

INTRODUCTION



The knowledge and wisdom of the Native peoples of this continent represent a wide gap in the minds of mainstream society. It is little known, for example, that their conception of wholeness applies both to human health in terms of balancing all aspects of the human being—spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental—and to a comprehensive view of the universe.

My own understanding of Indian¹ ways began to develop in the early 1990s when I began to reconnect with my own heritage. Since then I have gleaned many thoughts that represent my current state of knowledge, which consists of what I already knew, what I had to correct, and the significant knowledge I have gained. This book is an attempt to apply some of that understanding to current issues in Church and society, particularly but not exclusively in the United States. It is really a story of how my perspectives and overall worldview developed over time and the experiences I encountered along the way to a more realistic outlook on life.

In the seasons of one's life, we are born in the spring and go through adolescence in summer. In the autumn our leaves begin to fall and we are not as agile. Finally, unless our winter comes early, we reach an age when our hair turns white and we prepare to meet the next spring in another world.

It was in the late autumn of my own life that I came upon a very important discovery about myself, which led to other discoveries over a period of several years. What I learned caused me to re-examine my extensive training and experience in science and decades of church-based Christian education. Basic questions of identity and purpose, which I thought had already been settled—who am I, why am I here, where am I going—re-emerged, causing me to make a lengthy and difficult introspective journey of self-exploration and internal conflict. It involved the partial deconstruction of an old framework of thought, shedding conformist ways of thinking, and accommodating new paradigms into a more valid framework reflecting new knowledge. It was a long process that required several years, but there came a time when I felt I had broken through a barrier and I acquired a more realistic worldview and a greater consciousness. The difficult experience also happened during a twenty-year interlude when my academic career in teaching and research had collapsed, I was feeling out of place in society, and I was searching for fulfillment. Fortunately, what happened to me inwardly was also a purifying and healing process that strengthened me and gave me a new purpose.

Our situation in life is the result of countless events and influences, including our genes and invisible forces in the universe. Every bump and turn along our path, however great or small, may determine to some degree the next one in a long sequence of moments that comprise a lifetime. Some of our experiences are the direct consequence of conscious actions while others occur against our will or without our knowledge. Even painful experiences may belong to a greater purpose that we humans with limited vision cannot presently see but will eventually be revealed. I believe that our finitude as two-leggeds (humans) is really a gift from the Creator that, along with other endowments, should prompt us to walk in a sacred manner, humbly acknowledging both our dependence on and our responsibility toward everything around us.

Nature has many useful metaphors and parallels that can be compared with the human experience. In quantum physics there is a phenomenon called *nonlocality*, or alternatively, *entanglement*: Two subatomic particles can encounter each other under certain conditions in such a way that they will be forever connected, or entangled, regardless of where they may be located in the universe at a later time. Similarly, the paths that other people take during and after an encounter can also affect us for life. These “nonlocal” causes, such as

the decisions others make over which we have no control but may threaten or enhance our personal freedom and self-determination, often do not reach our consciousness until we feel their effects. This happened to me in a big way that completely shattered my career goals, a tragedy that affected my entire family. The influence of that event has never left; it is a permanent part of my story line. In retrospect the events in my life that seemed to be completely unrelated to each other eventually worked together to bring about an outcome that I did not plan and led me to a path of fulfillment. But it was not until I had reached retirement age that this path opened up before me. This phenomenon, known as synchronicity, defies the world of cause and effect in which so many of us have been indoctrinated. In any case, it does not preclude my conscious awareness of a higher Power, the Great Spirit, to whom nothing is a mystery.

When my original plans in academia, which had already begun and were showing signs of success, came to an abrupt end and the American dream vanished before my eyes near the peak of my professional life, I had to ask myself what my role was in life's grand scenario, not as *I* planned it but as it actually unfolded. It was hard to believe that, as a doctoral student whose program had suddenly collapsed, along with my career, I had reached a dead end and faced the prospects of unemployment, unprepared to face the world. I felt the burden of responsibility to my family. No one except possibly my wife and children could sense the deep wound in my soul or the emotional shock of injustice and betrayal that also clashed with the long-held belief that such a tragedy could not happen to someone like me who believed he was in the center of the will of God. This was a theological puzzle until I realized that I was interpreting God's will in terms of what was best for me, as I perceived it, instead of relying on a proper relationship and allowing God's sovereignty to work itself out. My emotional recovery can only be understood in the context of my journey, which included a growing awareness of purpose as I observed and experienced life in several tribal communities. A great lesson I learned is that individual purpose has little meaning in isolation; it works itself out in community; fulfillment involves cooperative relationships of interdependence.

Thus the questions I once asked myself make much more sense in a global context: As Americans, who are we? Why are we here? Where are we going? As Christians in a larger society, who are we? Why are we here? Where are we going? These are the central questions that subconsciously motivated this book. I typically do not address one issue at a time but several ones together

because they are interrelated, which explains why some of the titles to chapter sections do not exactly fit; they were named after I had already written the material.

An indigenous perspective is reflected throughout the book while I also maintain my relationship to Christ, which began through a significant encounter that is also described in these pages. When a relevant link to a Biblical teaching seemed appropriate, I connected it to the thought I wanted to express. I have had to be candid about some deeply troubling issues, and the reader will need to judge my statements from the evidence and by pursuing the non-partisan sources cited. I ask the reader not to think of this book as a Christian book but as one written by an Indian who is also a follower of Jesus.

My life's passion really began just as I was approaching retirement age. Now that I have rotated off the labor force I have pondered the inescapable question of what I could have accomplished if I had found the Indian circle of life at a younger age and if the individuals who had the responsibility of honoring my path had done what was right and just. By failing to act, such persons in our society who hold key positions in many walks of life—administrators, managers, government officials, members of Congress, and so on—are affecting the future of millions of people. They all lack the one virtue that would compel them to use their authority to empower people and expose or prevent the wrongdoing of others: moral courage.

Americans on opposite ends of the political spectrum have expressed the sincere concern that the nation has reached a crossroads. This is a paradox because Republicans and Democrats have opposite interpretations about the meaning of the crisis and the direction we are being taken. The fragmentation is also evident in the dichotomies, conflicts, polarized politics, and the deep rift in the nation's soul. I believe that many of the conflicts in our country are the result of artificial dualities: human-caused divisions and boundaries that do not exist in the natural world, of which political parties are one example.

It was not meant to be this way. There was a time in human history when knowledge was united; science, religion, and philosophy were not treated as separate entities. Unless partisan politics take a dramatic turn, their folly will become clear when Americans and the rest of the world begin to take seriously two overriding threats: global warming and peak oil—the worldwide oil crisis. Politics cannot nullify the consequences of violating nature's laws. We, all

of humanity, will have to seek solutions together. We should not be surprised to find ourselves having to live again in simple lifestyles and depending on local resources for subsistence.

Whence will come our salvation? My response to this question is to focus on wholeness. A fragmented society is an old human condition that deeply troubled the late David Bohm, a renowned quantum physicist who was also a passionate human being. Fragmentation is the opposite of wholeness, and Bohm perceived that the very nature of reality as suggested by quantum theory is undivided wholeness. Surprise! This conclusion from modern physics is a feature of the universe that has always been an integral part of the cosmologies and cumulative empirical knowledge of Native peoples. Wholeness and health are related. As Bohm points out, physical health is an inner measure of what is right in all the parts and processes of the human body. (The root of the word “medicine,” which means “to cure,” is the Latin word *mederi*, which means to measure.) Moreover, Native peoples define wholeness and health in terms of balance, and Jesus defined salvation in terms of health and wholeness. Making people physically whole was a picture of spiritual wholeness. In tribal societies, a healthy person is balanced spiritually, emotionally, physically, and mentally. Thus wholeness, health, and balance—all of which apply spiritually as well as physically—are intimately related. Wholeness is a worthy goal for all societies. *My aim is not only to convince you of the validity of Indian thought but also, and more importantly, to help you change the way you think about reality and to focus on wholeness.* If we all do this, it will have a therapeutic effect that will create the changes needed in our world.

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I address some difficult concepts and questions without claiming to understand them all. The Western world needs to listen to the indigenous voice, but I do not speak for any tribe or for Indian country. The chapter on science will show that indigenous knowledge is comprehensive and that the people’s science is integrated with the life of the community, not a stand-alone domain in which scientific pursuits occur without a conscience and without the elders’ wisdom. Conventional science has neither the conscience nor the worldview to develop a sustainable society.

The Biblical Scriptures have been a very positive influence in my life, and I am also thankful that Yeshua (Jesus) has come to Indian country. It is the Church in America that I cannot fully embrace. The Church is disinterested in Indian ways and what Indians can provide, imposing her cultural ways on Indians and expecting them to adjust. American Christianity is customized to fit American culture, and it historically contaminated Biblical teachings and the gospel of Jesus with American political ideals.² This is what was forced upon American Indians at the expense of their own ways of life.

As a new form of Christianity emerges that is married to American partisan politics and condones the unethical practices of Government, the Church is also losing credibility among the non-Indian populace. It is a counterfeit and intimidating political coalition that claims to be Christian. It is deceptive because of its rhetoric. It is influential because its advocates include prominent individuals who are widely considered as leading spokesmen for Christianity in America. It lacks compassion and relies on coercive tactics to accomplish unworthy goals by trying to change society *outwardly* instead of appropriating a spiritual power that changes people *inwardly* to make them humble, just, and honest. Instead of striving to be the “salt” of the earth, it uses its influence to promote and justify war, death, and aggression.

There is also a Christianity that distorts or sidesteps Jesus’ teachings in order to accommodate the comfortable lifestyles that Americans want to maintain, not necessarily how they should live. Now is the time to heed Jesus’ warning about false prophets that would arise and deceive many. Perhaps not so obvious is the fact that people whose faith is strong but whose awareness is lacking are vulnerable to being deceived.

Reading the Bible through Indian eyes has made me realize that the teachings of Jesus and the culture of the Hebrews—the tribes of Israel—are closer to life in American Indian tribal communities than the American Christianity with which I am thoroughly familiar. The Bible, for example, does not support the pervasive individualism or materialism in American society—traits that are also reflected in the English language. Following Jesus is a serious matter but churchgoers have always found ways to sidestep his hard teachings, which are more holistic, compassionate, spiritual, communal, practical, experiential, and relevant than American lifestyles. Jesus’ teachings imply a *different way of life*. He said that his teaching was not his own but from the Creator (John 7:16),

which implies a different metaphysics of doing and being than what his disciples were experiencing.

Before Jesus was born, the pre-existent Son of God, who is also the Creator, had guided the Hebrews in Old Testament times. Ample testimony from today's tribal elders supports the fact that this is the same One the tribes knew before they heard about the Word, the *Logos*, who became flesh and dwelled among the two-leggeds. As George Tinker (Osage/Cherokee) and Paul Schultz (Ojibwe) state: "Our ancestors had a relationship with God as Creator that was healthy and responsible long before they knew about Jesus. They had a relationship with the Creator that was solidified in the stories they told around the camp fires in each of their tribes, in their prayers, and especially in their ceremonies."³

The Bible itself is not a Western document. European immigrants who settled in North America, displacing American Indian tribes, brought it here and established churches that conformed to European culture and became part of the fabric of American culture. American Christianity thus reflects American culture, not traditional Indian cultures, which were scorned. The national policy of assimilating Indians under the motto, "Kill the Indian and save the man," was a grave mistake; Church and society rejected the very wisdom they have always needed to build a sustainable civilization.

Bible expositors in eschatology are using the Iraq war, which is likely to spread soon to neighboring nations and may lead to mandatory military service, as a launching pad to focus on interpreting prophecy at a time when the nation could use, not only encouragement from its spiritual leaders, but also wisdom to avert more bloodshed. Jesus' teachings on how his followers should live in the present have taken a back seat to apocalyptic visions of future war, death, and destruction. Yes, Jesus is coming again but the desire among some Christians to see the latter fulfilled in our time seems greater than the compassion needed in a time of crisis.

The Spirit explicitly warned that a time would come when followers of Jesus would stray away and pay attention to bad spirits and hypocritical liars. We are now witnessing a phenomenon in which the language used to imply moral values and Biblical truths actually means the opposite in practice. Indians know that the spirit world intermingles with humans; Jesus confirmed it many times in his encounters, saying that his followers must test every spirit, for there are good and bad spirits (1Tim. 4:1-2; 1 Jn. 4:1).

In view of these trends, I believe this is a time when the Church in America needs to discern the extent to which American idealism, in the sense of being conformed to this world (Romans 12:2), has contaminated her true mission. For these reasons also I feel that Christians need to hear a different perspective. My comments may seem harsh, but rather than interpreting them as bashing the Church or the nation's leaders, I ask the reader to open his or her heart and try to envision the implications of what I say about the state of the nation and the role of the Church in national affairs. This is why I also speak to pastors and all Christian leaders, echoing the urgent call from journalists, who claim no relationship to the Church, and are asking you to act courageously and speak up in response to what is being done by Government in the name of God and Jesus. Even they know that genuine Christianity would not belie the real Jesus or advocate conquest instead of peace, hatred instead of compassion, revenge instead of reconciliation, or believe that the end justifies the means. Jesus directly and publicly confronted the powerful religious hypocrites of his day, and he always sided with the poor, the outcast, the crippled, and the blind.

In a recent vision, I saw guns suspended in air and pointing at each other; very large ones pointed at the small ones. The message seemed to convey a struggle between powerful forces and nobler, weaker ones in a struggle to survive. It caused me to think of how the tribes and their way of life have always been under attack, how American citizens, families, and Congress are yielding to the increasing threats of Government, and the obstacles I have personally encountered, not only in trying to attain the American dream, which I have now repudiated, but also in achieving ultimate fulfillment.

The indigenous peoples of this continent have faced ongoing threats since the time they were first called "Indians." More than six hundred tribes reside within the boundaries of the United States. All combined, the tribes now control only about four percent of their original land base and represent about one to two percent of the total U.S. population. Many tribal members no longer speak their Native language. The landscape has changed; mountains, stars, rivers, and sacred places now bear English names. Indian symbols and names with deep meanings are commercialized for profit and used for fun and games. American historians, columnists, politicians, heads of governments, clergy, lawyers, economists, scientists, teachers, schools, and institutions, aligned with American ideals, far outnumber their Indian counterparts. They also control

what their books say about American history and American Indians, and the books also vastly outnumber Indian literature.

European immigrants to this land perceived Indians as inferior in many ways, calling them “savage” and uncivilized, an attitude that has not disappeared, for the tribes are still referred to as “primitive” even by contemporary scholars. Historically, the influence of the Church in America has been felt in every area of Indian life and her “concerns” about Indians are mostly negative. Missionaries have had the same perceptions about Indians as those who first settled the West, though their purpose was to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ, which means “good news.” It is well known in Indian country, however, that the ensuing conflicts were not always good news. Many, perhaps most, missionaries perceived the Indians as being spiritually deficient, completely lacking of the knowledge of God. There is little evidence that this attitude has changed despite several centuries of opportunity to learn differently. A major aim of this book is to correct some of these perceptions and point to the Indian wisdom that needs to be embraced.

A major crime that has had permanent effects on Indians was the attempt by the Government to replace Indian religion⁴ with American Christianity as *the* way to “civilize” Indians so that they would become part of the fabric of American life. Indian religions and traditions were scorned, outlawed, misunderstood, perceived as “primitive,” and viewed as idolatrous and satanic. In flagrant violation of the First Amendment, the Government established church-run boarding schools for the purpose of Christianizing children and not allowing them to speak their languages or practice their customs. The intended goal was to eliminate Indian religions, languages, and customs from American society in one or two generations.

The Government utilized many churches and missionary groups, both Catholic and Protestant (Evangelical), for that purpose. Many of the children in those schools suffered from mistreatment and various forms of punishment and sexual abuse. Needless to say, the experience had dire consequences that are visible today. The trauma can be described not only in emotional, physical, economic, and social terms but also in terms of the knowledge that many lost because they were forced to forget the truths and skills that had always sustained them as a people. Educational films that I highly recommend to mainstream society are *In the White Man's Image*, *Where the Spirit Lives*, *Rabbit-Proof*

Fence, and *Whale Rider*, which describe similar Native experiences in America, Canada, Australia, and Aotearoa (New Zealand), respectively.

American culture clashes with Indian ways and concepts. This book gives my own perspective of this conceptual gap involving Indian perceptions, knowledge, and worldviews that Americans need to understand. We must go beyond improving relationships between Indians and society, including the Church, and ask *how key indigenous perspectives will help move the nation and the world toward balance*. America needs this now. Vine Deloria, Jr. may have had this in mind when he wrote: “Instead of talking of an Indian ‘science’ or even an Indian ‘religion,’ we should focus our attention on the metaphysics possessed by most American Indian tribes and derive from this central perspective the information and beliefs that naturally flowed from it.”⁵

If our society is moving in this direction at all (and current trends in science do indicate it), it is at a primitive stage. Church and society still view Indian ways as primitive; they are not interested in what Indians can offer. Some Christian Natives are now trying to educate the Church about the validity of Indian thought, customs, and culture so that Indian people who are embracing Christ will be free from suppression by church groups. Native scholars and others in science are also producing work that makes traditional knowledge and wisdom, or Native science, accessible to Western scientists.

In addition to the attack on the Indian way of life, the westward movement of European settlers was driven by the strong belief, or doctrine, expressed by key spokesmen, politicians, and leaders that God gave this continent to the English immigrants in order to establish a new civilization for their people who perceived themselves as the “New Israel,” elected by God to move across the Western hemisphere, seize the territories that were rightfully occupied by the tribes, and establish their own civilization. This doctrine, known as “manifest destiny,” implied that Indian genocide and removal were justified in order to make room for the settlers. This notion did not come from the Bible; it was conceived in the minds of immigrants who used the Bible as the basis for their claim. Similarly, the idea that slavery and genocide were divinely sanctioned as the only way that African slaves and the Natives of the Americas could know Jesus has no basis whatsoever. No amount of human logic can substitute for a nation’s conscience.

The human conscience is a wonderful endowment. As citizens and human beings, I believe we have a duty to each other as a matter of conscience. As my wife and I were leaving the theatre one day after viewing the film, *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, a true story about three Aboriginal girls who ran away from an Australian boarding school that was operated by the government in its policy to “breed out” Aboriginal blood, an older woman saw me and asked: “Are you a Native American?” Before I could answer, she placed her hand on her chest and said with a broken voice: “I’m so sorry about what we’ve done to your people.” This is an example of the conscience at work in a way that can lead to healing and restoration.

But the conscience cannot always be relied upon for proper behavior. Human societies thus develop written rules of conduct based on widely cherished human values to assist in guiding ethical decisions and behavior. Many rules and policies carry penalties to deal with violations, including laws to protect human and civil rights. In the U.S. system of governance, the people have placed their trust in high-ranking officials at the federal level to carry out their sacred responsibilities.

During the early 1990s I went through intensive training and passed a professional examination to become industry-certified as a Disaster Recovery Planner (CDRP). CDRP members were, and are today, regulated by professional codes of ethics that demand a continuing commitment. We had to subscribe to the highest levels of integrity. Even in those days, we prepared for acts of terrorism and other possible events that threatened the continuity of critical services provided by our respective organizations. The purpose of disaster recovery was to assure that all critical functions of the organization (business, institution, and so on) would continue without interruption during recovery.

Although I am no longer in that field, I still subscribe in principle to the CDRP code of ethics as a matter of conscience, because my responsibilities as a human being have not disappeared. These include avoiding harm to others, being honest and trustworthy, honoring agreements and property rights, improving understanding, respecting privacy, and assessing risks and danger. In this book I try to point out danger.

I once came upon a helpful brochure from the Four Worlds International Institute called “Traditional Indian Code of Ethics.” For example: give thanks to Creator each day, show respect as a basic law of life, seek the courage and

strength to be a better person, be truthful at all times, observe moderation and balance in all things, listen to the guidance given to my heart, and one that I have always remembered: *the hurt of one is the hurt of all; the honor of one is the honor of all*, which is essentially equivalent to the apostle Paul's admonition in one of his letters: "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all members rejoice... (1 Cor. 12:26)." Looking into my own past, I can remember occasions when these values were violated, when I could have acted better and treated people more kindly. But I have also witnessed the politics of organizational corruption, of managers and administrators at all levels who deceived, made false statements and denigrated people, or sought to advance only their ideas or their friends'.

Some tribal leaders have spent their entire lives protecting the tribe against hurtful government policies. I have to believe that the Holy Spirit can kindle the human spirit of American Christians to act in accordance with their consciences by cooperating with and advocating for the tribes on some issues. *The Church can play a decisive role in getting the federal government to honor its responsibility to the tribes, and I presume that many, perhaps most, members of Congress are Christians or adherents to Christianity in some degree.* This responsibility is also a matter of conscience and sacred honor. After spending more than four decades in Christian circles and concentrating my efforts during the past thirteen years in trying to raise awareness about several issues and developments in Indian country, I still find a general disinterest among church leaders and members. I hope this book will trigger a change.

Two examples of old issues that remain unresolved are the *Cobell v. Norton* case⁶ and the Western Shoshone's struggle to keep their homeland from being stolen in violation of the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley.⁷ The Western Shoshone's struggle should have become mainstream news long ago. The history of this struggle and the incredibly vacuous argument used to justify land theft goes back to 1979, when the Indian Claims Commission placed a cash settlement in an Interior trust account for lands deemed taken from the Western Shoshone by "gradual encroachment." Legislation then tried to force the distribution of this money, an amount set at the 1872 fair market value of 15 cents an acre. The Western Shoshone have always maintained that their homeland is not for sale. Two important video documentaries that provide important background are *Broken Treaty at Battle Mountain* and the sequel, *To Protect Mother Earth* (also called *Broken Treaty II*).

In *Cobell v. Norton* the U.S. government cannot account for billions of dollars belonging to approximately 500,000 American Indians and their heirs that have been held in trust since the 1880s. The class-action lawsuit was filed to hold the government accountable. The overview page on Elouise Cobell's website summarizes the case as follows: "Thousands of individual Indians generally were allotted beneficial ownership of 80- to 160-acre parcels of land in the break-up. As trustee, the government took legal title to the parcels, established an Individual Indian Trust and thereby assumed full responsibility for management of the trust lands. That included the duty to collect and disburse to the Indians any revenues generated by mining, oil and gas extraction, timber operations, grazing or similar activities."

The government has admitted collecting at least \$13 billion from Individual Indian Trust lands but doesn't know what happened to the money or the compound interest earned over generations. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, R-Col., an American Indian in Congress who recently retired, describes very accurately the government's treatment of this problem:

Imagine if you went to your bank to withdraw money, but the teller did not know your account balance and could find no evidence your account ever existed. You ask about deposits made from the receipts from rental property you own and the bank teller has no idea [i]f those payments are being made. When you complain to the bank manager, he says he cannot help. Then you find out the bank doesn't keep account documents in file cabinets; it keeps them in plastic garbage bags or stacked exposed in leaky, rat-infested buildings. In fact, one warehouse is so overrun with rats that the bank employees will not go inside for fear of catching the Hantavirus. Certainly you would go straight to the federal authorities that oversee the banking industry, there would be an immediate and thorough investigation and the bank's executives would face several penalties, perhaps even jail time.⁸

According to Senator Campbell, on the very day the government attorneys were assuring a federal judge that all necessary steps were being taken to preserve all relevant documents in the ongoing class action, the U.S. Treasury Department destroyed 162 boxes of documents that may have contained the

evidence needed to determine how much money the United States owes. “Both in court and before the Congress, the Interior Department has resisted any outside independent review, has stonewalled, been held in contempt for making repeated misrepresentations to the court and has adopted a ‘fight every issue’ strategy,” says Senator Campbell. U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth declared the conduct of federal officials in this case “fiscal and governmental irresponsibility in its purest form,” in view of the mismanagement, fraud, ineptness, dishonesty and delay.

A February 2005 article states that Interior Department officials testified that the current administration doesn’t have a plan to settle this trust fund lawsuit and doesn’t know whether a costly accounting that is taking funds away from other Indian programs will be successful. The Bush administration still has no proposal to resolve this case.⁹ Americans, what is our duty as citizens?

Since the beginning of European occupation, American Indian tribes have had to defend themselves against adverse federal government policies, which continued to threaten their survival after the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre, the last conflict that supposedly ended a historical period known as the Indian wars. In particular, tribal sovereignty has always been under attack by the U.S. Supreme Court and by various legislators who support citizen groups that harbor anti-Indian sentiments. Unfortunately, some missionaries also acted as the Government’s accomplices in the seizure of Indian lands, and some also supported the doctrine of manifest destiny.

The following excerpt from a famous speech that Seneca Chief Red Jacket delivered in 1805 during a meeting between the Iroquois and the Boston Missionary Society illustrates one of the early conflicts with missionaries:

Brother: our seats were once large, and yours very small. You have now become a great people, and we have scarcely a place left to spread our blankets. You have got our country, but you are not satisfied; you want to force your religion upon us.

Brother: continue to listen. You say that you are sent to instruct us how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to His mind. And if we do not take hold of the religion which you white people teach, we shall be unhappy hereafter. You say that you are right, and we are lost. How do you know this to be true? We understand that your religion

is written in a book. If it was intended for us as well as for you, why has not the Great Spirit given it to us, and not only to us, but why did He not give to our forefathers knowledge of that book, with the means of understanding it rightly? We only know what you tell us about it. How shall we know when to believe, being so often deceived by the white man?

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 not all agreed, as you can all read the book?¹⁰

A reading of the entire speech will reveal the following Anglo-American traits noticed by the Iroquois:

- The Indians gave food to the white people and received poison in return.
- Indians were hired to fight against other Indians.
- The white people are not satisfied with what they have; they want more land.
- The white people force their religion on the Indians.
- Why should the Indians accept the white people's word about what the Bible says, since they have often deceived the Indians?
- The white people claim there is only one religion but cannot agree among themselves on how to interpret the Bible.
- In contrast, the Iroquois are unified in their beliefs. They never quarrel about religion. They want to enjoy the religion that the Great Spirit gave them.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Iroquois told the missionaries that they would wait and see what effect the preaching would have on their white neighbors. Would it make them honest? Amazingly, many of the conflicts that Chief Red Jacket cited in his speech were in fact repeated throughout history in other encounters between the Indians and Americans: greed for land; divide and conquer tactics; lack of reciprocity in response to the tribes' generosity; lies and deception; inconsistent Christian behavior; and failure to acknowledge the validity of Indian religion.

Historically, Indian encounters with missionaries varied, and the above is not meant to imply that the Church consistently mistreated Indians. Besides the Christian message, Native peoples have received valuable assistance from Christians, missionaries, and other church-based groups over the centuries. My reason for citing Chief Red Jacket's speech is its relevance: a) he identifies some of the key problems that have plagued Indians for centuries in their relationships to Church and Government, and b) Government, aided by an emergent American Christianity that is militant and greedy—a Christianity that many people in Indian country had to live through in the past—is now threatening American citizens in much the same manner. For example:

- A proposal to bring the nation under a single Biblical “worldview” is being contemplated. A marriage between Church and Government is also on the horizon. This looks like an effort to “civilize” and “Christianize” all Americans, reminiscent of the Indian boarding schools.
- Greed, lies and deceit, deep divisions in the American populace, and an emergent distorted Christianity are evident. Instead of Indians hired to fight other Indians, citizens are divided against each other.
- Justified killing is based on concepts of God, the Bible, and Jesus.
- The militant Religious Right has virtually taken over the Republican Party and is greatly influencing the executive branch of Government toward conquest of nations, nature, and citizens. In some ways, Americans are already conquered and many are not aware of it.
- Strategies by the executive branch have allowed it to virtually control the other branches. What has happened to Congress's moral compass and courage? This is affecting all Americans.

While I have come to grips with my own identity and sense of purpose, I am disturbed about the direction America has chosen to take, involving issues that are categorized as political but are much deeper than politics. The perspectives that emerged from my personal transformative journey now bear upon my concerns for the nation. If the reader is not familiar with the meaning of colonization from the point of view of the colonized instead of the colonizer, now is the time to learn in order to understand how citizens can be victimized.

It took several years for me to overcome the grief and sense of betrayal associated with the discovery of undeniable facts about American Indian genocide

and other actions and attitudes of society and Government. In this book I point out some of the myths and denials about the roots of American democracy, how the Bible and the lordship of Christ have been misapplied or distorted in order to support grandiose visions about a national destiny, and the importance of assessing history from an Indian perspective. I describe how I escaped from ultra-conservative views with no desire to condemn and why I believe that a perspective of the world that matches the wisdom of indigenous societies is the only way that industrial societies, including America, can find ways to survive.

This book has a personal message for everyone regardless of religious or cultural background, political preference, or educational training. Much of it was transcribed from memory; therefore, many of the thoughts expressed are in raw form and can be pursued further. It serves as a tutorial for non-Indian readers who are unfamiliar with Indian history, issues, and wisdom. Native scholars will immediately recognize my elementary treatment of some commonly known issues, but hopefully they will also see the value of seamlessly weaving many areas of knowledge into a coherent whole at a level that everyone can understand and appreciate, for many readers will probably encounter concepts and facts that are unfamiliar.

I quote Scripture without writing exclusively as a Christian. I refer to government without writing as a politician. I refer to principles of science without writing exclusively as a scientist. I deal with epistemologies and worldviews without claiming to be a philosopher. I am all of these to an extent but none of them exclusively. I speak with a soft voice but an urgent message, which is just as urgent whether spoken loudly or softly. In prayer, there is no need to raise our voices to the Creator. Effective communication depends on linguistic form and attitude, not amplitude; it is the heart that both listens and speaks. Christianity, at least for me, is not a “religious” activity; I have integrated it with my indigenous worldview, which recognizes and consciously contemplates the spiritual dimension in the totality of existence. Faith, like science, seeks to understand empirical and experiential data and the mysteries that lie deeper than what is manifested to the naked eye or the physical senses.

Everyone has a personal story because everyone has a path. Because I have consciously lived in and understand four different worlds of thought—American/Western, Christian/Biblical (both Catholic and Evangelical), Chicano, and Indian—I believe my perspective is uniquely relevant. I have an

intense desire for everyone to reach their full potential with their own individual gifts and identity and to experience life as it was intended. It is not easy when so many people in our society inherit wealth and privilege that is not naturally earned. Relationships—whole, broken, healed, healing, contemplated—require mutual respect and recognition of purpose in order to find fulfillment, which does not occur in isolation. Nature always chooses balance and harmony in alignment with Creator’s laws and in relationship to all things. Can we humans not do the same?

Tecumseh, a Shawnee chief, once said: “Show respect to all people and grovel to none. When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself.” Many wise teachings like this one have helped me walk in a sacred manner.

Without spirit nothing can live. There is a Power that energizes the living universe. There is a spirit of humility and honesty expressed by Jesus in his sermon on the mount. I feel the Spirit in my own renewed life. It is *medicine power* like the balm in Gilead, both a metaphor and a healing plant, which is needed for building healthy societies. We can bring that spirit into our lives to purify ourselves inwardly from such tendencies as anger, arrogance, greed, vengeance, and various forms of addiction. It is the Spirit who speaks to the Church today, as in the beginning, identifying those who will overcome the false apostles: “Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7)

American Indians often use the Lakota expression *mitakuye oyas’in*, “we are all related” or “all my relations”; it is a pledge of respect for all life, human and non-human. The typical Mayan expression *In Lak’ech Yelir* has a similar meaning: “I am another yourself” or “I am you, we are the same,” which implies that whatever we humans do to others we do to ourselves.

Bringing Back the Spirit is my prayer for humanity to understand and experience the meaning of wholeness. It is my desire for the message in this book to prompt the reader’s mind to change the way it thinks and for the spirit and conscience to act with a higher awareness of what it means to care about all our relatives, for we are all related.

NOTES

1. “Indian” is a term that typically applies to American Indians. Much of the text also uses “Indian” and “Native” interchangeably and is meant to include the First Nations of Canada, Native Hawaiians, Alaskan Natives, and the *Indios* of Latin America. To several of these tribal groups, North America is known as *Turtle Island*.
2. Primarily, this idealism is a reference to doctrines of divinely ordained conquest and the notion of European superiority over Native peoples. Many non-political traits of Western culture also clash with Native cultures.
3. Paul Schultz and George Tinker. “Rivers of Life” in *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*. James Treat, ed. New York: Routledge, 1996, p.58.
4. “Religion” here does not have the same meaning as in American society, where it is a separate and optional activity. The spiritual dimension, or spiritual consciousness, permeates all aspects of tribal existence.
5. Vine Deloria, Jr. and Daniel R. Wildcat. *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Resources, 2001, p. 2.
6. Link to www.indiantrust.com
7. Link to www.wsdp.org.
8. Campbell, Ben Nighthorse. “How America Handles Indian Money.” 2000. *Indian Country Today*.
9. “Bush Official Denies Indian Trust Mismanagement.” www.indianz.com, February 26, 2005.
10. Excerpted from www.churchstatelaw.com/historicalmaterials/8_2_4.asp.

