal migration at every Great Green Corn Festival in the fall (18). These orators referred to “towns of people in many nights’ encampment removed” (18). According to Woodward, by the nineteenth century for unknown reasons, the history of Cherokee migration was deleted from orations delivered by the chiefs (19).

Linguists have discovered that the Cherokee and Iroquoian languages in many respects are similar (Woodward 19). This finding supports the early habitation of the ancient Cherokees in what is now the Great Lakes region. Further, many linguists now classify the Cherokees as a branch of the Iroquoian family originating from the north (19).

According to Woodward some ethnologists and historians concede that the word Cherokee is a corruption of the word *Tsalagi* or *Tsaragi* meaning “Ancient Tobacco People” (Woodward 21). *Tsalagi* might be a derivative of *A-tsilagi-ga-i* which means “Red Fire Men” (21). The color red to the Cherokee was a symbol of bravery. The Cherokee believed that bravery emanated from the East where the sun rose. Therefore, *Tsalagi* could also mean “Children of the Sun” or “Brave Men” (21).

The Cherokees also gave names to themselves. Kituhwa (today near Bryson City, North Carolina) is the Cherokees’ mother settlement in the southern Alleghenies. Early day Cherokees referred to themselves as *Ani Kitu Hwagi* which means “People of Kituhwa” (Woodward 22). Another especially liked name is *Ani-Yun Wiya* which means “Real or Principal People” (22). This is the interpretation Cherokees follow today. *Ani-Yun Wiya* emanates from Dragging Canoe, a Cherokee chief in 1775 (22). His words protested his people’s cession of land to Richard Henderson’s Transylvania Company were as follows:

We had hoped that the white men would not be willing to travel beyond the mountains . . . Finally the whole country, which the Cherokees and their fathers have so long occupied, will be demanded, and the remnant of *Ani-Yun Wiya*, The Real People, once so great and formidable, will be compelled to seek refuge in some distant wilderness. (Williams, from Woodward 1963:22)

The Cherokees were the war lords of the southern Appalachian Highlands. “We cannot live without war, they told white men who visited their highland strongholds in the eighteenth century. ‘War is our beloved occupation’” (Haywood, from Woodward 3). The Cherokees, however impassioned they were towards war-like activity, turned from war against white domination and acculturated into white society.

In summary, the following are paramount events that influenced Cherokee history (Woodward 4):

- 1) The coming of the Spanish plunderers under Hernando DeSoto in 1540.
- 2) The treaty with England in 1720 in which Cherokee lands were ceded to the crown, and the tribe made complete submission to the British.
- 3) The treaty with the new American Republic in 1785 by the terms which mutual friendship was established.
- 4) The forced removal to the West, “The Trail Where They Cried,” at the hands of the United States government in 1838.
- 5) The Civil War, 1861-1865.
- 6) The dissolution of tribal bonds in 1906, and fusion into the mass of American citizenry.

Within these three hundred and sixty six years is “a tale of a people with extraordinary tenacity trying to survive as a culturally distinctive group” (Mankiller 1993a, 44).

### **Background of Cherokee Culture**

Hernando DeSoto, first European to visit the Cherokees, admired their physical appearance, their pottery making, basket making, and their skills in hunting (Demos 75). DeSoto noted their use of mounds as sites for ceremonial temples and sometimes for burials (75). The people were friendly and gregarious (76). “Harmony was their supreme social value; hence they always viewed the goals of the community as more important than

the interests of individuals” (76). Cherokee women farmed, fished, and gathered (Demos 76). Their towns were small, compact and self-sufficient (76).

Cherokee society was matrilineal, a line of kinship based on mothers. Women owned homes and fields for farming. At death, these properties passed to her blood relatives. Some men were polygamous but in most cases the co-wives were sisters or cousins (Demos 76). Divorce was accepted and easily obtained; in the aftermath of divorce, a woman regained the full support of her parents, brothers, and other maternal relatives (76). Women frequently resorted to abortion and infanticide to limit family size (Demos 76). Priests were either male or female (76). Women took the lead in festivals such as the important Green Corn Dance held at the start of the harvest (77). Town government was managed by a council in which all adults participated. While men held positions as chiefs and elders, women freely declared their own opinions (77).

Warfare with neighboring tribes such as the Tuscaroras and Shawnee in the eighteenth century resulted as hunters moved farther in search of game, and from clashes with white settlers from the East (Demos 78). Colonial leaders demanded land near the traditional borders or within Cherokee territory which in 1721 began a series of treaties (78). In the latter half of the eighteenth century Cherokees were involved in wars with the colonists. Both the French and Indian War (1754-63) and Cherokee alliance with the English and colonists loyal to the crown in the American Revolution (1776-83) produced devastating results (78). Loss of land from failed government negotiation and from continued encroachment by frontiersmen added to Cherokee misery.

Concurrently, Cherokee culture was changing. Fur trading reshaped Cherokee economy and both women and men participated in the industry. The introduction of European tools changed farming, imported utensils changed cooking, imported European fruits and vegetables changed diet, and machine-woven blankets replaced the use of animal skins. Women’s traditional craft skills such as molding and firing pots, shaping bones into combs and needles, and weaving fibers into mats were abandoned (Demos 79).

Changes occurred in Cherokee social and political organization. English leaders wished to deal with Cherokees similar to their own status. Since the Cherokees did not have chiefs beyond the level of the individual towns, a process of centralizing power within the tribes began, which would last far into the nineteenth century (Demos 80). The backlash of this was a gradual lessening of women's role in governance. Although women had actively participated in town councils, contact with European settlers mainly involved trade and warfare, activities in which the men traditionally participated. Therefore, women's involvement diminished.

The next critical juncture that affected traditional Cherokee culture occurred after the American Revolution. Federal government policy dictated that the Cherokees be "civilized" and be given a chance to abandon their "savage" ways. The new policy included intermarriage, education, Christianity, and agriculture. Women were encouraged to become homemakers "in the typical white-American sense" (Demos 82). Cherokee response was divided, but some Cherokee women were eager to embrace the proposed changes (82). Some Cherokees left completely and migrated west. Cherokees who decided it would be better to accept non-Indian customs did so in hopes that if they became more like the whites, the settlers would allow them to live in peace in their homeland (Schwartz 27).

The Cherokees became recognized as "the most civilized tribe in America" (Demos 86). By the early nineteenth century the Cherokees had developed a highly sophisticated government, a Constitution modeled after the United States Constitution, a judicial system, a bilingual newspaper, *The Cherokee Chief*, and an alphabet: "Sequoyah, the great Cherokee leader invented an alphabet so that the words of the white man might be written down and read by his people" (Jones 124). The Cherokees began to elect leaders such as a principal chief, an assistant chief, and other officials who would govern their nation.

Meanwhile, gold was discovered in Cherokee territory. Georgians were afraid that the Cherokee Constitution would help the Cherokees defend their claim to their traditional territory (Schwartz 30). Although government-signed treaties had guaranteed the Cherokees their land, President Jackson claimed there was little the government could do to control the state of Georgia (30). In 1830, the United States Congress passed the Indian Removal Act which gave Jackson the authority to buy the land of the Cherokees, and in return, offer the Cherokees a section of land that is now Oklahoma (30). The Cherokees believed they could negotiate but their attempts were futile (31; Strickland, 293). The Cherokees were forced westward, stripped of their homeland, brutalized, and murdered. Whites had encouraged the Cherokees to take on their ways, but they had not intended for the Cherokees to put into practice what they had been taught: "The worst part of our holocaust was that it also meant the continued loss of tribal knowledge and traditions" (Mankiller 1993a, 47).

Upon relocation to Indian Territory the Cherokees continued to live according to non-Native American ways. They built schools and hospitals and established a criminal justice system in accordance with the Cherokee Constitution. A public school system for the tribe was established in 1841, and two preparatory schools were established in 1851 (Mankiller 1993a, 122). A school exclusively for Cherokee women, the Cherokee Female Seminary, modeled after Mount Holyoke in Massachusetts, was established in 1850 (Green 68).

The United States government had promised the Cherokees that in exchange for all the land in the Southeast and for all the lives lost in the removal they would be able to live uninterrupted in Indian Territory forever (Mankiller, 1993b, 87). The Civil War demolished this notion and dismantled the progress the Cherokees had made in restructuring because part of the war was fought in Indian Territory (87). After the Civil War the Cherokees again began to rebuild; however, Indian Territory was opening up to white settlement,



which the government had promised would never happen (87). In essence, history repeated itself with westward expansion.

In 1907 Indian territory ceased to exist when Oklahoma was declared a state. Even though the Cherokee government was to have been dissolved by March, 1906, “it was continued in modified and restricted form under an act of Congress until June 30, 1914, when all business in the division of tribal properties was finished (Woodward 323). Principal Chief William C. Rogers, chosen in the previous election of 1903, continued in office until 1917 to sign the deeds in the transfer of Cherokee lands” (323). “Indian Territory” was found to be oil rich, and again government allocated lands. Cherokees received an allotment of one hundred and ten acres each from the tribal domain (322). Cherokees dominated a large section of the state of Oklahoma. Aware that they were by education, experience, and training qualified to do so, Cherokee leaders assumed the responsibilities of citizens of the United States and Oklahoma immediately after statehood (324): “After statehood, Cherokee physicians and surgeons Frances B. Fite and W. Thompson, together with their Cherokee colleagues who in territorial days had organized the Indian Territory Medical Association, merged the Indian Territory Medical Association, thus bringing into existence the Oklahoma Medical Association” (325). Cherokee educators, newspaper editors, and ministers participated in the upliftment and betterment of both whites and Indians residing in the new state of Oklahoma (325).

In the 1940’s there was a revitalization of tribal government, but it was not until 1971 that the Cherokees through a series of enactments were able to elect their own tribal leaders and began again the process of rebuilding a political and social system (Mankiller 1993b, 88).

### **The Role of Rhetoric in Cherokee Culture**

The role of rhetoric in Cherokee culture is depicted in oral tradition. The Cherokees have a long and proud history as orators whether as boasters of war exploits or as dignitaries with elegant appeals for peace. Women were not restricted from rhetorical

expression, actively spoke at councils, and voiced their views towards tribal organization and the interests of the people. Cherokee chiefs led their people through a tumultuous and undeserved history with rhetorical ability and skill.

Historical accounts have passed from generation to generation through oral tradition and storytelling. The Cherokees have a passion for telling and listening to stories (Mankiller 1993a, 44). Orations delivered by the chiefs omitted migratory information in their repertoires by the nineteenth century, yet the words of a nineteenth century chief, William P. Ross, portray an oral tradition: “No response comes down the gallery of time from the silent recesses of the past” (Woodward 19).

In the Cherokee culture the ability to speak well was highly regarded. A Cherokee custom to instigate war “provided practice for warriors” (Woodward 34) which provided Cherokee youth and opportunity to recite war deeds: “Among themselves every warrior is an orator & they have publick (sic) gatherings frequently to give them an opportunity of boasting of their exploits” (35). A letter written in 1761 by William Fyffe, a Charlestown plantation owner, states that “recitations of war deeds encouraged their youths to become orators who even surpassed those of ancient Greece and Rome” (35).

Cherokee women did not fall silent in spite of white influence and the lessening of women’s active rhetorical participation. Nanyehi (Beloved Woman, Nancy Ward) earned her title as governor of the Women’s Council after showing great leadership during a war against the Creek Indians (Green 44). She could speak for women on matters of peace and war and domestic policy (44). Nanyehi appeared in 1785 at a treaty conference concluding Cherokee participation in the American Revolution (Demos 81). Proclaiming herself as “a mother of warriors,” she exhorted the delegates to create a firm basis for peace between her people and the United States (81). According to Demos, in 1787 another woman wrote to Benjamin Franklin on the same subject (81). She had argued for peace at an assembly of tribal leaders, had filled peace pipes for the warriors, and had sent some of the same tobacco to the United States Congress. Her letter to Franklin urged him

to “rightly consider that woman is the mother of All--and the Woman does not pull children out of Trees or Stumps nor out of old Logs, but out of their Bodies, so that [men] ought to mind what a woman says” (81). According to Demos, these words reflected the ancient Cherokee belief that women’s role as mothers gave them special authority in guarding the welfare of society as a whole (81).

Cherokee men who were accustomed to the active participation of women in councils were surprised at the absence of women when they met with European leaders. Outacity (Ostenaco) led a Cherokee delegation to meet British representatives in the early eighteenth century. Upon meeting the British, his first words were, “Where are your women?” (Green 33-34). European men made disparaging remarks such as “[a]mong the Cherokees, the women rule the roost” and “the Cherokees have a petticoat government” (Mankiller 1993a, 19). In May 1817, Nancy Ward participated at a tribal council at which she presented a statement signed by twelve other women pleading with the Cherokee people not to give up any more land (19).

“Oratory has been an important feature of Indian councils and rituals, but with the threat to their way of life from white settlements and expansion Indian orators were faced with the greatest rhetorical challenge that could be imagined when they attempted to persuade the powerful intruders to fairness and consideration and their own people to a course of action whether resistance, compromise, or surrender” (Kennedy 87). According to Strickland, the Cherokees believed in “the power of the spoken word” (293). The Cherokees believed that through negotiation they could prevent the forced removal to the West in 1838.

Oratory has been a continuous process in Cherokee culture and an integral part of Cherokee communication for the past four centuries, probably longer than any other existing Native American tribe. Although Cherokee culture was matrilinear and despite the fact that women played a vital role in the rhetoric of the culture, Wilma Mankiller was

the first female Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Her rhetoric has influenced her people, politicians, corporations, students and educators.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an historical overview of the Cherokees and the significant events that shaped their culture. The next chapter explicates the neo-Aristotelian approach that will be employed to examine the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller and reviews the extant literature.

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**PART II    RHETORICAL ANALYSIS**

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology and Rhetorical Literature Review

This chapter explains the neo-Aristotelian method employed in this thesis in order to examine the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller, the first woman elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. A reason for using the neo-Aristotelian method is to explicate details, context, speaker, and artifact to form an initial base-line of research on this important rhetorical process. Three essential elements involved in the neo-Aristotelian approach include: (1) reconstructing the context in which the rhetorical artifact(s) occurred; (2) analyzing the artifact; and (3) assessing the potential impact of the artifact on the audience in light of the various options available to the rhetor (Foss 27). Further, this chapter explains the three major components of the neo-Aristotelian approach to reconstruct the context: (1) the rhetor; (2) the occasion; and (3) the audience (28). The five classical canons of rhetoric will be explained in this analysis which include: (1) invention; (2) organization; (3) style; (4) delivery; and (5) memory (29-31). This chapter will further explain the assessment of rhetorical effects which includes whether the goal of the rhetor was likely achieved, the short or long-term impact of the rhetoric, the speaker's intention, and the context in which the rhetoric was presented (31-32). In addition, this chapter provides a review of literature specific to the rhetorical study of Native American oratory.

According to Cathcart a magnitude of neo-Aristotelian criticism has been applied to the speeches of prominent political and religious leaders (83). Neo-Aristotelian criticism has explained how these individuals and their rhetoric have worked to influence audiences, and to what degree a particular discourse is representative of effective or ineffective persuasion (83). Thus, this analysis advances the study of Mankiller's rhetorical practices from a variety of perspectives inherent in neo-Aristotelian criticism.



## **Reconstructing the Context**

Connecting the rhetorical artifact with its context in order to discover how the various components of the context affected the rhetoric is a vital element of this analysis. In neo-Aristotelianism the three major components of context are: 1) the rhetor, 2) the occasion, 3) the audience.

### **The Rhetor**

Knowledge of the speaker's history, experience, character, attitudes and values is necessary in order to understand the speaker's motives, ideas and rhetorical intent (Foss 28). According to Cathcart "every message is in fact an extension of its speaker, and its significance is in large part related to that source" (19). According to Cathcart, "the speaker must be one of the main interests, if not the main interest of the critic" (19). This psychological focus attempts to understand the speaker's drives and motives and to explain the structure of feelings and thoughts in the message (20-21). A biographical approach considers the speaker's entire career or a large segment of it in conjunction with the speaker's rhetorical discourses. Taken together, this approach reveals the uniqueness of the rhetor, as well as the uniqueness of the message as an extension of its speaker and their psychology (19).

### **The Occasion**

Analysis of the occasion is important because the uniqueness of the situation impacts on the rhetorical act. Elements that influenced the rhetor on a specific topic, events that precipitated the occasion, and social and cultural attitudes toward the topic are part of the social climate, and all contribute to the occasion and meaning of the discourse (Foss 28).

### **The Audience**

Some of the same elements that formed the occasion for the rhetor also affect the audience such as the factors relating to the occasion and the nature of the rhetorical act. Elements that influenced the rhetor's choice of topic and the rhetor's approach need to be

illuminated for the audience. The composition of the audience, the audience's interest and enthusiasm for the rhetor, the audience's knowledge about the reputation of the rhetor, and the audience's attitude towards the rhetorical topic are audience considerations for the rhetor (Foss 28).

### **Assessing the Rhetorical Artifact**

Neo-Aristotelian analysis of the rhetorical artifact is accomplished utilizing the five classical canons of rhetoric: 1) invention, the location and creation of ideas and materials for the speech 2) organization, the structure and arrangement of the speech 3) style, the language of the speech 4) memory, the mastery of the subject matter that may include memorization 5) delivery, the management of voice and gestures in the presentation of the speech.

#### **Invention**

Invention includes the speaker's main ideas, lines of argument and content (Foss 29). Invention is based on external or on artistic proofs. External proofs are sources that the speaker does not create such as testimony of witnesses or documents such as contracts and letters. Whether the evidence is quoting from experts, statistical summaries, personal experiences, or some other form, the relevance to the speaker's argument must be evaluated (29). The development of the evidence, its consistency and sufficiency must also be analyzed (29). Internal or artistic proofs are created by the rhetor, including logos, ethos, and pathos.

Logos refers to the logical or rational elements of the proof, the evidence and reasoning (Lucas 413). The evidence presented to enforce or support the point is evaluated in terms of the belief of the audience and the context of the rhetoric (Foss 29). The audience must derive a conclusion based on the rhetor's appeals through either inductive or deductive reasoning (29). A conclusion is drawn in inductive reasoning through a presentation of a series of examples (29). In deductive reasoning, the audience draws a conclusion through a generalization made by the rhetor which is applied to a

specific example (29). Analyzing both the evidence presented by the rhetor and the reasoning used by the rhetor to develop the appeal helps reveal rhetorical efficacy (29).

Ethos refers to credibility and deals with the effect or appeal of the speaker's character on the audience (Foss 29). A speaker's credibility is determined by two factors: competence and character (Lucas 405). The competence of the speaker is determined by the audience based on the speaker's intelligence, expertise, and knowledge of the subject (405). An audience determines the speaker's character through the speaker's sincerity, trustworthiness, and concern for the well being of the audience (405). How the rhetor's character is perceived by the audience before the presentation enables the audience to accept or reject the source or message. According to Andrews, the perception an audience has of a speaker is what determines ethos (57). Credibility is mainly established by the rhetor through the rhetorical act in three ways: 1) integrity through linking the rhetor and message with what the audience considers virtuosity 2) intelligence depicted by common sense, knowledge of current issues, and good taste, 3) good will which is an established rapport with the audience (Foss 30). The ethical component of this appeal also includes the virtues or vices in the evidence. Evidence consists of supporting materials such as examples, statistics, or testimony which are used to prove or disprove a statement or argument (Lucas 409). Speaker credibility is enhanced by justified claims whereas unsupported generalizations create audience skepticism (409).

Pathos is the internal or artistic proof that concerns the appeals designed to generate emotions of the audience (Foss 30). The emotions generated by the speech and how these emotions elicit a reaction favorable to the rhetor's purpose need to be discovered (30).

### Organization

Organization refers to the pattern of the arrangement of the speech such as chronological order that divides material into time units, or problem-solving in which a discussion of a problem is followed by a solution (Foss 30). Determining the parts of the

speech given more emphasis by their placement is necessary to evaluate their importance to the rhetor. Emphasis can be determined by identifying which parts of the rhetoric are given greater stress by their placement at the beginning or at the end of the speech (30). This requires an evaluation of the organization of the speech regarding its consistency with the subject, purpose of discourse, and appropriateness to the audience (30).

### Style

Style refers to the language used by the rhetor (Foss 30). Style includes how particular words are used by the rhetor to create effect and how words are formed to create short or long sentences (30). Dialect is part of a rhetor's style (Lucas 302). Use of language such as ordinary, vigorous, or sophisticated word choices are part of style (Foss 30). Important to consider in examining style is whether the language contributes to the accomplishment of the rhetor's goal, assists in the development of the argument, facilitates the communication of ideas, and thus helps to create the intended message (30).

### Delivery

Delivery is the manner in which the rhetor speaks. Delivery involves the mode of presentation whether from notes or manuscript, impromptu, memory, or extemporaneously (Foss 31). Delivery includes posture, gestures, voice, vocal inflections, articulation, pronunciation, rate and pitch of speech and eye contact (31). Further, delivery includes the appearance of the rhetor, body movement during the presentation and the affect of the rhetor's persona on the audience (31).

### Memory

Memory encompasses the rhetor's control of the material. Foss notes that this canon is often not applied in the neo-Aristotelian approach in part because memory was not dealt with systematically by Aristotle, and because few speeches are memorized today (31). For the purpose of this study, the evidence suggests that some Native American orations were presented by memory ( Morris 29, Ek 257) and that it was customary for speeches to be memorized (Kennedy 101).

### **Assessment of Effects**

The impact of the rhetorical artifact on the audience is referred to as the assessment of effects. The effect of the artifact includes whether the goal of the rhetor was achieved (Foss 31). The effect of the rhetorical artifact is evaluated according to the speaker's purpose (31). To assess the effect of a rhetorical presentation the speaker's intention, the audience, and the context in which the speech is presented need to be evaluated (31). The canons of rhetoric, invention, organization, delivery, style, and memory need to be evaluated (31). Assessment should also include an overview of the immediate and long term effects (31).

### **Review of the Literature on Native American Oratory**

A review of the literature reveals that little rhetorical research has been conducted on Native American oratory. This review of literature covers the extant literature beginning in 1935.

Buswell's (1935) article, "The Oratory of the Dakota Indians" is a brief article based on her master's thesis. Information in this article is largely composed of letters written to Buswell from individuals who knew Dakota leaders personally and from interviews that involved Buswell and individuals who knew Dakota Territory well. Buswell specified five points characteristic of all Indian oratory. First, according to Buswell, the language is simple, naive, and picturesque. Second, yet closely allied with the first point, is the profuse use of the figure of speech, such as the adjective. Third, the Indian orator made constant use of the personal pronoun. Fourth, the Indian speaker used short, terse sentences. Fifth, the speeches are marked by utter sincerity (326). The strength of this article is dependent on the comments of her sources rather than actual analysis of Dakota Indian rhetoric. Limitations of this article which were acknowledged by Buswell are: (1) speeches were difficult to secure because they are in permanent possession of tribal ownership and (2) some speeches have been translated but must be secured verbally because they have not been transcribed (324).

Morris's (1944) article, "Indian Oratory" is a short article that canvassed an array of Native American orators including Cornstock, a Shawnee chieftain; Mingo Chief, John Logan; preacher Samson Occum; Tomochieh, Chief of the Creeks; a Memomine Chief; Captain Pollard, a Seneca Chief; Chief of the Mahas, Big Elk; Mrs. Horn Bull, a woman Sioux Council member; Cherokee Chief, George Lowery and numerous others. Morris found numerous characteristics in the Native American oratory that she studied such as strength, assurance, and sympathy; the use of simile and metaphor; conversational and informal speech patterns; a strategy of asking a barrage of questions to the audience and a style that was dignified, forceful, and convincing, but eloquent as well. Morris used brief passages from Native American speeches to make her assessments. This study offers numerous excerpts of speeches and numerous examples of the speech occasion. The scope of the study entails a generalized overview of many descriptors of speech activity but does not identify any one characteristic as distinctive of a particular tribe.

Balگوoyen's (1962) article, "A Study of Conflicting Values: American Plains Indian Orators vs. the U.S. Commissioners of Indian Affairs" examined speeches of United States Commissioners and speeches of Plains Indian Chiefs. The study revealed that shared value orientation is the element that makes communication possible and when values are not shared, communication breaks down (76). American Indians and the United States government viewed land in two opposing ways. To the Indians land was sacred and theirs by ancestral right, "impossible to fence off for personal use" (80). To the government, "land was a consumer commodity, to be cleared, fenced, taxed, bought and sold" (80).

Jones's (1965) book, *Aboriginal American Oratory; The Tradition of Eloquence Among the Indians of the United States*, is a comprehensive history of Native Americans and it is a compilation of the rhetoric of outstanding native American women and men orators. The inspiration for this work evolved from Jones's find of a collection of printed Native American speeches in a loft of an old log cabin on the Iowa prairie (xviii). Jones

evaluated every speech in this work in terms of its historical context, content, and effectiveness. Orators in this collection including Pontiac, Logan, Chief Brant, Red Jacket, Tecumseh, Geronimo, Chief Joseph, Little Carpenter, and others have been placed under the umbrella of Jones's term, "The Golden Age of Indian Eloquence" (41).

Jones extensively studied organization, style, and delivery characteristics of selected Native American orators. Jones identified three major essentials of all Native American oratory: (1) breadth and depth of thought which commands the respect of the listener; (2) sentiments clothed in language of sufficient elegance to give their content force and charm; and (3) a manner of delivery that is polished and refined to a degree which leaves satisfaction with those who listen (16).

Jones's study reached similar conclusions to Buswell's (1935) and Morris' (1944) earlier studies in that Native American words were simple and to the point, and were enhanced by imagery: "The Indian lived and thought in metaphor--consequently even the most mundane of his speeches are like brightly colored pictures reflected in the minds of his listeners" (xviii). "Metaphor and allegory come naturally to his lips, but he has no use or need for clichés or superlatives" (19). Sorter, 1972; Scholten, 1977; Armstrong, 1971; Turner, 1971; Strickland, 1982; and Kennedy, 1998 reached similar conclusions to Jones (1965) that eloquence is one of the characteristics of Native American oratory.

Richard Ek's (1966) article, "Red Cloud's Cooper Union Address," studied the delivery of Red Cloud's 1870 presentation which is described as "refreshing, simple, and unaffected utterances" (260). Ek applied Aristotle's proofs, ethos, pathos, and logos to Red Cloud's speech. Although this speech was short, typical of some Native American oratory, Ek explained the powerful and long-lasting aftermath of this brief speech based on the strength of its logical argument which was presented with credibility and emotion (259-261).

Balگوoyen's (1968) article, "The Plains Indian as Public Speaker," studied speaking roles as part of Plains Indian culture and identified some of the outstanding tribal

speakers during the nineteenth century. Speech text, historical and biographical information were significant components of this study. The study addressed the use of appeals: “the orator used every logical, personal and emotional appeal at his command” (24). Consistent with Morris (1944) Balgooyen found direct interaction between the speaker and the audience noting that “[t]he speaker would seem to address his remarks first to one member of the audience, and then to another” (16).

Armstrong’s (1971) book, *I Have Spoken: American History Through the Voices of the Indians*, is one of the few resources that provides a collection of speech text of Native American orators. Her work is an important source for subsequent scholarship.

Camp’s (1978) article, “American Indian Oratory in the White Image: An Analysis of Stereotypes,” focused on the stereotypical image of the American Indian orator. In this study Camp further examined the much analyzed speech of Mingo Chief, John Logan (Sandefur 289). Perhaps inspired by Turner (1973) this study informs us that Native American oratory might be “the direct product of the Indian’s contact with the White” (811). Reinforcing Buswell, 1935; Morris, 1944; Jones, 1965; and Balgooyen, 1968, Camp confirmed “the Indian’s verbal facility and powers of persuasion” (812). This article explains that misconceptions of the Native American orator likely stem from a difference in cultural values. Camp suggested that non-Indian attitudes and interpretation of Native American oratory chronicles the operation of stereotypes as interlocking networks of folk and popular beliefs, attitudes, images, and values (815). This study revealed that misconceptions have resulted from two mid-nineteenth century phenomena: (1) the use of the popular press and (2) the social dislocation attendant to the assimilation into white culture (815).

Strickland’s (1982) article, “The Rhetoric of Removal and The Trail of Tears: Cherokee Speaking Against Jackson’s Indian Removal Policy, 1828-1832” and Charland’s (1987) article, “The Case of the Pueple Quebecois” both explored minority group identification in contention with government in the context of rhetorical strategy.



Charland's article points out that "populations can at different historical moments gain different identities that warrant different forms of collective life" (217). Strickland suggests that regardless of the remarkable artistic achievement of Cherokee rhetoric (308) "no rhetorical strategy no matter how sophisticated or artistic" (309) could have prevailed over government's determination to enforce relocation. Strickland's article addresses pathos and the use of language and examines the oratory of Cherokee elders, Major Ridge and John Ross. The study reveals the importance of credibility. However, the perspectives of a minority group which run counter to prevailing social attitudes, without the support of government, are subject to failure, regardless of how well planned or well executed its rhetorical strategy (309).

Kennedy's (1998) chapter, "North American Indian Rhetoric," (from *Comparative Rhetoric An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction* 83-111) is a thorough overview of the evolution of Native American oratory. Characteristics typical of Native American orators are identified and confirm characteristics previously identified by Jones (1965). Brevity (Kennedy 85; Jones 17), politeness (Kennedy 85), and honesty (Kennedy 97; Jones 19) are some components of Native American public address. According to Kennedy, colonial inhabitants noted "their preference for brevity of speech" (85, 88). "The Indians encountered by the settlers valued politeness and sought consensus in debate both among themselves and with the white" (85). A case that depicted honesty explains a contest between a United States representative in council with a tribal orator. The agent insists the argument is on paper. The tribal orator replies, "the paper then tells a lie" (Jones 19).

Kennedy (1998) further classified Jones's (1965) previous findings of organization. Kennedy states that Native American speeches "regularly contain a proemium, a narration, a proof that contains a series of arguments and an epilogue and they are characterized by dignity, rationality and wit" (92).

Woodward's (1963) book, *The Cherokees*, provided a thorough context in which to understand the history of this people. Green's (1992) book, *Women in American Society*, and Demos's (1995) book, *The Tried and the True Native American Women Confronting Colonization*, have informed this thesis on historical, cultural, and social perspectives and challenges that are unique to Native American women. Schwartz's 1994 biography, *Wilma Mankiller Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation*, provided a chronological and factual history.

Karlynn Kohrs Campbell's (1998) essay, "Inventing Women: From Amaterasu to Virginia Woolf," provides a context for evaluating the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller. Campbell's statement, "women were compelled to invent spaces and roles in which and the sites from which women's voices could be heard and heeded. Women had to invent themselves as speakers, as rhetors" (112) is appropriate to this study in terms of Wilma Mankiller's evolution to leadership: "My world was supposed to be within the confines of our home and social life, a world strictly defined by Hugo [first husband]. But that would no longer do for me. I wanted to set my own limits and control my destiny. I finally came to understand that I did not have to live a life based on someone else's dreams" (Mankiller 1993a, 159).

The autobiography, *Mankiller A Chief and Her People*, (Mankiller, 1993a) is an important literary source for this study. Mankiller's autobiography provides rich context for which one can obtain knowledge about her personal story, the complex history of the Cherokees, and the evolution of the American Indian civil rights struggle.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided an explanation of the neo-Aristotelian method that will be employed to examine the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller and reviewed the extant literature on Native American oratory. The next chapter applies the neo-Aristotelian method to examine the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller

The rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller has motivated, influenced, and educated numerous audiences including the Cherokee people, politicians, and college students. This chapter explicates the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller by the neo-Aristotelian method.

The rhetorical artifacts examined consist of two speeches presented by Wilma Mankiller: (1) the text of “Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation” delivered at Sweet Briar College, April 2, 1993 and (2) the text and recording of the keynote address delivered at California Lutheran University, March 6, 1999. Also included is a personal interview conducted by the author with Wilma Mankiller on May 19, 2000. The speech, “Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation,” was obtained January 11, 2000 from the Sweet Briar College website, “Gifts of Speech at Sweet Briar College.” The audiocassette of the keynote address presented at California Lutheran University, March 6, 1999, program, “Creative Options: A Day for Women,” was obtained from Dr. Kateri Alexander, Director of Women’s Resource Center at California Lutheran University. The audiocassette was professionally transcribed, as accurately as possible, into manuscript form.

#### **Reconstruction of context**

Three areas that provide the context for these artifacts include: (1) Mankiller as rhetor; (2) the occasions on which the rhetoric was presented; and (3) the audiences to whom the rhetoric was addressed. Information about the background of Wilma Mankiller assists in explaining her motives to educate her audiences about the Cherokees, their history, their progress, and her leadership within the contemporary Cherokee community. Her speeches reveal a Cherokee philosophy born of a brutal, sad history and reared by

social and economic struggles. My examination is sensitive to an understanding of the Cherokee world view.

In terms of the occasion, these addresses occur at a time when contemporary society is very aware of Native American political, social, cultural and economic difficulties. Further, contemporary society recognizes the Native American culture and there is great interest in Native American spirituality, tradition, arts and crafts, music, and literature. Mankiller's speeches also occur at a time when women have assumed important leadership roles in the political arena.

The audiences that came to hear Mankiller speak consisted of women and men, primarily college students, who share an interest in Native American culture, history, and philosophy, who came to learn about the Cherokees, or who came to experience the public discourse of a Cherokee Chief, specifically Mankiller.

### The Rhetor

The charisma of Wilma Mankiller is manifested in her history, her experience, her character, and her personality. The charisma of Wilma Mankiller's rhetoric is characterized by her honesty, her wit, and her sincerity in the conveyance of her message. Mankiller has said, "I want to be remembered as the person who helped us restore faith in ourselves" ("Wilma Mankiller, Wife, Mother, Grandmother, Chief" 021400). As leader and rhetor she has appealed to her audiences and has won the respect of her people, our nation, corporations, political figures, educators, and students.

Mankiller brings to the podium a uniqueness. She is the first woman to be elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Her background is rich with experience which inspired and has culminated in her role of leadership.

Wilma Pearl Mankiller was born November 18, 1945 in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the capital of the Cherokee Nation. Her mother was Dutch-Irish; her father a full-blooded Cherokee. Removed at age ten in 1956 with her family through the Bureau of Indian Affairs program from Oklahoma to California, she was thrust into a culture completely

unknown to her (Mankiller 1993a, 70 and 288). Mankiller was a troubled adolescent, “teased unmercifully” for her name and her dialect (Mankiller, 1993a, 103). Early on she encountered racial and social bias. Upon the relocation to California by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a popular sign in restaurants read, “No Dogs, No Indians” (72): “The other kids also teased me about the way I talked and dressed. It was not that I was so much poorer than the others, but I was definitely from another culture” (72). Through experiences such as these she realized the need for social justice. Mankiller did graduate from high school, became employed as a clerical worker for a finance company, married, and gave birth to two daughters within a decade.

To better understand Mankiller’s discourse, pivotal events meaningful of that discourse need to be identified. The momentous event in Mankiller’s life, propelling her into social activism, was the occupation of Alcatraz in 1969 by Berkeley college students which brought to national attention the needs of Native American people (Mankiller, 1993b, 89). Mankiller became involved in the Pit River tribe land dispute and was instrumental in the tribe’s retrieval of their ancestral land (Schwartz 55-57). She acquired paralegal skills and became adept at organization. In 1976, as a single mother, Mankiller returned to Oklahoma and re-entered college to complete her course work for a bachelor’s degree in social sciences while working to procure grants for her people which would enable them to initiate critical rural programs (65). She served as a volunteer for seven years for numerous social programs and was involved in creating foster care and adoption policies relating to Indian children (55-57): “I became a volunteer for practically every Native American organization around . . .” (Mankiller 1999, 107). In 1979 she was made a program-development specialist for the Cherokee Nation. While fulfilling the responsibilities of this position she began taking graduate courses in community planning at the University of Arkansas. In 1981 she created the Bell Project which was a very successful project concerned with rehabilitating housing in Cherokee communities (Schwartz 69-71). In 1982 she founded the Community Development Department of the

Cherokee Nation (107). In 1983 Chief Ross Swimmer requested that Wilma run for election as his deputy chief (73). When Swimmer became director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1985, Mankiller assumed his duties (Mankiller 1993a, 290). In 1987, Mankiller became the first elected woman to the office of Principal Chief, and in 1991, she was re-elected as Principal Chief (Schwartz 107).

Under her leadership, economic development, health and child services were given new priority. In 1990 Mankiller signed the historic self-governance agreement which authorized the Cherokee Nation to assume responsibility for funds formerly administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Mankiller 1993a, 290-291). Tribal courts and tribal police were revitalized under her leadership and a Cherokee Nation tax commission was established (290-291).

Mankiller's obstacles have been more than political. She has faced and overcome numerous medical challenges which include two kidney transplants, seventeen reconstructive operations following a severe car accident, myasthenia gravis, and cancer.

Mankiller did not seek re-election in 1995. She has since served as an editor of *The Reader's Companion to United States Women's History* published in 1998 and lectures throughout the country. She is continuing to write and currently has three books in process (Olaya 2000). Mankiller has received national recognition for her achievements. The 1998 Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, and the 1987 *Ms. Magazine* Woman of the Year award are included in her numerous and prestigious tributes.

As a rhetor, Mankiller does not keep her life experiences secret. She intertwines her experience, her determination, her growth, her tenacity, her self-sufficiency, and her faith and belief with her message: "I think the most important issue we have as a people is what we started, and that is to begin to trust our own thinking again and believe in ourselves enough to think that we can articulate our own vision of the future and then work to make sure that vision becomes a reality" (Mankiller, 1993b, 99).



Mankiller's personal history and experience prove that she is tenacious: "... rather than giving up I just worked harder" (Mankiller, 1993b, 92). In speaking about her people she says: "[o]ur people are very tenacious, and it was that tenacity that I saw as a strength we could build on" (95). As a single mother of two daughters, Mankiller exhibited self-sufficiency as well as the ability to restructure her life. In speaking about the Cherokees and their efforts to rebuild their community, she notes: "[w]e see that process as a process of how we began to rebuild ourselves as a people . . . we see that as a way of rebuilding our nation" (98). Mankiller's personal determination to "do something and contribute" (92) is woven through her reflection on her people as a nation: ". . . we've grown and the reason we've grown and rebuilt is because of our own hard work and our determination to have a community, and to have a tribe again . . ." (98-100).

The rhetoric of Mankiller is unique in its self-disclosure of her experiences, thoughts, and reflections. Her message as an extension of herself reflects her values, attitudes, and beliefs. Her discourse conveys the concept that determination, tenacity, and self-sufficiency are the conditions by which the Cherokees have preserved their culture and by which they can continue to sustain themselves.

### Occasion

Both of the occasions, "Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation" and "Creative Options: A Day for Women" share similar features. Both presentations were held in college settings. Wilma Mankiller was invited to speak at both occasions in a premier position. Mankiller spoke extemporaneously at both occasions (Mankiller 2000, 117). Both of these occasions were similar in that they created the unique opportunity to listen to and observe a Native American leader in a public forum. Mankiller as speaker, the content of her speeches that would address Native American issues, Cherokee issues and problems, and her endeavors as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation would indicate rare and interesting rhetorical occasions.

Mankiller's presentation at Sweet Briar College was delivered April 2, 1993 to an audience consisting of college students, many who were Native American, and Native American writers (Mankiller 2000, 117 and Mankiller 1993b, 83 and 99). Her speech was part of a program designed for Native American writers (Mankiller 2000, 117). Leslie Silko and N. Scott Momaday were noted Native American writers who participated in panels associated with this event (Mankiller 1993b, 83, 99). This presentation was also one of a series of speeches presented by distinguished women at Sweet Briar College in 1993.

Mankiller's presentation as the keynote speaker at California Lutheran University was delivered March 6, 1999 to an audience consisting of college students. Many of the students were Native American women (Mankiller 1999, 102). The program for this occasion was "Creative Options: A Day for Women." Sponsored by the Women's Studies Department and the Women's Resource Center at California Lutheran University, the program focused on women and their possibilities.

#### Audience

Both of these audiences were largely composed of college students. Many of the participants at the Sweet Briar College presentation were Native American (Mankiller 1993b, 100 and 2000, 117). The presentation given at "Creative Options: A Day for Women" was largely attended by Native American women, acknowledged by Mankiller in her greeting (Mankiller 1999, 102 and 2000, 117). I suggest that those who attended these presentations would reflect a listening community that anticipated the speaker either out of curiosity or from prior knowledge of her. Further, presentations such as these reflect a listening community conscious of, interested in, and/or sensitive to Native American issues as well as a listening community that may want to become more knowledgeable about Native American issues. Native American writers also attended the Sweet Briar College presentation, "Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation," that suggests a

select audience interested in procuring more information for their craft and professional endeavors.

While the audiences are generally similar, there is little difference in the demographics of the two audiences. The audiocassette of Mankiller's speech from "Creative Options: A Day for Women" reveals an exuberant crowd who intermittently applaud and cheer. From this tape I can estimate that it was a large crowd by the volume of the applause, and that Mankiller was well received as she was called to the podium and at the conclusion of her speech. These responses would indicate a well pleased audience, quite satisfied by her presentation whether familiar with her before the occasion or not. At the conclusion of her speech there was chanting, whoops, and yells in a Native American idiom. Further, the high-spirited crowd might indicate an audience inspired by Mankiller's accomplishments to consider the program's designed purpose which focused on the many possibilities for women that exist today.

### Analysis of the Rhetorical Artifact

Mankiller uses the five classical canons of rhetoric: (1) invention; (2) organization; (3) style; (4) memory; and (5) delivery in order to create an effective message for her audiences.

### Invention

Both speeches, "Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation" and the keynote address at California Lutheran University are structured similarly and their content is similar. The logical proof in both speeches centers on historical Cherokee information, cultural and social issues, and present day conditions. Both speeches contain information relating to Mankiller's evolution into leadership and her role and experiences as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Personal testimony and historical statistics and data are prevalent evidence in both speeches. The content of the speeches differ in that there is a heavier concentration of historical evidence and documentation of Cherokee accomplishments in "Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation" than in the keynote address. There is a heavier

concentration of Mankiller's experiences as Principal Chief, her evolution into a leadership role, and her philosophical and spiritual reflections in the keynote address.

In the speech, "Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation," the logical proof that Mankiller utilized for the explanation of the contemporary condition of the Cherokee Nation was an account of Cherokee history, clarification of the social and economic problems her people have encountered, an explanation of the current issues her people are dealing with, and a report of how her people are dealing with current issues:

I think first it's important before I start talking about what we're doing today in the 1990's and what we did throughout the eighties or even the seventies in rebuilding our tribe; I think it's really, really important to put our current work and our current issues in a historical context" . . .  
[b]ecause there are a whole lot of historical factors that have played a part in our being where we are today, and I think that to even begin to understand our contemporary issues and contemporary problems, you have to understand a little bit about that history. (Mankiller 1993b, 82)

She recounts in a chronological pattern the long history of Cherokee self-governance. Mankiller begins with governance in order to establish for her audience the importance of governance to the Cherokees, an institution that the Cherokees have long upheld. By giving an historical explanation of the Cherokee implementation of governance she provides a context in which her audience can realize the early performance of Cherokee governance:

The Cherokee Nation has had a government in this country long before there was a United States government. We had treaties with England even before we had treaties with the colonies, and then later with the United States. We have a long history of governance. We had a constitution. The constitution doesn't look like the United States Constitution; our constitution was a wampum belt, and the color and the arrangements of the beads represented symbols of governance and principles by which we lived our lives, and so we have a long, long history of governance, and so that for people who find it odd that we today have a government-to-government relationship with the U.S. government should reflect on the fact that we've had that relationship for a long time. (Mankiller 1993b, 83)

She explains early European contact, first with DeSoto in 1540, and continued European contact which eventually surrounded Cherokee territory. She explains the motivation for the Cherokee removal being that Cherokee land was rich, good for cotton and tobacco growing, as well as gold having been discovered within the Cherokee Nation (Mankiller 1993b, 84). These economic resources were very desirable to the United States government. In addition, she explains the dispute with the state of Georgia:

[O]ne of the other factors in the pressure for removal was the fact that Georgia, the state of Georgia, had grown up around the Cherokee Nation, and they did not want a sovereign within the boundaries of the state of Georgia, an argument that we hear even today as states and tribes continue to battle over issues of jurisdiction and states' rights. So we got caught up in a states' rights issues as well as all the other issues that caused people to want to remove the Cherokees. (84)

Despite Cherokee efforts, the removal was enforced in 1838 by President Jackson. She describes United States Army federal troops confiscating property, stockading the people, and the long walk known as "The Trail Where They Cried:"

President Jackson ordered U.S. Army federal troops to the homes of Cherokees and rounded up Cherokees, sort of like cattle in a way, I guess, and what they would do is they would take a family, all the members of the family from their home and inventory their property and their farm and that sort of thing and confiscate everything except what they would allow them to take with them, and then they took them to stockades throughout the Southeast and held them in stockades and prepared them for the journey to Indian Territory (Mankiller, 1993b, 85-86). This is a story I think that not many of you hear about when you hear about the history of the South and the history of the Southeast. (86)

During the long walk one fourth of the Cherokee tribe died before making it to Indian Territory, now the state of Oklahoma. She explains that after the removal, despite the tragedy and extensive loss, her people came together to rebuild a community and to rebuild their tribe:

Many people were dead, families were bitterly divided over the issue of removal itself, and yet almost immediately after removal, our people began

to try to come together and rebuild a community and rebuild a tribe.  
(Mankiller 1993b, 86)

She continues to explain how the Cherokees adapted to new life. The Cherokees within not even ten years in Indian Territory established a new political system, signed a new Constitution in 1839, built buildings which still stand today, established a judicial system, printed newspapers in Cherokee and English, rebuilt an economic system, and created an educational system not only for men, but for women (Mankiller 1993b, 88):

Everything we'd ever known had been left behind, that which bound us as a people: the cultural system, the social system, and the political system, everything we had ever known had been left behind. [W]hat gives me hope and keeps me optimistic about our people, however, is to look and see how our people dealt with that after removal. (86)

She notes that the United States government had promised that the Cherokees could live in Indian Territory uninterrupted forever in exchange for all the land in the Southeast and all the lives lost during the removal: "We believed that." (Mankiller 1993b, 87)

The Cherokees' process of rebuilding was interrupted by the Civil War. Subsequent to the Civil War, Indian Territory was invaded by white settlers, exactly what the Cherokees were promised would never happen. Next, she explains that in 1907 Oklahoma became a state and Cherokee lands were opened up for settlement. Cherokee schools were shut down. Cherokee courts were closed and the Cherokees were forbidden to elect their tribal leaders. Land allotments were made which is identified by Mankiller as having the most profound effect on the way Cherokees view themselves and on the social system of the Cherokee people: "Of all the things that happened to our people at the turn of the century, I think the individual allotment of land had the most profound effect on the way we view ourselves, and on the social system of our people." (Mankiller 1993b, 87)

In conclusion to the historical review, Mankiller states that in the forties there was a revitalization of tribal government, but it was not until 1971 that her people through a

series of enactments were able to elect their own tribal leaders and begin again the process of rebuilding.

In both speeches, “Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation,” and the keynote address at California Lutheran University, Mankiller explains social and economic problems of the Cherokees through personal testimony. She details the removal of her family to California via a program sponsored by the Bureau of Indian Affairs:

The better life that the Bureau of Indian Affairs promised my family ended up being initially an old hotel in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco. It was the keys Hotel and the better job they promised my father and my older brother ended up being a job working in a rope factory for many, many hours, for very little pay. (Mankiller 1999, 104)

She explains her family’s poverty level existence, her recognition of discriminatory practices, and her isolation in a culture very different from what she had known:

San Francisco was as distant from my home and the culture I lived in as anything could possibly be. I had never seen an elevator. Never rode a bicycle. Never used roller skates and never used a telephone and we looked differently from the other children. We dressed differently from the other children. We spoke differently. We certainly had a different last name. I could remember my sister and I, I was ten at the time, feeling so embarrassed being in school because we were so different that we would go home at night and take a book and read out loud to one another so that we would sound more like the children in school, because we were just trying to not be different and not be noticeable. It is hard not to be noticed when you have a name like ‘Mankiller.’ (Mankiller 1999, 105)

Depending again on personal experience, in both speeches, Mankiller explains current issues her people are dealing with such as health, housing and social programs by recounting her journey which eventually culminated in the role of leadership:

[W]hat I learned from my experience in living in a community of almost all African-American people, and what I learned from my experience in living in my own community in Oklahoma before relocation is that poor people have a much, much greater capacity for solving their own problems than most people give them credit for. And I can’t begin to tell you how many well-meaning social workers I’ve had come and try to save me during my life. ( Mankiller 1993b, 90)

The catalyst moment in Mankiller's life that led her to social activism was her observation in 1969 of a group of Berkley college students who occupied Alcatraz Island to call national attention to the needs of Native Americans. From that point, Mankiller decided she wanted to help her own people:

[F]or the very first time I heard people talking about things that I had felt but did not know how to articulate and they were expressing thoughts and feelings that resonated with me and changed me forever. (Mankiller 1999, 107)

Mankiller became involved in other movements such as the Pit River tribe in which she helped these Indians retrieve their ancestral lands. She enrolled in college, acquired paralegal skills, and did volunteer work for numerous social programs. Mankiller explains that she realized that she was very adept at organization and chose to pursue a career in community planning. She attributes her growth in the political arena with her accomplishments in rural development projects such as the Bell Project, a method which has created dozens of revitalized Cherokee communities. She skillfully educates the audience on the issues which trouble her people such as housing, youth programs, health services, and specifically the need for community rebuilding:

So the example I'm gonna give you is a small community just not even fifteen miles from where I was raised and where my home is. In that community the people settled disputes with violence. Many, many kids were dropping out of school, income for elders was less than fifteen hundred dollars a year, twenty-five percent of the people were hauling water, had no indoor plumbing, many of the houses were dilapidated, and so we began working in this community because we absolutely believed that this community and these people would rebuild and revitalize their community. I saw this as a way or rebuilding our tribe, community by community, family by family, and so we began meeting with people and had them sit down in a group and talk about their own vision for the future and their own dreams for the future and then prioritize what it was they wanted to do. We made this deal with them, Charlie and I, and the deal was that if they would stay with us, we would be facilitators. We would bring the resources to them if they would



decide how they wanted to rebuild their community and then not only work on the leadership of it but on actually implementing it. (Mankiller 1993b, 96-97)

Mankiller documents the numerous achievements the Cherokees have accomplished:

[W]hen we started out in 1971, electing our own Chiefs again and starting this process, we were bankrupt, and we started in a storefront in Tahlequah. We've grown from that point to today, where we have twelve hundred regular employees. We run our own primary health care clinics; five primary health care clinics, a fully accredited high school, which is a boarding school, a vocational education school, twenty-four separate Head Start centers, an extensive array of day care centers, adult literacy programs, and many, many other programs, and we run a number of businesses also. (Mankiller 1993b, 98)

Mankiller's credibility is apparent in several ways. She establishes ethos through historical and factual accounts of the Cherokees as victims of long suffering. She develops credibility through personal testimony. Cherokee achievements under Mankiller's leadership further support her credibility. Mankiller's familiar jargon and congenial attitude towards the audience supports her believability. The development of her message reflects common sense, good taste, and sincerity. The persona of Mankiller coincides with the rhetorical content of her speeches. She is viewed as genuine because she has accomplished within her Nation what she aspired to do after her observation of the occupation of Alcatraz in 1969: “. . . from that point on, I became very, very interested and I acquired skills because I wanted to help my own people” (Mankiller 1993b, 89).

Mankiller's pathos in purest form is her desire to share her experiences as a woman and as a Cherokee; to share her growth into a leadership position and how she evolved as a woman into a leadership position. Modest, yet with pride, she educates her audience about the history of the Cherokees, their survival, and their accomplishments. She shares numerous personal experiences, her near-death experience, her feelings of spirituality, and “of being good mind.” Mankiller evokes emotional responses. The audio cassette revealed that there were listeners sniffing most probably because of their tears when she

spoke of her friend, Sherri, who had been killed in the car crash that almost claimed Mankiller's life (Mankiller 1999, 112). The audiocassette reveals laughter when she ended an anecdote with, "Don't ever argue with a fool because someone walking by can't tell which one is the fool" (1109). There were intent silences when Mankiller spoke of a Cherokee prayer that guides one to keep negative thoughts out of their mind (111), when she explained her near death experience as ". . . a very wonderful feeling . . . better than falling in love, . . . I no longer feared death and so I no longer feared life" (112) and in speaking of her own prognosis, ". . . I don't think much about what is going to happen tomorrow . . . but rather I simply live fully today . . ." (113). Poignant moments such as these illuminate Mankiller's pathos.

### Organization

Both of Mankiller's speeches follow a similar format. She begins with an anecdote of how a woman Chief should be addressed since "Chief" is principally a male term. She details how she was repeatedly questioned by a gentleman who picked her up from the airport. He asked if she should be called "Chiefteness" or "Chiefette." She answers, after a while, "Ms. Chief," and then explains to her audience, "if you say that real fast you are saying mischief" (Mankiller 1993b, 81 and Mankiller 1999, 102). This evolves into an explanation of her name. "Mankiller" was a title through historical times for a soldier who was responsible for the security of the Cherokee villages. When asked the origin of her name, she responds, "I earned it" (Mankiller 1993b, 82 and Mankiller 1999, 103).

Mankiller previews the body of her speeches by stating the points she wants to talk about: her journey to leadership, the historical background of her people, rebuilding the Cherokee Nation, the cultural, social, and economic problems that face her people, and the accomplishments of the Cherokees. Her speeches are story like and are laced with examples of personal experiences as a child and young woman, reflections of her family, her difficulties in adolescence, and accounts of her professional life, which include her

evolution into leadership. She weaves these examples into a fabric which tells the story of the Cherokees, herself, and her endeavors as Principal Chief.

Chronologically she details the history of the Cherokees. This background information comes first in these two speeches; however, the historical content is significantly more extensive in her speech, "Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation." Placement of this historical evidence in the beginning of the speeches underscores the importance that Mankiller attaches to it in order for her audiences to understand from the beginning, the story of the Cherokees. She intermingles childhood experiences throughout both speeches. She speaks of professional experiences not only which identify her achievements but also explain her path into leadership. She speaks of "interdependency" as one of the single most important things that we continue to have as native people" (Mankiller 1993b, 96 and Mankiller 1999, 110-111). This is effective because it serves not only as socio-cultural information, but illustrates the traditional Cherokee community of individuals helping each other and one Cherokee village helping another. The very essence of interdependency vividly reflects the connectedness of Mankiller as Principal Chief to the Cherokee Nation. Through her leadership there is interdependency.

Both speeches conclude with the same humorous but poignant message. Mankiller addresses the issue of stereotype and appeals to her audience to abolish the negative stereotypes that still exist about Native American individuals: "I hope my being here and spending a little time with you will help to erase any stereotypes you might have had about what a Chief looks like" (Mankiller 1993b, 101 and Mankiller 1999, 114).

### Style

Mankiller's style is unaffected, direct, and conversational. Her word choices are simple and plain. Her language conveys clear meaning. Her language is not arrogant nor is it sophisticated. Mankiller's discourse is casual and she speaks to her audience of her thought at the moment. She speaks naturally and informally without pretense. She often uses reflection in her examples. She uses anecdote and humor. She uses the personal

pronoun “I” and addresses her audiences as “you.” She immediately relates to the audience by introducing herself as “Wilma,” and she informs the audience that she likes to be called “Wilma” and that is what she is usually called back home.

The audiocassette of the keynote address at California Lutheran University reveals an emotional moment when Mankiller came to tears and was unable to speak for a few moments as she recalled the tragic death of a friend that emanated from the serious car crash in which she was involved and sustained near fatal injuries. Her language at times is inspirational when she refers to her own unknown prognosis from her kidney disease, when she recalls her near death experience, when she speaks of Cherokee prayer, spirituality and belief, and when she describes what the Cherokee call “having good mind” which refers to finding the positive in every situation (Speech 1999, 111).

Importantly, Mankiller’s keynote address was presented at a program sponsored by the Women’s Resource Center at California Lutheran University. Although both of her speeches contain personal testimony based on her life’s experiences, and her evolution into leadership, her presentation at California Lutheran University contained disclosure that the presentation at Sweet Briar College did not, such as her car accident, health issues, and her philosophical reflections and attitudes on life. Both speeches contained information and anecdotes regarding her experiences as a leader. Both speeches discussed Cherokee history and Cherokee present day issues; however, “Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation” was more focused on Cherokee history, the Cherokee condition, and the tribe’s accomplishments. Mankiller is an extemporaneous speaker and speaks “at the moment of the moment;” however, because of the inherent nature of the program at California Lutheran University, which was directed at “women’s options,” perhaps Mankiller purposely revealed more intimate layers of herself and spoke more intently on her evolution into a leadership role.

Mankiller uses metaphor when she speaks of stereotype: “We’re gonna have to move back the veil and deal with each other on a more human level . . .” (Mankiller 1993b,

101). In a sense she uses her name, Mankiller, as metaphor when she explains its origin as “someone who was responsible for the security of the village” (82). As Principal Chief she served in this capacity. Her discourse, however, is not saturated with metaphor. The lack of metaphor adds to the clarity of her discourse through direct, unadorned language.

### Delivery

Mankiller’s voice is deep, low and controlled. Her volume, modulation of pitch and rhythm are consistent throughout her discourse. She does have a subtle dialect. Some of her words are casually spoken such as “gonna” (Mankiller 1993b, 99). She does not speak dramatically. Her voice reflects the appropriate emotion consistent with her language such as sorrow, solemnity, or merriment. Her speech pattern is fluent although many of her sentences are broken with disfluencies such as multiple “uhs,” common to extemporaneous speaking. Her articulation is clear and her pronunciation of words is distinct. Further reflecting Mankiller’s extemporaneous style of delivery, she uses contractions rather than a more formal style that would eschew contractions.

In a telephone interview Mankiller told this writer that she “is the same person whether I am talking with a politician in Washington or an individual from rural Oklahoma” (Mankiller 2000, 116). Her comfortable, “as is” rhetorical style adds to the charm of her style of delivery. In listening to the recording of the keynote address presented March 6, 1999, Mankiller’s delivery did not reflect that she was speaking to a large audience in a formal, public setting. Her delivery was warm and familiar as if she was speaking to only one individual in a private situation, much like my conversation with her.

Mankiller does not speak from a manuscript (Mankiller 2000, 117 and Olaya 2000). Much of the content in these two speeches is similar, although the presentations are six years apart. The anecdotes in her introduction and in her conclusion vary slightly but are similar in both speeches. The body of both speeches is similar but the depth of the historical component in “Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation” and emotional revelations in

the keynote address are more intense. The fact that Mankiller is an extemporaneous and candid speaker adds to the genuineness of her delivery.

### Memory

Morris (29), Ek (257) and Kennedy (101) have stated that Native American orators customarily do not speak from manuscripts or notes. Mankiller does not speak from a manuscript (Mankiller 2000, 117 and Olaya 2000). Customarily, Mankiller jots a few notes an hour or so before her speaking engagement (Mankiller 2000, 117). She will also adjust the content of her speech according to the academic composite of her audience as to statistics and specific data (Mankiller 2000, 116).

Memory encompasses the speaker's control of the material presented in the discourse. Mankiller's rhetoric is largely composed of personal testimony harvested from personal experience. Likewise, the substantial component of historical and cultural content in her speeches emanates from her inherent and acquired knowledge of her people, Cherokee tradition, and her socialization. Therefore, much of the content of Mankiller's speeches is explicitly compiled of her experience and personal knowledge, which would not be "memorized" material. The content of her speeches is a composite that she has "lived," personally, culturally, traditionally, spiritually, academically, and professionally.

### Assessment of Effects

Mankiller's motive and purpose need to be considered in the assessment of the impact of her rhetoric. Mankiller's motive is to inform her audience about the Cherokee people, their history, struggle, and progress as well as about her experiences as Principal Chief. Her goals are accomplished by an honest presentation of historic evidence, facts, and personal experience. The presentation of this evidence is effective for several reasons: (1) the historic component is educational; (2) the historical and social components stimulate an emotional response; (3) her disclosure of personal experiences invites an intimate emotional response; (4) her personal experiences reveal not only her story but give us insight into the Cherokee condition. Mankiller's message calls for her people to

become self-sufficient. She skillfully weaves examples of personal testimony with respect to her own call for self-sufficiency throughout her discourse. This tactic is masterful because at the same time she is talking about self-sufficiency she mirrors self-sufficiency as an exemplar.

Mankiller utilizes self-disclosure; she discloses in a short time a bounty of personal information. Her use of self-disclosure is effective for several reasons: (1) she does not distance herself from the audience, rather she relates to her audience comfortably and casually; (2) she establishes credibility by relating her life experiences; (3) her experiences as a Cherokee woman lead to a further understanding of the lives of other Cherokees; and (4) her self-disclosure is totally believable because it is her experience and is supported by historical and biographical evidence.

The effects of a speech presented by Wilma Mankiller would leave an enduring impression. This passage illustrates a people who have been scorned and devalued and still survive:

We've been acculturated to believe that our religion is pagan, and that our language is archaic and useless, and that our history doesn't even exist, or it's totally distorted when it's told. Our children go to public school systems in Oklahoma, and they see teachers that don't look like them, don't reflect who they are as a people. We've always been acculturated to believe that the BIA or the Indian Health Service or somebody else had better ideas for us than we ourselves had, and so trusting our own thinking, tearing that away from them and getting it back I think is the single most important task we have ahead of us, and we've started that. It's gonna take a long time. We've started that on porches in eastern Oklahoma and in kitchens and in community centers. We've started talking about why we should take our own lives back. (Mankiller 1993b, 99)

This passage would also have a lingering effect. The passage reflects a philosophy of choice with a focus on the positive that could be beneficial to all people:

We all have choices when we meet people. We can either focus on the negative attributes of that person or we can focus on the positive attributes of that person. (Mankiller 1999, 111)

The content of her speeches contains information that one is not likely to forget.

The passage gives us an insight into historical social attitudes towards the Native American. The passage also documents the fallacy of such social attitudes:

[I]n the 1840's there was still a significant number, not the majority or anywhere near the majority, but there were a significant number of people in this country that were still questioning whether Indians were human, or whether Indians had souls, when we and many other people like our tribe had been running our own governments for a long, long time. (Mankiller 1993b, 87)

This passage as well depicts a message that is a persistent social problem. The passage is direct and to the point:

[W]e still, unfortunately have a lot of negative stereotypes about Native American people in this country. . . (Mankiller 1999, 113)

Mankiller's style is personal and direct. In a straight-forward manner she states her purpose and discloses personal information.

Tonight I wanted to talk to you about rebuilding the Cherokee Nation community by community and person by person, or specifically rebuilding the Cherokee Nation, but I've also been asked by a number of people to talk about myself and my own sort of growth into a leadership position, essentially from first being a rural Cherokee person, one of eleven children and then being relocated to an urban ghetto and spending time in an urban ghetto, and how I evolved as a woman into a leadership position, so I'll try to weave some of that into my story of rebuilding the Cherokee Nation and the process we've been undergoing for the last two decades. (Mankiller 1993b, 82)

This passage as well exemplifies personal disclosure. In unadorned language she tells the audience about her impoverished childhood:

I am one of eleven children. We lived in a very rural, isolated community, very Cherokee community. There are no paved roads near our house. We had no indoor plumbing. No electricity. Very little contact with the world outside our very isolated and insulated community. We farmed for our own consumption and also farmed for cash. We produced some products for cash as well. (Mankiller 1999, 104)



Her manner is comfortable and somewhat nurturing. She entices her audience to listen to her tell the tale of her people and their survival:

If you look at history from a native perspective, and I know that's very difficult for you to do, the most powerful, or one of the most powerful countries in the world as a policy first tried to wipe us off the face of the earth. And then, failing that, instituted a number of policies to make sure that we didn't exist in 1993 as a culturally distinct group of people, and yet here we are. Not only do we exist, but we're thriving and we're growing, and we're learning now to trust our own thinking again and dig our way out. So it was that tenacity that I felt we could build on. (Mankiller 1993b, 95)

She invites her audience to let her share her experiences:

What I thought I would do today is talk to you a little bit about my own journey to the position of leadership and I think that for some of you, you probably share similar experiences. (Mankiller 1999, 103)

Her presentations contain affability. With courtesy towards her audience, and consideration for her husband whom she wants to introduce, she pleasantly discloses biographical information as she reveals a personal decision which gives the audience an intimate insight into her individual perspectives. This is a simple but significant example of how Mankiller intermingles personal information with fact, which is typical of her discourse:

Thank you very, very much for choosing to spend a little time with me tonight. I appreciate that. I'd like to introduce my husband, Charlie, who traveled with me from Oklahoma, who's here somewhere. There he is, right there. Some people don't know I'm married because his name is Charlie Soap and my name is Wilma Mankiller, and when we got married we debated whether he should take my name or I should take his name, and we decided we'd both keep our own names, so he kept his maiden name and I kept mine. (Mankiller 1993b, 81)

Her presentations contain wit and a sense of humor. Her jocularly relaxes the audience, brings the audience into her realm, and captures the attention of the audience. This passage also provides the audience with an insight into the speaker. She is clever and "down to earth" conversant:

Last night in the very nice place I was staying at, I ordered room service and the fellow asked for my room number and then he asked for my name and he said, ‘I don’t know if I want to take this food up there or not. (Mankiller 1999, 102)

Mankiller’s rhetoric is sincere and honest. This disclosure depicts a heartfelt belief in family and community. This reflection might serve as the root for the importance of “interdependency” which Mankiller refers to as fundamental for Cherokee preservation:

What kept us together, I think, as a family during that period of time was the Indian Center, which was a place where many other families like ours, sort of refugees, I guess you could say in the city, gathered at the San Francisco Indian Center and shared our experiences and kind of tried to build a community there. (Mankiller 1993b, 89)

Her presentations depict a sense of bravery. This passage reveals a layer of the speaker with which perhaps many audience members can relate. The honesty of the reflection might merge the speaker and audience into a unified understanding:

I had very low self-esteem. I used to listen to people in meetings, and I didn’t have the confidence to speak up. Other people would speak up with ideas, but I didn’t have the faith in myself to speak up, and what caused me to have the faith in myself to speak up was that my desire to do something and contribute was stronger than my own fear of speaking up, or my own lack of self-confidence or my own fear of speaking up. So that impetus helped me a lot to assume a leadership position. I’ve always been, I guess, blessed with a thick skin. (Mankiller 1993b, 92-93)

One can depict a sense of courage. This passage also gives the audience a view of the personal growth of this accomplished and distinguished woman. This passage which reflects “belief in one’s self” might serve as exemplar to some members of the audience in their quest for self-confidence:

One of the things my parents taught me, and I’ll always be grateful is a gift, is to not ever let anybody else define me; that for me to define myself, and so someone could literally come up to me and say “I think you’re an SOB or whatever” and that’s their deal and that’s their opinion and that’s separate from my own view of myself, and I think that helped me a lot in assuming a leadership position. (Mankiller 1993b, 93)

I believe that the rhetorical content and the persona of Wilma Mankiller would have continued resonance.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter examined the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller by application of the neo-Aristotelian approach by reconstructing the context in which the rhetorical artifacts occurred, analyzing the artifacts, and assessing the impact of the artifacts. The next chapter offers conclusions about the distinctive rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

I want to be remembered as the person who helped us restore faith in ourselves.  
(from Wilma Mankiller, Wife, Mother, Grandmother, Chief)

### Conclusion

This thesis critically examined the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller, first woman elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. In order to accomplish this I studied the rhetoric of orators representative of the “Golden Age of Indian Eloquence” which included Pontiac, Chief John Logan, Joseph Brant, Red Jacket, Tecumseh, Geronimo, Chief Joseph and Little Carpenter. I studied the rhetoric of Cherokee predecessors of Wilma Mankiller including Little Carpenter, Dragging Canoe and Old Tassel, and rhetorical characteristics of Major Ridge and John Ross. I examined the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller using the available rhetorical artifacts which consisted of two manuscripts, “Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation,” (April 2, 1993) and keynote address, (March 6, 1999), the audiocassette of the keynote address, and a telephone interview May 19, 2000. A study of the history of the Cherokees, the role of rhetoric in Cherokee culture, and a biographical study of Wilma Mankiller were conducted. A review of the extant literature on the rhetoric of Native Americans from 1935 was performed.

The rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller was examined via application of the neo-Aristotelian method. The analysis includes the three tasks involved in the neo-Aristotelian approach: (1) reconstructing the context in which the rhetorical artifacts occurred; (2) analyzing the artifact; and (3) assessing the impact of the artifact on the audience in light of the various options available to the rhetor (Foss 27). To reconstruct the context biographical information was studied, and information relative to the audience(s) and occasion(s) was evaluated. To assess the rhetorical artifacts the five classical canons of rhetoric (1) invention; (2) organization; (3) style; (4) delivery; and (5)

memory were applied. To assess the effect Mankiller's intention, the canons of rhetoric as they apply to the context of the rhetoric, the achievement of the rhetor's goal and the short or long term impact of the rhetoric were considered.

My analysis revealed that Wilma Mankiller's rhetoric employs classical characteristics of Native American oratory: the use of the personal pronoun (Buswell 326); sincerity (326); conversational and informal speech patterns (Morris 30); politeness (Kennedy 95); honesty (Kennedy 97, Jones 19); dignity, rationality and wit (Kennedy, 92) and a logical argument presented with credibility and emotion (Ek 259-261, Balgooyen, 24).

Mankiller uses the personal pronoun. She speaks in a conversational and informal pattern. Her speech is polite. Her sincerity is founded by her recital of her early desire to improve the life of her people and thus, her credibility is supported by her successes in community planning and social development projects and by her achievements as Principal Chief. Mankiller's honesty is demonstrated by testimony of biographical experience that includes childhood turbulence, the difficulties of motherhood as a single parent, participation in social activism that would evolve into a successful role in leadership, medical challenges, and revelation of a spiritual consciousness which has guided her beliefs, attitudes, and values. Her sincerity and honesty emanates from her stated purpose of wanting to educate her audiences about the history of the Cherokees and their progress.

Mankiller develops a logical argument and presents it with credibility and emotion. With dignity and rationality she tells the story of the tumultuous Cherokee history, their social and economic achievements, revitalization, and continued growth process. She employs wit as she weaves a humorous anecdote and poignant message together, such as the issue of stereotype. Her speeches end in a plea to erase stereotypical images of Native Americans now that they know what a Chief looks like.

Jones (16) stated the three major essentials of all Native American oratory include: (1) breadth and depth of thought which commands the respect of the listener; (2)

sentiments clothed in language of sufficient elegance to give their content force and charm; and (3) a manner of delivery that is polished and refined to a degree which leaves satisfaction with those who listen. The historical chronology of Cherokee history and the factual account of the problems and progress of the contemporary Cherokee condition are recounted by Mankiller in breadth and depth and command the respect of the listener. The charm of Mankiller's language is that her word choices are unaffected and understandable. Her word choices are easy to deduce which empower her message with directness. Her unpretentious word choices, her personality, her energy, and her passion as a woman, a Cherokee, a survivor, and a leader offer satisfaction to the audience.

According to Kennedy, (92) Native American speeches consistently contain an introduction, narration, and a proof that contains a series of arguments and a conclusion. Mankiller's addresses are structured in this fashion.

My analysis also revealed a correlation of speech characteristics between the rhetoric of Mankiller and Sioux Chief, Red Cloud. Ek's study (260) described Red Cloud's Union Address in 1870 as "refreshing, simple, and unaffected utterances." Ek applied Aristotle's proofs of logos, ethos and pathos in his study of this address. Ek suggests that the powerful and long lasting aftermath of the speech is based on the strength of its logical argument which was presented with credibility and emotion (259-261).

The long lasting aftermath of Mankiller's presentations examined in this thesis, is based on the strength of her logical arguments which were presented with credibility and emotion. Mankiller's logical proof in the discourse examined for this thesis is a chronological presentation of historical events that were harmful and that almost extinguished the Cherokees. Red Cloud's logical proof "existed in the chronological presentation of commonly acknowledged and undeniable facts relating to unfortunate aspects of the white-Indian relationship" (Ek 260). As history has unfolded Red Cloud's address must be considered a failure but in another sense, "it was one of the most

remarkable successes in American Indian history. The chief's words were powerful enough to generate a force sufficient to bring the United States government into temporary submission" (262).

Likewise, Mankiller's rhetoric, unlike the rhetoric of some of her predecessors has not fallen on the deaf ears of contemporary government leaders. In 1990 she signed the historic self-governance agreement which authorized the Cherokee Nation to assume responsibility for funds formerly administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Mankiller 1993a, 290-91). She has through her rhetoric inspired her people to believe in themselves, to become more self-sufficient, and to be proud of their heritage. She has educated audiences throughout the country about the plight and progress of the Cherokees. The rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller is a forceful voice for the Cherokee Nation in all corridors of the public and political arena:

I think the most important issue we have as a people is what we started, and that is to begin to trust our own thinking again and believe in ourselves enough to think that we can articulate our own vision of the future and then work to make sure that vision becomes a reality. (Mankiller 1993b, 99)

My analysis identified characteristics distinctive of the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller founded on the five classical canons of rhetoric based on the rhetorical artifacts evaluated in this study.

### Invention

- 1) Mankiller develops the logical proof based on historical data, past and present social and economic facts, and personal testimony.
- 2) Mankiller develops the ethical proof based on credibility. Her character and authoritative competence are believable because she speaks from personal knowledge and expertise about being Cherokee, about Cherokee history, and Cherokee philosophy. She can be perceived as sincere, honest and trustworthy because she speaks from personal testimony by citing events that can be



verified. She is dedicated to her topic and she is concerned about educating her audience.

- 3) Mankiller generates emotional response based on the logical and ethical proofs, and based on her rhetorical style and delivery.

### Organization

- 1) Mankiller develops her speeches in a chronological arrangement.
- 2) The placement of Cherokee history at the beginning of her speeches emphasizes the importance of this information to her in order for the audience to understand the social and economic condition of the Cherokees today.

### Style

- 1) Her language is unaffected and sincere.
- 2) Mankiller's language is refreshing in that it is intelligent but not arrogant. Simple word choices and sentence structure allows the audience to concentrate on the meaning of the thought and facilitates an understanding of the intended message.
- 3) Mankiller relates intimately with her audience. She asks to be called, "Wilma." She refers to herself as "I" and to the audience as "you." She brings the audience into her realm through personal testimony.
- 4) Mankiller speaks casually and conversationally.
- 5) Mankiller incorporates a sense of humor in her speeches through anecdote.

### Delivery

- 1) Her voice is deep, low, and controlled.
- 2) Her voice reflects the appropriate emotional component consistent with the message, such as sadness, jocularly, and earnestness.

### Memory

- 1) She is an extemporaneous speaker. She does not use notes or manuscript.

In summary, Mankiller presents a logical and credible argument supported by historical evidence and personal testimony. Her language is unaffected and plain. Her style is conversational and casual. Her rhetoric is credible, earnest, and sincere.

### **New Directions for Research**

To this writer's knowledge and confirmed by Wilma Mankiller, this is the first study to critically evaluate the public discourse of Wilma Mankiller. Thus, this study creates a base-line for a rich spectrum of future scholarship. This study opens the arena for other scholars to study the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller through a variety of analytical approaches such as narrative, dramatic, textual, or feminist criticism. This study opens the arena for the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller to be compared with other leaders of a minority nation who faced extreme cultural and political invalidation. Such a study, for example, could be a comparison of the rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller, first woman elected Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation and the rhetoric of Golda Meir, first woman elected Prime Minister of Israel. The rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller could be compared from a historical perspective as well as from the perspective of public discourse scholarship to other Native American women speakers cited in this thesis such as Sacajawea, Sarah Winnemucca, Bright Eyes, Zitkala-Sa, Warcasiwin, and Mrs. Horn Bull. The rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller could be compared to the rhetoric of other Cherokee women speakers such as Nanyehi (Beloved Woman, Nancy Ward) cited in this study. Mankiller's rhetoric could also be compared to the rhetoric of one of the orators of the "Golden Age of Indian Eloquence," to other Cherokee orators such as Dragging Canoe, Little Carpenter, Chief Old Tassel, Major Ridge or John Ross or to other contemporary Native American leaders. The rhetoric of Wilma Mankiller could be studied as a comparative to the rhetors of the Anti-Slavery Movement such as Sojourner Truth, Abby Kelley Foster, Lucy Stone, Angelina and Sarah Grimke and others. Future scholars may locate additional examples of Mankiller's rhetoric and perhaps even pursue an active research project to fully document (video tape) her future rhetorical activities.

This analysis hopes to initiate future study within the realm of women's studies and communication studies in that the conflict of private sphere and public sphere still remains one of contemporary woman's biggest challenges. This analysis revitalizes the future study of Native American oratory in order to further illuminate the unique cultural heritage inherent in Native American rhetoric. This analysis encourages the future study of Native American oratory within the realm of public discourse scholarship. This analysis provides the foundation for scholarship that could involve other disciplines than communication studies including history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, literature, linguistic studies, and political science. The continued study of Native American oratory within these disciplines offers the potential for a rich spectrum of contribution to the scholarship of Native American oratory.

Especially in the context of a tribal people, no individual's life stands apart and alone from the rest. My own story has meaning only as long as it is a part of the overall story of my people. For above all else, I am a Cherokee woman. (Mankiller 1993a, 14)

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**Wilma Mankiller: Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation**  
**April 2, 1993**

Thank you very, very much for choosing to spend a little time with me tonight. I appreciate that. I'd like to introduce my husband, Charlie, who traveled with me from Oklahoma, who's here somewhere. There he is, right there. Some people don't know I'm married because his name is Charlie Soap and my name is Wilma Mankiller, and when we got married we debated whether he should take my name or I should take his name, and we decided we'd both keep our own names, so he kept his maiden name and I kept mine.

Being in this part of the country is really kind of nostalgic, because part of the Old Cherokee Nation took in part of Virginia, and it's really interesting and kind of an emotional experience always to come back to this part of the country. It was interesting, as I met people during the course of the day today, several people asked me how they should address me, and at home I can think of very, very few people who call me "Chief;" most people just call me Wilma, and that's how I ask people to address me here.

But I had a different experience one time when I went to an eastern college to do a panel on Indian economic development, a named eastern college. This young man came out to the airport to pick me up at the airport to take me out to do the panel, and he asked me, he said, "Well, since principal Chief is a male term, how should I address you?" And we were driving in the car by then out to the university, and I just looked out the window of the car. Then he said, "Well, should we address you as Chiefteness?" So I looked out the window for a little longer. Then he thought he would get real funny and cute, and he asked me if he should address me as "Chiefette," so I looked out the window for a real long time. Then I decided that I should answer him, and so I told him to call me "Ms.Chief," misChief. So we went out to the university to do our panel and the same young man who picked me up at the airport was one of the people who got to ask the panel his questions, and so his question to me was about the origin of my name. My name

is Mankiller, and in the old Cherokee Nation, when we lived here in the Southeast, we lived in semi-autonomous villages, and there was someone who watched over the village, who had the title of Mankiller. And I'm not sure what you could equate that to, but it was sort of like a soldier or someone who was responsible for the security of the village, and so anyway this one fellow liked the title Mankiller so well that he kept it as his name, and that's who we trace our ancestry to. But that's not what I told him. When he asked me about the origin of my last name, I told him it was a nickname, and I'd earned it. So I'm sure there's some yuppie somewhere still wondering what I did to earn my last name.

Tonight I wanted to talk to you about rebuilding the Cherokee Nation community by community and person by person, specifically rebuilding the Cherokee Nation, but I've also been asked by a number of people to talk about myself and my own sort of growth into a leadership position, essentially from first being a rural Cherokee person, one of eleven children and then being relocated to an urban ghetto, and spending time in an urban ghetto, and how I evolved as a woman into a leadership position, so I'll try to weave some of that into my story of rebuilding the Cherokee Nation and the process we've been undergoing for the last two decades.

I think first it's important before I start talking about what we're doing today in the 1990's and what we did throughout the eighties or even the seventies in rebuilding our tribe; I think it's really, really important to put our current work and our current issues in a historical context. I can't tell you how many everyday Americans that I've talked with who've visited a tribal community in Oklahoma or in other places, and they've looked around and they saw all the social indicators of decline: high infant mortality, high unemployment, many, many other very serious problems among our people, and they always ask, "What happened to these people? Why do native people have all these problems?" and I think that in order to understand the contemporary issues we're dealing with today and how we plan to dig our way out and how indeed we are digging our way out, you have to understand a little bit about history. Because there are a whole lot of

historical factors that have played a part in our being where we are today, and I think that to even to begin to understand our contemporary issues and contemporary problems, you have to understand a little bit about that history.

Normally I talk about the nation-to-nation relationship between the tribes and the U.S. government, but Orin Lyons is going to cover that subject tomorrow and can do that much more ably than I can, but let me just say about our tribes so you have an understanding of that. The Cherokee Nation has had a government for a long, long, long time. We had a government in this country long before there was a United States government. We had treaties with England even before we had treaties with the colonies, and then later with the United States. We have a long history of governance. We had a constitution. The constitution doesn't look like the United States Constitution; our constitution was a wampum belt, and the color and the arrangements of the beads represented symbols of governance and principles by which we lived our lives, and so we have a long, long history of governance, and so that for people who find it odd that we today have a government-to-government relationship with the U.S. government should reflect on the fact that we've had that relationship for a long time.

Some people will tell you today, when you hear people as you hear Orin tomorrow talking about treaty rights and treaty issues, some people will tell you that those treaties aren't valid anymore and they should be ignored simply because they're old, and obviously if you listen to Leslie Silko and Scott Momaday today you can understand why that argument makes sense. There are lots of world documents that are very old and just because they're old and because of their age doesn't mean that they're any less valid. The United States Constitution is very old. There are many other similar documents that are very, very old.

What I'd like to tell you just briefly, and for the historians here, I'd like to touch just briefly on the history of our tribe and what happened under this continual attempt by the United States Government to "solve the Indian problem," and because our story is



very similar to the story of many other tribes in this country, not in exact detail, but in net effect. Our tribe, we were kind of farmers and agricultural people, and we lived throughout the Southeast, and we had early European contact, first with DeSoto in the late 1540's and continued to have European contact and eventually were surrounded by our new Southern neighbors. So that by the first part of the last century, we were fairly accustomed to our Southern neighbors that were surrounding us.

There began to be discussion of removal. This is one of a continuing series of policies that the federal government had instituted; there were the Indian wars, there were a number of other policies, and we were by now in the beginning of the relocation and reservation policy; the war era hadn't ended, but we were beginning the reservation and relocation policies of the federal government at that particular time or the United States government at that particular time.

There were several reasons why there began to be discussion of removing the Cherokees. President Jefferson conceptualized removal; Jackson gets all the blame for the removal of the Cherokees and the other southeastern tribes, but Jefferson actually conceptualized the removal. Some of the impetus for the removal was economic. Cherokee land was good land for growing cotton, was good land for growing tobacco, and also some gold had been discovered within the Cherokee Nation, and then there were also a number of corporations and individuals who wanted our land, so all those were factors in the pressure for removal. But one of the other factors in the pressure for removal was the fact that Georgia, the state of Georgia, had grown up around the Cherokee Nation, and they did not want a sovereign within the boundaries of the state of Georgia, an argument that we hear even today as states and tribes continue to battle over issues of jurisdiction and states' rights. So we got caught up in a states' rights issue as well as all the other issues that caused people to want to remove the Cherokees.

During this period of time, when removal was being discussed in our tribe, our Chief was a fellow named John Ross, and John Ross believed in the American judicial

system, and he felt that the American judicial system was built on beautiful principles, and that was something that should work for the Cherokees. And so both individual people and the tribe took some of our cases for the preservation of the integrity of the Cherokee Nation through the American judicial system and all the way to the United States Supreme Court and won. By then, General Jackson, who fancied himself to be a great Indian fighter was President Jackson, and he basically told the United States Supreme Court, when they ruled in favor of the Cherokees, "You've ruled in favor of the Cherokees, now let's see you enforce it," and continued on toward implementing a removal policy.

During this period of time when removal was being discussed, our own people, the Cherokees, became very bitterly divided politically. Part of our people wanted to remain here in the Southeast and throughout the rest of the Southeast and fight to the death for the right to remain in our homeland, and part of our people wanted to go on to Indian Territory, believing that the removal was inevitable, and that we should go on to Indian Territory, what is now Oklahoma, and resettle and rebuild our families and our communities there in Indian Territory. And so there were bitter internal divisions among our people during that period of time, that period of discussion. We had non-Indian friends throughout the South who helped us, who took up our cause and tried to protect the Cherokees and work with us. Some of our friends spent time in jail, who refused to obey the laws of the state of Georgia, which asked them to get special licenses from the state of Georgia to reside within the Cherokee Nation.

So despite our best efforts and the best efforts of our non-Indian friends, the removal did occur. In 1838, President Jackson ordered out U.S. Army federal troops to the homes of Cherokees and rounded up Cherokees, sort of like cattle in a way, I guess, and what they would do is they would take a family, all the members of the family from their home and inventory their property and their farm and that sort of thing and confiscate everything except what they would allow them to take with them, and then they took them to stockades throughout the Southeast and held them in stockades and prepared them for

the journey to Indian Territory. This removal was conducted during 1838 and through the spring of 1839. By the time the last contingent of Cherokees arrived in Indian Territory in April of 1839, not really that long ago in the totality of history, a little more than 150 years ago, fully one fourth of our entire tribe was dead. And they had either died while they were being held in the stockades, or during the removal itself. Much of the removal was conducted on foot, and much of it was conducted in winter. This is a story I think that not many of you hear about when you hear about the history of the South and the history of the Southeast.

What's interesting, I think, and what gives me hope and keeps me optimistic about our people, however, is to look and see how our people dealt with that after removal. After removal, we ended up in Indian Territory. Everything we'd ever known had been left behind, that which bound us as a people: the cultural system, the social system, and the political system, everything we'd ever known had been left behind. Many people were dead, families were bitterly divided over the issue of removal itself, and yet almost immediately after removal, our people began to try to come together and rebuild a community and rebuild a tribe. So that by the mid 1840's, not even ten years after we ended up in Indian Territory, we started sort of a revival or rebuilding of the Cherokee Nation there in Indian Territory. We put together a new political system, signed a new constitution in 1839. We began rebuilding; we built beautiful institutions of government which still stand today as some of the oldest buildings in what is now Oklahoma. We built an extensive judicial system. We began printing newspapers in Cherokee and in English. We rebuilt an economic system, and most importantly, I think, we built an educational system.

We built an educational system not only for men, but we built an educational system for women, which was a very radical idea for that particular period of time in that part of the world. Our tribal council had no idea how to run a school for girls, and so they sent a group of emissaries to Mount Holyoke and asked the head of Mount Holyoke

to send some teachers back to show us how to put together a school for girls. So we built an educational system and began this process of healing and rebuilding ourselves as a people.

What's interesting to me in looking -- I like history a lot, and looking at old historical documents -- is to see that in the 1840's there was still a significant number, not the majority or anywhere near the majority, but there were a significant number of people in this country that were still questioning whether Indians were human, or whether Indians had souls, when we and many other people like our tribe had been running our own governments for a long, long time. That's very interesting.

So the U.S. government had promised the Cherokees that in exchange for all the land in the Southeast and all the lives during the removal, that we could live in Indian Territory forever uninterrupted, and we believed that. And so that's when we began this process of rebuilding, and then the Civil War happened. Part of the Civil War was fought in Arkansas and then over into Indian Territory, which of course divided everyone. And then after the Civil War was over, and the U.S. began to talk about restructuring, they began talking about opening Indian Territory up to white settlement, which they had told us they would never do. And in a way, history, I guess you could say, repeated itself.

Because I'm going to skip all the details of how it happened, but by 1907 Oklahoma statehood came into being. Our lands had been opened up for settlement in several land runs by then, and our tribal government, the Cherokee tribal government, was left with just a skeleton. Our schools were closed down, our courts were closed down, we were forbidden from electing our own tribal leaders, and I think most significantly, land we had held in common was divided out in individual allotments of one hundred twenty to one hundred sixty acres per family. Of all the things that happened to our people at the turn of the century, I think the individual allotment of land had the most profound effect on the way we view ourselves, and on the social system of our people.

So from 1906 and 1907, when Oklahoma became a state, and until 1971, we didn't elect our own tribal leaders. Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation and some of the other, well they call them Southeastern tribes; by now they were in Indian Territory; our Chiefs were appointed by the President of the United States, and usually for no good purpose. They were appointed so they could sign easements or give away land, or other resources of the tribes. In the 1940's there began to be a movement among the Cherokees to revitalize the tribal government again, and through a series of enactments in 1971, we were able to elect our Chiefs again, and we began this process of rebuilding.

It's interesting to see how our people began to view leadership during this period of time from 1906-1907 to 1971. They began to see chiefs of the Cherokees as something external to themselves; a position that only very prominent people who had little connection to the tribe could aspire to or hold. People who would receive Presidential appointments usually were very prominent people or very wealthy, or they wouldn't catch the attention of a President and receive a Presidential appointment. And so our people began to see those people as the Chiefs of the Cherokee Nation. And so that in our first election in 1971 reflects that. In 1971, our first elected Chief was a very prominent Oklahoma businessman and a Cherokee and very politically active. Then our next Chief, who was elected in 1975, was very similar to that in many ways. He was a lawyer and a banker and an Indian Chief and had kind of a similar background, and so now let me interject myself into this because people have asked that.

I came not too long after the Cherokee Nation began this process of revitalizing the Cherokee Nation. I began work for the Cherokee Nation in 1977. When I returned to Oklahoma, having lived in California for a number of years, I swore I'd never work for a tribal government, and that was basically the only place to work, so I got a job there. When I got a job there, there were no female executives. I certainly didn't start to work there with an agenda to become Chief; there was no precedent for that. There'd never been a second Chief or a principal Chief who was female, but I came to the position with

absolute faith and confidence in our own people and our own ability to solve our own problems, and I began developing programs that reflected that philosophy. And as I began to develop programs, it increased revenue, and as I increased revenue to the tribe, I began to catch the attention of the hierarchy there and began to move up. And I learned those skills in California.

When my family, as Doctor Hill noted, went to California as part of the BIA relocation program -- yet another attempt to "solve the Indian problem" -- the fellow who conceptualized the relocation program is the very same fellow who thought up the program that interned the Japanese during world War II. And after World War II was over he didn't have a job, and so they ended up making him head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. So the idea was the same in both cases: to break up communities and break up families. And the idea behind the BIA relocation program was to solve the Indian problem by breaking up tribal communities and my family was a part of that. For my father, who had eleven children, too many bills, or too little money and too many mouths to feed, the idea of having a better life for his children was intriguing to him. And so that a better life for us ended up being a housing project in San Francisco, which was sometimes flatteringly called "Harlem West," and much was the same for the other people who went out on relocation programs.

What kept us together, I think, as a family during that period of time was the Indian Center, which was a place where many other families like ours, sort of refugees, I guess you could say in the city gathered at the San Francisco Indian Center and shared our experiences and kind of tried to build a community there. In 1969, a group of students from San Francisco State and UC Berkely occupied Alcatraz Island, off the bay of San Francisco, and my family became very involved in that movement, and so from that point on, I became very, very interested and I acquired skills because I wanted to help my own people. So I figured out how to organize things. I figured out how to do paralegal work. I was encouraged to go to college. Nobody in my family went to college -- nobody I

knew went to college. Certainly no one in Hunter's Point, the housing project I lived in, went to college. It was conceptually out of our space. And this one woman, a Claremount woman who always thought I had leadership potential and didn't just see a ghetto kid, talked me into going to college. Though then they had something called the EOP program, and you could go, and it was a program. I think it was started during, maybe the New Deal, I'm not sure, but it was a social program that helped minorities get into college, and so I started college under that program. Then after Alcatraz, I got interested in helping the Pitt River tribe in northern California regain its ancestral land, and I volunteered for them for seven years. So that time in California prepared me for returning home.

But what I learned from my experience in living in a community of almost all African-American people, and what I learned from my experience in living in my own community in Oklahoma before the relocation is that poor people have a much, much greater capacity for solving their own problems than most people give them credit for. And I can't begin to tell you how many well-meaning social workers I've had come and try to save me during my life. And so anyway, there was that idea that we could solve our own problems that I went to the Cherokee Nation with in 1977. So that by 1982, I was director of the community Development Department, and I'd conceptualized this idea along with my husband of how to rebuild a community. And I'll talk a little bit about that later. So that by 1982, I was directing the Community Development Department and heading that up, and doing these projects in a number of different communities. When our chief then developed systemic cancer, and he asked me if I would attend some meetings in Washington and do some things that I don't normally do. And when he became well and thought about running for election again in 1983, he asked me if I would run for Deputy Chief with him, and I did.

So then I ran in 1983 for election, which was a real eye-opener for me. I expected people to challenge me because I had an activist background, or challenge me because I

was going around talking about something called grass roots democracy, and because my husband and I were organizing these rural communities, and so I thought people would challenge me on my ideas when I began to run for election in 1983, but they didn't. The only thing people wanted to talk about in 1983 was my being a woman. That was the most hurtful experience I've ever been through.

I would go to a community meeting and want to talk about issues related to the tribe. I had a lot of ideas, and by then I had developed a lot of programs, and no one wanted to talk about anything except the fact that I was female. Some people felt that we would be the laughing stock of all the tribes if we had a woman who was in the second highest position in the tribe, and oh I don't know what all they said; it was an affront to God, that a woman wanted to do this and all kinds of things. And so I did fairly well in debate in both high school and college, and it was really interesting because I was unable to even get in a dialogue with people about this issue.

I remember during that period of time, I called a friend at the Ms. Foundation for Women, who was on the board and a folklorist and is very witty. So I called her up and I asked her to tell me some witty things to say so that when people came up and said real hurtful things to me that I could say something witty back to them, and kind of diffuse what they were saying, and I can't repeat to you what she told me to tell them. It wasn't funny. It wasn't witty. But anyway, we did have a nice talk, and I decided that I was going to have to somehow get a hold of this and deal with it and move on. I decided, and I guess everybody has different ways of dealing with that kind of reaction, I decided to simply ignore it and continue on, so I saw something on the back of a tea box in 1983 that was just a very simple little saying that helped me get through that election. It says something like "Don't ever argue with a fool, because someone walking by and observing you can't tell which one is the fool." I thought that was very good advice; I continued on, and I thought that the idea that gender had anything to do with leadership, or that



leadership had anything to do with gender was foolish, and I could see no point in even beginning to try to debate that non-issue with anybody, so I just continued on.

I remember also during that period of time, just to show you that I really am an optimist, our tribe is very large, we have one hundred and forty thousand members now. We didn't have that many then, but we still had a significant number of members, and so I decided to have a rally. I didn't know anything about politics, but I knew that one has rallies, and so I had a dinner, like a reception at this house in Tahlequah that has this historic significance to our tribe and had it catered. We put it on radio and put it in the news and I went to a lot of trouble to have this big rally. So I go on the evening of the event, and I'm prepared to answer questions from tribal members and the whole evening only five people showed up, and I think three of them were my relatives. I think it was real clear to me then that things could only go up from that point forward. So simply rather than giving up, I just worked harder. And I knew that I was going to lose the election, and everybody expected me to lose the election. It was a conventional wisdom unless I really did something, and so I went out and spent a lot of time talking with people. I did win that election in 1983.

So that's a little bit of a story of how I evolved into a leadership position. I'm forty-seven and women my age, by and large, were not raised to be leaders. We weren't acculturated to assume leadership positions and had to kind of evolve over a period of time, and my own evolution into a leadership position was born absolutely out of my desire to do something about issues that I thought were important for my own people. I had very low self-esteem. I used to listen to people in meetings, and I didn't have the confidence to speak up. Other people would speak up with ideas, but I didn't have the faith in myself to speak up, and what caused me to have the faith in myself to speak up was that my desire to do something and contribute was stronger than my own fear of speaking up, or my own lack of self-confidence or my own fear of speaking up. So that

impetus helped me a lot to assume a leadership position. I've always been, I guess, blessed with a thick skin.

One of the things my parents taught me, and I'll always be grateful, is a gift, is to not ever let anybody else define me; that for me to define myself, and so someone could literally come up to me and say, "I think you're a SOB or whatever" and that's their deal and that's their opinion and that's separate from my own view of myself, and I think that helped me a lot in assuming a leadership position.

Just one little brief thing, it was really interesting, we've had a long association with the Choctaws and the Creeks and the Chickasaws and the Seminoles, and the five tribes have always met together, and we have an old organization in Oklahoma, and we meet every quarter, and when I was elected in 1983, no woman had ever been elected as a Chief or second Chief in this organization. And in the very first meeting after the election, our Chief had to go to Washington, so I assumed his spot in this organization. The Chiefs and the Deputy Chiefs are the executive committee, and when I walked in the room, it was really interesting, because all these fellows had this long table, and they all had chairs there, and when I walked in there was no chair for me. So I thought about it for a minute, and I went and got a chair, and I just pulled it up and I sat down, and I just ignored it and went on about my business using the same thing that I did in the election, which was just to ignore it, do what I needed to do to go on. It was very interesting, three years later, the same group elected me their President, and so that I think that there is something to be said about just ignoring it and continuing to do the right thing, and that relationship will evolve.

The other thing that happened was in 1983, when I was elected -- in our tribe when you're elected Deputy Chief, you also become President of the Tribal Council. Well, the entire Tribal Council had opposed my election in 1983, so you can imagine how thrilled they were when I became their President. So I come to the very first meeting, and the Cherokees are very formal in the way we conduct meetings and according to our oral

tradition, we're Iroquoian, and I think the Iroquois also have this formal way of conducting meetings. There's a lot of ceremony and formality. Anyway, I came to conduct my first meeting, and this one fellow on the Tribal Council who just thought it was the worst thing possible for a woman to be conducting this meeting kept interrupting me throughout the entire meeting, and saying I was violating some obscure rule I'd never heard of, or I wasn't following some procedure that I didn't know anything about, and so I decided right then and there that I was going to have to assert myself, or I'd have to put up with that for the next four years. So I had, between the first meeting and the second meeting, I went around and had all the council members microphones changed, and so that the President of the Tribal council controlled the microphones. So the second time I came to the meeting and this very same fellow started giving me a hard time, I just cut off his microphone; nobody could hear what he was saying. He could talk and nobody heard what he was saying, so after I did that though, we began to understand each other and get along a little bit better, so that's just a little bit about my experiences in getting into a leadership position. Now back to rebuilding.

I think that rebuilding a community and rebuilding a tribe, there are all kinds of ways you can do that. When I lived in California, I worked on international treaty issues. The tribe that I worked with didn't recognize the United States government. It wasn't an issue of whether the U.S. recognized this tribe, this tribe didn't recognize the U.S. government. Long before the current discussion of sovereignty and international recognition I had traveled to Mexico and U.N. Representatives and had been working in the international arena, and my role as a support person was to try to get them there and help them in that way of thinking. Anyway, with that kind of work, I think it is very, very important and I think Orin will talk about that kind of work, but for me, I wanted to do something that was a little closer to people, and I could work on those kinds of issues and yet I still saw kids sniffing paint and I still saw so many problems in our communities, that that's the level that I wanted to work on.

And I think many of our people, when we work in our communities; if you take all of the problems we have in their totality, caused by all these historical factors that I talked about earlier, they're almost overwhelming. I approach this a little bit differently. I know all the problems in our communities. I face them every single day. It's a daunting set of problems, but what I focused on, and what Charlie focused on, instead of just focusing on the problems, we focused on what we saw as the positive things in our communities. One of the things that I saw, just as if you look at what happened after the Trail of Tears, you can look at some of the positive things that happened among our people. What I looked at in our communities is I saw among our people -- they had unbelievable tenacity. Our tribe is one of the most acculturated tribes in the country, and yet there are thousands of people who still speak Cherokee. Ceremonies that we've had since the beginning of time are still going on in a tribe as acculturated as ours is. Our people are very tenacious, and it was that tenacity that I saw as a strength we could build on.

If you look at history from a native perspective, and I know that's very difficult for you to do, the most powerful, or one of the most powerful countries in the world as a policy first tried to wipe us off the face of the earth. And then, failing that, instituted a number of policies to make sure that we didn't exist in 1993 as a culturally distinct group of people, and yet here we are. Not only do we exist, but we're thriving and we're growing, and we're learning now to trust our own thinking again and dig our way out. So it was that tenacity that I felt we could build on.

Another positive thing that I saw was that kind of attention to culture and history and heritage that I thought was very, very important. Another thing that I saw was great leadership in our communities, and leadership again, it's kind of like the way I talked about looking at government. Our government may have not looked like the U.S. government, but it's a government and the leadership we saw in our communities may not have looked like leadership that you see in the external world, but the leadership existed. You could find the leadership just by seeing who people go to when there's a time of crisis

in the community. The other thing that I saw which is, I think, one of the single most important things that we continue to have as native people, and that's a sense of interdependence. I've been very fortunate to be able to travel extensively in this country and abroad, and I can tell you that even though our people are very fragmented today, we still, in the more traditional communities still have a sense of interdependence. I can still motivate people in communities to do something because it helps their neighbor, or helps the person down the road, or helps the community much more than I can motivate people to do something just because it helps themselves. I always tell college recruiters if you're going to go out in the more traditional communities and recruit college students, don't go out and tell them that if they get a college education, that the college education will help them accumulate great personal wealth, or great personal acclaim, or help them get a BMW or whatever. Tell them that they can use their skills to help rebuild their community, and help their family, and help their tribe and you might get their attention. It's that sense of interdependence, I think, that I'd like to see us hang on to, and that is what we began to build on to, and that is what we began to build on.

So that the example I'm gonna give you is a small community just not even fifteen miles from where I was raised and where my home is. In that community the people settled disputes with violence. Many, many kids were dropping out of school, income for elders was less than fifteen hundred dollars a year, twenty-five percent of the people were hauling water, had no indoor plumbing, many of the houses were dilapidated, and so we began working in this community because we absolutely believed that this community and these people would rebuild and revitalize their community. I saw this as a way of rebuilding our tribe, community by community, family by family, and so we began meeting with people and had them sit down in a group and talk about their own vision for the future and their own dreams for the future and then prioritize what it was they wanted to do. We made this deal with them, Charlie and I, and the deal was that if they would stay with us, we would be facilitators. We would bring the resources to them if they would

decide how they wanted to rebuild their community and then not only work on the leadership of it but on actually implementing it.

What they decided to do was rehab some of their homes; twenty of their homes, build twenty-five new homes using solar technology, and build a community water system. They agreed to do this building as volunteers. And we agreed to raise the money to bring the technical assistance and the resources there. Now, when we went out and told people about this project and tried to raise money for the technical assistance and the physical resources, people thought we were crazy and told us we shouldn't even be out there by ourselves at night alone, and that people in that community wouldn't even work for a living, much less as volunteers. But we knew better.

One of the most interesting things is that during this period of time, when we were fundraising, a show called "CBS Sunday Morning News" heard about our effort from one of the foundations we approached and they liked to do shows about victims then in the early eighties. So they came out to film this whole process, to film a community that, basically this poor, struggling Cherokee community was trying to get water and housing, and they came to film a failure. So they filmed the very first meetings where people were saying "Aw, nothing's ever changed here, nothing's ever going to change, this isn't gonna work" to them actually saying "Well, what the heck? Let's go ahead and try it," to actually taking training. They were there the first day, and the first day was the toughest for me. Everything I'd ever believed in my life about my own people was banking on people showing up and volunteering to rebuild their community. It wasn't just the physical rebuilding, it was the fact that people would take charge of their own lives and their own future and rebuild ourselves as a people, and so that first day, you know driving around all the curbs to this community and rounding the bend and seeing all the volunteers showed up and were ready to go to work was the most significant part of my work I've ever done -- far more significant than being elected Chief.

Anyway, people did show up that first day, and the film crew, the CBS film crew, stayed with us through the whole project and actually filmed the completion of the water system. Every family in that community worked on rebuilding their water system, rebuilding their houses, and rebuilding their community, and taking charge of their own future and their own lives again.

We use that CBS film now as a training tape for other communities, so we're really glad that they did come and film it. So that process, I think, that was a little more than ten years ago, it was actually thirteen years ago, and since that time, we've used that same method in dozens of other communities and we see that process as a process of how we began to rebuild ourselves as a people. Some tribal leaders and people in elected leadership positions build institutions, and they see that as a way or rebuilding a nation, and what we're trying to do is rebuild communities and families. We see that as a way of rebuilding our nation. So there are many different approaches to doing that.

Institutionally, when we started out in 1971, electing our own Chiefs again and starting this process, we were bankrupt, and we started in a storefront in Tahlequah. We've grown from that point to today, where we have twelve hundred regular employees. We run our own primary health care clinics; five primary health care clinics, a fully accredited high school, which is a boarding school, a vocational education school, twenty-four separate Head Start centers, an extensive array of day care centers, adult literacy programs, and many, many other programs, and we run a number of businesses also. We had no special leg up, and we had no marketable natural resources, and I have to tell you -- I'm glad we didn't, because I've never had to face the issue of whether to exploit or not to exploit natural resources. I think that I've had to make a lot of tough decisions, hard decisions, but I'm glad I never had to deal with that issue.

Someone described me as a rabid environmentalist, so I think that might have been a very difficult situation for me. Anyway, we've grown, and the reason we've grown and

rebuilt is because of our own hard work and our own determination to have a community, and to have a tribe again, and that's where we are today.

If you ask me today about what our most important issue is as a people, most people who know me, my skill is development, and we're doing lots of building and lots of development and that sort of thing, and that's always what I've done best. Other people would say "Well, you know the most important issue is building the clinic they're building in this community or building that facility there or whatever," but that's not the most important issue I think we have as a people. I think the most important issue we have as a people is what we started, and that is to begin to trust our own thinking again and believe in ourselves enough to think that we can articulate our own vision of the future and then work to make sure that that vision becomes a reality.

That's a lot easier to say than it is to do. We've had a couple of hundred years of acculturation, probably the Cherokees more than anybody. We've been acculturated to believe that our religion is pagan, and that our language is archaic and useless, and that our history doesn't even exist, or it's totally distorted when it's told. Our children go to public school systems in Oklahoma, and they see teachers that don't look like them, don't reflect who they are as a people. We've always been acculturated to believe that the BIA or the Indian Health Service or somebody else had better ideas for us than we ourselves had, and so trusting our own thinking, tearing that away from them and getting it back I think is the single most important task we have ahead of us, and we've started that. It's gonna take a long time. We've started that on porches in eastern Oklahoma and in kitchens and in community centers. We've started talking about why we should take our own lives back.

I was interested this morning in listening to Leslie Silko's talk about education, because it's taken me much longer than it took her to understand that the real problem with why we have so much trouble with the educational system is that the real problem is the schools of education in this country. We would have to dismantle all that thinking



before we could even begin to resolve our educational issues, and they not only produce non-Indian teachers that teach incorrectly, they are now teaching our Indian teachers that come back and teach incorrectly. It's taken me a long time to reach that conclusion, but all of that is a process of trying to reclaim our sense of self and understand ourselves, and respect who we are as a people.

Finally, and then I'll take some questions -- one of the things that I wanted to just note is that one of the other problems, besides trusting our own thinking, that I think is very important, is that there still continues today in 1993 to be just an incredible array of negative stereotypes about native people. And I'm not sure that all the wonderful people you have at this conference -- and I've never seen an array of native people that I've been more impressed with than the group of people you have on campus here today -- I don't know whether you realize what an extraordinary group of people you have here on campus. If you took all those people working every day of their lives, I'm still not sure that we could turn around so many of the stereotypes we have in this country about native people.

Some of the films that we see in popular culture, I think are headed in the right direction. I liked "Dances with Wolves," some people didn't, and the one thing that was a little confusing that was kind of interesting though is here's Kevin Costner -- he's got all these gorgeous Sioux women around, and what does he do? He chooses the one white woman in the entire territory. I mean, this guy's got to have a problem, but other than that I think that some of those films and things we see in popular culture, I think are helpful. The real fundamental change I think in eliminating stereotypes is going to have to be in the academic community. I think there's got to be a lot of what you're doing today, and what you've done all day and all week, and really listening to people simply tell the truth. I think that'll help turn things around significantly.

We have in this country way too many negative stereotypes about black people, and about Latin people, and all kinds of people; it's just an incredible problem we deal

with. Sometimes in Oklahoma, it's really discouraging to sit down with a group of people from different backgrounds and cultures and try to work on a common problem, whether it's education or economic development or whatever the problem is, because everybody's sitting around this table, and they're all looking at each other with stereotypes, and they can't get past that. It's like everybody's sitting there and they have some kind of veil over their face, and they look at each other through this veil that makes them see each other through some stereotypical kind of view point. If we're ever gonna collectively begin to grapple with the problems that we have collectively, we're gonna have to move back the veil and deal with each other on a more human level, so I applaud you for trying to erase some of the negative stereotypes about native people that you have. Finally, I guess I'd like to say I hope my being here and spending a little time with you will help to erase any stereotypes you might have had about what a Chief looks like.

Thank you.

**Wilma Mankiller: Keynote Address  
March 6, 1999**

Thank you very much. (Applause). Thank you. Thank you very much. I'm very happy to be here and it's especially nice to see so many Native American women here today so far away from home. It's kind of interesting to travel because my name's unusual, Mankiller (laughter) and people are always a little startled by that.

Last night in the very nice place I was staying I ordered room service (laughter) and the fellow asked for my room number and then he asked for my name and he said, "Well, I don't know whether I want to take this food up there or not," (laughter) and it kind of reminds me of a trip I took back east one time to do a panel on Native American economic development, a very prestigious college that I won't name and this young man that came to pick me up just couldn't imagine a woman being Chief, first, and then he couldn't get over my name. And so anyway, when he picked me up we went to the baggage claim to pick up my baggage and he says, "Well, how should I address you since principal Chief is a male term?" (Crowd murmur). And so I didn't answer him. I just watched the thing going round and round and just stood there and then he kept chatting away and he said, "What should we address you, Chieftiness?" (Laughter). And there is this stereotype, basically that Native Americans are stoics. So I thought, well, I'll be stoic and I'm not going to talk to this guy. (Laughter). So then we get the bags and we get into the car and we are on the way out to the university and then he gets really ridiculous and he asks me if he should address me as "Chiefette?" (Laughter). So then I decided to answer him and I told him he can call me Ms. Chief. (Laughter). And if you say that real fast you're saying mischief. And anyway, so we get out to the university and to our panel. Then comes the question and answer period and this same young man asks me a question about the origin of my name and actually my name Mankiller was a title in Cherokee historical times. They're not literally but when it's translated into English it translates into

Mankiller. A Mankiller was someone who watched over Cherokee villages and that's who we trace our ancestry to, but that's not what I told him. And (laughter) when he asked about the origin of my name I told him that it was a nickname and that I'd earned it. (Laughter and applause). And then I let him try to figure out what I did to earn it. (Laughter).

What I thought I would do today is to talk to you a little bit about my own journey to that position of leadership and I think that for some of you, you probably share a similar experience but first I want to just give you just a tiny bit of background information about our tribe so you can put my life and my work in sort of some sort of historical context.

Our tribe, the Cherokee tribe is the second largest tribe in the country. There are little over 200,000 members, enrolled members, in the Cherokee Nation and many thousands more that can't enroll for one reason or another. The largest number of Cherokee by far reside in eastern Oklahoma which is the site where the Cherokees were moved to in 1838 and 1839 by the United States Army basically because the United States government wanted our land of southeast Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama. There is still a small Cherokee reservation in the Smoky Mountains in North Carolina with about 10,000 enrolled members there as well.

The Chief of the Cherokee Nation is one of seventeen elected positions. We are elected every four years by the general population. There's a Principal chief, a Deputy Principal Chief who serves also as the President of the Tribal Council and fifteen Tribal Council members who are the legislative body of the tribe. Historically, governance was done by consensus and Cherokees lived in semi-autonomous villages. The Chief was simply a spokesperson, rather than having executive authority as we do today. So just a little bit of background information.

As Kateri said, by the way, Kateri is a Native American name that many of you may be familiar with, but as Kateri said, when our family participated in the Bureau of Indian Affairs Relocation Program the BIA Relocation Program, one of many, many

attempts since the inception of tribal U.S. relationship to quote, “solve the Indian problem.” Initially, in initial contact there was a treaty making period, then the Indian wars and the reservation era and a relocation era which is how our tribe ended up in Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, a boarding school era where eighty-five percent of all Native American children were removed from their homes and placed in distant boarding schools and many, many other policies basically designed to make sure that this time as we approached the twenty first century that tribal people weren’t still together as tribes, as distinct tribal communities. And the Relocation Program was, yet another policy designed to break up tribal communities, remove them from their ancestral homeland. That’s not obviously how they sold the program to my father.

I’m one of eleven children. We lived in a very rural, isolated community, very Cherokee community. There is no paved road near our house. We had no indoor plumbing, no electricity, very little contact with the world outside our very isolated and insulated community. We farmed for our own consumption and also farmed for cash. We produced some products for cash as well.

They sold the program to my father basically by telling him that there would be a better life for our family and for his children if he were to participate in the relocation program. And so we participated in the program in 1957 and chose San Francisco as our relocation site.

The Cherokees were not the only tribes that were basically persuaded to participate in the relocation program. We met in San Francisco tribal people from many other tribes throughout the U.S. The better life that the Bureau of Indian Affairs promised my family ended up being initially an old hotel in the tenderloin district of San Francisco. The Keys Hotel and the better job that they promised my father and my older brother ended up being a job working in a rope factory for many, many hours for very, very little pay.

San Francisco was as distant from my home and the culture I lived in as anything could possibly be. I'd never seen an elevator, never road a bicycle, never used roller skates and never used a telephone and we looked differently from the other children. We dressed differently from the other children. We spoke differently. We certainly had a different last name.

I could remember my sister and I, I was ten at the time, feeling so embarrassed being in school because we were so different that we would go home at night and take a book and read out loud to one another so that we would sound more like the children in school because we were just trying to not be different and not be noticeable. It's hard not to be noticed when you have a name like Mankiller. (Laughter).

The adjustment there was very difficult for us and obviously it had a dramatic impact on my self-esteem.

We ultimately ended up in a housing project in San Francisco called Hunter's Point, very rough housing project and that's where we lived most of, during most of the years when I was growing up. It was the kind of housing project where you can't get an ambulance to come to at night, that the only time we saw police in our community was for no good reason and just as we had in Oklahoma, had our own very isolated and insulated community and a very different kind of community, we had a similar experience in San Francisco. Hunter's Point was a world of it's own, very different than the world around it. So all the community, our housing project, was ninety seven percent African American. So the first time I saw people standing up for things they believed in. I saw African American people standing up for things that they believed it and it had a dramatic impact on me.

I had no, obviously, in my community at Hunter's Point female role models to pattern myself after. There's no one to mentor me and basically we were just trying to survive to adulthood. There was no one telling me that I needed to go to college or one that I could see that was in a leadership position, no women. And our social life centered

around the San Francisco Indian Center and many of the women there were so much like the women in my family just trying to get by every day and facing a daunting set of problems just to get through each day.

I, women of my generation, I'm fifty-three, no matter where they live, whether they live in a housing project or were raised in a housing project or rural Cherokee community or in a middle class family or in an upper class family, we were all raised basically to be wives and mothers. And, so it's very interesting in our community to sort of watch the change and the roles of women during a period when I was sort of coming into my own.

Like many women of my generation I married and had two children. I married right out of high school and I had two children and I lived in one of the most exciting places on earth, to be in the sixties which was the San Francisco Bay. (Laughter). And I'd watched around me as the Women's Movement began to evolve, the Civil Rights movement was very important. There was a Red Power Movement, a Brown Power Movement, all kinds of exciting things going on around me, the enormous Anti-war movement, a Free Speech movement at University of California at Berkeley, the music was changing, and the world seemed full of possibilities in the late sixties.

Within that context and within that framework in the late sixties a group of Native Americans from San Francisco State University decided to take over Alcatraz Island off San Francisco Bay basically to make a statement about the conditions that Native American people lived under and they cited a provision, an old treaty that says unused federal land would revert to Native Americans and my entire family got involved in the occupation of Alcatraz Island in the late sixties, in 1969.

We felt like people of our time because of everything that was going on around us during that period of time. It was a very exciting time and for me it was a watershed experience. At that time I looked like many other middle class housewives. I took my girls who were very young to Alcatraz in little patent leather shoes and nice little dresses

and went over to see what was going on there. When my brothers and sisters moved to Alcatraz Island it was an unbelievable experience for me because for the very first time I heard people talking about things that I had felt but didn't know how to articulate and they were expressing thoughts and feelings that resonated with me and changed me forever.

After the Alcatraz occupation I became a volunteer for practically every Native American organization around and like I'd been taught I was always in a secondary role. I wrote speeches for men. I arranged organizational meetings for men. I worked on the newsletter for the Native American Center. I helped the women prepare the Wednesday night dinners. I was always in a secondary and a supportive role for many of the years after the Alcatraz occupation. And, I began to slowly change. I was always trying to talk men leaders into being involved in projects that I believed in and slowly but surely I began to acquire the skills to be able to do that myself.

I think the next major change for me after Alcatraz was being at a meeting in Oakland, California with a large group of Native American people and having the men leaders debate an issue and I'd always been so self-conscious and had such a lack of self-confidence that I wouldn't speak up at meetings. I would leave meetings often and think, why, I had better ideas than those people. But, I never said anything because I didn't want to risk having someone ridicule me or make me feel worse about myself. I think that the next big experience then for me after Alcatraz was when I felt so strongly about an issue that I spoke up in a meeting and opposed what was going on in the meeting. I have taken a lot of risks in my life with health, with going back to Oklahoma with just my children and no job and no idea what I was going to do, running for election, and I don't think there is anything more risky than I've ever done than stand up in that meeting and speak my piece and tell people that I disagreed with the direction that this group was going in and that I didn't intend to stand for it. It was a major turning point for me. And once I'd crossed that line and the line was crossed basically because I felt more



strongly about the issue that I did about how I would be perceived. Anyway, that was a major turning point for me.

I ultimately continued to be involved and ultimately returned to Oklahoma in 1977. I didn't want my children to be raised in Oakland. I wanted them to experience some of the things that I'd experienced in my early childhood.

I began working for the Cherokee Nation in 1977 in a low level administrative job. There were no female executives. There'd never been a female Deputy Chief or a female Chief there and so I didn't begin working there with the idea that I would some day assume the leadership role. I began working there basically with the idea that I thought that our people had a much greater capacity for solving their own problems than they'd ever been given credit for and as I began to develop programs and bring in money to the organization, I began to move up the hierarchy which was an all male hierarchy at that time, ultimately founding the Cherokee Nation Community Development Department.

In 1983 our Chief at that time asked me if I would run, consider running for Deputy Chief. I couldn't imagine myself making the transition from a community organizer to someone who had to go out and sell myself to a large population and becoming a political leader. And then I went to one of our rural communities, a small rural community. I'd been in housing and water systems and other kinds of community development. I went down a road I'd never been down before and saw people living in buses and people living in cars and one of my skills was in housing and I drove straight from that community back to the Chief's office and I told him I would run for Deputy Chief.

So it was very interesting when I ran for office in 1983 because I thought that my politics which had been much more liberal than the very conservative area I now live in, now in eastern Oklahoma would be an issue. I thought many factors would be an issue but I never dreamed that the biggest issue would be my being female. It was very interesting because no one questioned whether I had the skills or the ability to do the job and I was so naive that I would pass out copies of my resume thinking, well, if these

people knew that I knew a lot about treaty issues, Native American law, how to develop programs, if they knew that I knew these things then they would support me. They weren't even remotely interested in those things. They were only interested in the fact that I was a woman. Yeah. And so, (laughter) I remember one time during that period of time when I was speaking to a group kind of like this but all Cherokees, all Cherokee people and the people were very hostile, about half the people were very hostile, and I never had a response to anything that people had to say about my gender or anything like that. So I went through a particularly hurtful meeting and I called a friend of mine who was on the Board of the Ms. Foundation for Women and she is a folklorist and I asked her to tell me, give me some witty things to say to people when they came up and said hurtful things about a woman aspiring to leave the tribe at that time in the second highest position. I can't repeat to you what she told me to tell them. (Laughter). It would have worked but I will tell you that she gave me some good advice which was to not focus on the sexism and the anti-female comments that people were making and spend all my energy on that or I would lose the election. Her advice to me was to simply go forward and talk about issues that I believed in.

I remember reading on this one topic during that period of time on the back of a tea box a little piece of advice that helped me through that election and I figured it's very good advice. It said something like, "Don't ever argue with a fool because someone walking by can't tell which one is the fool." (Laughter). And then since the argument against women being in leadership was so foolish, I refused to engage in that kind of debate and conversation and simply talked about the issues.

I did win that election and all during this whole time (applause) I was going through a lot of personal change and trying to make the transition from community activist to leader. And in our tribe when one becomes the Deputy Chief you also leave the Tribal Council. The Tribal Council had all, every single person, opposed to my election. So you can imagine how thrilled they were when I became their President. (Laughter).

Then I remember the first time I tried to conduct a meeting and because we're a very large tribe, it's a very formal sort of meeting arrangement. The very first time I tried to conduct a meeting there was one fellow who kept interrupting me and telling me that I wasn't following some obscure rule I've never heard of or wasn't following the appropriate procedures or something, and so I thought, you know, I'm going to have to put up with this for the next four years unless I find some way to assert myself. And so between the first monthly meeting and the second monthly meeting I had all the microphones changed so that I controlled the microphones. (Laughter). And, (applause), so at the next meeting when he started to interrupt me I simply cut off his microphone (laughter), and so we began to understand one another after that. (Laughter). And then two years into my role as Deputy Chief our Chief resigned and I moved up to the position of Chief, ran for my election on my own in '87, and won, barely. I then ran for election again in '91 and won with eighty-three percent of the vote of which I am very proud. (Applause).

So I think for Cherokee people, anyway, the issue of whether a woman should lead or not, that question has been pretty well resolved.

I want to share with you some things that helped me in my years at the Cherokee Nation and helped me in leadership that I learned as a child. No one in my family, and I'm sure no one in your family, sat down with you and said these are the things that I think will be very, very important to you in your life. Rather, I learned the best way I think that you can learn is by observing the people around me. What I saw in our rural community is that people could not survive unless they helped one another. Most of the people in my community were farmers and if someone had milk, someone else had eggs, someone had meat, someone else had vegetables, someone else had fruit or whatever, we traded and we bartered and that's how we managed to survive. We helped one another. This was long before there were all these federal programs that are available now and in order to simply survive, we had to learn how, and that we were interdependent and that we had to help

one another. So I learned a lot about community and I learned a lot about interdependence as a child and those things helped me enormously later in my life.

The other two things that I learned that were very, very helpful to me is what all people call “having a good mind” or what more contemporary Cherokees call, “living the good life” or “being a good person” or what Christians would call trying to be “Christ-like.” This idea or this concept of “having a good mind” means trying to be the best person that you can and trying to find something positive about every single situation you find yourself in and trying to find something positive about all people you interact with. We all have choices when we meet people. We can either focus on the negative attributes of that person or we can focus on the positive attributes of that person. What I learned by watching these people who had an incredible number of problems that they faced every single day was that they always found something good to say. You can say, “Well, your crops failed, yeah, but this worked.” Or, “you have really bad arthritis or diabetes or something like that and you are confined to a wheelchair. Yeah, but you know, I like to read a lot. So it’s okay. I can make a life this way.” And no matter what it was, people carried this concept of “having good mind,” trying to be a good person, and trying to find something positive about their lives. In fact, one of my very favorite traditional Cherokee prayers is the one that starts out with “First let us remove all negative thoughts from our minds so we can come together as one.” That’s how the prayer begins. It’s a very beautiful prayer which teaches you to take negative thoughts out of your mind. There’s nothing that I learned as a child that had a more profound influence on me than that simple lesson about keeping negativity out of my mind and trying to find something positive about whatever situation I found myself in, and I found myself in quite a few situations.

In 1978 I decided to go to graduate school and I wasn’t making it. My only income was as a graduate assistant. I had got a graduate assistantship and I asked the Cherokee Nation if I could go back and do some consulting work for them while I was in

graduate school. I was on my way to an interview with the Personnel Director to do the consultant work and my friend, Sherry Morse, was driving this way and I was driving that way and she passed three cars and we ran into each other and she was killed at the site. (Long pause, Mankiller regaining composure). You never get over that. (Pause). She was a very young woman, thirty two, and I was thirty-two. She had been a southern beauty queen and had been a runner-up for Miss Mississippi which had defined her and her family and she kind of rebelled and said, "I'm not going to do this anymore." She became interested in child development, rural child development. She read a lot about it and was teaching during that time and so it's always seemed very unfair to me that she was taken at a time when she just reached a point where she said, "I'm gonna, I'm gonna, you know, I'm gonna abandon this idea of being totally consumed by my appearance." Anyway, so that happened and I was very severely injured, very severely injured. The people who took me from the ambulance told me later that they couldn't tell whether I was a man or a woman. I was so bloody and so during what happened during that experience of going from the accident to the hospital is what I later learned was a near-death experience. I didn't even know it, know anything about near-death experiences but I came very, very, very close to death, very close to death and I could touch it and could feel it. It was actually a very wonderful feeling. It's the most wonderful feeling I've had in my life. This was better than falling in love, better than childbirth, better than anything I've ever, ever experienced in my life, more profound, and when I recovered and began to reflect on that, the change that that experience made in me is that I learned to no longer fear death and so I also no longer feared life. (Pause).

(Dead air space) . . .to have a kidney transplant and I wrote my physician who had performed the original kidney transplant in Boston who was kind of the grandfather of transplantations for Harvard and asked him if he could help me find a clinical trial. Well, it just so happened that he was involved in a clinical trial and that you couldn't get in this clinical trial if you've had cancer or if you had a kidney transplant before. But he argued

with the review board on a compassionate basis and allowed me in the clinical trial cause the clinical trial basically involves giving the transplant recipient much less immunosuppression than a regular person with a transplant and so it lowers your possibility of creating a friendly environment for cancer, very technical stuff. Anyway, I got to participate in this program and my niece who is thirty-two years old and she's a Crow, half Crow, and one quarter Cherokee, donated a kidney to me. So in last July I had a successful kidney transplant and since then have been rebuilding my health and I've been able to live very, very fully again.

I continue to serve on the Board of the Ford Foundation of the Freedom Forum which is the old Gannet Foundation. I've been working a lot to help build a youth center in our town. I've done some benefits for a Lutheran sponsored youth home which is called the Oaks Indian Center. I've, you know, been involved in all kinds of different things. I helped with the local Cherokee Heritage Center. I completed editing during the time I was treated for cancer a book called the *Reader's Companion to the History of Women in the U.S.*, published by Houghton-Mifflin. I'm now working on two or three other books.

So, anyway, I've got my life back again and I don't think much about what's going to happen tomorrow or two weeks from now or a month from now with regard to my health but rather I simply life fully today. People are always asking me about my prognosis but the truth is that none of you know what your prognosis is, what's going to happen tomorrow.

So (applause) I guess finally I don't want to keep you here forever cause I know you've workshops to go to. I was just trying to give you some things that have been important to me to think about.

Finally, I think I enjoy getting out and talking to people like you because it helps to eliminate any stereotypes about Native American people, and we still, unfortunately have a lot of negative stereotypes about Native American people in this country and I sure

hope my being here will help to eliminate any stereotypes you might have about what a Chief looks like. (Laughter).

Thank you.

(Laughter, applause, whoops, yells, and Indian chanting)

**TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH WILMA MANKILLER MAY 19, 2000**

On May 19, 2000 from approximately 10:00 to 10:30 Eastern Standard Time I had a telephone interview with Wilma Mankiller. She was very gracious, polite, and genuinely interested in my academic endeavor. I provided her with background information about myself that I believed was pertinent in order for her to understand my personal and academic reasons for this scholarship. We almost immediately sustained a very warm rapport and our conversation was mutually friendly, unguarded and respectful. I comfortably referred to her as Wilma and she in turn referred to me as Lynda.

I explained to her the purpose of my thesis which is to examine her public discourse from a scholarly approach. I informed her of the rhetorical artifacts I was using in order to carry out my analysis. I explained to her the neo-Aristotelian method, including the tasks involved and the five classical canons of rhetoric at which time she expressed sentiment that she was unaware that there were academic methods to study speeches and that she thought it was “wonderful” that there was this field of scholarship.

At the end of our conversation Mankiller informed me that she had recently spoken with an educator about the need for scholarship of Native American speakers. She stated to me that she had expressed to this individual that many people think of great speakers as only European and in the context of ancient classical times. She told this individual that there have been “great Indian speakers” and that educational programs need to include scholarship focused on “Indian speakers” who have been a significant part of “Indian history.” She shared with me my enthusiasm and hope that this thesis will inspire other students to potential scholarship of Native American oratory.

Mankiller agreed with numerous assessments and conclusions that I have drawn from my analysis of her rhetoric. I will explain these using the five classical canons of rhetoric as a guide. As far as invention, Mankiller emphatically believes that as an “educator” it is essential to provide the audience with a detailed history of the Cherokees



in order for the audience to understand the events that have plagued her people and to grasp an understanding of the contemporary Cherokee condition today. Clarification of historical factors reveals many of the contemporary issues that Native American people confront today such as stereotype, social misconception, and cultural identification. She indeed does discuss Cherokee history first in her presentations in order to create a context for her audience. Mankiller expressed, "context is everything." She stated that she will alter the amount of detail she provides dependent on her audience. If the audience is an extremely educated composite she will incorporate in her information significantly more data and statistics. Mankiller concurred that she definitely relies on personal testimony. By referencing her life and experiences she can illustrate social and cultural problems that the Cherokees have faced and continue to overcome collectively and individually.

In terms of organization, Mankiller presents a chronological history of the Cherokees. She agreed that the arrangement of her impromptu presentations chronologically incorporates personal experiences which she uses as examples to augment the information she conveys.

Mankiller expressed that in her communication, private or public, she "is the same person whether I am talking with a politician in Washington or an individual from rural Oklahoma." She does not adapt her persona to the situation, nor does she "make a distinction in the way she addresses one person or a group. Honesty, sincerity, and respect in discourse are elements clearly important to Mankiller and were indeed present in our conversation.

Mankiller agreed that she uses language that is clear to understand. She wants her audience to easily interpret her message and to relate to what she is trying to convey. When she speaks she is casual and conversational, without pretense. She agreed that her manner was unaffected; her style is her own, natural and of the moment. She sees herself as a speaker with a serious message that she wants her audience to comprehend. For an audience to accept her message she must be believable and to be perceived in this way,

she can only “be herself.” Mankiller does use humor in her speeches. Our telephone conversation included a discussion of the anecdotes regarding how she should be addressed and how a chief looks. She was quite amused by these examples and after a hearty laugh commented on the poignant point that was behind both that she wanted to make. The first addressed gender discrimination and the second stereotype. Although there are apparently many more experiences that she could recount these two incidents most accurately illustrate the issue of gender discrimination which effects all women and stereotype which effects all people.

In terms of delivery, Mankiller speaks with emotion appropriate to the content of her message. I mentioned that in the audio tape of her speech at California Lutheran University there was a brief pause in which she could not speak when she told of the death of her good friend, Sherri, due to the severe automobile accident in which she was involved. She readily acknowledged that she “still can’t get over that.” Mankiller is an unmasked speaker, real and vibrant. She is unguarded and unafraid to say what she feels and indefensibly shows her feelings.

As far as memory, Mankiller does not prepare her speeches. She speaks about what she wants with no imposed subject matter when she accepts a speaking engagement. She does not use a manuscript. In fact, “about an hour before I jot down a few notes.”

We spoke about the two presentations that I would analyze for this thesis. Mankiller informed me that “Rebuilding the Cherokee Nation” was a speech presented at a conference of Native American writers and there were many Native American women in the audience at the California Lutheran University event.

My telephone conversation was confirmatory of some of the findings and conclusions of my analysis. In speaking with Wilma Mankiller it was clear that most important in any type of discourse in which she is involved she is honest and sincere. It was extremely comfortable to talk with her and to listen to her. In speaking with Mankiller I learned that most important to her in her public speaking engagements is to

educate her audience about the Cherokees, first through historical information and second through evidence which demonstrates the great progress of this tenacious and determined people. In speaking with Mankiller it was apparent that her message goes beyond the realm of the Cherokees in that no longer can the walls of discrimination, misconception, and stereotype continue to barricade our society which is so rich in multi-culturalism.

Wilma Mankiller said it most eloquently:

“No person can make a distinction against another.”

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