INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

TODAY

LIVING IN TWO WORLDS

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© Kay WalkingStick

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About This Issue

Whether they are called tribal, Native, or Aboriginal peoples — First Nations, Adivasis, or American Indians — indigenous peoples are ethnic groups who have inhabited particular regions from ancient times. Another common term for these groups is "original inhabitants," because their residence in a place predates modern history.

As the authors in this issue of *eJournal USA* make clear, indigenous people worldwide have endured a long history of conquest and colonialism. Native people in many lands were decimated or wiped out by war and disease, relocated against their will, their children taken to boarding schools to inculcate "civilized" values. European settlers, for the most part, did not understand or recognize the very different value systems and worldviews of indigenous peoples in colonized lands. In recent decades a number of governments have acknowledged the damage done over centuries to their Native peoples and sought to redress past wrongs.

These countries have developed legal means for recognizing the rights of indigenous citizens and supporting their economic development and cultural preservation. Non-governmental groups have similarly worked toward these ends. This movement has created, in some places, a renaissance of Native cultures. Further empowerment came on September 13, 2007, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a document negotiated between governments and indigenous peoples over two decades.

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A Navajo dancer performs at an Idaho pow wow. Pow wows celebrate American Indian culture and preserve tribal traditions.

Essays in this journal are written mostly by experts descended from indigenous tribes, who speak from the Native point of view. Former Chief of the Cherokee Nation Wilma Mankiller writes of using the past to achieve a strong future for indigenous peoples, where "one of the greatest challenges will be to … pass on traditional knowledge systems." Yupiaq elder Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley says, "I grew up as an inseparable part of Nature." His tribe has harnessed its traditional knowledge to modern science in an effort to adjust to the impact of climate change on their fragile Arctic homeland.

Bruce E. Johansen recounts the story of American Indian nations whose governance practices influenced the founders of the United States, practices that are reflected in the U.S. Constitution. Jace Weaver details the evolving legal relationship of American Indian nations with U.S. state and federal government systems.

Indigenous languages, rich in practical knowledge and spiritual symbolism, embody key elements of diverse cultures, but they are rapidly disappearing. Louise Erdrich writes about the depth of her native Ojibwe language, while Akira Y. Yamamoto explains why "each and every language is precious" and how they can be preserved. Vine Deloria Jr. and Joseph Bruchac depict the essential reverence of Native cultures for the environment.

Globalization has enabled networking among indigenous groups, helping them establish dialogues outside their local communities. An interview with José Barreiro, National Museum of American Indian (NMAI) director for Latin America; the International Indigenous and American Indian Initiative program at the University of North Texas described by Jonathan Hook; and Shubhranshu Choudhary's article about citizen journalism by Adivasis in India show aspects of this exchange.

Also, a photo gallery offers a glimpse of indigenous people in arts and society. As NMAI historian and curator Gabrielle Tayac writes, "The brilliance of Native cultures is manifold." ■

— *The Editors*

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Indigenous People in the 21st Century

Wilma Mankiller

Wilma Mankiller is the former principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, the first female to hold that position. A published author and long-time Native rights activist, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1998.

What does the future hold for indigenous people across the globe and what does it mean to be an indigenous person in the 21st century?

The response to these questions will vary greatly among the 250 to 300 million indigenous people in virtually every region of the world. There is enormous diversity among the approximately 5,000 distinct groups of indigenous peoples, each of which has a unique history, language, culture, system of governance, and way of life. While some indigenous people continue to subsist on fishing, hunting, and gathering food, others manage multifaceted enterprises.

Indigenous groups across the globe do face some common challenges in their fight to protect their lands, natural resources, and cultural practices. The battle to protect the human and land rights of indigenous people is made immeasurably more difficult by the fact that so few people know much about either the history or contemporary lives of indigenous people. And without any historical or cultural context, it is almost impossible to understand current indigenous issues.

Problems rooted in Colonialism

When contemplating the challenges faced by indigenous people worldwide, it is important to remember that the roots of many social, economic, and political problems can be found in colonial policies. The world's indigenous peoples are bound by the common experience of being "discovered" and subjected to colonial expansion into their territories that led to the loss of an incalculable number of lives and millions of hectares of land and resources. The most basic rights of indigenous people were disregarded, and they were subjected to a series of policies designed to assimilate them into colonial society and culture. Too often the legacy of these policies was poverty, high infant mortality, rampant unemployment, and substance abuse with all its attendant problems.

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Ancient meets modern. American Indian in traditional dance costume descends escalator.

As a result of the work of many indigenous people and advocacy groups, the United Nations General Assembly voted on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on September 13, 2007. While the great majority voted for the declaration, the United States, New Zealand,

Canada, and Australia voted against it. But the position of these four countries is changing. Kevin Rudd, the prime minister of Australia, recently announced that Australia will endorse the declaration, an important step for the Aboriginal people of that country, as well as indigenous people everywhere. With the 2008 election of President Barack Obama, many hope the United States will reconsider its vote against the resolution.

The U.N. Declaration protects the self-determination and treaty rights of indigenous people, as well as their right to "freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development." As they pursue these rights, access to and control of their ancestral land is central to the self-determination efforts of indigenous people from the Manipuri tribals in India to the Andean people in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

As indigenous people regain control over more of their own lands and resources, they are working to develop their economies and rebuild their communities and nations. While there are many individual indigenous entrepreneurs, there are also a remarkable number of businesses commonly owned by tribal governments or communities. These businesses range from a women's weaving cooperative on the banks of the Rio Negro in Brazil to the fish-trading businesses of the Luo people in Kenya. Annual trade shows for indigenous products and businesses are held in Winnipeg, Canada, and Melbourne, Australia. In the United States many social and cultural programs are funded with revenue from tribally owned enterprises such as book publishing, shopping malls, and gaming casinos.

As they develop the economy and address social issues, indigenous people place a high premium on preserving tribal culture, languages, healing arts, songs, and ceremonies. It is miraculous that, in the face of enormous adversity, many indigenous people have retained traditional knowledge, core values that have sustained them over time, and a sense of cohesion as a tribal people.

Shared Issues

Despite their many differences, the world's indigenous peoples share some common values, including a sometimes fragmented but still very present sense of reciprocity and a clear understanding that their lives are part of and inseparable from the land. This deeply felt sense of interdependence with each other and all other living things fuels a duty and responsibility to conserve and protect the natural world that is a sacred provider of food, medicine, and spiritual sustenance.

Courtesy Wilma Mankiller

Cherokee leader and activist Wilma Mankiller.

Values matter in indigenous communities, where the most respected people are not those who have amassed material wealth or achieved great personal success. The greatest respect is reserved for those who help other people, those who understand that their lives play themselves out within a set of reciprocal relationships.

The manner in which tribal people govern themselves also differs from region to region. In the United States there are more than 560 tribal governments with a direct government-to-government relationship with the federal government. These governments exercise a range of sovereign rights, including administering their own judicial systems and police forces, operating schools and hospitals, and managing a wide range of business enterprises. Tribal governments create tens of thousands of jobs and add millions of dollars to the economies of the states in which they reside. All these advancements benefit everyone in the community, not just tribal people. The history, contemporary lives, and future of tribal governments in the United States is intertwined with that of their neighbors.

The land base of tribal governments varies from some who control millions of hectares to others who possess less than 25 hectares of land. And the population ranges from the Navajo and Cherokee Nations, each with an enrolled membership of more than 250,000 to some tribal governments with less than 100 members. It is important to note that the population or land base of a sovereign tribal government does not determine the degree to which it enjoys the rights to self-government. Just as the tiny principality of Monaco enjoys some of the same international rights as China and the United States, tribal governments with a tiny land base and small population are sovereign entities with the same powers as tribes with a large population or land base.

As they move further into the 21st century, indigenous people face many critical political, social, economic, and cultural challenges. One of the greatest challenges will be to develop practical models to capture, maintain, and pass on traditional knowledge systems and values to future generations. Nothing can replace the sense of continuity that a genuine understanding of traditional tribal knowledge brings. There is no doubt

that in some indigenous communities, the original languages, ceremonies, and knowledge systems have been irretrievably lost, but in many others the culture is vibrant, the language is still spoken, and hundreds of ceremonies are conducted to commemorate seasonal changes in the natural world and in the lives of human beings. Each year indigenous people are developing more projects to preserve discrete aspects of culture such as language and medicinal plants.

To view the future of indigenous people, one needs to look at the past. If indigenous people were tenacious enough to survive a staggering loss of lives, land, rights, and resources, they seem well-equipped to survive whatever challenges lie ahead of them. In many parts of the world, indigenous people are not only surviving, they are thriving. In South America, where there are approximately 40 million indigenous people, visionary indigenous leaders like Evo Morales, president of Bolivia, and Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchú are leading both a cultural and political renaissance.

In the United States the future looks somewhat better for tribal people due in large part to the self-governance and self-determination efforts of tribal governments. There are many inspiring stories of tribal governments and people rebuilding and revitalizing their communities and nations.

Harvard University recently completed more than a decade of comprehensive research that has been published in a guardedly hopeful book entitled *The State of Native Nations*. The research indicates that most of the social and economic indicators are moving in a positive direction; many tribal governments are strong, educational attainment levels are improving, and there is a cultural renaissance occurring in many tribal communities.

Within indigenous communities there are many conversations about what it means to be a traditional indigenous person now and what it will mean in the future.

To be an indigenous person of the 21st century means being part of a community that has faced devastating poverty and oppression, yet finds many moments of grace and comfort in traditional stories, language, ceremonies, and culture.

To be an indigenous person of the 21st century means being a member of a group that possesses some of the most valuable and ancient knowledge on the planet, a people who still have a direct relationship with and sense of responsibility to the land.

To be an indigenous person of the 21st century means trusting one's own thinking again and not only articulating one's own vision of the future but having within communities the skill sets and leadership ability to make that vision a reality.

To be an indigenous person means, despite everything, still being able to dream of a future in which the people all over the world will support the human rights and self-determination of indigenous people. Land and resources can be colonized but dreams can never be colonized.

To be an indigenous person of the 21st century means networking and sharing traditional knowledge and best practices with indigenous communities all over the planet, using the iPhone, BlackBerry, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and every other technological tool that becomes available.

Within indigenous communities there are many conversations about what it means to be a traditional indigenous person now and what it will mean in the future.

To be an indigenous person of the 21st century means being an entrepreneur, physician, scientist, or even an astronaut who will leave her footprints on the moon and then return home to participate in ceremonies her people have conducted since the beginning of time.

I am an indigenous woman of the 21st century, and, as was the case with my ancestors, my life has played itself out within a set of reciprocal relationships with members of my community, the Cherokee Nation, my biological family, and my chosen family.

To be an indigenous person of the 21st century means honoring our ancestors who kept their vision fixed firmly on the future, no matter what was going on in the present.

To be an indigenous person of the 21st century means acknowledging past injustice but never allowing ourselves to be paralyzed into inaction by anger about the past or the totality of present-day challenges.

It means heeding the advice of our relatives, the Mohawk, who remind us that it is hard to see the future with tears in our eyes. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Living Traditions of Native America

Gabrielle Tayac

Courtesy National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution

Sisseton Sioux Beaded Cloth, ca. 1877. Glass beads, wool trade cloth, cotton, and wool yarn.

Historian Gabrielle Tayac is a curator at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C. She is a descendant of the Piscataway tribe, who inhabited the Chesapeake Bay area. Her grandfather, Chief Turkey Tayac (1895-1978), was a traditional healer. Here she discusses the importance of an accurate portrayal of the history and culture of indigenous peoples.

"The Earth and myself are of one mind."
— *Chief Joseph*

Chief Joseph (1840-1904) of the Nimipu Band of the Nez Perce lived much of his life amid the encroachment of white settlers drawn to the Gold Rush in the western United States. The U.S. government promised to reserve land for the Nez Perce, including their traditional homelands, now the states of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. However, by 1863 the land base was reduced by 6 million acres (2.4 million hectares) to one-tenth of its original size. Chief Joseph reluctantly agreed to move to the reservation, but a violent reaction by younger warriors led the U.S. Army to pursue the Nez Perce. Despite his brilliant military strategy, Chief Joseph was forced to surrender in 1877 because his people were weakened by starvation, cold, and illness. He spoke the words quoted above during his surrender. He was never allowed to return to his beloved home, the Wallowa Valley. Today the Nimipu have not only survived, but they participate in a modern economy through fishing, logging, education, and commerce. A group of us working at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C., thought that Chief Joseph's story and his sentiment about the Earth should be the first that visitors encounter upon entry to our building.

Four major ideas are helpful for understanding the past and present situation of Native peoples. First, they have diverse cultures that are united in the concept that humans must be stewards of a living world. Second, individuals are defined by and are accountable to their tribal communities. Third, the trauma of the destructive encounters with European settlers has shaped who we are today. Finally, Native peoples' creative expressions, past and present, continue to contribute to global culture and science.

Native America, to understand it as a world described by NMAI curator Paul Chaat Smith (Comanche), is "ancient and modern, and always changing."

About 4 million people identify themselves as either being an American Indian or having American Indian ancestry. American Indians can be found across

the country, and 70 percent do not live on reservations, the lands set aside by treaty for tribes. Many are intermarried with people of other ethnic and racial backgrounds, the highest rate of intermarriage among any ethnic group in the United States. Despite recent economic gains, especially through casino gaming allowed due to jurisdictional sovereignty that tribes have, American Indians still suffer from poorer health, higher poverty, and lower educational attainment than other sectors of the U.S. population.

Tribes are tremendously diverse, with each having its own traditional culture, language, history, and government. Most Native people seek a balance of maintaining ancestral cultures with participation in an increasingly global environment.

Courtesy National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution

Historian Gabrielle Tayac.

For many years, because of discrimination and misunderstanding in the broader society, Native Americans were not valued and our cultures were thought to be dying. But in the past 30 years, thanks to the collective efforts of people of all backgrounds, new life is coming to the tribes in an era of increasing self-expression. Our museum, which opened in 2004, is a product of that struggle. Created by an act of Congress in 1989, the NMAI brought an important private collection of more than 800,000 objects into public stewardship under the Smithsonian Institution. Perhaps most importantly, NMAI lets Native people speak on their own behalf to interpret their histories, philosophies, and identities for a world audience.

NMAI signals a profound shift in the valuing of Native cultures. An essential role that the museum serves is to educate the public about Native peoples from their own point of view. While stereotypes are difficult to address among adults, our real hope lies with the future shaping of children's viewpoints. Schoolchildren are a key audience to our facility, and our education department works with tribal scholars to develop accurate materials for use in the classroom. Internet resources are available also, as most people in the country will not have the chance to spend time at the museum, showing a diversity of Native cultures across topics in the arts and sciences. For example, many people aware of American culture may be familiar with the tradition of Thanksgiving as a special dinner in November based on a peaceful exchange between Native Americans and Puritan colonists in the 17th century. However, even in the United States few people are aware that the idea of thanksgiving is based upon a traditional Native daily ceremonial practice to express gratitude and responsibility for the abundance in the world. Different seasons bring different thanksgivings, such as the "strawberry thanksgiving" that is practiced every June among northeastern tribes.

Living Worlds

"With beauty I speak, I am in peace and harmony."
— *Navajo Blessing*

The profound teachings of diverse Native cultures are often known as "original instructions," meaning that the ways of being in the world were passed to humans by a Creator or other spiritual beings. These ideas have been passed down orally, embedded in story, song, and dance as American Indians north of Mexico did not have writing systems until European forms were adapted by tribes. There is no Native philosophy — there are hundreds. Living in balance with the natural and spiritual realms, respecting our role in the world as human beings, and embracing family and community responsibility are shared cultural values intended to guide our peoples in today's world.

One example, the Navajo, whose blessing is quoted above, call themselves *Diné* or "the people". They live on a reservation extending almost 7 million hectares (26,000 square miles) in the arid lands surrounding the borders of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Their current population of nearly 300,000 comprises the largest tribe in the United States. The *Diné* are

traditionally sheepherders and weavers, although today you can find individuals in every profession and on every continent. A core principle in *Diné* philosophy is *hozho*, which has been simplified in English as "beauty." But hozho is more complicated than that. It conveys values of wholeness, balance, and restoration. Many *Diné* ceremonies and practices are devoted to restoring harmony in individuals, communities, and the world. So when a person says, "with beauty I speak," she is stating a much more complicated idea — that her thoughts should be restorative, holistic, and balanced. As the *Diné* have reclaimed control of their education and government systems over the past decades, they are inserting this philosophy of what should guide their schools, courts, and economy.

Native philosophies are rich and varied. People of all backgrounds are increasingly interested in learning more about these ancient systems that still have relevance. For most of American history, unfortunately, Native religions and philosophies were at best misunderstood and at worst outlawed. Many Native nations are now working hard to recover traditions that were lost and preserve what they still have.

Living in balance with the natural and spiritual realms, respecting our role in the world as human beings, and embracing family and community responsibility are shared cultural values intended to guide our peoples in today's world.

Community

"Being an Indian is not about being part something; it is about being part of something." — *Angela Gonzales, 2007*

Relationships are at the core of Native identity. The sense of family is often more extended than what we see in the contemporary United States, in which most families are nuclear, chiefly parents and children. In American Indian cultures, family includes not only blood-related relatives but clan or society relationships. Tribal membership is also a key to identity, which is determined by the degree of Indian heritage, or "blood quantum," acceptable for membership to the tribe. To be an American Indian is not merely to be a member of a broader ethnic or racial group but also to belong to a specific community that defines its own membership. Some tribes trace descent through the mother, other tribes through the father, and still others have adopted the rules set out by the U.S. government in the early 20th century. Each tribe is unique.

As subjects of discriminatory racial policies, Native Americans and African Americans have a great deal in common. Both Native Americans and African Americans were viewed as inferior biologically and culturally to many Euro-Americans for centuries. There were laws prohibiting whites from intermarrying with them, laws that were enforced more stringently for African Americans. Interestingly, both Native Americans and Africans shared indigenous lifestyles, enabling them to relate to each other upon first contact. In early colonial history we find quite a bit of intermarriage between them on the Atlantic seaboard. Their work towards overturning discrimination was also linked. Encouraged by the 1960s civil rights movement, many American Indians began their own social movements to regain rights. American Indian identity is perhaps one of the most talked about topics among American Indians themselves. The tensions between obligations to a tribal community and living in a quickly changing era of globalization makes many people feel that they are constantly juggling "two worlds." Yet as policies and social attitudes about the value of American Indian cultures changed, some younger Native people are exploring the idea that they really live in just one world as whole people with a tribal identity that can adapt to any circumstance.

Expression

"The Indian way is a thinking tradition."
— *John Mohawk, ca. 1990*

The brilliance of Native cultures is manifold. One can observe creative genius in ancient agricultural innovations, contemporary art, pre-contact concepts of governance, or environmental conservation traditions. Indigenous peoples have much to offer the world, even as they bring their tribal identities and global contemporary realities into one world. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

My Place, My Identity

Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley

Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley is professor emeritus of education at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and has a long-time interest in the biological sciences. He was born into a traditional indigenous Yupiaq family in Alaska, where he was raised by his grandmother from the age of two, after his parents died. She spoke only Yupiaq, so Yupiaq was his first language, and the tribal culture his first culture. The Yupiat are among several Arctic tribes sometimes referred to as Eskimos. Kawagley has been executive director of several nonprofit corporations focused on science, education, and health. He currently serves on Haskell University's American Indian and Alaska Native Climate Change Working Group.

© AP Images/Al Grillo

Erosion takes a toll at the village of Newtok, where residents are consulting tribal elders and geologists in the best ways to adapt to the effects of global warming.

I recently watched a television program titled "You Own Alaska." My first reaction was that this was an expression motivated by political and economic interest. But the more I thought about it, the more it grated on my worldview. How could anyone "own" Alaska? According to my ancestral traditions, the land owns me! Thus began my reflections on how my Yupiaq worldview differs from that of the dominant society.

The cold defines my place. Mamterilleq (now known as Bethel, Alaska) made me who I am. The cold made my language, my worldview, my culture, and technology. Now, the cold is waning at a very fast rate, and as a result, it is changing the landscape. The changing landscape in turn is confusing the mindscape of the Yupiat, as well as other indigenous people. Some of the natural sense makers of Mother Nature are out of synchronization with the flora and fauna.

We, the Yupiat of the Kuskokwim River, used the leafing of the alder tree to tell us when the smelts would journey up the river and we could begin dip-netting for them. When the alder leaves emerge from the bud, the king salmon will be arriving, and so on. But these indicators are no longer reliable when spring arrives two to four weeks earlier than usual. This is just one example of the changes that are taking place in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

Landscape and Identity

In the times past, the landscape formed our mindscape, which in turn formed our identity. I grew up as an inseparable part of Nature. It was not my place to "own" land, nor to domesticate plants or animals who often have more power than I as a human being.

We know that Mother Nature has a culture, and it is a Native culture.

This is why we as a Native people have to emulate Her. We know that the Ellam Yua, the Person or Spirit of

the Universe, lives in Her. That is why she serves as our guide, teacher, and mentor.

We need to spend much time in Nature to commune with the Great Consciousness. This gives balance to the Native person. She encourages us to become altruistic, showing the utmost respect for everything around us, including the flora, fauna, and all the elements of Mother Earth — the winds, the rivers, the lakes, the mountains, the clouds, the stars, the Milky Way, the sun, the moon, and the ocean currents. Mother Earth gives me everything I need to know and be able to problem-solve. But times have changed, making living a life in concert with Mother Earth more difficult.

Missionaries and the educational system had the first impact. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, schools were introduced to the Yupiat people by the Christian churches under contract with the U.S. government.

Boarding schools were established for Alaska Native youngsters. The education provided was organized to assimilate the Native people to the techno-mechanistic and consumerist worldview. The education was oppressive and suppressive of the Native language and culture. By this time the United States had become very adept at organizing and administering boarding schools for American Indians. Native children were taken away from their parents and villages for long periods of time. They would return to their home villages but no longer fit in.

Their wants and desires were averse to the village life. The assimilative education was so effective it caused most Native youngsters to suppress their own Nativeness.

Courtesy Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, photo by Sean Topkok

Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, Yupiaq elder and professor emeritus, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

From the late 1960s and up to the present, Native people have been working diligently to change education so that it accommodates their languages, worldviews, culture, and technology. This is a slow healing process for the villages. Our educational mission is to produce human beings who are at home in their place, their environment, their world. This is slowly being brought to fruition through the efforts of the Native people themselves, with support from others of like thinking.

Merging Traditional Wisdom with Technology

The Yupiat have been proactive in reorienting the education system for their children and are now proving to be equally proactive in dealing with the effects of climate change. They are looking at how our ancestors dealt with climate change in the past and applying what they learn to the present. Once they have an idea of what might be done, they devise a plan and ask for technical assistance from engineers, hydrologists, geographers, and other scientists whose knowledge and skills will give them the best guidance.

For example, the villagers of Newtok, which has suffered from extensive erosion, has taken a leadership role in planning the move of their village. This means seeking finances, looking at a possible new site for the village, and asking elders and geologists to provide an assessment of whether their choices are right. This is a village-led design and organization for moving everything: from the homes, airfield, water well, and other community facilities.

The Yupiat are also proactive in cleaning spawning areas for salmon. They meet periodically with state fisheries experts to let them know their concerns and to address issues in which they need technical help.

Native people realize that the traditional ways of knowing and doing can benefit from technical assistance provided by the various disciplinary sciences to strengthen their plans and work. The working together of the two ways of knowing are much more powerful and, hopefully, more conducive to doing the right thing. It is through such collaborations that the historic clash of worldviews as reflected in the phrase "You Own Alaska" can become a force for new understandings and solutions to the many challenges we face together. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Native American Ideas of Governance and the United States Constitution

Bruce E. Johansen

Courtesy National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution

Wampum belt. White shell beads, or "wampum" in the Narragansett language, were strung or woven into belts that were used by the Iroquois to record history, make contracts, mark special events, or present as gifts. This belt is thought to record the visit of a Western Ojibwe chief to English King George III.

Bruce E. Johansen is Frederick W. Kayser Professor in the School of Communication at the University of Nebraska in Omaha. With coauthor Donald A. Grinde Jr., he pioneered the once-controversial, now widely accepted, research on the significant influence of indigenous American government practices on the Constitution of the United States.

Besides well-known European precedents — from Greece, Rome, and English common law, among others — indigenous American ideas of democracy have shaped the government of the United States. Immigrants arrived in colonial America seeking freedom and found it in the confederacies of the Iroquois and other Native nations. By the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, these ideas were common currency in the former colonies, illustrated in debates involving Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams. Later, during the 19th century, conceptions of Iroquois gender relations had an important impact on major architects of American feminism. These ideas illuminate political debates today.

Throughout eastern North America, Native nations had formed confederacies by the time they encountered European immigrants: the Seminoles in what is now Florida, the Cherokees and Choctaws in the Carolinas, and the Iroquois and their allies the Wyandots (Hurons) in upstate New York and the Saint Lawrence Valley.

The Iroquois system of confederation was the best-known to the colonists, in large part because the Iroquois occupied a pivotal position in diplomacy, not only between the English and French but also among other native confederacies. Called the Iroquois by the French and the Five (later Six) Nations by the English, the Iroquois peoples, who call themselves Haudenosaunee, "People of the Longhouse," controlled the only relatively level land pass between the English colonies on the eastern seaboard and the French settlements in the Saint Lawrence Valley.

The Iroquois Confederacy was formed by the Huron leader Deganawidah, "the Peacemaker" in Haudenosaunee oral tradition, who enlisted the aid of Aiowantha (sometimes called Hiawatha) to spread his vision of a confederacy to control bloody rivalries. The confederacy originally included the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas. The sixth nation, the Tuscaroras, migrated into Iroquois country in the early 18th century and were adopted. The confederacy probably dates from the 12th century of the Common Era, according to research by Barbara A. Mann and Jerry Fields of the University of Toledo.

Haudenosaunee fundamental law, the Great Law

of Peace, stipulates to this day that sachems' (chiefs') skins must be thick to withstand the criticism of their constituents: Sachems should take pains not to become angry when people scrutinize their conduct in governmental affairs. Such a point of view pervades the writings of Jefferson and Franklin, although it was not fully codified into U.S. law until the Supreme Court decision *New York Times v. Sullivan* (1964) made it virtually impossible for public officials to sue successfully for libel.

The Great Law of Peace also provides for the removal from office of leaders who can no longer adequately function in office, a measure remarkably similar to a constitutional amendment adopted in the United States during the late 20th century providing for the removal of an incapacitated president. The Great Law includes provisions guaranteeing freedom of religion and the right of redress before the Grand Council. It forbids unauthorized entry of homes — all measures that sound familiar to U.S. citizens through the Bill of Rights.

The procedure for debating policies of the confederacy begins with the Mohawks and Senecas, called "elder brothers." After being debated by the Keepers of the Eastern Door (Mohawks) and the Keepers of the Western Door (Senecas), the question is thrown "across the fire" to the Oneida and Cayuga statesmen, "younger brothers," for discussion. Once consensus is achieved among the Oneidas and the Cayugas, the discussion returns to the Senecas and Mohawks for confirmation. Next, the question is laid before the Onondagas, who try to resolve any remaining conflicts.

At this stage, the Onondagas exercise a power similar to judicial review and functions built into conference committees in the U.S. Congress. They can raise objections about the proposal if it is believed to be inconsistent with the Great Law. Essentially, the council can rewrite the proposed law so that it can be in accord with the constitution of the Iroquois. When the Onondagas reach consensus, the Tadodaho, the chief executive officer of the Grand Council, confirms the decision. This process reflects the emphasis on checks and balances, public debate, and consensus. The overall intent of such a parliamentary procedure is to encourage unity at each step.

The Iroquois and Colonial Federation

At Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1744, Canassatego, the Iroquois Tadodaho, advised colonial representatives on Iroquois concepts of unity:

> Our wise forefathers established Union and Amity between the Five Nations. This has made us formidable; this has given us great Weight and Authority with our neighboring Nations. We are a powerful Confederacy; and by your observing the same methods, our wise forefathers have taken, you will acquire such Strength and power. Therefore whatever befalls, never fall out with one another.

Benjamin Franklin probably first learned of Canassatego's advice to the colonies as he set the sachem's words in type. Franklin's press issued Indian treaties in small booklets that enjoyed a lively sale throughout the colonies, from 1736 to 1762. Even before the Albany Congress, the first attempt to unify the colonies, Benjamin Franklin had been musing over the words of Canassatego. Using Iroquois examples of unity, Franklin sought to shame the reluctant colonists into some form of union in 1751 when he engaged in a hyperbolic racial slur: "It would be a strange thing … if Six Nations of Ignorant savages should be capable of forming such an union and be able to execute it in such a manner that it has

© North Wind Picture Archives

Native Americans harvesting maize. Hand-colored woodcut with a watercolor wash.

subsisted ages and appears indissoluble, and yet that a like union should be impractical for ten or a dozen English colonies, to whom it is more necessary and must be more advantageous." Actually, subsequent evidence shows that Franklin had a healthy respect for the Iroquois. He began his distinguished diplomatic career by representing Pennsylvania in treaty councils with the Iroquois and their allies, as he became a forceful advocate of colonial union.

On July 10, 1754, Franklin formally proposed his Plan of Union before the Albany Congress. Franklin wrote that the debates on the Albany Plan "... went on daily, hand in hand with the Indian business." The Iroquois sachem Tiyanoga not only spoke for the roughly 200 Indians in attendance at the Albany Congress but also briefed the colonial delegates on Iroquois political systems, much as Canassatego had done 10 years earlier.

In drawing up his final draft of the Albany Plan for colonial unification, Franklin was meeting several diplomatic demands: the British, for control; the colonies, for autonomy in a loose confederation; and the Iroquois, for a colonial union similar to their own in form and function. For the British, the plan provided administration by a president general appointed by England. The individual colonies were to be allowed to retain their own constitutions, except as the plan circumscribed them. The retention of internal sovereignty within the individual colonies closely resembled the Iroquois system and had no existing precedent in Europe.

The retention of internal sovereignty within the individual colonies closely resembled the Iroquois system and had no existing precedent in Europe.

Thomas Jefferson and Native American Concepts of Governance

While Franklin and Jefferson were too pragmatic to believe that they could copy the "natural state," its image was sewn early into the United States' national ideological fabric. Jefferson wrote: "The only condition on earth to be compared with ours, in my opinion, is that of the Indian, where they have still less law than we." When Thomas Paine wrote, on the first page of his influential pamphlet *Common Sense*, that "government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence," he was recapitulating observations of Native American societies.

Writing to Edward Carrington in 1787, Jefferson linked freedom of expression with public opinion and happiness, citing American Indian societies as an example:

> The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, our very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter . … I am convinced that those societies [as the Indians] which live without government enjoy in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under European governments.

"Without government" could not have meant without social order to Jefferson. He, Franklin, and Paine all knew native societies too well to argue that Native Americans functioned without social cohesion. It was clear that the Iroquois, for example, did not organize a confederacy with alliances spreading over much of northeastern North America "without government." They did it, however, with a non-European conception of government, one of which Jefferson, Paine, and Franklin were appreciative students who sought to factor "natural law" and "natural rights" into their designs for the United States during the revolutionary era.

A Debate Regarding Federalism at the Constitutional Convention

By June of 1787, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention were engaged in a debate about the fundamental nature of the Union. Many delegates appeared to agree with James Wilson when he stated, on June 1, 1787, that he would not be "governed by the British model which was inapplicable to … this country." Wilson believed that America's size was so great and its ideals so "republican, that nothing but a great confederated republic would do for it."

In 1787, on the eve of the Constitutional Convention, John Adams published his *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*. Although Adams was selected as a Massachusetts delegate to the Constitutional Convention, he chose not to attend and published his lengthy essay instead. Adams's *Defence* was a critical survey of world governments that included a description of the Iroquois and other Native

Courtesy Bruce E. Johansen, photo by Michelle Bishop

Historian Bruce E. Johansen.

American governments and other historical examples of confederacies in Europe and Asia.

Adams's *Defence* was no unabashed endorsement of native models for government. He refuted the arguments of Franklin, who advocated a one-house legislature resembling the Iroquois Grand Council, a model that had been used in the Albany Plan and Articles of Confederation. Adams did not trust the consensus model that seemed to work for the Iroquois. Adams believed that without the checks and balances built into two houses, the system would succumb to special interests and dissolve into anarchy, or despotism. When Adams described the Mohawks' independence, he exercised criticism, while Franklin wrote about Indian governments in a much more approving way.

The role of women in Iroquois society inspired some of the most influential advocates of modern feminism in the United States.

Native American Ideas and the Origins of American Feminism

An aspect of Native American life that alternately intrigued, perplexed, and sometimes alarmed European and European-American observers, most of whom were male, during the 17th and 18th centuries, was the influential role of women. In many cases they hold pivotal positions in Native political systems. Iroquois women, for example, nominate men to positions of leadership and can "dehorn," or impeach, them for misconduct. Women often have veto power over men's plans for war. In a matrilineal society — and nearly all the confederacies that bordered the colonies were matrilineal — women owned all household goods except the men's clothes, weapons, and hunting implements. They also were the primary conduits of culture from generation to generation.

The role of women in Iroquois society inspired some of the most influential advocates of modern feminism in the United States. The Iroquois example figures importantly in a seminal book in what Sally R. Wagner calls "the first wave of feminism," Matilda Joslyn Gage's *Woman, Church, and State* (1893). In that book, Gage acknowledges, according to Wagner's research, that "the modern world [is] indebted [to the Iroquois] for its first conception of inherent rights, natural equality of condition, and the establishment of a civilized government upon this basis."

Gage was one of the 19th century's three most influential American feminists, with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Gage herself was admitted to the Iroquois Council of Matrons and was adopted into the Wolf Clan, with the name Karonienhawi, "she who holds [up] the sky." ■

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The Pendulum Swings of Indian Policy

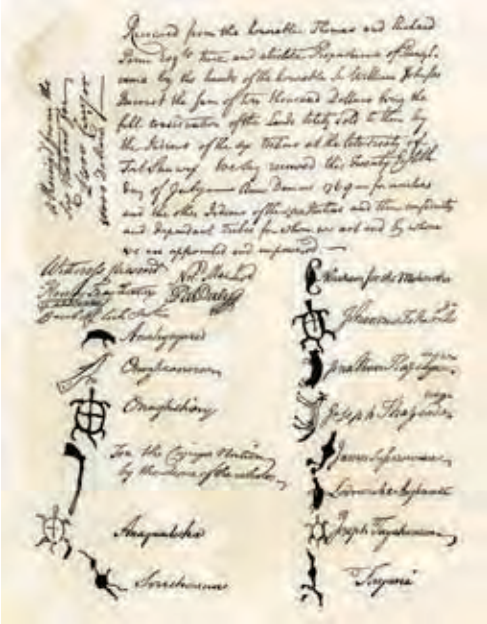
Jace Weaver

Jace Weaver is Franklin Professor of Religion and Native American Studies, a professor of law, and director of the Institute of Native American Studies Program at the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. With degrees in political science, theology, and law, his work spans disciplines. He has authored or edited nine books and is currently working on a book on the Cherokee Removal with his wife, Laura Adams Weaver. He was advisor for the 2009 PBS documentary series We Shall Remain, *Episode 3, "Trail of Tears," which presents history from the Indian perspective. He is of Cherokee ancestry.*

When Americans watched the evening news on television on November 21, 1969, most were shocked to learn that Indians had occupied the abandoned federal prison on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay. Their surprise came not so much from the act of radical activism — by 1969 Americans had become accustomed to seeing protests on their TVs — as they were to find that Indians still existed at all. For many Americans, Indians (or Native Americans) never emerged into the 20th century from the 19th. They forgot Indians existed with the declared end of the Indian Wars in 1890.

Average Americans could be forgiven their ignorance. The media did little to cover issues involving the indigenous inhabitants of the United States. Henry Luce was not atypical. The powerful publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines had "an absolutely and seemingly unbreakable policy against running any stories about Indians anywhere in the country." Luce considered contemporary Native Americans to be "phonies," according to Alvin Josephy in "New England Indians: Then and Now," in *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation* (1990).

The Indian occupiers of Alcatraz based their actions vaguely on a notion that the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, which ended Oglala Lakota Chief Red Cloud's war against the United States, permitted Native Americans to claim surplus federal property. Indians held the island for 19 months. It was the first of several such occupations and other protests.



Signature page of receipt for payments to the Iroquois chiefs for land ceded to the British in the Treaty of Fort Stanwix (1789), one of many such documents that defined the legal relationships between the colonists and the Native tribes. The chiefs signed by inscribing their totem animals.

© North Wind Picture Archives

These events not only awakened the general population to the presence of modern-day Native Americans; they did not go unnoticed in the corridors of power. In July 1970, in a special message to the U.S. Congress, President Richard Nixon (1969-1974) announced a new direction in Indian policy, Self-Determination. Now Indian tribes would be encouraged to manage their own affairs. This policy replaced that which had reigned for the previous 25 years, Termination, which terminated recognition of sovereign Indian nations, their tribal laws, and land stewardship. Through assimilation and legislation, state and federal governments sought to end the special relationship between the tribes and the government defined by treaties and, essentially, write Indians out of existence as distinct Native cultures.

In fact, for 233 years governmental policy toward the country's original inhabitants has swung pendulum-like between encouraging cultural survival and aggressive assimilation. As each policy era gave way to the next, the aim was, in every instance, to solve the "Indian problem." To policymakers the problem was the special status of Indians and Indian tribes, what in Canada (where law and policy broadly parallels the United States) is called "citizenship-plus." Indian tribes are separate sovereigns within the federal system. They are "nations within a nation," a status that is confirmed by treaties and the U.S.

Constitution. Members of federally recognized tribes are thus dual citizens, of both the United States and their Native nation. With nearly every turn in policy, lawmakers have sought to get the federal government "out of the Indian business."

Authority over Indians

Actually, in order to understand American Indian policy and the place of Native Americans, one must go back before the beginning to the colonial period. After the end of the French and Indian War in 1763, France ceded its New France (Canada and the land between the Mississippi River and the so-called eastern mountains) to Great Britain. To bring order to the newly acquired territory, King George III issued a royal proclamation. It provided that neither individuals nor colonies could buy or take lands from Indians. Now the Crown was the only taker of land from Indians, and there was only one way to gain it: a treaty by which a tribe ceded its lands. It also sought to establish a "permanent line of White settlement" in North America. For the 13 American colonies, this was the Appalachian chain, a line of demarcation that was violated even before it was established.

After the American Revolution (1775-1783), the United States stepped into the shoes of Britain. The U.S. Constitution (Article I, Section 8) gave Congress the power to "regulate commerce … with the Indian tribes." Over time this has been interpreted as giving the federal government exclusive and total authority over Indians. In 1790, Congress passed the Trade and Intercourse Act, which mirrored the royal proclamation. Before he became president, George Washington wrote that policy and practicality

> point very strongly to … the propriety of purchasing their Lands in preference to attempting to drive them by force of arms out of their Country; which as we have already experienced is like driving the Wild Beasts of the Forest which will return as soon as the pursuit is at an end and fall perhaps on those that are left there; when the gradual extension of our Settlements will as certainly cause the Savage as the Wolf to retire; both being beasts of prey tho' they differ in shape. (George Washington, Letter to James Duane, September 7, 1783, quoted in Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Documents of United States Indian Policy* (1990))

President Washington (1789-1797) followed a policy of assimilation in situ, "civilization" and incorporation of Indians into the new nation where they were located.

Although Washington's position would remain official policy for 40 years, by the time of Thomas Jefferson's presidency (1801-1809), there were signs of change. Echoing Washington but hinting at a new policy, Jefferson wrote, "[O]ur settlements will gradually circumscribe and approach the Indians, and they in time either incorporate with us as citizens of the United States, or remove beyond the Mississippi. The former is certainly the termination of their history most happy for themselves" (Thomas Jefferson, Letter to William Henry Harrison, February 27, 1803). After the Louisiana Purchase, he even suggested making the Mississippi River the new permanent line of white settlement in North America. Although Jefferson quickly dropped the idea, thereafter the removal of Indians to the West became part of the public discourse and an increasing inevitability. In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. From 1831 to 1839, the major tribes of the Southeast, the so-called Five Civilized Tribes, were relocated to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). Removal was designed to remove an obstacle to White settlement, but it was also intended to permit Native nations to maintain their governments and cultures outside the United States.

Support for Removal ebbed, largely due to the brutality of the forced march of the Cherokee to the West, a trek that became known as the Trail of Tears. After 1839, sectional differences between North and South that would lead to the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) dominated the political agenda. Indians were largely ignored. After the Civil War, however, westward expansion began again. There was once again the need to remove Indians as impediments to white settlement. This ushered in the period of Reservation policy.

Reservations were intended to be temporary measures while Indians were prepared for citizenship by teaching them farming and the mechanical arts. Reservation lands were held by the federal government communally in trust for the Indians who lived there. In 1887, as a further tool for "civilizing" Natives, Congress decided to give them private property. Under the General Allotment Act, reservations were broken into small parcels and given to individual Native Americans and Native families. With Allotment, the policy pendulum swung back to forced assimilation. In 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) called it "a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass" (Theodore Roosevelt, First Annual Message to Congress, December 3, 1901). As a

result of Allotment, 65 percent of Indian lands passed out of Native hands between 1887 and 1934.

The Indian New Deal

As with every policy before them, Reservations and Allotment failed to achieve their desired goals and solve the "Indian problem." Political winds shifted. It was left to Theodore Roosevelt's cousin to shift policy back toward political and cultural preservation. During Franklin Roosevelt's presidency (1933-1945), Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier created the Indian New Deal.

The cornerstone of the Indian New Deal was the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934. The act encouraged tribes to draft written constitutions and govern themselves, subject to the supervision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Though some tribal nations resisted the IRA as infringing on inherent tribal national sovereignty, the new policy era represented a major change for the better. Legislation also ended Allotment and legalized the practice of traditional Native religions (which had been criminalized during the Reservation period).

Just as events running up to the Civil War drove Indians from the public agenda, so did World War II. In the years following the war, though, forces opposed to Native sovereignty reasserted themselves and proceeded to dismantle the Indian New Deal. In 1948, Congress created a special commission on government, chaired by Herbert Hoover. As president (1929-1933), Hoover had effectively stopped Allotment but done nothing to actively change the policy. Despite the gains made under Franklin Roosevelt, the report of the Hoover Commission channeled Theodore Roosevelt, stating, "The basis for historic Indian culture has been swept away. Traditional tribal organization was smashed a generation ago. … Assimilation must be the goal of public policy" (Quoted in Charles F. Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations* (2005)). Termination, by which the federal government attempted to sever its government-to-government relationship with nations — effectively abolishing tribes — became federal policy. A key component of the policy was Relocation, a program designed to lure Indians from reservations into cities where there was need of a large labor population. The person President Harry Truman (1945-1953) chose to administer Termination and Relocation as commissioner of Indian Affairs was Dillon S. Myer. Myer's previous experience with American minorities was during World War II when he headed the War Relocation Administration, the agency that oversaw internment camps for Japanese Americans. Allotment led to the loss of 65 percent of Indian lands; largely due to Termination and Relocation, today more than 70 percent of Native Americans live off reservations.

Self-Determination

President John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) ended federal Termination efforts, but it was left to President Nixon to announce Self-Determination. It remains official policy today. In the past 40 years, Native nations have taken increasing control of their destinies, governing themselves and their citizens.

Today there are 562 federally recognized tribes. Though poverty and health disparities remain critical problems, thanks to the Supreme Court decision in *California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians* (1987), which ruled that states could not prohibit gambling on sovereign Indian lands, some tribes have achieved economic independence. Tribal nations have increased the zone of tribal sovereignty.

Recently, in an important book, Jeff Corntassel and Richard Witmer have argued that the policy era has turned yet again. They contend that we live in the era of "forced federalism" because since 1988, with the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (a response to the *Cabazon* decision), Congress has required Native nations to negotiate with state governments regarding establishment of gambling casinos. This represents an intrusion by states into tribal sovereignty not seen since Termination.

Although it is too early in President Barack Obama's administration to discern what direction his Indian policy will take, there are indications that he will continue, and even strengthen, Self-Determination. During the 2008 presidential campaign, he expressed opinions strongly in favor of Native sovereignty. He has nominated Larry Echohawk, a Pawnee legal scholar and expert in federal Indian law and policy, to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Despite these hopeful signs, Native Americans remain wary. History has taught them that, if not now at least sometime in the future, the pendulum will swing once more from a policy of sovereignty and survival to one of assimilation and extinction. ■

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People and the Arts

© George Longfish

George Longfish. *As Above, So Below*, 1998. Acrylic on canvas.
Canadian-born, of Seneca and Tuscarora heritage, Longfish's versatile art often dwells on issues of social justice and Native culture.

PEOPLE

Recent decades have seen the rise in appreciation of indigenous people and their cultural contributions, not only historically but in the present. They are found in all professions, many working to preserve their heritage and represent and educate minorities. This photo gallery highlights a few extraordinary individuals and new art from diverse indigenous communities.

© AP Images/Winnipeg Free Press/Mike Deal

Buffy Sainte-Marie, songwriter-musician.
Since the 1960s, this Canadian-born Cree singer-songwriter-musician has brought the message of social justice to audiences around the world. Her song *Up Where We Belong* won an Academy Award.

© AP Images/John Moore

Alejandro Toledo, president, Peru.
Son of Quichua campesinos, he became the first indigenous president of a Latin American country in 2001, serving until 2006. A child laborer growing up, he went on to study in Peru and the United States.

© AP Images/NASA, Kim Shiflett

John Herrington, astronaut.
A Chickasaw Indian, Herrington was the first Native American astronaut. He flew on the space shuttle *Endeavour* in 2002, taking with him sacred Indian artifacts and tribal blessings.

© AP Images/Dado Galdieri

Rigoberta Menchú, Nobel laureate, Guatemala.
A Quiche (Mayan) Indian, Menchú picked coffee with her peasant family before becoming a social reformer. Her family's work for Indian rights led to the death of her father, mother, and brother and her own voluntary exile. Her work for Indian rights and interethnic dialogue won her the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992.

© AP Images/*The Denver Post*/Leah Bluntschli

Lacrosse is a popular team sport today, but it has ancient roots in indigenous America. It was often played for ritual purposes, involving hundreds of players and huge stretches of ground.

© AP Images/Jeff Geissler

Chris Eyre, film director.
Adopted and raised by a white family but of Cheyenne-Arapaho descent, Eyre reconnected with his indigenous roots in adulthood. His films, such as *Smoke Signals* for which American Indian writer Sherman Alexie wrote the screenplay, explore aspects of Native American life.

© AP Images/Anchorage Daily News/Erik Hill

Wes Studi, actor.
Known for his character roles as Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) and Geronimo in *Geronimo: An American Legend* (1993), he is among Indian actors who have made names in the film business since casting directors began to cast authentic Indians in Indian roles.

© Jim Denomie

Jim Denomie. *Edward Curtis Paparazzi – Black Hills Golf and Country Club*, 2007. Oil on canvas. Native culture coming to terms with mainstream American culture is a frequent theme in this Minnesota-based artist's work.

Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona

Roxanne Swentzell. *The Emergence of Clowns*, 1988. Mixed media clay sculptures. Pottery is a fine art in Swentzell's Santa Clara Pueblo tribe. Here she depicts the sacred clowns, or "koshares," which traditionally make fun of human follies and bad behavior to goad people to behave better.

© James Luna

James Luna. *Two Worlds War Dance Technology*, 1990. Mixed media.
A Luiseño Indian from California, Luna is a performance and installation artist who says the genre "offers an opportunity like no other for Native people to express themselves in the Indian traditional art forms of ceremony, dance, oral traditions, and contemporary thought."

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© AP Images/Marcelo Hernandez

The market for Andean textiles woven in the old way, as by this Aymara woman near Lake Titicaca, Bolivia, supports cottage industries in indigenous economies.

Kenneth White/U.S. State Department

Fancy Dancing. Dakota Plains Indians are among those who have revived their culture of ceremonial dance. This Men's Fancy Feather Dance was performed at a pow wow, or gathering, at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

Courtesy Jolene Nenibah Yazzie/National Museum of American Indian, Smithsonian Institution

Jolene Nenibah Yazzie. *Protector of Innocence*. Navajo comic illustrator Yazzie's Native American female cartoon superheroes were created to "show women how to recognize and appreciate the strength that is present inside them," she says.

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Bunky Echo-Hawk. *HE WHO*, 2008.
In Montana in May 2008, Barack Obama was adopted by the Crow Nation and given a Crow name that means "he who helps people throughout the land." Black Eagle is the surname of the Crow Elders who are his adoptive parents. Artist Echo-Hawk (Pawnee/Yakima) painted the portrait at a live art event at the Denver Art Museum during the 2008 Democratic National Convention.

© Bunky Echo-Hawk

Fritz Scholder. *Indian No. 16*, 1967. Oil on canvas. Part of the *indian not indian* exhibit at the NMAI, November 1, 2008 - August 16, 2009.
One-quarter Luiseño Indian, Scholder (1937-2005) struggled with his Native American heritage in his controversial and influential art. He resisted idealized, sentimental images and depicted the often difficult reality and inner conflict in contemporary Indian lives.

Courtesy National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Collection of Robert E. Herzstein

Native-Owned Newspaper Wins Battle With Torch of Truth

Tim Giago

Tim Giago is an Oglala Lakota journalist and editor who founded the Lakota Times *on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota in 1981. Later renamed* Indian Country Today, *it became the largest independent Indian newspaper in the country. Giago has trained and mentored numerous American Indian journalists. An award-winning journalist, he was founder and first president of the Native American Journalists Association, has worked in both print and broadcast media, is the author of several books, and writes a nationally distributed weekly column, "Notes on Indian Country." Emerging from retirement, Giago started the weekly* Native Sun News *in April 2009, to "go back to the traditional way of providing news for Indian country," in print and not online, he wrote in his* Huffington Post blog.

Courtesy Native Sun News

Editor and journalist Tim Giago.

In 1980, 29 years ago, there wasn't a single independent, Native American-owned weekly newspaper in the United States. I didn't know that when I decided to start a weekly newspaper on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in the spring of 1981.

A business plan? What was that? I failed to realize until I went to a bank in the reservation border town of Rushville, Nebraska, that interest rates at the time hovered around 20 percent. The 1980 U.S. Census had just been released, and it named Shannon County, the heart of the Pine Ridge Reservation, as the "poorest county in America."

In the face of all these negatives, I started a weekly newspaper. I started the paper because it was vitally needed. Gossip and rumor and lies were rampant, and I believed that the people deserved to know the truth. Truth was my torch, and truth is what made this small start-up newspaper a success. Within two years our circulation had spread to all nine reservations within South Dakota's borders. Our circulation had gone from the initial 3,000 to nearly 12,000 weekly within the first three years.

Guns vs. Words

There was a lot of violence on the reservation following the Wounded Knee occupation (an armed, 71-day, activist takeover of the town of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973, which drew law enforcement, publicity, and attention to Native American issues). Factions fought factions and it was a terrible time in our history. The murder of two FBI agents at Oglala on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1978 exacerbated the situation. I decided that my newspaper, the *Lakota Times*, had to address this continuing violence and condemn it. Strong editorials pointed out the damage this violence was doing to the future of the tribe. The newspaper covered the violent incidents in depth. The truth upset the violent ones. Attacks began upon the *Lakota Times*. Office windows were blasted out with guns on three occasions. The newspaper was firebombed with Molotov cocktails in 1981, just before Christmas.

One dark and drizzly night, after I had put the paper

to bed and walked out in the rain and climbed into my car, my windshield was shattered by a bullet that ripped past my head. Phone threats of death menaced me, my wife, and my children. The president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Joe American Horse, called a special session of the tribal council after my building was firebombed. American Horse said, "Starting with now, anymore attacks upon the *Lakota Times* will be considered an attack upon the Oglala Sioux Tribe." The attacks stopped.

Only one newspaper editor in the entire state of South Dakota had the courage to speak out about the attacks upon me and my newspaper. His name was Jim Carrier and he was managing editor at the *Rapid City Journal*. Although I was a fellow newspaper editor and publisher in this state and although the attacks on my newspaper were published on my front page, all of the other non-Indian editors totally ignored what was happening to one of their own. Carrier was fired not too long after he stood up for me.

We weathered this horrific storm, and the attacks only made us stronger, but more than that, it brought the Lakota people to our side. It quelled some of the fear that permeated the reservation in the early 1980s. At first people were afraid to write a letter to the editor, until one brave Lakota woman from the Pejuta Haka (Medicine Root) District, my home district, wrote a letter to our newspaper condemning the violence. She wrote, "If Tim Giago, a Lakota man I have known since he was a small boy, can stand up and fight this violence, we Lakota *winyan* [women] must do the same."

From Wikimedia Commons, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File: Newspaper_rock.jpg

Early journalism. Newspaper Rock, a sandstone petroglyph in Utah, records different eras of human activity, over 2,000 years. Although their meaning is not clear, the symbols may be traced to Fremont, Anasazi, Navajo, and Anglo cultures.

Pen Mightier Than Sword

After her letter it seemed that the floodgates opened and letters poured into our newspaper speaking up about all of the issues that have plagued our tribal government for years. At last the people had a forum through which they could express their opinions.

For more than 100 years every newspaper in South Dakota had had the opportunity, or I should say the obligation, to cover the largest minority in their state, the Native Americans. They chose not to do this, and so my small weekly newspaper, started on a shoestring, soon became the largest weekly newspaper in the history of South Dakota. It succeeded because it filled a void and it opened the doors for the Native American people to finally move into 20th-century media.

The *Lakota Times* became the watchdog for the Indian people. When we saw the disparity in justice, one for whites and one for Indians, we attacked it. When we stood up with editorials urging the state legislators and the governor to create a Native American Day as a legal holiday in this state, we won. South Dakota became the only state in the Union to celebrate Native American Day, and this would never have happened if a small, independent Indian-owned newspaper, the *Lakota Times*, had not fought to see it happen.

We won many battles without using a gun, and we proved indelibly that "the pen is mightier than the sword." ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Two Languages in Mind, But Just One in the Heart

Louise Erdrich

Author of more than a dozen novels, a memoir, poetry, and children's books, Louise Erdrich, of Turtle Mountain Ojibwe descent, is among the foremost Native American writers. She first gained fame with her award-winning Love Medicine *(1984). She owns Birchbark Books, a small independent bookstore in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Here she writes about the inspiration she derives from Ojibwemowin, the Chippewa (Ojibwe) language.*

© AP Images/Dawn Villella

Novelist Louise Erdrich at her store, Birchbark Books in Minneapolis. Modern Native American family life provides themes for her writing.

For years now I have been in love with a language other than the English in which I write, and it is a rough affair. Every day I try to learn a little more Ojibwe. I have taken to carrying verb conjugation charts in my purse, along with the tiny notebook I've always kept for jotting down book ideas, overheard conversations, language detritus, phrases that pop into my head. Now that little notebook includes an increasing volume of Ojibwe words. My English is jealous, my Ojibwe elusive. Like a besieged unfaithful lover, I'm trying to appease them both.

Ojibwemowin, or Anishinaabemowin, the Chippewa language, was last spoken in our family by Patrick Gourneau, my maternal grandfather, a Turtle Mountain Ojibwe who used it mainly in his prayers. Growing up off reservation, I thought Ojibwemowin mainly was a language for prayers, like Latin in the Catholic liturgy. I was unaware for many years that Ojibwemowin was spoken in Canada, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, though by a dwindling number of people. By the time I began to study the language, I was living in New Hampshire, so for the first few years I used language tapes.

I never learned more than a few polite phrases that way, but the sound of the language in the author Basil Johnson's calm and dignified Anishinaabe voice sustained me through bouts of homesickness. I spoke basic Ojibwe in the isolation of my car traveling here and there on twisting New England roads. Back then, as now, I carried my tapes everywhere.

The language bit deep into my heart, but it was an unfulfilled longing. I had nobody to speak it with, nobody who remembered my grandfather's standing with his sacred pipe in the woods next to a box elder tree, talking to the spirits. Not until I moved back to the Midwest and settled in Minneapolis did I find a fellow Ojibweg to learn with, and a teacher.

Inspiring Teacher

Mille Lac's Ojibwe elder Jim Clark — Naawi-giizis, or Center of the Day — is a magnetically pleasant, sunny, crew-cut World War II veteran with a mysterious kindliness that shows in his slightest gesture. When he laughs, everything about him laughs; and when he is serious, his eyes round like a boy's.

© AP Images/Wisconsin State Journal/Joseph W. Jackson III

Students at a Wisconsin Ojibwe language-immersion school. Immersion programs are being used to teach indigenous languages to a new generation, preserving languages that otherwise might die with the older generation of fluent speakers.

Naawi-giizis introduced me to the deep intelligence of the language and forever set me on a quest to speak it for one reason: I want to get the jokes. I also want to understand the prayers and the *adisookaanug*, the sacred stories, but the irresistible part of language for me is the explosion of hilarity that attends every other minute of an Ojibwe visit. As most speakers are now bilingual, the language is spiked with puns on both English and Ojibwe, most playing on the oddness of *gichi-mookomaan*, that is, big knife or American, habits and behavior.

This desire to deepen my alternate language puts me in an odd relationship to my first love, English. It is, after all, the language stuffed into my mother's ancestors' mouths. English is the reason she didn't speak her native language and the reason I can barely limp along in mine. English is an all-devouring language that has moved across North America like the fabulous plagues of locusts that darkened the sky and devoured even the handles of rakes and hoes. Yet the omnivorous nature of a colonial language is a writer's gift. Raised in the English language, I partake of a mongrel feast.

A hundred years ago most Ojibwe people spoke Ojibwemowin, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs and religious boarding schools punished and humiliated children who spoke Native languages. The program worked, and there are now almost no fluent speakers of Ojibwe in the United States under the age of 30. Speakers like Naawi-giizis value the language partly because it has been physically beaten out of so many people. Fluent speakers have had to fight for the language with their own flesh, have endured ridicule, have resisted shame and stubbornly pledged themselves to keep on talking the talk.

The Great Mystery

My relationship is of course very different. How do you go back to a language you never had? Why should a writer who loves her first language find it necessary and essential to complicate her life with another? Simple reasons, personal and impersonal. In the past few years I've found that I can talk to God only in this language, that somehow my grandfather's use of the language penetrated. The sound comforts me.

What the Ojibwe call the *Gizhe Manidoo*, the great and kind spirit residing in all that lives, what the Lakota call the Great Mystery, is associated for me with the flow of Ojibwemowin. My Catholic training touched me intellectually and symbolically but apparently never engaged my heart.

There is also this: Ojibwemowin is one of the few surviving languages that evolved to the present here in North America. The intelligence of this language is adapted as no other to the philosophy bound up in northern land, lakes, rivers, forests, arid plains; to the animals and their particular habits; to the shades of meaning in the very placement of stones. As a North American writer, it is essential to me that I try to understand our human relationship to place in the deepest way possible, using my favorite tool, language.

There are place names in Ojibwe and Dakota for every physical feature of Minnesota, including recent additions like city parks and dredged lakes. Ojibwemowin is not static, not confined to describing the world of some out-of-reach and sacred past. There are words for e-mail, computers, Internet, fax. For exotic animals in zoos.

Anaamibiig gookoosh, the underwater pig, is a hippopotamus. *Nandookomeshiinh*, the lice hunter, is the monkey.

There are words for the serenity prayer used in 12-step programs and translations of nursery rhymes. The varieties of people other than Ojibwe or Anishinaabe are also named: *Aiibiishaabookewininiwag*, the tea people, are Asians. *Agongosininiwag*, the chipmunk people, are Scandinavians. I'm still trying to find out why.

Complexity of Ojibwemowin

For years I saw only the surface of Ojibwemowin. With any study at all one looks deep into a stunning complex of verbs. Ojibwemowin is a language of verbs. All action. Two-thirds of the words are verbs, and for each verb there are as many as 6,000 forms. The storm of verb forms makes it a wildly adaptive and powerfully precise language. *Changite-ige* describes the way a duck tips itself up in the water butt first. There is a word for what would happen if a man fell off a motorcycle with a pipe in his mouth and the stem of it went through the back of his head. There can be a verb for anything.

When it comes to nouns, there is some relief. There aren't many objects. With a modest if inadvertent political correctness, there are no designations of gender in Ojibwemowin. There an no feminine or masculine possessives or articles.

Nouns are mainly designated as alive or dead, animate or inanimate. The word for stone, *asin*, is animate. Stones are called grandfathers and grandmothers and are extremely important in Ojibwe philosophy. Once I began to think of stones as animate, I started to wonder whether I was picking up a stone or it was putting itself into my hand. Stones are not the same as they were to me in English. I can't write about a stone without considering it in Ojibwe and acknowledging that the Anishinaabe universe began with a conversation between stones.

Ojibwemowin is also a language of emotions; shades of feeling can be mixed like paints. There is a word for what occurs when your heart is silently shedding tears. Ojibwe is especially good at describing intellectual states and the fine points of moral responsibility.

Ozozamenimaa pertains to a misuse of one's talents getting out of control. *Ozozamichige* implies you can still set things right. There are many more kinds of love than there are in English. There are myriad shades of emotional meaning to designate various family and clan members. It is a language that also recognizes the humanity of a creaturely God, and the absurd and wondrous sexuality of even the most deeply religious beings.

Slowly the language has crept into my writing, replacing a word here, a concept there, beginning to carry weight. I've thought of course of writing stories in Ojibwe, like a reverse Nabokov. With my Ojibwe at the level of a dreamy four-year-old child's, I probably won't.

Though it was not originally a written language, people simply adapted the English alphabet and wrote phonetically. During the Second World War, Naawigiizis wrote Ojibwe letters to his uncle from Europe. He spoke freely about his movements, as no censor could understand his writing. Ojibwe orthography has recently been standardized. Even so, it is an all-day task for me to write even one paragraph using verbs in their correct arcane forms. And even then, there are so many dialects of Ojibwe that, for many speakers, I'll still have gotten it wrong.

As awful as my own Ojibwe must sound to a fluent speaker, I have never, ever, been greeted with a moment of impatience or laughter. Perhaps people wait until I've left the room. But more likely, I think, there is an urgency about attempting to speak the language. To Ojibwe speakers the language is a deeply loved entity. There is a spirit or an originating genius belonging to each word.

Before attempting to speak this language, a learner must acknowledge these spirits with gifts of tobacco and food. Anyone who attempts Ojibwemowin is engaged in something more than learning tongue twisters. However awkward my nouns, unstable my verbs, however stumbling my delivery, to engage in the language is to engage the spirit. Perhaps that is what my teachers know, and what my English will forgive. ■

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Endangered Languages

Akira Y. Yamamoto

© AP Images/Eraldo Peres

An indigenous tribe member holds a copy of the Brazilian constitution. Legal recognition and protections of the status of indigenous groups and their languages are critical for their cultural survival.

Born in Japan, Akira Y. Yamamoto has devoted his long career to promoting endangered indigenous languages and cultures. Currently professor emeritus of anthropology and linguistics at the University of Kansas, he chaired the Linguistic Society of America's Committee on Endangered Languages and Their Preservation and co-chaired the UNESCO's Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. A prolific writer, he has written books on the Hualapai and Kickapoo languages and on Haiku.

A Chamicuro grandmother, Natalia Sangama, in 1999 spoke these words:

> I dream in Chamicuro,
> but I cannot tell my dreams
> to anyone,
> because there is no one else
> who speaks Chamicuro.
> It's lonely being the last one.

The Chamicuro (or Chamekolo) is a language in Lagunas, Peru. UNESCO's atlas of endangered languages reports that it has only eight speakers and is critically endangered. According to *Ethnologue 2005*, languages in the world are distributed as follows:

Region	Number of languages	% of total
Europe	239	3.5%
The Americas	1,002	14.5%
Africa	2,092	30.3%
Asia	2,269	32.8%
Pacific	1,310	19.0%
5 regions	6,912	100%

There are 347 languages that have more than a million speakers, but 95 percent of the world's spoken languages have far fewer speakers.

Globally, Languages Are Disappearing

UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing* (the *Atlas* hereinafter) documents 2,279 languages in the world faced with different degrees of endangerment: 538 are critically endangered, the youngest speakers are elderly, and interaction in the given language is infrequent or rare. Thus, we must assume that these 538 languages will disappear in a few years when these speakers are gone.

Languages are disappearing because people stop using their heritage language and, instead, start using another, often the language of political, economic, military, and/or religious dominance.

Major reasons for languages disappearing, besides human and natural disasters, are:

- The language of formal education is not a child's heritage language, so that children do not fully learn it.
- Mass media, entertainment, and other cultural products are all in dominant languages.
- Dominant language receives a higher status, while the heritage language obtains a lower status.
- Urbanization, migration, and employment mobility lead to disintegration of language communities.
- Labor markets require knowledge of dominant languages to the detriment of heritage languages.
- Multilingualism is not valued, but monolingualism in the dominant language is considered sufficient and desirable.
- Dominant language is desirable for states (one nation — one language) and for individuals, fostering belief that children must choose between learning their heritage language or learning the dominant language.

External forces that affect the language community include government policies on languages. Language policies that provide insufficient protection of linguistic human rights may force the language community to abandon its heritage language. Supportive policies encourage the community to maintain and promote its language. The UNESCO document *Language Vitality and Endangerment* summarizes governmental attitudes and their effects, which range from policies that value diverse languages and provide legal protection of specific languages to those that promote passive, active, or forced assimilation of the dominant language.

Such external factors influence the beliefs speakers of the heritage language form about the value and role of their language. Members of a speech community are not usually neutral towards their own language, according to the UNESCO study: "They may see it as essential to their community and identity and promote it; they may use it without promoting it; they may be ashamed of it and, therefore, not promote it; or they may see it as a nuisance and actively avoid using it."

What Nations Are Doing

Around the world, indigenous language communities face the rapid disappearance of their ancestral languages. The crisis has prompted efforts to document and revitalize languages at both the grassroots and government levels. Although it is too soon to see significant promotion and revitalization of indigenous languages, efforts to do so are increasing.

There are about 600 First Nation communities, 50 Inuit communities, and 80 Métis communities in Canada, composing about 3 percent of the total Canadian population. ("First Nations" describes indigenous Canadian tribes who are not Inuit, i.e., indigenous peoples of the Arctic, or Métis, descendants

of indigenous people who married Europeans.) The *Atlas* identifies 86 endangered indigenous languages, only three of which, Cree, Inuktitut, and Anishinaabe, are expected to remain and flourish in Aboriginal communities. In 1998 the government introduced the Aboriginal Languages Initiative, which supports community-based indigenous language preservation projects. A National Aboriginal Language Day was declared in 1989. In 2008 Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples for abuses in residential schools, which indigenous children were made to attend after forcible removal from their families.

In Australia, the *Atlas* identifies 102 endangered indigenous languages. Currently, the situation is critical as most remaining speakers are elderly, and there is little or no language transmission to younger generations. New South Wales (NSW) adopted the Aboriginal Education Policy advocating that Aboriginal languages be maintained, revived, and reclaimed. This is reinforced by the NSW Government Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal People, which states, "Language is an important component of cultural heritage and identity ... the importance of learning Aboriginal languages is recognized as a vital part of Aboriginal students' experience." Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offered a formal apology to Aborigines for past government injustices in 2008.

It is estimated that about 24,000 indigenous Ainu people remain in Hokkaido, the northern-most island of Japan, although there could be more if those who refuse to reveal their ethnic identity for fear of discrimination are included. There are possibly 40 fluent speakers and an increasing number of second-language learners. In 1869, after the Meiji Restoration, the forced assimilation of the Ainu began when the government established Kaitakushi (the Development Commission) to rule and develop Hokkaido. Government promotion of the Japanese language resulted in a rapid decline of the Ainu language. In June of 2008, an unprecedented resolution was adopted by the Japanese Diet, acknowledging the Ainu's hardships, strengthening the efforts of grassroots language and culture revitalization groups.

Mexico is a multicultural and multilingual country with an estimated 144 endangered indigenous languages. In 2001 indigenous peoples' rights and communities were recognized by inclusion in the Mexican constitution. In 2003 the General Law for the Linguistic Rights of the Indigenous People was published as a decree. Grassroots indigenous organizations are working closely with academic professionals in documenting and revitalizing their languages. An indigenous literacy movement among various language communities is gaining power.

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is the world's most linguistically diverse nation, with 823 living languages spoken by a population of 5.2 million (2000 PNG Census). From 1870 until the 1950s, the majority of PNG schools were established by missions. Vernacular languages were used as the language of instruction. An English-only policy was adopted in the 1950s, but reformed after PNG's independence in 1975. From 1979 to 1995, vernacular-language preschool programs spread informally, and in 1995 government policy required inclusion of vernacular-language education in the initial years of a child's education, with a gradual transition to the use of English as one of the languages of instruction.

Venezuela has 34 endangered indigenous languages. The current constitution, adopted in1999, declares Spanish and indigenous languages in Venezuela as official languages. Some academic professionals are intensely working with the indigenous communities toward documentation and revitalization of their languages.

© AP Images/Don Ryan

A young man of Walla Walla Indian descent studies the tribal language with a tribal elder at the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Oregon. It is often the best way to save an indigenous language when only the oldest generation can speak it fluently.

Of Indigenous Languages in the United States

At the time of European contact, there were an estimated 300 indigenous languages in North America that

Courtesy Ted Vaughn and Akira Yamamoto

Akira Y. Yamamoto with Yavapai Indian elder Ted Vaughn in Prescott, Arizona, at work on Vaughn's dictionary.

belonged to more than 50 language families. The first major classification of Native American languages, by John Wesley Powell (1891), identified 58 language families. According to the *Atlas*, prior to 1950 there were 192 languages in the United States, and 53 have become extinct since then, leaving 139 languages with one or more speakers. Eleven languages are classified as "unsafe" in that most children speak the language, but the use of the language may be restricted to certain domains such as in the home. Twenty-five languages are "definitely endangered," meaning that children no longer learn the language as their mother tongue. Thirty-two are "severely endangered," or spoken primarily by older generations. Seventy-one languages are classified as "critically endangered," because the youngest speakers are the elderly.

In the United States, all indigenous languages are endangered. In Alaska, where there were 21 languages with one or more speakers, the Eyak language lost its last speaker in 2008. The most linguistically diverse state is California. Of Powell's 58 language families, 22 were in California. Californian languages have suffered most extensively, and yet they continue to represent very diverse language families. Almost half of the Native Californian Indian languages have disappeared since the 1950s, leaving 30 with one or more speakers.

U.S. Preservation Efforts

Language professionals, community leaders, and individual members of Native communities continue to raise awareness of the rapid decline of indigenous languages among their peoples, policymakers, and the general public. Ojibwe Nation Chairman Floyd Jourdain Jr. recently told the Red Lake Ojibwe Nation: "Our Ojibwe language is officially in a state of crisis. ... We estimate that there are as few as 300 fluent language speakers remaining within our tribe. Our official tribal enrollment number is 9,397 members" (*The Bemidji Pioneer*, April 6, 2009).

The last speaker of Eyak, Mary Smith, who passed away in January of 2008, made this appeal: "It's sad to be the last speaker of your language. Please, turn back to your own and learn your language so you won't be alone like me" (*Kodiak Daily Mirror,* August 20, 2006).

Individuals and language communities have run programs to revitalize their heritage languages in private homes, communities, and schools since the 1970s. As there are diverse communities, there are diverse language programs. Some "revive" languages not spoken for decades, based on documented materials; some rely on one-on-one language transmission, especially when the remaining speakers are elderly; some reintroduce the language to schoolchildren and to their parents; some are heritage language medium programs; and many teach the language as an academic subject. Programs target learners of all ages.

Native American leaders, language community members, educators, and linguists met at the 1988 Native American Language Issue (NALI) Conference in Tempe, Arizona. At the conference, resolutions on Native American language rights were drafted, discussed, and approved by the conference attendees. Resolutions were sent to the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs. This resulted in the passage of the Native American Languages Act of 1990, which officially addresses the fundamental rights of the Native American peoples by highlighting the uniqueness of their cultures

and languages and the government's responsibility to work with Native Americans to preserve them. It recognizes that traditional languages are an integral part of Native American cultures and identities for transmitting literature, history, religion, and other values necessary for the survival of their cultural and political integrity. It acknowledges that language provides a direct and powerful means of promoting international communication by people who share languages. Since its enactment, motivated language communities have been supported legally and financially, although the amount of financial support is limited. The Linguistic Society of America (LSA) led the campaigns for documentation, revitalization, and public awareness at the professional level.

Where Are We and Where Are We Going?

In recent years, we have seen a gradual change in attitudes towards bilingualism: an appreciation for it, if not encouragement of bilingual education. The most noticeable changes are attitudes within Native American communities. Shame in using their heritage languages has shifted to pride in their languages. Younger people are actively interested in language revitalization, and more language programs are emerging.

At the institutional level, there are increasingly active efforts to promote Native language education.

Organizations such as the Indigenous Language Institute assist language communities and individuals in their efforts in language documentation and revitalization through grants and technical support from government, nongovernmental, and international organizations (*see Additional Resources for a list of organizations*).

Each and every language is precious. With language, individuals form a group. With language, humans create a universe in which the relationship with their environment is established, nurtured, and maintained. When we lose a language, we lose a worldview, a unique identity, and a storehouse of knowledge. We lose diversity and human rights, as a Navajo elder said:

If you don't open your eyes,
there is no sky.
If you don't listen,
there are no ancestors.
If you don't breathe,
there is no air.
If you don't walk,
there is no earth.
If you don't speak,
there is no world.

(Paraphrased by Yamamoto from a Navajo elder's words, PBS-TV Millennium Series *Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World.* ■

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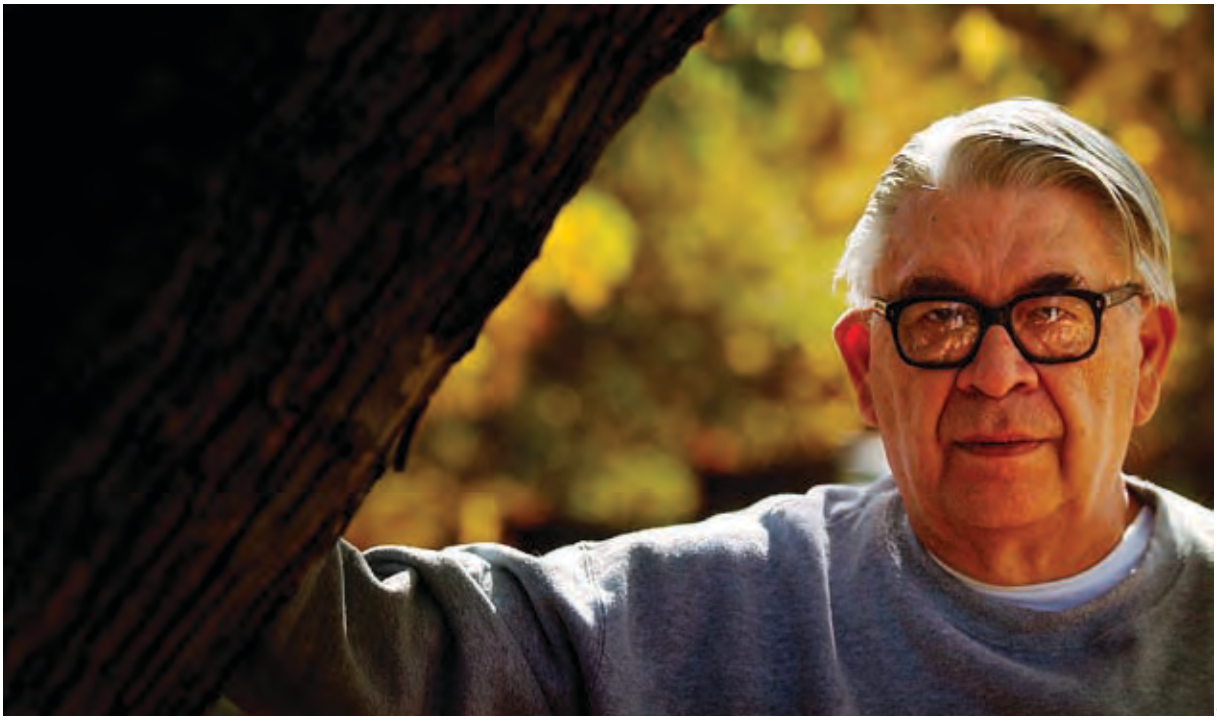
EXCERPT

Universe of Spirits

Vine Deloria Jr.



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The Late Vine Deloria Jr. was a leading Native American historian and commentator of the past century.

Many consider Vine Deloria Jr. (1933-2005), a Dakota (Standing Rock) Sioux, the leading Native American scholar of the past century. His eclectic research, writings, and teachings continue to influence Native and non-Native Americans alike. Often provocative, his works on history, law, religion, and political science helped to shape attitudes about Native Americans and champion their rights. His first book, Custer Died for Your Sins, *brought him recognition, and the score of books that he wrote subsequently strove to restore Indian culture to an honored place. He testified before the U.S. Congress about Indian affairs and was on the faculty at the University of Colorado and the University of Arizona. He argued with humor and incisiveness. One famous Deloria quote: "When asked by an anthropologist what the Indians called America before the white man came, an Indian said simply, 'Ours.'"*

From *God Is Red*

When I was very small and traveling with my father in South Dakota, he would frequently point out buttes, canyons, river crossings, and old roads and tell me their stories. In those days before interstate highways, when roads were often two ruts along the side of a fence, it was possible to observe the places up close, and so indelible memories accrued around certain features of the landscape because of the proximity of the place and because of the stories that went with them. He seemed to remember details that other people had missed or never knew. He could point out buttes where vision quests [initiatory spiritual rites of passage] were held, the hill near Standing Rock where the woman lived with the wolves, and obscure landings along the Missouri where the people crossed or where Jack Sully, shirt-tail relative and famous bandit, escaped from a posse.

I came to revere certain locations and passed the stories along as best I could, although visits to these

places were few and far between. It seemed to me that the remembrance of human activities at certain locations vested them with a kind of sacredness that could not have been obtained otherwise. Gradually I began to understand a distinction in the sacredness of places. Some sites were sacred in themselves, others had been cherished by generations of people and were now part of their history and, as such, revered by them and part of their very being. As the Indian protest movement gained momentum and attracted many young people to its activities, much of the concentration of energies was devoted to the restoration of sacred sites and the resumption of ceremonies there.

Reflecting back on the old men I observed as a boy and the utter sincerity of their belief, their humility and hesitancy to rush forward with answers to important questions, in writing the book [*God Is Red*] I was led back to a great appreciation of our religious traditions. Since writing the book, I have been gradually led to believe that the old stories must be taken literally if at all possible, that deep secrets and a deeper awareness of the complexity of our universe was experience by our ancestors, and that something of their beliefs and experiences can be ours once again.

Black Elk [Oglala Lakota holy man] in his vision saw many hoops of many people and we always recognize that there are other traditions with their ceremonies, so that sacredness is not restricted to any particular group of people and their beliefs. Yet an examination of tribal traditions will show that Indian paths to an encounter with the Great Mystery of life were generally straight and fulfilling. Almost any tribe can be examined and the result will be a bevy of stories about how the people used spiritual powers to live, and these powers are almost always made available to us in a sacred place where time and space do not define the terms of the experience.

God Is Red: A Native View of Religion. Copyright ©1972, Fulcrum Publishing. All Rights Reserved.

From *The World We Used to Live In*

Every Indian tribe has a spiritual heritage that distinguishes them from all other people. Indeed, in the past, recognizing their unique relationship to the world and its creatures, most tribes described themselves as "the people" or "the original people." Regarding themselves as unique, they rigorously followed the commands of the spirits as they had experienced them over uncounted generations and recognized that other peoples had the same rights and status as themselves. So the idea of quarreling over the traditions by which they lived was felt to be absurd. Religious wars, then, were simply inconceivable, and while they may have fought ferociously over hunting and fishing grounds or launched hostilities in vengeance, the closest they came to combat over beliefs and practices was to find medicines — powers — that could negate the medicine and power possessed by other peoples.

Many avenues of spiritual expression seem to have been shared by tribes. Many tribes practiced the sun dance, the spirit lodge, the vision quest, the sweat lodge, use of sacred stones, and other rituals, with slight variations in format, that originated in the past. Certain birds and animals offered their help to people with some degree of uniformity. The bear, wolf, eagle, buffalo, and snake lent their powers to people of many tribes, although their functions, such as healing, making prophecies, or offering protection against dangers, were often similar.

Growing up in Bennett County, South Dakota, and listening to stories of the old days and learning, from time to time, of the unusual things that were still being done by spiritual leaders, I have never emotionally or intellectually questioned the veracity of the old accounts. Over the years, I have listened to stories told by others or accidentally come across accounts of incidents in which amazing spiritual powers were displayed. Our ancestors invoked the assistance of higher spiritual entities to solve pressing practical problems, such as finding game, making predictions of the future, learning about medicines, participating in healings, conversing with other creatures, finding lost objects, and changing the course of physical events through a relationship with the higher spirits who controlled the winds, the clouds, the mountains, the thunders, and other phenomena of the natural world. Knowing how little superstition exists in Indian communities, I have always considered these accounts as truthful remembrances of past events. Medicine men, for the most part, performed their healings and predictions in front of large Indian audiences that were saying "Show Me" long before Missouri adopted that slogan for itself. ■

The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men. Copyright ©2006, Fulcrum Publishing. All Rights Reserved.

EXCERPT

Ceremony

Joseph Bruchac

His Abenaki Indian heritage inspired Joseph Bruchac to become a Native American storyteller and devote his life to illuminating the traditions of diverse Native American tribes. Abenakis are one of five tribes that formed the Wabanaki Confederacy in eastern North America. Bruchac is author of more than 70 books of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction for adults and children, and has received numerous awards, among them the American Book Award, Scientific American Children's Book Award, Cherokee Nation Prose Award, and Hope S. Dean Award for Notable Achievement in Children's Literature. He is founder of the Greenfield Review. *He has performed widely as a storyteller throughout the United States and abroad.*

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Large ceremonial dances, such as the annual Gathering of Nations Pow Wow in Albuquerque, New Mexico, give elders an opportunity to pass traditions on to younger generations and acquaint them with customs of other tribes.

Beauty before me I walk
beauty below me I walk
beauty all around me I walk
in beauty all is restored
in beauty all is made whole…
— from the Diné "Nightway"

"Every morning when I get up to get a drink of water from the sink, I always remember to thank the water." Those words were spoken to me 30 years ago by Dewasentah, an Onondaga Clan Mother who was always reminding me of the sacred relationship that exists between all things and the responsibility we humans have to acknowledge that relationship.

One of the ways that relationship is expressed in American life is through what Europeans call ceremony. The dictionary defines ceremony as a formal act or series of acts performed solemnly as prescribed by ritual or tribal procedure. Although that is certainly true, it can also be said that, for American Indian people, ceremony is life itself. Tom Porter, a Mohawk elder, told me that one reason why we have so many ceremonies is that humans are forgetful. If we just remembered to give thanks every day and then behave in a thankful and respectful manner, that would be enough. But each time we forget, we need to be given more ceremonies to help us remember.

American Indian ceremonial practices can be as simple as the offering of tobacco with a prayer or as complex as the healing traditions of the *Diné*. Those traditions, known as "Ways," involve a highly trained *hataaXii*, or "chanter," who has spent years memorizing the words and the protocol for one or more of those Ways, each of which is used for a particular healing purpose. The most common, Blessingway, is often used to restore physical and spiritual balance in an individual. Enemyway is used for a *Diné* person who has been in battle and touched an enemy, thus causing a spiritual imbalance. For the healing, a dry painting

is created on the ground using colored sand and pieces of ground-up bark. This sand painting is a mandala that depicts some event from the *Diné* Creation Story, perhaps the victory of the Hero Twins over a monster. The person to be healed is seated on the painting as the *hataaXii* chants the particular Healing Way. These Ways may take several days to complete. Because the presence of others who wish to offer their support makes the Healing Way more successful, many people are invited to attend.

Even events that are viewed as nothing more than games are often part of Native ceremonial practice. One example of this is the American Indian game now known as lacrosse. Called *Tewaarathon* in Mohawk, it is the "Great Game" or the "Creator's Game." When it was played, the field might have been miles in length, and the entire population of one or more villages might have taken part. Such games were usually played to help restore the health of a person to whom the game was dedicated. When the Iroquois prophet Handsome Lake became ill on his final visit to the Onondaga Nation in 1815, a game of lacrosse was immediately planned and played in an attempt to bring healing to the mortally ill elder. (Although he was not cured, he responded to the honor they gave him by saying, "I will soon go to my new home. Soon I will step into the new world, for there is a plain pathway leading me there.")

Some of the best-known ceremonies among Native people have been either sensationalized or misinterpreted. The potlatch ceremonies found among many of the Native peoples of the Pacific Northwest have been referred to as "fighting with wealth" by anthropologists who describe potlatch ceremonies in which a prominent figure tries to outdo a rival by either giving away or destroying vast amounts of personal possessions. The Canadian government and the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs were both so alarmed by their perception of potlatches as wasteful that potlatches were outlawed for much of the twentieth century. Although potlatches were, indeed, ostentatious affairs used to build or restore prestige, there was more to them than Europeans understood. Potlatch itself comes from the Nootka word *patshatl*, which means "giving." It could be said that while the accumulation of personal wealth is a desirable social norm in mainstream American culture, just the opposite is true in American Indian cultures. Sitting Bull, the great Lakota leader, once said that his people loved him because he was so poor.

The tradition of the giveaway as a ceremony to give thanks by showing great generosity is widespread throughout Native North America. I know of a Cheyenne family in Montana who promised to do a big giveaway if their son returned safely from Vietnam. All the while he was gone, they accumulated huge amounts of things to give away — blankets, canned goods, all kinds of things. When he returned home safely, their giveaway took place. Not only did they give away everything they'd gotten together, but also they were so happy that they gave away their refrigerator, their television, their record player, their radio, their pickup truck, and all their own clothing. Finally, they signed away the deed to their house. They not only showed how great their love was for their son, how truly grateful they were to Maheo, the Great Mystery, but they also made a great name for themselves in their community. Though they were now poor, they were rich in the eyes of their people.

At its best, a potlatch was a way to redistribute material wealth, rather than leaving it in the hands of a few. The imbalance of potlatches in the late 1800s, at which blankets and other goods were not just given away, but burned, seems to have resulted from the influx of European goods and the potential to accumulate excessive wealth on the part of those who traded with the whites. Today, the potlatch has been restored in many of the Northwest tribal nations as a ceremony to give thanks and gain honor by giving.

Ceremony reminds us, through song, story, dance, and dress, through ritual behavior and sacrifice, that we are one with everything around us. To be in balance within ourselves and with that world around us is the proper and natural way. Through ceremony, we may both acknowledge and restore that balance. ■

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The Global Conversation
An Interview with José Barreiro

Scholar José Barreiro is director of the office for Latin America and assistant director for research at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C. Born in Cuba, he is of Taino heritage, has spent his academic career researching indigenous peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, and is a leading expert in the field. Before joining NMAI, Barreiro was associate director, American Indian program," at Cornell University. Besides his many academic publications, he has been a journalist, editor, and novelist.

Question: How strong are the links forged between indigenous peoples around the world?

José Barreiro: One of my most instructive experiences happened when I was a young reporter and part of a delegation that went to a meeting at the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1977. I went with the Mohawk Nation delegation, for whom I worked at the time, as a reporter for the newspaper *Akwesasne Notes.* My wife is a Mohawk, and we lived on her reservation. It was a small conference in the U.N. context, but it was a huge conference for Indian people, to gather for the first time and meet each other. Many people came from very remote places. For the first couple of days the discourse was around the human rights problems that people were having in different countries. The unity was around what people have suffered: loss of land, problems with cultural retention, and those kinds of assaults. I remember an old chief of the Seneca, Corbett Sundown, who was trying to talk to this Mapuche elder from Chile. I speak Spanish, so I was translating, and the Mapuche elder said to him, "Why are we not talking about who we are as Indians?" Corbett's response was to invite him to an early-morning tobacco burning — his own ceremony, a version of the Iroquois thanksgiving address. The word spread, so many other people came. It is a beautiful, comprehensive oration, an expression of appreciation for the natural world, placing the human being in the circle of creation and giving thanks to the underworld, Mother Earth, and all of creation. It says, "In thankfulness we put our minds together," then drop tobacco on the fire, and that smoke carries the oration to all creation, to the world. The Mapuches, the Mayas, the Hopi, the Maquiritari, and the Aymara and Quechua, everybody could resonate to it. This is it, they said. This is why we are here. Our unity is really about this, because we have something similar to express.

Courtesy National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution

José Barriero, a leading expert on indigenous peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, is himself of Taino descent. The Tainos were the first to encounter 15th-century European explorers of the Western Hemisphere.

Q: What are the shared difficulties?

Barreiro: There is the forced introduction of an alien culture and attempted destruction of indigenous cultures. The boarding schools had a "kill the Indian and save the man" mentality. [In the early- to mid-20th century in the United States, as in Canada and Australia, children of Native tribes were forcibly removed and sent to boarding schools for a Western-style education. They were forbidden to speak Native languages and, often, to see their relatives.] There is a social pathology — poverty, alcoholism — worse in some places than in others, but it's there and needs to be combated, and there is a lot of activism around it, from educators to health workers.

If modern technologies come in very forcefully, there is a definite loss of the other culture, and sometimes that's the intent. That was the problem with the early boarding school education. It didn't admit there was something in that child. It assumed the child was empty, and we are going to pour civilization into that brain, and create a new person. That never worked. It created a lot of social pathology. You are told everything about your people is wrong. You cannot have your people as a model. That is a serious dysfunction creation in the mind of a young person.

But where people have been relatively strong, when satellite dishes, or the car, or whatever, comes in, adaptability is a lot more to the forefront. You hunt with a rifle instead of a bow and arrow. You drive a car instead of using a horse, often without the other being completely given up. Or it becomes more of a cultural icon or symbol. If you go to the Crow tribal fair every August, you'll see a huge number of Plains Indians, in some 1,500 tipis, with a herd of five to eight thousand horses. Parades, rodeo, pow wow. This is not for tourists, this is for the tribes. The tourist is welcome but incidental. The horse is a central feature. The arts are rich — the way they deck out those horses, the beadwork. This is true among many Indian peoples. I've been to high mountain tops in Guatemala where the Quiche Indians have similar things. People, when they get together in their own cultural context, want their old traditions. You see it all over the hemisphere.

Q: How did your own Taino tribe fare?

Barreiro: We had a lot of the intermarriage early on with the Spanish and the African population that came initially as slaves. There was serious population loss due to war and disease, but also centuries of relative isolation as *guajiro*, mountain and plains farmers. So there has been a continuity of family knowledge that is largely indigenous knowledge. That family culture, the medicinal traditions, herbology, living on the earth, identification of nature spirits — all that stayed. Today, 50 years after a socialist system, which is supposed to be completely atheistic, Cuba has more spiritual elements than anywhere in the hemisphere. It's amazing how people have sustained these things, now in many different manifestations. This is true also of Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and in terms of the Taino base, the Greater Antilles, the big islands, much less so on Jamaica and Haiti. You see it still in the fashion of country homes, agriculture, herbal medicines, prayers, many things.

Q: What are the chief issues of Latin America and the Caribbean today?

Barreiro: Economic issues are very strong generally. There has been disruption. Modernity, a lot of the new, fast and furious communications, transportation, have entered these communities. The most important disruption has been to local agriculture. I remember those Indian markets in Southern Mexico and Guatemala in the early 1970s — you could be in the most remote place in the mountains and you would run into an Indian market that was at least abundant in local food. The people could eat.

Most of the time, indigenous communities have a deeper attachment to place. Once depredation of forest and letting go of local food production begins to happen, people begin to migrate. There are no jobs. Somebody comes in with the idea if you plant asparagus here for the market in the United States, Europe, or whatever, that's going to make you the money, and people can work as rural workers. But the process destroys local production of food that people actually eat. It creates a product that is only sold outside of where those people live. The people cannot afford to buy the canned food from the outside. Those Indians coming north from Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras are village Indians, people who would not leave their areas except for dire economic conditions. That's a little bit of a simplification, but by and large when you still have strong local agriculture, the traditional culture is strong, the marriages last longer, the children come up without the pathologies attending the poverty, and you have a better life. From there people can be educated to be whatever they can be, but still the bulk of folks will do something successful on the land. The dream of the land is still strong. And that's the dream of being able to make a life from direct interaction with the land. In a way, it's what defines primitive. "Primitive" is used as a denigrating adjective, but all it really means is people have a primary relationship with the land. They know the difference between this tree and that tree. Each has its own purpose. There is a level of knowledge of ecology and local geography that creates a successful life. That's what traditional culture created, a successful life. That's how it's remembered.

Q: Indigenous people have a spiritual connection to the land, which is a different perspective from the Western view, isn't it?

Barreiro: There is a worldview difference, and there

are two central elements to it. One is that everything in this world has spiritual resonance, even those things we consider to be dead, inanimate, or even manufactured. The earth itself is alive. This is the source of life. Everything in this earth has a communicative spirit that can be dormant or awakened. So that is a transcendent principle of indigenous philosophy.

The second is that everything in this world needs to be appreciated, whether it's the moon, a little bug, or a tree. Of course, it's true for human beings as well, so if you look at the ceremonial traditions, it's all about that. It's all about giving thanks, appreciation. And in appreciation there is reciprocity. Reciprocity is the basis of respect. You give, you take. A gift begets a gift. Respect begets respect. And the reciprocity is extended not only to other human beings, but is extended to these other elements of the world that sustain our lives, what Mother Earth gives us as a gift. We work with her. The sun helps. The rain helps. And Mother Earth provides for her children.

Q: The tribal community has a deep bond, doesn't it?

Barreiro: Indigenous people are always looking for "where do you fit?" Individuals do not exist, really. We are social animals; we are spiritual, connected co-communities. So that element is central. That is why businesses often have a tough time on reservations. Cousin Joe starts a gas station, but he has a lot of poor relatives, and he can't refuse them a tank of gas, so the business goes bankrupt. It's a true story oft repeated. But if you give away today, two weeks later the cousin comes back, was lucky hunting and you get a side of deer. When it's working properly, that reciprocity is always part of the equation. And you always learn something. There is always the person who takes advantage as well, but they get a reputation for being that way.

Q: Do institutions such as the museum, and other organizations, promote effective dialogue and partnerships?

Barreiro: There being here at the Smithsonian, NMAI, a museum germinated and guided by Indian people, means a lot to indigenous people across the hemisphere. They like it that there is an Indian museum here in the middle of the Mall, 400 yards from the U.S. Congress. There is a lot of strength in an institution like this. There is an element of our culture and identity that can supplant the problematic things that get in the way of real discourse. Perhaps we are entering into an era for the country and for the world that after so much conflict and hatred there can be a way of helping that out, in the indigenous traditions of pact making, of peacemaking.

I do believe that if we find the proper basis in which to establish this dialogue, it has the capacity to be a central, core dialogue in the world. It's not just America; there are indigenous people around the world, and very ancient cultures that retained strong pieces of their own indigeneity as it came through their own civilizational pattern. They are like the elders of the human family. Those guys on Wall Street, they aren't the elders. They are kids and they are driven by very tunnel-vision activity. There is more to life than that. I know it because I have walked into some extremely poor places in the middle of nowhere, a hut with an old woman or old man in there that can impress you for what they know and their level of intelligence and human capacity. Those are also true teachers. I know they are my teachers. And there are people like that who are also professors — it's not like education knocks that out of you. I think, ultimately, it's the discourse that we are driving at.

In the creation of this museum, there was a process of partnership-building. In 30-some years' process, in the United Nations and nationally, the most valuable thing for Native people has been the networking — these very remote communities sending out two or three people to New York or to Geneva or Washington. And in the course of that they meet human rights lawyers. They meet foundation people, they meet each other — environmental and human rights activists, people with sound business ideas, educational organizations — and out of that work has surfaced a tremendous energy of partnership. The partnership of the American public, itself, has been very important. The tribes would not have survived without the strong sector of the American public that kept having sympathy for what happened and some intelligence around it. Today, there is a whole range of potential and active partners. We hope the museum can be a crossroads of global discussion and Native discourse. Indian people need it, and the world needs it even more. ■

José Barreiro was interviewed by Lea Terhune, managing editor for this eJournal USA.

The opinions expressed in this interview do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

CGNet and Citizen Journalism in India

Shubhranshu Choudhary

Shubhranshu Choudhary is an Indian journalist who has worked for The Guardian *and the BBC and who is a cofounder of CGnet, the citizen journalism project that is the subject of his essay. This year he was awarded the prestigious Knight Fellowship for international journalists for his groundbreaking, and sometimes risky, work.*

The list of journalists published by the Journalists Union in the tribal state of Chhattisgarh has only one Adivasi name in it — that of Kamlesh Painkra — but he is no longer a journalist.

Chhattisgarh (CG) is a small state in central India, carved out in the year 2000 for its predominantly indigenous population called Adivasis (original inhabitants). The Indian constitution lists them as "Scheduled Tribes," constituting 8 percent of the population. Seventy-five percent of the tribals live in the central region of India.

Adivasis are the most deprived section of Indian society, occupying the lowest rung on the ladder of social indicators. They are worse off than the former untouchables (dalits). They have little or no political voice. CGnet was launched to help them make their voices heard. CGnet is the people's Web site of Chhattisgarh, where everybody is a journalist. It is a citizens' journalism forum whose mission is the democratization of journalism, where journalism is not restricted only to journalists.

Kamlesh Painkra says, "Had CGnet not been there, I would have had two choices as a consequence of doing journalism in Chhattisgarh. One, I may have committed suicide; the other option was to join the Maoists. I had no third choice." Suicide is an option of despair that is not uncommon among India's rural poor.

Maoists are Indian left-wing extremists leading a bloody rebellion of the Adivasis. Unable to make headway in cities, they have made the forest their home for the past three decades. The situation is critical enough for the Indian prime minister to declare the insurgency started by Maoists (also known as Naxalites) as the biggest internal security threat for India.

Courtesy Shubhranshu Choudhary, photo by Brendan Hoffman, ICFJ

Shubhranshu Choudhary is a journalist who helps train India's tribal people in citizen journalism.

Absence of Communication

Currently, not only are there no professional tribal journalists, but there are no journalists who can communicate with tribals directly. Literacy rates are abysmal, because there is no education facility that teaches in any tribal language, despite provisions in the Indian constitution for affirmative action for tribals in jobs, education, and land issues. This has resulted in a divided society and an absence of dialogue between the tribal and non-tribal communities.

Community radio could supplement the tribal drums, which are still used as a medium of communication, but the only radio station is the government-owned All India Radio, which does not broadcast any news bulletins in a tribal language.

The Indian regulations do not allow community-owned radio stations. There is limited reflection of tribal opinion and issues in the mainstream media.

According to a survey by Delhi-based alternative media organization Charkha at the time of the start of CGnet, five years ago, reporting on issues of common people in the local newspapers was an astonishingly low 2 percent.

Kamlesh Painkra first came in touch with CGnet when he was exiled from his home for writing about the atrocities of the state-sponsored militia called Salwa Judum, or "peace march." The police chief asked him to write an apology for what he wrote, saying it was a mistake. Painkra refused. Then his brother was jailed for harboring Maoists in his home, although he had a tenant in his house who was an officer in the Indian paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force who tried to intervene on his behalf. A friend of Painkra who was in the police told him there was a police plan to kill him and advised Painkra to leave. Painkra moved to Dantewada but could not find work as a journalist. Citizen journalists in CGnet not only helped Painkra but took up his work.

Citizen journalists of CGnet have helped expose human rights violations that the mainstream press has missed. Some of the stories have been picked up by the mainstream media and attracted the attention of human rights activists.

Adivasis have a rich oral tradition. All their poetry and songs pass from one generation to the next orally. CGnet intends to record these oral treasures digitally in order to save their rich tribal languages and cultures.

CGnet has trained some young Adivasis in simple tricks of citizen journalism, such as how to record and convey their concerns over mobile phones using the built-in camera. These images are then uploaded on the Web site and discussed on the forum through e-mail.

A Voice for the Voiceless

In April 2007 a television station reported the death of half a dozen Adivasis in a village called Santoshpur. Police authorities were quick to issue a statement saying Adivasis died in a crossfire between police and Maoists. Then a CGnet citizen journalist secretly recorded an interview with the head of the police party that killed the villagers, who gave graphic details about the operation. It forced the state to reopen the case when it was taken to the Chhattisgarh high court by human rights activists.

The growing strength of the group, in terms of numbers and the quality of debate, is so encouraging that CGnet now hopes to expand its area of influence to tribal populations in four neighboring states. This will bring together tribals who have been divided by administrative boundaries, although they have a common language and culture, and provide a hub where similar communities can share their stories and build a dialogue with what they see as the "outside world."

Samad Mohapatra, a veteran journalist in the nearby state of Orissa says, "I wish my state had a similar platform, and I hope all these future protégés of CGnet will create a wider alternative media platform."

Annual face-to-face meetings of CGnet allow people with different ideologies to meet up and talk. At the last annual CGnet meeting, representatives from the mining industries and tribals opposing them shared their concerns across the table. Forty-four percent of Chhattisgarh is forest where the tribals live. These forest areas also house rich mineral deposits. With the new economic policy, the pace of industrialization has increased. Now these resource-rich forest areas are under scrutiny of Indian and multinational companies who want to use these minerals.

As the tribals are not formally educated, they fear that they will be left out of this development. Mainstream media, which are mainly owned by corporations or are heavily dependent on them, fail to provide adequate space for tribal concerns.

CGnet tries to fill this gap. Its members work to complement the mainstream media by concentrating on the subjects mainstream media does not or cannot cover.

When Indian authorities allow community radio in this troubled region, Adivasis trained by CGnet can have their own communication network, which will be a medium for the people, by the people, and of the people, with just a little help from technology and a few volunteers.

The Washington-based International Center for Journalists is also helping CGnet achieve this dream.

Himanshu Kumar of Vanvasi Chetna Ashram, who has worked with Chhattisgarh Adivasis for a long time, says, "Adivasis are in bad shape because they never spoke up against the atrocities against them. Now CGnet has given a voice to the voiceless." ■

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Toward a Worldwide Indigenous Network

Jonathan Hook

Courtesy Jonathan B. Hook/UNT

Indigenous students in Ufa-Shigiri, near Yekaterinburg, Russia, in ceremonial costumes, celebrated a cultural exchange event organized by the author.

Jonathan Hook is the director of a new program at the University of North Texas (UNT), the International Indigenous and American Indian Initiative. Hook, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, has worked extensively with American Indians and indigenous groups around the world. He was formerly director of the Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Dallas, Texas. He has also worked with the U.S. State Department and UNT on a series of international indigenous student videoconferences.

Through the convention hall windows I see a rare Anchorage sun dancing on the eastern slopes of not-too-distant mountains. Inside, multinational listeners in brilliantly colored regalia adjust translation headsets and clap. In this summit to discuss international indigenous perspectives on United Nations climate change response and mitigation actions, passions run high.

Common Experiences Link Tribal Peoples

There are many issues of common concern to indigenous communities around the world, most of which result from European physical and cultural expansion during the past 500 years. Uncountable similar personal experiences weave into patterns of historic trends that create the tapestry of who and what we are today. These include loss of land and language, retention of cultural autonomy, coexisting with conflicting worldviews, and the escalating impacts of climate change. Governments, NGOs, universities, and community groups are working diligently to address these topics, including the University of North Texas. My personal journey has intertwined with broader historical processes leading to the creation of UNT's International Indigenous and American Indian Initiatives program, which is the first of its kind in Texas.

I am a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, one of almost

600 indigenous nations inside the United States. As a child, I listened repeatedly to stories of forced removals, struggles, and survival. I was a delegate to the Cherokee Nation Constitution Convention, and I've always been interested in indigenous communities and their issues.

A few years ago, I sat with leaders of the Sutiava people in western Nicaragua listening to the daily afternoon downpour. They showed me a small dictionary and lamented a great cultural and personal loss — the recent death of the last speaker of their language. Perhaps the greatest marker of cultural identity, this demise of language is of tremendous concern to indigenous people everywhere.

Subsequent trips to indigenous communities in Sarawak, Malaysia, and the Russian Ural Mountains confirmed parallel concerns about language retention, cultural continuity, environmental protection, land preservation, and economic viability. There was always a great hunger to discuss the American Indian experience and a desire to meet with the Native peoples of the Americas.

Technology Facilitates Dialogue

Travel funds are always difficult to locate, so a Russian host suggested that we utilize technology to hold a videoconference. The idea was taken up and facilitated by the U.S. Consulate in Yekaterinburg, Russia, the U.S. Embassy in Malaysia, and the U.S. Department of State, and we held our first International Indigenous Student Videoconference on Culture and the Environment for secondary school youth. The American Indian community was represented by Kialegee Creek Tribal Town, Kiowa Nation students, and the chairman of the Ponca Nation Council. The issue raised as most critical internationally was that of climate change.

The videoconference led to an invitation for several American Indian students to visit Altai, Siberia. Two Kiowa students and a Kiowa elder accompanied me to Siberia, where we camped with Altai students and adults along the Katun River. Upon our arrival, we formed a circle, seated on benches. Into the center rode a magnificent Altai man, in full Mongolian-style regalia with drawn bow. He dismounted and demonstrated both stringed instruments and Altai "throat" singing. During the cool evenings we sat around campfires, sharing stories and songs from our respective cultures. Afternoon rains found us drinking tea and sheltering inside the warm, round yurta tent, exploring cultural similarities and

Courtesy Jonathan B. Hook/UNT

International Indigenous and American Indian Initiative program director Jonathan Hook.

sharing visions for the future. The bond between Kiowa and Altai was visible and almost immediate.

This was followed a few months later by a visit of four young Altai educators to meet with American Indian leaders and communities in Oklahoma and New Mexico. We visited Keetoowahs and Cherokees in northeast Oklahoma and Kiowas and Comanches in the western part of the state. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Siberians joined a meeting of the All Indian Pueblo Council and Governor Bill Richardson. Later, just north of Santa Fe in the home of a Tesuque Pueblo leader, they were treated to a completely indigenous meal of corn, venison, elk, local salt, garden vegetables, and fruit from our host's orchard.

The University of North Texas expressed great interest in our videoconference and related activities. Its president offered to host our second annual International Indigenous Student Videoconference. More American Indian students participated in the event and shared cultural dance exhibitions with the university community.

When I was director of the Office of Environmental Justice and Tribal Affairs at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's regional office in Dallas, Texas, I worked with the tribal leadership, environmental directors, and communities from 65 Native nations. UNT partnered with my office on efforts such as pursuing a Native-driven cumulative risk assessment on tribal land and supporting American Indian education opportunities through collaboration with Haskell Indian Nations University. I began working with the University of North Texas on other projects related to American Indians, diversity, and multiculturalism.

International Indigenous Program

The state of Texas has the fourth largest American Indian population in the United States, yet has no infrastructure to support its Native population. There is no state liaison or Indian Commission, and no university in the state had an American Indian program until 2009, when UNT inaugurated its International Indigenous and American Indian Initiatives (IIAII) program. Its name reflects the continuity of shared issues among indigenous peoples around the world. The vision of this new program is to bring about institutional and indigenous community growth through listening, responding, and collaborating nonpaternalistically with domestic and international Native communities.

For millennia, Native peoples have valued education and the ability to creatively adapt. Exceptional love, care, and instruction through modeling were given to American Indian children in their tribal setting. Five hundred years of disease, genocide, and cultural decimation stripped many Native generations of the tools to adapt and surmount the obstacles facing them in Western-derived educational, employment, and social systems. Typically, Western religious, political, and educational institutions paternalistically imposed their cultural paradigms on Native communities. This led to increased cultural loss and an aversion by American Indians to imposed programs. Today, UNT has the largest number of American Indian students of any university in the state.

Mechanisms for effective engagement include meetings with our recently created Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC), careful observations during community site visits, reading Native and non-Native publications, and listening actively to tribal government and tribal organization requests. The advisory council comprises American Indians from Texas and Oklahoma. It offers a broad range of expertise from nursing, education, law, community activism, tribal government, environment, and business to spiritual leadership. The IAC is well-prepared for its dual role of ensuring cultural integrity and identifying projects of interest to communities. Being responsive to indigenous communities means reactively complying with specific requests and proactively working to become an "Indian-friendly" institution. To that end UNT offers:

- A variety of Native-oriented courses;
- An Indigenous Studies major /minor, and
  A significant presence of Native faculty and staff at all levels;
- Ongoing Native student recruitment and funding;
- Leadership in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act;
- Language preservation;
- Significant Native-generated library holdings;
- A viable indigenous student organization;
- Indigenous-related research;
- Mentoring by Native professionals;
- Strong relations with Native nations, tribal colleges, and American Indian organizations.

The international focus is in response to shared concerns by worldwide indigenous communities regarding the current and potential impacts of climate change and UNT's unique ability to engage the topic. Real program success will be measured by changed lives at the university and in communities around the world. As I listened in Alaska to stories about the impacts of climate change on indigenous communities, my mind drifted back many years to a presentation made by my daughter. She had a circle of seated children throw a ball of yarn back and forth to each other, creating what looked like a spider web. Then she asked each child successively to pull on their strand of yarn. All were able to feel the tugs, demonstrating the impact that each of us has on each other and all living things. Our new program exists to celebrate, nurture, and support this global circle of life. ■

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Additional Resources

Books, articles, Web sites, and films on indigenous people

BOOKS AND ARTICLES

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"Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples," *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 2 (Summer 2008) *http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/csq/32-2-summer-2008-climate-change-and-indigenous-peoples*

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http://www.ethnologue.com

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Alvin Josephy. "New England Indians: Then and Now," in Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry, eds., *The Pequots in Southern New England: The Fall and Rise of an American Indian Nation*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990.

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Miyaoka, Osahito, Osamu Sakiyama, and Michael Krauss, eds. *The Vanishing Languages of the Pacific Rim*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Prucha, Francis Paul ed. *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 2d exp. ed. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990.

Thornberry, Patrick. *Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights*. New York: Juris Publishers; Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2002.

Wilkinson, Charles F. *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005.

By Contributing Authors

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Giago, Tim A. *Children Left Behind: Dark Legacy of Indian Mission Boarding Schools* [by] Tim Giago (Nanwica Kciji, Stands Up for Them). Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 2006.

Grinde, Donald A. Jr. and Bruce E. Johansen. *Exemplar of Liberty: Native America and the Evolution of Democracy*. Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center, 1991.
http://www.ratical.org/many_worlds/6Nations/EoL/

Hook, Jonathan B. *The Alabama-Coushatta Indians*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997.

Johansen, Bruce E., ed. *Enduring Legacies: Native American Treaties and Contemporary Controversies*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004.

Kawagley, Angayuqaq Oscar. *A Yupiaq Worldview: A Pathway to Ecology and Spirit* [by] A. Oscar Kawagley. 2nd edition. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2006.

Mankiller, Wilma, compiler. *Every Day Is a Good Day: Reflections by Contemporary Indigenous Women*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 2004.

Mankiller, Wilma, and Michael Wallis. *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Weaver, Jace, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior. *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006.

WEB SITES

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (September 13, 2007)
http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/drip.html

International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs
http://www.iwgia.org/sw617.asp

UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger
http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=EN&pg=00139

Research Centers and Associations

American Indian Language Development Institute (AILDI), University of Arizona
http://www.u.arizona.edu/~aildi/

Amerind Foundation
http://www.amerind.org

Center for World Indigenous Studies
http://cwis.org

Indigenous Language Institute
http://www.ilinative.org

International Indigenous and American Indian Initiatives, University of North Texas
http://indigenous.unt.edu/

Library of Congress American Folklife Center
Resources in Ethnographic Studies
http://www.loc.gov/folklife/other.html#indig

National Indian Law Library
Native American Rights Fund
http://www.narf.org/nill/index.htm
http://www.narf.org/

National Museum of American Indian Library/ Smithsonian Institution
Cultural Resources Center
Collection relating to the indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere and Hawaii.
http://www.sil.si.edu/libraries/nmai-hp.htm

SACNAS
Advancing Hispanics/Chicanos & Native Americans in Science
http://www.sacnas.org/

FILMS

Dances with Wolves (1990)
Director: Kevin Costner
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099348/
A revisionist Western epic film that employed many Native American actors and incorporated Lakota dialogue, it won seven Academy Awards.

The Last of the Mohicans (1992)
Director: Michael Mann
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104691/
Oscar-winning film based on the novel by James Fennimore Cooper about fur trappers and Indians during the French and Indian War in colonial North America, starring Daniel Day Lewis and Indian actors Wes Studi and Russell Means.

We Shall Remain (2009)
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/
Director: Chris Eyre
A documentary series from the award-winning PBS program *American Experience*, "We Shall Remain" presents post-colonial history from the Native American perspective.

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http://america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Information Programs