

NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH - NOVEMBER 1997

NATIVE AMERICANS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

PREFACE

Major Robert D. Maize, USAF, assigned to the 21st Air Support Operations Squadron at Fort Polk, Louisiana, served as a participant in the Topical Research Intern Program at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) during the month of April 1997. He conducted the necessary research to prepare this report. The Institute thanks Major Maize for his contributions to the research efforts of DEOMI.

SCOPE

The Topical Research Intern Program provides the opportunity for Servicemembers and DoD civilian employees to work on diversity/equal opportunity projects while on a 30-day tour of duty at the Institute. During their tour, the interns use a variety of primary and secondary source materials to compile a review of data or research pertaining to an issue of importance to equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) specialists, supervisors, and other leaders throughout the Services. The resulting publications (such as this one) are intended as resource and educational materials and do not represent official policy statements or endorsements by the DoD or any of its agencies. The publications are distributed to EO/EEO personnel and selected senior officials to aid them in their duties.

This publication reviews selected sources to provide insight on issues related to Native American history and culture. We make no claims that it is comprehensive, nor that it represents all scholarly views. The interested reader is encouraged to pursue the issues in greater depth and from other perspectives as well.

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The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the official position of DEOMI, the military services, or the Department of Defense.

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INTRODUCTION

A long time ago my father told me what his father had told him, that there was once a Lakota holy man, called Drinks Water, who dreamed what was to be.... He dreamed that the four-leggeds were going back to the Earth, and that a strange race would weave a web all around the Lakotas. He said, "You shall live in square gray houses, in a barren land...." Sometimes dreams are wiser than waking.

BLACK ELK,
OGLALA SIOUX,
ca. 1932 (1:111)

It is commonly accepted today that perceptions form our views of reality. Our perceptions shape our world view. What happens when people who perceive things differently meet? Their realities collide and conflict often results unless the gap which exists between their worlds is bridged. Our history is full of examples in which perceptions based upon facts tainted by fear, prejudice, and misunderstanding, resulted in tragic consequences. This has never been more true than in the case of the Native Americans, commonly called American Indians. This point is clearly demonstrated by an excerpt taken from the introduction of the book, *The Native Americans: An Illustrated History*:

THE YEAR WAS 1849. The place, the California Trail where it crossed the vast sagebrush and alkali desert of Nevada. To the hordes of fortune hunters hurrying from the East to the newly opened California gold mines, no part of their route seemed more dangerous than this inhospitable stretch. Not only were there few sources of water, but the desolate land was full of "treacherous savages"--bands of horseless Northern Paiute, Bannock, and Western Shoshone Indians. The whites compared them unfavorably with the bold, mounted, buffalo-hunting tribes of the Plains and referred to them contemptuously as "Diggers" because they dug with sticks for roots, a main component of the diet that had sustained them in their harsh Great Basin homeland for ten thousand years.

In the travelers' diaries, journals, and letters--which served for generations afterwards as the prime source of what white men knew about these Indians--the writers described them as "wretched, degraded, and despicable," "the meanest Indians in existence," who hid from sight during the day but came out from amongst the desert vegetation after dark to sneak into the emigrants' camps along the trail and steal their food and livestock. At night the fearful, travel-worn whites had to mount guard, listening intently for every

rustle and sound in the desert. When they heard a suspicious noise, they shot in the direction of its source, and at dawn they often found a dead Indian lying nearby. Sometimes it was the body of a young child, a woman, or a gnarled elder, and the travelers' stories circulated this information as proof that all "Diggers" were skulking thieves, no matter what their age or sex. (1:14)

Here we have a description of events based upon facts as perceived by white settlers moving to the new California territory through what they believed to be an unforgiving land--a land possessing hostile characteristics and unfamiliar to these travelers--one that appeared to be filled with little comfort, unexpected danger, and sudden death at every turn. And to make matters worst, it was a land inhabited by an Indian people whose very nature appeared to lack any redeeming qualities regardless of age or sex. A people who would kill you as quickly as they would look at you. A people who deserved the title of "Diggers"; a title which only helped to reinforce the negative attitudes and perceptions of those settlers passing through the region toward the Native Americans living there. This stereotypical image of the Great Basin tribes was cultivated over the years and became a permanent part of the social consciousness of non-Native Americans. But, every story has two sides. The other side of this one was told by a very articulate Indian woman named Sarah Winnemucca, who had been a five-year-old Paiute child living with her family along the Oregon Trail in 1849. She gives a very different view of events as they occurred during the period in question:

What the whites had believed were "skulking" thieves and murderers in the darkness were in fact hungry and terrified Indian families trying to get safely across a road that the white men had unwittingly cut directly through territory where for centuries the Indians had lived, gathered food, and held their ceremonies. The bisecting road had crippled the Indians' freedom of movement across their lands, for they lived in mortal dread of the stream of trigger-happy white travelers who shot at them as if they were rabbits.

Attempting to get past them, from one part of their territory to another, to reach relatives or a desperately needed wild food source, Indian fathers and mothers hid anxiously with their children behind clumps of sage or other desert brush during the day, then at night directed the young ones to scamper silently across the road past the white men's camps and hide on the other side until all the elders, one by one, also got across.

If the whites had been careless with their livestock, some of the bolder young Indians, who naturally blamed the intruders for overrunning and destroying their food-gathering grounds and polluting their waterholes, saw no wrong in helping themselves to one or two of the emigrants' cows--as the Indians perceived it, an acceptable act of reciprocity. These, in short, were what the travelers cursed as "the meanest Indians in existence"--men, women, and children, trying to survive, but whom the whites occasionally heard in the night and killed. (1:14-16)

Here is another world view based upon the same facts. However, the facts are seen from a different vantage point and like so often the case, the view is significantly different. It is true the Indians were rarely seen during the day and mostly came out at night. It was not

because the night afforded them protection and cover to accomplish misdeeds; however, it did minimize the risk of being shot by fearful and weary travelers. It was also true that occasionally livestock and food were taken, but not out of malice. The Indians viewed it as compensation for damages done to their land and way of life by the migrating settlers. Both groups were directly involved in the same events, but their perceptions of these events led to very different realities.

In order for people with different world views to coexist peacefully, we must bridge the gap between their realities. But how? One way is to establish a commonality between the two groups and work toward mutual understanding. Though this process sounds simple on the surface, it is much harder to accomplish because of the complex and varied nature of humanity. For example, everyone has to eat. This is a fact which cannot be denied--a commonality true for all. However, what (meat or vegetables) and how (fingers or utensils) we eat differs tremendously from culture to culture. These factors complicate the eating process and can create more sources of conflict. If you don't think this is true, seat a "vegetarian" next to a "steak and potatoes" person or use your left hand at the dinner table in the Middle East. The inability to successfully "bridge many of the gaps" between different cultures is due to the failure of one group to fully understand what the other group considers to be valuable. What gives meaning to their lives? What is their sacred trust? We must first find the answers to these questions and then earnestly work to fully understand their implications. By accomplishing this, we gain insight into the heart of other people who possess a view of the world different from our own. Only when we do this can we begin to know them.

This booklet will examine some historical background concerning the origins, beliefs and values, and society of the American Indians. We will examine different aspects of life as it existed in "precontact" America. This is the period of time before the arrival of Columbus and the Europeans. During this time, many diverse American Indian cultures existed. These, in conjunction with European influences, would eventually become the cultural foundation upon which the American Indian society of today is built. This period is also important because it allows us to observe life from a "pure" Indian perspective. We will also observe precontact cultures through the eyes of those early explorers and traders who had first contact with the Indians. Also located throughout the booklet are comments and quotes by Native Americans on their own lifestyles and other key issues. This booklet will focus on the Native Americans whose ancestors lived within the geographical confines of the continental United States. This is necessary due to the significant differences which existed between the Indian cultures of America, Canada, and Middle or Meso America (today's Mexico and Central America). However, the reader should not forget that each group influenced the development of the other in a variety of ways through social interaction, trade, and commerce. For example, one of the most significant impacts was made by the "Empires of the Sun." The centuries of cultivation efforts by the Aztecs, Mayans, Olmec, Teotihuacan, Toltecs, and Zapotec civilizations lead to the domestication of "maize" or corn. This food would become a primary staple in the diet of many North American Indians as well as other people throughout the world. (2:25)

History has repeatedly shown us that very often the key to the future is found by looking into the past. More importantly, when we look, we should strive to view people and situations fairly, openly, and without bias. General Sir William Francis Butler, during the winter of 1872-1873, traveled by sled from the forks of the Saskatchewan River through Peace River Pass and along the Fraser River valley. He wrote these words by firelight, in sub-zero temperatures while in his camp one night:

In nearly all the dealings of the white man with the red . . . the mistake of judging and treating Indians by European standards has been made. Indian character is worth the study, if we will only take the trouble to divest ourselves of the notion that all men should be like ourselves. There is so much of simplicity and cunning, so much... quickness, sense of humor, credulousness, power of observation, faith and fun and selfishness mixed up together in the red man's mental composition, that the person who will find nothing in Indian character worth studying will be likely to start from a base of nullity in his own brain system. (3:104)

Lastly and most importantly, it is hoped that this booklet will provide you, the reader, an opportunity to expand your horizons while increasing your knowledge of a unique people. We often forget that the key to understanding is often found by having one's eyes opened to some basic truth or fact which has simply been overlooked.

Of all the cultures and civilizations that exist today, perhaps the most misunderstood is that of the Native Americans. Much of what is "known" about their culture has been acquired from Saturday afternoon television westerns which are more concerned with action than historical content. If you stop the average non-Native American on the street and ask what images come to mind when they hear the word Indian, most would probably respond with visions of buffalo herds, leather moccasins, beads and trinkets, the Little Big Horn, Custer's last stand, reservations, tepees, and eagle feathers. Oh yes, don't forget about the menacing tomahawk and bow and arrows.

Many people don't even realize why Native Americans are called Indians. The term is based upon another misperception. Christopher Columbus coined the phrase because he thought he had landed in the East Indies of Asia in October of 1492. Columbus did not realize he had reached the Bahama Islands. While sailing along the coasts of present day Cuba and Haiti he encountered "Eden-like villages of naked Arawakan-speaking people." Columbus called the island natives *los indios*, or Indians, "thus fastening that name on the population of all the indigenous nations of the Western Hemisphere." (2:115)

It is interesting to note that none of the European explorers ever asked these "Indians" who they were or what they called themselves in the generic sense. Had they done this simple act, it would have provided them a glimpse of how the Native Americans viewed themselves and perhaps been the first step to bridging the gap which still exists today. Tall Oak, a member of the Narragansett tribe states:

When the first Europeans arrived, Columbus and his crew, he came and he called us Indians, because of the obvious reason, he thought he was lost in India. But what did we

call ourselves before Columbus came? That's the question so often asked. And the thing is in every single tribe, even today, when you translate the word that we each had for ourselves, without knowledge of each other, it was always something that translated to basically the same thing. In our language it is Ninuog, or the people, the human beings. That's what we called ourselves. So when the Pilgrims arrived here, we knew who we were, but we didn't know who they were. So we call them Awaunageesuck, or the strangers, because they were the ones who were alien, they were the ones that we didn't know, but we knew each other. And we were the human beings. (2:214)

A RICH HERITAGE

I am an American Indian, and I believe that I can therefore speak to the question of America before Columbus with a certain advantage of ancestral experience, a cultural continuity that reaches far back in time. My forebears have been in North America for many thousands of years. In my blood I have a real sense of that occupation. It is worth something to me, as indeed that long, unbroken tenure is worth something to every native American.

N. SCOTT MOMADAY, KIOWA
from *America in 1492* (1:26)

When people talk about Native Americans they are invariably drawn to the American west. It was here that the great Indian wars took place on the wide open plains of states like Kansas, Colorado, the Dakotas, and Oklahoma. As historian Alvin M. Josephy puts it,

Largely because of the romance and color of the mounted Plains tribes and the skills and fierce determination of their chiefs and warriors, which dime novels, Wild West shows, and movies publicized far and wide, the Great Plains came to be associated in the minds of non-Indian peoples throughout the world as the land of the North American Indians. (2:7)

In fact, the Indian nations of the Great Plains during the time of the Indian wars represented only a remnant of the many great nations that had previously existed. Before the arrival of Columbus, Indian culture thrived throughout the western hemisphere. Indian nations covered the entire North American continent while extending through Central and South America. These nations were bounded by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans while stretching from Central America to the Arctic. They had well established borders between them that pre-dated the Roman Empire. (2:8)

It is not known precisely how many different nations existed at the time of first contact. Scientist calculate that there were in the vicinity of 200 Indian nations in the late 1600s. (4:1) Estimates of the total number of Native Americans inhabiting the Americas prior to the arrival of Columbus vary. Archaeologist and ethnohistorian Henry F. Dobyns believes that the pre-Columbian Americas once had a huge population of 112 million people. He also estimates the number of Indians living in North America alone at 18

million. (1:105) Additional findings support such high numbers. Recent estimates suggest that the pre-Columbian population of Hispaniola (current day Haiti) was as high as seven or eight million people. (2:116)

The question that puzzled early explorers and scholars and which until recently had eluded answer by scientists was two fold: Where did these people come from and how did they reach a land so far away from what was considered the "known world"?

ORIGINS

When we were created, we were given our ground to live on and from this time these were our rights. This is all true. We were put here by the Creator--I was not brought from a foreign country and did not come here. I was put here by the Creator.

CHIEF WENINOCK, YAKIMA, 1915 (1:23)

As more information was discovered about the "New World" and the strange people (by European standards) that lived there, much speculation arose about their origin. Many of the scholars attempted to explain their existence from a perspective based on the world view of their day. Hence, early theories were developed from biblical and mythological viewpoints. D'Arcy McNickle, in his book, *They Came Here First*, provides a concise assessment of the situation:

Speculation about the origin of man in the New World was as fanciful as the tribal myths and legends.... The early writers were constrained by theological concepts which traced man's ancestry to Adam and Eve, through Noah and his offspring. The search for New World origins accordingly was at first confined to biblical interpretation, with embellishments from classical mythology. A tale attributed to Aristotle told of certain Phoenician sailors who sailed westward and disappeared into the Atlantic. The tale was resurrected after Columbus's voyage with the explanation that he had discovered the descendants of the lost mariners. In another account, Plato's fabled continent of Atlantis provided the land bridge over which people crossed to the Americas, where they were isolated when Atlantis was destroyed by earthquake. A favorite theme, one which persisted into the nineteenth century, identified the Indians with the Lost Tribes of Israel, based on a supposed similarity between Hebrew and Aztec words and on certain customs and traditions said to be common to Jews and New World tribal people. (3:6)

Stories about the creation and origins of man are common to all people. The Native Americans are no different. Every tribe, every nation has a creation myth that has been passed down through the generations. Dr. Alvin M. Josephy, noted historian and author of the book, *500 Nations*, cited several examples of origin myths. He states:

Among the Nez Perce and other Indian people of the mountainous Northwest, generations of grandparents told children stories of a time when the world was inhabited only by animals, all of whom spoke like humans and had human-like characteristics. Living by one of the waterways was a fierce monster who kept all the animals in fear by

devouring them. Finally, the bold and courageous Coyote, the tribe's culture hero, jumped down the monster's throat and killed him by sawing up his heart with a flint. When the monster was dead, Coyote cut his body into small pieces, creating from each part a different tribe.... In the desert Southwest, Hopi, Zuni, and Pueblo descendants of the Anasazis...tell of the emergence of their people through a hole, known as sipapu, from an underground lake. Others relate in great detail the climb of their ancestors toward perfection through three underworlds and their final emergence through sipapu into the present or fourth world. (2:9-11)

Another creation story which is told by the tribes of the northwest coast tells of a lonely god who wanted companionship:

Raven was lonely. One day he paced back and forth on the sandy beach feeling quite forlorn. Except for the trees, the moon, the sun, water and a few animals, the world was so empty. His heart wished for the company of other creatures. Suddenly a large clam pushed through the sand making an eerie bubbling sound. Raven watched and listened intently as the clam slowly opened up. He was surprised and happy to see tiny people emerging from the shell. All were talking, smiling, and shaking the sand off their tiny bodies. Men, women, and children spread around the island. Raven was pleased and proud with his work. He sang a beautiful song of great joy and greeting. He had brought the first people to the world. (1:30)

Most of the tribal legends tell of migrations to the sites that became their homes in this world. It is this migration theme which forms the basis for the scientific explanation for the presence of Native Americans in the western hemisphere. The first person to propose a theory that was not shrouded in fantasy, but represented an attempt to logically and factually explain the presence of new world people, was not even a member of the scientific community. In fact, he was from a religious order. McNickle states:

[This theory was first proposed by a Jesuit missionary named] José De Acosta, who in 1590 published the first of several volumes in which he argued that man and animals had crossed to the New World over a land bridge, the location of which was either in the South Seas, across from the Strait of Magellan, or off the northwest coast of North America. Acosta also reasoned that the migration of man and beasts was not accomplished as a single mass movement, but occurred over a period of time; and further, that the original migrants were nomadic hunters who in due course developed agriculture and a civil life of their own. (3:6)

[de Acosta] noted that such a journey would require "only short stretches of navigations"-an extraordinary premise, given that Europeans would not "discover" the Bering Strait for another 136 years. (1:31)

Acosta's theory was a revolutionary leap in thinking toward the origins of New World people. However, it would be almost 400 hundred years before scientific evidence would lend support to what a Jesuit missionary had imagined.

Today, the generally accepted scientific view is that the roots of Native Americans are located somewhere in Asia. They believe the migration occurred over several thousand years as the Earth progressed through various periods of the last ice age in which the development of unimaginable Pleistocene glaciers caused the world's oceans to drop over 300 feet. (2:12) It was this drop in the level of the world's oceans which scientist believe allowed the Bering Land Bridge to appear. This passage between the two continents coupled with temperate weather periods which caused the sea to slowly rise while melting the ice that had previously blocked the land routes provided an avenue for the migrating people, animals, and plant life to reach the New World. (3:8)

Archaeologists have confirmed the presence of people living in all parts of North and South America by at least 12,000 years ago--longer ago than Egypt, Phoenicia, China, Israel, or any other nation identified in history. (2:12)

Eventually, the ice age came to an end and the glaciers began to recede, restoring the oceans to previous levels and once again covering the Bering Land Bridge. Once in what would one day be called North America, these nomadic natives began to flourish, expand, and move south through the valleys and plains, following the animals they hunted for food and other necessities. Eventually these small bands of wanderers would inhabit a quarter of the world's land surface. They would also develop sophisticated and diverse cultures that would extend from sea to sea and last for over a thousand generations.

It is important for the reader to consider and understand how Native Americans view this scientific origin theory as it conflicts with many of the tribal origin legends and stories. Vine Deloria, Jr., of the Standing Rock Sioux offers us the opportunity to view a different perspective:

The Bering Strait theory is tenaciously held by white scholars against the varied migration traditions of the natives and is an example of the triumph of doctrine over facts. Excavating ancient fireplaces and campsites may be exciting, but there are no well-worn paths which clearly show migratory patterns from Asia to North America, and if there were such paths, there would be no indication anywhere which way the footprints were heading. We can be certain of only one thing: the Bering Strait theory is preferred by whites and consequently becomes accepted as scientific fact. If the universities were controlled by the Indians, we would have an entirely different explanation of the peopling of the New World and it would be just as respectable for the scholarly establishment to support it. The theory does illustrate a constant theme...a good many scientific and/or scholarly beliefs about Indians originated as religious doctrines. As religion lost its influence as an opinion maker, the idea was picked up by some secular scholars, transformed into scientific theory, and published as orthodox science. (1:28)

BELIEFS AND VALUES

All of this [creation] is sacred, and so do not forget. Every dawn as it comes is a holy event, and every day is holy, for the light comes from your Father Wakan-Tanka, and

also you must always remember that the two-leggeds and all the other peoples who stand upon this earth are sacred and should be treated as such.

WHITE BUFFALO WOMAN

Sioux sacred woman,

quoted by Black Elk (Oglala Sioux), 1947 (1:207)

Native American culture developed a value and belief system which differed significantly from those of the Europeans in some regards and yet was very similar in others. The Indian world view recognizes the importance of relationships that exists between all living creatures and their environment. This belief is a central theme throughout Native American culture. This respect of life and land played an integral part in the development of Indian society and is still very important today. This idea of the "inter-relatedness of all things" is one of the foundational principles forming the essence of their world view. Dr. Josephy states,

With the passage of time, different groups came to identify themselves with special parts of the land, understanding in some cases that it was the place of their ancestors' origins or in others that the Creator or other supernatural beings meant them to live there. Century after century, they established spiritual harmony with their particular territory, learning to understand and take care of its resources so that the resources, in turn, would take care of them. (2:17)

The Native Americans sought not to control the environment like European cultures, but to live in harmony with it. As Mr. McNickle describes it,

In all that they attempted they seemed to be most deeply concerned with the moral quality of their relations with each other.... [T]hey were constantly seeking a quality of life which was never at any point at variance with the force which created life. (3:71)

More importantly, because they believed everyone and everything was related, Indian cultures developed a deep respect for life. It is an outlook that has been ingrained into the very nature of the Indian people. Dr. Josephy provides us another example when he examines the beliefs of the Iroquois. He states,

The Iroquois [like many Indians] believed that the spirits of all humans were joined to those of the objects and forces of nature, and in addition, that a human's inner spiritual power, called *orenda*, combated the powers of evil that could harm the individual as well as the rest of the people. Although an individual's *orenda* was small, it contributed to the total *orenda* possessed by a family, group, or clan. (2:47)

Hence, individual life strengthened the tribe and was to be cherished, nurtured, and protected. The Indian philosophy toward hunting helps to further illustrate the belief in the connection of all life. The shaman (native physician and ritualist) was often responsible for ensuring a successful hunt. This was accomplished by visiting the cave to meet the spirit in charge of the local animal population. Together, the shaman and animal

spirit would work out a redistribution of lives within the region: a certain number of human souls would be exchanged for the spirits of animals killed in the hunt. The Indians believed that since all souls were immortal and thus available for later exchanges, the reapportionments balanced out over time. However, for the process to work, it was necessary for the hunters to treat the mortal remains of the killed animals with honor and respect. (1:119)

Dr. Richard White, McClelland Professor of History at the University of Washington, concluded that Indians regarded animals not as some subordinate order of beings put at the service of humans, but as persons, other-than-human persons, with whom human beings established relationships. He tells us that the nature of these relationships have been richly charted in Indian stories from a time long past when they believed humans and animals communicated directly and even intermarried. A Nomlaki Indian of California told an ethnographer: "Everything in this world talks, just as we are now--the trees, rocks, everything. But we cannot understand them, just as the white people do not understand Indians." (1:240)

This concept of "oneness" with all things allowed the Native Americans to develop an awareness and appreciation for the diversity of life. Recognizing that differences were readily apparent in nature, it followed that people could be different in appearance, manner, and lifestyle. Differences did not decrease the worth of a person. Everyone had a role to play and some contribution to make in the process of life:

During the winter, when people were shut in by the weather, cripples or handicapped individuals traveled around as entertainers, advisors, and trainers. If they were too crippled or feeble to walk, young apprentices carried them from town to town for the chance to memorize the stories they told, the games they led, or the crafts they taught and produced. . . . Such special regard for the handicapped was related to the all-pervasive regard for differences and was a distinguishing characteristic of native Americans. The belief still holds that the curtailing of some ability, whether physical or mental, was more than compensated for by some special gift at storytelling, herbal cures, toolmaking, oratory, or putting people at ease. (1.118)

Though there were major differences in the values and beliefs of the American Indians and Europeans, there were also similarities. Universal qualities like generosity, kindness, honor, courage, humor, and bravery were an integral part of Indian culture. They recognized the importance of such traits. Men and women had to not only possess these qualities but actually demonstrate them in their daily lives before being placed in a position of authority and power. Noted author Frank Waters quoted Sweet Medicine, Chief of the Northern Cheyenne, describing Coal Bear, who was appointed the Keeper of the Sacred Hat:

He was a man who was kind to everybody. He was very peaceful. He was qualified to keep the Sacred Hat because the law that concerns the Keepers says that a man who is Keeper must be honest, peaceful, and kindly to everyone. (1:123)

One source of information which provides insight into Indian values and beliefs as practiced in daily life is provided by journals written by various Jesuit priests who served as missionaries to the various tribes from 1610 to 1791. They recorded numerous examples of daily situations encountered by the priests as they attempted to observe and convert the Indians to Christian doctrine. Following are a few extracts from various journal entries as recorded by Mr. McNickle. This first excerpt deals with the issue of sharing material possessions and offers an alternative method for minimizing a potential conflict with another party:

These people (evidently the Hurons) seek a reputation for liberality and generosity; they give away their property freely and very seldom ask any return; nor do they punish thieves otherwise than with ridicule and derision. If they suspect that anyone seeks to accomplish an evil deed by means of false pretenses, they do not restrain him with threats, but with gifts. From the same desire for harmony comes their ready assent to whatever one teaches them; nevertheless, they hold tenaciously to their native belief or superstition.... (3:99)

The issues of sharing material wealth and of giving away personal property will be discussed later. Mr. McNickle has extracted another situation documented by the priests which highlights the good nature and humor that is often overlooked when we discuss Native Americans. This encounter involved a Jesuit priest named Le Jeune who was in competition with an Indian shaman.

[Le Jeune claimed that] for years [the shaman] had been living a life of ease by tricking his people into believing he possessed supernatural powers.... Le Jeune naturally took upon himself the task of proving that the Indian was an impostor and it was equally natural that the...shaman should perceive the Jesuit's design and take measures to countervail him.... Thus the Indian would brag about his prowess with women and the priest, bristling with indignation, would preach on the evils of promiscuous love.

"I told him," says Le Jeune, "that it was not honorable for a woman to love any one else except her husband; and that, this evil being among them, he himself was not sure that his son, who was present, was his son. He replied, 'Thou hast no sense. You French people love only your own children; but we love the children of our tribe' I began to laugh seeing that he philosophized in horse and mule fashion. . . ." (3:99-100)

In another instance, it was some time before Le Jeune caught on to a trick the shaman was playing on him. He would teach Le Jeune to pronounce words, very patiently drilling him in the proper pronunciation. When the priest used them there would be an uproar in his audience. It was not until much later that someone revealed to him that the words were obscenities. (3:100)

Another value--respect for elders--was described by John Lawson, an explorer and trader who, in the early eighteenth century, traveled among the Indians of the Carolinas. He wrote, "Whensoever an aged man is speaking, none ever interrupts him, the company yielding a great deal of attention to his tale with a continued silence and an exact

demeanor during his oration." (3:102) In fact, this quality appears to have been a "universal" trait throughout Indian culture at that time and though slightly diminished, it still exists today. The elders of the tribes are respected and honored. They are often consulted and sought after for advice concerning all matters of tribal life. Indians realize that with age comes experience, understanding, and wisdom. These are valuable resources which can be used to guide others along the difficult and challenging path of life. Elders are not to be discarded, dismissed, or forgotten. They are a very powerful force within the social structure of Native American culture.

Some day you will meet a people who are white. They will try always to give you things, but do not take them. At last I think that you will take these things that they offer you, and this will bring sickness to you.

SWEET MEDICINE,
Cheyenne Prophet (1:231)

No greater difference existed initially between the European and Indian culture than their respective attitude toward the accumulation of wealth and property. The idea of making a profit for its own sake was totally alien to the Indians. McNickle states:

[The Indians] were at a loss to understand the European's preoccupation with profit-making. Indians were accomplished traders, but trade with them meant an exchange of goods by which each party obtained something useful to himself and gave up something useful to his opposite. No one returned with a surplus. (3:105)

This attitude was most likely due to the balance that Indians endeavored to maintain in their lives. The idea of having excess without some physical reason or need would appear unnatural. Early in the 19th century, a French-Canadian trader named Pierre-Antoine Tabeau came to trade among Arikara Indians along the Missouri River. He recorded a conversation that occurred between himself and a principal trader for the Arikara tribe:

The Arikara look upon the whites as beneficent spirits who ought, since they can, to supply all its needs and it looks upon the merchandise, brought to the village, as if destined for it and belonging to it. Besides, their minds not grasping our ideas of interest and acquisition beyond what is necessary, it is a principle with them that he who has divides with him who has not. "You are foolish," said one of the most intelligent seriously to me. "Why do you wish to make all this powder and these balls since you do not hunt? Of what use are all these knives to you? Is not one enough with which to cut meat? It is only your wicked heart that prevents you from giving them to us. Do you not see that the village has none? I will give you a robe myself, when you want it, but you already have more robes than are necessary to cover you." All the logic and all the rhetoric in the world are thrown away against these arguments, and how hope for success in a nation, imbued with these principles and always destitute of everything? (1:231)

Once again, the root cause of the conflict stems from different world views. There were two separate aspects with regards to this issue. The first was a social aspect. Mr. Jay

Miller, a contributing author on the book, *The Native Americans: An Illustrated History* as well as several other books on various Indian subjects describes this as a "different logic" in which the Indians could not make economic exchange either a separate sphere of life or the purpose of life. He goes on to say that

For Indian peoples the idea that an economic relationship--giver and recipient, buyer and seller--could be separated from a social relationship--kinsperson, friend, enemy--was astonishing. It is as if outsiders should suggest to us that our relationship with our children should have no influence on our economic exchanges with them. Why not charge our children for their food, their clothes, their shelter? Why not make sure we get the largest possible profit from every ice cream cone we offer? And why not have our children, in turn, bill us for their labor? Indians extended the social logic we apply to immediate family to a wider array of social relationships. For them social relationships ideally determined the form of economic relationships. (1: 232-233).

The second part of this issue deals with the purpose of acquiring wealth. The European view was that acquisition of wealth was an end unto itself. It was the key to power, authority, and prestige. To the Indians, a person's status depended not on what he or she possessed, but rather on what he or she gave to others. To have wealth while others were lacking was seen as a serious threat to the unity of the tribe. Acquired riches were only an avenue to generosity. The gathering of wealth was often just the prelude to distribution. From the east to the west, the Native American social systems were designed to encourage people to redistribute material wealth in exchange for social status and public recognition. (1:238)

Just as the Indians could not understand the European's desire to make a profit, the Europeans could not understand how the Indians could give away their wealth and possessions with such great ease. For the Indians it was simply a matter of honor. To give someone a gift indicated the individual was honored and respected by the giver. This practice was true whether the person was alive or dead. Mr. Miller illustrates this point in his discussion of the Feast of the Dead:

Many Indian peoples honored the dead by burying valuable goods with them or by distributing goods to mourners at the time of burial. The Algonquian-speaking peoples of the Great Lakes staged [a spectacular ceremony known as] the Feast of the Dead. It involved a mass reburial of those who had died and been temporarily interred since the last Feast of the Dead.... Host villages might devote a year to gathering trade goods and native goods. They would then distribute all of these goods as grave offerings or as gifts to their allies who attended the feast. (1:226)

Nicolas Perrot, a French trader, who traveled among the Indian nations, stated in his memoirs concerning this practice:

They lavish all that they possess in trade goods or other articles; and they reduce themselves to such an extreme of poverty that they do not reserve for themselves a single hatchet or knife. Very often they keep back for their own use only one old kettle; and the

sole object for which they incur all the expenditure is, that they may render the souls of the departed more happy and more highly respected in the country of the dead. (1:229)

The American Indian has a very simple approach to life, constantly working to maintain a balance between all aspects of their existence. Mr. McNickle describes the Indian attitude toward material possessions during the initial phase of contact with the Europeans:

Tribal societies upon first contact with Europeans were very conscious of differences, but they were selective in what they appropriated for themselves. They chose mostly tools, weapons, and equipment; material objects which would enlarge the scope of their own competency. The intangibles of the European, his concern for wealth accumulation and for individual advancement, his aggressiveness toward the environment, and his class-structured society were contrary to the way Indians preferred to live, and did not appeal to them. (3:106).

Had the Indian nations been able to preserve this attitude among themselves, they might have been better off. But, as is the case in so many relationships, it was inevitable that the Europeans would have a powerful influence upon Indian culture. This influence would eventually disrupt their way of life and have adverse consequences. No example demonstrates this better than the impact of fur trading upon the Indian way of life as described by Dr. Josephy:

[Initially the fur trade for northern tribes was] merely an extension of a seasonal round of food-gathering--largely hunting, trapping, and fishing--that they had followed for centuries. At various times of the year, these Indians still regularly hunted beaver, fox, rabbit, otter, and other small furbearing animals. In winter, they split into multifamily units and in the deep forest hunted the larger game.... Late spring was their season for coming together again, when their villages rejoined for ceremonies, social activities, courtship, games, feasting, and trade. It was a routine to which the European fur traders adapted, accepting, in addition, a relationship in which the Indians' traditions...set the standards and conduct of the exchange. (2:228)

Fur trading progressed into the continent's heartland involving more Indian nations and in 1670, the British established the Hudson's Bay Company to compete with the French monopoly which existed in Canada. The tribes played the French and British against one another to get the highest prices for their furs. The Indians received payment in guns, powder, balls, hatchets, blankets, cloth, kettles, knives, mirrors, awls, beads, paints, combs, and other European manufactured goods, and this exchange caused a great change in their material culture. (2:229)

Many Indian nations...gradually found it more lucrative to trade with the white men than to pursue old economic activities. Some of the agricultural nations stopped planting and let their fields lie fallow and overrun with weeds, while hunting societies lost the rhythm of their lives. Traditional trade networks and practices were disrupted, jealousies and feuds were aroused, and the ability of tribes to control the behavior of their members was undermined by the diverting presence of the Europeans.

[V]illage, clan, and family cohesion and discipline broke apart as individuals, eager for economic gain and prestige, put personal goals ahead of the values and well being of the group.... At the same time, bands and nations that once traded for mutual benefit were forced into cutthroat competition.... [A]ncient tribal and personal spiritual values and sacred relationships with the land and animals also changed or were abandoned. (2:230-231)

The balance which had existed for thousands of years had been destroyed. The excess hunting caused an exhaustion of wildlife, which at times resulted in starvation for the Indians. Alcoholism became widespread as traders supplied large quantities of liquor to the braves, making it easier to swindle them out of their furs.

Authority and traditions of the tribe, which had previously been maintained in the past by elders and clan relatives, spiritual leaders, or, sometimes, by public ridicule and shame, were no longer effective. The efficient and peaceful system of trade and commerce which had existed for thousands of years among the Indian nations had been completely destroyed by the mid-eighteenth century. It was replaced by a competitive European system which stripped away Indian culture and traditions leaving behind uprooted and stressed people who turned to violence in an attempt to survive. As the fur trade moved west it left behind an even worse legacy: Where there once was a land full of life, inhabited by proud, unbridled, and honorable people, there now remained only barren lands inhabited by a people who were no longer self-sufficient and without hope. (2:227-232)

Without a doubt, the uncontrolled expansion of the fur trade and the eventual disregard for established practices directly contributed to the decline of many North American Indian nations.

RELIGION

Your emperor may be a great prince; I do not doubt it, seeing that he has sent his subjects so far across the waters; and I am willing to treat him as my brother. As for the pope of whom you speak, he must be mad to speak of giving away countries that do not belong to him. As for my faith, I will not change it. Your own god, as you tell me, was put to death by the very men he created. But my god still looks down upon his children.

ATAHUALPA,
Inca ruler's response to
hearing that Pope Alexander VI had
declared Peru to be the possession
of Spain, 1533 (1:131)

A discussion of beliefs and values would not be complete without examining Indian religious practices. Indian cultures developed their own concept of God and the universe. These religious concepts were very complex and represented much more than mere superstitions to the Indians as thought by the early Europeans. Columbus wrote after his

first encounter with the Arawaks of Hispaniola, "I believe that they would become Christians very easily, for it seemed to me that they had no religion." What he failed to realize was that the Arawaks had developed a complex belief system relating spiritual power to status and ancestry. They believed each individual possessed a personal guardian spirit, whose powers and strength were directly related to the status of the individual. Therefore, the spirits of the chiefs were the most powerful, and they served as gods of all the people those chiefs ruled. (2:120)

Native American religious beliefs varied as much then as religious beliefs vary today. The Huron fundamental belief was centered upon a supreme female deity who was assisted by other life-giving and life-sustaining gods. They also developed a profound philosophical view, proposing the duality of the human soul, which provided for two sides (for example good and evil) to every individual. Uniting one's soul was the end objective of existence. (1:172)

Most Indian religious beliefs were centered on one supreme being who created the world and man. Dr. Josephy confirms this view:

...most common origin stories...illustrate a close spiritual bond between the Indians and all of creation within their universe. The Creator, The Master of Life, the Great Spirit, Wakan Tanka--whatever terms the various Native American groups used--breathed life into humans and bound their spirits to those of all else in their universe. (2:11)

The origin tale of the Gabrielinos, an Indian tribe that was located in southern California in the seventeenth century, further supports this view:

Chinigchinich then proceeded to make a new people from clay, and they became the Indians of today. He placed these people in groups all over the country and gave them what they needed to survive. He gave them their languages and their customs and all was good. (1:120)

It is interesting to note that unlike the Christian religion in which man's harmonious existence with nature was destroyed due to the fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, most Indian cultures believed that it was possible, even necessary, for man to live in harmony with nature and others. There was a strong bond between the land and the people. Dr. Josephy states, "Because of their spiritual attachment, one gave life to the other, and it behooved humans to keep that attachment in balance and harmony by proper conduct and thoughts, lest it harm the people's well being." (2:11) This point can be further illustrated by the powerful influence of rituals on the lifestyles of early Native Americans:

Before "tribes" various parts of ancient America were peopled by loosely knit groups whose common identity was created and maintained during the celebration of defining rituals. These periodic celebrations, in which a whole community might join, were intended to renew the world and the connectedness of all living things by enacting the community's Origin Saga. Thus farmers celebrated harvest festivals like the Green Corn

rite of the Southeast or, in the Southwest, the Solstice rites of the Pueblos. Hunter-gatherers held ritual celebrations to welcome the arrival of fish runs, the harvest of acorns, or the shift from plant foods to hunting in the fall.

Ritual definition of identity served to unite people into congregations that often included communities from several major watersheds. (1:119)

Rituals are still an integral part of the Native American lifestyle. They still serve to unite tribal communities and educate Indian youth on their heritage and beliefs. These two factors have enabled the Native American culture to survive through the millennia. It is also apparent that religion could have offered an opportunity for the Europeans and Indians to meet on common ground. Mr. Miller highlights several commonalities that existed between Native American and European religious practices.

First, representatives of both sets of religious, priests and shamans, prayed or performed special rites to their respective gods for things needed by their people. Both religions believed in divine intervention or miracles. Christians believe (then and now) in the possibility of miracles--a special blessing handed down by God to fulfill a special need. Indians also asked their deities for signs of approval or kindness--rain after a drought, a cure for an illness or injury, a gift of food in hard times. The primary difference stems from the source of each religion's belief, the Christian relying on Church doctrine based on various interpretations of the Bible made by generations of scholars, and the Indian rooted in a profound connection with the land and all life. (1:177)

However, no common ground would ever be reached and the Europeans would seek to replace the Native American religions with Christianity just as they had attempted to do with the Moslem cultures during the crusades. Some Native Americans would become Christians while others would hold fast to their traditional beliefs. Some would die for their beliefs while others would adopt new ones while still carrying on their traditions and practices as they had for thousands of years.

For the Native Americans, religion and land was the cornerstone of their existence. These two elements had been combined to form a delicate balance which had been the basis of the Indian world view for thousands of years. The arrival of the Europeans upset this balance and started a chain of events that would eventually result in the erosion, decay, and finally ruin of many great Indian civilizations. With the loss of their land and persecution of their beliefs, the Indian way of life would be forever changed. According to Miller:

For the native peoples of America, the most prominent themes of the past five hundred years are likely to be, "They took our land" and, "Our religion was changed." For all practical purposes, these two themes, in native eyes, are one; the land and the spiritual life of the people who live on the land are the same. Religion and the land hold the people together. Thus native people feel most acutely and strongly any impact on the land, and any impact on religion. To America's indigenous people the forcing of their ancestors

from their lands and the European missionary effort were two sides of the same coin. (1:191)

However, the article goes on to state that some good did result from conversion of Indians to Christian beliefs. For example, whereas the theft of the land is seen as a harsh and unrecoverable catastrophe, by modifying their beliefs and adopting the foreign religion, many natives were able to survive the terrible years that followed the arrival of first Europeans. Many were able to keep their families and even their communities intact, some remaining on their lands--though these lands were significantly reduced. And, by converting to the new religion, the Indians received some recognition in this "new world" in which they now lived. Christian Indians had access to a variety of "privileges" such as trade and education that non-Christian Indians could not enjoy. (1: 191)

The Native American belief and value system was one that encompassed all aspects of the Indian world. It was a system that held the highest values of integrity and honor while promoting a deep respect for the individual, group, and environment in which they lived. It represented a combination of ideas and concepts that had evolved over thousands of years resulting in a philosophy which called for unity and respect toward all life and land. In summary, Mr. Miller says it well:

[As time passed,] they and the land fused and became one. From this unity, today came their continuing sense of being and the courage of their moral stands on ecology, the worth of the individual within a community, and the value of all life. From this bond also came their delight in difference and diversity.... Natives learned that just as the terrain, vegetation, and denizens of an area varied, so too did the human residents. (1:209)

It would benefit all of us to remember this valuable lesson.

ANCIENT STRUCTURES

Of all these wonders that I then beheld today all is overthrown and lost, nothing left standing.

BERNAL DIAZ,
Spanish Conquistador
After the destruction of Tenochtitlan (2:110)

We often forget that life is an evolutionary process. The old is replaced by the new in a never ending cycle of beginnings and endings. This holds as true for the development of Native American culture and society as it does for every other society. Very often the development of Indian civilization has been viewed as having been relatively constant until the arrival of the Europeans. This was not the case. As McNickle points out,

In the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys great burial mounds, representing vast communal efforts, were already abandoned and overgrown when first observed by white men early in the nineteenth century. In the Southwest, masonry houses comparable in

size to modern apartment blocks had fallen into ruin before the Spanish explorer Coronado entered the area in 1540. (3:27)

He goes on to say that,

Contrary to the impression often created by early commentators--and left unchallenged by most historians--native America was not frozen in a mold of custom and tradition.... The history of the New World occupation is one of movement, of growth and adaptation. The intrusion of the Europeans with their more varied culture, and the pressure for change exerted by trade goods, proselytizing, and space conquest, can be viewed as another occurrence in a long process whose beginnings were lost in the remote time. (3:106)

It is apparent that the examination of Indian society is invariably linked to the environment in which they existed. This can lead to the development of generalizations about Indian life and though being true for most, these characteristics may not apply to all. McNickle talks about this system of modeling Native American culture. He calls it the culture-area concept. In general, the system utilizes a model in which North America is segmented into some eight or nine geographical regions, each characterized by its specific way of life. According to this concept, a region like the Canadian northwest or California would be most likely occupied by groups of hunters, since the environment would cater to their development, given the abundance of wildlife. You could then generalize about the various aspects of their life like the camps in which they lived, tools and weapons, family structure, beliefs, and any number of other attributes that identify people as hunters. However, we should recognize that by making generalities we limit our ability to see things as they really are. By grouping everything together, we sometimes have the tendency to overlook a single fact or characteristic that is essential to achieving the basic understanding we seek. Not to mention that the development of generalities does a disservice to others because it no longer recognizes the uniqueness of the individual. Mr. McNickle agrees, "The generalizations were true, within limits, but they obscured the individual, the hunter who was first of all a man, and maybe the kind of hunter who tripped over his own feet in the woods." (3:27)

The culture-area concept does provide us with a tool for examining and categorizing the vast amount of information we have collected on Native American culture, but we must realize that the model has limitations and problems inherent in its design.

It should now be understood that the development of Indian society was an evolutionary process that occurred over the millennia. A rich diversity flourished from two broadly dispersed lifestyles: farmers who gathered some foods from the wild, and hunter-gatherers, who controlled their food sources to some extent. From these two basic forms, Native Americans accommodated themselves to various terrains in specialized ways. (1:113)

As the population increased and the ancient Indians began to spread throughout the vast continent of North America, cultural and physical variations began to appear as they

adapted to new environments. Those living along the coasts implemented sea-oriented cultures and supported their economy by their ability to harvest fish, shrimp, and other resources of the sea. In the forests of the east as well as California, the people learned to use fire to revitalize the land for new growth that would help to increase the population of animal life. In the great northern territories of Canada, snowshoes were used for travel by caribou hunters and mannequins were used to herd animals into corrals. In the harsh desert of the Great Basin, nomads, surviving on scarce vegetation and roots, pine nuts, and desert reptiles, would develop a stable lifestyle that would last until the arrival of non-Indian settlers in the nineteenth century. In Mexico and the fertile river valleys in the East, hunters and gatherers became part-time farmers. Below the Rio Grande, they learned how to grow corn, beans, and squash, while in the eastern regions they cultivated such edible plants as sunflowers, squash, sumpweed, and goosefoot. (2:17-18).

From these humble beginnings a wide variety of Indian civilizations would rise throughout the North American continent. Some would survive while others would fall, giving birth to a new and different ways of life. In the end, they all helped to lay the foundation for the cultures that would greet Columbus and other Europeans as they discovered this new land.

THE FIRST ONES

He who obeys the requirements is given caribou, and he who disobeys is not given caribou. If he wastes much caribou he cannot be given them, because he wastes too much of his food--the good things. And now, as much as I have spoken, you will know forever how it is. For so now it is as I have said. I, indeed, am Caribou Man. So I am called.

ATIK'WAPE'O
The Story of Caribou
Man (Naskapi) (1:33)

It has been previously stated that Native Americans could be found in all parts of North America approximately twelve thousand years ago. The oldest American Indians archaeologists can readily identify are called "Clovis" people, named for an archaeological site near Clovis, New Mexico. These sites contain thousands of artifacts of these people, such as fluted spear points, scraping and cutting tools of stone, and some well made tools of bone and ivory, circa 9500 B.C. Only a few small Clovis campsites have been found, most likely occupied only for brief periods of time, the majority located near water. Though there are no documented cultural norms, archaeologists have theorized about their society based upon information gathered from the caribou hunting Eskimo and the bison hunters of the Great Plains. These two societies appear to have existed under conditions similar to those experienced by the Clovis people. From examining these cultures, scientists believe they can develop an accurate portrait of Clovis life. Given their harsh environment, it follows that Clovis men and women faced extinction routinely. They lived close to and off of the land. One mistake and a hunter could suffer a critical injury or death, and his family was immediately at risk. They

competed for food with fierce predators who could just as easily hunt them for food.
(1:33)

Scientists also believe life centered on the family and, though capable of surviving alone, they chose to live in small informal groups, consisting of four to ten families. What leadership there was most likely fell to the most dominant male, who probably gained his authority from his accomplishments as a hunter and provider. The groups were very territorial and daily life was centered in a specific geographical area. Periodically, to aid in the growth and expansion of the tribes, there would be a group meeting of the various tribes. Here the members would talk, play games, gamble, exchange goods, and have social gatherings or ceremonies. It was also during this meeting that the young men would pick a mate from a different tribe and she would leave her family to join his. In this way, the men would remain on the land most familiar to them and ensure the survival of the tribe. (1:33)

Experiences, beliefs, and practices were passed among the men from generation to generation. One that was most likely passed through the years and undoubtedly helped to guarantee survival was the dedication to reciprocity. Regardless of who got the kill, or who harvested the plants, everyone was entitled to a share. Even the most skilled hunter sometimes failed and this practice of sharing increased the survival opportunity of everyone. Those who provided best and those who shared most willingly were honored. Then the ice and water began to recede and the Clovis way of life ended. (1:32-34) But the people survived, and it would be their descendants who would be the architects of great cultures like the Anasazi, Hadenosaunee, and Mississippians. These three cultures can serve as examples of the great diversity and rich heritage that is a part of the Native American experience.

LIFE IN THE DESERT

The whole Southwest was a House Made of Dawn. It was made of pollen and of rain. The land was old and everlasting. There were many colors on the hills and on the plain, and there was a dark wilderness on the mountains beyond. The land was tilled and strong and it was beautiful all around.

Southwest Indian Song (1:66)

The societies which developed in the arid and changing domain of the American Great Basin evolved from the earliest known people in America. The disappearance of glaciers and associated animal life made it necessary for the people to change the way they lived. The transition from nomadic hunters of mastodons to food gatherers and farmers was a slow process, lasting two or three thousand years. For the gatherers, this new life style was based on numerous survival skills such as fishing and the hunting of small animals and birds, but the key to long term survival was the gathering of edible, wild-growing foods. (2:54)

McNickle points out,

By about 8000 B.C. the people had not only learned enough about the plant life of the region to subsist themselves, but they had devised equipment to utilize wild foods. Great numbers of grinding stones (metates) are found in the caves and rock shelters occupied during that early period. Baskets were woven for seed gathering, winnowing, and storage. Watertight baskets were used for cooking by dropping hot stones into the water. (3:39)

Then changes in climate allowed the piñon pine to rapidly migrate from the southwest to the north approximately six thousand years ago. This tree was the source of the piñon nut which provided a high-bulk food and could be stored for two or three years. Gatherers developed a lifestyle based upon a seasonal movement pattern, often changing locations several times a year, with the piñon nuts serving as a primary food source. This lifestyle would remain unchanged until the arrival of the Europeans. (1:38)

Like the Paiute and Shoshone who followed them, the people of America's high desert developed other ingenious survival skills and were most efficient in the utilization of their resources, necessary traits if they were to survive in the severe environment. For example, jackrabbits were driven into long handmade nets of twisted plant fibers, as long as tennis nets of today. The women would cut the rabbit skins into continuous lengths and twist these into lengths of fur. A large rabbit might produce fifteen feet of fur ribbon, but the skins of more than one hundred jackrabbits might be required to make a single man's robe. Ingenuity and resourcefulness are the continuing trademarks of these early people. While excavating at Lovelock Cave in northwestern Nevada in 1924, archaeologists discovered a blanket made from the skins of six hundred meadow mice. It is hard to comprehend the patience required to trap, skin, cut the fur into tiny strips, join them into two hundred feet of mouse fur rope, and then sew the strips together. Although it is two thousand years old, this blanket is in perfect shape, still tightly woven and capable of providing protection from the high desert winter. (1:38-39)

Without a doubt, these early Native Americans must have possessed tremendous discipline and a never ending thirst for life in order to overcome the challenges of harsh desert life.

The cultural descendants of these ancient Indians are the modern Paiute and Shoshone people. Life in their communities, as for their ancestors before them, centered on the nuclear family. Men hunted as they always had, but the primary economic responsibility shifted to the women. The women still held the roles of companion and mother, but their foraging and gathering activities made them the principal providers. So, as the woman's economic role became firmly established, her status and sociopolitical power also increased. This is a pattern that was to be repeated in several major American Indian cultures within North America. The women became expert weavers and sometimes took over the responsibility of shaman. A woman might even have more than one husband if she was especially prosperous. Another significant change was that the brides no longer were required to move into the husband's home territory. Among the desert dwellers, the man commonly moved into his wife's camp, where she was familiar with the local resources. Even without agriculture, these foraging people would develop a culture which

would persist for thousands of years in an area many still consider to be a desolate and inhospitable land. (1:39)

Our religious teachings are based upon the proper care of our land and the people who live upon it. We must not lose the way of life of our religion.... We believe in that; we live it, day by day.... We the leaders of the traditional Hopi...want our way of life to continue on; for ourselves, for our children, and for their children who come after.....

Modern-day Bluebird chief,
Hopi Tribe (2:53)

In the southwest, agriculture eventually became a part of Native American society. Archaeologists agree that agricultural skills in the form of maize, squash, and bean cultivation entered the area from Mexico beginning about 1000 B.C. Scientists also agree that during the next 2,000 years, three primary civilizations evolved throughout the area, the Mogollon, Hohokams, and Anasazi. (3:34-37)

The Mogollon people were living in small villages located in the highlands which form the Arizona-New Mexico border along the upper Gila River. By 300 B.C. they had well established communities in houses built partly underground with wooden posts supporting a dirt roof. (3:35) They are most remembered for their legendary pottery known as Mimbres ware, named after the Mimbres Valley in New Mexico where the potters lived from approximately A.D. 750 to 1250. This pottery was painted with stylized human forms, birds, big horn sheep, etc., or precise geometric designs, and art critics and collectors have recognized it to be some of the most beautiful in the world. Mogollon beliefs required that the pottery be buried with the dead owner, and the pots were often "killed" with neat holes punched through the bottom, to symbolically release the spirits of the figures. (2:55) Sometime after 1400 A.D. the Mogollon culture merged into the cultures of neighboring areas and the people eventually vanished as a distinctive group. It has been suggested that they may have been the ancestors of the historic Zuñi tribe. (3:35)

During the same period a second civilization was also flourishing. The Hohokam people lived further downstream on the Gila River in the scorching Sonora Desert, and archaeologists are still debating their origins. It is not certain if the Hohokam migrated from Mexico or evolved from a local, non-agricultural people living in the area. What is certain, however, is that they were highly skilled farmers and engineers who introduced irrigation agriculture to this dry area in the west. They built hundreds of miles of canals diverting water from rivers to their fields of maize, beans, squash, and cotton near what is now Phoenix and Tucson. (2:55) By A.D. 800 the Hohokam had devised an elaborate canal system that enabled them to meet all their water needs. Some of the major canals were as much as twelve feet deep and eighteen feet wide. (3:35) The city of Phoenix currently uses a canal system which is almost completely superimposed on the early Hohokam plan for diverting water from the Salt River, a silent and inadvertent tribute to the skill and ability of those first Native American engineers. (1:64) The Hohokam established networks of trade with tribes in northern Mexico and the Gulf of California,

importing sea shells in exchange for turquoise, copper, and other items available in the interior. These shells were highly valued and the Hohokam craftsmen transformed them into personal ornaments and religious objects. (2:55) Like the Mogollon, the Hohokam culture declined, and by 1450 they had also disappeared as a distinct people.

Archaeologists have been unable to identify what caused the decline, perhaps drought or the inability of the soil to support further crop growth due to increased salinity. It is, however, believed by many that they were the forefathers of today's Pima and Papago tribes. (1:64)

The third and greatest of the southwestern civilizations would incorporate characteristics of the first two. It developed in the high desert of the Colorado Plateau in the high Four Corners country of southern Utah and Colorado, as well as northern Arizona and New Mexico. (2:56) The Anasazi, whose name has been given several translations ranging from "enemy ancestor," which has Mexican roots, to "ancient enemies," derived from the Navajo language, were the ancestors of the Pueblo Indians. The early Anasazi lived in underground houses, sunken homes with stone walls and wide, strong roofs, which provided excellent protection from the temperature extremes of the desert heat and bitter winter cold. As they became more accustomed to their environment, the Anasazi began to transform their above-ground storage buildings into living quarters, keeping the underground quarters as religious centers, known as kivas. These would become the primary locations for religious teachings, rituals, and meeting places for clans. The kiva was circular with a hole in the center which symbolized the sipapu, where they believed their ancestors had emerged into this world. Here the Anasazi leaders developed and implemented a theocratic society and a faith that have been a guide and protection for the Puebloan peoples even to today. Between A.D. 700 and 1000 they began construction of the distinctive multi-room apartment complexes that would replace their pit houses and give their descendants, the Pueblo Indians, their name. (2:56; 1:64)

In the Great Pueblo period, beginning circa 1050 A.D., the culture matured. One of the greatest features evidencing this maturity was the development of house architecture, exemplified in the cliff dwellings of the Mesa Verde district and Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon, a four story community of some 800 rooms, all under one roof. (3:37) Chaco Canyon is a phenomenon that has raised as many questions as it has answered. In 1848, Lieutenant James H. Simpson, an Army surveyor expressed his amazement when he first came upon the ruins of Chaco Canyon. He saw hundreds of rooms, with beautiful stonework, some three or four stories high, which formed huge sweeping arcs. A total of nine fully developed towns or "Great Houses," each with hundreds of rooms, located along a single nine-mile stretch of Chaco Canyon. Lieutenant Simpson believed that these huge towns could not possibly have been constructed by the ancestors of the Pueblo Indians, as he felt their building techniques were too primitive, and he named the ancient Toltec tribes of Mexico as the architects of Pueblo Bonito and the other Great Houses. Over the years, others would nominate additional prospective builders, including the Aztecs and even the Romans. Today archaeologists readily admit that the Anasazi were the builders responsible for the magnificent dwellings found throughout the region. Within the thirty-odd square miles, the canyon now contains more than 2,400 archaeological sites. (1:64)

It is apparent that Chaco Canyon was the center of the Anasazi civilization, a place where trades were concluded and spiritual pilgrimages came to an end. The Anasazi constructed more than four hundred miles of road and broad avenues leading to the canyon from the different regions. The roads were unique and distinctive, straight lanes that did not pass around obstructions but rather through or over them. Some of the best extending fifty miles in various directions. Signal stations were erected at distant intervals and fires were maintained to allow communication across the vast stretches of desert and provide a guide for travelers at night. In some areas they constructed causeways, and they cut stairways into sheer cliffs. The almost perfectly straight roads suggest that they were laid out, or "engineered," prior to construction, and the method of accomplishing this is still a mystery to the archaeologists. These roads carried the materials needed to build and maintain the Great Houses. It is estimated that during the peak of Anasazi civilization and during certain times of the year, these houses supported populations in excess of five thousand people. (2:58;1:71)

The greatest Anasazi architectural achievement was Pueblo Bonita. At its peak, this single building housed over a thousand residents in more than six hundred rooms. Craftsmen, merchants, and government and religious leaders and their families lived under a single roof. The central plaza was built as a great amphitheater with as many as five stories above the canyon floor. The very heart of Anasazi civilization, it was here that the commerce in turquoise vitalized and gave life to their empire. Considered more valuable than gold and jade by Mexican traders, this precious stone, cut and shaped into small tiles, was shipped back to merchant centers in the heart of Mexico, where it would then be transformed into creations for the rulers and royalty of the various Middle American kingdoms. (2:58-59)

From this trade, the Chacoans grew prosperous. The people started saving their wealth, accumulating vast amounts of material resources, and redistributing them to other locations under their control. Eventually a formal hierarchy evolved and took over Chaco. Social distinctions began to appear, separating those living in the Great Houses from those who lived in surrounding villages and towns. It became a religious and trade center rivaling any in the world at that time. By the eleventh century, the turquoise trade had evolved into a large regional network involving many of the surrounding towns and communities. The Anasazi believed that the key to spiritual and economic good fortune was to be found in turquoise. (1:70)

But unlike the enduring stone from which they carved their homes, the Anasazi lifestyle would not be able to stand the test of time. It is believed that around A.D. 1130 a series of droughts began which would eventually last over fifty years, causing critical water and food shortages. As had happened before, people began to return to areas that had abundant natural water sources. (2:59) Additionally, like many others to come after them, the Chacoans soon recognized the inherent risk of developing a society that was centered upon the acquisition and trade of a single resource. As the drought destroyed crops and the land became scorched, people began asking, "Who can eat turquoise?" As the drought continued, fewer and fewer people made the pilgrimage to Chaco. The Chacoans had nothing to offer but "worthless" stone. The bottom had dropped out of the turquoise

market and many Chacoans tried to trade the stone for food stuffs like maize and beans. By early in the twelfth century, the ritual center had shifted northward, toward the San Juan River. (1:77)

But, the Chacoans did not totally disappear. They had devised one of the most progressive and prosperous social systems in precontact America. Ritual and economic networks were built from independent communities who voluntarily pooled their strengths to reduce the possibility that any one of them would suffer natural or economic disaster while living in their precarious environment. This singular achievement should be recognized as a testimony to the strength of their unity and beliefs. The Chaco system had worked well for over 150 years. But when environmental changes caused the system to collapse, there was no panic, violence, or mass suicides. The towns were evacuated in an orderly manner. People took their personal belongings and other possessions that would serve them in their new life. The Chacoans simply developed a new set of rules by which to live. This act of will allowed them to shift their social and religious priorities to meet the challenges of survival in a changing world, just as Native Americans have been doing since they first appeared in North America. (1:76-77)

LAND OF THE FREE

Whenever the statesmen of the League shall assemble for the purpose of holding council, the Onondaga statesmen shall open it by expressing gratitude to their cousin statesmen, and greeting them, and they shall...offer thanks to the earth where men dwell, to the streams of water, the pools and the lakes, to the maize and the fruits....

From the great law of peace of the
league of the Hodenosaunee (2:44)

The Hodenosaunee or Iroquois, consisting of the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas, lived in the valleys, mountains, and along the lakes of upper New York State. The ancestors of the Iroquois, the Owasco, settled the region around A.D. 100 and became accomplished farmers. By A.D. 1000, they had been well established for centuries. Living in an area overflowing with natural resources, they hunted, fished, gathered nuts, berries, and other wild foods in addition to raising corn, beans, and squash. They lived in large, barreled-roofed, bark-covered longhouses, up to two hundred feet by twenty-five feet. Each longhouse could contain ten to twelve families, each with its own private space, and a shared fire. (2:44-45;1:97)

They developed a very complex social order, determining their heritage through the female line. The matrilineal clans were presided over by the oldest woman, called the "mother." Over the door of the longhouse was a representation of the clan's original ancestor. The children were taught by the elders, those who were needy and sick were tended, and there was a clear definition of community responsibilities. It was required that people marry outside of their clan, which tended to ensure that the whole tribe would continue to develop and maintain strong bonds. (1:97;2:45)

Like a few other societies of the day, it was the man who left home upon marriage to live in the longhouse of his wife. In fact, everything in Iroquois society was owned and controlled by the women, even the longhouse. The male retained only personal possessions, such as his clothes and weapons. The women held a vast amount of power and authority. The clan mothers appointed and dismissed all councilor-chiefs. If a male relative were to be killed in war, a woman could demand compensation in the form of an enemy captive. Husbands might be shabby and disorderly, but wives were expected to be well-dressed and respectable. (1:97)

Iroquois society developed this way because of the delegation of duties between men and women within the clans. The duties of the men primarily consisted of being hunters, traders, and warriors, and often these activities involved traveling great distances for long periods of time. Though a few younger men were left behind to guard and protect the longhouses, the majority of the daily community activities were the responsibility of the women, from nursing and raising the children to the planting and harvesting of crops, and the Iroquois women were very successful at their jobs and running the community. It is estimated that at the peak of their production ability, the women of the Seneca tribe brought in more than a million bushels of corn a year, plus tons of beans, squash, and sunflower seeds. The Iroquois society immediately prior to the arrival of the Europeans was experiencing a period of prosperity, peace, and development that had lasted for generations. (1:97)

Iroquois tribal history states, however, that generations before this their life was characterized by a never-ending cycle of raid and counterraid, death, and revenge between the five Hodenosaunee nations. The very essence of their civilization was being drained by continuous conflict and strife. According to legend, all efforts to break the cycle of violence had been repeatedly thwarted by an evil Onondaga war priest named Thadodaho. Deganawidah, a holy man who would become known as the Peace Maker, had a vision while sitting by a clear stream. In the vision he saw the Five Nations unified as one under the branches of a symbolic Tree of Great Peace. He went on to say that the Iroquois must live in harmony and justice by forming a government of law. His message reached the ears of a young Mohawk noble named Hiawatha who was so moved that he began spreading the message himself. (2:47-48;1:98)

Because of his speaking ability, Hiawatha became the principal spokesperson for peace, and legend has it that he developed the first wampum belt, a beaded system used to code information helpful in reciting the Great Law. Then Deganawida and Hiawatha went to each of the leaders of the five tribes and explained the intent and purpose of the law. It is said that all the chiefs recognized the undeniable truth and justice inherent in the new law, which was so simple. Even Thadodaho, the fiercest and most evil of all the warrior chiefs could not ignore its message. It is said that Hiawatha's words so moved him that he was transformed from a demon into a man, and finally he even became a champion of the Great Law. A great council was called of all the chiefs of the five Iroquois tribes. The new laws were stated and agreed to by each chief. Each of the Five Nations clasped the hands of other tribes, "so firmly that a falling tree should not sever them," and the Confederacy of the Iroquois was formed. (2:48-49;1:98)

Deganawida had devised thirteen laws that would enable the people and nations to live in harmony with each other, a society in which the needs of all would be met without having to resort to violence and needless bloodshed. To us, it might appear as a society operating under formalized principles and laws similar to the Ten Commandments and the U.S. Constitution combined. Each of the laws had its own moral structure:

In all of your...acts, self-interest shall be cast away.... Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people, and have always in view not only the present, but also the coming generations...the unborn of the future Nation. (2:48)

The Hedenosaunee not only developed a law by which to live, they went even further by restructuring the world view of their society, based on the traditional longhouse. They visualized the five nations as one gigantic longhouse stretching some 250 miles across New York state. The central corridor of the house was the Hedenosaunee Trail, the primary route of communication between the various tribes of the confederacy running east and west. The eastern edge of the territory was guarded by the Mohawks and the western by the Seneca. The Keepers of the Eastern and Western Doors respectively. The Onondagas, who lived in the center of the region, were called the Keepers of the Fire for all five nations of the Great Longhouse. (2:49-50)

The concept of having multiple states existing under one rule of law in which decisions and policy are established by the different groups achieving consensus should be readily identifiable as a form of federal and representative democracy. The Grand Council of the Iroquois nation met at the capital of Onondaga. Decisions were made by the representatives of each nation, who first reached consensus among themselves, then they would confer with their respective counterparts, the Mohawks and the Senecas as "elder brothers," and the Oneidas and Cayugas as "younger brothers." Once a consensus was reached within these two groups, the elder brothers would pass their decision to the younger brothers. If the younger brothers agreed with the decision of the elder ones then the permanent council leader, an Onondaga, would announce consensus, but if the younger brothers could not agree with the decision of the elder brothers the deciding vote would be cast by the Onondaga, breaking the deadlock. (2:50)

The Hodenosaunee system of checks and balances would serve as a model that would influence seventeenth and eighteenth century white scholars and thinkers as they sought to develop more efficient and just ways to govern their people. It is said that Benjamin Franklin drew inspiration for his Albany Plan of Union for the British colonies from the example of the Iroquois League. The founding fathers of the United States studied the writings of political philosophers describing the League and its operating methods. It is speculated that this had an indirect influence not only on the union of the colonies, but on the actual formation of our government in 1789. (2:52)

Looking at how Congress reaches agreement on bills through compromise meetings of the House and Senate members, one cannot help but notice how it resembles the way that the Iroquois League operated. However, as historian Dr. Joseph points out,

The new United States did not go as far as the Hodenosaunees, for, unlike the Indians, it did not accord equality to all men and both genders among its people. While the United States and other nations of the world struggled during later generations to rectify such inequities, the Great Law of the Hodenosaunee remained unchanged and still guides the Grand Council of the People of the Longhouse--one of the world's oldest continuing democracies--to this day. (2:50-53)

ENIGMATIC MOUNDS

October 1540: The Cacique was at home, in a piazza.... One of [his men] shaded him from the sun with a circular umbrella.... It formed the standard of the Chief, which he carried into battle. His appearance was full of dignity: He was tall of person, muscular, lean, and symmetrical. He was the suzerain of many territories, and of a numerous people, being equally feared by his vassals and the neighboring nations.

Recorded by a Portuguese knight
(name unknown) in his journal, upon
encountering native royalty at Tascaluza
(central Alabama) (1:102)

Many of the eastern and southern Indian societies, including the Iroquois, have their roots in one of the least known, yet intriguing, societies that ever existed, the Mississippians. This term is used to describe the late precontact societies that extended from as far west as present-day Oklahoma to the eastern seaboard and from as far north as Wisconsin to the Gulf of Mexico. (1:100-101)

This culture appeared to have developed along the bottomlands of the middle Mississippi and the lower Ohio, Illinois, and Tennessee rivers. They would be remembered as the Temple Mound Builders for the religious structures that rested upon the huge, flat-topped earthen mounds they constructed. (2:35)

Sometime between 1000 and 1500 B.C., Indian societies in middle America developed a preoccupation with death. This resulted in the building of thousands of earthen mounds whose magnificent shapes and sizes often required massive cooperative efforts. The Indians would bury their dead in these mounds along with ornaments, tools, and other personal belongings. This burial practice, based upon simple religious beliefs, was the foundation upon which the Adena culture evolved. While the earliest mounds were found in the Ohio Valley, it is believed that this practice spread from there into Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The Adena still hunted and gathered wild foods while domesticating local plants and establishing both permanent and semi-permanent villages. Even though they possessed adequate resources, the Adena communities remained limited in size and growth. However, their skill and ability continued to increase allowing them to produce large burial mounds and circular earthworks as well as numerous useful and artistic objects made of mica and copper. (3:30;2:36)

The integration of maize farming into Adena society about A.D. 200 seemed to facilitate growth and vitality among the Adena people for reasons unknown. This paved the way for an era of prosperity and expansion from which a new and more elaborate culture known as the Hopewell would rise to prominence. Their influence would cover an immense area ranging from their place of origin on the lower Illinois River, to Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, eastward to Pennsylvania and New York, and as far south as Florida and Louisiana. (3:30) In a complexity which far exceeded that of the Adena culture, the Hopewellian civilization built large ceremonial centers, with elaborately constructed walls, containing conical or dome-shaped burial mounds up to thirty feet or more in height and two hundred feet in circumference. (2:36) Another significant achievement of the Hopewellians was their extensive trade network. The so-called "Hopewellian Interaction Sphere" enabled them to obtain resources from almost anywhere on the continent. Whether it was copper from the Great Lakes, tortoise shells from the Gulf of Mexico, mica from North Carolina, pipestone from Ohio or obsidian from Yellowstone, they were available for use by the skilled Hopewellian artisans to make the ceremonial and personal items often buried with their owners. (1:83)

Excavation of the mounds and other sites gives a strong indication that Hopewellian society was highly developed with a specific social order, with rulers whose power, authority, and privilege were based upon heritage. Research confirms a strong religious system; specialized occupations such as artists, traders, and metalworkers; and organized supervision of mass labor efforts. (2:37) Another point of view speculates that the Hopewellians represented a period in Native American history that was not characterized by a particular culture or political power. Instead, it was the first North American pan-Indian religion. For the first time, people who did not possess a common language or culture were drawn together by a common set of beliefs and symbols. (1:82) Whatever the view, all will agree that the Hopewellians had a lasting impact upon the development of Native American society throughout middle and eastern North America.

PYRAMIDS ON THE MISSISSIPPI

The bright light of the Hopewellian culture dimmed after A.D. 500. Like so many other cultures before, the specific causes of decline are not known. Beliefs and attitudes concerning the dead changed. Less emphasis was placed on the including of riches in the burial mounds. Precious copper and obsidian was fashioned into much needed tools rather than being crafted into gifts for the dead. Instead, for a short period of time, it appears that the dead were honored by the building of massive effigy mounds. These were huge earthen figures of oversized bears, birds, and serpents that began to appear across the northeastern landscape. Along the Iowa-Wisconsin border today there are over twenty-seven such mounds that have survived. (1:85)

What was to be known as the Mississippian culture would be centered along a portion of the Mississippi River between St. Louis, Missouri, and Natchez, Mississippi. This society would bring forth a new and powerful lifestyle that would spread throughout eastern America. (3:31) Great urban centers like Etowah (Georgia), Moundville (Alabama), Cahokia (Illinois), and Spiro (Oklahoma) would be ruled by leaders who were sanctioned

and revered by thousands of farming people who lived in hillside villages and farmsteads. (1:100) The Mississippians developed a culture with an endurance and continuity few others would match. They would have a legacy which spanned nine hundred years. (2:40)

Their way of life centered upon the major ceremonial centers identified above. Each center contained huge earthen mounds, topped by temples or homes in which the rulers or religious leaders lived. These mounds were significantly bigger than the ones previously built by the Adena or Hopewellian cultures and did not always serve as burial sites. Instead, they were the locations of public rituals and spectacles. (2:40) The Mississippian life style was also characterized by very long political cycles. Regional communities accepted the rule and leadership of a specific chief. These communities remained largely independent but would occasionally form alliances due to the extensive economic networks they shared and family ties. If conflict between rival communities resulted in war, tradition allowed the victorious chief to exact tribute and allegiance from the defeated foes while allowing them to retain their lands. Upon the death of the chief, these alliances would fragment once again into individual towns until someone else would take up the reins of central leadership. (1:102)

The Mississippians, like their Hopewellian predecessors, established tremendous lines of communications utilizing the preponderance of waterways that ran throughout the empire. Although most of the empire was not in direct contact with the oceans, it did not preclude them from acquiring many exotic items. Sea shells and freshwater pearls were commonly used for decorations and in paying tribute to the dead. (1:101) Additionally they were able to obtain pottery, weaving, and copper from the Great Lakes area; obsidian from the Yellowstone country in the Far West; mica and crystal from the Appalachians; gold and silver from Canada; and conch shells from the Gulf of Mexico. (2:40) Mr. McNickle points out that archaeologists estimate the trading empire established by the Mississippians was

...larger than the combined area of France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Greece, Denmark, Romania, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Portugal, Luxembourg, and Bulgaria. [The distance traveled along these routes] was greater than that from London to Constantinople, from Madrid to Moscow, or from Paris to Cairo. (6:13-14)

Located at the heart of this vast trading empire was the greatest of all Mississippian ceremonial centers, Cahokia.

Cahokia was about three miles east of present-day St. Louis, Missouri. Sometime between A.D. 600 and 800 people started to live there. This city was started before the Holy Roman Empire was founded, and persisted through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Europe. (6:11) This location was perfect because it was near the center of the continent and provided access to major waterways. Jack Weatherford, in his book, *Native Roots* states,

Ancient Cahokia arose where it did for much the same reason that St. Louis arose, because both straddle a major nexus on the Mississippi River.... Cahokia sits at the continental hub of North America. It was an ideal place for trade, commerce, and communications. . . . Virtually no other spot on this planet can claim a more favorable location for long-distance travel by river in every direction. (6:12-13)

And so, out of humble beginnings would grow one of the greatest cities ever to exist in early America. Scientists calculate that Cahokia was home to over ten thousand people at the height of the Mississippian culture, and the city was surrounded by thousands more who lived in neighboring villages along the bottomlands of the Mississippi River. (2:41)

Cahokia was a walled city which covered an area of five square miles. It contained over a hundred of the large and small pyramids and earthen mounds for which the Mississippians are known. It was home to a variety of specialists who met the needs of an elite class of war chiefs and political and religious officials and their families. (2:41) It is suggested that a social hierarchy existed in which farmers and laborers held a status distinct from artisans, priests, and a ruling class. (3:32)

In the eighteenth century, as the Europeans were finishing the exploration of the lower Mississippi country, they came upon a regal Indian atop a magnificent mound. He was carried on a litter and was honored as a god. He was the ruler of Cahokia, called the "Great Sun" of the Natchez nation, and was the last major mound builder of the Mississippian experience. He and his family lived on the flattened top of Cahokia's largest mound, some ten stories high with a base far larger than any pyramid in Egypt or Mexico. (2:41) It still covers some 16 acres, rests on a base 1,037 feet long and 790 feet wide, with a total volume of approximately 21,690,000 cubic feet. The pyramid of Khufu (or Cheops), the largest in Egypt, has a base of 756 feet on each side. Not until the building of modern airplane hangers, the Pentagon, and twentieth century skyscrapers was this pyramid rivaled in size. Today it is called "Monks Mound." The name is not derived from the ancient Indian priests or rulers who lived on it, but from Christian Trappist monks who owned it in the nineteenth century. (6:9-10)

Cahokia survived during the centuries that passed while other nations and civilizations around the world rose and fell. Not much more is known about the Cahokian society, because no Indian record was written and no European explorer saw the great city at its zenith. By the time Spanish explorers arrived in the sixteenth century, the culture had already evaporated into the mists of time. (6:14) The once great metropolis which rested on the Mississippi had become a ghost city of overgrown mounds. It is possible that this large urban center had outgrown its ability to provide food for its people, forcing the people to migrate. (2:42) Whatever the case, the pyramids of Cahokia still stand today and serve as another testament to the skill, ingenuity, and culture of pre-contact Native Americans. But, the passing of Cahokia did not signal the end of the Mississippian civilization. Its influences had spread out among numerous other Indian societies.

The Europeans would find many mound building nations still thriving throughout the south, though none would rival Cahokia in scope or sophistication. These would include

the Timucuas, Cherokees, Coosas, Muskokees, Mobiles, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Quapaws, and many others whose heritage flowed from the heart of the mighty Mississippi River and would be forever connected to the great city called Cahokia. (2:42-43)

Still, some Mississippian beliefs live on in the practices of the southeastern Indians of today. Practices like the puskita, or Green Corn, ceremony of renewal and thanksgiving as well as the Black Drink ceremony, which confers spiritual purification upon its participants, can be traced back to their origins within the Mississippian religious culture. Just as the Mississippi river flows uninterrupted so do these cultural practices continue among the descendants of the Mississippian culture. (1:103-105)

There are a vast number of Native American cultures that evolved throughout pre-contact North America. We would be hard pressed to number the times that life has taken hold, flourished, and then returned to the earth. This is but a brief glimpse of key elements of early American Indian culture that, when combined with European influences, formed the basis for the development of today's Indian society. The one underlying theme which runs as a continuous thread interwoven through the tapestry of Indian culture is the unity of all life and the respect that this belief nurtures in each individual. As Mr. Miller so eloquently describes it,

All these diversified lifestyles depended on close, careful, and reverential relationships with the environments that supported them. Everywhere, people recognized that life lived off life.... Each lifestyle--sedentary farmer, nomadic hunter-gatherer, and everything in between--had different social and religious expressions, but all were based in the life-giving source of the natural world. (1:114)

REFLECTIONS

There is no "better" or "worse," only different. That difference has to be respected whether it's skin color, way of life, or ideas.

KOTE KOTAH,
Chumash (1:108)

This quotation provides a basic premise that each of us can reflect upon. If we accept this premise, then we are that much closer to seeing people for who they are and not for "what" they appear to be. Had the early Europeans been able to do this, they would have seen more than "mere savages" living in America upon their arrival. Unfortunately, they, like many of us were blinded by prejudices and judgmental thinking. They were also influenced by personal expectations of what America held for them. Mr. Weatherford, in his book *Native Roots*, puts it well when he says, "The settlers coming into America believed that the land contained no civilizations, so they steadfastly saw none." He quotes Alexis de Tocqueville who epitomized the common European view in his treatise, *Democracy in America*:

North America was inhabited only by wandering tribes, who had no thought of profiting by natural riches of the soil; that vast country was still, properly speaking, an empty continent, a desert land awaiting its inhabitants. (6:17)

Mr. Weatherford goes on to say that in the eyes of De Tocqueville and the rest of Europe, the Indians had merely "occupied without possessing" America. They were prevented from developing a civilization by their "implacable prejudices, their uncontrolled passions, their vices, and still more, perhaps, their savage virtues." (6:17)

It stands to reason that a commonality to bridge the gap between the two cultures would never be found without the desire to look for one. And so today there still exists a void between Native Americans and non-Native Americans that has spanned over five hundred years. This gulf has prevented us from having access to a very valuable resource: the knowledge, experience, and insight that the Native American culture has gained over the past ten thousand years concerning this land we call America. Dr. Josephy supports this point when he says that by denying the value of Indian histories and cultures, we have "turned our backs on thousands of years of Indian learning and experience with the American land, and on the enormous richness and diversity of Indian spiritual and creative life." (1:20)

This paper is written with the hope that it will encourage each of us to recognize that we do have a commonality with Native Americans. That commonality is rooted in the struggles, achievements, successes, and rich experiences of those who came before us, regardless of nationality, whose sacrifice and vision made our nation what it is today. Each of us has traveled along a different path to get where we are today and yet, from this point on, it is up to us to decide whether we remain on separate paths or walk united along a common one toward a future which has the potential to exceed our greatest hopes. The first thousand generations of American Indian history was a chronicle of adapting, problem-solving, and above all else, surviving. These are qualities that we all need to develop as our nation prepares to enter the 21st Century. Let us close with the full Chumash quotation which opened this section dealing with respect for differences:

There is no "better" or "worse," only different. That difference has to be respected whether it's skin color, way of life, or ideas. The Chumash have a story about this. It begins with a worm who is eaten by a bird. The bird is eaten by a cat whose self-satisfaction is disrupted by a mean-looking dog. After devouring the cat, the dog is killed by a grizzly bear who congratulates himself for being the strongest of all. About that time comes a man who kills the bear and climbs a mountain to proclaim his ultimate superiority. He ran so hard up the mountain that he died at the top. Before long the worm crawled out of his body.

KOTE KOTAH,
Chumash (1:108)

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APPENDIX #1

NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES

This appendix contains a collection of Native American quotations, speeches, and experiences that have been noted throughout the centuries. They offer insight into the essence of the American Indian perspective on a variety of issues. Some have their origins far in the past, while others happened recently. They may help to enlighten us about the Native American people and their culture.

ON CHANGE

The first speech is extracted from the book, *Brave are My People*, by Frank Waters. Mr. Waters tells us it was given by Chief Seattle of the Duwamish tribe, for whom the city of Seattle, Washington, is named. Chief Seattle, upon agreeing to sign the Port Elliot Treaty, by which the Duwamish tribe gave up its lands in the Puget Sound region and accepted confinement on a reservation, made the following speech before Isaac Stephens, governor of the Territory of Washington, in 1854. He states that Chief Seattle was a great speaker and skilled diplomat. Born in 1786, he died in 1866 at the age of eighty, one year after the city named for him passed a law making it illegal for Indians to live in Seattle. Here is what many consider to be the greatest of all Indian orations. (5:181)

Yonder sky that has wept tears of compassion on our fathers for centuries untold, and which to us appears changeless and eternal, may change. Today is fair. Tomorrow it may be overcast with clouds. My words are like the stars that never change. Whatever Seattle says, the great chief at Washington can rely upon with as much certainty as he can upon the return of the sun or the seasons.

The White Chief says that the Big Chief in Washington sends greetings of friendship and goodwill. This is kind of him, for we know he has little need of friendship in return. His people are many, like the grass that covers the vast prairies. My people are few, and resemble the scattering trees of a storm-swept plain. . . .

Your God is not our God. . . . We are two distinct races with separate origins and separate destinies. There is little in common between us. To us the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground. You wander far from the graves of your ancestors and seemingly without regret. Your religion was written on tablets of stone by the iron finger of your God so that you would not forget it. The Red Man could never comprehend nor remember it. Our religion is the traditions of our ancestors--the dreams of our old men given them in the solemn hours of the night by the Great Spirit, and the visions of our sachems; and it is written in the hearts of our people.

Your dead cease to love you and the land of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of the tomb and wander way beyond the stars. They are soon forgotten and never return. Our dead never forget the beautiful world that gave them being. . . .

Day and night cannot dwell together. The Red Man has ever fled the approach of the White Man, as the morning mist flees before the morning sun. However, your proposition seems fair and I think that my people will accept it and will retire to the reservation you offer them. Then we will dwell apart in peace.

It matters little where we pass the remnants of our days. They will not be many. A few more moons, a few more winters--and not one of the descendants of the mighty hosts that once moved over this broad land or lived in happy homes, protected by the Great Spirit, will remain to mourn over the graves of a people once more powerful and hopeful than yours. But why should I mourn at the untimely fate of my people? Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, like the waves of the sea. It is the order of nature, and regret is useless. Your time of decay may be distant, but it will surely come; for even the White Man, whose God walked and talked with him as friend with friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny....

Every part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove, has been hallowed by some sad or happy event in days long vanished. Even the rocks which seem to be dumb and dead as they swelter in the sun along the silent shore, thrill with memories of stirring events connected with my people. The very dust upon which you now stand responds more lovingly to their footsteps than to yours, because it is rich with the blood of our ancestors and our bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch. Even the little children who lived here and rejoiced for a brief season, will love these somber solitudes and at eventide greet shadowy returning spirits.

When the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the White Men, these shores shall swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe. And when your children's children think themselves alone in the field, the

store, the shop, upon the highway, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone.

At night when the streets of your cities and villages are silent, and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled and still love this beautiful land. The White Man will never be alone.

Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds. (5:181-183)

ON EDUCATION

Education was a two-edged sword. While learning to read, write, and function in "white" society was a tremendous asset, it had damaging side effects. The Indians tended to lose their identity and self-esteem as they were integrated into a system which did not acknowledge their history or culture. As Mr. Josephy explains it, "Without self-esteem and a sense of their identity, thousands of Indian school graduates, still alienated from, or rebuffed by, white society and feeling insecure as Indians, fell between two worlds, failing as a 'white,' and no longer feeling comfortable on a reservation." (2:436)

It is important to understand what the other person considers valuable. As a result of a meeting between the grand council of several Virginia tribes and the British commissioners in 1744 an Indian spokesman made the following statement. During this meeting, the British had urged the Indians to send their children to the College of William and Mary, established for the education of American Indians.

We know that you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in these colleges, and that the maintenance of our young, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced that you mean to do us good by your proposal, and we thank you heartily; but you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same as yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young men were formerly brought up at the colleges in your northern provinces. They were instructed in all your sciences; but when they came back to us, they were bad runners; ignorant of every means of living in the woods; unable to bear either cold or hunger; knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, nor kill an enemy; spoke our language imperfectly; were neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor councilors; they were totally good for nothing.... We are nonetheless obliged by your kind offer, though we decline accepting it; and to show you our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them. (3:113-114)

Almost 150 years later, we see the situation has not changed as Sun Elk, of Taos Pueblo, returns to the reservation from a boarding school in the east:

It was a warm summer evening when I got off the train at Taos station. The first Indian I met, I asked him to run out to the pueblo and tell my family I was home. The Indian couldn't speak English, and I had forgotten all my Pueblo language.... Next morning the governor of the pueblo and the two war chiefs...came into my father's house. They did not talk to me; they did not even look at me.... The chiefs said to my father, "Your son who calls himself Rafael has lived with the white men. He has been far away.... He has not....learned the things that Indian boys should learn. He has no hair.... He cannot even speak our language. He is not one of us." (2:436)

Another problem that existed in the education system stemmed from the negative manner in which it often portrayed the Indians. This often had a traumatic and damaging effect on the self-image of the young Indian students:

Did I want to be an Indian? After looking at the pictures of the Indians on the warpath--fighting, scalping women and children, and Oh! such ugly faces. No! Indians are the mean people--I'm glad I'm not an Indian, I thought. Each day stretched into another endless day, each night for tears to fall. "Tomorrow," my sister said. Tomorrow never came. And so the days passed by, and the changes slowly came to settle within me.... Gone were the vivid pictures of my parents, sisters and brothers. Only a blurred vision of what use(d) to be. Desperately, I tried to cling to the faded past which was slowly being erased from mind.

MERTHA BERCIER,
Chippewa Student at Eastern Boarding School,
ca. 1900 (2:434)

I went back to school in the fall.... We read a history book about "the savages." The pictures were in color. There was one of a group of warriors attacking white people--a woman held a baby in her arms. I saw hatchets, blood dripping, feathers flying. I showed the picture to the Sister. She said, "Rose Mary, don't you know you're Indian?" I said, "No, I'm not." She said, "Yes, you are." I said, "No!" And I ran behind a clump of juniper trees and cried and cried.

ROSE MARY (SHIGOBE) BARSTOW, (Ojibwa), 1976 (1:356)

ON RELIGION AND PRAYER

It is a strange thing that since prayer has come into our cabins, our former customs are no longer of any service; and yet we shall die because we give them up.... I have seen the time when my dreams were true; when I had seen Moose or Beavers in sleep, I would take some. When our Soothsayers felt the enemy coming, that came true; there was preparation to receive them. Now, our dreams and our prophecies are no longer true--prayer has spoiled everything for us. (1:174)

ALGONQUIAN COUNCIL, ca. 1642

A Seneca, Sagoyewatha (He Who Keeps Them Awake), known to the whites as Red Jacket, was a noted orator and defender of Indian traditions. He struggled to hold off the missionaries, and on one occasion made the following contemptuous speech to a representative of the Boston Missionary Society, who was overeager in an attempt to convert the Senecas to Christianity:

Brother, we have scarcely a place left to spread out blankets; you have got our country, but are not satisfied; you want to force your religion upon us.... Brother, you say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit; if there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why do not all agree, as you can all read the book?....

We are told that your religion was given to your forefathers, and has been handed down from father to son. We also have a religion which was given to our forefathers, and has been handed down to us their children. We worship that way. It teacheth us to be thankful for all the favors we receive; to love each other; and to be united. We never quarrel about religion.

Brother, the Great Spirit has made us all; but he has made a great difference between his white and red children; he has given us a different complexion, and different customs.... Since he has made so great a difference between us in other things, why may we not conclude that he has given us a different religion?....

Brother! We do not wish to destroy your religion, or take it from you. We only want to enjoy our own. (2:283)

When we arrived at the mission, they locked me in a room for a week; the father made me go to his habitation and he talked to me...telling me that he would make me a Christian...and Cunnur, the interpreter, told me that I should do as the father told me, because now I was not going to be set free, and it would go very bad with me if I did not consent to it.... One day they threw water on my head and gave me salt to eat, and...told me that now I was a Christian and that I was called Jesus: I knew nothing of this, and I tolerate it all because in the end I was a poor Indian and did not have recourse but to conform myself and tolerate the things they did with me.

JANITIN,
a Kamia Indian seized and taken
to the Dominican mission at San Miguel,
1878. (1:276)

Once there was an Indian who became a Christian. He became a very good Christian; he went to church, and he didn't smoke or drink, and he was good to everyone. He was a very good man. Then he died. First he went to the Indian hereafter, but they wouldn't take him because he was a Christian. Then he went to Heaven, but they wouldn't take let him in--because he was an Indian. Then he went to Hell, but they wouldn't admit him there

either, because he was so good. So he came alive again, and he went to the Buffalo Dance and the other dances and taught his children to do the same thing. (1:342)

ANONYMOUS, (Fox)

ON TRUTH AND HONESTY

Sarah Winnemucca, or Tocmetone (meaning Shell Flower) in her native tongue, was a member of the Paiute Tribe. She was a remarkable Indian woman who published a book in 1883 entitled, *Life Among the Piutes*. This book detailed the sufferings of her people, the Paviotso Paiute of northern Nevada. Her family had been a part of the "opening of the West"; in the mid -1840s her grandfather, the first Winnemucca (most likely meaning "One Moccasin"), escorted Captain John C. Fremont into California through the Sierras. She was very intelligent and possessed excellent language skills. Because of her abilities, she spent her life trying to earn support for her people with government officials and the general public. Eventually, she began to follow the East Coast lecture circuit arousing support for her people. However, she was never able to really earn recognition and support for her people from the government. She died of tuberculosis in 1891 while living in Montana . In her 1883 autobiography she wrote,

It is true that my people sometimes distrust me, but that is because words have been put into my mouth which have turned out to be nothing but idle wind. Promises have been made to me in high places that have not been kept, and I have had to suffer for this in the loss of my people's Confidence..... My people are ignorant of worldly knowledge, but they know what love means and what truth means.... They do not know anything about the history of the world, but they can see the Spirit-Father in everything. The beautiful world talks to them of their Spirit-Father. They are innocent and simple, but they are brave and will not be imposed upon. (1:357)

In order to become sole masters of our land they relegated us to small reservations as big as my hand and make us long promises, as long as my arm; but the next year the promises were shorter and got shorter every year until now they are the length of my finger, and they keep only half of that.

CHIEF PIAPOT, CREE, 1895 (1:301)

ON SHARING

There are many things to be shared with the Four Colors of humanity in our common destiny as one with our Mother the Earth. It is this sharing that must be considered with great care by the Elders and the medicine people who carry the Sacred Trusts, so that no harm may come to people through ignorance and misuse of these powerful forces.

Resolution of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the
Traditional Elders Circle, 1980. (1:447)

