



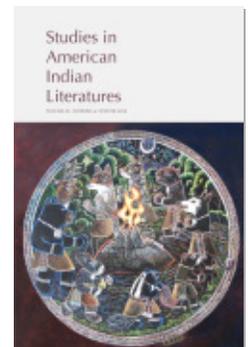
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Neither Chief Nor Medicine Man: The Historical Role of the “Intellectual” in the American Indian Community

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Neither Chief Nor Medicine Man

The Historical Role of the “Intellectual” in the
American Indian Community

DAVID MARTÍNEZ

Calling American Indian writers and activists “intellectuals,” particularly those who distinguished themselves with English-language publications appealing to a broad audience, is a relatively recent phenomenon. At least it is recent when considered within the scope of Indigenous people’s history in North America. Thus, the emergence of the American Indian intellectual requires an account of its historical origins, in addition to a critical analysis of the appropriateness of describing individuals as “intellectuals” who never described themselves as such.¹ Nevertheless, the term *intellectual*, however problematic, recurs in an array of books and articles, not to mention coursework, being produced in the American Indian/Native American studies community. For example, I make a substantial case for regarding Indigenous writers as “intellectuals” in my 2011 anthology *The American Indian Intellectual Tradition: An Anthology of Writings from 1772 to 1972*, in which I assert: “A much overlooked part of intellectual history in the United States is the American Indian tradition, which is generally regarded as having begun with Samson Occom, a Mohegan minister born in 1723” (ix). The volume contains writings of nearly thirty intellectuals altogether, representing nearly as many tribal groups, which, while far from being an exhaustive survey of American Indian nonfiction writers, nonetheless makes it abundantly clear that the Indigenous writer as a purveyor of knowledge and ideas is a meaningful part of contemporary American Indian society. Not long before the appearance of my anthology, Bernd C. Peyer did a remarkable job of documenting Indigenous intellectual history in two books: *American Indian Nonfiction: An Anthology of Writings, 1760s–1930s* and “*The Thinking Indian*”: *Native American Writers, 1850s–1920s* (both published in 2007). The latter complemented Peyer’s historical discourse on pre-1860 Indian

writers titled *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America*, which he published a decade earlier, not long after Robert Allen Warrior released *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions* (1994). Warrior's book, although it is not the first to use the nomenclature "American Indian intellectual," is nonetheless the one that continues to influence the emergent field of American Indian intellectual history. What follows is an analytical history of the intellectual in the American Indian community, in which writing is conjoined with political awareness of the "Indian problem" and a desire to advocate for Indian rights. More important, the Indigenous intellectual is seen as forging his or her identity outside the confines of academia, thriving instead along the margins of tribal society, where one may be acknowledged as a relative and tribal member yet communicate effectively in a non-Indigenous language, in which one has to take all of the risk and responsibility for representing one's tribe to an audience completely alien to the world in which one grew up.² Maintaining this connection to one's peoplehood without giving in to the dominant society's preconceptions of Indians is one of the more challenging obstacles to getting one's Indigenous perspective acknowledged by others.

In one sense the term *intellectual* has earned validity today as an idiom in Indigenous scholarship on the basis of having become a convenient way of describing a culturally, historically, and philosophically diverse range of writers and thinkers. As such, it has practical value for scholars attempting to research and explicate the thoughts of any Indigenous writers writing about topics and in genres that may be regarded as peripheral to the speeches, lectures, and oral traditions of one's home community. At the same time, *intellectual* is a foreign word imposed upon individuals who never described their roles as writers and speakers in such elitist terms. Consequently, one can argue that *intellectual* signals a colonized mind more than it evokes an Indigenous perspective.³ Nevertheless, if one eliminates the word from the scholarly discourse on American Indian writers and thinkers, where does that leave one? Ultimately, one has to put *intellectual* under erasure or *sous rature*, just as Jacques Derrida was compelled to do with the archaic language of metaphysics.⁴ Highly inadequate, *intellectual* is an old word suggestive of ivory towers, scholarly culture, and an intelligentsia, all of which are non-Indigenous. Yet the term is necessary for affirming that Indigenous writers are as capable as their European or American counterparts of profound insights expressed in eloquent prose.

In general, tribal languages did not possess a word for “writing” per se, though many did adapt older terms—typically ones signifying drawing or picture making—to describe the peculiar markings on paper that settler populations brought with them, and which was a prominent part of their idea of “civilization.”⁵ So, then, how to talk about the writer and writing in an Indigenous context? In a colloquial sense *intellectual* is simply another name for “educated Indian,” which historically meant having obtained an “education” at a “white man’s school” away from one’s language and cultural traditions. As such, the emergence of Indigenous intellectuals is integral to the metamorphoses that all Indigenous communities have undergone as a consequence of Euro-American expansionism, which included the appearance of Christian converts and Indian police, army scouts, ranchers, farmers, and day laborers, not to mention Indian Bureau employees. With this in mind, Indigenous intellectuals were important at making sense out of the maelstrom of changes that tribes endured as their sovereignty and individual rights were repressed, as they were systematically forced onto reservations overseen by the military and a federal bureaucracy. Indigenous intellectuals have, in response to this predicament, articulated the needs and rights of the American Indian community, as well as promoted what they regarded as necessary political and social reforms in Indian-US relations. On the latter point, it should be acknowledged that Indigenous intellectuals often advocated for ideas and proposals that have been regarded as controversial by both their contemporaries and descendants in the American Indian community. For example, as Peyer documents, many of the most prominent personages of the Antebellum Indigenous literary community were unashamedly Christian, who actively sought the conversion of their “brethren.” On one hand, writers like Occum, William Apess (Pequot), Elias Boudinot (Cherokee), and George Copway (Ojibwe) thought that converting to Christianity was a practical adjustment to be made in light of the drastic changes impacting their respective communities. On the other hand, these missionary writers firmly believed that the new religion was an antidote to the scourge of social evils, alcoholism above all else, that were afflicting numerous Indian families. Then, of course, there were intellectuals advocating for US citizenship, the General Allotment Act, and admitting an Indian state into the Union.⁶

In addition, Indigenous writers were compelled to reflect on the Indian-made changes that have emerged because individuals volun-

teered to enlist in the armed services, send their children to school, or migrate into nonreservation communities, complete with changes in lifestyles and career options. Perhaps the conditions under which these choices were made were created by American colonialism; nevertheless, in many cases Indians chose for themselves how they would survive and endure through the situations in which they found themselves. The latter included making conscious decisions to try using the tools and knowledge of modern American life to serve and protect their tribes and families, either by creating a cogent political opposition or, just as often, by fostering understanding between Indian and settler communities. Elias Johnson, for example, noted in the 1881 introduction to *Legends, Traditions and Laws of the Iroquois, or Six Nations, and History of the Tuscarora Indians*:

The Histories which are in the schools, and from which the first impressions are obtained, are still very deficient in what they relate of Indian History, and most of them are still filling the minds of children and youth, with imperfect ideas. I have read many of the Histories, and have longed to see refuted the slanders, and blot out the dark pictures which the historians have wont to spread abroad concerning us. May I live to see the day when it may be done, for most deeply have I learned to blush for my people. (2)

However, despite living in a time of armed and violent conflict, Johnson did not seek revenge for the slanders inflicted by generations of colonial histories. Rather, as he states in his preface: “To animate a kinder feeling between the white people and the Indians, established by a truer knowledge of our civil and domestic life, and of our capabilities for future elevation, is the motive for which this work is founded” (3). In addition to writing Indigenous histories, it was commonplace for American Indian authors to take to the podium in a series of public lectures, in which white audiences willingly subjected themselves to the haranguing of an “educated Indian” about the “true conditions” on the reservation or on the frontier.

Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins (Paiute) stands apart in this regard, as she made a desperate attempt at acquiring help and understanding for her people, who were enduring the ravages of settlers overtaking their homeland in northwestern Nevada. Even an army fort and clearly demarcated reservation lines were insufficient at protecting an other-

wise defenseless community, which only wanted to adjust to the new order in peace. According to Hopkins's editor at G. P. Putnam's Sons, Mary Mann: "Mrs Hopkins came to the East from the Pacific coast with the courageous purpose of telling in detail to the mass of our people, 'extenuating nothing and setting down naught in malice,' the story of her people's trials" (Mann 2). Book writing, in this case, like so many others, was done out of necessity. Particularly in the days before mass electronic media, publishing a book was a way of reaching a large audience. Moreover, this was done, not for entertainment, nor even merely for education, but rather to raise awareness of an ongoing calamity and, hopefully, inspire people to action. As I write in *The American Indian Intellectual Tradition*: "Winnemucca did not write for the sake of a higher ideal, except for the implied right of the Paiutes to live free from fear of either persecution or theft. Winnemucca was more concerned with facilitating her nation's survival in a region, the Great Basin, that seemed to only grow more violent every time there was an increase in the colonial population" (101). As an example of how an American Indian becomes a writer-activist working on behalf of one's community, Winnemucca's account of how she was thrust into such a role stands out as exemplary. In chapter 5 of her 1883 book *Life among the Piutes*, Winnemucca recounts a distressing episode in which the Paiutes are accused of murdering two white settlers, which brings in an investigation from the local army detachment. The commanding officer, Captain Jerome, who knew Winnemucca well due to her work as a translator, sent a letter asking that she and her brother Natchez meet with him about this serious matter. Winnemucca, because the threat of war with the Americans was imminent, shared the captain's missive with others in her camp. Upon hearing that the soldiers were on their way, Winnemucca's people demanded that she say something to the captain on their behalf:

They said, "Can you speak to them on paper?"

I said, "I have nothing to write with. I have no ink. I have no pen."

They said, "Oh, take a stick,—take anything. Until you talk on that paper we will not believe you can talk on paper."

I said, "Make me a stick with a sharp point, and bring me some fish's blood." They did as I told them, and then I wrote [to the captain]. (82)

Life among the Piutes is an epic elaboration of the urgent situation in which the Paiutes found themselves because soldiers were on the way, not to mention waves of immigrants into Paiute land.

In the spirit of working for the good of one's people during a time of crisis, Charles Eastman stands as a paragon of intellectual service, in which his writing was a major part of his activism. Similar to Winnemucca, Eastman's identity as a writer would be forged in the fires of Indian-white relations. More specifically, Eastman pondered and wrote about Indian affairs during the first two decades of the twentieth century, not because he was seeking tenure (Eastman never joined a university faculty) nor aspiring to become a best-selling author (although some of his titles, such as *Indian Boyhood*, achieved some level of popularity), but rather to engage in "a campaign of education on the Indian and his true place in American history." More to the point, Eastman recognized the need to rehabilitate the popular image of Indians as "savages" and "moral degenerates," which had driven federal Indian policy since the Washington administration. "My chief object has been," Eastman writes, "not to entertain, but to present the American Indian in his true character before Americans" (*Deep Woods* 187). Oftentimes Indigenous intellectuals, such as Eastman, used their skills to elucidate the history of Indian-white relations from an Indigenous perspective, be it the injustices that tribal nations incurred in the name of "progress" and "civilization" or the numerous acts of generosity Indians have shown their "white brothers" over the years. Just as often Indigenous writers felt compelled to explain that Indians were not "war-like savages," but people who valued peace for their nation and who practiced a "religion" based on notions of balance and respect. Unfortunately, what makes such a clearly stated and worthwhile endeavor such an ordeal is the fact that not everyone is amenable to the Indigenous perspective on Indian affairs, which Eastman learned firsthand.

After being driven off the Pine Ridge Reservation for criticizing Indian agents on how they handled the Ghost Dance fracas, which led to the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre, Eastman, a Dartmouth-educated physician from the Mdewakanton Dakota community, moved his young family to Saint Paul, Minnesota, where he struggled to make ends meet as a general practice physician. In his thirties and with time on his hands, Eastman initiated his writing career, which he recalls in chapter 9 of his 1916 autobiography, *From the Deep Woods to Civilization*: "While

I had plenty of leisure, I began to put upon paper some of my earliest recollections, with the thought that our children might some day like to read of that wilderness life. When my wife discovered what I had written, she insisted upon sending it to *St. Nicholas*" (139). These self-described "sketches" were published the year after their submission and subsequently formed the basis for *Indian Boyhood*, which Eastman published with McClure, Philips in 1902. Over time Eastman's writing career developed into a profound effort at educating Americans, and not just his children, about Indian culture and history. Thus, Eastman's life as an "intellectual"—which, by the way, was a label he never once used to describe himself—was driven by the needs and values of the Indigenous community from which he derived his identity as a Dakota person.⁷ Eastman neither sought out the status of published author nor deliberately aspired toward the notoriety of being a spokesman on behalf of Indian rights. Yet, because of his eloquence and the publication of nine books, Eastman's work as a writer, thinker, and activist became as meaningful as his work as a medical doctor. Both types of vocation fulfilled his wish "to share with [his] people whatever [he] might attain" from pursuing a college degree (*Deep Woods* 60).

This is not to say that Eastman did not realize the extent to which social decay was epidemic throughout the reservation system; on the contrary, based on his firsthand knowledge of reservation conditions as an Indian Bureau physician, Eastman argued that what Americans saw on the reservation was actually a reflection of the federal government's treatment of Indians, which deliberately exposed them to "strong drink, powerful temptations, and commercialism" (*Deep Woods* 187). Comparable to the "slums" set aside for immigrant populations in cities like New York, Boston, and Chicago, the reservations were set aside, in Eastman's estimation, not to preserve Indian culture, but rather to permit its denizens to deteriorate into extinction away from so-called polite society, all of which was hidden behind a veneer of lies and half-truths called "Indian progress" that the Indian Bureau annually touted in volumes of official reports.

As a charter member of the Society of American Indians (founded in 1911), which was the predecessor for organizations like the National Congress of American Indians, the National Indian Youth Council, and the Native American Rights Fund, Eastman played an important role in advocating for Indian rights. Indeed, as I have observed elsewhere,

what Eastman had in common with both his peers and predecessors was taking “on the role of edifying their readers and listeners about conditions in the Indian community, complete with a ‘Native perspective,’ if you will, on historical events and political developments” (Martínez, *American* ix). Yet, despite Eastman’s literary legacy, which stood alongside that of his peers, such as Zitkala-Sa, whose own writings are still being read today in literature and gender studies, Carlos Montezuma, whose *Wassaja* newsletter stands as a tower of principled journalism, and Arthur Parker, more prolific than any of the Progressive Era luminaries, who authored dozens of articles and several books on Indigenous history, culture, and politics, there has always been an assumption that Indians are *written about* by others and do not write for themselves. So, between those who do not want to hear the Indian side of the story and those who do not believe Indians can write, finding the opportunity to broadcast Indian voices is challenging, to say the least, often requiring patience and fortitude.

Vine Deloria Jr., Standing Rock Sioux intellectual, once noted in his seminal work on American Indian religion, *God Is Red*, that there was a prevailing but disturbing attitude against recognizing the need for contemporary Indian writers. Referring to his own experience at getting his first book published, Deloria recalls: “As late as 1964, many publishers thought (1) Indians could not write books, and (2) any book written by an Indian would be ‘biased’ in favor of Indians” (26). According to Stan Steiner, the author of *The New Indians*, a 1967 book covering the rise of Indian activism after World War II and the men and women who emerged as leaders, he made a valiant but futile effort during 1965–66 at finding Deloria a publisher. Repeatedly, Steiner kept encountering the same prejudice on the part of editors who assumed that the future author of *Custer Died for Your Sins* could not write a “fair and balanced” book about Indians. Fair and balanced, of course, was code for writing like a non-Indian. “Whenever the subject of Indians writing their own books arose,” Deloria further recounts, “even the friendliest of non-Indians stated that a great many Indians had written books and that we should be content with what they had left” (26). Such as what? Deloria refers to an unnamed historian who asserted that books like *Sun Chief* by Don Talayesva, *Son of Old Man Hat*, the Navajo autobiography that was “recorded” by Walter Dyk, and Black Hawk’s 1833 autobiography, another as-told-to work, were sufficient representations of the Ameri-

can Indian experience. Apparently, Deloria bemoaned, “books about contemporary outrages,” be it fishing rights in the Pacific Northwest or Hopi and Navajo concerns about Peabody Coal Mining in the Four Corners region, ought not to be published because they would “stir up bad feelings between Indians and whites” (26). Fortunately Deloria was able to publish *Custer* in 1969 with Macmillan, which was widely known for having published *Worlds in Collision* in 1950, a deeply divisive work in cosmology and astrophysics. Immanuel Velikovsky, of course, would later be a major influence on Deloria’s critique of religion in *God Is Red* (113–32), which was first published in 1974.

What is interesting about the above anecdote is the fact that the publishers with whom Steiner spoke and the historian who wrote to Deloria were at least aware that American Indians had been authors, at least of a sort. As noted, the publishers and historian mentioned only as-told-to autobiographies, which, although they have a significant place in the history of American Indian literature, are nonetheless premised on the notion that Indians do not write *per se*. More to the point, an Indian author is not really an author but a storyteller, more specifically, one who comes out of an oral tradition regaling his or her “reader” with the myths, legends, and tales of a “vanishing race.” What the historical record of American Indian letters demonstrates to the contrary is that there have been generations of Indian authors who wrote without the assistance of either a translator or note-taker, and who focused unabashedly on contemporary outrages, much to the chagrin of their largely white American audiences. Be that as it may, although the number of Indigenous writers has increased over the decades, now centuries, of American occupation of what has become the United States, their presence has nonetheless remained scarce. For while Indigenous writers and thinkers appear numerous when taken as a whole, they lose their collective prominence when regarded from the vantage point of individual tribes.

Indeed, it is not uncommon among Indian writers to be one of only a few, if not the only one, to publish anything within one’s tribe. Moreover, it is equally common for one to make only a modest contribution to Indigenous letters before exiting the writing community altogether. Consequently, when it comes to the literary traditions of many tribal groups, there is little to speak of. For example, while one can comprehend an Ojibwe literary heritage as long as one is inclusive of all Ojibwe

groups, it is much more difficult to speak of, say, a Crow or Apsáalooke literary tradition. Not many writers come to mind beyond Pretty-Shield, who was the “author” of another as-told-to autobiography, which the aged medicine woman published with Frank B. Linderman in 1932.⁸ The same is true of my own tribe, the Akimel O’odham or Gila River Pima. Although I am aware of writers like George Webb, who published *A Pima Remembers* in 1959, and Anna Moore Shaw, who published *Pima Indian Legends* in 1968, followed by *A Pima Past* in 1974, there is not much basis on which to claim a Pima literary tradition.⁹ Even when Tohono O’odham writers are added, who are also few and far between (e.g., James McCarthy, Danny Lopez, and Ofelia Zepeda), the O’odham literary tradition as a whole remains rather modest. Thus, it is only under the pan-Indian label *American Indian* that one can begin to see the advent of intellectuals appearing in Indigenous communities as a unique class.

As noted earlier, Indigenous communities have seen writers and thinkers steadily emerge since the 1770s, when Occom arose as a minister to and an advocate for the Mohegan community of southern New England. From here on, other Indigenous writers/thinkers/activists appeared, typically during a period of crisis instigated by a critical and adversarial development in federal Indian policy, to be a voice on behalf of their tribe, their race, and their religion (which often meant both Indigenous and Christian traditions). As treaties were broken and westward expansion induced the forced removal of countless Indians, figures like Elias Boudinot (Cherokee), John Ross (Cherokee), William Apess (Pequot), Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins (Paiute), and George Copway (Ojibwe) stood up on behalf of Indigenous peoples and, in a variety of writings and speeches, promoted justice, sympathy, and tolerance for Indian communities being overrun by innumerable settlers, who were turning Indian lands into “territories,” and then into “states” faster than most Indian people could adjust to in their lifetime. The struggle for Indian rights, of course, continued after the so-called Indian wars were over and the reservation system was set firmly into place. At this point one begins seeing persons like Charles Eastman (Dakota), Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai), and Gertrude Bonnin (aka Zitkala-Sa, Lakota) take a stand for treating Indians as “citizens” and for reforming, if not in fact abolishing, the Indian Bureau. Then, again, in the aftermath of HCR 108, another generation of thinkers took on the weighty task of express-

ing the hopes, fears, ideas, and values of Indigenous communities once more in a state of siege, during which we hear the voices of Clyde Warrior (Ponca), Robert K. Thomas (Cherokee), and Vine Deloria Jr. (Lakota) affirming the language of sovereignty and self-determination. One might say that it is precisely because of the necessity of asserting a politically active component to one's writing that makes the Indigenous intellectual something other than an "intellectual." Whether one is advocating for new legislation to enhance Indian rights or educating non-Indians about tribal culture and history, American Indian intellectuals are compelled to react and often rebel against American colonialism. Consequently Indigenous writers historically have worked outside of the confines of academia. Some were medical doctors, while others were ministers, newspapermen, tribal leaders, or amateur ethnographers. Equally important is the fact that individuals like the ones named above varied in their educational backgrounds, some having acquired a college degree while others barely achieved the equivalent of some high school, if not less.¹⁰ In short, Indigenous intellectuals were never a part of a "leisure class," complete with privileged, affluent backgrounds. Family and clan, in most cases, mattered more than degrees and titles.¹¹

Unsurprisingly, it would be non-Indian scholars who would bestow the title of *intellectual* upon Indigenous writers who were more concerned with their tribe's immediate well-being than with labels. In 1978 Margot Liberty edited an anthology titled *American Indian Intellectuals of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*, in which she observed in a preface to the 2002 edition that the phrase "American Indian intellectuals" was first coined by Margaret Mead and Ruth L. Bunzel in their 1960 anthology, *The Golden Age of American Anthropology* (vii). Unfortunately, Liberty does not cite her reference; upon examination of Mead and Bunzel's anthology, the term is nowhere to be found. Mead, in her introduction, does refer to American Indian individuals who, during the classic period of anthropological fieldwork, 1880–1920, "made occasional pilgrimages to our great museums where their sacred pipes and sacred medicine bundles had been preserved through the efforts of those who found the old ways valuable. *At the same time a few of their young men pushed on to become proficient in the new culture*, but others—the majority—sank into apathy, fenced within bits of land which were inadequate to support their ancient ways of life and out of which they were only too likely to be maneuvered on the morrow" (2–3, my emphasis).

One of these few young men, about whom Mead speaks, was Francis La Flesche, an Omaha/Osage who collaborated with Alice C. Fletcher on a massive two-volume report for the Bureau of American Ethnology titled *The Omaha Tribe*. La Flesche's work independent of Fletcher is also acknowledged in Mead and Bunzel's anthology with an excerpt from a prayer for the painting of the body, which he translated for his BAE report on the Osage. With respect to La Flesche, Bunzel notes:

Francis La Flesche grew up among the Omaha while the buffalo still ran, and remembered war parties though he had not participated in them. He was educated at a Presbyterian mission college. On a visit to Washington as a member of a delegation of Indians he met the Secretary of the Interior, who persuaded him to join the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Here he began his fruitful collaboration with Alice Fletcher. After the completion of the Omaha volume he was transferred to the Bureau of American Ethnology and worked on the Osage, a closely related tribe. (228, emphasis in original)

Given the time in which Mead and Bunzel published their anthology, it is significant to note that the references to La Flesche are free of any condescending language toward his ethnicity. The coauthor of *The Omaha Tribe* is fully accepted as part of the anthropological tradition without any need to explain or justify his presence. At the same time it is unclear why Mead and Bunzel omitted other significant American Indian anthropologists, such as Arthur C. Parker (Seneca), J. N. B. Hewitt (Tuscarora), and James Murie (Pawnee), not to mention the equally important ethnographies and ethnohistories produced by a variety of American Indian authors, such as Samson Occom (Pequot), George Copway (Ojibwe), Andrew J. Blackbird (Ottawa), William Warren (Ojibwe), and Elias Johnson (Tuscarora), as well as George Bushotter (Lakota), George Sword (Lakota), Charles Eastman (Dakota) and Luther Standing Bear (Lakota). More than likely, Mead and Bunzel held an unconscious presumption, La Flesche notwithstanding, that anthropologists were non-Indians trained in the science of ethnography, while Indians were objects of study, bearers of a disappearing culture, which anthropology sought to preserve in the voluminous pages of BAE reports.

Liberty, on the other hand, is explicitly aware of the Indigenous contribution to the discourse on American Indian culture and history, focusing exclusively on American Indian writers and thinkers of

the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nonetheless, the volume consists of non-Indians writing about Indians, even though, as of 1976, there were several well-known Indian writers who could have written insightfully about their predecessors. Perhaps the composition of Liberty's anthology is a reflection of the social science tradition of which it is a part. The papers were written for a symposium at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting. Of particular interest to the contributors was the dynamics of cultural change within small communities as exemplified by the Indian writers under examination. As Liberty observes: "the American Indian situation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was one generally of such rapid and drastic change as to focus anthropological attention upon the nature of cultural change itself." Following in the footsteps of Mead and Bunzel, Liberty's contributors are "linked to the historical interest of the Boasian school," in which cultural change "took on a particular note of urgency." Indeed, the "stresses upon individuals which derived from acculturation are clearly reflected in the essays" of Liberty's anthology, such as the ones on Arthur Parker (Seneca) and Richard Sanderville (Blackfoot) (256–73).¹² With respect to this exceptional generation of American Indian intellectuals, Liberty acknowledges the diversity among the men and women who defined the era of cultural change in which they lived, while observing some common traits among them. In the tradition of salvage anthropology, Liberty notes awareness on the part of Indian writers of lifeways that are rendered all the "more precious because they were vanishing." Consequently many of the writers examined were motivated by "the task of preserving at least something for the future." Liberty then points out some recurring themes that would remain relevant long past the "golden age" of American anthropology:

Other notes recur here—of anger at exploitation and crusading for reform; of showmanship at times and making financial or political gain from widespread loss and tragedy; of "reverse exploitation" of anthropologists reported somewhat wryly by several authors . . . ; and of conflict and sometimes heartbreak amid the relentless currents of change which engulfed each in his or her own way. (1)

The distinction of being "intellectuals," however, did not seem to gain traction as a result of Liberty's comprehensive effort at elevating writing to a form of agency in the American Indian community. Recogniz-

ing the existential freedom of authoring one's own writings and what this implies about cultural change and adaptation under colonial conditions would not begin to occur until the 1990s, which is when American Indian studies or Native American studies (AIS/NAS) reached a level of scholarly maturity that it did not have when Liberty published her seminal anthology.

During the 1990s, which also saw the emergence of "decolonization" as a dominant idea driving Indigenous scholarship, the presence of Indigenous scholars grew to a point at which the discourse changed from etic to emic in orientation. Consequently, as Warrior affirms in *Tribal Secrets: Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*, one must "respect the demand that Native writers be taken seriously as critics as well as producers of literature and culture." With this objective in mind, Warrior stipulates in his introduction: "after more than two centuries of impressive literary and critical production, critical interpretation of those writings can proceed primarily from Indian sources" (xvi). American Indians are now living and working in a post-anthropological era, in which Indigenous writers and thinkers may proceed without the necessity of privileging the social scientists that once dominated the analyses of their communities.¹³ In a controversial turn Warrior postulates the concept of "intellectual sovereignty" as a practical alternative to "native perspective," which has been used repeatedly for lack of a better term. Warrior initially defines his idea in light of his critiques of Vine Deloria Jr. and John Joseph Mathews (Osage) as moving "toward a cultural criticism that is grounded in American Indian experiences but which can draw on the insights and experiences of others who have faced similar struggles" (xxiii). In other words, just as the European intellectual tradition feels obliged to refer only to other European writers for insight into the European experience, so too can American Indian writers be just as self-referential, even ethnocentric, in their own discourses.¹⁴

Once the discourse on American Indian writers, as thinkers and activists, alternated into an Indigenous reflection on the role of such figures in *their* respective communities, the critical questions consequently changed from those posed by anthropologists interested in cultural change to those in the Indigenous community interested in cultural revitalization and political self-determination. Instead of examining Indigenous writers as conduits of cultural decline or assimilation, they are active creators of ideas, opinions, narratives, and critiques, in which the

historical and current state of affairs among Indigenous nations is subjected to the analyses and evaluations of Indigenous writers and thinkers. With respect to American Indian intellectuals, insofar as the questions and discussions were being driven by Indigenous scholars, they also became more self-aware of their growing academic tendencies. Whereas for much of American Indian intellectual history, writer-activists worked outside of academia, since the advent of AIS/NAS more Indigenous writers have been working squarely within the academic environment, complete with all of its freedoms and limitations. At this point examining the role of the American Indian intellectual inevitably ran into questions of purpose and usefulness to Indigenous communities.

Contemporaneous with Warrior above, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux), in her 1996 article, "American Indian Intellectualism and the New Indian Story," observes the obvious absence of an intellectual tradition and role models among Indian people, in spite of the growing numbers of Indians, not only in terms of population, but also who write and publish on a regular basis. "It is true," Cook-Lynn writes, "that 'the American Indian intellectual' is to many people a bizarre phrase, falling quaintly on the unaccustomed ears of those in the American mainstream." Instead, Indians are overburdened with an array of stereotypes, none of which acknowledges Indians as writers and thinkers. "It is as though the American Indian has no intellectual voice with which to enter into America's important dialogue" on the pressing issues of the day (Cook-Lynn 57). Consequently, just as the vast majority of Indian lands are occupied by non-Indian settlers, so too are much of the stories about them told by non-Indians. Yet, Cook-Lynn states, perhaps because of the institutional pressures to represent Indian cultures and histories in a way that is amenable to the American myth of settlement and expansion, American Indian writers, even when they are tenured and tenure-tract professors, do not always live up to the needs and expectations of their respective communities:

The failure of the contemporary Indian novel and literary studies in Native American studies to contribute substantially to intellectual debates in defense of First Nationhood is discouraging. The American universities which have been at the forefront of the modern study of American Indian experience in literature for the past three decades and the professors, writers, and research-

ers who have directed the discourse through teaching and writing have been influenced by what may be called the inevitable imperial growth of the United States. Most seem to agree that the Indian story and what is labeled “cultural studies” are the future but their refusal or inability to use a nation-to-nation approach to Native intellectualism has prevailed. (“American Indian Intellectualism” 68)¹⁵

It is the nation-to-nation approach that Cook-Lynn advocated a mere three years earlier in “The American Indian Fiction Writers: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, the Third World, and First Nation Sovereignty,” in which she criticizes those writers whom she regards as having sacrificed a concrete relationship with their community for the transnational accolades that come with pursuing a more “cosmopolitan” aesthetic agenda. “As Vine Deloria, Jr. asked the anthropologists in [1969], ‘Where were you when we needed you?’ Indians may now ask of their writers, two decades later, ‘Where were you when we defended ourselves and sought clarification as sovereigns in the modern world?’” (Cook-Lynn, “American Indian Fiction” 28). Indeed, as Deloria would point out himself two years after Cook-Lynn’s article: “the battles against derogatory images of Indians, improper histories of tribes, and misinformation on tribal programs are still being carried on largely by local Indian leaders, *not by Indian academics*” (“Intellectual” 27, my emphasis).¹⁶ Implied by Cook-Lynn’s and Deloria’s comments is the assertion that the only authentic role for the Indigenous writer and thinker is to actively immerse oneself in the social and political realities of the daily lives and ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples, consequently developing a research agenda that is based on Indigenous lives and histories, as well as the values and ambitions of communities that remain colonized in an otherwise “post-modern” era. Moreover, one can argue that despite the institutionalization of AIS/NAS in academia—or, perhaps, because of it—an ironic development in the Indigenous community is a class of scholars who need to be reminded of their activist, politically aware heritage.¹⁷

With the above in mind, a critical issue in the pursuit of an authentically Indigenous foundation for scholarship has been challenging writers and thinkers in the Indigenous community to actively affirm their connection with the non-Western traditions that define their intellectual identities. Regardless of one’s academic training, there is a source

of value and meaning that extends beyond the academic field in which one may have been trained and educated (including AIS/NAS) and into the bonds defined by peoplehood. Within this tribal context one is compelled to consider an array of elders as one's intellectual predecessors, including ones who may not have known English, let alone have written down their thoughts. In a 1998 essay titled "Intellectual Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Looking at the Windmills in Our Minds," Deloria bemoans the intellectualization of the Indian community among Indian academics:

Traditional people were and are natural philosophers, but if we look closely at their words, we find deep insights described in the simplest of language. Thus, self-determination, sovereignty, hegemony, empowerment, and colonialism are nice big words that philosophers and intellectuals use, but what do they really mean? I often feel they assist us in creating a set of artificial problems, wholly abstract in nature, that we can discuss endlessly without having to actually do something. Each generation has a set of concepts that it uses to feverishly discuss longstanding problems and thereby avoid responsibility for solving them. (25)

In deference to the natural philosophers of the Indigenous community, in my 2010 article "Pulling Down the Clouds: The O'odham Intellectual Tradition during the 'Time of Famine,'" which focuses on the Pima medicine man Thin Leather, I wrote with respect to the aged but illiterate wise man being an "intellectual" in his own right:

First, each indigenous community in its own way was capable of addressing the most poignant issues of the human condition: life and death, human nature, origins, community, and the like. Second, one is only an *indigenous* intellectual if one is an indigenous person first and foremost, which includes valuing one's people and their relationship with their homeland, language, kinship, and sacred history. Third, being an intellectual is not limited to being college educated and speaking and writing in a European language. Fourth, while indigenous communities possess an intellectual tradition, they do not have a theoretical one; instead, philosophical and religious ideas and insights are conveyed primarily through narrative, be it in the form of a story, song, or speech. (2-3)

Taking Deloria's and my articles together is not to suggest that Indigenous intellectuals ought to forego engaging in analytical or theoretical discourses, lest they be judged as "assimilated." On the contrary it is meant to caution Indigenous scholars from privileging nonfigurative forms of thinking at the expense of aboriginal knowledge traditions.¹⁸ Just as generations of parents and grandparents advised their children and grandchildren to "remember where you're from" before sending them off to college, so too must Indigenous intellectuals remember this, even after acquiring a host of advanced degrees and publications.

So, now, having critiqued the historical origins of the "American Indian intellectual," where does that leave us? While it is clear, based on a preponderance of evidence, that Indians have been authors—complete with creative control—of a wide range of works in a variety of genres, does it make sense to speak of an American Indian *intellectual* tradition? After all, it was not all that long ago when Indians were thought to be struggling toward "civilization" by becoming the humblest of farmers and Christians, let alone actively generating a body of published writings exhibiting articulateness and erudition. For this Indigenous author, the question of my intellectual identity is only partially defined by my connection, as noted above, to my literate predecessors, Webb and Shaw, not to mention Thin Leather. Of equal importance is that I am directly descended from Simon Lewis, my grandfather, who was once a farmer, who then became a Presbyterian minister, and who tended to his parishioners' needs for more than forty years at the Gila Crossing First Presbyterian Church in District 6 of the Gila River Indian Community in Arizona. It was mostly his example, complete with his sincere encouragement that I further my education, that inspired me to become the writer and scholar I am today.

Honoring one's elders, especially those of one's family, is commonplace among Indigenous intellectuals, as it is within the American Indian community in general. With respect to this, it simply does not make any sense to speak about the appropriateness of words like *intellectual*, or any other abstraction, without talking about kinship, be it in terms of family, language, or land. My point about relatedness, I should note before concluding, is based on a frequently uttered principle of respecting one's ancestors, in which case, in an Indigenous world where more tribal members than ever before are pursuing education, especially higher education, as a venerable life goal, the stories of how our predecessors acquired their education and how they used it to serve their

people are not only a part of our intellectual heritage but also our oral traditions. They are part of the stories of this world, the one in which we have all been struggling since the earliest settlers arrived on Indian land.

An Indigenous definition of *intellectual*, therefore, must necessarily include a range of wise and learned figures, possessing different bodies of traditional knowledge, not the least of whom would be medicine men and chiefs, such as Thin Leather. At the same time, in between these traditional roles have emerged figures like Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, Charles Eastman, Vine Deloria Jr., and Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, who, as far as I know, were neither medicine people nor chiefs. The writer/thinker/activist, aka intellectual, is a modern phenomenon, yet a meaningful one that Indigenous communities are still figuring out how to comprehend. May it always be the case that those of us who purport to speak, teach, and write on behalf of Indigenous peoples be consistently held accountable for our words and actions. As I have written elsewhere, Indigenous people have an intellectual tradition—as embodied in their Creation Stories—but they do not have a theoretical tradition. Such a distinction does not necessarily imply that Indigenous people are incapable of abstract thought or that the thinking done in Indigenous languages lacks sophistication. Rather, it is meant to remind both Indians and non-Indians alike that there is a very profound way of contemplating the life and world around one without relying on the Western tradition of abstract thinking, which is typically replete with technical terms and obtuse ideas, which only properly trained “experts” can understand and explain to others. What my observation suggests, instead, is that the Indigenous intellectual heritage is a tradition of wisdom without elitism, and that if contemporary AIS/NAS scholars sincerely want to respect the knowledge of their elders and communities, then they ought to maintain their discourses on an equitable plane with their oral tradition, not to mention their elders. Such a proposition, of course, will make sense depending on the extent to which one regards one’s oral tradition as valid, not to mention how much an individual knows about the values, beliefs, and practices associated with these traditional narratives.¹⁹

NOTES

1. In one sense the reluctance of American Indian writers to call themselves “intellectuals” is consistent with the suspicion aimed at such individuals in American society in general. For more on the problematic history of being labeled an intellectual in America, see Richard Hofstadter.

2. The necessarily marginal, not to mention subversive, role of the intellectual has been analyzed and reflected upon by a range of thinkers, in particular those representing subaltern groups in nations that have been historically colonized by global (mostly European) powers. See, for example, Edward W. Said.

3. As Clara Sue Kidwell and Alan Velie argue, employing such a phrase as “native perspective” is merely “a convenient short-hand term for the idea that Native Americans think differently from other people, but the phrase itself does not explain what that difference is.” On the contrary the phrase simply homogenizes Indigenous thinking, limiting it to being little more than an expression of ethnic determinism. Kidwell and Velie, 9.

4. See Jacques Derrida, 44–64.

5. For more on this complex subject, see Garrick Mallery and William M. Clements.

6. Probably the most notorious example of American Indian intellectuals being out of step with changes in the community was when leaders of the Society of American Indians, namely Zitkala-Sa, Charles Eastman, Carlos Montezuma, and Arthur Parker, came out against the spread of peyote use among Indians on the reservation. See Hazel W. Hertzberg, 239–86.

7. For more on Eastman’s biography and his life as a public servant, see Raymond Wilson. For more on Eastman’s intellectual development during the Progressive Era, see David Martínez, *Dakota*.

8. The book known today as *Pretty-Shield* was originally published as *Red Mother* (New York: John Day Company, 1932). See also Frank B. Linderman.

9. Similar to Eastman, Webb became a writer out of concern for the children in his life: “This book is written with the young Pima Indians in mind. Very few Pima parents tell their children about the customs and habits of their forefathers. Therefore the present young Pimas do not know of the early life of their people.” See George Webb, 7. Shaw shared in the ambition of many Indigenous writers of enlightening as wide an audience as possible about the customs and values of her people: “In 1950 I began a two-year writer’s course to enable myself to set down the ancient legends of our people in an interesting manner. This was all a part of my plan to help make both Indians and whites aware of the proud heritage of the original Americans.” See Anna Moore Shaw, 190–91.

10. In this respect American Indian intellectuals were part of the common people, any of whom have the right to speak on the Indigenous experience, regardless of the disadvantages of education and income. This is a notion found elsewhere and during different historical epochs. See, for example, Antonio Gramsci.

11. The phenomenon of the “educated Indian” has been a part of Indian Country since the earliest days of compulsory education was imposed on Indian children, going back to John Eliot’s “prayer villages.” Ever since, there has persisted what one may call an “Indigenous class consciousness,” signifying the divide between those who have obtained “the white man’s education” and those who remained “untutored.” Illustrative of this class consciousness is a story that Benjamin Franklin reported in 1744 during a treaty council in Virginia with members of the Haudenosaunee

or Iroquois. The delegates from the Virginia colony offered to educate half-a-dozen Iroquois young men at the college of Williamsburg, to which the Iroquois delegation replied: "You, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things . . . Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of the 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 therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor counselors—they were, therefore, totally good for nothing." In turn, the Iroquois made a counter-offer, in which they would take some of the Virginians, whom they would instruct in all that they knew of living in the woods, thereby making "men of them." See Rennard Strickland.

12. Margot Liberty, "American Indians and American Anthropology," 8–9. Liberty mentions a third name, Warbonnet, who is not featured in her anthology but is quoted in Loretta Fowler's essay on Bill Shakespeare, 256–73.

13. See the classic critique of anthropology's difficult relationship with the Indian community in chapter 4, "Anthropologists and Other Friends," of Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins*, 78–100. It should be noted that the pursuit of a more humanistic approach to the understanding of Indigenous culture and society goes back to the earliest generations of Indigenous writers. For example, in addition to Elias Johnson's work, cited above, Eastman devoted a work on Indian religion to developing a more humane discourse. Eastman faced this dilemma when writing about the sacred customs with which he was familiar growing up in the Dakota community; however, he felt the customs were poorly understood by non-Dakotas. At the time, the prevalent idea among social scientists was the evolutionary model of social development, which stipulated that all human societies naturally progress from "savagery" to "civilization," with modern Western civilization standing at the pinnacle. With this precept in mind, scores of anthropologists set out to record the "vanishing" and "primitive" ways of Indian tribes throughout the world, from the South Pacific to the American Southwest, before they either literally disappeared or else vanished into the grind of modern life, which was analyzed and documented in works that defined the science of ethnology. In the case of the "Sioux," so-called authoritative volumes had been published by Samuel W. Pond, James Mooney, and James R. Walker, which are still being cited today. For Eastman, though, even these learned men did not sufficiently capture the essence of Dakota customs as *living* beliefs and practices, let alone as anything that could survive the advent of the Progressive Era. Thus, as Eastman states in the preface to his 1911 book *The Soul of the Indian*: "My little book does not pretend to be a scientific treatise. It is as true as I can make it to my childhood teaching and ancestral ideals, but from the human, not the ethnological standpoint. I have not cared to pile up more dry bones, but to clothe them with flesh and blood. So much has been written by strangers of our ancient faith and worship treats it chiefly as matter of curiosity. I should like to emphasize its universal quality, its personal appeal!" (4). Eastman was writing this at a time when many spoke of "race" as though it were virtually a different species. Thus, the impetus for *The Soul of the In-*

dian, which includes a positive comparison of Dakota sacred traditions, such as the Sun Dance, with Christian sacraments, such as Baptism, was not only to enlighten his readers about why Indians held their customs and beliefs so dearly, but also to change the way Americans thought about being human. Instead of the Malthusian notion of “survival of the fittest,” which demanded that non-Western peoples give up their traditional ways for modern life or otherwise perish, Eastman advocated for a more balanced relationship between peoples and places, which prioritized peace over progress, spirituality over materialism, and brotherhood over competition. In many ways, Indian thinkers are still addressing today the dilemmas of modern life that Eastman confronted. What, perhaps, has changed between then and now is the way in which many Indigenous people across reservations throughout the United States have accommodated the values of labor, education, wealth, and competition into a tribal political agenda that now sees nation-building and entrepreneurship as the latest stage of evolution in their pursuit of self-determination.

14. In Warrior’s estimation, paradigmatic of intellectual sovereignty is the work of Mathews, in particular his 1945 book *Talking to the Moon*, which was the Osage writer’s meditation on the Blackjacks, the area of Osage Country from which Mathews came and to which he always returned. As Warrior summarizes Mathew’s importance to his special notion of sovereignty: “In *Talking to the Moon*, Mathews is obsessed with self-critical reflection on what he was doing in his life of writing at the Blackjacks. He presents a vision of how the act of writing functions in the struggle for self-determination and is continuous with both tradition and survival. Mathews’s life at the Blackjacks, in this reading, becomes a long critical reflection on the meaning of freedom through the practice of intellectual sovereignty.” The term *intellectual sovereignty*, although Mathews probably would have found it to be alien to his salt-of-the-earth manner of writing, nevertheless adequately evokes the kind of learned meditation on Indian land and the concrete experiences that Indian people have had as part of their environment, as written by someone as abundantly educated as the author of *Talking to the Moon*. Mathews, after all, was a graduate of the University of Oklahoma with a degree in geology, as well as Merton College, Oxford, from which he obtained a degree in natural sciences. See Warrior, 101.

15. Cook-Lynn, “American Indian Intellectualism,” 68. Even more reprehensible, instead of organizing to defend against land loss or the expropriation of natural resources, American Indian intellectuals, as of 1998, were more interested in organizing themselves into a professional society, “and all indications are that the function of this group is not to be useful to Indian communities with skills gained in higher education but simply to console each other that they have such a hard time climbing the academic ladder.” See Deloria, “Intellectual,” 27.

16. Deloria, “Intellectual,” 27.

17. While it has become a part of ordinary Indian life today to see college-educated Indians earning a variety of degrees, referring to Indians as “intellectuals” is still frequently seen as an uncomfortable fit, akin to cutting one’s hair and putting on “citizen clothes.” This is the case even when the “intellectual” in question possesses undeniable talents as a writer and thinker, not to mention as an activist. As David E.

Wilkins (Lumbee) fondly recalls about his friend and mentor, Vine Deloria Jr.: “Vine was never taken with the notion of being identified as an ‘intellectual.’” This was in spite of the fact that, as Wilkins notes, Deloria had authored and coauthored at least two dozen books and two hundred articles and essays, in addition to regularly giving keynote addresses and interviews and testifying before congressional committees. See Wilkins, 154.

18. Deloria railed against the endemically obtuse and hegemonic language that institutions invariably develop, such as has been perpetrated by the three most oppressive entities in Indian history: “Indeed, the people who maintain the barricades in science, religion, and politics have one thing in common that they do not share with the rest of the citizenry. They are responsible for creating a technical language, incomprehensible to the rest of us, whereby we cede to them our right and responsibility to think.” See Deloria, *Red Earth*, 21.

19. While the question of identity, as in “Who is or what defines an Indian?” will always arise anytime one goes into an existential crisis over their perceived Indianness or lack thereof, as an intellectual distraction from the urgent issues and problems facing Indigenous communities it ranks at the top of the pile of hackneyed topics that academics love to discuss in class (along with defining terms like *assimilation*, *traditional*, and *living in two worlds*). Identity as a topic of personal reflection, according to Jace Weaver, was a particular concern of the American Indian Philosophical Association, which drew a legendary moment of wrath from Vine Deloria Jr., who attended a regional meeting of the American Philosophical Association as their guest of honor. “The organizers, however,” Weaver writes, “made the mistake of inviting Deloria to respond. According to those present, after listening to the presentations, Deloria said, ‘I’ve wasted my life. If all I have done is enabled you to be here and navel gaze about your own identities, I’ve wasted my life!’” See Weaver, 240.

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