

Uwisiwaci, ucau lauy, uwisiwaci ucau liian.
You left them their pride and you left them their land,
And what have you done to these ones.

Has a change come about Uncle Sam
Or are you still taking our land
A treaty for ever George Washington signed
He did, dear lady, he did, dear man.
And the treaty's being broken by Kinzua Dam,
And what will you do for these ones?

Oh it's all in the past you can say
But it's still going on till today
The government now want the Iroquois land
That of the Seneca and the Cheyenne.
It's here and it's now you must help us, dear man,
Now that the buffalo's gone.

Compatriots

Lucy heard the car's motor wind down before it turned off the gravel road a quarter of a mile west of the house. Maybe it was Bunky. She hurried and left the outhouse. She couldn't run if she wanted to. It would be such a relief to have this pregnancy over with. She couldn't see the colour of the vehicle, for the slab fence was between the house and the road. That was just as well. She'd been caught in the outhouse a few times, and it still embarrassed her to have a car approach while she was in there.

She got inside the house just as the car came into view. It was her aunt, Flora. Lucy looked at the clock. It was seven-thirty. She wondered what was going on so early in the morning. Flora and a young white woman approached the house. Bob barked furiously at them. Lucy opened the door and yelled at him. 'I don't know what's wrong with Bob; he never barks at me,' said Flora.

'He's probably barking at her,' explained Lucy. 'Not many whites come here.'

'Oh, this is Hilda Afterbach. She's from Germany,' began Flora. 'Remember? I told you I met her at the Calgary Stampede? Well, she got off the seven o'clock bus, and I don't have time to drive her all the way down to my house. I took her over to my mother's, but she's getting ready to go to Lethbridge. Can she stay with you till I get off work?'

Lucy smiled. She knew she was boxed in. 'Yeah, but I've got no running water in the house. You have to go outside to use the toilet,' she said, looking at Hilda.

'Oh, that's okay,' her aunt answered. 'She's studying about Indians, anyway. Might as well get the true picture, right? Oh, Hilda, this is my niece, Lucy.' Flora lowered her voice and asked, 'Where's Bunky?'

'He never came home last night. I was hoping it was him coming home. He's not supposed to miss any more work. I've got his lunch fixed in case he shows up.' Lucy poured some water from a blue plastic water jug into a white enamel basin and washed her hands and face. 'I haven't even had time to make coffee. I couldn't sleep waiting for him to come home.' She poured water into a coffeemaker and measured out the coffee into the paper filter.

'I'd have some coffee if it was ready, but I think I'd better get to work. We have to punch in now; it's a new rule. Can't travel on Indian time anymore,' said Flora. She opened the door and stepped out, then turned to say, 'I think the lost has returned,' and continued down the steps.

The squeak of the dusty truck's brakes signalled Bunky's arrival. He strode toward the door, barely acknowledging Flora's presence. He came in and

took the lunch pail Lucy had. 'I stayed at Herbie's,' was all he said before he turned and went out. He started the truck and beeped the horn.

'I'll go see what he wants.' She motioned to Flora to wait.

When Bunky left, she went to Flora: 'Maybe it's a good thing you came here. Bunky didn't want to go to work 'cause he had a hangover. When he found out Hilda was going to be here all day, he decided he'd rather go to work.'

'If I don't have to leave the office this afternoon, I'll bring the car over and you can drive Hilda around to look at the reserve, okay?'

'Sure, that'll be good. I can go and do my laundry in Spizee.' She surveyed the distant horizon. The Rockies were spectacular, blue and distinct. It would be a nice day for a drive. She hoped it would be a repeat of yesterday, not too hot, but, as she stood there, she noticed tiny heat waves over the wheat field. Well, maybe it won't be a repeat, she thought. Her baby kicked inside of her and she said, 'Okay, I'd better go tend to the guest.' She didn't relish having a white visitor, but Flora had done her a lot of favours and Hilda seemed nice.

And she was. Hilda made friends with the kids, Jason and Melissa, answering their many questions about Germany as Lucy cooked. She ate heartily, complimenting Lucy on her cooking even though it was only the usual scrambled eggs and fried potatoes with toast and coffee. After payday, there'd be sausages or ham, but payday was Friday and today was only Tuesday.

'Have you heard of Helmut Walking Eagle?' Hilda wanted to know.

'Yeah, well, I really don't know him to talk to him, but I know what he looks like. He's from Germany, too. I always see him at Indian dances. He dresses up like an Indian.' She had an urge to tell her that most of the Indians wished Helmut would disappear.

'I want to see him,' Hilda said. 'I heard about him and I read a book he wrote. He seems to know a lot about the Indians, and he's been accepted into their religious society. I hope he can tell me things I can take home. People in Germany are really interested in Indians. They even have clubs.'

Lucy's baby kicked, and she held her hand over the spot. 'My baby kicks if I sit too long. I guess he wants to do the dishes.'

Hilda got up quickly and said, 'Let me do the dishes. You can take care of the laundry.'

'No, you're a visitor. I can do them,' Lucy countered. But Hilda was persistent, and Lucy gave in.

Flora showed up just after twelve with the information that there was a sun-dance going on on the north side of the reserve. 'They're already camping. Let's go there after work. Pick me up around four.'

'I can't wait to go to the sun-dance! Do you go to them often?' Hilda asked Lucy.

'No, I never have. I don't know much about them,' Lucy said.

'But why? Don't you believe in it? It's your culture!' Hilda's face showed concern.

'Well, they never had sun-dances here—in my whole life there's never been a sun-dance here.'

'Really, is that true? But I thought you have them every year here.'

'Not here. Over on the Blood Reserve they do and some places in the States, but not here.'

'But don't you want to go to a sun-dance? I think it's so exciting!' Hilda moved forward in her seat and looked hopefully at Lucy.

Lucy smiled at her eagerness. 'No, I don't care to go. It's mostly those mixed-up people who are in it. You see, Indian religion just came back here on the reserve a little while ago, and there are different groups who all quarrel over which way to practise it. Some use Sioux ways, and others use Cree. It's just a big mess,' she said, shaking her head.

Hilda looked at Lucy, and Lucy got the feeling she was telling her things she didn't want to hear.

Lucy had chosen this time of day to do her wash. The Happy Suds Laundromat would be empty. As a rule, the Indians didn't show up till after lunch with their endless garbage bags of laundry.

After they had deposited their laundry in the machines, Lucy, Hilda, and the kids sauntered down the main street to a café for lunch. An unkempt Indian man dogged them, talking in Blackfoot.

'Do you know what he's saying?' asked Hilda.

'He wants money. He's related to my husband. Don't pay any attention to him. He always does this,' said Lucy. 'I used to give him money, but he just drinks it up.'

The café was a cool respite from the heat outside, and the cushioned seats in the booth felt good. They sat by the window and ordered hamburgers, fries, and lemonade. The waitress brought tall, frosted glasses, and beads of water dripped from them.

'Hello, Lucy,' a man's shaky voice said, just when they were really enjoying their lunch. They turned to look at the Indian standing behind Hilda. He was definitely ill. His eyes held pain, and he looked as though he might collapse from whatever ailed him. His hands shook, perspiration covered his face, and his eyes roamed the room constantly.

Lucy moved over to make room for him, but he kept standing and asked her, 'Could you give me a ride down to Badger? The cops said I have to leave town. I don't want to stay 'cause they might beat me up.'

'Yeah, we're doing laundry. I've got Flora's car. This is her friend, Hilda. She's from Germany.'

The sick man barely nodded at her, then, turning back to Lucy, he asked her, 'Do you have enough to get me some soup? I'm really hungry.'

Lucy nodded and the man said, 'I'll just sit in the next booth.'

'He's my uncle,' Lucy explained to Hilda as she motioned to the waitress. 'His name is Sonny.'

'Order some clear soup or you'll get sick,' Lucy suggested to her uncle.

He nodded, as he pulled some paper napkins out of a chrome container on the table and wiped his face.

The women and children left Sonny with his broth and returned to the

laundromat. As they were folding the clothes, he came in. 'Here, I'll take these,' he said, taking the bags from Lucy. His hands shook, and the effort of lifting the bags was clearly too much for him. 'That's okay,' protested Lucy, attempting to take them from him, 'they're not that heavy. Clothes are always lighter after they've been washed.'

'Hey, Lucy, I can manage. You're not supposed to be carrying big things around in your condition.' Lucy let him take the plastic bags, which he dropped several times before he got to the car. The cops had probably tired of putting him in jail and sending him out each morning. She believed the cops did beat up Indians, although none was ever brought to court over it. She'd take Sonny home, and he'd straighten out for a few weeks till he got thirsty again, and he'd disappear as soon as he got money. It was no use to hope he'd stop drinking. Sonny wouldn't quit drinking till he quit living.

As they were pulling out of town, Lucy remembered she had to get some Kool-Aid and turned the car into the Shop-n-Go Mart. Hilda got out with her and noticed the man who had followed them through the street sitting in the shade of a stack of old tires.

'Hey, tamohpomaat sikaohki,' he told Lucy on her way into the store.

'What did he say? Sikaohki?' queried Hilda.

The Kool-Aid was next to the cash register and she picked up a few packages, and laid them on the counter with the money. When the cashier turned to the register, Lucy poked Hilda with her elbow and nodded her head toward the sign behind the counter. Scrawled unevenly in big, black letters, it said, 'Ask for Lysol, vanilla, and shaving lotion at the counter.'

They ignored the man on the way to the car. 'That's what he wants: he's not allowed to go into the stores 'cause he steals it. He wanted vanilla. The Indians call it "sikaohki"; it means "black water".'

Although the car didn't have air-conditioning, Lucy hurried toward it to escape the blistering heat. When she got on the highway, she asked her uncle, 'Did you hear anything about a sun-dance?'

At first he grunted a negative 'Huh-uh', then, 'Oh yeah, it's across the river, but I don't know where. George Many Robes is camping there. Saw him this morning. Are you going there?'

'Flora and Hilda are. Hilda wants to meet that German guy, Helmut Walking Eagle. You know, that guy who turned Indian?'

'Oh yeah, is he here?' he said indifferently, closing his eyes.

'Probably. He's always in the middle of Indian doings,' said Lucy.

'Shit, that guy's just a phony. How could anybody turn into something else? Huh? I don't think I could turn into a white man if I tried all my life. They wouldn't let me, so how does that German think he can be an Indian. White people think they can do anything—turn into Chinese or Indian—they're crazy!'

Sonny laid his head back on the seat and didn't say another word. Lucy felt embarrassed, but she had to agree with him; it seemed that Indians had come into focus lately. She'd read in the papers how some white woman in Holly-

wood became a medicine woman. She was selling her book on her life as a medicine woman. Maybe some white person or other person who wasn't Indian would get fooled by that book, but not an Indian. She herself didn't practise Indian religion, but she knew enough about it to know that one didn't just join an Indian religious group if one were not raised with it. That was a lot of the conflict going on among those people who were involved in it. They used sacred practices from other tribes, Navajo and Sioux, or whatever pleased them.

The heat of the day had reached its peak, and trails of dust hung suspended in the air wherever cars or trucks travelled the gravel roads on the reserve. Sonny fashioned a shade behind the house underneath the clothesline in the deep grass, spread a blanket, and filled a gallon jar from the pump. He covered the water with some old coats, lay down, and began to sweat the booze out.

The heat waves from this morning's forecast were accurate. It was just too hot. 'Lordy, it's hot,' exclaimed Lucy to Hilda as they brought the laundry in. 'It must be close to ninety-five or one hundred. Let's go up to Badger to my other aunt's house. She's got a tap by her house and the kids can cool off in her sprinkler. Come on, you kids. Do you want to go run in the sprinkler?'

The women covered the windows on the west side where the sun would shine. 'I'm going to leave all the windows open to let the air in,' said Lucy, as she walked around the house pushing them up.

Lucy's aunt's house sat amongst a clutter of junk. 'Excuse the mess,' she smiled at Hilda, waving her arm over her yard. 'Don't wanna throw it away, it might come in handy.' There were thick grass and weeds crisscrossed with paths to and from the clothesline, the outhouse, the woodstove. Lucy's aunt led them to an arbour shaded with huge spruce branches.

'This is nice,' cooed Hilda, admiring the branches. Lucy's aunt beamed, 'Yes, I told my old man, "Henry, you get me some branches that's not gonna dry up and blow away," and he did. He knows what's good for him. You sit down right here, and I'll get us some drinks.' She disappeared and soon returned with a large thermos and some plastic tumblers.

They spent the afternoon hearing about Henry, as they watched the kids run through the sprinkler that sprayed the water back and forth. Once in a while, a suggestion of a breeze would touch the women, but it was more as if they imagined it.

Before four, they left to pick Flora up and headed back to Lucy's. 'It's so hot after being in that cool cement building all day!' exclaimed Flora, as she settled herself into the car's stifling interior. 'One thing for sure, I'm not going home to cook anything. Lucy, do you think Bunky would mind if you came with us? I'll get us some Kentucky Fried Chicken and stuff in town so you don't have to cook. It's too hot to cook, anyway.' She rolled up a newspaper and fanned her face, which was already beginning to flush.

'No, he won't care. He'll probably want to sleep. We picked Sonny up in town. Both of them can lie around and get better. The kids would bother them if we were there.'

It was a long ride across the Napi River toward the Porcupine Hills. A few miles from the Hills, they veered off until they were almost by the river. 'Let's get off,' said Flora.

Hilda gasped at what she saw before her. There was a circle of teepees and tents with a large open area in the middle. Exactly in the centre of the opening was a circular structure covered with branches around the sides. Next to this was a solitary unpainted teepee. Some of the teepees were painted with lines around the bottom; others had orbs bordering them, and yet others had animal figures painted on them. Smoke rose from stoves outside the teepees as people prepared their evening meals. Groups of horses stood languidly in the waning heat of the day, their heads resting on one another's backs and their tails occasionally flicking insects away. The sound of bantering children and yapping dogs carried to where they stood.

'Let's eat here,' the kids said, poking their heads to look in the bags of food. Flora and Lucy spread a blanket on the ground, while Hilda continued to stand where she was, surveying the encampment. Flora pointed out the central leafy structure as the sacred area of prayer and dance.

'The teepee next to it is the sacred teepee. That's where the holy woman who is putting up the sun-dance stays the entire time. That's where they have the ceremonies.'

'How many sun-dances have you been to?' asked Hilda.

'This is my first time, but I know all about this from books,' said Flora. 'Helmut Walking Eagle wrote a book about it, too. I could try to get you one. He sells them cheaper to Indians.'

Hilda didn't eat much and kept looking down at the camp. 'It's really beautiful,' she said, as if to herself.

'Well, you better eat something before you get left out,' advised Lucy.

'These kids don't know when to stop eating chicken.'

'Yeah,' agreed Flora. 'Then we can go down and see who's all there.' Hilda had something to eat, and then they got back into the car and headed down toward the encampment. They drove around the edge of the camp and stopped by Flora's cousin's tent. 'Hi, Delphine,' said Flora, 'I didn't know you were camping here.'

Lucy knew Flora and Delphine were not especially close. Their fathers were half-brothers, which made them half-cousins. Delphine had grown up Mormon and had recently turned to Indian religion, just as Flora had grown up Catholic and was now exploring traditional beliefs. The same could be said about many of the people here. To top things off, there was some bad feeling between the cousins about a man, some guy they both had been involved with in the past.

'Can anybody camp here? I've got a teepee. How about if I camp next to you?'

Delphine bridled. 'You're supposed to camp with your own clan.'

Flora looked around the camp. 'I wondered who's my clan. Say, there's George Many Robes, he's my relation on my dad's side. Maybe I'll ask him if I can camp next to him.'

Delphine didn't say anything but busied herself with spitting kindling from a box of sawn wood she kept hidden underneath a piece of tarp. Jason spied a thermos under the tarp and asked for a drink of water.

'I have to haul water, and nobody pays for my gas,' grumbled Delphine, as she filled a cup halfway with water.

'Oh say,' inquired Flora, 'do you know if Helmut Walking Eagle is coming here? This girl is from Germany, and she wants to see him.'

'Over there, that big teepee with a Winnebago beside it. That's his camp,' Delphine answered, without looking at them.

'Is she mad at you?' Jason asked Flora.

'Yeah, it must be the heat,' Flora told him with a little laugh.

Elsie Walking Eagle was cooking the evening meal on a camp stove outside the teepee. She had some folding chairs that Lucy would've liked to sit down in, but Elsie didn't ask any of them to sit down though she was friendly enough.

'Is your husband here?' asked Flora.

'No, he's over in the sacred teepee,' answered Elsie.

'How long is he going to take?'

'Oh, he should be home pretty soon,' Elsie said, tending her cooking.

'Do you mind if we just wait? I brought this girl to see him. She's from Germany, too,' Flora said.

Lucy had never seen Helmut in anything other than Indian regalia. He was a smallish man with blond hair, a broad face, and a large thin nose. He wore his hair in braids and always wore round, pink shell earrings. Whenever Lucy saw him, she was reminded of the Plains Indian Museum across the line.

Helmut didn't even glance at the company but went directly inside the teepee. Flora asked Elsie, 'Would you tell him we'd like to see him?'

'Just wait here. I'll go talk to him,' Elsie said, and followed her husband inside. Finally, she came out and invited them in. 'He doesn't have much time to talk with you, so . . . Her voice trailed off.

The inside of the teepee was stunning. It was roomy, and the floor was covered with buffalo hides. Backrests, wall hangings, parfleche bags, and numerous artifacts were magnificently displayed. Helmut Walking Eagle sat resplendent amidst his wealth. The women were dazzled. Lucy felt herself gaping and had to shush her children from asking any questions.

Helmut looked at them intently and rested his gaze on Hilda. Hilda walked toward him, her hand extended in greeting, but Helmut ignored it. Helmut turned to his wife and asked in Blackfoot, 'Who is this?'

'She says she's from Germany,' was all Elsie said, before making a quick move toward the door.

'Wait!' he barked in Blackfoot, and Elsie stopped where she was.

'I only wanted to know if you're familiar with my home town Weisbaden?' said Hilda.

'Do you know what she's talking about?' Helmut asked Elsie in Blackfoot. Elsie shook her head in a shamed manner.

'Why don't you ask *her* questions about Germany?' he hurled the words at

Hilda, then, looking meanly at his wife, he added, 'She's been there,' Elsie flinched, and, forcing a smile, waved weakly at the intruders and asked them in a kind voice to come outside. As Lucy waited to leave, she looked at Helmut whose jaw twitched with resentment. His anger seemed to be tangibly reaching out to them.

'Wow!' whispered Hilda in Lucy's ear.

Outside, Flora touched a book on the fold-out table. Its title read *Indian Medicine* and in smaller letters, *A Revival of Ancient Cures and Ceremonies*. There was a picture of Helmut and Elsie on the cover. Flora asked, 'Is this for sale?'

'No, that one's for someone here at camp, but you can get them in the bookstores.'

'How much are they?' Flora asked, turning the book over.

'They're twenty-seven dollars. A lot of work went into it,' Elsie replied. Helmut, in Blackfoot, called out his wife's name, and Elsie said to her unwelcome callers, 'I don't have time to visit. We have a lot of things to do.' She left them and went in to her husband.

'He's the brains, she's the source,' Flora said. 'Let's go. My kids are probably wondering what happened to me.'

'I'm sorry I upset her husband. I didn't mean to,' said Hilda. 'I thought he would be willing to teach me something, because we're both German.'

'Maybe you could buy his book,' suggested Lucy.

'Look,' said Flora, 'if you're going to be around for a while, I'm going to a sun-dance this next weekend. I'm taking a few days off work. I have a friend up north who can teach you about Indian religion. She's a medicine woman. She's been to Germany. Maybe she even went to your home town.'

'Oh, really!' gushed Hilda. 'Of course, I'll be around. I'd love to go with you and meet your friends.'

'You can come into the sweat with us. First, you'll need to buy four square yards of cotton . . .' began Flora.

But Hilda wasn't really listening to her. She looked as if she were already miles and miles away in the north country. Now, a sweat, she thought, would be real Indian.

Annharte b. 1942

ANISHNABE

Coyote Trail

warm this trail
my nose picks you to follow

your tracks quiver my whisker
my nostrils fill

you are a chunky one
your tail dragged a leaf
overturned bark

you too are hungry
fat
depressed
I know all this news

I see your weight in microns of earth pressed
down
you won't be an easy meal

like last week I sssll unlk into town
I mean slunk not what I usually do

QUICK PAWS QUICK PAWS GOTCHA

YOU DON'T HEAR MY CLAWS UNLESS YOU PAUSE

that was something dead and delicious in that town
growing more foul each day

I call it fast food
though it don't move much
until I touch my paw to it
I drool again over that thought

the last time we met One Gulp
you kicked against my canines

So.

When those ducks see what has come out of the eggs, they says, boy, we didn't get that quite right. We better try that again. So they do. They lay them eggs. They dance that dance. They sing that song. Those eggs crack open and out comes some more baby ducks. They do this seven times and each time, they get more ducks.

By golly, says those four ducks. We got more ducks than we need. I guess we got to be the Indians. And so they do that. Before Coyote or that big mistake can mess things up, those four ducks turn into Indians, two women and two men. Good-looking Indians, too. They don't look at all like ducks any more.

But those duck-Indians aren't too happy. They look at each other and they begin to cry. This is pretty disgusting, they says. All this ugly skin. All these bumpy bones. All this awful black hair. Where are our nice soft feathers? Where are our beautiful feet? What happened to our wonderful wings? It's probably all that Coyote's fault because she didn't do the dance right, and those four duck-Indians come over and stomp all over Coyote until she is flat like before. Then they leave. That big mistake leave, too. And that Coyote, she starts to think about a healing song.

Pssst. Pssst.

That's it, I says. It is done.

But what happens to Coyote, says Coyote. That wonderful one is still flat. Some of these stories are flat, I says. That's what happens when you try to fix this world. This world is pretty good all by itself. Best to leave it alone. Stop messing around with it.

I better get going, says Coyote. I will tell Raven your good story. We going to fix this world for sure. We know how to do it now. We know how to do it right.

So, Coyote drinks my tea and that one leave. And I can't talk any more because I got to watch the sky. Got to watch out for falling things that land in piles. When that Coyote's wandering around looking to fix things, nobody in this world is safe.

Harold Cardinal b. 1945

CREE

A Canadian *What the Hell It's All About*

Over the past century, the Indian people, and many white people as well, have become increasingly aware of the aura of conflict surrounding the relations between white man and red man in Canada. The struggle now has become so intense and so emotional for so many of our people, especially our young people; and has led to equally intense but opposite emotional response from elements of white society, that I think the time has come for us to sit back and try to determine in our minds just what the hell this struggle really is all about.

We have been fighting for so long now that the original misunderstandings and differences that created this conflict have been forgotten. Various tactics have been tried by one side and countered by the other; emotions have taken over from reason; and the passions born of hatred have grown until neither fighter any longer knows, or cares, what the fight is about. The fight has become an end in itself.

In the long run such an attitude can only be disastrous, not just for our people, but for our country. To reverse this unfortunate trend of confrontation, we must examine some of the myths that have contributed to the situation currently faced by the Indian people in this country. We must re-examine the basic philosophies inherent in any discussion with white society, or with white individuals.

The past and the present are important, but basically we have to look to the future. In that context, many people concerned about the current economic conditions in Canada are closely examining just what kind of future, what kind of country they really want to build; not for a minority but for all Canadians; not for their generation but for all future generations. It must be within in mind that we begin re-examining the relationship between Indians and members of the larger Canadian society. This is true whether we are talking about individuals in that larger society, or whether we are talking in collective terms about the Indian entity, the Indian nation, or about the white entity, the white nation.

One problem that has largely contributed to the misunderstanding between us is the terminology we use in efforts to relate to each other. Not only are the languages of the opposing sides drastically different, but the societies using those languages are in so many respects so very strange to one another that communication becomes almost impossible. A perfect example of this type of problem was the confrontation between Nikita Khrushchev and John Kennedy in Vienna. To a person not overly familiar with the opposing ideologies it would be difficult to understand, from the translation of what was said, why the two leaders disagreed so violently when to all appearances

what they said differed so little. Only with a thorough knowledge of the background and opposing ideologies of each side could one hope to understand what the shouting was all about.

The situation faced in Canada between Indian and white races is much the same.

There has always been one question that a white man asks an Indian. It is asked by the average Joe on the street of an Indian just off the reserve: professional people of both sides ask it of each other. It is, to the Indians, a Have-you-stopped-beating-your-wife? sort of question. It may be posed in many ways, not only by the individual white person, but by the government as well. It is being posed more frequently and even more demandingly these days by the unelected government—the civil servants, provincial or federal. It is being posed with perhaps more integrity by political leaders: from MLAs to premiers, from MPs to the Prime Minister. The question, simplistically put, is: 'Why do you not want to be Canadian?'

Today, an Indian person has great difficulty responding to that question rationally, because the term *Canadian* means so many different things to the people of Canada, be they white or red.

Whatever we may think about the differences between Canada and the United States of America, at least people in the United States learn one lesson early and well. They are taught, virtually from the cradle on, what being an American is all about. Such teaching may seem to many of us to be chauvinism—distasteful and propagandistic—but from the time they are able to reason, children go through an indoctrination process that gives them a sense of patriotism, a sense of pride in being American. They may not always articulate this clearly, but a sureness of their identity as Americans is instilled in them. While Americans still may not fully understand the meaning of cultural plurality, at least they are not asking each other who they are.

In Canada there is no such universally accepted definition of the concept of Canadianism. There is no easy, sure national identity for Canada or for Canadians. When the question, 'You do want to be a Canadian, you don't want to be something else?' is asked it's always immensely difficult for an individual or a group to answer, because so much depends upon the questioner's concept of Canadianism. Unless we reach a common agreement on the meaning of that term, we must always define the concept as we understand it, so that others will know what we mean when we discuss Canadianism.

For too long, both the white and the Indian political leaders have been involved in a Quixotic battle. Our imaginary windmills have been our varying concepts and definitions of what being Canadian is all about. Our feelings, our emotions, our passions have almost reached their climax. It is even more necessary for Indian people to really look at what they are talking about; to understand the full meaning of their terms when they are defining themselves to each other or to members of the larger society. Only then can we understand what we are fighting about, what we are trying to work out together, what it really is that we are after.

One of the most personally rewarding, and, paradoxically, the most frus-

trating experiences of my life has stemmed from my attempts to decipher the meaning our people attach to the term, *Canada*, and to being *Canadian*. It is rewarding to catch a glimpse of what our old people who speak no English mean when they tell us of their concept of Canada and of Canadianism.

Canada is a word taken from the Cree language. Other tribes may claim it also, but from the Cree point of view, the word *Canada* stems from the Cree word *Ka-Kanata*, a word that translated literally means 'that which is clean'. The full Cree term to describe the country is *Ka-Kanata-Asti*—'the land that is clean'. Thus, when we speak of our country in Cree, at the same time we define it as 'the clean land'. We describe our country as the clean land because it belongs to our Creator, who is a clean being. If we, as Cree-speaking people, use the term *Ka-Kanata* or *Canada* then, we know precisely what we are talking about. But when a white man calls this country *Canada*, I don't know what he means; I don't know what the meaning is from the white point of view. I don't have any precise definition to go by.

For the Cree-speaking person, the term *Nee-yow* is used when that person is affirming his or her Canadianism. When a white person says, 'I am a Canadian', a Cree-speaking person says, 'I am a *Nee-yow*'. Typically, it is a descriptive term. A Cree-speaking person, describing himself in his own language, does not say, 'I am Cree', because *Cree* is merely a word used by whites to describe one group of Indians. When those Indians known as Cree to the white world, describe themselves as *Nee-yow* they are saying, 'We are members of that nation of people who are part of the four seasons of Mother Earth.' They are saying, 'We are part of this land, and because we are part of this land we are also part of our Father's creation and hence His children.'

This is where the problem of definition crops up. It is difficult for a white man, not understanding Indian culture, to know what someone means when he says, 'I am a member of a nation of people who are part of Mother Earth.'

When a white person describes him or herself as Canadian, it is difficult for me to know what his or her definition of that term is. When a Cree-speaking person says that he or she is *Nee-yow*, that person is also describing precisely what being a Canadian is all about to him or her. I do not know if the white man's understanding and definition of the word is as precise as ours when he identifies himself as a Canadian.

Another way to explain the Cree use of such a term is to use an analogy of the Roman Catholic Church. Other religions in other parts of the world may provide similar analogies, but whenever a person is baptized into the Catholic Church, that person is given a special name. Usually the name is that of a saint who will give guidance and protection to the child as he or she goes along the path of life; a patron saint who in fact will be the spiritual guardian of the child. The same process applies to Indian name-giving, but it also applies to tribes. The tribes have a patron saint who will look after them. Thus when a Cree-speaking person says *Nee-yow* he is saying, 'I am born into that tribe which will look to this land as its patron, or as its guardian and guide through life.' It's a religious-cultural definition of being a Canadian.

Therefore, I believe that a part of our communal problem is that there have never been any precise translations between the Indian and white languages. Other tribes, such as the Chipewyan, the Slavey, the Dogrib, the Navajo, call themselves *Dene*, giving their definition of themselves as a people in their language. In fact, all tribes across the continent have their own particular definitions of themselves as they relate to their environment, whether that environment is Mother Earth, as it is on the prairies, or the water, as it may be for the Indians living on the coasts. I think it is that thinking that distinguishes the traditional element right across the country.

For a long time much of the heritage of our culture has been lost even to Indians and is only now beginning to be understood again. When an Indian person describes this land as *Ka-Kanata*, 'the clean land', he is implicitly defining his responsibility to that land. If it is a clean land, then he has a responsibility to keep himself clean. Not just clean in the sense of television's White Tornado, but clean in the sense of maintaining a balanced relationship with the land. This means that whatever an Indian takes from the land, he will replace somehow. At the very least he will return the proper respect to the land for the gifts the land has given to him.

It goes even further than that. If one talks about a clean person, in a very broad sense one is talking in a philosophical way about a person who is honest with himself, with his family, with his neighbours, with all people; a person who is clean in the sense that purity is cleanliness. To the white man, some of these responsibilities are religious, and some are the responsibilities of citizenship. More simply they describe the way people *should* relate to one another, the way they should help one another.

When a person speaking from the traditional point of view says, in Cree, that he is a clean person, he relates himself to the clean land. This signifies recognition of the fact that this land belongs to, and was created by a clean being: a being known as God to some people, Jehovah to some, perhaps Manitou to others. Whatever the name used, the Creator's existence is recognized, and because people believe that He is clean and pure, and that all things He has created are clean, then one has to be pure in order to relate to Him.

Unfortunately there are many Indians today who do not understand this. While this may be the case for perhaps even the majority of Indians, I suspect that almost universally the white man has no awareness of our people's perception of their land and of themselves. Few white men have even an inkling of what Indians mean when they describe themselves and their relationship to the land, and to Canada. Consequently, there is a mistaken belief that our people's concept of Canada and of being Canadian is necessarily in conflict with the concept that white people have.

When the Prime Minister talks about the kind of country he would like Canada to be, and the type of Canadians he would like to see develop within such a country, and when an elder from any of Canada's tribes explains his vision of what this country and its people should be, the concepts are not that dissimilar. Two more disparate people, speaking in different tongues, speak-

ing from different worlds, would be hard to find anywhere, and yet their dreams, their visions, their hopes, and their aspirations could not find any greater fusion.

But all too often, both sides: Indians and their political leaders, whites and their political leaders: unable to see except through the tunnel-vision of their respective cultures, fail entirely to look beyond the surface differences which loom so large, and go on determinedly believing that there has to be an inherent conflict between the dreams of a Prime Minister and the dreams of a tribal elder.

It is the absurdity of the Khrushchev-Kennedy dialogue all over again. Of course the white Prime Minister and the Indian elder have different personal perceptions, but must the white man believe that because an old Indian, giving a definition of nationhood and its responsibilities, expresses his beliefs in a language that is different, that draws its images from a different culture, therefore he does not merit consideration? Must the Indian, because the white man dresses differently, behaves differently, and uses words that sound strange, be convinced that there can be no common meeting ground? Must each then, based on his own narrow perceptions, reject the other, perhaps even launch wars to make certain the other side comes around to the 'proper' point of view?

I think the difference in definition and the lack of understanding has created what I call a *mirage gap* between people in this country. What appears to be a divergence on the meanings of *Canada* and *Canadian* as used by people on both sides is more mirage than reality. Close examination of the definitions clearly shows that there isn't really that much of a gap between them. But the practical point of this is, and it's a major point based on that mirage gap in understanding, we have a government that has developed policies aimed at assimilating Indians to make them into what the larger, white society perceives to be Canadians. Thus one finds all programs emanating from the federal or the provincial governments, whether concerned with economic development, education, or anything else, having as their central purpose the assimilation, or, at the very least, the integration of Indians into the Canadian mainstream.

Assimilation, integration—the two favourite terms used by the white society over a century of relationships between Indians and whites. Over a hundred years of relationships have been based on a complete misunderstanding. What it amounts to is simply that the larger society has never understood, and still doesn't understand the Indian concept of the terms *Canada* and *Canadian*.

As an illustration of how completely overwhelming such a misunderstanding can be: when an Indian suggests that he simply wants to remain an Indian, that declaration is perceived as both un-Canadian and a wholly undesirable goal. Naturally it follows that no effort must be left untried to prevent that poor, benighted Indian from pursuing such a goal.

To a large degree it was on this basis that the Trudeau Government came up

with their white paper in 1969 which proposed nothing less than total assimilation of the Indian people. In spite of the quick and fiercely emotional rejection of that proposal, the government to this day does not know why the Indians reacted so violently, and cannot understand why they wouldn't accept such a reasonable philosophy. For the most part the government remains convinced that if only the Indians understood what that white paper was talking about they would accept it as being the best path for them to follow.

Because of such a major, fundamental misunderstanding a lot of wrong assumptions are being made by people both in the larger society and within the Indian community. We have what seems to be a Mexican stand-off between two sides, each passionately believing that what they stand for is right, and that if only those other fellows would understand there would be no problem. In maintaining such a stand-off, incidences of emotional confrontation between Indians and whites are escalating across the land. Many individuals who mean well now find themselves in a fight that they did not start and worse yet don't know how to get out of. Consequently, and quite understandably, they are committed to winning that fight—however they can.

Because so few people on either the Indian or the white side really understand the basis of the relationship between the two societies, or the differences in cultural definitions and perspectives, we face another danger. This is the intrusion into the battleground of people who mistakenly identify and confuse their own ideological beliefs with Indian problems and grievances. This can be a dangerous intrusion. A left-wing element in this country, not really understanding what the Indian nations are all about, nevertheless has seized upon the opportunity of the present unsettled Indian situation as ripe for promotion of their kind of thinking and action. Their doctrinaire-oriented operation is in opposition to the values put forward by the establishment. Over the next few years as this left-wing element strives to assert itself, such action undoubtedly will spawn a counter-balancing right-wrong faction. Then there arises a real danger that Indian people in this country will polarize around different ideologies with which perhaps they have no legitimate reason to be involved. I very much fear that Indians, as did the whites before them, will get sucked unwittingly into a purely political battle of ideologies which can do them no good and more likely will harm them and their cause.

This, it seems to me, is one of the oncoming dangers that we face, especially in the type of economic climate that this country is moving toward. As individuals search for ways to meet the threat posed to their society by world and national economic ailments, members of both the larger society and the minorities will tend to look for pat answers. Perhaps the easiest of such answers are precisely those backed by differing ideological movements.

Already there are definite signs that this is happening. Not long ago a caravan of young Indians marched from western Canada to Ottawa, only to wind up getting their heads smashed by police on Parliament Hill. Individuals who were involved have identified a very strong influence, indeed almost a takeover of that caravan, by Maoists and other leftist groups.

Even more seriously there seems to be emerging from the Northwest Territories' Dene Declaration (a statement of Indian nationhood issued by the tribes of the Northwest Territories), an intrusion of left-wing thinking that is perhaps much closer to the academic community in Toronto than it is to the Dene. With that tainted declaration as a guide, I fear that the Indian people of the Northwest Territories may well find themselves locked in a needless battle with the federal government; a futile battle fought for purposes foreign to their own, a battle that can only serve to divert their attention and energies away from their true goals. They may also find themselves dragged willfully into the conflict with little, if any, control over why such a fight must be waged.

Careful study of the varying definitions of what Canada and being Canadian mean makes it obvious that concepts proposed by the Prime Minister are not that much different from ideas suggested by tribal elders. With that mutual recognition perhaps we can at least begin to create the environment that will allow a start at tackling the real problems without getting bogged down in a cold-war mentality between whites and Indians. By wiping out the misunderstandings that have existed for so long we can create an opportunity for members of both societies to attack the very real problems that do exist and work toward mutually-identified goals.

Essentially then, when we talk about Canada or Canadianism it is even more vital now than ever before that Indians across the country define their terms more precisely.

One of the reasons for the apparent misunderstanding between Indian people and the larger society, particularly in recent times, may have been a tendency by Indians to rely too greatly upon white consultants hired, paradoxically, to improve communications between the two societies. Such consultants usually are quite expert in one field—they satisfactorily provide Indians with the badly needed expertise in defining English terminology. The problem is that they seldom know anything about Indian people or the Indian nations, let alone the definitions Indians apply to themselves. Consequently what emerges is the white academic's imperfect understanding or interpretation of what Indians are all about, rather than the facts in Indian terms. The hired experts may, and often do, make valiant efforts to explain, but they end up creating more confusion because all they are explaining is their own confusion. Another vital area in which this sort of error is surfacing is the problem of defining the term *aboriginal rights* as it relates to Indian claims right across Canada.

In essence then, part of the difficulty in communication has been the barrier, linguistic and cultural, between Indian tribes, Indian nations, and members of the white society.

The basic task that remains after three or four centuries of contact between Indians and whites is still the construction of a bridge of understanding between two worlds that exist as separate realities.

Drew Hayden Taylor b. 1962

OJIBWAY

Pretty Like a White Boy: The Adventures of a Blue Eyed Ojibway

In this big, huge world, with all its billions and billions of people, it's safe to say that everybody will eventually come across personalities and individuals that will touch them in some peculiar yet poignant way. Individuals that in some way represent and help define who you are. I'm no different, mine was Kermit the Frog. Not just because Natives have a long tradition of savouring frogs' legs, but because of his music. If you all may remember, Kermit is quite famous for his rendition of 'It's Not Easy Being Green'. I can relate. If I could sing, my song would be 'It's Not Easy Having Blue Eyes in a Brown Eyed Village'.

Yes, I'm afraid it's true. The author happens to be a card-carrying Indian. Once you get past the aforementioned eyes, the fair skin, light brown hair, and noticeable lack of cheekbones, there lies the heart and spirit of an Ojibway storyteller. Honest Injun, or as the more politically correct term may be, honest aboriginal.

You see, I'm the product of a white father I never knew, and an Ojibway woman who evidently couldn't run fast enough. As a kid I knew I looked a bit different. But, then again, all kids are paranoid when it comes to their peers. I had a fairly happy childhood, frolicking through the bullrushes. But there were certain things that, even then, made me notice my unusual appearance. Whenever we played cowboys and Indians, guess who had to be the bad guy, the cowboy.

It wasn't until I left the Reserve for the big bad city, that I became more aware of the role people expected me to play, and the fact that physically I didn't fit in. Everybody seemed to have this preconceived idea of how every Indian looked and acted. One guy, on my first day of college, asked me what kind of horse I preferred. I didn't have the heart to tell him 'hobby'.

I've often tried to be philosophical about the whole thing. I have both white and red blood in me. I guess that makes me pink. I am a 'Pink' man. Try to imagine this, I'm walking around on any typical Reserve in Canada, my head held high, proudly announcing to everyone 'I am a Pink Man'. It's a good thing I ran track in school.

My pinkness is constantly being pointed out to me over and over and over again. 'You don't look Indian?' 'You're not Indian, are you?' 'Really?!!?' I got questions like that from both white and Native people, for a while I debated having my status card tattooed on my forehead.

And like most insecure people and specially a blue-eyed Native writer, I went through a particularly severe identity crisis at one point. In fact, I admit it, one depressing spring evening. I died my hair black. Pitch black.

The reason for such a dramatic act, you may ask? Show Business. You see, for the last eight years or so, I've worked in various capacities in the performing arts, and as a result I'd always get calls to be an extra or even try out for an important role in some Native oriented movie. This anonymous voice would phone, having been given my number, and ask if I would be interested in trying out for a movie. Being a naturally ambitious, curious, and greedy young man, I would always readily agree, stardom flashing in my eyes and hunger pains from my wallet.

A few days later I would show up for the audition, and that was always an experience. What kind of experience you may ask? Picture this, the picture calls for the casting of seventeenth-century Mohawk warriors living in a traditional longhouse. The casting director calls the name 'Drew Hayden Taylor' and I enter.

The casting director, the producer, and the film's director look up from the table and see my face, blue eyes flashing in anticipation. I once was described as a slightly chubby beachboy. But even beachboys have tans. Anyway, there would be a quick flush of confusion, a recheck of the papers, and a hesitant 'Mr Taylor?' Then they would ask if I was at the right audition. It was always the same. By the way, I never got any of the parts I tried for, except for a few anonymous crowd shots. Politics tells me it's because of the way I look, reality tells me it's probably because I can't act. I'm not sure which is better.

It's not just film people either. Recently I've become quite involved in Theatre, Native theatre to be exact. And one cold October day I was happily attending the Toronto leg of a province-wide tour of my first play, *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock*. The place was sold out, the audience very receptive and the performance was wonderful. Ironically one of the actors was also half white.

The director later told me he had been talking with the actor's father, an older non-Native type chap. Evidently he had asked a few questions about me, and how I did my research. This made the director curious and he asked about the father's interest. He replied, 'He's got an amazing grasp of the Native situation for a white person.'

Not all these incidents are work-related either. One time a friend and I were coming out of a rather upscale bar (we were out YUPPIE watching) and managed to catch a cab. We thanked the cab driver for being so comfortably close on such a cold night, he shrugged and nonchalantly talked about knowing what bars to drive around. 'If you're not careful, all you'll get is drunk Indians.' I hiccuped.

Another time this cab driver droned on and on about the government. He started out by criticizing Mulroney, and eventually to his handling of the Oka crisis. This perked up my ears, until he said 'If it were me, I'd have tear-gassed the place by the second day. No more problem.' He got a dime tip. A few incidents like this and I'm convinced I'd make a great undercover agent for one of the Native political organizations.

But then again, even Native people have been known to look at me with a fair amount of suspicion. Many years ago when I was a young man, I was

working on a documentary on Native culture up in the wilds of Northern Ontario. We were at an isolated cabin filming a trapper woman and her kids. This one particular nine-year-old girl seemed to take a shine to me. She followed me around for two days both annoying me and endearing herself to me. But she absolutely refused to believe that I was Indian. The whole film crew tried to tell her but to no avail. She was certain I was white.

Then one day as I was loading up the car with film equipment, she asked me if I wanted some tea. Being in a hurry I declined the tea. She immediately smiled with victory crying out, 'See, you're not Indian, all Indians drink tea!'

Frustrated and a little hurt I whipped out my Status card and thrust it at her. Now there I was, standing in a Northern Ontario winter, showing my Status card to a nine-year-old non-status Indian girl who had no idea what one was. Looking back, this may not have been one of my brighter moves.

But I must admit, it was a Native woman that boiled everything down in one simple sentence. You may know that woman, Marianne Jones from 'The Beachcombers' television series. We were working on a film together out west and we got to gossiping. Eventually we got around to talking about our respective villages. Hers on the Queen Charlotte Islands, or Haida Gwaii as the Haida call them, and mine in central Ontario.

Eventually childhood on the Reserve was being discussed and I made a comment about the way I look. She studied me for a moment, smiled, and said 'Do you know what the old women in my village would call you?' Hesitant but curious, I shook my head. 'They'd say you were pretty like a white boy.' To this day I'm still not sure if I like that.

Now some may argue that I am simply a Métis with a Status card. I disagree. I failed French in grade 11. And the Métis as everyone knows have their own separate and honourable culture, particularly in western Canada. And of course I am well aware that I am not the only person with my physical characteristics.

I remember once looking at a video tape of a drum group, shot on a Reserve up near Manitoulin Island. I noticed one of the drummers seemed quite fairhaired, almost blond. I mentioned this to my girlfriend of the time and she shrugged saying, 'Well, that's to be expected. The highway runs right through the Reserve.'

Perhaps I'm being too critical. There's a lot to be said for both cultures. For example, on the left hand, you have the Native respect for Elders. They understand the concept of wisdom and insight coming with age.

On the white hand, there's Italian food. I mean I really love my mother and family but seriously, does anything really beat good Veal Scallopini? Most of my aboriginal friends share my fondness for this particular brand of food. Wasn't there a warrior at Oka named Lasagna? I found it ironic, though curiously logical, that Columbus was Italian. A connection I wonder?

Also Native people have this wonderful respect and love for the land. They believe they are part of it, a mere chain in the cycle of existence. Now as

many of you know, this conflicts with the accepted Judeo-Christian, i.e., western view of land management. I even believe somewhere in the first chapters of the Bible it says something about God giving man dominion over Nature. Check it out, Genesis 4:7, 'Thou shalt clear cut.' So I grew up understanding that everything around me is important and alive. My Native heritage gave me that.

And again, on the white hand, there's breast implants. Darn clever them white people. That's something Indians would never have invented, seriously. We're not ambitious enough. We just take what the Creator decides to give us, but no, not the white man. Just imagine it, some serious looking white man, and let's face it people, we know it was a man who invented them, don't we? So just imagine some serious looking white doctor sitting around in his laboratory muttering to himself, 'Big tits, big tits, hmmm, how do I make big tits?' If it was an Indian, it would be 'Big tits, big tits, white women sure got big tits' and leave it at that.

So where does that leave me on the big philosophical scoreboard, what exactly are my choices again; Indian—respect for elders, love of the land. White people—food and big tits. In order to live in both cultures I guess I'd have to find an Indian woman with big tits who lives with her grandmother in a cabin out in the woods and can make Fettuccini Alfredo on a wood stove.

Now let me make this clear, I'm not writing this for sympathy, or out of anger, or even some need for self-glorification. I am just setting the facts straight. For as you read this, a new Nation is born. This is a declaration of independence, my declaration of independence.

I've spent too many years explaining who and what I am repeatedly, so as of this moment, I officially secede from both races. I plan to start my own separate nation. Because I am half Ojibway, and half Caucasian, we will be called the Occasions. And I, of course, since I'm founding the new nation, will be a Special Occasion.