

THE AMERICAN
INDIAN INTELLECTUAL
TRADITION

An Anthology of Writings from 1772 to 1972

Edited and with an Introduction by

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“Which One Are You? Five Types of Young Indians”

CLYDE WARRIOR, 1964

Clyde Warrior (1939–1968), Ponca, activist, and cofounder of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC). After cofounding the NIYC in 1961 at Gallup, New Mexico, Warrior rose to become one of the leading idealists of the burgeoning Red Power movement, which had become disenchanted with institutionalism. Taking a much more confrontational approach to indigenous political issues, such as treaty rights, than many tribal leaders—including those in the National Congress of American Indians—were comfortable with, Warrior spawned an era of Indian nationalism that is still informing American Indian activism today. In reference to some early activist work that Warrior did on behalf of the Cherokee in Oklahoma, Stan Steiner referred to the Ponca leader as a “young Indian intellectual” who “was one of the angriest of the angry young men of the hills.”²⁴ Warrior took this anger and used it to inspire a movement hitherto unseen in the Indian community, beginning with the Fish-Ins, which was an effort to get tribal fishing rights recognized by state and federal authorities who were exploiting the area at the expense of local Indian interests, in the Pacific Northwest, which motivated a generation of young Indians to take their destiny into their own hands. As a college-educated individual, Warrior was also capable of expressing his ideas and opinions in writing. The selected reading for this volume, “Which One Are You? Five Types of Young Indians” (ABC: Americans Before Columbus, 1964)—in contradistinction to Frell M. Owl’s piece—focuses exclusively on young people in an attempt to get them to reflect on their own lives and question the authority that reigns over them.

Among American Indian youth today there exists a rather pathetic scene, in fact, a very sick, sad, sorry scene. This scene consists of the various types of Indian students found in various institutions of learning throughout American society. It is very sad that these institutions, and whatever conditioning takes place, creates these types. For these types are just what they are, types, and not full, real human beings, or people.

Many of you probably already know these types. Many of you probably know the reasons why these types exist. This writer does not pretend to know why. This writer can only offer an opinion as to names and types, define their characteristics, and offer a possible alternative; notice alternative—not a definite solution. All this writer is merely saying is he does not

like Indian youth being turned into something that is not real, and that somebody needs to offer a better alternative:

Type A—SLOB or HOOD. This is the individual who receives his definition of self from the dominant society, and unfortunately, sees this kind in his daily relationships and associations with his own kind. Thus, he becomes this type by dropping out of school, becomes a wino, steals, eventually becomes a court case, and is usually sent off. If lucky, he marries, mistreats his family, and becomes a real pain to his tribal community as he attempts to cram that definition [of himself] down the society’s throat. In doing this, he becomes a Super Slob. Another Indian hits the dust through no fault of his own.

Type B—JOKER. This type has defined himself that to be an Indian is a joke. An Indian does stupid, funny things. After defining himself, from cues society gave him, he proceeds to act as such. Sometimes he accidentally goofs up, sometimes unconsciously on purpose, after which he laughs, and usually says, “Well, that’s Indian.” And he goes through life a bungling clown.

Type C—REDSKIN “WHITE-NOSER” or THE SELL-OUT. This type has accepted and sold out to the dominant society. He has accepted that definition that anything Indian is dumb, usually filthy, and immoral, and to avoid this is to become a “LITTLE BROWN AMERICAN” by associating with everything that is white. He may mingle with Indians, but only when it is to his advantage, and not a second longer than is necessary. Thus, society has created the fink of finks.

Type D—ULTRA-PSEUDO-INDIAN. This type is proud that he is Indian, but for some reason does not know how one acts. Therefore he takes his cues from non-Indian sources, books, shows, etc., and proceeds to act “Indian.” With each action, which is phony, we have a person becoming unconsciously phonier and phonier. Hence, we have a proud, phony Indian.

Type E—ANGRY NATIONALIST. Although abstract and ideological, this type is generally closer to true Indianness than the other types, an IQ he resents the others for being ashamed of their own identity. Also, this type tends to dislike the older generation for being “Uncle Tomahawks” and “yes men” to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and whites in general. The “Angry Nationalist” wants to stop the current trend toward personality disappearance, and institute changes that will bring Indians into contemporary society as real human beings; but he views this, and other problems, with bitter abstract and ideological thinking. For thinking this [he] is termed radical, and [he] tends to alienate himself from the general masses of Indians, for speaking what appears, to him, to be truths.

None of these types is the ideal Indian . . .

It appears that what is needed is genuine contemporary creative thinking, democratic leadership to set guidelines, cues and goals for the average Indian. The guidelines and cues have to be based on true Indian philosophy geared to modern times. This will not come about without nationalistic pride in one’s self and one’s own kind.

This group can evolve only from today's college youth. Not from those who are ashamed, or those who have sold out, or those who do not understand true Indianism. Only from those with pride and love and understanding of the People and the People's ways from which they come can this evolve. And this appears to be the major task of the National Indian Youth Council—for without a people, how can one have a cause?

This writer says this because he is fed up with religious workers and educationalists incapable of understanding, and pseudo-social scientists who are consciously creating social and cultural genocide among American Indian youth.

I am fed up with bureaucrats who try to pass off "rules and regulations" for organizational programs that will bring progress.

I am sick and tired of seeing my elders stripped of dignity and low-rated in the eyes of their young.

I am disturbed to the point of screaming when I see American Indian youth accepting the horror of "American conformity," as being the only way for Indian progress. While those who do not join the great American mainstream of personalityless neurotics are regarded as "incompetents and problems."

The National Indian Youth Council must introduce to this sick room of stench and anonymity some fresh air of new Indian-ness. A fresh air of new honesty, and integrity, a fresh air of new Indian idealism, a fresh air of a new Greater Indian America.

How about it? Let's raise some hell!

"Pan-Indianism"

ROBERT K. THOMAS, 1965

Robert K. Thomas (d. 1991), Cherokee, anthropologist, who taught for many years at the University of Arizona, in addition to a wide variety of research and academic positions. As a working anthropologist, Thomas engaged in numerous fieldwork projects on a variety of Indian communities, such as the Cherokee, Sioux, Papago, and Cree. As a scholar, Thomas published an impressive number of articles in peer-reviewed scholarly journals, maintaining an interest in how Indians preserve identity in an environment of change. This topic also informed his political interests in cultural revitalization and the Indian youth movement. The following selection, "Pan-Indianism," was published in the February 1965 issue of the Midcontinent American Studies Journal.

Pan-Indianism, as we use the term in anthropology, is an extremely complex and ever growing social phenomenon. It is seen differently by different people in different parts of the country. As an anthropologist, I feel comfortable dealing with social process which is firmly rooted in the small community, but such a complex social phenomenon as Pan-Indianism, which takes in so much territory spatially and temporally, is a little beyond our methodology in anthropology and my competence. The best I can hope to do in this paper is to pick up the main threads of this social movement, to present fleeting vignettes of its historical development and to offer some ideas about its present breadth and direction.

The basis for this paper is field work done in a Sac and Fox community of central Oklahoma in 1956 and among the Pine Ridge Sioux of South Dakota in 1958. Field work in the Southwest and among the Oklahoma Cherokee has added significantly to an understanding of the limits and spread of Pan-Indianism. However, much of the material in this paper comes from more impressionistic contacts with American Indian groups—intimate involvement in Indian affairs for quite a number of years, extended visits to many American Indian communities, participation as a member at the Chicago Indian Center and the like. In a sense, this paper is an attempt to systematize many impressions, experiences and insights. Needless to say, there are many gaps in my knowledge of the Pan-Indian movement.