UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF INDIANNESS:
CULTURAL PERSISTENCE IN PLAIN SIGHT, 1898-PRESENT

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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Norman, Oklahoma
2012

PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF INDIANNESS:
CULTURAL PERSISTENCE IN PLAIN SIGHT, 1898-PRESENT

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
GRADUATE COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

This work examines the ways in which various American Indian groups and individuals have presented aspects of their cultures publicly over the last century, especially at events and venues considered to be non-Indian in origin. The intersection of American popular culture and Indigenous cultural representation presents unique opportunities to explore important issues that Native American people have faced over the last hundred years—assimilation policies of the federal government, retention of traditional cultural practices, and combating stereotypes of Indians created by the dominant society, to name just a few. Exhibits of Indian products (and Indians themselves) at fairs and expositions are beginning to receive the scholarly attention they deserve because of the copious coverage of them by the press and the window into contemporary Native life that they offer. For this study, the involvement of Indian people in three distinct fairs—the 1898 Omaha Exposition, the Cheyenne-Arapaho Indian Fair, and the American Indian Exposition—is explored to demonstrate the degree to which the Native participants both shaped and were shaped by these events.

The latter chapters of the dissertation focus on the issues of Indigenous representation in Indian princess pageants, tourist villages, and dance exhibitions. It is safe to say that many Americans, to the extent that they have any concept of Native Americans at all, have formed their views of American Indians to a great extent on how they have encountered them on vacation, at

school, or at some public place outside of a Native community. How "authentic" is this image, though, given the out-of-context performances that are being presented? Issues of cultural concessions and cultural revitalization, as well as Native control of their own image, are examined to better understand the notion of representation from the representatives themselves. I conclude the dissertation with a description of how Indian tribes and individuals today are using public dance performances to perpetuate, reinvigorate, and/or recreate aspects of their cultures. As well, the use of performance to reintroduce culture to individuals detached from their respective tribes will be discussed to demonstrate that dance can and does have the power to heal.

INTRODUCTION

American Indians have been “on display” for non-Indian viewers since the time Europeans first encountered them more than five centuries ago. Taken captive and brought back to European seats of power, these Indigenous “trophies” represented ocular evidence of discoveries of new and exotic lands and made Europeans feels more certain about their own level of civilization vis-à-vis that of the apparently backward children of nature. Non-Indian entrepreneurs soon began capitalizing on the widespread fascination with Indians by importing them to Italy, France, England, Germany, Spain, and Portugal for show purposes. Some of these early Native showpersons came willingly, while others were coerced or duped into going. By the late 1800s, the stream of Indian performers had become a veritable torrent as large-scale circuses and Wild West shows hired them in droves to re-enact historical episodes from the passing of the West and to sing, dance, and live in tipi villages as audiences assumed all Native Americans did.

Native people also began, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, to carve out a performance niche for themselves that did not require lengthy tours abroad. In addition to joining numerous domestic traveling shows, they became de rigueur attractions at fairs of all sizes, non-Indian civic celebrations, and at amusement parks. Not coincidently, this homegrown demand for Indigenous talent coincided with the placing of tribes on reservations where

their military threat was, at least theoretically, contained. Once whites no longer feared Indian attacks, a pressure valve was released in their collective psyche that allowed them to enjoy Native Americans as sources of entertainment and curiosity on a more intimate level than had heretofore been possible. As historian Clyde Ellis explains, "It was rather like seeing animals at the circus: encountering the same animals in the wild would have been cause for panic; displaying them as exhibits under the control of white masters, however, released audiences from their fears and allowed them to trade their apprehension for a voyeuristic gaze."[1]

As nostalgia for the Old West grew, so too did the opportunities for Indian entertainers. The rise of the motion picture industry and transportation advances in the first-quarter of the twentieth century made Indians more accessible than ever before, both on the screen and closer to home at public events. Some of the first Native cultural performers, such as Te Ata Fisher and Molly Spotted Elk, emerged at this time and made careers out of teaching Native ways to primarily non-Indian audiences. Teams of Native American baseball, basketball, and football players; musical bands made up entirely of Indians; and even Indigenous magicians and roller skaters crisscrossed the country to capitalize on the public's seemingly insatiable appetite for Indians in any and all forms. As paved roads and automobiles became part of the American landscape, so too did the ubiquitous tourist trap. Many of these attractions were either Indian themed and/or employed actual Indians to entice

weary travelers to stop, rest, and enjoy what the First Americans had to offer. Over time, these tourist villages, with substantial modifications, became the tribal cultural centers of the 1950s and 1960s and which have proliferated recently among Indigenous peoples across the country.

The Great Depression and then World War II landed dual blows to Indian entertainers as traveling shows by the hundreds ceased operation. Some performers struck out on their own and a few found jobs at large-scale amusement parks that blossomed during the Cold War era, but most novelty acts simply faded away. Both individuals and groups, veterans of the increasingly visible and widespread intertribal powwow circuit, though, began to earn money by making appearances at schools, parks, and governmental institutions, performing Indian dances and explaining Indian cultures to a new generation of both Native and non-Native viewers. Venues such as fairs and civic celebrations continued to be viable options for Indian performers; the fact that tribes themselves began operating rodeos and fairs demonstrated a conscious effort to assume greater control over their image and to keep more of the financial rewards for themselves.

Many of the aforementioned cultural performance forms and venues continue to be viable today, albeit with alterations born of increased Indian control over their own presentation, changes in both Native and non-Indian performance mediums over time, and the commitment of tribal monies to cultural retention and cultural tourism programs. Remaining constant,

however, seems to be the core reasons why Indian performers choose to present aspects of their cultures publicly: to educate and break down stereotypes, to meet new people and travel, to act as spokespersons for their tribes and families, and, to a lesser degree, to earn money. Few of these cultural conduits, either historically or today, have been able to make a living at "being Indian," but that has not stopped them from doing what they love to do. The state of Oklahoma, the nation, and even other countries have been the beneficiaries of this rich performance tradition, and the way things look, there is every reason to believe that public Indian entertainers will continue to enlighten and entertain for the foreseeable future.

The manner in which Native people have navigated the often murky waters of American popular culture forms the underpinning of this work. While many of the institutions and venues at which American Indians have made themselves publicly available for the last century or so might accurately be described as creations of non-Indian culture, they have nevertheless served as vehicles of cultural preservation for Indigenous peoples in Oklahoma and beyond. Native involvement in fairs, princess pageants, and tourist villages, as well as the performance of dance programs at various public sites, has given Indians new avenues and new reasons to discover, perpetuate, and/or solidify their Native identity. While some might question whether this entry into the capitalistic, non-Indian economy has compromised or somehow cheapened traditional ceremonies, dances, and dress, I argue in this study that in many

cases it has actually served to strengthen cultural knowledge.[2] After all, in order to present one's culture, one has to know at least a little bit about it.

The interdisciplinary nature of this study has been informed by a host of scholars in a variety of fields—history, anthropology, Native American studies, musicology, art history, and tourism studies—but wherever possible I have tried to allow Indians to speak for themselves, either through the documents they left behind or from the numerous personal interviews that form the backbone of chapters four through six of the dissertation. In the first part of this work (chapters one through three), I examine Native involvement in fairs and expositions. The first chapter focuses on a large group of Indians (many from Oklahoma) who journeyed to the 1898 Omaha World's Fair to serve as the primitive foil to the sophistication of Euro-American society on display at the attraction. Historian Robert W. Rydell, in his classic study of U.S. world's fairs, posits that these institutions, didactic and entertaining as they were, possessed a more sinister side. As authoritative sources for shaping racial beliefs, they promoted white supremacy by degrading peoples of other cultures, including American Indians.[3] While I agree with Rydell that fair organizers *intended* for such attractions as Indian villages to serve as counterpoints to Anglo progress, I assert that, at least at Omaha, this simply did not happen. Native participants and bungling by the Office of Indian Affairs (hereafter OIA) combined to create what I believe to be the largest intertribal powwow up to that time.

Other scholars, such as Paige Raibmon, have identified expositions as merely alternative spaces at which Indigenous peoples carried out traditional activities, albeit in modified form. In her analysis of a group of Northwest Coast Indians who danced at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, she explains that performers made conscious decisions on what aspects of dances to present publicly: "Individuals and groups carefully considered which beliefs and practices could be compromised in order to preserve what they deemed the most important aspects of their identity."[4] Raibmon also sees the performance of the Hamatsa Dance as a form of overt political protest since the dance, as part of the Northwest Coast potlatch ceremonies, was under attack from government officials and missionaries back home. My findings closely parallel those of Raibmon, aside from the fact that participants at Omaha hailed from the Northern and Southern Plains, and controversy centered around the Omaha or War Dance rather than the Hamatsa Dance. Despite these differences, both I and Raibmon conclude that pragmatic concessions to accommodate a wider cohort of dancers ensured the dances' survival to succeeding generations.

Chapter two focuses on Native involvement in the Cheyenne-Arapaho Indian Fair held in western Oklahoma from 1910 through 1914. The event, instituted by the OIA, aimed to encourage agricultural pursuits among Native farmers, make better homemakers of Native housewives, and dissuade Native peoples from traveling to various festivals and Anglo fairs every summer and

fall. As a public relations tool, the Indian agricultural fair policy was also meant to offer visual proof to non-Indians who attended them that the government's assimilation efforts were in fact working. While these fairs have received some recent attention from scholars, notably historian L.G. Moses, there have been no in-depth studies of any of the roughly forty government-sponsored Indian fairs that flourished in the early part of the twentieth century. Moses, in his work on Indians employed by Wild West shows, concludes that Native fairs offered Indians less freedom to dance and carry out other traditional activities than did Wild West shows owing to the former's regulation by the Indian Office.[5] Whereas Indian fairs proscribed Indianness, Wild West shows promoted it. And, as private enterprises with no ties to the government, these shows enjoyed little oversight and much popular support.

Moses' argument might hold true for some Indian fairs (and undoubtedly varied from agency to agency depending on the superintendent), but in my examination of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Indian Fair, I did not find this to be the case. Tribal members presented themselves to the public largely in the manner they wanted to as government agents tacitly accepted the dances and sham battles that took place as simply being part of the show. In fact, the only indication to audience members that they were in fact enjoying an Indian fair rather than a Wild West show were the numerous exhibit booths surrounding the arena. Further research of other tribal fairs will likely support

the notion that Native control over these events trumped governmental oversight on most occasions.

In chapter three, I examine two Native American-centered festivals—the Craterville Park Indian Fair (hereafter CPIF) and the American Indian Exposition (hereafter AIE)—that emerged in western Oklahoma following the demise of government-sponsored Indian fairs around 1920. The latter event, held at an amusement park north of Lawton, Oklahoma, in the Wichita Mountains from 1924 to 1934, featured many of the same activities seen at OIA fairs. That it also featured Anglo oversight represents only one of several important distinctions between it and the American Indian Exposition, which began in 1934, continues to this day, and from its inception has been controlled by an all-Indian board. In addition to determining how ownership affected the longevity of each event, I also consider how it shaped the portrayal of Indians that attended. Did the program of events become less theatrical and more traditional with Native ownership? Were Indians "marketed" to consumers differently at Craterville than at Anadarko (the town in which the American Indian Exposition was held)? These questions and others are addressed in order to better understand the relationship between organizers of Indian festivals and the main attractions who made them viable economic enterprises.

Both of these events have received little scholarly attention, save for a chapter in Clyde Ellis' 2008 book, "A Dancing People." In it, he explores the impact of the CPIF and the AIE on the development of the powwow circuit in

Oklahoma and offers reasons for the decline in popularity of each. Ellis attributes the discontinuance of the CPIF to the death of Frank Rush, Sr., in 1933, the dissatisfaction with Rush among certain Indians, and the rise of the distinctly Native enterprise, the AIE. While I agree that all three factors contributed to the closure of the CPIF, I attempt to better explain why the rise of the AIE led to the downfall of Rush's festival and also emphasize the importance of advertising as well as the support of the state and federal governments to the success of the Anadarko exposition.

The much maligned and poorly understood Indian princess is the focus of chapter four. Here I study specifically the Miss Indian America Pageant held yearly in Sheridan, Wyoming, as part of the All-American Indian Days from 1953 to 1983. Based on interviews conducted with Sharron Ahtone Harjo (Kiowa/Creek) and Barbara Pappio Poe (Kiowa/Chippewa), I demonstrate the importance of family and tribal support in earning the Miss Indian America crown and explore the sometimes weighty responsibilities associated with the title. As well, the importance of knowing one's tribal clothing, ceremonies, art, and history to winning the pageant are examined in order to show how competing for MIA could make contestants feel more tied to their Native communities.

Chapter five traces the often contentious process of building and staffing a recreated Cherokee village from circa 1700 in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Tsa-La-Gi Village or the Ancient Village as it came to be known, opened in

1967 and served to educate the public about Cherokee life prior to contact with Europeans while bringing much needed tourist dollars to northeast Oklahoma and employing several dozen tribal members in the process. The project met resistance at every turn, from funding to location to content, revealing deep divisions between the tribe's governing body (which represented the prime force in developing the village) and its constituency. While opponents of the living history museum criticized the depiction of their ancestors as "savages" and the low rates of pay for Tsa-La-Gi employees, most village workers I interviewed seemed to have enjoyed their experiences there and often returned for multiple summers. The dynamic between tourists and the Native demonstrators who worked in the village is also examined in order to dispel any notion that villagers were silent, powerless pawns on the chessboard that was the Ancient Village. Although employees (with the exception of guides) were not allowed to speak to visitors, they certainly talked amongst themselves—both in Cherokee and in English—and took pride in their duties as historical reenactors.

Several recent studies have focused on Indian villages, with widely divergent conclusions as to the degree of cultural commodification and appropriation displayed in each. Patsy West, in her thorough analysis of the Florida Seminole involvement in the tourist industry, found little to differentiate Native life in for-profit villages from that of life in actual Seminole villages. Miccosukees managed to avoid the "tawdry

commercialized representations" of their culture because virtually the entire tribe was, to some degree or another, involved in the tourism business.[6] Tribal members thus exercised considerable control over how they were presented to outsiders because they owned many of the tourist villages themselves. Rather than having a deleterious effect on traditional folkways, says West, involvement in the tourist industry actually enhanced such practices as the making of patchwork because working in the villages afforded women both more time to devote to the art as well as better access to sewing machines and fabric.[7]

Christina Beard-Moose offers a more cynical view of Native-tourist interactions in her study of the Eastern Cherokees of North Carolina. One sees less a willing involvement of tribal members here than a forced participation in the tourist industry owing to the lack of other viable economic opportunities in the area. Beard-Moose believes this to be so because the Seminoles welcomed their situation while Cherokee tourist endeavors never drew the support of those living in the Great Smoky Mountain area—mainly because the non-Indian owner/operators employed less than culturally-sensitive means to extract tourist dollars. Although only a small section of the book is devoted to the Oconoluftee Village, it appears that the motives behind its creation were similar to those of the Tsa-La-Gi Village in Oklahoma: to educate the public about Cherokee history and culture through live demonstrations and to employ as many tribal members as possible in the process. The conclusion reached by

Beard-Moose—that Oconoluftee was only partially successful in teaching tourists about Cherokee lifeways because only a small percentage of visitors to the area opted to visit the attraction—could accurately be applied to the situation at Tahlequah. However, I suggest that Tsa-La-Gi entered the ring with essentially both hands tied behind its back owing to the lack of tourism infrastructure nearby coupled with its geographical location (northeastern Oklahoma) that never came close to attracting the numbers of visitors to its borders as did the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina.

One major difference between our studies centers upon the issue of exploitation in the villages. Beard-Moose finds "disturbing" the idea that Oconoluftee's planners had at one time envisioned Indian families living in the village full-time, believing it demonstrated "a blatant racist 'othering.'"[8] While acknowledging that villagers were compensated for their labor and allowed to sell articles they produced, she nonetheless found Oconoluftee guilty of "exoticizing the other."[9] Admittedly, the Cherokees employed in North Carolina could have experienced vastly different conditions than those found in Oklahoma. However, after speaking with several former Tsa-La-Gi villagers, I failed to hear even a mention of exploitation and most seemed appreciative of the opportunity the attraction afforded them. They agreed with Beard-Moose about being "exoticized" at times, but none felt duped or tricked into working as living historical interpreters, nor were they asked to perform their job duties without fair compensation. I believe Beard-Moose falls into

the trap of reading too much into the tourist literature here and incorrectly assumes the organizers of the Eastern Cherokee attraction ever intended for tribal members to take up residence in the village on a permanent basis. After all, both the founders and employees of Tsa-La-Gi spoke of Cherokees "living" at the village during the summer months, meaning they worked there during business hours but did not actually dwell in the historical structures therein (although some tourists mistakenly believed they did). Even if Cherokee families had made the village their home on a full-time basis, it would not change the fact that they had made the conscious decision to do so. Just because an Indigenous person earns money by exhibiting aspects of his or her culture in a public setting does not exploitation make.

In the final chapter of this work, I examine the life and experiences of a noted Fancy Dancer, Corney Yarholar (Pawnee/Otoe/Sac and Fox/Muscogee Creek). Yarholar, who is the great-grandson of the well-known Otoe Fancy Dancer, Sidney "Brave Scout" Moore, grew up in Oklahoma giving performances at schools, museums, civic celebrations, and at a host of other venues. He has traveled extensively, giving dance exhibitions across the United States, and in this chapter I focus on the three that had the most impact on him personally. Typical of most Native entertainers, Yarholar has had his share of forgettable moments on the road to go along with the immense fun of giving dance exhibitions. And, as a veteran of the powwow circuit, Yarholar offers a unique perspective on the differences between dancing at a contest

powwow and dancing before mostly non-Indian audiences at programs and shows. In addition, the Fancy Dancer, having performed in theatrical dance presentations as well as simple powwow dance exhibitions, details the shortcomings of dance theater and the often humorous attempts by non-Indian producers to evoke "authentic Native themes."

The few book-length works on American Indian performers paint a portrait of individuals who, despite their cultural knowledge and artistic talents, were forced to make concessions in their performances owing to the stereotypes of their age. Both Molly Spotted Elk and Te Ata Fisher, for example, told stories, wore regalia, and performed songs and dances that did not belong to their respective tribes. Furthermore, each found it expedient to adopt a more "Indian-sounding" name to satisfy the expectations of their largely non-Indian audiences. According to Bunny McBride, author of the Spotted Elk biography, Native performers from the late Victorian to the pre-World War II era "barely matched their traditions, for most modified their acts to please audiences that responded only to archetypal Indian models. . . . To succeed as an Indian entertainer, one could not be rigid about cultural authenticity."[10] While some scholars might dismiss these early Indian professional performers as sell-outs, caricatures, or stereotypes, they vocally and very publicly proclaimed their pride in being Indian at a time when it was not always popular to do so. Today's performers would no doubt understand the concessions they had to make, as they too make decisions to perform

publicly that are not always embraced by their tribes, families, or Indigenous people in general.

CHAPTER ONE

Presenting Culture on an International Stage: The 1898 Omaha World's Fair

Nebraska's Indian population exploded in the summer of 1898, but it was not due to natural increase. More than five hundred Indians representing twenty-three tribes came to Omaha as part of the United States Indian Department's exhibit at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition. During their three-month stay at the world's fair, Indians did a lot of dancing, feasting, and visiting, and earned a good deal of money performing sham battles. In doing so they demonstrated not only the vibrancy and resilience of Native American cultures, but also the ineffectiveness of the government's assimilation policy. The Indian Bureau spent $40,000 for the Indian Congress (as this gathering of Native people came to be known) to show the public how education was "civilizing" Native Americans. Instead it sponsored an enormous intertribal powwow and Wild West show that directly contradicted its own policies. Three factors—bureaucratic error, Indian resistance, and Indian agent accommodation—combined to produce an exhibit at Omaha that left the Indian Office red-faced and Christian reformers seething.

In this study I hope to demonstrate that Indians not only negotiated the terms on which they came to Omaha but also played a major role in determining what activities they would participate in once they arrived.[1] Rather than view the Indian Congress as an example of the imperialist and racist tendencies of the United States at the turn of the century as have some

scholars, I have chosen to adopt a less pessimistic view of the encampment.[2] Certainly exhibit organizers had their own colonialist ideas about how Native peoples should be portrayed to the American public at Omaha. However, Indians who attended the exposition created their own program of events that defied the notion that they were either subservient or assimilated. The intertribal Grass Dances that took place on the grounds throughout the summer, for instance, demonstrated that Indians were willing to compromise on where dances were held and who could participate in them in order to ensure their survival. Such concessions support historian Clyde Ellis' observation that the Omaha or Grass Dance became more secular in form and meaning in the late nineteenth century as warrior societies waned in importance.[3] And, as Paige Raibmon suggests in her study of Kwakwaka'wakw Indian dances at the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, such compromises represented not the "commercialized corruption of traditional practices" but rather cultural resilience in the face of the colonial policies of the federal government.[4]

Save for the size and scope of its Indian exhibit, the Omaha World's Fair typified those that preceded it and those that would follow it in the twentieth century. The purposes of the exposition, to boost the local economy and establish the city as a regional power, were not new concepts, and the fair's structures, while imposing, were by no means innovative. It featured magnificent buildings filled with exhibits from national, state, and local

governments and businesses; beautifully landscaped grounds with a central lagoon; and an entertainment-filled Midway section consisting of refreshment stands, wild animal exhibits, ethnic villages, and peep shows. The exposition attracted over two million people during its five-month duration, which compared favorably with attendance figures at the smaller world's fairs of the 1890s.[5] As is true of most fairs, all the buildings on the grounds were demolished shortly after the exposition concluded. Although the structures appeared permanent, they were in fact made of staff, a material similar to plaster of Paris.

Monuments to progress and Anglo-Saxon achievement, Gilded Age expositions seem an unlikely place to find exhibits related to American Indians, much less American Indians themselves. However, every U.S. world's fair from the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition to the 1904 St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition, featured some sort of Indian display. Most of these exhibits were organized either by anthropologists (many of whom worked for the Smithsonian's Bureau of American Ethnology) who sought to preserve vestiges of Native cultures before they disappeared or the Indian Department, which sought to destroy them. Such differences may have placed the two groups at loggerheads, but that did not prevent them from working together on fair exhibits. Reasons for this cooperation lay in the message each group wished to convey to the fairgoing public. Anthropologists, convinced that Native Americans were a vanishing race,

hoped to give white Americans one final glimpse of Native culture through displays of Indian artifacts and actual Indians. The Indian Office, too, believed Native peoples were disappearing, not so much numerically as culturally. It hoped to convince fairgoers, with displays of Native children's schoolwork or "civilized" Indians, that its educational system was responsible for erasing Native cultures. Thus, as counterpoints, anthropological and Indian Service exhibits could not have been more complementary to one another.[6]

The best example of complementary Indian Office-anthropology displays prior to the Omaha World's Fair appeared at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition. There, the government erected a two-story model Indian school in which Native pupils recited lessons and demonstrated domestic and industrial skills to the public. Indian Affairs head Thomas J. Morgan hoped the model school would offer fairgoers "a graphic and impressive showing of what the Government is trying to do in the way of education and civilization."[7] As a dramatic contrast to the school, the Indian Department planned to establish an encampment of traditional Indians near the schoolhouse to live as they did on their reservations. The distinction between primitive and progressive Natives would therefore be made clear to visitors.

Morgan's hopes for an ethnological village dimmed when Congress slashed the Bureau's exhibit appropriation, but he found a way around the problem by enlisting the help of Frederick Ward Putnam, an anthropologist at Harvard's Peabody Museum. Putnam, acting as director of the fair's

Department of Ethnology and Archaeology, eagerly agreed to assemble an encampment of Indians for Morgan. His efforts to attract representatives of various tribes to the exposition proved highly successful as over one hundred Navajo, Cree, Penobscot, and Iroquois Indians agreed to set up camp in the village just south of the model school building. The ethnological village and the model school proved popular with visitors, and both the Indian Department and anthropologists came away from Chicago feeling good about themselves.[8]

As originally conceived, the government Indian exhibit at the Omaha Exposition bore some semblance, at least ideologically, to that at Chicago. Edward Rosewater, editor and publisher of the *Omaha Bee* and chairman of the exposition's Bureau of Publicity and Promotion, first proposed the idea of a grand Indian encampment in August of 1897.[9] He envisioned bringing representatives of every tribe in North and South America to the fairgrounds to live in their Native abodes and perform dances and other ceremonies inside a structure he dubbed the "grand council wigwam." Indian artifacts from the collections of the Bureau of American Ethnology (hereafter BAE) could be displayed as well as a handful of Natives who had adopted the habits and dress of whites. Rosewater believed that this "Congress of Civilized Indians," though not as ambitious as the main Indian Congress, would prove to exposition visitors that at least some Native people possessed "intelligence and ability." The ethnology exhibit as a whole would no doubt be the last time so

many of the "bronze sons of the forest and plains" could be brought together before they were "gathered to the happy hunting grounds."[10]

Although Rosewater's plan met with immediate approval from exposition officials, who saw the exhibit's potential to lure visitors to the fair, it proved financially unfeasible and had to be scaled back. Working closely with BAE anthropologist James Mooney, who happened to be in town preparing his own exhibit for the fair, Rosewater revamped the exhibit. The newspaperman scrapped the Civilized Congress, the artifact display, and the grand wigwam portions of the display but kept the core Indian village component, albeit without Indians from Canada or South America.[11] The leaner, more focused exhibit had the endorsement of one of the most famous anthropologists of the era, but would it meet with the approval of the Indian Bureau and the U.S. Congress? After all, without the sanction of the former there would be no Indians, and without the sanction of the latter there would be no money.

Fair managers chose to tackle the Congressional appropriation problem first and solved the Bureau problem in the process. Sometime between October 1897, when Rosewater and Mooney finalized plans for the exhibit, and December 6, 1897, when the U.S. Congress convened, proponents of the Indian encampment convinced Nebraska Congressmen David H. Mercer and William V. Allen to introduce a bill in Congress that would provide $100,000 to carry out the project.[12] Although the bill died in committee in the House, it

reached the conference stage in the Senate early in 1898—but not without significant changes. The amended bill authorized the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to assemble a Congress of American Indians at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition to illustrate the "past and present conditions" of the tribes. It further stated that the Native village was to include "members of every tribe, showing tribal customs and habits, ancient and modern, the progress made by education, and such other matters and things as will fully illustrate Indian advancement in civilization."[13]

The final wording of this piece of legislation is revealing. It indicated that the Indian Department had not merely gotten behind the proposed Indian Congress but was in fact now in charge of the project. Secondly, it demonstrated the Bureau's desire to make the exhibit a comparative one in order to contrast the lifestyles of traditional and progressive Indians. Given the agency's past displays at world's fairs, neither development was terribly surprising. Secretary of the Interior Cornelius Bliss and officials in the Indian Office no doubt feared that Mooney and Rosewater's proposal for a congress of unassimilated Natives would directly challenge its own assertions that Indians were becoming civilized. By taking the reigns of the exhibit out of the hands of exposition officials, the Bureau assumed control of its ideological destiny at the fair. Visitors might see primitive Indians in droves, but this image would not go unchallenged. Educated Indians would be right there beside them to testify to the efficacy of the government's assimilation policy.

By March 1898, passage of the amended Indian Congress bill seemed a mere formality. The measure enjoyed broad support among people that counted, and the fact that Congress had already distributed hundreds of thousands of dollars for other exhibits at the fair augured well for its prospects of passage. Commissioner of Indian Affairs William A. Jones felt so confident the money would be forthcoming that he issued a circular to Indian agents on March 22, giving them the green light to begin preparing for the exhibit. With the fair set to open on June 1, this step was not an unreasonable one. However, it proved premature. On April 19, the U.S. declared war on Spain and might just as well have declared war on the Indian Congress bill itself. For legislative attention became so monopolized by war measures that the encampment bill never made it to a final vote.[14] It wilted on the vine and died, a victim of its own insignificance.

Exasperated but not defeated, Indian Office bureaucrats and exposition managers decided to try an end around to obtain the necessary funding. They knew that the annual Indian Appropriation bill would have to be voted on before Congress recessed for the summer. So, with the stroke of a pen, the Bureau attached a rider to this massive piece of legislation that replicated exactly the wording of the former Indian Congress bill. In conference, legislators slashed the appropriation for the encampment to $40,000, but kept the amendment in place.[15] The wheels of Congress turned slowly, though, and the Indian Appropriation bill did not come up for a final vote until late in

June—nearly a month after the Trans-Mississippi Exposition opened. When it finally passed on June 30, the Indian Congress finally became official.[16] The Bureau had its money, now all it needed was a few hundred Indians.

Commissioner Jones wasted little time naming a director for the exhibit once the bill passed. On July 11, he placed Captain William A. Mercer, acting superintendent at the Omaha and Winnebago Agency and a U.S. Army officer, in charge of the congress.[17] Mercer's reputation as an effective administrator who followed regulations closely, coupled with the fact that he headed an Indian agency only sixty miles north of Omaha made him a logical choice.[18] Before he could begin recruiting Native peoples to the fair, Captain Mercer needed a plan of action. He decided to use Jones' March 22 circular as a blueprint because this document spelled out not only the purpose of the proposed encampment but also the types of Indians the Bureau desired and the items delegates were to bring with them. By relying on the circular, however, the Captain unwittingly created an exhibit that neither Congress nor the Interior Department had originally intended. The fault lay not with Mercer—at least not initially—but rather with the Commissioner. As a closer examination of the circular will show, Jones misinterpreted the objective of the Indian Congress from the beginning and by doing so left the Department open for criticism later on.

In the three-page directive to agents, Commissioner Jones stated that the intent of the encampment was to illustrate the "mode of life, Native

industries, and ethnic traits" of Native Americans in "as thoroughly aboriginal" a manner as possible. Because most American Indians were rapidly "modifying their original habits and industries" by adopting those of white people, the congress would offer fairgoers the chance to see "primitive" Indians for perhaps the last time. Jones therefore asked agents to send only full-blooded Indians to Omaha, with the exception of one or two mixed-blood interpreters per delegation. Delegates were to live in their Native housing type while on the grounds and manufacture craft items for sale to visitors. The Commissioner also encouraged Natives participating in the encampment to bring along "implements of warfare" and any other items of historical interest they might own.[19] All expenses would, of course, be paid by the government.

Notably absent from the circular was any reference to either "civilized" or "educated" Indians. Inexplicably Jones had written progressive Natives completely out of the exhibit, directly contradicting the intent of the measure as passed by Congress. The reason for this omission is unclear, but it was probably the by-product of political patronage in the Indian Department. Jones might have brought a wealth of experience to the Commissioner's post when he arrived in Washington in May 1897, but it was not in Indian affairs. A banker and co-owner of a zinc company in Wisconsin, his efforts on behalf of William McKinley's 1896 presidential campaign had earned him his Bureau position.[20] Jones' lack of familiarity with the Indian Office's past exposition displays and ignorance of government Indian policy in general no doubt caused

him to overlook the necessity of having a counterpoint to traditional Indians at the fair.

Captain Mercer expected to have few problems attracting Native delegates to Omaha by August 4, the opening day of the encampment. After all, the congress offered Indians the chance to take a three-month paid vacation to see the splendors of a world's fair. Upon hearing news of the exhibit from their respective agents, however, few Indians dropped what they were doing to hop on the next train to Omaha. Instead, tribal members responded with a collective yawn. The fair was of no great importance to them; it represented not a vacation, but a disruption to their daily lives at the busiest time of the year. Consequently, tribes across the West initially declined Mercer's invitation and went on about their business. The Captain's initial optimism vanished as he settled down for a long summer of negotiation and compromise. If there was to be an Indian Congress at all, it would be held largely on Native terms, not the government's.

Fortunately for the Bureau, it had placed the exhibit in the hands of a man who refused to take "no" for an answer. Captain Mercer, acting the part of Gilded Age diplomat, asked Indians what it would take to get them to come to Omaha. If the responses of the Pine Ridge Sioux, the Jicarilla Apaches, and the Santa Clara Pueblos are any indication, they first wanted money. W.H. Clapp, superintendent at the Pine Ridge Agency, blamed Indians' desire for compensation on the pernicious influence of Buffalo Bill Cody. Each year

Cody paid Indians from Pine Ridge "substantial" sums to perform in his Wild West Show, thus giving them "an idea of their commercial value as show men." As a result, when Clapp broached the subject of the congress to them, they asked how much money they would receive. "When told they are not to be paid," related the agent, "they want nothing to do with the project."[21] Although Clapp promised to continue his recruiting efforts, he saw little hope for success.

On the Pueblo and Jicarilla Agency in New Mexico, the situation was much the same. The Pueblos had been paid to participate in celebrations at Santa Fe for years and annually sold pottery at the Colorado State Fair in Pueblo. Not surprisingly, they demanded ten dollars each if Mercer wanted them in Omaha by August 4, but were willing to accept less if they could arrive later in the summer.[22] Their agent, N.S. Walpole, described them as "industrious, laboring people" who knew the value of money and expected to be compensated for their time.[23] While the Jicarilla Apaches did not expect to be paid outright for going to the exposition, they did want to look like Indians when they got there. Consequently they requested twenty dollars apiece to purchase "various articles necessary to make a complete Native costume."[24]

In addition to money, Native people wanted to leave for Omaha when it was convenient for them rather than for Mercer. The rationale for this desire was simple: they needed to harvest their crops and hold harvest celebrations prior to leaving their reservations for three months. The same Santa Clara

Pueblos who requested ten dollars to travel to the fair also made it clear they would not leave home until after their August 12th feast day.[25] Kiowa farmers and stockmen in Oklahoma explained that they were too busy with harvesting and roundups to take time out for the Congress.[26] Even Indians at the Omaha and Winnebago Agency under Captain Mercer insisted on harvesting their wheat and holding their annual powwow before heading south to Omaha.[27] Because the Captain depended on two hundred Omahas and Winnebagoes being present at the encampment on opening day, it seems likely the exhibit's August 4 kickoff date was not chosen arbitrarily.

Since Mercer could not pay delegates directly (the Bureau forbade it), he probably assured Indians hesitant to come to Omaha that there would be ample money-making opportunities at the fair. Not only would they be able to sell arts and crafts to visitors, they would be compensated for participating in "Special Features," which at this time had not yet been determined.[28] Mercer could and did compromise with delegations on arrival dates, which explains why only about half of the five hundred Indians that would eventually make up the encampment took part in the opening ceremonies. Although the Blackfeet, Assiniboines, Chippewas, Iowa Sac and Fox, Jicarilla Apaches, Brule Sioux, and Cheyenne River Sioux were present on August 4, the aforementioned Pueblos and Kiowas did not join the congress until September.[29]

Upon arriving in Omaha, Native delegates were taken by wagon from the train station to the encampment grounds. Located on the periphery of the

exposition complex, the four-acre tract of land had wooded areas, grassy meadows, and a dirt arena. There were two wooden structures on the grounds when the Indians arrived, a commissary building for storing food and a curio shop for selling Native arts and crafts.[30] A high board fence enclosed the campground, which was bordered on the south and west by streets and on the north and east by various exposition buildings. While exhibitors located near the Indian Congress appreciated the number of visitors the Indians attracted to the remote northwest corner of the fairgrounds, one wonders if the Native groups who had to live there enjoyed the location quite as much. After all, on breezy summer days the odors that wafted into the encampment from the livestock and poultry exhibits next door would have been anything but pleasant.

Water for drinking, bathing, and laundering was piped into the Indian village through an underground plumbing system installed prior to the delegates' arrival. A pair of eighteen by thirty-foot tanks, each two feet deep, were placed on opposite ends of the camp and kept full of running water from Omaha's municipal water system for washing clothes. A three-feet-deep pool measuring twenty-five by thirty feet, with cement sides and bottom served as the children's communal bathtub, while adults bathed in larger, deeper pools enclosed in bath houses. Delegates received filtered water to drink, and for variety bought bottles of soda water on the Midway.[31]

Food distribution at the Congress mirrored the way rations were distributed on the reservation. Each head of family received a card with their name and the number of their dependents on it. Every five days family heads walked to the commissary on the north end of the campground, presented their identification cards, and received their allotted rations. Foods such as beef, bread, beans, hominy, dried fruit, potatoes, rice, and onions were issued, as well as ground coffee and tea. A reporter for the *Bee* observed that delegates usually tossed the meat, vegetables, and fruit into a single kettle, allowed the ingredients to boil, and then served the gruel-like concoction. The American Indian, he explained, was "not a graduate of any cooking school," but could prepare a meal "as palatable to an Indian as though it had been cooked in the most fashionable French restaurant in the land."[32]

Each tribe occupied a designated area on the grounds upon which they erected their Native housing type. In this sense, at least, the encampment closely resembled what legislators and the Interior Department had envisioned. The tipi was by far the most common type of dwelling in the encampment, but there were a few variations on this theme. Sac and Fox delegates from Iowa constructed a rounded wigwam covered with mats made of woven rushes, while the Chippewas crafted a similar structure covered with tree bark. Ft. Sill Apaches, classified as prisoners of war by the federal government, occupied regulation U.S. Army tents. Their distant cousins the Jicarilla Apaches, during their stay at the fair, found out the hard way that their cloth wickiups provided

little protection from the rain. An early morning thunderstorm on the opening day of the Congress drenched their bedding and clothing; as one observer noted, they might just as well have been "out of doors" for all the good their wickiups did them.[33]

Fairgoers found the tipis and wigwams only mildly interesting, but the dwellings of the Wichitas and Pueblos proved magnets for attention. Besides being unique in appearance, the Wichita grass lodge and the Pueblo adobe house each took about a week to build, thus giving visitors the opportunity to witness every phase of their construction. Shortly after their arrival, the Pueblos ordered a load of straw and had it dumped in the northwest corner of the camp. Next, they dug a pit, filled it with water, and tossed in soft dirt and straw. After mixing the mud and straw together by "tramping" it "with their bare feet," the men scooped the gooey mixture into brick molds and left the bricks to dry in the sun.[34] This process was repeated for the next several days until the Pueblos had made approximately 2,000 of the mud bricks. They then constructed a sixteen by twenty foot adobe house with a brush roof, mud fireplace and chimney, and holes in the eighteen-inch thick walls for windows.[35] Because the Pueblo delegation consisted only of men, visitors immediately dubbed the house the "bachelor's quarters."[36]

Resembling a "well-built haystack," the Wichita grass house was the congress' largest dwelling.[37] James Mooney purchased the lodge from its owner in Oklahoma, had it disassembled, and then shipped it to the exposition.

A half-dozen Wichita women under the direction of their chief, Tawaconi Jim, spent a week reconstructing the lodge once it arrived.[38] The framework of the structure was made of trimmed cedar poles imbedded in the ground at the base and lashed together at the top, thereby forming a curved dome. Its outer covering consisted of bundles of dried grass tied securely to the frame. Fully assembled, the grass house measured twenty-five feet in diameter and thirty feet in height.[39] Fifteen Wichitas occupied the lodge during the Congress, but at least twice that number could be squeezed into the structure for dances and handgames. Members of the other tribes on the grounds frequented the grass house several nights a week to participate in these activities, making the place "resound with shout and song."[40]

Although exposition visitors were permitted to stroll around the Indian village from eight in the morning until nightfall, delegates employed various tactics to ensure themselves at least an occasional moment of privacy. Several Natives roped off their dwellings to prevent unexpected guests, while the Pueblos posted a "Keep Out" sign on their house.[41] Others, finding the curiosity of fairgoers annoying, simply drew their tipi flaps shut.[42] While many tribal members did not mind being photographed, a pair of visiting reporters from Maryland discovered that this was not always the case. When one of them attempted to snap a picture of an elderly Indian lady in camp, the Native woman picked up a stick and ran him off.[43] If some fairgoers perceived

the Congress as something of a human zoo, the Indians themselves certainly did not; as one delegate remarked, "We are not monkeys yet."[44]

The presence of so many distinct tribes living in close proximity to one another, especially traditional enemies like the Crow and the Sioux, raises the question of how delegates got along. On the whole, they seemed to interact remarkably well. The earliest groups to arrive made a point of greeting newcomers at the camp's entrance gate with a handshake, a calumet ceremony, or a song of welcome.[45] The Sioux, possibly because they were the first to arrive at the Congress, often took the lead in these welcoming ceremonies, with other tribes following closely behind.[46] Evidence of intertribal goodwill permeated the encampment during its three-month duration, often at dances, but in everyday life as well. When Goes-To-War (Sioux) needed a new tipi, for instance, his wife asked ladies from several Plains tribes for assistance. They agreed and completed the task in a few short hours. Afterward Goes-To-War and his wife treated the women to a feast of beans and bacon, which was washed down with cups of steaming coffee.[47] Another example of the familial atmosphere in camp occurred after the wife of Spotted Back (Omaha) gave birth to a baby boy. According to newspaper accounts, as soon as the other Indians received word of the birth, they hastened to the Spotted Back tent. But they did no go empty handed. After congratulating the parents, visitors handed them gifts of food, clothing, blankets, pipes, bows and arrows, calico, and red

cloth. Several days later the Spotted Back family reciprocated by holding a feast and a dance.[48]

Fittingly, the only fight recorded at the congress took place after one of the sham battles. The two combatants, Crow Ears (Flathead) and Hits-Them-All (Wichita), had bad blood between them, but just why is unclear. Following the sham battle on October 6, Hits-Them-All pointed his rifle, still filled with blanks from the performance, at Crow Ears' feet and fired. The Flathead returned the compliment by aiming his gun at the Wichita's "bread basket" and pulling the trigger. At this point both men tossed their rifles aside and wrestled each other to the ground. "They writhed and tossed for a brief period and, breaking away, squared off for a fight. Crow Ears reached out with his right hand and landed heavily on Hits-Them-All's neck, who countered and gave Crow Ears a severe punch below the belt." This last cheap shot ended the fight when friends of the two men pulled them apart and led them away.[49]

The activity Indians indulged in most frequently at the exposition, the Omaha or Grass Dance, did not appear on any schedule of events for the Congress when it began—and for good reason. For years the Indian Department had been trying to stamp out the practice on reservations across the country, with little success. Hostility toward the dance focused on its tendency to incite warlike passions among young men, to promote drinking and promiscuity, and to encourage intertribal visiting accompanied by the giving away of property. Agents of the Bureau deemed the War Dance (as

they called it) demoralizing to all involved and employed every method imaginable to stop it. Some chose to withhold rations and annuity payments from dancers in an attempt to starve them into submission. Others, like an agent for the Kiowas in 1889, threatened to use military force to prevent dances.[50] A few simply threw dancers in jail. Joseph T. Carter, superintendent at the Flathead Agency in Montana, had two Indians arrested in 1896 for "the repetition of the offense of participating in the forbidden war dance."[51]

Despite these coercive measures, Native people across the Northern and Southern Plains continued to dance the Omaha. They did so not only because it was important to them, but also because the Bureau had no legal grounds to abolish it. Agents as well as Indians knew this. As a result, the majority of superintendents, unable to stop the dance completely, tried to regulate it as best they could.[52] That Captain Mercer took a similar pragmatic, accommodationist approach to Native dancing at the fair is thus not surprising. However, because the dancing at the exposition took place in front of thousands of people rather than on isolated reservations, it caught the eye of reformers quick to point out the blatant hypocrisy between the Indian Office's stated policies and its actions at Omaha.

If Captain Mercer and Commissioner Jones had had their way, Indians at the Congress would have participated in a daily program of foot races, wrestling matches, and ball games for the amusement of spectators. On the opening day of the exhibit, delegates did just that—and then refused to do so

for the remainder of the exposition.[53] They cared little for Anglo sports and informed Mercer as much. The Captain, who wanted to make the Congress as interesting to visitors as possible and to keep the Indians happy, asked delegates if they would prefer dancing instead. He did not have to ask twice. Indians readily agreed to dance but would not commit to any set schedule Mercer drew up. Local newspapers lamented the fact that they would not be able to publish advance notice of dances but explained to readers that, "Indians steadfastly decline to dance unless they feel like it."[54]

Apparently delegates felt like dancing most of the time during the summer of 1898 because for the remainder of the fair this activity consumed much of their time. Almost every night and sometimes during the afternoon as well, men from every tribe on the grounds painted their bodies, donned their regalia, and headed toward a roped-off circle in the middle of the encampment. In the center of the dance arena sat a drum group, already singing and beating the drum. This central drum group might be made up of Crows one day and Sioux the next, for it rotated between tribes. A master of ceremonies coordinated the event and helped determine the eligibility of a man to dance, while a dance leader, chosen ahead of time, led off the festivities by recounting his prowess as a warrior.[55] For the next several hours Omaha songs filled the air as dancers, carrying rifles, tomahawks, or coup sticks, pantomimed exploits performed on the battlefield years before. Bells, sometimes worn about the ankles or hung in strips from the mens' breechclouts, jingled in time to the

rhythm of the drum.[56] Giveaways or feasts sometimes concluded the dance, but usually the tired dancers simply made their way back home to sleep.

To anyone familiar with modern intertribal powwows, the above description might just as well have been given in 1998 as 1898. All the key elements of present-day powwows were visible in the Grass Dances at Omaha: a central drum group, a master of ceremonies, dancers from numerous tribes, a head man dancer, giveaways, and spectators. Although regalia has changed over the years, Indians at the encampment would no doubt still recognize the hair roaches, feather bustles, and sleigh bells worn by today's Grass Dancers. Omaha songs, too, have changed, but this would not have surprised nineteenth-century adherents to the dance. After all, as tribes across the Plains adopted the dance between 1870 and 1900, they altered the songs to reflect their own war heroes and battles.[57] The assembly of Native peoples at the fair may have been called an Indian Congress, but it could just as accurately be described as the longest sustained powwow in recorded history.

Reporters for Omaha's two daily newspapers, as well as Eastern journalists, found the dances intensely interesting. They commented on every phase of these events, providing intimate details about the participants but at least as much about the Anglos who watched them. Although their observations were filled with ethnocentric sentiments and flawed analysis, they are nonetheless valuable for what they reveal about Native cultures at the end of the nineteenth century. For example, members of the press corps often

noted the extremely young age of some of the dancers. A *Bee* reporter spotted a twelve-year old boy "painted and bedecked like the warriors" at a Grass Dance in August: "He sat with his little pipe stems of arms on his knees, puffing a cigarette with precisely the same stolid demeanor of the big men to the right and left of him. When the time came to dance, he danced and shouted (in his shrill, childish treble) just as they did."[58] A month later, Francis Stewart, a five-year old Crow boy stepped into the dance circle. Painted like a warrior, he wore only a breechclout "as big as your hand" and "strips of fur around his ankles." "As the little fellow pranced into the ring," related the journalist, "he not only amused the white people but the Indians as well."[59]

As these two incidents demonstrate, Anglos found these youthful attempts to imitate adult dancers cute and almost comical. The Indian Office, missionaries, and reformers, however, would not have found them quite so innocent or amusing. Here, for all to see, was the next generation of American Indians, and they were not wearing school uniforms and singing the *Star Spangled Banner*. They were wearing very little at all, singing Omaha songs, and perpetuating the "sins" of their forefathers. The despair of the Bureau, though, was also the hope of Native elders. At least some of them must have felt a sense of peace as they watched youngsters enter the dance circle, knowing their traditions were being passed on to the next generation.

The stories told by Native men to justify their right to dance were another aspect of the Grass Dances that frequently appeared in print. Men,

before they could participate in a dance, stood up, related the number of enemy scalps they had taken, horses stolen, or other brave deeds they had done and were either granted or denied permission by popular consent. Back home on the reservations, agents pointed to this part of the event as one of its most objectionable features, claiming that it instilled a warlike mentality in young men.[60] While some Bureau officials believed the dance would eventually die out as Indians became educated and Christianized, they underestimated the flexibility of both the Omaha Dance and its adherents. One need only look at who was allowed to dance at the fair to see evidence of this adaptability. Reporters noticed that some young men who could make no claims to heroism in war were "let in just for fun," and others, like Little Head of the Poncas, danced so well that a "concession" was made for him to participate despite the fact that he had never proven himself in battle.[61] That women and children were also permitted to take part in the Grass Dance indicated a willingness to make the event as inclusive as possible, thereby ensuring its survival.

When Indians were not dancing, they could often be found rehearsing for or performing in sham battles. These outdoor dramas featured Indians, some on horseback and some on foot, reenacting scenes from frontier warfare. Delegates divided themselves into two groups, each numbering between one hundred and one hundred-fifty persons, then proceeded to shoot, scalp, and torture one another for an hour or more. Of course the rifles were filled with blank cartridges, the "scalps" actually animal fur, and the torture merely good

acting, but audiences did not seem to mind. They flocked to each performance as if it would be the last, praising the "striking reality" of the engagements.[62] Indians enjoyed taking part in the performances as well, especially since they received half the gate receipts. The fifteen-member Santa Clara Pueblo delegation, one of the smallest at the encampment, took home $160 for its part in the thirteen sham battles given at the fair; total combined income for tribes at the Congress probably exceeded three thousand dollars.[63]

Such "mimic affrays" had been staples at Wild West shows and civic celebrations for at least two decades prior to the Omaha Exposition, so their appearance there was not in itself unusual. Their presence at an Indian Office exhibit, with the active encouragement of a representative of the Bureau, however, bordered on the absurd. For as long as Wild West shows had existed, the Bureau had discouraged Indians from joining them. The shows, because they rewarded Natives for growing their hair long, dressing in traditional clothing, and acting like fierce warriors, undercut the government's assimilation efforts.[64] In addition, they gave the public the mistaken impression (in the Bureau's opinion) that Indians were not becoming civilized and were in fact incapable of it. Indians, ignoring Indian Office rhetoric and threats from their agents, continued to join shows because the government was powerless to stop them. An 1879 Supreme Court decision had given them the right to leave their reservations if they so desired, but did not guarantee them protection from agent harassment.[65] Even so, the opportunity to earn money

and travel across the country proved too great an inducement to keep many Indians at home.

Contrary to what critics of the exhibit later claimed, sham battles became a regular feature at the fair quite unexpectedly. Shortly after the Indian Congress opened, members of a white fraternal society called the Improved Order of Red Men (hereafter IORM) approached Captain Mercer about staging a mock battle on August 10, Red Men's Day at the exposition.[66] The secret society, which was holding its annual lodge meeting in Omaha, hoped to pit several hundred of its men against an equal number of Indians from the encampment. Mercer, after consulting with tribal members on the proposal, agreed to the engagement. On the morning of the battle, however, IORM chapters from Tennessee failed to arrive as scheduled; since they were to have made up the bulk of the organization's fighting force, a change of plans was necessary. Not wanting to let the public down, the Captain borrowed guns from a local high school cadet corps, purchased a large quantity of blank ammunition, and rented as many horses as he could find. With these items he equipped a force of Indians and cowboys from a Wild West show on the fair's Midway to fight his congress delegates. Thus, the sham battle matched white men (IORM members who had shown up), cowboys, and "friendly" Natives from the Wild West show, against "hostile" Indians from the encampment.[67] The coalition of Anglos and good Indians triumphed over the savage Natives, of course, and the popularity of the event convinced Mercer that this was the

"special feature" he had been looking for. The sham battle was an event the public would pay to see and that Indians were willing to participate in. The Captain realized that sham battles, by generating revenue for performers, ensured their happiness and continued presence at the fair and could only help in recruiting new delegations to Omaha. In the months ahead, additional sham battles would be given, all pitting Indians against Indians and all drawing enormous crowds.

No sham battle attracted more attention than the one held on October 12. It drew over 15,000 spectators, including President William McKinley, who afterward shook hands with the performers. While this particular engagement has received attention from the few historians who have studied the fair, none has mentioned the scene that was left out of the drama that I believe is of some significance.[68] Captain Mercer, hoping to add something special to the presidential sham battle, planned to recreate the murder of Sitting Bull. The Hunkpapa Sioux chief and Ghost Dance leader had been gunned down outside his log cabin in 1890 by Red Tomahawk, a Standing Rock Sioux policeman. In the struggle to arrest Sitting Bull, eight of the chief's followers had been killed, along with six Indian police officers.[69] Whether Mercer hoped to carry out the tragic episode in all its brutal detail is uncertain, but at least two weeks prior to the October 12 battle, he expressed confidence that with "a few more rehearsals" he would be able to give fairgoers "an exhibition of just how the old Sioux war chief lost his life."[70]

The Captain doggedly pushed forward with the reenactment despite evidence that his actions had touched a raw nerve among the Sioux. They balked when asked to help build a replica of Sitting Bull's cabin, forcing Mercer to hire the Pueblos to do the job.[71] Attempts to recruit the Standing Rock Agency Indian police also failed. They wanted nothing to do with the project because to them "it was no play"; the chief's death had been a "sad and serious" event and Native lawmen were not about to "make a burlesque of it now."[72] Given the reluctance of Sioux tribal members to participate in Mercer's scheme, one wonders who he tried to convince to participate in the drama. While this may never be known, we do know why the reenactment was called off. During rehearsals in early October, a group of Sioux delegates passing by the cabin noticed a light inside. Peering through the window, they were startled to see Sitting Bull warming himself beside a fire. Suddenly, a man appeared behind the chief and struck him on the head, after which the fire went out. Once news of this apparition spread throughout camp, delegates refused to go near the place.[73]

At first glance Sioux resistance to the reenactment seems perfectly understandable. Here was a callous government Indian agent seeking to commodify and market a tragic event that had occurred just seven years before the fair. No doubt the Standing Rock Sioux at the Congress, some of whom were probably related to Sitting Bull, waged an active campaign against the drama until the incident in the cabin settled the matter for good. While

ideological and familial concerns may well have played a role in Lakota opposition to the event, their involvement in two previous world's fair displays leads one to believe that economics also factored into their decision. At Chicago in 1893, nine Sioux Indians, at least one of whom was Hunkpapa, performed for a Midway show called "Sitting Bull's Cabin."[74] Two years later at Atlanta, Lakota survivors of the Wounded Knee Massacre participated in a re-creation of the event at an exhibit on the Midway Heights.[75] Because performers in both instances were paid a salary for their services, it is possible that Sioux delegates at Omaha refused to reenact the death of Sitting Bull for the simple reason that Mercer could not or would not pay them for doing so. If the whole idea of capitalizing on macabre historical events paints Indians in a pejorative light, it should be remembered that whites seemed quite willing to re-create for paying audiences the killing of George Armstrong Custer shortly after the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

The dances and sham battles that drew rave reviews from visitors and the press during the exposition continued to attract attention after the Congress closed on October 31. But it was the kind of attention the Indian Office could have lived without. Indian policy reformers, missionaries, Indian school administrators, and even the Bureau's own employees excoriated the department for its complicity in the world's fair exhibit. Considering that these groups supported assimilation and therefore detested most aspects of Native cultures, this chorus of dissent was to be expected. Opponents of the

encampment, without exception, characterized it as a federally funded Wild West show and lamented the message such an exhibit sent not only to the public but also to the Native participants. Whites, believing that the Indians they saw at the fair were representative of all Native Americans, would assume that the government's efforts to educate and civilize them had been wasted. Meanwhile, Indians who were taught on the reservation to work their farms, cut their hair, and give up their old ways were essentially told at Omaha, "Wear your hair long, paint your face and body, and . . . don't forget the war-cry and the degrading dance."[76] Critics may have exaggerated the deleterious effects of dances and sham battles at the fair, but it must be remembered that these were the same arguments the Bureau itself had used for years to prevent Indians from participating in such activities.

Dissenters also accused Mercer and exposition officials of taking advantage of delegates by forcing them to dress up and perform as if they were part of a Midway sideshow. Especially reprehensible, critics claimed, was the fact that many of the Indians were of the "progressive class" who had been educated at federal boarding schools.[77] While at least nine of the delegates had attended Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, probably fewer than fifty of the five hundred Indians at the Congress had any sort of schooling.[78] And, as indicated previously, few Natives needed to be coerced into participating in Grass Dances or sham battles. Certainly actual conditions at the encampment

bore scant resemblance to those described by Presbyterian missionary Alfred Riggs from the Santee Sioux Agency in Nebraska:

> Those whom [Mercer] . . . can get to come are the half-bloods and young educated Indians. From them he strips off their civilized dress and makes them don the shameful toggery of former days. Returned students . . . are those made over into the semblance of aboriginal pagans. . . . [M]any whose civilized habits and Christian ideals do not permit them to join in these pagan and savage dances at home have been compelled to take part in them at Omaha . . .[79]

Pine Ridge agent W.H. Clapp reproached the Bureau for pandering to the "morbid curiosity" and "lowest passions" of fairgoers by exhibiting "naked painted Indians." The public, he claimed, wanted to see savage Natives "for quite the same reason as they do to see freaks" such as a "two headed girl or a six legged calf."[80] Both Clapp and Riggs cast Indians as helpless victims of a Bureau-exposition management plot to exploit their love of dance and warfare for the amusement of the public. In actuality, however, it was Indians themselves who made the decision to engage in Grass dances and sham battles at the exposition.

If the Commissioner of Indian Affairs was unaware of the enormity of his blunder while the exposition was going on, critics made certain his ignorance did not continue thereafter. Clearly Jones had gotten the message by early 1899, for in a letter to Indian reformer Herbert Welsh, he expressed regret for not opposing the dances and sham battles at the fair. "In regard to the Indian Congress," the Commissioner concluded, "it has had a very demoralizing effect on the Indians that . . . attended."[81] Jones spent the next

five years in office trying to atone for his sins at Omaha, distancing himself from past policy errors whenever possible. In 1899, for instance, he prohibited Indians from taking part in Grass Dances at an exposition, and a year later refused to allow Buffalo Bill Cody onto reservations to recruit performers for his show.[82] Admittedly, policy never quite translated into reality, but Jones' detractors soon became his biggest supporters as his views began to mesh with their own.

The Indian Congress at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition, aside from its immediate impact on federal Indian policy, probably had few enduring consequences. However, the events that took place at the encampment were significant for a number of reasons. The prominence of dancing and sham battles demonstrated the impotence of the Indian Bureau in curtailing these activities on the reservations and the failure of assimilation. The fact that delegates, despite their divergent tribal affiliations, knew how to dance the Omaha and understood their roles in the mock battles, indicated that they had participated in them before. This was so because agents back on the reservations lacked the legal authority to abolish these practices. Thus they accommodated them, but certainly did not encourage them as Captain Mercer did at the exposition. While the dances and sham battles themselves contradicted the notion that Native peoples were being assimilated into Anglo society, the presence of so many delegates wearing traditional clothing and

speaking their Native languages revealed how little progress the Bureau had made in wiping out Native cultures.

The Grass Dance also reflected the vibrancy and adaptability of Native cultures. By 1898, the opportunities for Native men to earn prestige in battle (either against Anglos or other tribes) had by and large passed away. As a result, warrior societies in many tribes became obsolete and began to disappear.[83] However, young men still needed a way to become "somebody" in their individual societies without having to count coup on an enemy or steal a horse. The Omaha Dance became the vehicle that made this generational transition possible without ignoring the past accomplishments of older tribal members but also without casting aspersions on youth who lacked military experience. Therefore at the exposition, elders recounted war deeds and led the dances while younger men were allowed to participate and by their dancing ability proved they were worthy to be in the same dance arena as the veterans. Other innovations seen at Omaha, such as the incorporation of women and children into the dance further widened its appeal and ensured its survival up to the present day.

Finally, the fact that white fairgoers so enthusiastically embraced the dances and sham battles suggests that although the Indian Department's exhibit might not have dovetailed with stated Indian policy at the time, it did accurately reflect the tastes of the general public. Unlike missionaries, reformers, and the Bureau, many ordinary Americans wanted to see Indians

who appeared untouched by civilization, as unrealistic as that expectation was in 1898. The enormous popularity of Wild West shows in the late nineteenth century, which featured Indian dancing and sham battles, clearly demonstrates this. Given the image of Native Americans in the popular mind during the Gilded Age, Commissioner Jones' March 22 circular, advocating a "thoroughly aboriginal" spectacle makes a little more sense. Because he had been in office only a short time and had no prior experience with Native peoples, Jones wrote the document not as an Indian Office bureaucrat, but as a member of the general populace. As such, he probably excluded only those parts of the exhibit that to him seemed the least attractive and interesting. By doing so he created an Indian Congress that pleased the public but outraged assimilationists.

CHAPTER TWO

An Assimilationist Policy Gone Awry: Perpetuating Culture at the Cheyenne-Arapaho Indians Fairs, 1910-1913

The Indian fair is that rare example of a government program for Indians gone terribly *right*. Implemented by the Office of Indian Affairs on reservations in the early 1900s, Indian fairs allowed Native people to exhibit their crops, livestock, and domestic handiwork in competition for prizes much like whites did at their numerous county and state fairs. The Indian Office hoped that such competition would inspire more Indian men to take up farming and raise better crops and help Native women become better housewives. In addition, the Indian Office believed reservation fairs would cut down on the amount of traveling Indians did during the summer months. Instead of attending dances, feasts, and county fairs, government officials reasoned, Native peoples would be content to hold a single large fair in the fall after crops had been harvested. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert G. Valentine enthusiastically supported Native fairs as a way to derive some benefit from Indians' love of dancing and visiting. Valentine recognized that, while the Indian Bureau could not prevent Indians from dancing, by "combining Indian amusements and ceremonies with an educational exhibit, some practical benefit must result."[1] Valentine also liked the fact that Indian fairs were conducted under the watchful eyes of its own agency

superintendents. With Bureau agents firmly in control of such events, he believed little could possibly go wrong.

From a single government sponsored Indian fair on the Crow Reservation in Montana in 1905, Native fairs spread rapidly across the country. Little more than a decade later, fifty-eight reservations and agencies could boast of holding one or more of them on a yearly basis.[2] The proliferation of Indian fairs occurred because all parties involved in their operation—Indians, the Indian Office, local businesses, and fairgoers—benefited from them. The Indian Bureau used the fairs as propaganda tools to demonstrate the efficacy of its numerous assimilation programs for American Indians: whites could observe displays of Indian-grown crops and see Natives congregating at an acceptable, Euro-American institution (the fair) and feel confident that the government's efforts to "civilize" them were succeeding. Indians benefited financially from fairs by charging Anglos to watch them dance and through exhibit premiums. Fairs served an important social function as well by bringing tribal members of all ages together at the end of the summer.[3] Local merchants profited from the influx of visitors into their towns, while fairgoers were afforded the opportunity to see Indians dressed in buckskin and feathers performing dances, racing horses, and living in tipis—things many whites assumed Indians did every day.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes of Oklahoma held their first fair in Weatherford, Oklahoma in October of 1910. The popularity of the three-day

event prompted its continuation for the next three years, and it was held, alternately, at Weatherford and Watonga, Oklahoma.[4] The event attracted between 2,000 and 2,500 Indians annually and at least as many Anglo spectators. Given that the entire Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes numbered no more than 3,000 individuals at the time, it can be safely stated that at least two-thirds of tribal members attended the fair every year.[5] Under Valentine's pro-Indian fair administration, the future of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair seemed promising, but a change in commissioners in 1913 along with the growing disillusionment of local Cheyenne-Arapaho agents toward the fair led to its closure after the 1913 event.

While an examination of a single Indian agricultural fair within a four-year time frame may seem trivial at first glance, I hope to demonstrate that to the Cheyenne and Arapaho people themselves, the event was by no means trivial. It brought tribal members of all ages and both sexes together for one last community-wide celebration prior to the opening of schools in late September. And, because it was sanctioned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, men and women could dance, live in tipis, and visit with one another at the fair without fear of harassment by government officials. The event also offered Cheyennes and Arapahos the opportunity to earn money in a variety of ways—through exhibit premiums, by working odd jobs at the fair, and by competing in horse races and athletic contests. Finally, the fair allowed intermediary chiefs from both tribes to reinforce their authority among the communities they

represented.[6] Cheyenne-Arapaho headmen determined the fair's location, its program of events, and to a great extent who would be in charge of these events.

In a broader sense, the Cheyenne-Arapaho Fair, like Indian fairs across the United States, became an expression of cultural identity amidst a sea of government programs aimed at removing all vestiges of Native cultures.[7] The Indian Office may have implemented Native agricultural fairs, but they clearly did not control them. Tribes from Oklahoma, Montana, Wisconsin, South Dakota, and other states incorporated the fair into their yearly gatherings and in the process altered its content in tribally specific ways.

To better understand the machinations of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair, it is helpful to have at least a cursory knowledge of where the tribes stood on the eve of the fair in 1910. The federal government had forced the two tribes onto a four million acre reservation in present day western Oklahoma in 1869. Since that time, the number of agencies that served them had increased from one to four—Darlington, Cantonment, Red Moon, and Seger—but their land base had been reduced considerably. The allotment of the Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation in 1892 opened three and a half million acres to white settlement, leaving the two tribes with barely one-eighth of their former landholdings.[8] The tribes received $1.5 million for their surplus land, and after one-third of it was disbursed to tribal members, the remainder was deposited in the U.S. Treasury to draw five percent interest annually. Each

year the Indian Department divided this $50,000 in interest income among the Cheyenne-Arapaho people in a per capita payment.

The government hoped that tribal members would settle on their allotments, build houses, and become farmers, but this did not happen. Most continued to live together in extended families and small villages, resisting Anglo Christianity, education, family structure, and concepts of private property.[9] By 1910, more Cheyennes and Arapahos were raising crops than ever before, but mainly on a small scale. A variety of factors account for why so few took up farming as a vocation. First, marginal soil fertility and insufficient rainfall made farming a risky proposition in Cheyenne-Arapaho country; as Faze, a tribal elder, put it: "We can't depend on our crop—sometimes we fail, can never be sure about our crops. . . ."[10] A lack of farm implements and livestock, and a limited capacity to operate agricultural machinery also kept tribesmen out of the fields.[11] Mainly, though, the Cheyennes and Arapahos simply did not want to farm. They much preferred to lease their allotments to white farmers and ranchers, which assured them a steady income without the uncertainties of farming.

Fearing that Native lessors would spend their money unwisely, the Indian Bureau placed lease funds into individual trust accounts where they could be withdrawn only with written approval from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Thus, Cheyennes and Arapahos wanting to purchase such simple items as food and clothing had to first ask their superintendent to

submit a spending application to the Indian Office. If the Commissioner deemed the expenditure necessary, the agent could then disburse the funds. If not, the individual was out of luck. Since the entire process usually took several weeks, a person seeking money to treat an emergency medical condition might die before receiving the necessary approval. As well, because the Commissioner's approval hinged largely upon an agent's recommendation, Indian agents wielded considerable power over the Indians belonging to their agencies. Tribal members who failed to obey agents' strictures, for instance, could expect some difficulty when trying to gain access to their trust money.

The absurdity of having to ask permission to spend one's own money was not lost on the Cheyennes and Arapahos who, in various councils with Indian Service personnel, let their feelings on the matter be known. Big Nose called the trust fund application process "a waste of time," explaining, "it is our money and when we need it we ought to get it." Faze left little doubt as to where he stood on the issue: "I want to get money every month; sometime the Agent will not let me have it. It is my money and when I want it I should have it. It makes no difference to the Agent what I do with it and he has no right to say I must not have it."[12] Arnold Woolworth (Arapaho) asked only that his people be allowed to withdraw money from their accounts like white people did.[13] When the Indian Office turned a deaf ear on these complaints, some Cheyennes and Arapahos resorted to extra-legal means to get at their money. They requested trust money to purchase such items as plows and horses, telling

their superintendent they needed them to farm. The Indian commissioner, always willing to encourage Native agricultural pursuits, invariably approved the application. Once the desired item had been purchased, however, the Indian buyer would immediately sell it to a white farmer for pennies on the dollar. Although the disposal of trust property by any method without the consent of the superintendent was illegal, few agents had the time or the money to pursue these offenders. A reporter for the *Colony Courier* newspaper sided with the Cheyennes and Arapahos on the trust money issue, believing there was "something wrong with a system that encourages the Indians to scheme for authority to buy implements . . . [t]hat they don't need or want so they can dispose of it at a fraction of its value to get a little of their own money to spend as they please."[14]

In addition to lease money, all Cheyennes and Arapahos received annual annuity checks that they could spend however they wished. It was not a great deal of money to be sure (usually fifteen to twenty dollars), but because annuity payment days brought tribal members together in a festive atmosphere, they served an important social function. Despite the pleas of the agents not to do so, men, women, and children from both tribes would gather at their respective agencies for several days of dancing and visiting before and after the payments were issued. With these multiple sources of income, one might wonder if the Cheyennes and Arapahos ever had to work at all. The answer is "yes"—but not on a regular basis. For one reason, steady jobs, especially for

Indians in western Oklahoma, were exceedingly scarce. While a handful operated large farms or found steady employment at one of the four agencies, most had to live off lease and annuity money or rely on the generosity of their families or friends to get by. Others turned to short-term seasonal labor if the need for money arose. For men this entailed threshing wheat or picking cotton for white farmers in the fall, for women making beaded craft items for sale to markets in the East.

Although the Cheyenne and Arapaho people held very few steady jobs, they managed to stay remarkably busy. But it was exactly the type of busy the Indian Office could have lived without. Social activities—seemingly an endless list of them—occupied much of the Indians' time from January to December. Cheyennes and Arapahos visited each other, other tribes, and friends and relatives in other states; they attended tribal and intertribal dances and ceremonies; and they traveled to fairs and celebrations throughout the state. To whites living in Cheyenne and Arapaho country, it appeared that the tribes were on a perpetual vacation, or possibly "in the visiting period of their progress toward civilization."[15] To the Cheyennes and Arapahos themselves, however, these times of coming together were simply who they were as a people, as essential to their well being as food and water.

One of the stated goals of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Fair was to prevent the tribes' yearly "merry-go-round" of visiting and dancing.[16] But how realistic was this goal? If the two decades leading up to the Indian fair are any

indication, not very realistic at all. Cheyennes and Arapahos, once their land had been allotted, had the time, the money, and the legal right to go wherever they wanted for as long as they wanted and dance if they so desired. This did not mean that Indian agents of the two tribes allowed them to do so—at least not without a fight. However, most agents must have known they were fighting a losing battle because the further removed in time from allotment the Cheyenne and Arapaho people became, the more opportunities they found for visiting and dancing and the more encouragement they received from whites living in western Oklahoma. Civic leaders in towns throughout the Cheyenne and Arapaho country recruited tribal members to dance, parade, and stage sham battles at their local fairs and celebrations to increase attendance. The Cheyennes and Arapahos were only too willing to oblige, as long as they received some compensation for their services. Normally, they were given one or two cows to barbeque, but sometimes cash inducements were necessary to ensure their participation. Against a united front of Indians and Anglo citizens, the Indian Bureau stood little chance of convincing Cheyennes and Arapahos to stay at home and farm during the summer.

The experience the Cheyenne-Arapaho tribes gained attending Fourth of July celebrations and local fairs served them well when the time came for them to hold their own fair. They filled the Cheyenne-Arapaho Fair's program with dances, horse races, sham battles, and parades—events they had been participating in for years at local Anglo gatherings and at gatherings of their

own. Tribal members enjoyed these activities as much as whites enjoyed watching them. Cheyennes and Arapahos also used the negotiating skills they had learned bargaining for beef with civic leaders to extract various concessions from towns competing for the Indian fair. Tribal leaders realized their fair was a desirable commodity and demanded commensurate compensation from the locale they eventually decided upon. Contrary to popular media accounts of the Indians' unfamiliarity with the operations of fairs, by 1910 the Cheyennes and Arapahos were veteran showmen.

Approximately 2,000 Cheyennes and Arapahos gathered together at Big Jake's Crossing on the Washita River in June of 1910.[17] At this large dance Indians could be seen drinking lemonade, shooting firecrackers, visiting with friends and relatives, and dancing. A number of white people were also present. While most Anglos came as curious spectators, some set up concession stands (for a fee) and sold cold drinks, beef, and other foods to people on the grounds.[18] Three of the Anglos in attendance, Willis Dunn, William Freer, and Walter Dickens, superintendents of the Red Moon, Darlington, and Seger Agencies, respectively, had not traveled to Big Jake to sell concessions or to watch the dancing. In fact, the proposal they were going to make to a council of Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders would hopefully eliminate the very event at which they were present. The three superintendents envisioned a large-scale Indian fair that would take the place of yearly dances

and intertribal visiting. Members of the two tribes, while embracing the notion of an all-Indian fair, would attach a very different meaning to it.

Superintendent Dickens opened the Big Jake council with a brief mission statement of the proposed fair:

> The object of this fair is to encourage agricultural pursuits among the Indians. We wish it to be the Indians' Fair conducted and managed like those of the white people. It will be held at some central point convenient to the four reservations, in the fall of the year, after the crops have been gathered. We wish all the Indians to take part in this enterprise.[19]

Following these opening remarks, Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders were asked to express their opinions on the fair. Cheyennes Cloud Chief, Three Fingers, Standing Water, White Spoon, and Prairie Chief and Arapahos Grant Lefthand and Jock Bull Bear reacted favorably to the proposition, although White Spoon worried that alcohol might become a problem at such a large event. John Washee (Cheyenne), who had attended Indian fairs on other reservations, wanted to know where the prize money on exhibits would come from. Other headmen used the Indian fair council as a forum to address more pressing issues. Mower (Cheyenne) and Roman Nose Thunder (Cheyenne), for example, complained that annuity and lease payments were late in being disbursed, causing some Cheyennes and Arapahos to go hungry. Despite these concerns, tribal leaders agreed to hold an election the following week to choose officers for the newly-formed Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Association.[20]

As the council at Big Jake demonstrated, men of influence from both tribes endorsed the fair from the very beginning. The agents knew that their support was crucial in getting the rest of the tribal members to participate in the venture. Though allotment had eroded the power of traditional chiefs, numerous intermediary chiefs or headmen had emerged to serve the needs of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. Many of these men were over the age of forty and were among the highest-ranking religious leaders in their respective tribes.[21] Superintendents to the Cheyennes and Arapahos, regardless of their personal feelings about headmen's ceremonial activities, learned to work through them in order to get things done. Thus, even though agents wanted young, educated men to assume leadership roles in the fair, they necessarily deferred to tribal members in choosing coordinators for the event. Not surprisingly, the Cheyenne and Arapaho people selected primarily older, well-established headmen to run their fair rather than elevate young men to positions of leadership they had not earned.

The presence of a large number of Indians in the fair's organizational hierarchy allowed the Cheyennes and Arapahos to conduct the event on their own terms. The executive committee of the association consisted of a president, vice-president, and secretary/treasurer (all Indians) plus the four superintendents.[22] This executive board determined when and where the fair would be held and what activities would take place each day. A 28-member advisory committee made up of Indians from each of the four agencies

provided input on key fair-related decisions, encouraged Cheyennes and Arapahos to participate in the fair, and supervised events at the fair.[23] While the superintendents might disagree with some of the Indian officers' decisions, they rarely overruled them. After all, upsetting the Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders could lead to no fair at all.[24]

The location of the fair was one area in which the Indians exercised considerable influence. Each year several towns in western Oklahoma competed for the event, which enabled the tribes to extract various concessions from each potential locale. To secure the Indian fair in 1911, for example, the civic leaders of Watonga gave the fair association $500, provided free firewood for Indian campers, and paid for advertising.[25] The Cheyenne and Arapaho agents, while less than enthusiastic about the Indians' choice of Watonga over Weatherford, were powerless to overrule the decision. Cantonment Agent Byron White, writing to Darlington Superintendent Freer in 1911, stated his belief that holding the fair at Watonga was a mistake, but conceded that "of course we had nothing to do with it."[26] Freer expressed similar sentiments in a letter informing the Weatherford Indian Fair Committee of their unsuccessful bid for the fair:

> . . . I personally regret that it has not been deemed practicable for us . . . to hold the fair in your community again this year. The decision in the matter was . . . necessarily left to the committee of Indians, and the excellent fairgrounds [at Watonga], together with the large and convenient camping ground and pasturage nearby [for the Indians' horses], appealed to them strongly. . .[27]

Cheyennes and Arapahos also made their voices heard in the daily program of events at the fair. The degree to which they were able to mold the fair into a uniquely Indian event becomes obvious when one compares the inaugural 1910 fair program (which the agents put together with little Native input) with those of later years. In 1910, the entertainment portion of the fair consisted of little more than horse races and track and field events. Indians competed in nine footraces ranging in distance from 50 yards to one mile, two hurdle races, a high jump and a long jump, and a baseball throwing contest.[28] Though the tribes gave evening dance performances, they were not a part of the official fair program.

After 1910, the events and entertainment features of the fair changed markedly. Athletic contests, save for a handful of footraces, were scrapped in favor of traditional Indian games and more horse races.[29] Reasons for the alteration were twofold: the Cheyennes and Arapahos did not like the track and field events, and the superintendents realized that the new contests and increased horse races would attract more Anglos to the fair. Following a meeting with John Otterby, a Cheyenne who served as the fair's secretary in 1910 and its president in 1911, Seger Superintendent Dickens explained to his fellow agents what the 1911 fair program would look like:

> . . . [T]he hurdle races and other events . . . have been eliminated . . . for the reason that the Indians do not take much to this kind of athletics. I believe [that] most of the Public are interested in the horse races. Where the footraces can be pulled off promptly they are good but the high jump, putting the shot, throwing the baseball, etc., are rather dry sports.[30]

Sham battles, Native dances, and historic tableaus (outdoor plays) also began to appear on fair programs after 1910. These features had been part of Wild West shows for years and appealed as much to the Native participants as to white spectators. During the sham battles, opposing groups of Cheyennes and Arapahos mounted on horseback squared off against one another in mimic warfare. Men who took part in the battles dressed in buckskin shirts and leggings, wore elaborate war bonnets, and carried either buffalo-hide shields and lances or guns. Each side received a liberal supply of blank cartridges for their rifles or revolvers, and the noise and smoke that resulted from the "ferocious battle" pleased fairgoers immensely.[31] Participants used red paint to simulate bloody scalpings and gunshot wounds, but injuries sometimes occurred that were not part of the script. In 1911 for instance, an Arapaho man was thrown from his horse during an afternoon sham battle. After turning several "aerial flip-flaps," the man landed heavily on his shoulder, breaking his collarbone.[32] The sham battles had their lighter moments as well, however. During the same 1911 performance, Cheyennes and Arapahos decided to have a little fun with a cameraman from New York City who was filming the event. According to a reporter, the Indians discovered that by shooting close to the filmmaker's feet they could make him jump and so "kept him jigging" the remainder of the performance.[33]

It seems likely that status played a major role in who was allowed to take part in the sham battles. After all, most of the participants were either

intermediary chiefs, religious leaders, or both. Few were under the age of forty, and a handful, like Cheyennes Burnt All Over and Little Chief, were in their seventies.[34] All performers received a dollar or two for each battle fought, and there were other perks as well. Participants in the 1911 sham battle received 102 bottles of soda to quench their thirst after mixing it up, adding $5.10 to their already robust performance fee of $175.50.[35] Watan, a member of the Arapaho sham battle contingent, apparently tried to make firearms part of the compensation package in 1912. After the fair concluded, he failed to return two of the Colt's army revolvers loaned to the fair association by agent Freer. Freer eventually tracked Watan down, however, and one assumes restored the missing weapons to the government's arsenal.[36]

The historic tableau made its first and last appearance at the 1911 fair—not because it was unpopular but because it was too expensive to produce. Superintendent Freer came up with the idea for "an interesting and spectacular representation of old time Indian life" but never imagined how elaborate (or costly) the production would become. So many Cheyennes and Arapahos wanted parts in the play that the cast swelled to over 200 members.[37] Performed on the second and third nights of the fair, the tableau contained several short acts in which tribal members of all ages participated. After two large bonfires were started to illuminate the scenes, the production commenced with two Arapaho women doing beadwork. Other acts included two men making bows and arrows, two Arapaho men smoking pipes, a Cheyenne

woman making bread, and a Cheyenne mother singing a lullaby to her baby. Girls and boys from both tribes had small parts as well. Girls played with dolls and set up toy tipis while the boys wrestled with one another. The pageant concluded with the Cheyennes performing a Shield Dance, the Arapahos a Staff Dance.[38]

Freer, like any good producer, was slightly more critical of the performance. Apparently he had purchased some type of powder which, when thrown into the bonfires, was supposed to have burned bright red. Hoping to end the fair in dramatic fashion, Freer had asked the Indians to toss the powder into the fires before the final performance to cast a red glow over the scenes. Although the Indians carried out their end of the bargain, the red light failed to materialize. The superintendent/producer pronounced the entire illumination scheme "a complete fizzle."[39]

Native dances took center stage on the evening bills of the 1912 and 1913 fairs after the historic tableau was discontinued. Cheyennes and Arapahos performed a greater variety of dances than in previous years and, ironically, were encouraged to do so by the very agents who discouraged these dances every summer. Tribal members must have been especially pleased to receive 50 cents for each dance they performed.[40] At the 1912 fair, the Arapahos gave a Crow Dance that caught the fancy of the local press—not for its style or beauty, but for the effect it was supposed to have had on the weather. Prior to the Thursday night dance performance, John Washee, an

Arapaho, announced to the grandstand crowd that the Crow Dance always brought rain and to expect it soon after the dance was over.[41] Many fairgoers were probably skeptical of Washee's prediction—after all the summer had been a typically dry one. But, as a local reporter explained, Washee knew what he was talking about: "The crow dance was given and sure enough it had hardly finished when the long delayed rain commenced to fall. There was a tradition for many years among the Arapahoes that the crow dance was a sure rain producer. They still believe it, especially are they stronger in the opinion since . . . Thursday's experience."[42]

Besides the influence they exerted in the management of the fair, Cheyennes and Arapahos also embraced the event for financial reasons. Each year the fair association paid out $500 to $1,000 for winning exhibits in five categories.[43] In addition to the standard exhibit groups found at Anglo fairs (livestock and poultry, farm and garden products, sewing and fancy work, and cooking), the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair, like virtually all Indian fairs at the time, added an additional one: Native handiwork. This department allowed Cheyenne and Arapaho artisans to compete for cash prizes in categories ranging from the best cradleboard to the best beaded tent door. In 1911 alone, eighty families exhibited more than two hundred articles in the Indian handiwork department.[44] The majority of items displayed were not for sale, but Cheyenne and Arapaho women sometimes sold moccasins for between $4.50 and $5.00 per pair—and usually Indians themselves were the buyers

rather than whites.[45] Unfortunately a handful of articles never made it back to their owners. Anna Eagle Nest, Medicine Woman, and Blind Bull all had moccasins stolen at the 1911 fair, and a pair of buckskin leggings belonging to Blackwhiteman were taken in 1910. Cheyenne-Arapaho agents reimbursed the women $5.00, $3.50, and $3.00, respectively for their moccasins, while Blackwhiteman received $6.00 for his leggings.[46] "The Indian [Blackwhiteman] would much rather have the leggings than the money," observed Darlington superintendent Freer, "but of course that is impossible."[47]

Although the fair probably had little long-term impact on art production in Cheyenne-Arapaho country, it did spur the manufacture of specific articles that were both worn and displayed at the event. In 1911 Red Feather received permission to spend $25.00 of her own money to purchase beads and other supplies in order to make beadwork exhibits for the fair.[48] That same year Standing Out (Cheyenne) made two buckskin dresses for exhibition at Watonga while several women asked Lightning Woman, a skilled Cheyenne quillworker, to design dresses for them.[49] Cleaver Warden, an Arapaho peyote leader and Carlisle graduate, wrote to superintendent Freer in August of 1912 requesting money to buy eagle feathers for his young son Robert's war bonnet, but was denied. Freer thought Robert too young to take part in the sham battles (the reason he wanted a war bonnet) and so turned down the request.[50]

Perhaps the most significant item to appear in the Indian handiwork department was a beaded buckskin dress belonging to Lily Page Riggs. Riggs,

whose Cheyenne name was Red Feather, used the fair as an opportunity to honor the woman she had been named after by constructing a replica of the dress Red Feather, a niece of Black Kettle, wore prior to the 1868 Washita Massacre. Save for the use of trade beads for ornamentation rather than porcupine quills, the replica dress mirrored the original exactly.[51] More than simply a beautiful garment, the Red Feather dress symbolized the endurance of the Cheyenne people despite attempts by the Indian Bureau to obliterate them culturally and the U.S. Army to obliterate them literally.

While the cooking and sewing departments always received a full complement of exhibits, filling display booths in the livestock and farm products categories proved more challenging. Logistical factors largely accounted for the paucity of livestock exhibits. Most Indians lived too far from either Weatherford or Watonga to herd their cattle to the fair and shipping them by rail was too expensive. Crop exhibits suffered because of the near drought conditions in western Oklahoma during the years of the fair.[52] Nevertheless, whites judged the Indians' agricultural displays "splendid" considering the adverse conditions under which they were grown.[53] Little did Anglos realize that the crops they were praising might be their own. Every year a handful of Cheyennes and Arapahos, hoping to secure some easy prize money, selected choice produce from the fields of their white neighbors and represented it as their own.[54] Both the Indians and the superintendents condemned the practice, but little could be done to stop it.

Cheyennes and Arapahos who failed to win blue ribbons at the fair could still take home prize money. First place finishers in the footraces, for example, received three dollars for the shorter sprints (less than 220 yards), five dollars for the half-mile, and ten dollars for the mile.[55] Champions of the shield throwing and bow and arrow shooting contests earned five dollars, while the winning women's shinny team received three dollars.[56] Small cash prizes were also awarded to the best dressed Indian man, woman, and family at the fair; the oldest Indian woman on the grounds; and for the best kept tipi. The Indian baby show, undoubtedly one of the noisier events at the fair, gave parents the opportunity to show off their toddlers and compete for premiums at the same time. In 1911, twenty babies, "all very attractive," competed in the contest. Those judged the cleanest, prettiest, best dressed, best behaved, and fattest earned their parents $1.50 prizes.[57]

By far the biggest payoffs at the Indian fair occurred at the horse races. Cheyennes and Arapahos loved to race horses, and their fair certainly reflected this. Each day at least six and sometimes as many as eight races were run for purses of between ten and twenty-five dollars per event.[58] Indians who owned a fast horse might easily pocket more money during the three-day fair than they could make working as a field laborer for an entire month.[59] Of course there was always a chance that one's horse would not win anything. Anninta Washee came up empty at the 1913 fair despite entering his horse Wire Quail in several races. When asked why his horse failed to place in any of the

events, Washee explained simply, "[He] didn't fly fast enough." Perhaps the reason for Washee being shut out lay not with his horse, but with its rider. At the same fair, an Indian boy employed as a jockey won second place in every race he ran and received a one to two dollar cut of the prize money each time.[60] Placing bets on the horses, while discouraged by the agents, did occur. To what degree remains uncertain owing to the somewhat sanitized accounts of the fair in local papers. However, Superintendent West made mention of the (to him) distasteful practice in his 1913 report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs saying, "I regret to . . . . [inform you] that there was some betting in connection with the races."[61] Regardless of the superintendents' personal feelings on the issue, betting on horse races was perfectly legal at the time.

That the races meant more to tribal members than a simple payout is readily apparent from descriptions of the events. Winners gained not only money but prestige, which reflected well on the individual's family and band. The following account of the horse races at the 1910 fair demonstrates that riders were racing for more than monetary gain when they rode onto the track:

> All day long the fences were lined with men, women, boys, and girls looking at the horses. Often there was applause as some favorite rider or the owner of some noted horse went by. . . . The starter beats on a tin pan with a club, and announces a race. Star, an old, old man who was sent in shackles to Florida in 1875 . . . was the official caller, and rode from camp to camp . . . calling out in Cheyenne that the race was to be run. Most of the Indian riders were bareback . . . and all of them without their shoes. Some had put the braids of their plaited hair under their vests, lest the braids strike them in the eye. . . . Bang! Goes the club on [the] pan and away go the horses. . . . Instantly, a high keening chant begins among the women lined against the

> fence along the track. They are singing to encourage their friend or kinsman riding in the race. . . .[62]

Odd jobs provided Cheyennes and Arapahos with yet another source of revenue at the fair. Many took tickets at the gates, guarded the exhibits, or cleared trash from the grandstand.[63] Others acted as interpreters so that agents could communicate with Indians who spoke no English. Though the Indians probably did not consider it work, dancing, singing, and performing in sham battles earned them just as much money as other odd jobs at the fair.[64] And, truly an injustice, the two Native boys assigned to empty shot from the hundreds of shells used in the sham battles received a paltry thirty cents each for their trouble.[65]

Cheyennes and Arapahos not only made money at the fair, but also used the event as leverage to gain access to more of their own money. Normally the government was loathe to approve any expenditures deemed unessential—and fair expenses certainly fit this description. However, the Indian Office routinely allowed superintendents to issue checks to Indians attending the fair. The reason? The Indians demanded it and were in a position to get it. They knew that people came to the fair to see them and that by boycotting the event they could effectively kill it. The agents realized this as well. As Superintendent White astutely pointed out, "[I]t would be difficult to hold an Indian fair unless the Indians would attend."[66] Thus, each year at the fair Cheyennes and Arapahos received between three and twenty-five dollars from their individual accounts to spend however they wished.[67]

Some Cheyennes and Arapahos were not content with only a fair expense check, however. They wanted money even before the event began so they could dress and eat well while at the fair. These Indians crafted their requests for additional funds in such a way as to play up their involvement in the fair and emphasize their strong work ethic. Before the 1912 fair, for instance, Albert Red Nose informed Superintendent Freer that

> . . . [E]very Indian is working hard for the fair at Watonga, and also I am looking for the program for the Indian fair. . . . I like to read them, and also we are commencing bailing hay for our own use this coming winter, and we want to try to bail over thousand bailes [sic] before the Indian fair at Watonga and we are working pretty hard in these hottest days and I am needing some clothing and groceries for the Indian fair . . . I am out of clothing myself, and we getting ready for the fair, and I am sure needing groceries and clothing right away.[68]

Freer replied that he was glad Red Nose and his "boys" were working hard and that a check would be sent soon.[69]

Cheyennes and Arapahos were not the only tribes that benefited financially from the fair. As implausible as it may seem, Northern Cheyennes residing a thousand miles away in Montana also felt its economic impact. In a classic case of supply and demand, Northern Cheyennes possessed a resource—pine trees—that their southern kinsmen needed and were willing to pay for. The trees, once stripped of their bark and branches, made excellent tipi poles because of their light weight and flexibility.[70] Oklahoma Cheyennes and Arapahos had purchased pine poles from Montana prior to 1910, but only in limited quantities. After the advent of the fair, this all changed. The

thousands of Indians who poured into Weatherford and Watonga every year had to stay someplace—and many chose to camp near the fairgrounds in tipis. This sparked a tipi building boom among the two tribes that sent orders for pine poles soaring. To meet the demand, Northern Cheyennes organized work teams to harvest trees in the Big Horn Mountains on their reservation.[71] As money was "very scarce" among the Northern Cheyennes, the one to two dollars they received for each pole was a welcome addition to their yearly incomes.[72]

Because a majority of Indians paid for tipi poles with money from their trust accounts, the four Cheyenne and Arapaho superintendents were necessarily involved in the process. After all, it was they who could advise the Indian Office to disburse or withhold monies requested by Indians under their authority. As a letter sent by Superintendent Freer to Tongue River (Montana) Agency Superintendent J.R. Eddy indicates, the agents fully supported the Indians' attempts to procure poles:

> Enclosed find check #14861 for $15 payable to Standing With Wind and endorsed to you. Standing With Wind, the wife of Three Fingers, requests that you kindly deliver this check to Little Hawk of your Agency. The latter desires the poles to be shipped to her . . . at once so that the poles may arrive in time for the Indian Fair. . . . If one of your employees could see that the poles are properly secured, I would consider it a favor. Any surplus left after prepaying the freight is to go to Little Hawk.[73]

Superintendents, while they approved of Cheyennes and Arapahos having tipi poles shipped to Oklahoma, looked less favorably on those who journeyed to Montana to select poles for themselves. Agents felt such trips

were a waste of money and time; when Indians should have been tending to crops, they were instead traveling across the country. Not surprisingly, then, when White Bird, a Cheyenne desiring to travel north for tipi poles, asked Superintendent Freer for assistance (in the form of money and a letter of introduction to take to Superintendent Eddy in Montana) he received an icy response.[74] "It seems a long trip to make to get poles for a tepee," wrote Freer to field matron Mary Freeman who was helping White Bird with his request, "and I am satisfied that the expense of the trip will be at least twice as much as the value of the tepee when finished. It seems to me that White Bird should be doing some sort of work this present season—that he should, at least, be as industrious as the majority of his tribesmen." Freer concluded sullenly, "Under these circumstances, I do not feel like writing White Bird a letter of introduction."[75] Whether White Bird made it to Montana or not is uncertain. If he did, it was through no help of his superintendent.

The chance to socialize with others was probably as important a reason as any why the two tribes embraced the event. Fairs by their very nature are inclusive institutions, and the Indian fair was no different. It brought together all segments of Cheyenne and Arapaho society—young and old, male and female, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, churchgoers and followers of Native religions—in a festive environment at the conclusion of summer. Adding to the celebratory mood was the fact that most families had at least some money to spend because lease, annuity, and fair expense checks were

distributed at the fairgrounds. This allowed parents to indulge their children with carnival rides and candy and for Cheyennes and Arapahos in general to hold feasts and giveaways for one another and visiting tribes. A sense of community permeated the grounds, and as government farmer George A. Hoyo observed, the annual event became, simply, a "good place to have a good time."[76]

Although the fair itself lasted only three days, tribal members arrived long before the event and remained several days after visiting with friends and family, dancing, feasting, and giving away property. These activities had been central to Cheyenne and Arapaho social and ceremonial gatherings for generations, and provide evidence of how seamlessly the two tribes incorporated the event into their established patterns of gathering. Without skipping a beat, the two tribes found continuity in an outside institution, in the process creating an institution all their own.

Headmen from both tribes usually arrived first at the fairgrounds in order to select their campsites and decide on the locations of others'.[77] Many tribal members chose to live in tipis during the fair, while others erected large canvas wall tents instead. These tents had rugs or carpeting for floors and occupants slept on either cots or beds.[78] One visitor to the fair, impressed with the number of camps in and around Watonga in 1911, commented that the town resembled a "regular Chicago of tents."[79] Although life in the camps may not have been as interesting to Anglo fairgoers as the dances and sham

battles, it had a familiar appeal to the Cheyennes and Arapahos themselves. Reporter Fred Barde, who visited the 1910 and 1911 fairs, perhaps best captured the essence of camp life with the following description:

> . . . White tepees that shone like a ghost-city at night were adorned with improvised scalp locks and all the various devices that distinguish the families one from another. Everywhere children were at play and the mothers and young women engaged in their household duties—some bringing firewood, others buckets of water, and some leading horses to the wells. There was much chattering and gossiping. Old men sat in the shade . . . and kept the red stone pipe filled with tobacco, . . . passing [it] round the circle as they talked. . . .[80]

That elderly members of both tribes—some blind and too feeble to walk—attended the fair reveals the importance it assumed in Cheyenne-Arapaho society. These men and women could not travel as often as they had when they were young but obviously thought enough of the Indian fair to do so. Each year a cash prize of five dollars was given to the oldest woman on the grounds, which was determined by a panel of Cheyenne and Arapaho elders.[81] Contestants simply recounted their life stories and the individual able to recall the earliest events in tribal history was declared the winner. To say that these women had seen much during their lifetimes would be an understatement. Elk Woman, at ninety-years-old the co-winner of the $5.00 prize at the 1911 fair, had been born in Colorado before the city of Denver was even a speck on the map.[82] Ninety-six year-old Cash Woman, although settling for second place at the 1913 event, took a back seat to no one in terms of having lived an amazing life. She had been one of the few survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre in

1864, escaping with only a gunshot wound to the arm. Her parents, brothers, and sisters, however, all perished that day at the hands of U.S. troops.[83]

Cheyenne and Arapaho adolescents considered the fair socially significant because it afforded them the opportunity to meet members of the opposite sex. At a time when Indian schools kept males and females separated as much as possible, the fair brought them together in an environment relatively free from sexual strictures. According to local newspapers, some teens felt so liberated that they decided to tie the knot with their newly found sweethearts. "The Indian Fair was quite a wedding affair," reported the *Colony Courier*, "judging by the number of marriages following right after it among the Indians."[84] Fair committeeman John Washee called this trend a "very bad thing" and claimed that between fifteen and twenty Cheyenne and Arapaho girls had run off with young men after the 1913 fair and gotten married.[85] Exactly why Washee was so concerned about the extracurricular activities at the fair is uncertain. Perhaps he saw the elopements as a challenge to the system of arranged marriages among the tribes, or maybe he was just speaking out as a concerned parent. Regardless of Washee's stance on the marriages, not all weddings were such spur of the moment events. Other couples planned well in advance to get married at the fair because they knew all their friends and relatives would be there.[86]

Despite the success of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Cato Sells ordered its abolishment early in 1914. Sells, who

replaced R.G. Valentine as commissioner in June of 1913, was a progressive Democrat from Texas with no prior experience in the Indian Service.[87] Whereas Valentine had allowed Indians to dance and race horses at their fairs to ensure their participation, Sells would make no such concessions. Soon after taking office, he began a personal crusade to rid Indian fairs of traditional dances, sham battles, and horse races, naively believing Native people would attend the fairs without them.[88] Because the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair featured all of these "inappropriate" amusements, Sells was only too happy to shut it down.

While the immediate cause of the fair's closure is obvious, a number of underlying factors contributed to its demise. Most important was Indian agent turnover in Cheyenne-Arapaho country during the years of the fair. In 1910, when the fair began, William B. Freer headed the Darlington Agency, Byron E. White the Cantonment Agency, Walter F. Dickens the Seger Agency, and Willis E. Dunn the Red Moon Agency. By November of 1912, only Dunn remained.[89] Their replacements, Frederick E. Farrell (Darlington), Walter G. West (Cantonment), and W.W. Small (Seger) helped carry out the 1913 fair, but Farrell and West clearly believed the event had outlived its usefulness. And, because they oversaw the two largest Cheyenne and Arapaho agencies, their opinions carried considerable weight. Commissioner Sells needed little encouragement to terminate the Cheyenne-Arapaho Fair, and Farrell and West made certain he received that encouragement shortly after the 1913 fair ended.

In a lengthy letter to the commissioner in October of 1913, West conceded that the Cheyennes and Arapahos undoubtedly benefited from the fair but felt they had lost sight of its true purpose. "The tendency seems to be to give too much prominence to horse racing, merry-go rounds, and Wild West shows," he complained, "and too little to agricultural, culinary, and live-stock exhibits. The question in the minds of the Indians seems to be, how much fun and amusement can be had, rather than how much useful knowledge can be gained . . ." West also denounced the fair because it failed to keep the Indians at home during the summer. Instead, he argued, it actually encouraged traveling by giving Cheyennes and Arapahos "one more occasion . . . to go."[90] Farrell, writing to Sells a month later, claimed to have been "an ardent believer in the Indian fair" until recently.[91] He had changed his mind however, after seeing Indian exhibits at Anglo county fairs. In a sort of epiphany, he concluded that only when Indians competed directly with whites as they did at these county fairs could they progress towards civilization. Both Farrell and West agreed that the Cheyenne-Arapaho Fair should be scrapped and that Indians should participate in white county fairs instead.

As the voice of dissent, Red Moon Superintendent Dunn crafted a powerful moral argument for the continuation of the fair. He asserted that Indians at the event were protected from the many vices so prevalent at Anglo county fairs because agents controlled which shows were allowed on the grounds. He had personally "turned away many objectionable shows,

gambling and catch-penny devices" as concessions manager at the 1912 and 1913 events.[92] According to Dunn, encouraging Cheyennes and Arapahos to attend county fairs, as his fellow superintendents suggested, would expose them to a host of evils:

> In their affiliation with local fair associations, the Indians will be used principally as an attraction, and as a result of attending county fairs in the past . . . the men have fallen prey to women in side-shows, or other cheap attractions, and three have died from loathsome disease. One good Indian Fair under close supervision of the agents is far better . . . than turning the Indians over to several bunches of grafters for advertising purposes, where the welfare of the Indians is not considered, but how much money can he be worked for.[93]

Compared with the perversions of Anglo fairs, the inappropriate "Wild West features" at Indian fairs seemed tame indeed. Though Dunn was undoubtedly the most qualified to comment on the fair owing to his involvement in the event from its inception, his views ran counter to Sells' and, as such, were politely dismissed.

Simple economics may also have played a role in the cancellation of the Indian fair. An examination of its financial records indicates that in its first two years, the event netted $79.54 and $438.76, respectively, but lost approximately $600 in 1912 and even more in 1913, its final year. The 1913 fair proved such a financial disaster that the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair Association barely managed to pay off its debts from the previous year and had just $127.94 left over to pay $1,200 worth of premiums.[94] Faced with an impossible situation, the four Cheyenne-Arapaho superintendents decided to

pay only premiums won on livestock exhibits and horse races, and then only 37 cents on the dollar.[95] The agents reasoned that individuals who had brought cattle or horses to the fair were most deserving of remuneration because of the expenses they had incurred transporting and feeding their animals. For the hundreds of Indians who went away from Weatherford with no prize money in 1913, the agents' decision could have placed the fair's future in considerable jeopardy. Cheyennes and Arapahos of the Seger Agency voiced "considerable dissatisfaction" and threatened to boycott the 1914 fair if the premiums were not paid.[96] Indians at the other three agencies probably felt angry as well, but there is some doubt as to whether the tribes would have jettisoned their fair after only one year of unpaid premiums. As late as February of 1914, the Cheyennes and Arapahos still planned to hold their fifth annual fair and, when notified of the event's cancellation, demanded a council with the Indian Bureau to protest the decision.[97]

Given that the fair continued to attract thousands of Indians and whites after 1911, one might be curious as to why the fair became a financial liability in 1912 and 1913. The reason appears to be a simple one: mismanagement of fair association funds by the four Cheyenne-Arapaho superintendents. Agents set a dangerous precedent after the 1911 fair of paying all expenses incurred by agency employees who attended the fair, regardless of how much or little they helped. Workers were reimbursed for transportation, meals, and lodging and, on one occasion, eighty-five cents for a shave.[98] At the 1910 Cheyenne-

Arapaho Fair, four government employees received expense checks that together totaled less than $50.00. By 1912, an army of at least thirty workers racked up over $1,000 in fair expenses. Obviously, word had gotten out that the annual Indian fair was in fact a yearly paid vacation.

Red Moon Superintendent Dunn, in full damage-control mode, blamed the deficit on the large numbers of Indians who were paid between fifty cents and one dollar a day to participate in the daily parade and dances.[99] The numbers, however, fail to support this assertion. Cheyenne and Arapaho dancers and parade participants were paid a total of $375.00 for their services at the 1912 fair; their lodging, transportation, and meal expenses were not. Such an expenditure could be justified because people came to the Indian fair to see Indians, not government employees. Clearly, agents lost sight of who the fair was supposed to benefit. A letter from Ebenezer Kingsley to Seger Superintendent Dickens reveals the extent of agents' misappropriation of fair funds and their misplaced priorities:

> Mr. White [superintendent at Cantonment] told me to send you my expense bill at the Indian fair . . . I did not understand that the expenses of employes [sic] detailed at the Fair would be paid, hence I kept no account of expenses, but if the Fair Association wants to pay my expenses I shall make no strenuous objections. . . . You can call . . . $7.85 as the bill.[100]

Kingsley received his expense check a little more than a week later.

In April of 1914, a group of Arapahos asked for and received a council with one of Commissioner Cato Sells' representatives. Tribal leaders such as Hail, Grant Lefthand, Bird Chief, Jr. and Big Nose attended the council and

aired a laundry list of grievances against the Indian Bureau. Each made a point, though, of expressing his displeasure over the cancellation of the Indian fair. Hail called the fair "a good thing" and hoped "it could be kept up like it has been." Bird Chief, Jr. and Big Nose felt the fair was important in the social life of the Cheyenne and Arapaho people and that they would be uncomfortable participating in Anglo fairs. The speech by Grant Lefthand may have best captured the feelings of his people on the matter: "The Indian Fair is an inducement to the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribe of Indians in the way of Industrial pursuits, and it ought to be continued . . . [W]e are all pulling one direction to prosper . . . and one of the best things we ever did is to have a Fair."[101] In a council four years before, agents representing the Indian Office had tried to convince Cheyennes and Arapahos to hold a fair. Now, it was the Indians who were trying to convince the same government agency to let them continue that same fair. Things had come full circle and, sadly, to an end.

The Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair, as short-lived at it was, quickly became the largest of the many community-wide gatherings held in Cheyenne-Arapaho country every year. The Indian Bureau hoped the fair would satisfy the Indians' "cravings for social intercourse" well enough to render their other gatherings obsolete.[102] It did not. While it did become an important event for Cheyenne and Arapaho people, the two tribes' numerous summer dances and ceremonials continued unabated. Thus, the reasons for implementing the fair in the first place were thwarted and the Cheyennes and

Arapahos, at least for a few years, enjoyed a culturally meaningful event at the government's expense (literally and figuratively).

From the fair's inception, Indians themselves figured prominently in its operation—and necessarily so. Simply put, without Cheyenne and Arapaho support the fair would have ceased to exist. The Indians knew it and the superintendents knew it. The two tribes skillfully negotiated this position of power to transform the fair into something uniquely theirs, conducted on their own terms. At a time when most tribal members could not even purchase groceries without governmental approval, this was truly a notable accomplishment.

CHAPTER THREE

Presenting Ourselves: The Growth of the American Indian Exposition from a Local to a National Event, 1933-1937

In 1932, a group of western Oklahoma Indians met at Anadarko to discuss an alarming trend. The growing number of Indian fairs (or expositions) in the state, meant to benefit Native people, were instead becoming cash cows for whites who organized them. Anglo businessmen claimed to have only the best interests Indians in mind when setting up the fairs and often labeled themselves "friends of the Indians." When the events concluded and it came time to divide the gate receipts, however, white organizers rarely shared the wealth with the main attractions of these events, namely the Indians. Native Americans who assembled at Anadarko in 1932 felt they had been shortchanged for years at the annual Craterville Park Indian Fair (hereafter CPIF) by Anglo park owner and fair promoter/organizer, Frank Rush. They decided a true all-Indian exposition—one not only established *for* Native people, but managed *by* them—was needed. The Southwestern Indian Fair, which would become the American Indian Exposition, was born.

Beginning with token exhibits and dance performances at the yearly white-run Caddo County Fair in 1931, the Southwestern Indian Fair quickly emerged as the largest Indian-operated fair in Oklahoma. Both the Anadarko Chamber of Commerce and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (hereafter BIA) realized the importance of the exposition (the chamber for its potential as a

tourist draw, the Bureau for its emphasis on Native culture) and eagerly supported it. Through promotional campaigns and financial aid, they helped transform the all-Indian fair into a nationally-recognized event. This does not suggest that Natives "sold out" to white interests or that the exposition became less a uniquely Indian affair because of Anglo assistance. Indian leaders knew from the start that cooperation with whites would be essential to the event's success. After all, whites controlled governmental purse strings and the press, owned the fairgrounds on which the fair would be held, and operated the businesses whose support would be crucial to funding and promoting the exposition. And, despite the fact that Indians turned out for their fair in huge numbers, it would never have turned a profit without white spectators paying for grandstand seats and buying souvenirs.

In this section, I trace the roots of the American Indian Exposition back to the CPIF, which began in 1924 and ended in 1934. Held every August in the Wichita Mountains northwest of Lawton, Oklahoma, the Craterville fair clearly served as the blueprint for the Anadarko Indian expositions. The parade of Indians in Native dress, the horse races, the athletic and dance contests, and the agricultural and domestic arts exhibits at the park would all become features of the later fairs. But the Indian fair at Craterville never developed beyond a regional attraction. Never heavily advertised, it received little support from nearby communities and declined noticeably after the death of Frank Rush in 1933. A year later it closed permanently.

The vested interest Natives had in their own fair at Anadarko coupled with local, state, and federal support, I posit, set this exposition apart from its Craterville predecessor and ensured its success. With foresight and initiative, Indians of western Oklahoma created a fair with an unprecedented level of Native control. Although I explore the development of the American Indian Exposition within a limited time frame (from 1931 to 1934), the fair certainly had much life left in it after 1934. In fact, eighty years later the exposition is still being held each summer in Anadarko and attracts not only national but international visitors.

The BIA, in its quest to assimilate Native Americans into dominant white society, initially hit upon the idea of reservation Indian fairs in 1905. Modeled after Anglo state and county fairs, Native expositions featured the same basic components: displays of agricultural products, livestock, and domestic arts that competed for prizes; educational exhibits that preached improvement and progress; and entertainment such as parades, carnival rides, a midway, and horse races. And like most white-operated fairs, those of the Indian variety took place on fairgrounds with similar features: sheds for livestock, buildings for exhibits, a grandstand, a racetrack, and space for a midway carnival.[1]

One of the stated purposes of government-sponsored Native expositions was to improve farming and livestock raising techniques and handicraft skills through healthy competition with one's neighbors for prizes.

As a result, Indian productivity in every area the fair touched would increase, and eventually their standard of living would be raised.[2] Most importantly, Indians would become self-supporting members of society—a sure sign of civilization. In addition, the Indian Bureau believed reservation fairs would keep Natives closer to home. With a fair practically at their doorstep, they would no longer have to travel long distances to attend Anglo state and county expositions. And more time at home, the government reasoned, translated into better farms and happier families.[3]

True to its paternalistic nature, the BIA also promoted Indian expositions as events at which its Native wards could assemble to enjoy "wholesome amusements."[4] According to the U.S. Indian Service, the Native fairs established places for "legitimate gathering" and provided sports "of the cleanest kind, minus whisky and gambling, always so prevalent whenever Indians escape government discipline."[5] Apparently, to the Indian agency the only good Indian was a regulated one.

From a single Indian fair on the Crow Reservation in 1905, Native expositions spread like wildfire across the country; a little over a decade later, fifty-eight reservations could boast of holding one or more of them each year.[6] They proved popular with Native American participants and white spectators alike, and the Bureau's initiative seemed a great success. But not for long. A handful of white reformers condemned entertainment features at the fairs such as traditional Indian dancing and sham battles, as well as the fact that many

Natives camped out at the fairgrounds in tipis (i.e. nonprogressive housing).[7] They believed that allowing Indians to slip back into their former ways could only hurt the race in its long climb up the ladder of civilization. The BIA, though it understood the position of reformers, felt it could do little about the problem:

> With regard to the criticisms that that have been made of certain features of Indian fairs—the dances, old camp life, and the congregation of large numbers of white visitors who only wish to view the Indian at his romantic worst, and who constantly encourage dancing—it is not seen at once how these features may be dispensed with. . . . [I]t would be discouraging, probably, were the Indians asked to support a fair that included only an industrial display.[8]

On a conciliatory note, the Bureau assured reformers that it would eventually wean Indians from their old-time tendencies so visible at the fairs. Their interests, over time, would be transferred completely to improving their homes, fields, and stock.[9]

After reaching their peak in 1915, Indian expositions quickly fell out of favor with the BIA. Cato Sells, Indian Commissioner from 1913 to 1921, began phasing out elements of the fairs he deemed counterproductive to Indians' advancement such as traditional dances, horse races, and sham battles. The emphasis of reservation fairs, believed Sells, should be on the exhibits of farm and home products.[10] One can imagine what effect the commissioner's policy had on Anglo attendance figures at the fairs, as well as the willingness of Native Americans to support such one-dimensional events. The number of

Indian expositions declined markedly during Sells' term in office and would fare no better under his successor Charles Henry Burke.

Commissioner Burke, who served from 1921 to 1929, took Sells' initiative one step further. He called for the elimination of Indian fairs altogether and encouraged Natives to take part in county fairs alongside whites. Burke defended his policy by pointing out that reservation expositions had been created to prevent Indians from leaving their crops and livestock unattended while traveling long distances to attend Anglo fairs. Because reservations had since been opened to settlement by whites who conducted fairs closer to the Indians, strictly Native fairs were no longer needed. "Quite a number of . . . [these] Indian fairs have been discontinued within the past few years," Burke reported in 1924, "and eventually it is hoped that they will all be abolished, the Indians taking part in the county fairs. . . ."[11]

While some Native people did in fact exhibit at state and county fairs, their displays were often allotted little space in exhibit buildings, and they received less prize money—if they received any at all. Usually, the only Indians able to earn cash premiums at Anglo expositions were those who raced horses because, at least at Oklahoma county fairs in the 1920s and 1930s, separate Indian and white horse races assured at least some Natives of taking home cash prizes. In addition, fairs operated by whites offered fewer opportunities for traditional Indian dancing and games. Indians thus attended Anglo fairs primarily to be entertained and to socialize with friends; they kept

their cultures vibrant through local powwows, picnics, and fairs conducted on private property. Obviously, the BIA, if it had had the authority to do so, would never have allowed the CPIF to get started. But because Frank Rush owned the land on which the exposition took place, the agency could do nothing to prevent it.

1924-1934: The Rise and Fall of the Craterville Indian Fair

It is not certain whether Frank Rush first approached the Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche tribes about holding a fair at Craterville or if they approached him. Perhaps Rush, who had served as superintendent of the Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve for fifteen years had the exposition in mind when he resigned his position in 1923 to pursue "private business enterprises." He purchased Craterville Park the same year and began to develop it into a summer resort.[12] The park, an ideal natural fairground, received its name because of its unusual appearance: surrounded by the granite peaks of the Wichita Mountains, it was a large depression of level land that resembled a crater. Within this natural bowl, Rush laid out a half-mile track for footraces and horse races and selected a sizable tract of land to be used for rodeos and as an Indian fairground.[13] A grandstand was built for fair spectators and exhibition tents and buildings were erected for agricultural and handiwork displays.[14] On scorching summer days, Indians and visitors could swim in the natural swimming pool nearby. Natives were not charged a rental

fee for use of the park during the fair nor did they have to pay admission to grandstand events.

In May of 1924, four Indians who made up the first Craterville Fair Board of Directors—Big Bow (Kiowa), Tony Martinez (Comanche), Herman Asenap (Comanche), and Ned Brace (Kiowa)—entered into a formal agreement with Rush to hold an annual all-Indian exposition at his park. The pact, which came to be known as the "Craterville Park Covenant," would later be painted (full-text) on a tanned piece of buckskin and displayed each year at the fair. It succinctly stated the purpose of the fair and, according to Oklahoma Governor, M.E. Trapp, represented a "landmark in the development of the Indian."[15] An excerpt from the covenant read:

> The object of this fair will be to create self-confidence and to encourage leadership by the Indian . . ., [to promote a] belief in the capacity of the Indian to better his position and take his place on terms of equality with other races . . ., and [instill in him] a desire to accomplish the most possible for himself and his people.

The document also required that all officers and directors of the exposition be Indians (and be elected by Indians) and that all exhibitors and exhibit judges be Natives as well.[16]

Held for three or four days every August (Thursday through Saturday or Sunday), the CPIF annually attracted one thousand or so Indians and at least as many white spectators. The majority of Natives who attended were Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches, though smaller numbers of Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Wichitas, Caddos, Delawares, and a host of other tribal members were also

present. Several days before the event started, Indians began arriving "in automobiles, wagons, buggies, and on horseback depending upon their financial condition."[17] They pitched tipis and tents and also erected brush arbors for shade during the day and open-air sleeping at night. A writer for *Inter-state Arts* magazine vividly described her visit to the Native camps on an evening in 1931:

> [S]moke from their camp fires . . . [sends] curling spirals up into the dusty haze of the late summer sky. Many of the campers have spread their evening meal upon the ground with their cups and plates and granite Indian bowls placed about oil cloth or red or yellow tablecloths. Others are eating at rough tables placed out under the arbors. . . . Lanterns swing out from poles at the corners of some of the tents; others are lighted by old fashioned kerosene lamps. . . . [S]leek ponies are to be seen tethered here and there among the tepees . . . One of them is seen in a pen made by tying rope from tree to tree.[18]

The daily program of events began in the afternoon with horse races and footraces followed by old-time Indian games. These games included a bow and arrow shooting contest, a wheel game, a tug of war match between the Kiowas and the Comanches, a women's shinny game, and a women's kick ball contest. In the kick ball contest, women from different tribes lined up and kicked a ball slightly smaller than a football for a distance of two hundred feet. "This is really more exciting than it sounds," explained a white fairgoer, "for these squaws wear the full Indian costumes, including shawls and moccasins, and it is by no means an easy feat to kick a ball in such full dress. They do it, though, and the excitement runs high."[19]

At 2:30 in the afternoon, Native men and women, young and old, prepared to demonstrate to the grandstand crowd how far they had progressed over the past 150 years. Dubbed the "Parade of Progress," Indians dressed in traditional buckskin outfits walked past the grandstand alongside those wearing business suits, and Native modes of transportation from the horse travois to the modern automobile followed closely behind—all driven by Indians. As Geronimo had proven years before at the 101 Ranch, the spectacle of a traditionally dressed Indian riding in a car offered not only a striking contrast, but also a fine photo opportunity.

Native dances—the primary reason both Indians and Anglos came to Craterville Park—took place in the evening and, in later years, in the afternoon as well. Indians performed a host of social dances over the years, including the Eagle Dance borrowed from the Pueblos of New Mexico, at various times over the years, but War Dances were the one constant on the fair program. Stephen Mopope (Kiowa), considered one of the top dancers on the Southern Plains in addition to his prowess as an artist, often led the performances. Other notable dancers to appear at the fair included Gus McDonald (Ponca), Chester Lefthand (Arapaho), and Joe Atocknie (Comanche). Atocknie, a student at Ft. Sill Indian School, delivered a masterful performance to win the 1931 World's Champion War Dancer Contest held at Craterville. A Lawton reporter described it thusly: "Atocknie made a colorful and striking figure as his graceful young body kept perfect time to the beat of the tom-tom music,

exhibiting splendid footwork and showing almost perfect rhythm as he imitated steam engines, airplanes, and other late methods of transportation."[20] Interestingly, several motion picture studios got wind of the dances and sent crews to film them in 1927; it is uncertain whether any of the footage ever made it into theaters. [21]

War Dancing may have been entertaining for the Anglo fairgoers, but for sheer heart-pumping excitement, the re-enactments of Indian stagecoach robberies and wagon train attacks could not be beaten. Mock Indian attacks, of course, had been staple features of Wild West shows for many years, but audiences at the fair did not seem to care. The painted, war bonnet-wearing warrior of popular imagination never seemed to grow old. Presented at the 1924 and 1925 expositions, the stagecoach robbery utilized the park's terrain for maximum dramatic effect. Native men in full war regalia swooped down the hillside on their horses, shooting arrows and firing guns "as they did when the white man was their hated enemy."[22] Additional "warriors" crept out from behind rocks to help subdue the stagecoach. Crowds loved the historical drama and fair officials declared it the most exciting and educational event on the program.[23]

A larger and more elaborate wagon train attack took place in 1926 with nearly two hundred Indigenous actors and fifty whites participating. Normally, Anglos were not permitted to participate in any fair events, but in this case the script of the spectacle demanded it. Without whites driving the wagons that

would be chased and eventually burned in front of the grandstand, the dramatic integrity of the attack would be compromised. A motion picture company filmed the entire scene, which could have come straight out of a Hollywood movie of the era.[24] To Major Gordon Lillie, a distinguished guest at the CPIF that year, the wagon train attack undoubtedly seemed familiar. After all Lillie, better known as Pawnee Bill, had presented similar dramas at his own Wild West show for years.

After three full days of programs, Indians were able to relax and enjoy a special meal before returning to their homes. Each year, Frank Rush presented them with a buffalo from the Wichita Game Preserve herd to be butchered and barbecued for Sunday brunch. Since Rush had increased the herd's size from 15 to 172 head during his tenure as park superintendent, he apparently received certain unique retirement benefits. Once the buffalo feast had concluded, the Kiowas and Comanches squared off for an afternoon baseball game. Although no prizes were awarded to the victors, both teams had the opportunity to run off the large meal they had just eaten.

The exhibits of farm and home products at Craterville, though not nearly as exciting to Anglo fairgoers as painted Indians on horseback, certainly interested the Indians themselves—and well they should have. The financial incentives for exhibiting were great enough to interest anyone: over $1,200 in premium money was given away at the 1929 exposition alone. Of the six exhibit departments that year—livestock, poultry and eggs, farm crops,

vegetables, canned goods, and handiwork—the largest outlay of $358 went to the handiwork department. Only in this particular section could one find authentic Native arts and crafts, which offered a welcome “departure from the ordinary” for white visitors.[25] War bonnets, beaded moccasins, and paintings on buckskin were just a few of the uniquely Indian items displayed. A reporter for the *Lawton Constitution* believed the painting exhibit was worth traveling miles to see:

> Paintings on buckskin, done by Indians, show remarkable talent. The Indian knows little of the rules of the art as practiced by the white man. But unhampered by that and expressing himself in his own way in the manner handed down to him from his ancestors, he can do some painting which is not only unique, but is real art, thoroughly original.

The art critic added that this new school of painting could stand its own against “so-called modern” art.[26]

Especially after the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, income from fair premiums would have been a welcome addition to any family struggling financially—Indian or white. At the 1930 Craterville Exposition, Frank Monatoboy and his wife exhibited at least 20 different items in various categories and left the park with a combined $47 in premium money.[27] And Indians could earn cash prizes in countless other ways besides exhibiting. Those who donned traditional regalia and took part in the Parade of Progress split a pot of $150 equally amongst themselves.[28] The best dressed husband and wife at the fair received $5, while the oldest Indian on the grounds collected $2. Between three and six dollars went to first place winners in the

traditional Indian game contests.[29] Furthermore, Natives blessed with great foot speed could pocket $10 a day by winning the half-mile race held daily at the exposition.[30]

Indians who attended the fair could earn even more money if they owned fast horses. At least five different horse races were run each day in various distances ranging from three-eighths of a mile to three-fourths of a mile. Owners of several horses who could place entries in multiple distance categories might easily collect over $100 during the three-day fair. In a single afternoon in 1928, horses owned by an Indian man named Red Wolf won four of five races, and his total winnings added up to a staggering $82.50. Even boys and girls had the opportunity to bring home "big money" by racing Shetland ponies for first place prizes of $7.50.[31]

During the eleven-year history of the event, Indians assembled at Craterville received healthy doses of self-improvement rhetoric as well. Days of races, games, and dancing were occasionally interspersed with speeches from state bureaucrats who helped remind Indians of the real reason for the fair (in the minds of politicos, at least): to become better, more productive farmers and housewives by competing with their neighbors for premiums. In addition, fair programs and premium lists encouraged Indians to embrace an agricultural lifestyle for the good of their race. The following text that appeared in the 1929 Craterville premium list is a good example. Strangely worded (it

switches from third person to first person several times), it may well have been written, in whole or in part, by Frank Rush:

> As a race of people we find ourselves face to face with modern times with which we must keep pace. The coming of the white man has rapidly put us in touch with the best farming machinery and the latest methods of farming.
> Since the Indian has had his choice of the best lands of our country, he should naturally be a farmer and stock raiser. The Board of Directors urges all Indians to . . . push ahead with farm work in order that we may take our place on terms of equality with other races. . . . Our government has wisely guarded our interests in the past, but the time will soon come when we must do our own thinking.[32]

Not all printed material or speakers exuded such paternalistic overtones. At the 1927 fair, for example, Oklahoma A&M College President Dr. Bradford Knapp delivered an address on Native contributions to agriculture and civilization. He reminded the grandstand crowd that it had been Indians who first introduced maize to the world, though this fact rarely made its way into the history books.[33]

The state of Oklahoma first became involved with the Indian fair in 1925. That year Governor M.E. Trapp presented a silver “Governor’s Cup” to Indian men of the Walters farm district for displaying the finest agricultural products at the exposition.[34] In 1928, Native women’s farm clubs began competing for a silver cup of their own. The first “State Board of Agriculture Cup,” given to the club with the best domestic science exhibit, went to the Apache district. Both cups were held for one year and then competed for again.[35] By 1929, the state had begun to realize the fair’s potential as a tourist

attraction and, as such, appropriated $1,000 for premiums.[36] With the money Frank Rush had been doling out for premiums freed up, he enlarged the grandstand and added an additional exhibit hall.[37] Increased funds also translated into more extensive promotion of the 1929 event, as evidenced by a full-page ad in the *Lawton Constitution*.[38] In previous years, Rush had paid for newspaper advertisements for the fair only twice, in 1924 and 1925; from 1926 to 1928 and again from 1930 to 1934, no ads appeared in any local paper.

The state legislature named the Craterville Exposition the "Official All-Indian Fair of Oklahoma" in 1931 and again dispensed $1,000 for premiums. By 1933, however, the state appropriation had been halved, and the fair was cut off completely from state funding in 1934, its final year of operation. Perhaps the fair simply fell victim to budget cuts. Or maybe state legislators saw more potential in the emerging Southwestern Indian Fair in Anadarko and waited to see which event would survive. Whatever the case, one thing is certain: when the state money for exhibits at Craterville dried up, the fair did as well.

Native people undeniably benefited from their involvement with the CPIF. Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche people renewed old friendships at the park every year, made new friends, and enjoyed traditional dances and games without fear of BIA reprisal. And while some Anglo fairgoers had little or no appreciation of Native culture, at least a few left the exposition more appreciative of Indian people. As one visitor related while visiting the fair: "A

people who do not seek the limelight have taken us into their sports and ceremonies in simple and sincere fellowship. We are grateful."[39] Many Indians profited financially from the exposition through exhibit premiums and other cash prizes, while others sold arts and crafts to visitors or operated concession stands to earn money. Finally, the Craterville Fair gave Indian people valuable experience in organizing a major event—experience that would help them create and transform the American Indian Exposition into one of the largest Indian fairs in the country.

1931-1934: From the Indian Agricultural Fair to the Southwestern Indian Fair

By the early 1930s, Indians in the Anadarko area had begun to discuss the possibility of starting a fair managed exclusively by Native people. Parker McKenzie (Kiowa), one of the founders of the American Indian Exposition, explained that such an event was necessary because of the deteriorating relationship between themselves and Frank Rush: "There was at the time considerable dissatisfaction amongst Indians who seasonably attended the Craterville fair near Cache, Okla. over the fact that promoter Frank Rush was plainly 'using' the Indians for his own financial benefit and allowing but a trickle to them."[40] Following the 1931 Craterville fair, Ned Brace (Kiowa), a longtime director at the fair, aired his concerns to the citizens of Walters, Oklahoma. He revealed that plans were already underway to establish a genuine Indian exposition at a central location in southwestern Oklahoma for

tribes of the Kiowa Agency (Kiowas, Comanches, Apaches, Caddos, Delawares, and Wichitas). Brace stressed that such a fair would be financed and run entirely by Indians and that both Lawton and Anadarko had offered the use of their fairgrounds free of charge if such an exposition became a reality.[41] While Anadarko townspeople may have welcomed the Native exposition, the city of Lawton was decidedly less enthusiastic about the idea than Brace's speech would indicate.

On August 14, 1932, the Lawton Chamber of Commerce met to discuss the Indian fair issue. Craterville Indian Fair Secretary Herman Asenap (Comanche) appeared before the board of directors and conveyed his belief that the city was in immediate danger of losing the fair. One board member replied that because Rush held a state charter for the all-Indian fair, it could not be relocated without his consent. Several of his fellow directors promptly reminded him that Indians and not Rush had the final say in holding the fair.[42] The chamber of commerce directors voted to send a committee before the Lawton city council that very evening in an attempt to gain council approval for free use of the fairgrounds for the Indian event if it were to be moved. But the directors made it clear that they would rather see the Craterville Fair remain at its present location at Rush's park.[43] Though Lawton newspapers failed to report the city council's decision, events in Anadarko three days later made it a moot point. Indians there formed the Southwestern Indian Fair Association (hereafter SIFA) after the conclusion of the 1932 Caddo County

Fair and elected Lewis Ware president, Herman Asenap vice-president, and Parker McKenzie secretary/treasurer.[44]

Frank Rush and the city of Lawton cannot take all the credit for the emergence of the American Indian Exposition. Events at the 1931 and 1932 Caddo County Fairs in Anadarko also precipitated the formation of the permanent fair body known as the SIFA. In 1931, an all-Indian fair was supposed to be held in connection with the white-run Caddo County Fair. Owing to the Depression, however, the county fair board lowered premiums across the board and cut those for Indian exhibits completely. As well, Indians were allotted only a single night to perform traditional dances in front of the grandstand. Thus, their share of admission revenue would have been paltry at best. Fortunately, the BIA came through with an appropriation of $75 for premiums, which Parker McKenzie sarcastically described as "heap big money."[45]

McKenzie nonetheless set out to create at least a passable display of Native artwork and farm and home products for the county fair. With the help of Jasper Saunkeah (Kiowa), McKenzie prepared several hundred premium lists to be distributed to Kiowa Agency Indians. The pamphlets announced the dates of the event, listed premium amounts for the various exhibits, and informed Natives that the enterprise was being sponsored by the SIFA. Though no such organization existed at that time (it would not be formed until

1932), McKenzie and Saunkeah believed it lent an air of professionalism to the venture.[46]

A number of volunteers helped prepare the displays of Indian products because the fair board could only afford to hire personnel to set up white exhibits. Top prize money of three dollars went to the best dairy cow, while first place winners in the agricultural and household arts divisions received a meager fifty cents. Indian artisans and craftsmen took home more liberal premium amounts.[47]

Things improved the next year as Kiowa Agency Superintendent W. B. McCown was able to secure a $500 appropriation from the Indian Bureau for premiums.[48] The 1932 all-Indian agricultural fair again took place in conjunction with the Caddo County Fair, which began on Wednesday, September 14 and ended Saturday, September 17. Indian exhibit entries increased dramatically from the year before, and Natives flocked to the joint fair in record numbers. As had been the case in 1931, white fair officials allowed Indian performers to provide only one night of grandstand entertainment. Native dancers made the most of this opportunity, however, and delivered a memorable performance on Friday evening. Lauded as the high point of the entire county fair, the spectacle made front-page news the next day. An *Anadarko Tribune* reporter described the scene in rich detail:

> Every conceivable form of Indian dancing was revealed to a crowd that flooded the grandstand and all of the sidelines. The spangled costumes, rich in color, reflected the glory of olden

> days when the virile red man had not been introduced to the puerile influences of civilization.
> The most picturesque of the Indian performances . . . was the snake dance. . . . Dancers form[ed] a long corkscrew line, and the lowly snake in all of its winding proclivities . . . [was] imitated. Then there was the rabbit, shield, and buffalo dance. Those who had charge of that part of the program certainly knew their botany. It was worth coming miles to see.[50]

On Saturday morning of the 1932 Indian and Caddo County Fair, Natives from at least eight different western Oklahoma tribes gathered at the fairgrounds to form the permanent Southwestern Indian Fair Association. Most Natives present had been going to Craterville for years and felt the time was right to strike out on their own. Superintendent McCown briefly addressed the group and assured them of his full cooperation in their endeavor. After other speeches and the election of officers, a resolution was adopted by the newly formed SIFA that laid out the reasons for a true all-Indian fair in Anadarko. It stated that in order for Indian people to stage an exposition successfully and reap the financial rewards of that exposition, Native people had to participate in every phase of the event "from the managing body on down."[51] After all, the numerous Indian fairs and powwows held every year in Oklahoma had few Native American managers, though Indians did participate in them. Such events were "merely money making ventures on the part of individuals or groups" who cared little about the advancement of Native interests.[52] Although the tribes assembled at the meeting conceded that financial assistance from and cooperation with whites would be necessary for the fair's success, control of the event would remain in Indian hands.

The 1933 Southwestern Indian Fair became the fledgling fair association's coming out party. True, the event remained yoked to the Caddo County Fair, but its popularity ensured that it would have long life as a separate entity in the years to come. As a prelude to the fair, two local Kiowa Indians, Mose Poolaw and Sid Lacer, organized an all-Indian state baseball tournament to be played in Anadarko. Fourteen teams from across the state signed up to vie for a silver cup as well as cash and other prizes. Teams made up of Osage, Caddo, Comanche, Apache, Kiowa, Cheyenne, Seminole, Creek, Arapaho, and Wichita Indians came from as far away as Ponca City and Fairfax to compete. On three nights of the seven-day baseball tourney, tribal dancers, some of whom had just returned from the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago, performed in front of the grandstand.[53]

Most of the teams had at least one player on their roster with some professional baseball experience, and several of these "big shots" were "known to athletic fans from all over."[54] Louis "Little Rabbit" Weller (Caddo), who played infield for the Ft. Cobb team, was undoubtedly the biggest name at the tournament. A former all-around sports star at Haskell Institute, he had recently signed a professional football contract with the Boston Redskins of the National Football League. He offered a word of advice to aspiring young football players that could easily be applied to other sports: "Listen to the coach. Do what he tells you. Practice hard . . . [and] leave smokes alone when you are in training."[55] With semi-pro ballplayers and characters like Weller in

the tournament, one can see why the event became Anadarko's biggest attraction of 1933.

Anadarko newspapers gave the games front-page attention during the week, with headlines such as "Bronzed Ball Players From All Sections of State Are on Hand" that proclaimed the novel racial makeup of the teams participating.[56] Most articles enthusiastically supported the all-Indian tournament, but the event received some unfavorable attention the day before the championship game. Local police arrested four intoxicated Indian ball players around midnight and tossed them into the "city bastile." "After spending some pretty tense moments on the ball diamond during the day," the paper reported, "these boys decided to go on the loose that night."[57] The following morning, the young men were brought before Police Judge J.A. Rogers who had seen them on the ball field the previous day. Rogers gently admonished the players and fined them the smallest amount possible, $1 apiece. The writer covering the story for the *Anadarko Tribune* claimed that this kind act proved that "no matter what else you may think of the judge, he's a good sport."[58]

The Wichita Indians defeated the Wetumka Harjoches 8-4 to win the state Indian baseball title. After the game, local businessmen presented the victorious squad with a beautiful silver cup, which brought a rousing ovation from the crowd.[59] Area merchants not only helped defray tournament expenses, but also donated gifts for the post-tournament awards. Prizes were

given to players in 15 different categories, including the individual with the most homeruns, the fastest time running the bases, and the most errors.[60] To make sure no team went away empty handed, organizers of the event divided the gate receipts with each team in the tourney. Fans from across Oklahoma attended the all-Indian baseball tournament and hoped it would become an annual event. They would not be disappointed, for the tourney returned for an encore performance at the 1934 Southwestern Indian Fair.

Less than a month after the baseball tournament, the 1933 Southwest Indian Fair officially opened with Indians in traditional regalia parading through the streets of Anadarko. The procession slowly made its way to the county fairgrounds where prizes were awarded to the best-dressed man, woman, young man, and young woman. Andrew Pidosofy took home a sack of flour and $1 worth of beef, while Mrs. Enoch Smokey received a sack of groceries. A young Kiowa woman, Cleo Ware, was given a magazine rack, while her youthful counterpart Archie Blackowl got a wool sweater.[61] Indigenous games and athletic contests, including arrow shooting contests for distance and marksmanship, several footraces, a women's kick ball contest, and two tug-of-war matches, filled the afternoon program. The second tug-of-war match, which pitted the Caddos against the Wichitas, turned into a test of endurance as well as strength. The tribes battled for nearly fifteen minutes before a tie was declared.[62]

Indian dancers provided a memorable nightcap to the day's activities as Kiowas, Comanches, Caddos, Delawares, and Wichitas performed Eagle, Spear and Shield, and Turkey Dances. The Ft. Sill Apaches gave the crowd a special treat by presenting their Fire Dance, complete with elaborate headdresses and painted clowns. A War Dance contest was also held, with Stephen Mopope taking top honors.

Unlike previous years, county fair officials allowed Indians to dance on three of the fair's four nights. The Anglo officials had finally realized that more Native dances increased fair attendance, which benefited both themselves and the Indian participants. White fairgoers loved to watch Native dancing, although as one observer pointed out, some elements of their authenticity were being compromised by allowing Anglos to view them: "The barbaric, glittering color and ritualistic gestures of the Apache fire dance . . . took a large audience back in imagination to the time when these dances were secret ceremonials, a vital part of tribal life and not a grandstand performance before modern floodlights at the fairgrounds . . ."[63] Like other tribes across North America, the Apaches had decided to perform dances outside of their traditional setting, a practice that probably made some tribal members uncomfortable. However, by doing so, they helped ensure the dances would survive to future generations, which most would agree was a good thing.

The one night of the fair that Indian dances did not take place was set aside for a program by Riverside Indian School pupils. Music from the

Apache band opened the program, after which third graders, dressed in buckskin outfits and carrying bows and arrows, performed a song drill entitled "Indian Ways Are Best." Third grader James Taylor then sang several cowboy songs after which students presented a folk dance. Next, the Riverside student body sang a Kiowa prayer song. Six girls from the physical education department followed with an exciting acrobatic stunt routine, and a flag drill and band music brought the program to a close.[64]

The main attraction—boxing between Riverside students—was yet to come. Faculty members and students set up a makeshift boxing ring in front of the grandstand as the expectant crowd looked on. The fans certainly got their fill of matches, as twelve young Indian pugilists competed in six separate bouts. Each boy got to select his own fighting name, which varied in quality and fierceness. A sample of these include Toughy Tsoodle, Wild Man Dunlap, Turpentine Aunquoe, Bozo Lookinglass, and Battling Barcindibar. Winners of each match were treated to a free pop by the grandstand soda vendor.[65]

High quality arts and crafts were displayed at the inaugural Southwestern Indian Fair even though the BIA doled out less premium money ($350) than the year before.[66] Susie Peters, who was in charge of the department, reported that 150 or so paintings were shown in five categories: oils, watercolors, pastels, pen and pencil sketches, and paintings on buckskin and velvet. Monroe Tsatoke (Kiowa) displayed one of his works which had recently won first prize at the Inter-tribal Ceremonial in Gallup, New Mexico,

and Stephen Mopope and James Auchiah (Kiowa) exhibited a number of their paintings as well. All three of these noted Kiowa Five artists won prizes at the fair, Tsatoke for best collection, Mopope for runner-up best collection, and Auchiah for second place best watercolor.[66] Livestock and farm and home products were also exhibited, but garnered scant attention from fairgoers.

In 1934 the Southwestern Indian Fair, which had been held jointly with the county fair for three years, truly became an independent event. Held a full month before the county exposition, it erased any doubts that the all-Indian fair could effectively draw visitors without the support of the Caddo County Fair. In addition, several new features were added to the fair bill in 1934 such as all-Indian horse races, an Indian princess contest, and a midway carnival. These would become staples of all Anadarko Indian expositions thereafter. And, while exhibit premium amounts remained far below Craterville Fair levels, at least now all revenue collected at the exposition remained in Native hands.

Indian fair organizers wisely incorporated the 1934 All-Indian Baseball Tournament into the exposition itself. It began August 12, three days before the fair started, and ended August 19, the day after the fair closed. Thus, visitors attending one event would be able to patronize the other as well. Word had obviously spread about the unique tournament because more than 25 Indian teams filled out admission applications for the 12 available slots. Elimination games were played throughout the state for the right to participate in the Anadarko all-Indian tourney. Teams from Cache Creek, Lookeba,

Colony, Stecker, Hog Creek, Clinton, Ft. Sill, Cushing, Anadarko, Carnegie, Okmulgee, and Camp Creek made the final cut.

As he had done the year before, Kiowa Agency Superintendent McCown threw out the ceremonial first pitch of the baseball series on Sunday morning. However now the individual attempting to catch the ball was H.E. Castleberry—in 1933 it had been Anadarko Mayor B.C. Loomis. According to a local reporter, the switch occurred because the mayor feared another debilitating, embarrassing injury: "Last year Mayor Loomis did the receiving act, but McCown's speed was too much for the mayor . . . and the ball hit him on the shin and he was crippled for almost a month following the injury."[67] Unfortunately, McCown's aim had failed to improve in a year's time, and his first pitch sailed past Castleberry, hitting the backstop in front of the stands. A manager for one of the Indian teams present declared it a perfect strike.[68]

Aside from the ceremonial first-pitch ordeal, the second all-Indian tourney went smoothly, and fans enjoyed many close games. The Anadarko club, comprised of Indians from no fewer than 11 different tribes, became the favorite to win the championship early on. Besides the team's obvious talent, its diverse tribal make-up, baseball gurus believed, increased its chances of winning.[69] Anadarko eventually won the tournament by defeating Okmulgee in the title game; a day later they beat an all-star team from the Ft. Sill military base 4-2. The top three teams split a purse of $328, while the remaining teams received $25 each.[70]

Fair officials had every reason to believe the 1934 exposition would be a grand success even before it began. In June of that year, Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier had expressed his support for the all-Indian fair and granted it $500 for fair expenses on top of the $544 the BIA had already allotted it for premiums. The expense money would cover the salaries of four exhibit superintendents and two assistants, with enough left over to take several exhibits to the Oklahoma State Fair.[71] A month later the SIFA, in a meeting with the Anadarko Chamber of Commerce, obtained permission to use the fairgrounds and its facilities without cost. In addition, a number of local merchants decorated their storefronts with Indian-inspired displays and hung banners that welcomed visitors to the fair. Mayor Loomis gave the Indian exposition his endorsement by issuing the following proclamation that appeared on the front page of local papers: "I, as Mayor of the City of Anadarko request all business and professional men and women to close their places of business at one o'clock p.m. on Thursday, August 16 and remain closed until six o'clock, so that all who wish to do so, may attend the first all-Indian fair held by the Southwestern Indian Fair Association. . . ."[72]

Much like they had done at Craterville, Indians arrived several days before the fair and baseball tournament to erect their tents, tipis, brush arbors, and grass houses. As the Native village grew "like a mushroom on the polo grounds east of the city," hordes of curious Anglos wandered around the

campsite.[73] One visitor described the hodgepodge of sights and sounds to be found there:

> Bright blankets of the oldtimers mingle in a costume picture with silk polo shirts and modern prints of their children. Before mealtime, open fires light up the camp ground with steaming kettles of beef cooking over them. Dried meat hangs from the lodge roof before it is cooked. Children romp with those of their neighbors. Dogs of various breeds from German police to rat terriers are in evidence. Sleek race horses to be entered in fair races are carefully groomed.[74]

For romantic appeal, the idyllic camp scene could not be equaled in the minds of many observers. And with the Depression and Dust Bowl landing dual blows to Midwesterners in 1934, this longing for a simpler, happier time was to be expected.

Virtually the entire town lined the streets for the opening day Native dress parade. Many out of town visitors and a few out of state visitors were also on hand to watch, drawn to Anadarko by the "unusualness" of an all-Indian fair.[75] Three Indian princesses on horseback led the procession, followed by Phil Cato's All-Indian Band and Native women wearing buckskin dresses and moccasins. A contingent of old and young men in dance regalia came next, walking with a "clink of bells and a display of feathers." SIFA officials, local businessmen, and a handful of visitors rode in a long line of cars at the end of the parade.[76] Although the procession had not been as long as one watcher had hoped, he admitted that it was certainly "colorful and different to the nth degree."[77]

Once spectators and paraders had made their way to the fairgrounds, Imogene Geiogamah (Kiowa) was named the winner of the first Indian exposition princess contest. That evening and each evening thereafter, Stephen Mopope directed Native dance programs in front of the grandstand. As usual, horse races and Indian games filled the afternoon slate of events, and agricultural, domestic science, and arts and crafts displays could be seen in the exhibit halls. Total attendance for the combined Indian exposition and baseball tournament exceeded even the most optimistic estimates. Nearly 9,000 visitors witnessed grandstand events during the week, and countless others toured the various exhibit buildings.[78]

The first independent Southwestern Indian Fair proved such a hit that its very name became a precious commodity. As such, three disgruntled Indians who had been left off the SIFA board of directors attempted to gain exclusive rights to the name "Southwestern Indian Fair" through a charter from the state. Oklahoma Secretary of State, R.A. Sneed, unaware that the individuals who approached him seeking the charter had no legitimate claim to the name, issued the charter to the rogue Indians the day after the 1934 fair ended. The trio of Malcolm Hazlett, William Collins, and Jess Adunko apparently planned to stage their own fair in 1935 and desired the legitimacy the Southwestern Indian Fair name would confer on their venture. To counter the move, Parker McKenzie and other leaders of the fair association decided to obtain a state charter of their own;[79] the name they chose for their new fair was

the “American Indian Exposition.” Fittingly, the scheme hatched by Hazlett and company fell through, and no Southwestern Indian Fair was ever held after the 1934 event. Instead, the legitimate fair association conducted the first annual American Indian Exposition in 1935, and it has been known by that name ever since.

Beyond its significance as one of the few large-scale expositions ever to be managed entirely by Natives, the Southwestern Indian Fair was important for a number of other reasons. It fostered intertribal solidarity by hosting the all-Indian state baseball tournament and through the formation of a more inclusive fair association. Whereas only Kiowas, Comanches, and Apaches had served on the Craterville fair association board, nine tribes were represented equally on the SIFA’s board of directors. In addition to bringing Native people closer together, the fair united the Anadarko community and strengthened relations between whites and Indians. Further, the Southwestern Indian Fair exposed more Anglos to the vibrancy and uniqueness of Native cultures and proved to whites that Indians could operate a successful fair on their own without a “big brother” like Frank Rush looking over their shoulder. And perhaps most remarkably, the exposition matured and prospered during a period of terrible droughts and the most severe economic depression the country had ever known.[81] Even so, the all-Indian fair fortuitously grew up under John Collier’s BIA administration, which means that, in hindsight, 1934

may just have been the perfect time for the American Indian Exposition to be born.

CHAPTER FOUR

Beauty and Cultural Knowledge to Boot: The Miss Indian America Pageant and the Persistence of Native Identity

From 1953 to 1983, thousands of Indians, mainly from the Northern Plains and the Plateau regions, flocked to Sheridan, Wyoming, in early August to attend All American Indian Days (hereafter AAID). This cultural celebration consisted of Native dances, parades, and games, but its signature event from the very beginning was the Miss Indian America pageant (hereafter MIA). A contest of "beauty, personality, and knowledge of tribal traditions," the pageant drew women from across the western United States, many of whom already held positions of royalty in their tribes (i.e. Miss Navajo Nation).[1] The MIA pageant has received virtually no scholarly attention, save for a recent article about the Bureau of Indian Affairs' photographs of contest winners. In the article, Wendy Kozol, a feminist scholar, explains how the historically paternalistic attitude of the Bureau toward Native peoples carried over into visual images of the Miss Indian Americas taken when they toured Washington, D.C.[2] While Kozol's argument seems logical, after talking with some of the ladies themselves, it could not be further from the truth. I hope to demonstrate in this chapter that the young women wearing the MIA crown were by no means passive pawns of either the Indian Bureau or the AAID organization. They were independent women with thoughts and agendas of

their own, which at times caused conflicts between themselves and the organization they were representing.

A logical question that comes to mind when studying AAID is how it came to be held in an affluent resort town in which very few, if any, Indian people actually lived. The answer is not entirely clear, but it appears to have grown out of the rodeo queen contest held at the 1952 Sheridan Rodeo.[3] That year, for the first time, rodeo visitors chose an Indian woman, Lucy Yellow Mule (Crow), to be queen of the event.[4] Whether civic leaders orchestrated Yellow Mule's selection in order to bring attention to the community is uncertain. However, given the fact that only a few months later the American Public Relations Association (an organization to which one of Sheridan's most prominent citizens, Howard Sinclair, belonged) gave the city a silver anvil award for "outstanding achievement in community public relations in the interest of racial equality and understanding," the choice of an Indian rodeo queen appears likely to have been a calculated PR move on the part of local businessmen.[5]

As part of her rodeo queen duties, Yellow Mule spoke at meetings and events in and around Sheridan for the next year. These appearances were largely scheduled by Sinclair, who directed her to speak about her family and Native culture in general. He hoped that by doing so she would break down the stereotypes whites had of Indians and promote better race relations. Although it is difficult to gauge the success of this campaign, Sinclair boasted

at the time that it was responsible for eliminating "No Indians Allowed" signs from Sheridan businesses.[6] Based on his report of Yellow Mule's campaign to the American Public Relations Association, the city received the aforementioned award. As utopian as Sinclair's claims seem to be, there can be little doubt his heart was in the right place.

In February of 1953, Yellow Mule, her attendants, Sinclair and his wife, and photographer Don Diers journeyed by train to Washington, D.C., to accept the silver anvil on behalf of the city of Sheridan. Publicity stops in major cities along the way garnered attention for the entourage even before it arrived in the nation's capitol. Once there, the group went sightseeing, spoke with politicians, and was interviewed by radio and television stations. On March 3, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay presented the award to the Wyoming community at a reception at a local hotel. When Yellow Mule rose to accept the honor, however, she abruptly sat back down, waited for several seconds, and then made her way to the podium. Some in the audience thought she had been temporarily overcome by stage fright, but the real reason for her hesitation emerged after the banquet. Apparently Joy Old Crow, one of Yellow Mule's attendants, had tied the buckskin fringes of her dress to the fringes of another girl's dress during McKay's speech.[7] To prevent having to accept the award with her close friend right beside her, Yellow Mule had waited until the friend untied the fringes.

One the way home, the group stopped in Minneapolis long enough to pick up an additional award from an organization called American Indian, Inc. Later that year the inhabitants of Sheridan were notified that they would receive yet another award for their campaign to eliminate racial discrimination: a medal from the Freedom Foundation.[8] At this point, civic leaders must have been wondering why they had not chosen an Indian rodeo queen years ago. The town decided that its July rodeo would be a fitting occasion on which to accept the medal, so in 1953, for the first time, it set aside one day of the event for exclusively Indian activities. Well aware of the exposure Yellow Mule had brought to Sheridan, a local Ford dealer raised the money to sponsor a Miss Indian America contest as part of this "All Indian Day." The special day proved so popular with both Anglo visitors and Native participants that it was decided to make "All American Indian Days" a stand-alone, permanent event from that time on.

Because the MIA pageant came to represent AAID more than any other feature of the event, the rest of the chapter will focus on Sharron Ahtone Harjo, the 1965 MIA. Ahtone Harjo, a full-blood Kiowa, college graduate, artist, and retired schoolteacher, defies the simplistic label of an "Indian princess." She is articulate and self-assured and has a great sense of humor as well as a terrific memory. She offers insight into the pageant not readily available from traditional archival sources such as newspapers and manuscripts. Based on Ahtone Harjo's recollections and those of other women involved in the event,

it becomes obvious that the MIA pageant was much more than just a beauty contest. Granted, all the contestants were physically attractive, but beauty without knowledge of one's culture would hardly have earned points with the judges. Judges were looking for well-rounded individuals who they felt would make a suitable ambassador for Native people and, of course, for AAID. In Sharron Ahtone Harjo, they found a woman ideally suited for these roles.

Before detailing the process by which Ahtone Harjo was chosen MIA and her experiences during her year-long reign, it is necessary to know something about her life. Sharron Ahtone was born on January 6, 1945, in Carnegie, Oklahoma, to Jake and Evelyn Ahtone. Her dad worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs as an agronomist at the time and would continue to be employed by the Bureau in some capacity until he retired (this explains why the family moved quite frequently when she was growing up). In 1949, the family moved to Washington, D.C., where Ahtone Harjo began attending school at the age of four. She remembers the beautiful colors of the leaves that fall and also celebrating Christmas with her family. At this time, her father was being trained as a relocation specialist by the Indian Bureau to coordinate the relocation of Native families from reservations to urban areas. The Relocation Program, enacted by the BIA in the 1950s to combat unemployment in Indian country and mitigate the perceived deleterious effects of reservation life, produced mixed results as well as a multitude of unintended consequences.

On the positive side of the ledger, Relocation taught many Native peoples job skills that allowed them to find work as secretaries, factory workers, and other blue-collar trades. The program also created Indigenous communities in large cities such as Chicago, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Dallas that provided the tinder for the conflagration known as the Red Power Movement. Intertribal activist groups such as the American Indian Movement and the National Indian Youth Council would likely not have been able to attract such a large following without the support of urban Indians brought together by Relocation. Large urban intertribal powwows blossomed during the 1950s and 1960s, demonstrating that Native pride need not be confined to reservations or tribal communities. The critical mass of Indigenous people in large cities, sharing songs, dances, and other aspects of their cultures with one another, increased solidarity among diverse Native groups while simultaneously strengthening individual tribal cultures.

Relocation, like most federal policies, had a number of adverse side effects. Many Indians who went to the cities could not find jobs or, if they did, could not earn enough to support their families. As well, important social networks were broken when groups left their Native communities which could not easily be replicated in urban settings. This disconnect drove some individuals to drugs and alcohol, crime, and, eventually, imprisonment. Others simply returned to their tribal communities, either out of homesickness or a feeling that their jobs in the cities were done. Whatever the reason for going

back, the practice subverted the aims of Relocation and marked a central failure of the policy.

After spending only a year in Washington D.C., the Ahtone family moved back to Oklahoma briefly before being sent to Fort Duchesne, Utah. A year later (1951), they were back in Anadarko, where Ahtone Harjo entered first grade. In 1956, the family moved to Billings, Montana, and remained there for over a decade. Ahtone Harjo graduated from Billings High School in 1963 and recalls that she was the only Indian in her class. She enrolled at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, in the fall of 1963 to study art under the acclaimed Cheyenne artist Richard West. Upon graduating with an associate degree in art, she accepted a scholarship from Colorado Women's College in Denver. She attended classes for only a semester there in the fall of 1965 and then left because she did not fit in well with the upper-class, overly intellectual women there. In the spring and summer of 1966, Ahtone Harjo traveled across the country as part of her Miss Indian America duties and then enrolled at Northeastern College in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, in the fall. She earned a bachelor's degree in art there in 1968 and shortly thereafter married Amos Harjo.

Amos was hired to teach physical education at a school in Waukegon, Illinois, in the fall of 1968, and Ahtone Harjo took her first art teaching position at a school there as well. Although she liked being close to Chicago, she has less than fond memories of the cold, snow, and "grayness" of Illinois.

In 1970, Amos accepted a P.E. position at Concho Indian School in Oklahoma, so he and his wife settled in nearby Yukon. Shortly after the move, Ahtone Harjo assumed an art/social studies teaching position at Concho and remained at the school until 1974. Although she got along well with the students, she left because of differing educational philosophies with administrators. Ahtone Harjo next took a job with the Indian Education Division in Edmond where she served as tutor/counselor to Indian students enrolled in Edmond public schools. She remained in this position until 1982. Following a brief stint teaching art at Sequoyah Middle School in Edmond, she accepted a similar position at Cimarron Middle School in the same city. She remained at Cimarron from 1983 until she retired in 2001, introducing Indian basketmaking into the curriculum as well as teaching children about Native cultures. Since retirement, Ahtone Harjo says that she has been doing whatever she wants to because, quote, "I deserve it."[9]

The Decision to Enter the MIA Pageant

Ahtone Harjo recalls that she first dreamed of becoming MIA when attending AAID in the mid 1950s as a child. She saw all the women dressed in their beautiful regalia and said, "That's what I want to be."[10] In 1964, at the age of nineteen, she decided to run for MIA for the first time. The field that year consisted of thirty women from twenty-three different tribes, some from as far away as Florida and Alaska. While Ahtone Harjo did not win, she received runner-up honors to Michelle Portwood (Northern Arapaho) and came

back to compete in 1965. With a year's experience under her belt, Ahtone Harjo felt more comfortable at the pageant but still did not think she had a chance of winning against a strong field of beautiful, talented girls. When her name was announced as the new MIA, then, Ahtone Harjo was shocked and, obviously, elated. Asked why she thought she won the second time around, she replied simply, "My big mouth."[11] This is Ahtone Harjo's modest way of saying that her outgoing personality endeared her to just about everyone, including the judges.

Getting to Sheridan

Those women who wanted to become MIA first had to meet three simple criteria: they had to be between sixteen and twenty-six years old, unmarried, and more than one-half Indian blood.[12] If they satisfied these requirements, they were asked to fill out an application form which included such questions as where they went to school, what their future goals were, and what their platform would be if chosen MIA. All applications sent to the AAID organization had to be accompanied by an entry fee of $125.00 which, according to Ahtone Harjo, "was a lot of money back then."[13] A number of contestants asked either their tribe or local businesses to sponsor them, but those unable to tap these sources could sometimes rely on Sheridan residents or businesses for donations. Ahtone Harjo mentioned that a Sheridan shoe store paid her way to the pageant in 1965. The entry fee went toward defraying the cost of contestants' meals, lodging, and activities during the

three-day event. MIA hopefuls were also required to wear clothing representative of their tribe, whether that was a buckskin dress, a velvet blouse and broom skirt, or an elk-tooth dress. Although contestants were not required to have a title (that is, to have previously won a princess contest) to enter, Ahtone Harjo believed that "it sure helped [one's chances of winning]."[14]

Four Long Days

From the time the women arrived in Sheridan until the time they departed, they adhered to a rigorous schedule of interviews, receptions, and other public appearances. The year Ahtone Harjo won, contestants checked into their hotel on Thursday, July 29, and that evening attended a banquet followed by a formal dance at the local Legion Hall. Serving as the ladies' escorts were a group of geology students from eastern colleges; while Ahtone Harjo thought most behaved like gentlemen, she admitted some were jerks. The next morning and afternoon, judges interviewed the women and then each MIA candidate sat for a portrait. At 6:00 P.M., they enjoyed a barbeque dinner and then watched activities at AAID the remainder of the evening. On Saturday, contestants endured another round of interviews before heading out to a ranch for a picnic. That night, outgoing MIA Michelle Portwood and a group of Arapaho dancers performed for spectators. Each year, said Ahtone Harjo, the outgoing princess was expected to create some sort of program involving members of her tribe. In 1966, the Kiowa Gourd Clan agreed to

travel to Sheridan to honor Ahtone Harjo's accomplishments as MIA. "That was pretty cool," she recalled, "because they don't go anywhere [usually]."[15]

Sunday, the final day of the event, began with a 9:30 A.M. worship service at the fairgrounds led by the Reverend Cecil Corbett (Nez Perce). Ahtone Harjo did not remember seeing Corbett, but did remember that Portwood performed the Lord's Prayer in sign language at the service. After the service, spectators were allowed to take pictures with the MIA contestants and occupants of the tipi village near the arena. A Sunday brunch followed and the afternoon was spent swimming at a residence outside of Sheridan. The group then headed back to the fairgrounds for the announcement of the new MIA. After Ahtone Harjo's name was called, Portwood transferred the crown from her head to that of the newly crowned princess while Ahtone Harjo attempted to balance a bouquet, the MIA trophy, and other gifts in her hands. Some of the other presents given to her immediately after the pageant were a Pendleton blanket, a silver necklace, moccasins, Sioux pottery, a hairdryer, and Chanel #5. Ahtone Harjo used the perfume during her year-long reign as MIA, saying, "I love the smell . . . I still do."[16]

The Judging Process

Clearly the judges had other reasons for choosing Ahtone Harjo besides her "big mouth." When talking with her about the judging process, it became clear that a number of factors contributed to her selection as MIA. One had to do with the individuals who made up the selection panel in 1965. The five

judges that year were Harry Fulmer, a local rancher; Robert Morgan, a local oilman; Elizabeth Lochrie, a Western painter; Emmie Mygatt, wife of a Western fiction writer; and Father Peter Powell, head of the American Indian Center in Chicago. None was Indian. Ahtone Harjo felt that her artistic ability helped her win the favor of the judges, especially Lochrie and Powell. She brought some of her paintings along to show the judges and believed they were impressed with what they saw. One of the judges, however, asked her a question about her works that she had a tough time answering: "With your artwork you seem to portray things that are important to your Kiowa culture. Can you explain your feelings about the ceremonial aspects as you portray them in your art?" After several seconds of silence, Ahtone Harjo mumbled something about how some Kiowa paintings were for record keeping, others for ceremonial purposes.

Other factors that worked in Ahtone Harjo's favor were her commitment to getting an education and her knowledge of Kiowa culture. At the time of the contest, she had already graduated from Bacone and had enrolled at Colorado Women's College. She said the judges liked to see that. As strange as it might seem, Ahtone Harjo thought that living in a non-Indian community like Billings instead of on her home reservation in Oklahoma actually helped her earn points with the judges because it set her apart from the other contestants. "I think [one of the reasons I won] had to do with the fact that I didn't grow up on a reservation. Because, looking at the ladies before

me, I think I was the first nonreservation person to win."[17] Perhaps Ahtone Harjo's knowledge of her culture, despite having been raised away from an Indian community, impressed judges more than anything else.

Dressing for Success

Although judges' questions varied from person to person, all contestants had to be prepared to talk about their traditional clothing. Undoubtedly judges attached some importance to the women's dresses, but they could not possibly have placed more emphasis on them than did the contestants or their families. This is because most of the dresses and accessories the ladies wore had been handed down to them by their mothers or made by their female relatives specifically for the MIA pageant. Barbara Hail, who served as a MIA judge in the late 1960s, considered dress making one of the most enduring legacies of the pageant because it strengthened ties between grandmothers, mothers, and daughters and perpetuated aspects of Native cultures such as beadworking and hide tanning. The entire process of preparing a young lady for the contest, said Hail, proved that "it took a family to make a princess."[18]

Two early MIA hopefuls, Rita McLaughlin (Standing Rock Sioux) and Barbara Pappio Poe (Kiowa/Chippewa) believed a dress could make or break a contestant. McLaughlin competed unsuccessfully in the 1953 and 1954 pageants before winning on her third attempt in 1955. She attributed her victory not to experience or luck, but rather to the new buckskin dress she had

made for the competition that year.[19] Barbara Pappio Poe entered the MIA pageant in 1956 after being crowned Kiowa Tribal Princess at the 1955 Anadarko American Indian Exposition. She recalled that she and Sandra Gover, a Pawnee girl, tied for first place at Sheridan, but because Gover told the judges she had made her own dress, she was declared the winner. Poe knew this was not true, but did not say anything at the time. When asked if she had made her own dress or accessories, Poe replied, "Heaven's no, all mine were handed down. And I didn't have to do anything. When I dressed, my aunts dressed me. I just put my foot up and they put my leggings on."[20]

Ahtone Harjo, too, stressed the importance of one's dress and accessories to winning the contest. She believed that those women who wore items from their mothers and grandmothers had an advantage over those who did not because it demonstrated to the judges how close they were to their families and how much their families supported them. In 1964, Ahtone Harjo wore a red velvet cowry shell dress that her mother fashioned for her but decided to wear her mother's buckskin dress in 1965. This dress had been made in the 1920s, and all the beadwork on the garment had been done by Ahtone Harjo's grandmother, Jane Poolant. This same grandmother made her moccasins, beaded hair ties, and beaded pendants for the pageant and also gave her a beaded belt to wear that was over one hundred years old. The beaded fan Ahtone Harjo carried belonged to her aunt, while her purse was a gift from her sister. During her reign as MIA, Ahtone Harjo's relatives worked together to

make her a buckskin dress of her very own to wear to the 1966 pageant. She put the dress on for the first time the weekend she gave up her crown and still treasures it today.

Duties and Destinations

The title of MIA carried with it a great deal of responsibility. Winners not only represented the AAID organization, but their tribes and families as well. Ahtone Harjo said she felt like an ambassador for all Indian people because she often spoke to groups who had never been around Native peoples before. As the MIAs traveled from city to city doing public relations work, they had to adhere to certain rules. They had to be on time to engagements and were told not to talk about religion or politics. They were also discouraged from drinking alcohol or smoking in public. A non-Indian chaperone, usually a woman, accompanied them almost everywhere they went. Ahtone Harjo, when asked if she ever felt stifled by the chaperones, replied, "No, not really."[21] Each MIA received a stack of picture postcards of herself to hand out at her many speaking engagements, and many people asked for autographs. Apparently old habits die hard as Ahtone Harjo presented me with her postcard when we met for our first interview and even signed it for me. She recalled that even with the postcards, many people asked if they could take her picture or have their picture taken with her. She did not mind being photographed, except on rare occasions when she "had a pimple" or "wild hair."[22]

Because of her class schedule at Colorado Women's College in the fall of 1965, most of Ahtone Harjo's appearances that year took place in and around Denver. In August before school started, however, she attended three functions in three different states: the Casper Fair in Wyoming, the Crow Fair in Montana, and the Navajo Fair in Arizona. While her visits to the first two events were nondescript, her trip to Arizona was particularly memorable because it was the first time she had ever flown on an airplane. She enjoyed watching the Miss Navajo Nation pageant at the fair and was impressed with the wide variety of skills contestants had to demonstrate. They had to speak and tell jokes in the Navajo language, spin and card wool, weave, dance, and, finally, butcher a sheep. That night Ahtone Harjo tried mutton stew for the first and last time (she did not particularly care for it).

When Ahtone Harjo decided not to return to school for the spring semester, the AAID board took full advantage of her free time by scheduling her "just about everywhere."[23] In January of 1966, she attended the Western Stock Show in the Denver Coliseum and got to ride a horse around the arena. Wearing her buckskin dress, she smiled and waved to the crowd from atop a horse as flash bulbs went off every few seconds. Without warning, however, the horse reared up and Ahtone Harjo was forced to hold on for dear life. "That was a bad experience for me," she said simply.[24] The next day at the show, one of the event's organizers asked her if she wanted to try riding the horse again. Not surprisingly, Ahtone Harjo declined, explaining, "I'm still

shaking from last time."[25] To allow her to be seen by spectators without putting her life in danger, organizers let her ride around the arena in a stage coach instead.

Flying in small private planes to destinations, especially during the winter, could sometimes be an adventure. Ahtone Harjo found this out on a trip to a winter carnival in Whitefish, Montana, in late January of 1966. All the commercial flights out of Billings had been cancelled due to an ice storm, so AAID officials chartered a private plane to take her and a female chaperone to Whitefish. Because the town sat in a valley, the pilot had to be careful not to descend too soon and risk crashing into the mountains. Ahtone Harjo related that when they were approaching Whitefish, the pilot turned to them and said, "Now you're going to have to help me." Ahtone Harjo immediately shot back, "What do you mean *I* have to help you?"[26] He quickly explained that he could not see anything through the clouds so they were just going to have to pick a spot, drop down, and hope for the best. Needless to say, the two ladies were "scared silly," but they landed safely and found a crowd of people waiting for them at the airport. Ahtone Harjo managed to maintain her composure and address the crowd even after the harrowing experience.

A trip to the Yakama reservation in February of 1966 proved to be Ahtone Harjo's most enjoyable destination during her time as MIA. She attended the George Washington Birthday Celebration there and described it as "a religious thing, very traditional."[27] As a guest in an Indian community,

Ahtone Harjo tried to do whatever was asked of her, including dancing with the Yakama women. An elderly Yakama woman confided to her that a previous MIA had attended the celebration in the past but refused to dance with the Yakama women because females in her tribe did not dance together. "We didn't like that," the elder remarked. "I am so glad that you are here because you are a real Indian lady," she continued, "I appreciate you trying to do our dances with us and will dance with us as women."[28] Ahtone Harjo responded that she was just trying to do what she was supposed to do which, in this case, meant dancing according to Yakama traditions, not her own. Before departing, the Yakamas presented her with all sorts of gifts, including an exquisite beaded purse. Even though she had gone to Washington state to celebrate George Washington's birthday, Ahtone Harjo "felt like it was my birthday I came back with so much stuff."[29]

Following several appearances in Washington, D.C., in the spring where she met Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert Bennett and Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, Ahtone Harjo traveled to Durango, Colorado for Ft. Lewis College's Hozhonii Days. The event stood out in her mind because, for once, no chaperone accompanied her. Robert Loesher, president of the Ft. Lewis College Indian Club, gave her a tour of the campus and acted as her escort during her time there. Loesher, who had a great sense of humor, told Ahtone Harjo that, before she came, he had had a girlfriend. "What do you mean *had* a girlfriend?" asked Ahtone Harjo. "Yeah," he replied, "but she got

mad 'cause you were coming." "Well I'm sorry about that," she responded, then added hopefully, "maybe you'll have one next week when I'm gone."[30]

When temperatures warmed up in the spring, AAID rented a convertible for Ahtone Harjo and she and a chaperone drove to events in Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, and Arizona. Although the many stops have blurred together in her mind, Ahtone Harjo remembered one particularly strange incident that occurred at a powwow in Flagstaff, Arizona. Not usually one to take photos herself, she saw an attractive Navajo couple in traditional dress and asked if they would allow her to take a picture with them. Without any explanation, however, they refused. When I asked Ahtone Harjo why she thought they had denied her permission, she replied, "I guess because I was Kiowa, I don't know."[31] Undeterred, she simply found someone else with whom to take a picture. Later that year at an appearance in Billings, Ahtone Harjo found herself in another bizarre situation. She was invited by a local television station to appear on a children's show; what she did not realize until later was that she would have to endure the indignity of being interviewed by a puppet named Froggy Do. She found it difficult to converse with a puppet in front of the studio audience, especially a puppet she was not familiar with. "It would have been alright if it was Kermit or Miss Piggy," she said jokingly.[32]

Perhaps as interesting as the trips Ahtone Harjo made were the trips she did not make. She canceled a speaking engagement in Alabama in 1966 because her father thought it was too dangerous owing to the racial strife there

at the time. He told her if she wanted to go to the South at a later date and speak, that would be fine, but not then. Ahtone Harjo also missed out on going to New York City, which disappointed her far more than Alabama. Originally scheduled to appear on a television show there called “To Tell the Truth,” producers later decided they did not want her because she looked too much like an Indian. Ahtone Harjo interpreted this to mean that her skin was too dark and that they wanted a light-complexioned “Pocahontas or something.”[33] Another planned excursion that fell through was a trip to California to ride on the state of Montana’s Rose Bowl parade float. Ahtone Harjo and other “representative” figures from the state were supposed to have appeared on the float, but she got cut at the last minute owing to space constraints. She would not have minded so much except for the fact that Miss Montana, who happened to be white, remained a part of the float despite the fact that she was not even a resident of the state.

Ahtone Harjo has never been afraid to speak out against perceived injustices and, in at least one instance, she was able to use her position as MIA to correct a slight against Natives that had gone on at AAID for far too long. One of the featured attractions of the event since its inception had been the parade of different tribal groups in full regalia through the streets of Sheridan. As an “All Indian” celebration, one would assume that an Indian or Indians would have been placed prominently at the head of the procession. This was not the case, however. Each year, dressed in their navy blue Custer 7th Cavalry

uniforms, the Sheridan American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps proudly led the parade through town to the fairgrounds. Ahtone Harjo and her family perceived this as insensitive and inappropriate and thus demanded that the AAID board move the band to the rear of the procession where it belonged. This angered some of the white board members, but ultimately the Ahtones prevailed and the band was relocated to the back of the line. Ahtone Harjo explained that, "We did not want replicas of Custer and his company in the parade. . . . I was very proud our family did that."[34] For those keeping track, the score now stands Indians 2, Custer 0.

While Ahtone Harjo enjoyed the traveling and all the duties that went along with the MIA position, when she gave up her crown the following year, she admitted that it felt like a huge weight had been lifted off her shoulders. The responsibilities that went along with wearing the MIA crown were great, especially for a twenty-year-old Kiowa girl from Billings, Montana. Ahtone Harjo felt pressure to do the "right thing all the time," which she tried to do anyway, but not usually with so many eyes on her. "I had a responsibility to an organization [AAID], I had a responsibility to a group of people [Indians], and to my family especially."[35] She claimed that being MIA never became a burden because she had so many people helping her. She admitted, though, that she sometimes thought her position placed a burden on family members who had to sacrifice so much of their time and money to help her realize her dream. In my opinion, it was time and money well spent. Thousands of

people across the nation got to hear Ahtone Harjo speak and met her personally and undoubtedly walked away from the experience impressed with her as a human being, not simply as an "Indian princess."

CHAPTER FIVE

Living Like It Was 1699: Recreating and Inhabiting an Ancient Cherokee Village in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, 1960-1985

Authenticity. It is a word loaded with meaning and, in the hands of intellectuals, becomes downright convoluted. Applied to American Indian cultural representation, the term "authentic" becomes even more problematic, especially when viewed through the prism of a non-Indian outsider. Thus, the notion that a retired U.S. Army colonel who happened to possess not a drop of Indian blood could accurately reconstruct a Cherokee village circa 1700 in 1960 in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and populate it with real Cherokees doing real period Cherokee activities seems naïve, colonialist, and perhaps even culturally insensitive. Who was this Marty Hagerstrand anyway? A colonial overlord, an Anglo-Saxon apologist, or simply a romanticist? Or, as he claimed, was he simply out to combat unemployment in northeastern Oklahoma and promote Cherokee culture to the world? How did the Cherokees react to yet another *yaneg* do-gooder in their midst? In this chapter, I will explore the overarching goal of authenticity that drove the Colonel (as Hagerstrand was known) to create a living Cherokee history museum, drove others around him crazy at times, and threatened to sabotage the very impetus for the Ancient Village's creation. While Hagerstrand's story is essential to any discussion of the village, the personal experiences of several Cherokees employed there will be

examined to demonstrate the complex, problematic, and sometimes humorous relationship between tourists and occupants of the Ancient Village.

One needed faith slightly larger than that of a mustard seed to envision the sleepy town of Tahlequah becoming a national or even a regional tourist hotspot in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Aside from its wooded and hilly landscape, proximity to the Illinois River, and history as the capitol of the Cherokee Nation, it possessed few of the attributes usually associated with vacation destinations. It had no sandy beaches, no snow covered mountains, and no tropical climate to draw visitors; lodging and dining establishments were scarce; and it lacked ready access to major highways and large population areas. Not exactly a recipe for success by anyone's definition. So what led Hagerstrand, Cherokee Chief and CEO of Phillip's Petroleum W.W. Keeler, and other prominent men and women in northeastern Oklahoma to believe that a Cherokee village could become a huge drawing card for the region? The answer lay 2,000 miles away in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina and seemed to rely heavily upon the transitive property of successful tourist ventures, at least in the minds of Tahlequah civic and tribal leaders.

Since 1952, the Eastern Band of Cherokees had operated a popular living history museum of their own, called Oconaluftee Village, on their reservation in the Great Smoky Mountains. The circa 1750 Cherokee village was surrounded by a palisade fence made from more than 2,000 locust tree poles and featured Cherokee tribal members carrying out activities typical of

the time period.[1] For men, this involved carving dugout canoes from logs using fire and axes; producing blowguns out of river cane; chipping flint into arrowheads and feathering arrows; and crafting utilitarian items such as fish hooks and utensils out of wood. Women could be seen fashioning pottery, stringing beads, weaving cloth, making baskets, and pounding corn into meal using a mortar and pestle.[2] Five "authentically reproduced buildings" dotted the village landscape, including a seven-sided council house and several types of Cherokee homes.[3] Native guides dressed in period clothing led tours throughout the day for visitors eager to see "how the red man lived before the white man tamed the American wilderness" and willing to shell out the admission prices of $1.50 for adults and $.50 for children.[4] After observing how Cherokees lived in the 1700s, those interested in gleaning a more complete picture of tribal culture were encouraged to visit the nearby Museum of the Cherokee Indian and attend the nightly outdoor play "Unto These Hills," which chronicled tribal history from 1540 to 1840 in dramatic form.

This three-pronged approach to presenting the story of the Cherokee people to the public had worked so well in North Carolina that Oklahoma planners had little trouble imagining a similar story of success would be possible for their region. After all, both areas possessed an abundance of the one natural resource essential to such an endeavor: large numbers of Cherokee Indians. That Tahlequah lacked the tourism infrastructure of Cherokee, North Carolina, seemed little more than a speed bump to the indefatigable team of

Hagerstrand and Keeler—not surprising given the former's career military background and the latter's position of power in both the corporate and tribal worlds. Once the decision had been made to transport the Eastern Cherokee model to Oklahoma, though, much more than tireless energy would be needed to implement it among an Indigenous population wary of self-help projects that all too often lined the pockets of non-Indian organizers while leaving local tribal members no better off than they had been before.

The formal first step toward making the Ancient Village a reality came in 1963 with the formation of the Cherokee National Historical Society, Incorporated (herafter CNHS). Headed by Keeler (President) and Hagerstrand (Vice-President), the three remaining board members consisted of prominent men in the Cherokee Nation: C.C. Victory, Jesse L. Ballard, and James I. Monroe. Both Victory and Ballard were retired attorneys while Monroe was vice-president of the First National Bank of Tahlequah.[5] The society had three main purposes behind its creation: preservation (of Cherokee history and culture), education (of non-Indians as well as Cherokees themselves), and economic improvement (of local Cherokees unable to readily find jobs in the area and of the region as a whole through the influx of tourist dollars).[6] Initial plans called for the creation of a "Cherokee Cultural Center" somewhere in or around Tahlequah that would consist of a drama, a historic village called "Tsa-La-Gi," and a museum a la North Carolina but with the addition of a tribal archives that would add a fourth phase to the eastern model. Although tribal

and civic leaders in Oklahoma originally intended to unveil the drama first, financial constraints and logistical factors delayed its opening and bumped the Ancient Village into the leadoff spot in the CNHS's batting order.

Even before funding sources for the village had been secured, Keeler and Hagerstrand began investigating potential sites for the living history museum. Tahlequah business owners naturally preferred a location within the city limits, but the CNHS heads decided on a more picturesque and historically significant setting for the proposed cultural center. Three and a half miles southeast of Tahlequah in the Park Hill area sat the ruins of the Cherokee Female Seminary which had been built in the mid-nineteenth century and abandoned in 1887 after a devastating fire. What better location, thought the CNHS board, to construct a complex dedicated to educating and preserving Cherokee history than in the shadows of the first bastion of higher learning in the present-day state of Oklahoma? The fact that the state owned the ground on which the ruins sat and was willing to lease it to the society for $1.00 a year made the location all the more desirable. So convinced was Hagerstrand that the perfect site had been found that he purchased an option to buy the 24 acres surrounding the state's 20 acre parcel on which the old seminary sat for $200 out of his own pocket. Although the Colonel would eventually be reimbursed by the CNHS, it was not the first time and would not be the last that he would use personal resources to ensure the survival of the project.

Concurrent with the adoption of a four-pronged approach to presenting Cherokee history came the final approval for the complex's design. The story of how the architect was chosen—or rather chose to do the project—is interesting to say the least. But then again, so is Charles "Chief" Boyd. Born in Amarillo, Texas, to a Cherokee mother and a non-Indian father, Boyd became interested in architecture during his senior year in high school when his parents were having a new home built. This newfound passion for building design led him to enroll at the University of Colorado in 1958 to pursue a degree in architecture. One of the requirements for graduation, a senior thesis, involved the creation of a project based on the demands of an actual client and overseen by two faculty members. While his peers gravitated towards designing courthouses and apartment buildings, Boyd had somewhat less mundane projects in mind. He sent out letters to two potential clients, one fueled by a desire to connect with his Cherokee heritage, the other fueled by the raging hormones of a 21 year-old male college student. He received an immediate response to his latter letter from none other than Hugh Hefner, who offered to fly him to Chicago to discuss designs for a proposed Playboy Club to be built in Denver, Colorado. Shortly thereafter, an invitation from W.W. Keeler to come to Oklahoma to begin work on a "Cherokee memorial" (Boyd's other option) left the young college student with a decision few if any of us have had to make at that point in life. Although the Hefner letter elevated him to near celebrity status among his fellow architecture students and, admits

Boyd, "Doing a Playboy club seemed like a lot of fun," he decided to at least drive to Oklahoma and get more information on the Cherokee project before making his final choice.[7]

Ever the efficient CEO, Keeler had arranged for Boyd to meet with prominent Cherokee attorney Earl Boyd Pierce in Muskogee, Oklahoma, then Hagerstrand in Tahlequah before speaking with him personally at Phillip's Petroleum headquarters in Bartlesville the following morning. Boyd hoped that the whirlwind tour would cement in his mind which avenue to pursue, but after hearing Pierce's ideas for the tribal memorial, he felt as conflicted as ever. The attorney envisioned a U-shaped drive lined with busts of famous Cherokee individuals sitting atop Ionic columns with a Greek temple at the end. Needless to say, this did not mesh with Boyd's expectations. "Part of the reason I was intrigued about and responded to Keeler's letter was that I had never really spent a lot of time . . . studying about my Indian heritage." If the Cherokee memorial was to be anything like Pierce described, thought Boyd, "I'm gonna go do a Playboy club . . . 'cause this is not Indian at all."[8] Hagerstrand proved an entirely different animal than Pierce, and his passion and excitement about the project rubbed off on Boyd immediately. The architect recalls that, in spite of having to use a machete to hack through the underbrush at Park Hill that afternoon, he was, "excited about everything except the ticks I got."[9] Feeling better about the project, Boyd's meeting with Keeler the next morning sealed the deal. The Phillip's head minced few words

with the young student as he rushed to catch a flight to Norway for business matters. "Tell you what. You design this thing, do a good job on whatever we come up with here, and we'll build it."[10] During the fourteen-hour drive back to Boulder, Chief Boyd decided he would take on the Cherokee memorial project as his thesis.

The partnership between Boyd and the CNHS proved mutually beneficial as the graduate student earned the top grade in his class on the project and the society saved thousands of dollars in planning costs by using an unproven but talented architect. Once the academic side of the project had been wrapped up, Hagerstrand summoned Boyd to Tulsa in the summer of 1964 to present his designs to the Cherokee Nation's Executive Committee for approval.[11] Boyd recalls hauling his 100-page thesis, 400 linear feet of drawings, and a four-square-foot scale model of the complex into a conference room in the Ramada Inn to pitch his ideas to roughly thirty of the most influential members of the Cherokee Nation. The presentation took close to an hour and was supposed to have been followed by a question and answer period. Neither questions nor comments materialized from the audience, however, which to the recent CU alum indicated that they had hated his ideas. "Oh crap," he remembers thinking as he returned to his seat, "this just bombed out totally." As the meeting shifted to other topics, Boyd sat quietly even as internally he was working himself "into a full blown depression."[12] His fears proved unfounded, however, as Earl Boyd Pierce (whose concept of the project

had nearly sent the young architect running towards the outstretched arms of one Hugh Hefner) made a motion later in the meeting to approve Boyd's design for the complex and name him the official architect of the CNHS. The motion passed and Hagerstrand told Boyd as they were leaving that he would contact him once the money for the project had been secured. Neither man at the time probably realized just how long this would take nor the amount of controversy it would generate.

The prospect of raising the nearly $250,000 it would take to clear the Park Hill site, install the requisite infrastructure for the village, and ultimately construct it would have seemed daunting to most individuals—but not to the Colonel. To the World War II veteran, it was merely an obstacle to overcome, by sheer force of will if necessary. His fundraising troops were few and considerably less passionate about the whole endeavor than himself, but with the help of his wife, son, and a few Cherokee students from a local college, Northeastern State University (hereafter NSU), Hagerstrand began to solicit contributions through mass mailings, phone calls, and on-site presentations to civic groups and other organizations. The basement of the Hagerstrand home became fundraising headquarters and both Jack Hagerstrand, the Colonel's son, and Jerry Bread, an NSU student, recall stuffing more envelopes there than they could count. The Colonel crisscrossed the state promoting Tsa-La-Gi to anyone who would listen, using Boyd's architectural model of the complex and a slideshow of his own creation. So often was he away from

home on such missions that his wife used to jokingly tell others that, "Where two or three are gathered, Martin will give a talk and show slides."[13] Though the tireless efforts of the Hagerstrand clan and other members of the CNHS probably netted around $25,000 for the Cherokee heritage center, both Chief Keeler and the Colonel knew very well that the bulk of the funding would need to come from larger entities such as the Cherokee Nation and both the state and federal government.

To what degree the Cherokee Nation would subsidize the building of the cultural center became a contentious issue as the project moved closer to becoming a reality. It revealed both the real and imagined disconnect between the Executive Committee of the tribe and its citizenry and raised questions about the motives and qualifications of Colonel Hagerstrand. At the center of the controversy was the $100,000 the Executive Committee committed to the project out of the Cherokee residual fund, a pool of $2 million that represented a portion of the tribe's successful lawsuit against the U.S. before the Indian Claims Commission.[14] While Hagerstrand, Keeler, and other members of the Cherokee Nation governing body may have had only the best interests of the tribe in mind when disbursing these funds to the CNHS, those tribal members not in positions of power voiced several concerns about the matter.

Some dissidents attacked the expenditure as frivolous given the amount of poverty in the Cherokee Nation, while others decried it as being an allocation without representation. Under the headline, "Our Own Money has

been Squandered on this 'Cherokee Village'!" Andrew Dreadfulwater, editor of the *Cherokee Newsletter*, summarized the feelings of many disgruntled Cherokees thusly:

> A "puppet government" appointed by the U.S. government . . . [is building] . . . this village. No Cherokee has a voice in choosing his tribal government nor in establishing the policy of the CNHS. . . . While our children hunger and sicken and our roofs leak, our needed funds have been "invested" without our knowledge or consent. . . . The only "benefit" we can hope for is a handful of degrading jobs at minimal wage from April to October. (Come visit us in January when we are back on Welfare!).[15]

To many rank and file Cherokees, the expenditure represented yet another example of the Keeler administration running roughshod over the needs and desires of its constituency. The fact that many on the Executive Committee served dual roles as board members of the CNHS raised conflict of interest concerns that led to further distrust of tribal leaders.

Another bone of contention centered upon the ownership of the village, theater, museum, and archives. A number of Cherokees felt, and not without reason, that if a portion of their tribal money was to be used for the project they at least ought to own it once completed. A vocal minority, however, wanted nothing to do with the cultural center so long as Hagerstrand, a non-Indian, was in charge. His $10,000 a year salary, they said, should be going to any one of the numerous Cherokees qualified for the position. Keeler dismissed his friends' critics, saying, "The day somebody walks into [my] office and tells [me] they know of a Cherokee who is capable of taking over this job, [I] am

going to be happy."[16] Eventually, Keeler became so tired of the myopic and incessant criticism from both camps of detractors that he reimbursed the tribe every cent it had paid Hagerstrand and asked the Cherokee people to what extent they hoped to be involved in the construction and management of Tsa-La-Gi:

> We started to have this whole thing tribally owned. We had a meeting in this room. I would guess we had about 300 at that meeting. On that occasion there developed the . . . [notion that] if any white people are paid from Cherokee funds we are not willing to go along with the program. . . . But I don't think we [meaning the Cherokee Nation] can complete this . . . [project] unless we put some money into it. . . . If . . . the Cherokees want to participate in the ownership of that Center it can be done. . . . It is just a question of . . . what do you people want?[17]

Hiner Doublehead, a Cherokee citizen present during the discussions, found the chief's words, "very encouraging." He explained, "Cherokees have asked why we don't have a part in this. . . . I know some people who are very much against the program. I think when we get to the point to where we own a part, or all of that, I think it will be a big help to . . . all the surrounding communities."[18] Although Chief Keeler probably never fully grasped what the general Cherokee populace wanted on any certain issue during his long tenure in office, he was able to retain the $100,000 tribal outlay for the village which, when matched by the state of Oklahoma and added to corporate donations, meant that Colonel Hagerstrand could finally make that call to Chief Boyd about commencing construction.

The work of transforming the wooded forty-four acre Park Hill property into a 1700s Cherokee village began on February 23, 1966. Since one of the main goals in forming the society had been job creation, Hagerstrand chose manual labor over machinery whenever possible, which helps explains why phase one of the cultural center took longer than anticipated to complete and why costs soared along the way. Dr. Jerry Bread, who saw the site early on, described it as being an impassable jungle of trees, vines, and bushes.[19] To remedy the situation, Hagerstrand hired twelve Cherokee men (all full-blooded he would later claim) to clear the tangle of underbrush that had overgrown the former school campus since its untimely demise nearly eighty years earlier.[20] Native workers also pulled down old chain link fences and erected new fencing; planted 600 trees and bushes throughout the grounds to screen out "undesirable views;" and filled sink holes where the Female Seminary basement had once been.[21] Since several of the school's brick columns rose majestically from the ruins, Hagerstrand left them intact while directing his crew to excavate and save for later use several tons of rock that remained from the foundation of the structure.[22]

While the Colonel and other CNHS members were patting themselves on the back for their historic preservation efforts at the Old Seminary, a disgruntled old lady in Tahlequah was licking a stamp and placing it on a letter addressed to W.W. Keeler that indicated not everybody appreciated the society's efforts to develop the Park Hill site. Its author, Mildred Parks

Ballenger, had been one of the earliest proponents of the CNHS but had split with the organization over personal and philosophical differences with Chief Keeler. As a Cherokee citizen and daughter of a prominent Tahlequah judge, she considered herself an authority on tribal history and was not afraid to speak her mind, as the letter to Keeler clearly indicated.

> Your appointee of the Park Hill project is destroying everything (historic) in the area. Hagerstand has no interest in preservation. He has spent his adult life in the army and his policy is destruction. It is okay to destroy, but the original can never be replaced. Any expert in this field knows that even one stone preserved "as is" is much more valuable than any "make over." He and some other mixed-bloods have very little concern of the historic value of this area, but some of us whose mothers attended this school (mine was there when it formed) are pretty concerned about the destruction of everything original.[23]

Ballenger concluded the diatribe on a note of hopeless resignation, followed by a sucker punch to the Chief:

> A number of the Cherokee people who have found out what is happening at Park Hill are really horrified that so much is being destroyed in such a highhanded manner by a [sic] outsider of your choosing while we, the people concerned, have to stand helplessly by and can do nothing to stop this destruction of our Cherokee landmark. There is really no reason for having any of this in the Park Hill area as there is so little of historic significance now left. We can't figure out what kind of man you are."[24]

How Keeler responded to the letter is uncertain; what is clear is that questioning his manhood did nothing to halt progress at the site.

Improvement of the grounds continued throughout 1966, as contractors installed water and sewer lines; paved roads leading to the site and parking lots

for the facility; and dug ponds and a creek on the five-acre plot chosen for the village.[25] Although not all of these workers happened to be Indian, as Hagerstrand readily admitted, by the end of the year, four Cherokee crews totaling some 52 laborers were earning a paycheck on the project. The Colonel concentrated most of the native workforce on building structures for the Ancient Village, which began in earnest in August of 1966. Reported to be seventy percent complete just three months later, the rapid progress on the structural components of the living museum was undoubtedly made possible by the years of historical research that served as its intellectual foundation.

The Colonel had been studying Cherokee history for nearly a decade before the cultural center came to fruition but was smart enough to realize that he lacked the academic and cultural pedigree necessary to fashion a colonial-era Native village. Thus, he hired Dr. Jack Frederick Kilpatrick, a music professor at Southern Methodist University and his wife, Anna, an author and Cherokee language translator, to provide technical assistance on the project. Both were Cherokee tribal members and knew their way around archives and special collections, making them ideal candidates for inclusion on Hagerstrand's ad-hoc research team of Chief Boyd, Keeler, and others.[26] While Keeler discovered the most obscure accounts of early Cherokee life in the British Museum and a monastery in Spain, the Kilpatricks combed through papers at the Smithsonian and the National Archives. Chief Boyd, who designed the basic layout of the village, researched at the Gilcrease Institute in

Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the special collections at NSU in Tahlequah.[27] This primary source material, even when added to scholarly articles on Cherokee archaeology, colonial travel narratives, and the Smithsonian's Bureau of American Ethnology annual reports, offered only a fragmented view of tribal life during the time period under consideration. With much conjecturing, inferring, and general stabbing in the dark, then, the structures for the village emerged.

Although the basic concept of the village at Tsa-La-Gi came from North Carolina, the buildings from Oconaluftee could not be replicated exactly since they belonged to a later epoch in Cherokee history. That said, a few similarities, such as the ten-foot-high palisade fence that surrounded the village, as well as the seven-sided council house at its center, were copied exactly owing to their presence in both eras. Aside from these commonalities, however, Oklahoma's Ancient Village was innovative in a number of ways (as innovative as a two-centuries old replica can be, at least). Workers constructed a parapet on either side of the village entrance from which Native sentries could survey the landscape and warn of impending attacks from, in this case, tourists.[28] A number of single-family wattle and daub houses were built throughout the village, some of which were left unfinished to allow visitors to examine their method of construction. Osis—conical structures that resembled small igloos—sat outside each residence. Also called "hot houses," osis provided Cherokees with warm places to sleep on the cold winter nights

commonly found in their eastern homeland. Because mud and clay formed the glue for both housing types, Chief Boyd directed workers to mix a liberal amount of cement into the plaster to prevent erosion from rainfall.[29] Hagerstrand's team of laborers also fashioned thatched food storage sheds on raised platforms throughout the village and his and her huts to conceal the restroom facilities within.[30] In a nod to Cherokee ceremonial life, a stomp ground was cleared and benches and arbors built around its perimeter. Nearby, workers erected a wooden pole for the stickball games that would take place during tours.

Given the dogmatic insistence of Hagerstrand on authenticity in every facet of the Ancient Village, he must have taken it personally when some outside observers questioned the historical accuracy of its structures. Like birds of prey, these armchair anthropologists and historians trained a critical eye on the construction at Park Hill and waited for an opportunity to sink their talons into the flesh of vulnerable prey such as Martin Hagerstrand. How was it, many Cherokees wondered, that a career military man and a non-Indian to boot, had any idea of how their relatives lived 250 years ago? For, no matter how qualified the Colonel's dream team of researchers happened to be, the Cherokee people in northeast Oklahoma had heard stories for generations about how their ancestors lived prior to Removal. Not surprisingly, their vision of what an ancient village should look like differed somewhat from that

of the expert's and sparked a twentieth-century debate on seventeenth-century Cherokee housing.

Locals focused their concerns on two aspects of village architecture: the size of the osis and the design of the single-family houses. According to historical accounts of hot houses, these structures had been large enough to accommodate "a crowd of Indians." Those at Tsa-La-Gi, however could best be described as individual units as only a single person could fit inside. "The Cherokees are not described, historically, as small people," commented one detractor, "and since some writers seem to indicate that the Cherokee family was a large matriarchal unit, these o-sis seem altogether unrealistic so far as size is concerned . . . particularly if they were used as sleeping quarters in the winter months."[31] If the diminutiveness of the Ancient Village osis might be chalked up to a difference of historical interpretation, the *types* of houses on display there could not. Several travel narratives had described Cherokee dwellings of the period as having two stories, partitioned rooms, and gabled roofs. Those at Tsa-La-Gi differed somewhat from these accounts in that they were one-story, one-room structures with flat roofs. On this occasion, at least, it appears that time and financial constraints may have trumped concerns about historical accuracy. That said, it is doubtful that any tourist traipsing through the Ancient Village ever felt shortchanged by the inauthentic housing units therein. After all, they paid admission to a living history museum to see the past come alive, not to critique its architectural merits.

As with every other aspect of the Ancient Village, the Cherokees selected to occupy it were expected to be historically accurate representations of their seventeenth-century forefathers. They not only needed to look, dress, and speak like their ancestors but also become proficient in gender-specific tasks particular to that time period. Needless to say, few Cherokees living in northeastern Oklahoma in 1966 possessed these desirable trade skills.[32] To remedy this situation, Hagerstrand created a rigorous training program for potential villagers and village guides. So intense, monotonous, and ridiculously thorough was the program that, forty years later, former Ancient Village employees still retain vivid memories of the drudgery that was villager boot camp. While most enjoyed life at Tsa-La-Gi once it opened (or at least tolerated it for a paycheck), enduring hours of lectures and demonstrations as well as studying the inch-thick Ancient Village manual just to get to opening day proved more than some potential employees could bear. The Colonel probably would not have had it any other way. His "troops" either believed in the mission of the cultural center and sacrificed to achieve its goals, or they could find some other place to work.

In the summer of 1966, Hagerstrand selected Cecil Dick, a renowned Cherokee artist who had studied under both Dorothy Dunn and Woody Crumbo, to take an all-expenses paid trip to North Carolina to procure articles made at Oconaluftee Village for use as models in training the future villagers at Tsa-La-Gi. According to the Colonel's wife, Dick was chosen not only for

his affable personality and knowledge of Cherokee history, but also because of his skin color. Hagerstrand believed that Eastern Cherokees "would not identify with" a white man, and "that it would be better to send a Cherokee."[33] Dick probably enjoyed the two-week vacation immensely but took seriously the task at hand and returned to Tahlequah loaded with arrows, baskets, pottery, beadwork, and pipes. Although pleased with the purchases of the artist overall, the Colonel drew some criticism from his father-in-law, Jack Brown, for the diminutiveness of the blowgun Dick brought back from North Carolina. Hagerstrand, while agreeing that it was far too short to be used effectively as a weapon, explained to Brown that, rather than representing a case of poor judgment on Dick's part, it simply embodied a desire to adhere to transportation regulations. The artist had had no choice but to return with what was essentially a sawed-off blowgun because the bus company that had transported him to and from North Carolina had prevented him from taking back anything longer.[34]

Dick, along with other experts on Cherokee culture, became the first faculty members at "Cherokee Culture University" established by Hagerstrand on the campus of Sequoyah Indian School in the spring of 1967.[35] Dr. Jerry Bread, who served as one of the Ancient Village's first guides when it opened in the summer of 1967, described the training as "rigorous" and that both Indian and non-Indian instructors were brought in to teach potential candidates about Cherokee history, language, politics, and arts and crafts.[36] Although the

curriculum for tour guides and that of villagers differed significantly, both had to endure four-hour night classes five times a week for an entire month to earn their "degrees." Whereas villager training involved much hands-on learning, tour guide preparation was more academic in nature, according to Bread.[37] Guides received instruction in general Indian history in addition to that of Cherokee history and also had to be well-versed in the organization and purposes of the CNHS.[38] Above all, though, they had to be effective communicators. To this end, prospective guides learned basic public speaking techniques such as voice projection and word articulation and conducted mock tours with other guides to prepare them for directing large groups of visitors through the village. The sentiments of Bread regarding the intensive course of study likely echoed those of many of his cohorts: "Training was . . . jammed in five days a week . . . [and] I got sick of it."[39]

Notwithstanding the fact that no demographic data on Tsa-La-Gi guides and villagers exist, anecdotal evidence suggests that the two positions attracted very different types of individuals in terms of age, education level, and even personality type. Tour guides tended to be in their early twenties, possessed college degrees (or were working towards them), and had outgoing personalities. Villagers, on the other hand, ranged in age from toddlers to tribal elders, lacked schooling past the high-school level, and, if not introverted, at least felt more comfortable around small groups and people they knew than total (especially non-Indian) strangers. Exceptions to these

generalizations existed, obviously, but by-in-large workers chose one role or the other based on their comfort level with each position's requirements. True, hourly wages for guides exceeded those of villagers by fifty cents, but at the end of the day, few villagers probably would have traded places with their tour guide counterparts and vice versa.

The initial crop of trainees numbered around sixty (fifteen guides and forty-five villagers), although only seven guides and thirty villagers made the opening-day roster in June of 1967.[40] Little imagination is needed to explain why some dropped out of the program early, but clearly some candidates completed the training and then simply faded from view. A straightforward explanation for the latter phenomenon failed to emerge from either the historical record or interviews but may be a consequence of the $2 per hour pay rate those in training received. It is certainly possible that some Cherokees availed themselves of the opportunity to learn basket weaving, pottery making, or any number of other traditional skills while being subsidized by the CNHS. As passionate a proponent of Cherokee culture as Marty Hagerstrand was, it is doubtful he would have done anything to weed out these cultural freeloaders even if he had known about them.

Tsa-La-Gi Village opened to visitors officially on Saturday, June 26, 1967, with an elaborate dedication program. Instead of a ribbon cutting ceremony, several Oklahoma Indian leaders and state politicians sawed through a strip of deer hide using stone knives and axes in keeping with the

ancient theme of the attraction.[41] Jodie Thompson, one of the village guides, performed the Lord's Prayer in sign language while musical entertainment for the occasion was provided by a local Cherokee quartet known as "The Chieftains" along with a brass band made up of local high school students.[42] The estimated 3,000 people in attendance (largely Cherokee according to newspaper accounts) heard speeches by State Senator Clem McSpadden, U.S. Senator A.S. Monroney, "part-Cherokee" actor Clu Gulager, and, finally, W.W. Keeler. On a hot summer afternoon, the crowd must have felt more than a little discomfort as the seemingly endless parade of dignitaries made their way to the lectern. Observed one local reporter, "The temperature boiled up into the 90s, but the audience sat politely through nearly two hours of oratory . . . emphasizing that the Indian is truly America's most patient citizen."[43] Following the dedicatory speeches, the gates of the Ancient Village were thrown open, and well-trained guides gave tours of Tsa-La-Gi as equally well-trained villagers went on about their circa 1700 daily lives.

Outside the stockade fence of the idyllic ancient community, a group of individuals belonging to the Five County Cherokee Organization, a Native activist group, did their best to temper the festive mood of the day. One of the picketers carried a sign that read, "The Trail of Tears Has Never Ended," while another offered a tongue-in-cheek, "How Cute It Is!."[44] This same organization had criticized the spending of the Cherokee residual fund on construction of the village and had mocked Hagerstrand's assertion that the

cultural center would create numerous jobs for tribal members. Its presence at the grand opening, therefore, was to be expected. Members of the organization decried the portrayal of Cherokees in the village as "unlettered savages," calling it "an indignity and cruel misuse of our living heritage."[45] They believed Tsa-La-Gi depicted an epoch in Cherokee history that cast their ancestors in a negative light and ignored the tremendous political, economic, and educational achievements of the Cherokee Nation over the past two centuries. Cherokees who worked at Tsa-La-Gi Village, in their minds, were selling out their proud culture for a pittance, forced to perform before tourists by an Anglo overlord named Marty Hagerstrand.

It would be difficult to dispute the notion that the Ancient Village presented Cherokee culture in an anachronistic manner—such was the impetus for its creation and the reason people were drawn to the living museum in the first place. An attraction that billed itself as being an accurate depiction of pre-contact Cherokee life would probably not have experienced much repeat business had visitors walked through the entrance gate only to see Cherokees in blue jeans watching television in their modern, air-conditioned homes. Tsa-La-Gi's uniqueness, after all, was its strongest selling point. What those opposed to the village failed to realize or chose to ignore was the fact that it was never intended to tell the entire story of the Cherokee people. It just happened to be the first of a four-phase project completed owing to its relatively inexpensive price tag. (Remember, the CNHS envisioned the

building of a museum, an archives, and a historical drama alongside the Ancient Village to offer as complete and well-rounded narrative as possible). Protesters could and would express valid concerns about activities that took place inside the village in subsequent years; however, by criticizing Tsa-La-Gi Village for highlighting a point in Cherokee history they felt would have been better off forgotten, they appeared to be turning their backs on their own culture. If the activists were going to claim Sequoyah as one of their own, they had to claim Sequoyah's grandfather as well (who, one presumes, could not read and write the Cherokee language).

The Ancient Village welcomed visitors from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. daily except Mondays and typically remained open from mid-April through mid-September. Guides herded groups of a dozen or so people every fifteen minutes along the village's asphalt path ("the only nod to civilization" one newspaper assured visitors). Jerry Bread, who gave thousands of tours during his five years at Tsa-La-Gi, still felt himself capable—even forty years after the fact—of conducting a tour effectively so etched into his memory had the experience become. He began each tour by providing historical, anthropological, and archaeological information about the Cherokees as well as "their culture, society, communities they lived in" out East prior to white contact.[46] He tied this into what they would see in the village and "broke down stereotypes right off the bat by pointing out that Cherokees, even though one of the Five Civilized Tribes, did go to war—hence the stockade fence around the

village."[47] As he led groups from station to station, he explained the nuances of what they were seeing, from the manufacture of blow gun darts out of bois d'arc wood to the process of making connutchie, a blend of hickory nuts and hominy that was a staple of the Cherokee diet. Tours concluded with a question and answer period which afforded Bread the opportunity to exercise his considerable wit, charm, and intellect. "Man, I tell you," the former guide quipped, "every question they had, I had a response to . . . [and if it] wasn't made up, it was from the history."[48]

Guides made clear to visitors at the beginning of tours that they should not expect to see every activity that Tsa-La-Gi had to offer on any single pass through the village. The reason why? It may have been a PR move or an effort to keep staffing costs down at the Ancient Village (or some combination of the two), but Hagerstrand had stations occupied on a rotating basis, meaning one might observe a stickball game, a stomp dance, or a canoe being made one day but different activities the next. A tour guide script from this era offers the following explanation for the rolling blackouts:

> There is no time schedule in this Village—for there would have been none 300 years ago. Rituals, meals, work assignments, hunts, games, etc., were not played or performed according to schedule. These things were done as needed or as the villagers found it interesting—not as a demonstration. Warriors may be out on a raid or a hunt, or playing stickball against an adjacent village. Consequently, you may or may not see any particular feature of life in the 1600s. The people in the Village are going about their business as though you are not there—a 'time machine.'[49]

While the Colonel had always envisioned villagers working at multiple stations throughout the week to avoid boredom, the sporadic closure policy developed later for unknown reasons. In addition to the two aforementioned possibilities, leaving certain stations unmanned at various times offered guides a convenient explanation for curious tourists whenever a villager happened to call in sick or simply refused to perform a task for whatever reason.

Stomp dance demonstrations at the village, as intriguing as they were to the average visitor, drew the ire of local Cherokees, including the aforementioned Five County Cherokee Organization, for a number of reasons. According to Betty Smith, one of the original villagers, most opponents felt that performing the dance outside of its proper setting—that of the stomp dance ground—was “cheapening” and “weakening” a religion espoused by many tribal members.[50] That the demonstrations took place during the day in front of non-Indian audiences and were being given by villagers who may or may not have belonged to a stomp ground further fueled their outrage. Despite arguments by those employed at Tsa-La-Gi that the songs and other details of the dance were altered out of respect for the sacred original, controversy would surround the demonstrations for years to come.

Getting enough villagers to stomp dance, especially during Tsa-La-Gi’s formative years, proved challenging. Not all employees balked at the idea solely on philosophical or religious grounds, however. Early on, dances took place inside the large, windowless council house whose thick walls kept

occupants cool in the summer and warm in the winter. That the structure also lacked adequate ventilation and lighting seemed not to have crossed the mind of the person responsible for selecting the council house as the site for the stomp dance demonstrations. Dancers and tourists alike must have felt like green beans in a pressure cooker as a fire was lit in the center of the building and villagers proceeded to dance around it, all while outside temperatures soared past 100 degrees in the withering Oklahoma summers. The unbearable heat coupled with the poor lighting soon forced Tsa-La-Gi managers to move the performance outdoors; thus, a small ceremonial ground, complete with arbors, was constructed inside the village. Even the more hospitable environs failed to convince some employees to participate. "Old people adamantly refused," recalls Bread, "but younger ones didn't have so much of a problem with it, generally."[51] It is easy to assume, based on the former guide's observation, that older Cherokees declined to stomp dance in public because they were more conservative and followed traditional religious practices more strictly than their younger counterparts. This overly simplistic explanation, though, fails to account for the most important factor in determining if an individual would participate or not: whether he or she was a member of a ceremonial ground and, if so, the policy of that ground regarding off-site dances. Anyone belonging to a ground which forbade stomp dances outside of their religious context, regardless of age, would not have taken part in the dances at Tsa-La-Gi for any amount of money. That said, more than a few

villagers eligible for demonstrations insisted on and received additional compensation from Hagerstrand for their participation.[52]

The Colonel desired that every visitor to Tsa-La-Gi feel as if they were taking a step back in time as they passed through the gates of the village and therefore did his best to wipe away all vestiges of modern-day life. We have seen how this played out in the construction of the village itself, but how did it affect the guides and the villagers who had to perpetuate this illusion for eight hours a day, sometimes under less than ideal conditions? Oddly enough, the strict rules enacted by Hagerstrand to regulate villager appearance and behavior actually served to create an atmosphere ripe for absurdity and humor that former employees readily recounted for this study. Working at Tsa-La-Gi could be sheer drudgery at times, but more often than not, those who spent any length of time there remembered vividly the moments when seventeenth-century expectations clashed with twentieth-century realities.

As historical reenactors, villagers had to remain in character at all times once inside the village confines. The only English that Hagerstrand would tolerate was that proceeding from the mouths of guides and tourists; villagers were to speak only Cherokee amongst themselves and could not interact with visitors in any way.[53] According to Bread, some villagers found this extremely easy as they "avoided eye contact and weren't outgoing anyway."[54] It proved more difficult for others, though, especially when unscripted events occurred during one of the hundreds of tours given every year. Steve Coleman, who

served as a guide at Tsa-La-Gi while a student at NSU, once accidentally shot a villager in the leg with a blowgun dart while demonstrating the accuracy of the weapon. On another occasion, shortly after extolling Cherokee woven benches for their strength and durability, Coleman and two of his friends sat on one to watch a dance only to have it collapse under their weight as visitors enjoyed a good chuckle.[55] Villagers like Betty Smith faced constant challenges to their stoic facades from the many visitors who attempted to make them laugh or engage them in conversations. She remembers hearing comments such as, "We know you all can speak English, you might as well stop this," and villagers, in response would say, in Cherokee, "I wish they'd hurry up and go on and quit being foolish."[56]

Although Smith describes this interplay between Native demonstrators and non-Indian onlookers as "a lot of fun," she concedes that sometimes visitors crossed the line by disparaging aspects of Cherokee life they saw in the village. "You'd get nasty comments . . . [and] of course you'd get angry, but you'd just have to keep a straight face and go on."[57] Aside from isolated incidents of hostility, she said, more often than not villagers found themselves biting their lower lips in an attempt to contain laughter rather than to control angry outbursts. Their amusement, in many cases, derived from the uninformed and downright ridiculous questions visitors posed to guides at the Ancient Village. And if that question happened to fall at the feet of Jerry Bread, the acknowledged snappy comeback king of the tour guides, villagers

knew they were in for a verbal treat. Smith still smiles remembering the time a visitor asked Bread where the villagers went to the restroom. With typical sarcasm, he responded, "The bushiest bush you can find."[58] When asked whether Indians still started fires by rubbing two sticks together, the guide answered in the affirmative. "Yeah, we still do," he deadpanned, "as long as one of them is a match."[59]

To the average tourist who knew little about Cherokee culture, strolling along the footpaths at Tsa-La-Gi probably felt like (as Hagerstrand had intended) taking a step back in time. The seventeenth-century structures and props, the villagers going about their daily business, and the guides providing color commentary for the various scenes converged in the minds of many onlookers to create the impression that what they were seeing was in fact reality. Far too often, however, visitors mistook this *historical* reality for *present-day* Cherokee reality and assumed villagers made their permanent residence at the village. Former guides and villagers found this both surprising and amusing, and it undeniably led to some hilarious situations at the attraction. Joyce Bear (Muscogee Creek), a villager in the late 1970s and early 1980s, described meeting a female tourist in the cultural center parking lot who seemed astonished to see her there. "Is it okay for you to be out here [i.e. outside the perimeter of the village]?" the visitor asked Bear. Confused, Bear replied, "Excuse me?" The woman, even more incredulous now, blurted out, "You speak English!"[60] After the villager assured her that workers were

indeed allowed to leave the village, the woman inquired as to how many Cherokees lived in each tiny osi. "Ma'am we *work* here," Bear explained. "I live in a three bedroom, bath and a half, modern home with central heat and air . . . and I'm working on my master's degree." While this may appear to be simply an isolated case of ignorance, former Tsa-La-Gi employees assured me it happened routinely, albeit not always to such an extreme degree.

In addition to the misguided notion that workers lived at the Ancient Village, some tourists mistakenly believed that the dress, speech, and activities of the villagers were indicative of a primitive people living in a third-world country. Betty Smith recalled a boy who refused to take the tour because he was afraid of being scalped (he remained at the entrance under the care of Cherokee guides, though). These misperceptions of Native savagery abounded among young and old visitors alike.[61] Joyce Bear recounted another episode in which a philanthropic woman, during her walk through the village, observed several bedraggled Native boys playing in the dirt and seemed shocked at the perceived poverty and backwardness there. Once the tour concluded, she made a quick trip to Tahlequah and returned with two large bags of apples and oranges. The kind-hearted visitor proceeded to distribute the fruit to the dumbfounded villagers who acted grateful for the unexpected additions to their diet.[62]

Since one of the primary motives behind the creation of Tsa-La-Gi was to combat stereotypes about Indian people, what conclusions can be drawn

from the aforementioned anecdotes, which seem to indicate that the cultural center did the exact opposite? For starters, the ease in which audiences bought into the idea that they were walking through a seventeenth-century Cherokee community indicates that the actors played their roles well and that the sets and props added further believability to the stations or scenes presented therein. It also speaks to the fact that, because the average visitor arrived at the attraction with little knowledge of Indian or Cherokee culture—and therefore possessed little belief that required suspension—whatever they observed at the Ancient Village was taken literally with little critical analysis. The expository words of the guides, if tourists heard them at all, fell to the red Oklahoma dirt like drops of sweat from the brows of village workers in the summer heat. Certainly most of the blame for the misunderstandings about Cherokee life must be placed squarely on the shoulders of ignorant non-Indian visitors. But the Colonel must accept some complicity for furthering these stereotypes simply by the way he chose to present ancient Cherokee life. By preventing villagers from speaking to audience members (either to explain what they were doing or to answer questions), he deprived them of perhaps their most important roles in the village: that of teachers of Indigenous knowledge. Hagerstrand unwittingly dehumanized the very people he was trying to showcase to the world by creating a communication barrier between actors and visitors, all out of a misplaced obligation to historical accuracy. Villager ranks were filled with talented artists, respected tribal elders, brilliant students, and future

leaders of the Cherokee Nation. Sadly, their voices were never heard by those who paid admission to Tsa-La-Gi, and visitors left the poorer for it.

Perhaps the most salient example of how Hagerstrand's quest for authenticity became counterproductive to the mission of the cultural center can be found in his employee hairstyle policy. While guides could have hair of any length as long as it was well-groomed, both male and female villagers were required to have extremely long hair since the Colonel believed this to be a more authentically Indian look. This proved problematic for most of the men and a few of the women in the Ancient Village whose short hairstyles simply would not do. The retired military officer turned to wigs for a solution and, judging from their appearance, might well have purchased them in bulk from a Universal Studios surplus auction. Black hair, parted in the middle with braids hanging down on both sides to the small of the back became the wig worn by both men and women in the village. Bread argued at length with Hagerstrand over the wigs, claiming they made village inhabitants look like stereotypical Hollywood Indians, but to no avail. When asked if he ever had to wear one himself, Bread replied emphatically, "Hell no. I wasn't wearing no damn wig."[63]

Villagers despised the wigs, not only because they felt ridiculous wearing them, but also because they were hot and scratchy. To make matters worse, they were laundered infrequently and, after being worn for multiple seasons, looked shabby and smelled even worse. Betty Smith, after enduring

one summer with a wig, told the Colonel she would not return the following year if she had to wear one again. "I was miserable," she recalled.[64] A pragmatic trend began to develop among villagers over the years to avoid donning the dreaded hairpieces: letting their natural hair grow out. If residents of Tahlequah noticed a surge in long-haired Indians in their community in the 1960s and 1970s, they needed to look no further than the Ancient Village for an explanation. Bread found it ironic that many of the young activists opposed to Tsa-La-Gi happened to possess luxuriously long locks of their own and would have made excellent villager candidates had their ideologies been different.

Lest one gain the mistaken impression that Hagerstrand had to drag Cherokees kicking and screaming to work in the village, it should be remembered that thirty to forty guides and villagers *chose* to seek employment there every year and often returned for several seasons. So, taking into account the micromanaging tendencies of the Colonel, the lack of control Cherokees exercised over how their image was portrayed to the public, and the challenges of working outdoors in Oklahoma during the summer, why did they work there at all? Most, not surprisingly, cited a paycheck. Bread, Bear, and most of the other guides, as college students, needed summer employment, and Tsa-La-Gi offered a convenient and appealing alternative to bagging groceries, mowing lawns, or working in a factory. For villagers like Smith with growing families and bills to pay, the position proved especially attractive because it provided a

steady source of revenue and eliminated daycare expenses since villagers were allowed to bring their children to work with them. If this policy seems somewhat out of character for Hagerstrand, bear in mind that because it added a touch of realism to the living history museum (after all, youngsters populated Cherokee communities of the past as well as the present), he stood solidly behind the practice.

In addition to the financial benefits, former Tsa-La-Gi employees mentioned that the opportunity to learn more about Cherokee history also drew them to the village. After completing the exhaustive training program and then immersing themselves in Cherokee culture on a day to day basis as their job duties required, it is difficult to imagine how any guide or villager could have failed to become at least a little more knowledgeable about their tribe had they possessed any inclination to do so. Smith, who admitted that she "didn't know a thing about Cherokee history" prior to being hired as a villager, may well have earned the equivalent of a Ph.D. in the subject after working at the Ancient Village for more than a quarter of a century.[65] She not only became proficient at making pottery, baskets, and beads at Tsa-La-Gi, but also passed the knowledge on to her five daughters who worked there. Smith's five sons, too, benefitted from growing up in the village, learning how to make flint arrows, blowguns and darts, and stickballs and sticks. The matriarch of the village takes pride in the fact that all of her children are well versed in

Cherokee culture having been immersed in it their whole lives and, just as importantly, are passing this knowledge along to *their* children.

Scant financial records exist from the early years of the Ancient Village, but clearly no one employed there got rich from the experience. Guides received around $1.40 an hour (minimum wage), and children 50 cents a day as an "allowance."[66] Detractors of the living history museum mocked the seasonal, low-paying nature of the jobs, but most individuals working there, unless they were students without families to support, used village wages to supplement rather than provide the primary source for their income. While it is difficult to argue that the Ancient Village had a huge economic impact on northeastern Oklahoma, it can at least be said that it helped a large number of Cherokees financially at a time when few job opportunities existed for Indians in and around Tahlequah (low-paying or otherwise). The forty or so tribal members on the Tsa-La-Gi payroll in 1968 and 1969 earned an aggregate of over $40,000 each of these two years. Notwithstanding the perceived quality or duration of these jobs, the dreams of Keeler, Hagerstrand, and the CNHS organization of creating an attraction that would both educate and elevate society were, on a modest scale, realized.

One of the enduring legacies of the Ancient Village, in the minds of those who worked there, was its ability to keep certain aspects of Cherokee cultural life vibrant, visible, and relevant to tribal members of all ages. Undoubtedly the making of blowguns, baskets, and other objects would have

continued in the Cherokee Nation without the presence of the living history museum. However, because the attraction placed a value on—nay demanded—a working knowledge of Cherokee history, proficiency in the creation of traditional tribal articles, and the ability to speak Cherokee, it created a sort of "cultural immersion school" long before such institutions came into vogue. This school, thinks Dr. Bread, must have had a positive impact on the production of cultural items in the Cherokee Nation, both in terms of quality and quantity. And, most importantly to him, the tribal culture being perpetuated by the Tsa-La-Gi village came from Cherokee people's perspectives rather than from those found in books.[67]

Another, perhaps more surprising legacy of the Ancient Village, is the degree to which it shaped the future career choices of those who worked there. Joyce Bear, who holds a master's degree in education, headed the Johnson O'Malley and Title 7 programs at Wagoner, Oklahoma, public schools before eventually becoming the Cultural Preservation Officer at the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Spending several summers at Tsa-La-Gi, recalls Bear, "stimulated something in me." "I thought . . . I'm learning this Cherokee history, but I should be learning my own. And so it really instilled that value in me that I wanted to learn more about [Muscogee (Creek) culture] . . . and so I started doing a lot more research even on my own tribe."[68] Bear has never really stopped learning about her people since her time at the village and is now considered an authority on Creek cultural matters. Even so, she still relies

on some of the master artisans she met at Tsa-La-Gi to teach traditional arts and crafts classes at the Creek Nation.

Dr. Bread also credits the cultural center for helping him decide what he wanted to do with his life. Prior to moving to Tahlequah to attend NSU in 1966, he knew little about his Cherokee heritage having grown up in western Oklahoma around his Kiowa relatives. With a gift for public speaking and a desire to learn Cherokee history, though, he made an ideal candidate for Hagerstrand's first corps of village guides. A decade later, Bread was writing a dissertation on the history of Cherokee education and had decided that the best way he could serve Indian people in the "here and now" was by getting a Ph.D. in education. For years he had been an advocate for villager rights at Tsa-La-Gi, articulating their concerns to the Colonel and standing up for them against activist groups such as AIM and the Five County Cherokee Organization which questioned their Indianness. Native students, too, needed a mouthpiece, an ally to guide them through the jungle of higher education. One cannot imagine an individual better suited for that role than Dr. Jerry Bread.

After listening to the stories of former Tsa-La-Gi employees, I wondered if the Ancient Village might have had a more profound impact on northeastern Oklahoma than even Marty Hagerstrand had imagined. It never became a huge tourist draw or even made money for that matter, but it did fulfill its goals of showcasing Cherokee culture to the world and of employing

many Cherokee people in the process. Admittedly, the presentation had its shortcomings, but one hopes visitors looked beyond the nappy wigs and fringed buckskin outfits to find some aspect of ancient Cherokee life to appreciate. The twentieth-century Cherokees working there certainly did, and those who were not knowledgeable about tribal history or culture when they arrived often left with the equivalent of advanced degrees in these areas. The Ancient Village played a small role in the furthering of Cherokee culture and gave some employees a clearer idea of the career they were best suited for. It also paid Cherokees (and some nonCherokees) to be Cherokee, albeit very little. From the outside looking in, the living history museum seems a misguided attempt by a non-Indian to uplift a troubled group of people. From the inside looking out, however, Tsa-La-Gi was a job, a cultural school, a daycare, an internship, and a host of other things. It loomed large in their lives, which is quite astounding for a five-acre tourist village.

CHAPTER SIX

Carrying the Torch for His People . . . Well, Almost: Amazing But True Tales of an Indigenous Performer

Cortney Yarholar and his cousin, Graham Primeaux, leisurely donned their Fancy Dance regalia in the spacious dressing room of the University of Oklahoma's Sharp Music Hall. Their Uncle Pat Moore, wearing a western shirt and cowboy hat, sat across from them in a folding chair holding a bottled water in one hand and a hand drum in the other. Stories and laughter flowed freely as the group discussed the dances they would be exhibiting at the performance that night. The trio decided that Yarholar and Primeaux would lead off with a demonstration of the Spear and Shield Dance followed by solo Fancy Dance demonstrations by first Primeaux and then Yarholar. This casual rehearsal, if it could be described as such, seemed to indicate either a faith in the power of spontaneity to produce excellence or a confidence born of experience. For these three gentlemen, the case was most definitely the latter. As descendants of the legendary Otoe Fancy Dancer, Sidney "Brave Scout" Moore, they had been taught from a very early age to share the songs and dances given to them by the Creator with the rest of the world. The veteran showmen had done just that over the years, performing hundreds of dance exhibitions at venues across the U.S. and Canada. The details of this particular evening's performance might have been ironed out just minutes before the

three took the stage, but their roots stretched back many generations, which no amount of choreography or rehearsal could replicate.

In this portion of the dissertation, I examine the experiences of an Indigenous performer, Cortney Yarholar, in order to better understand the motivations behind and the pitfalls of presenting one's culture publicly. Like Native showpersons from previous eras, Yarholar has sometimes made concessions that, in hindsight, he is not particularly proud of. That said, he has been a vocal advocate for Indian people wherever his travels have taken him, as I trust will be adequately demonstrated in the course of this study. It is a role that he has not always been comfortable in assuming; however, given his educational background, family pedigree, and accomplishments as a dancer, it is a role he is eminently qualified to fill. A desire to teach non-Indians about Native American ways represents a fundamental reason Yarholar gives for dancing at schools, conferences, and a host of other events. But dance serves and has served as much more than an educational tool in his life. Dance has allowed Yarholar to be different but also to fit in. It has allowed him to observe the uniqueness of people around the U.S. but come to the conclusion that human beings face the same fundamental challenges everywhere. Dance is deep, and it is complicated. As a public performance medium, it is even more so. But, at its essence, says Yarholar, dance—at least to him—has always been "an expression of love."[1]

Yarholar, who is Muscogee (Creek) on his father's side of the family and Sac and Fox, Pawnee, and Otoe on his mother's, cannot recall ever *not* dancing. "I started dancing when I could walk," he explains. "I was nine months old when I took my first step, and that's when I started dancing. It's always been a part of me and part of my life."[2] One of his earliest childhood memories involves dancing at a powwow while his elderly great-grandfather, Brave Scout, watched from his seat in the arena. In a sort of silent symphony, Yarholar would dance with ever increasing intensity as Grandpa Sid (the name with which Yarholar refers to his great-grandfather, Sidney "Brave Scout" Moore) urged him on, not through words of encouragement, but with his body language. "I can remember him . . . watching me dance, and he was really smiling, and . . . tapping his cane. And every time . . . I danced harder, he'd smile bigger, . . . and then he smiled bigger so I'd dance harder. And it was just back and forth."[3] Something clicked in the mind of the four-year-old dancer that night. He had always known *how* to dance. Now he began to understand what it *meant* to dance.

Without going into too much detail, Yarholar explains that he and most of the men in his extended family danced Fancy because that was the type of dance that had been given to them by the Creator. They received directions on how to take care of and show respect for the dance and its accompanying regalia; if they did so, the dance would take care of them. This family story, says Yarholar, was "sort of like an instruction guide" that he carried with him

wherever he went.[4] Thus, even as a youngster not yet in kindergarten, Yarholar recognized that the Fancy Dance represented more than just a category at a powwow. It took performing in front of his Grandpa Sid at the aforementioned powwow, though, to fully grasp the power inherent in the dance.

For the great-grandson of Brave Scout, dancing is a religious experience. It serves as a way—and certainly not the only way—to worship God and reciprocate, however inadequately, the Creator's love for him. As meaningful as dance is for him personally, Yarholar believes this provides only a partial explanation for why it is so powerful:

> It really transcends all those different barriers that people might have against one another: of hatred . . . bad feelings, or anything like that. It really just goes to another, almost spiritual [plane]—a real human connection of making one another feel good And then I was always told that when you dance, you're dancing for people who can't dance. . . . [T]here might be somebody that is . . . going through some emotional times that are not allowing them to think and feel balanced or feel well. But if they see somebody dancing and enjoying themselves . . . and expressing that purity that comes from that dance, it'll make them feel better. So, somebody might be sad, and you might make them feel better. Somebody might not have the ability to walk anymore, or maybe they were dancing, and they can't dance anymore for whatever reason. Or there might be somebody that's mourning a death, and your dancing makes them feel good. So again, it uplifts people.[5]

One should not be surprised that Yarholar prays for God to "dance through him" prior to entering the arena. He is, after all, dancing not only for himself, but for others both inside and outside the arena and, most importantly, for his Creator.

Admittedly, Fancing Dancing at the Gathering of Nations Powwow differs markedly from performing in front of a group of schoolchildren or conference attendees. Reasons for this are numerous and will be explored more fully later in the chapter, but suffice it to say that audience and venue play huge roles in determining the meaning and feelings behind a powwow dance vis-à-vis a show dance. Over the years, Yarholar has become more selective about where he performs, a byproduct of increased maturity and a desire to use dance engagements to raise awareness of issues affecting Indian people. He tries to give a good show and educate the audience no matter the occasion and for the most part feels that he has been successful in doing so. What follows is by no means an exhaustive chronicle of the hundreds of places at which the Fancy Dancer has performed. It may be thought of, rather, as a journey into the most memorable moments in the sometimes complex, sometimes humorous, and always joyful life of the great-grandson of Brave Scout, Cortney Yarholar.

School can sometimes be a cruel place for kids whose skin color, hairstyle, clothing, or body type does not conform to that of the majority of his or her classmates. When Yarholar started kindergarten at Cooper Elementary in Tulsa, Oklahoma, he experienced this firsthand. As the only identifiable Indian student in his class, kids regularly teased him about his long hair, dark skin, and even his first name, for obvious reasons. "I was always getting picked on for being different," recalls Yarholar. "I had two braids, . . . I was a

guy [and] my name was Cortney, and I was Indian. So . . . all the way around, I was just weird, just different."[6] All this changed, however, after the class talent show. While other students sang songs or drew pictures, "the Indian kid" put on his Fancy Dance regalia and did a show. The response he received, while not expected, was appreciated. "[After] that, . . . I began to realize that . . . when you start doing that [dancing], it's when you can . . . fit in. 'Cause after I danced for my class, I was cool all of a sudden. I was Cortney, I was the Indian, I danced—I was cool."[7] Thus, instead of turning his back on his Native identity, he embraced it and, by doing so, became accepted by classmates. This talent show dance exhibition marked Yarholar's inaugural foray into dancing outside the powwow arena. His first *paid* engagements arrived shortly thereafter.

Following graduation (from kindergarten), Yarholar, like most six-year-olds, looked forward to a summer filled with any activity that did not involve learning. Unlike his non-Indian counterparts, though, his vacation plans did not include allowance-fueled trips to 7-11 to buy junk food or week-long trips to Disneyland. He would be earning his own money giving dance exhibitions at various public places around Tulsa and going to powwows just about every weekend. As a branch of the Moore family tree, this was what he was born to do. A family friend, Archie Mason (Osage), offered the youngster his first professional engagement by hiring him to dance at shows being given at the Gilcrease Museum in west Tulsa that summer. Although Yarholar does

not remember the exact context of the performances, he does recall demonstrating not only the Fancy Dance, but also the Hoop Dance, the Buffalo Dance, the Eagle Dance, and the Round Dance.[8] Mason provided the singing and drumming while Yarholar performed, often with no other dancers besides himself. Even as a youngster dancing before an audience of adults, Yarholar never felt nervous or froze up during a show owing to the fact that he was used to dancing in front of large groups of people at powwows. And the symbiotic relationship between public and powwow dancing did not end there, Yarholar explains. "[B]y doing those shows . . . it was real good practice [for powwows]. . . . You learn how to be 'showy' and do extra stuff and emphasize everything."[9] When asked whether performing at shows contributed to his success in the powwow arena, he answered in the affirmative. "I think so . . . 'cause I never, like, practiced you know, just go out there and dance. But those shows, I guess, were kind of like practice . . . 'cause I learned how to be extra showy."[10]

Over the years, Yarholar gave dance exhibitions at countless schools, conferences, and public events, sometimes alone, on other occasions with family members or fellow powwow dancers. The duration of shows ranged from a half hour to an hour depending on the venue, and the number and types of dances presented varied from event to event. Two main factors determined which dances would be exhibited at an engagement: the budgetary parameters of the person or organization sponsoring the event and the

availability/willingness of a dancer or drummer to perform on a given date. This explains why Yarholar might dance solo one show with his Uncle Cricket providing the musical accompaniment and the next dance alongside his mother, father, and grandmother while his Grandpa Sid sang and drummed. The process for booking performance dates usually entailed nothing more than acting upon information received—either indirectly by word of mouth or directly via a phone call—that Indian dancers were being recruited to perform at a certain function on a certain date. Such was the case a few years ago when Yarholar, while attending a powwow in Minnesota with his grandmother, heard from a friend that Native dancers were being hired to put on a show at the Mall of America. Since he and his grandmother had arrived a couple of days prior to the powwow, they both gave dance exhibitions at the mall, earning a few extra dollars to make their trip a little more enjoyable. As Yarholar describes it, the engagement also led to his providing a boost to the local economy: "I got paid, and I don't think that money ever left the mall."[11]

Understandably, the hundreds of performances he has given across the U.S. and Canada tend to run together in his mind, making it difficult to provide specific details about each event in which he has participated. Even so, Yarholar is able to point to three engagements that, for a variety of reasons, stand out as being important in his life. The first involved a trip to the 1996 Olympic games in Atlanta, Georgia, as part of an all-star Native dance company assembled by the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Only eighteen at the

time, Yarholar felt honored to be included in such a prestigious group of powwow dancers and experienced first-class treatment from the Seminoles for the duration of the games. That his mother, grandmother, cousin, and uncle performed alongside him made the event all the more special. The stories that he recounts from the Atlanta trip, some humorous, some insightful, reveal the unique dynamic created by the bringing together of so many talented dancers and drum groups at an urban, non-Indian event.

The "Discover Native America Dance Troupe" (hereafter DNADT), as the Seminole Nation dubbed the two hundred or so dancers it brought to Atlanta, consisted of tribal members from across North America. Those selected gave exhibitions of their particular dance style (Fancy, Straight/Traditional, and Grass for men and Cloth/Buckskin, Jingle, and Fancy Shawl for women) in the one-square-block Indian Village located in downtown Atlanta. The "Village" contained two main structures: an enormous tent, inside of which was an arena surrounded by bleachers for visitors, and a large permanent building which served as the dressing room/lounge for the performers.[12] Organizers divided the dancers into two groups ("A" and "B"), with one group providing the afternoon program, the other the evening performance. To avoid monotony in the seven-day-per-week schedule, the groups rotated daily although, as we shall see, dancers themselves made further modifications to the schedule as exigencies required. In addition to being paid, in Yarholar's words, "really, really well," dancers received a meal allowance

and were housed in a nice hotel in the suburbs of Atlanta at the Seminole Tribe's expense.

While most members of the dance troupe arrived shortly before the games began on July 19th and left after the closing ceremony on August 4th, Yarholar spent almost a month in Atlanta prior to the games promoting the DNADT. He, along with his grandmother and a dozen or so other dancers, performed brief dance exhibitions at malls, public buildings, and parks around the city to drum up publicity for the upcoming shows. These promotional events took place sporadically throughout late June and the first half of July and usually attracted, as intended, the attention of local media. Try as he might, though, Yarholar never attained his dream of appearing in a one-on-one interview for any local television station. Shaking his head as he relived the pain of being passed over time and time again, the Fancy Dancer sums up his disappointing quest for quasi-stardom thusly: "I was truly like Milton from *Office Space*."[13] The character to which he is referring, for those who have not seen this cinematic tour-de-force, plays the role of office patsy to comedic effect throughout the film, getting overlooked and imposed upon to the point of absurdity.

Nearly as absurd, one might conclude, was the young Fancy Dancer's ill-fated attempt to carry the Olympic torch from Macon, Georgia, to, well, a destination that was never made entirely clear. A week or so prior to the opening ceremony, Seminole officials asked that a handful of dancers travel to

a rest area outside of Macon to greet the torch carrier who would be passing by that morning. Although the tribe offered performers additional pay on top of their regular salaries to go, Yarholar says this alone would not have been enough of an inducement to get him out of bed at 4:00 A.M. (the time at which he would have to get up to reach the destination on time).[14] The opportunity to run like a Southern Plains Billy Mills holding the Olympic torch, however, appealed to him strongly. Assured that he would, indeed, have the chance to do just that, the teenaged dancer from Oklahoma volunteered for the Macon trip.

The dancers left their suburban Atlanta hotel under the cover of darkness, but by the time they arrived at the rest area, recalls Yarholar, it was already, "blistering hot."[15] Party members donned their regalia and, as onlookers slowly trickled in, gave dance demonstrations in the parking lot. Already sweating profusely from the morning's shows, Yarholar began to sweat even more as the appointed time for the arrival of the torch neared without his having received any directions on just how the handoff was to take place. "[W]e finished [the dance exhibitions] and they said, 'Oh, the torch is getting ready to come through . . . let's get ready.' By then I was thinking, . . . 'I'm the designated one that's supposed to carry the torch for our little group, [and] nobody's told me what to do.' . . . I was waiting for instructions, you know, and nothing ever came."[16] Amidst the confusion, one of the dancers suggested they follow news reporters and the throng of spectators making their

way over a nearby mound to better observe the torch carrier as he approached. "And sure enough," relates Yarholar, "that guy came running over the hill with a group of people behind him, and he had the torch. . . . I was still thinking, 'Well nobody told me anything; I don't know what to do.' So anyways, the guy came running with the torch, and he ran right by us."[17]

Stunned, Yarholar seemed destined to not only miss out on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to carry the Olympic torch but to also have his dreams of being on TV dashed once again. Sadly, the chance to carry the torch was indeed gone forever; however, with television cameras rolling, the torch passing episode went from being laughable to downright hilarious.

> [As] he ran past us, . . . somebody from our group yelled, 'Run!' So we all started running. And so what the cameras caught . . . was the guy with the torch . . . running around the mound and a whole bunch of Indians . . . chasing him and yelling, 'Get him! Run, catch him!' . . . But then he handed it off to somebody else. . . . It was funny. But it was almost like—when we came around that mound chasing him—like we were trying to get him or something. . . . And then, to make it even funnier, somebody from our group yelled—and they yelled it real loud—'Run!' . . . That was weird that whole experience.[18]

Once the games began, Yarholar, like many of his fellow dancers, spent considerable time at the Indian Village even when he was not scheduled to perform. He enjoyed hanging out with friends and family there and, based on his description of the atmosphere therein, it seems as if a sort of temporary community emerged in the most unlikely of places—the concrete jungle of downtown Atlanta. The routine of alternating afternoon and evening dance

exhibitions may have staved off monotony and boredom for DNADT members for the first few days of the games, but as the two-and-a-half-week gig wore on, performers looked for ways to keep both themselves and spectators interested in the shows. They accomplished this by transforming the noncompetitive shows into de facto contest powwows and by transforming themselves into whatever type of dancer (or singer) they wanted to be. What made this possible? In the opinion of Yarholar, the deep pockets of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. By spending the money necessary to hire the best Indigenous dancers from the U.S. and Canada, they created the warp along which the weft of these talented and imaginative artists could dance, creating a unique and wonderful tapestry in the process.

Describing the quality of performers in Atlanta, Yarholar says, simply, "They were all dancers . . . [who] won a lot."[19] Since no first, second, or third place prize money would be awarded at the Indian Village shows, the dancers added a playful powwow flavor to them by trying to outshine the performer next to them, letting the response of the audience determine the "best" dancer. Yarholar admits that while many engagements outside the powwow arena lacked the intensity and etherealness of the real thing, this was not the case here. "[A]fter doing so many shows [in Atlanta], . . . we . . . started making it fun . . . [by] having contests amongst each other. We'd get the crowd into it and have the crowd applause—just do different things like that [but] wouldn't have a winner. I don't know, . . . they were all the best Fancy Dancers . . . so

we would all dance hard each [and] every show. Even though it was a show, it didn't matter 'cause [we were] amongst the best. . . . It was pretty cool to be considered amongst that group."[20]

In addition to infusing excitement into the performances through competition, individuals on the dance team also used the Olympics venue to explore avenues of performance outside of their typical roles at powwows. Far from their home communities and with no pressure to impress judges, dancers felt liberated enough to swap regalia with friends and dance in categories different from what they would at competition powwows. While the Jim Thorpe of the dance world failed to emerge at Atlanta, the participants had fun, stayed engaged, and gave the audience terrific shows. The sense of friendship and community evidenced among the dancers extended to the drum groups as well, recalls Yarholar. "There [were] even a few shows where . . . the whole drum group wanted the afternoon off . . . so there [were] a few shows . . . where me and Graham [his cousin Graham Primeaux] didn't dance, but we sang."[21] This type of accommodation, characteristic of life in the Indian Village during the 1996 engagement, would not have been practicable without an abundance talented personnel. "With the dancers, with the powwow people that they had," says Yarholar, "they [could] . . . all do everything."[22]

The practice of honoring a group or individual, common at powwows around the country, came to the Atlanta Indian Village quite unexpectedly one evening and became a spectacle not soon forgotten by those in attendance.

Usually solemn ceremonies suffused with meaning, the Olympics version started out that way but quickly devolved into something a bit different. It began innocently enough when two non-Indian men dressed in athletic warm-up suits wandered over to the MC stand near the dance arena. The translator for the pair (both men were from a country of unknown origin, and one spoke English while the other did not) informed the MC that his friend had just won the gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling. Duly impressed, the MC announced this fact to the audience and called for the wrestler to be honored in the arena. Yarholar relates what happened next, with typical humorous commentary:

> They . . . put him in the front and all the dancers danced behind him; we did kind of a special for him . . . honoring him. [The two men] showed up with the Indians, and pretty soon they're honoring them. It was real funny. But it was so funny because he didn't speak English, but before they knew it, he was right in the front, right in the middle. And he was dancing, . . . had his hands up [Yarholar waves his hands above his head, laughing]—he was real cool.[23]

Curious, I asked the Fancy Dancer where the wrestler was from and if he remembered his name. "I don't know what country he was from, but he didn't speak English. . . . He was real drunk, and I don't think he was [actually] the gold [medal winner]. I don't think he was an athlete. He didn't show it [the medal]. I think it was just two goofy guys . . . that got honored."[24] Whatever the real identity of the men might have been, it is unlikely this episode sparked a rash of credential-checking at powwows across Indian country.

In contrast to the overwhelmingly positive impression left on Yarholar by his 1996 Olympics experience, his foray into the world of dance theater four years later proved less than fulfilling. The production, entitled, "Spirit: A Journey in Drum, Dance, and Song," sought to combine the talents of Native American and non-Indian dancers on stage to tell the story of a culturally adrift mixed-blood man through song and dance. Written, co-produced, and funded by Peter Buffett, son of billionaire Warren Buffett, and choreographed by Wayne Fuentes, the show planned to tour the East Coast for six months before hopefully landing on Broadway. Yarholar, during his eight-month involvement with the show, saw his bank account swell while his self-esteem shrank as he realized just what he had gotten himself into. His brief theatrical stint cemented in his mind the boundary between cultural performance and cultural prostitution that most Indians in show business have wrestled with at one time or another. It also emboldened him to become an advocate for his fellow Indigenous performers on the set and push for changes in the script that, in his opinion, satirized and stereotyped Indian people. Although finding his voice ultimately cost him a return engagement with the show, it nevertheless matured him as a person and taught him to speak his mind on issues no matter the consequences.

The Fancy Dancer first learned of "Spirit," fittingly, through a friend at a powwow. The friend gave him a phone number to Back Row Productions, and when Yarholar called, he was asked to mail a VHS tape of his dancing to

their New York City address. Shortly thereafter, the production company phoned offering him a spot on the troupe, and at a salary of $1,400 a week, they did not have to ask twice. As a perpetually broke college student who had just completed his sophomore year at the University of Oklahoma, he jumped at the opportunity and soon found himself aboard a plane bound for New York City for two months of rehearsal prior to the show's opening in the fall of 2000. Practice sessions ran seven days a week and lasted for eight hours or more, leaving Yarholar little time to explore the metropolis. What little he did see, however, failed to impress him, and he soon tired of the daily grind. "I think, honestly," he recalls, "after the first week in New York City, I was ready to come home. I didn't like it. It's too much noise, man, it's noise all the time. . . . It was just too much."[25] Yarholar survived by creating a daily routine of talking to workers at the various coffee shops and restaurants he frequented, which "kind of normalized things a little bit."[26] Hanging out with other Indians in the theatrical production after work also eased his sense of alienation. Whereas nearly all of the non-Indian performers either lived in or frequently visited the city, for most of the Native dancers, this represented their first time in the Big Apple. This fact, believes the Fancy Dancer, explains why the Indians and non-Indians rarely fraternized outside of the studio. To him, it seemed as if the non-Indian professionals "were in their element in the big city," while "for most of the Indian dancers, it was pretty new."[27]

The defining moment of the show, at least for the Oklahoma native, came just a few days before the company's first engagement in New Haven, Connecticut. During dress rehearsals, costume designers milled about the stage showing Native performers old black-and-white photos of Indians and asking their opinions regarding the clothing they wore. Yarholar and his fellow performers, somewhat confused, nonetheless went along with the request. "They had different pictures," the Fancy Dancer recounts, "and . . . we didn't know what was going on. They were old pictures, old Indian pictures . . . and we'd kind of circle things . . . and say, 'Yeah, that's kind of cool.' But we thought they were making them [costumes] for the modern dancers."[28] The whole strange episode, soon forgotten amidst the flurry of opening-night preparations, resurfaced a couple of days later when the Indigenous troupers arrived for rehearsals only to be handed a most unexpected and unwelcome addition to their wardrobes. What transpired next may sound like something out of a movie, says Yarholar, but it actually happened (and he has witnesses to corroborate the tale). The story is presented verbatim in order to preserve the style and substance of the original:

> [W]hen it came time for dress rehearsals, they brought us each a suit to wear. And . . . they were those brown buckskin suits, . . . and they looked nothing like the things we circled. . . . What they [had] made, . . . it was Walt Disney Pocahontas—whatever those designers thought they saw. I mean, it was just horrible. They were all different . . . cuts, but they were all brown buckskin, long fringe type stuff. I mean . . . no real Indian would be caught in anything like that. [S]o they brought mine to me . . . in my dressing room, and I walked out into the hallway. Right in the dressing room next to me . . . [was] this

> guy named Dana Warrington [a Menominee/Potawatomi Traditional Dancer]. I heard him yell, 'F--k! I ain't wearing this. F--k this, I ain't wearing this s--t.' About that time that buckskin [suit] just came flying out of that room . . . hit the wall, [and] fell [to the ground].[29]

Grabbing his own buckskin monstrosity, Yarholar headed for the stage to give the production staff a brief lesson on Native American material culture.

> I told Peter Buffett, the choreographer, the producter—everybody that was there— . . . 'I'm not gonna wear this.' . . . I don't even remember all I said, but . . . they stopped everything. I was standing right there in the middle of the stage and told them, 'I'm not going to wear this. . . . It's disgraceful, [and] it's not representative of Native American people. I know it's probably what you want in your show, . . . but you asked . . . Native dancers to come and provide some authenticity to your show, your performance, and we're going to do that—but in *our* stuff. . . . If we're required to wear that [buckskin suit], . . . I'm breaking my contract, and I'm going home.'[30]

As the Fancy Dancer turned to walk back to the dressing rooms, he spied a fellow dancer who, standing just offstage, apparently did not share his outrage over the buckskin situation. "[He] was standing there in all his buckskin stuff looking like a little cave man," Yarholar says, shaking his head. "[H]e had no problem with it. He's standing up there seriously looking like a little cave man, . . . [and] I was like, 'crap.'"[31] The impact of Yarholar's diatribe, somewhat dulled by the contradiction standing within clear view of the production staff, nonetheless had the desired effect. Dancers never saw the offending costumes again and were allowed to wear their own regalia for the duration of the tour.

Several important conclusions can be drawn from the buckskin incident of 2000. First, the wanton disregard by costumers of Indigenous wardrobe preferences indicated an overt attempt to assert Euro-American hegemony over Native American culture. By trying to substitute spaghetti-western suits for dance regalia that reflected the personality, family and tribal background, and artisanal skills of its owner, costume designers embraced a paternalistic trope as old as Indian-White relations themselves. In this case, Anglo experts knew better than the Indigenous performers what real Indians should look like and proceeded accordingly. The episode also revealed the importance of having a Native voice in productions about Indians that are not necessarily written or produced by them. Obviously the presence of Yarholar and other Indian performers did not guarantee that the show would be entirely free from bias. They tried their best, however, to keep the worst cultural offenses out of the script and, in at least one instance, did just that. Finally, the buckskin backlash brought into sharp relief the fact that the Indian performers, while considered as a group for purposes of this study, possessed different ideas about what constituted "selling out" and what could be considered "artistic performance." The ideological line across which Yarholar and Warrington refused to step was crossed with alacrity by the "caveman" who did not think twice about donning the fringed garment. In the life of every performer, difficult choices about representation had to be made. It was up to the individual to weigh the pros and cons of any given engagement and act according to his/her convictions.

And what kept one performer up at night did not necessarily cause another to lose any sleep at all.

Looking back on his time with the Buffett production, Yarholar acknowledges that the world of dance theater was not for him. He has no problem with dramas about Native Americans done in a respectful manner, but he says the plot for "Spirit" fell far short of this ideal:

> Basically, if you've ever seen *Dances With Wolves*, it was *Dances With Wolves* on stage. They tried to . . . make it different, but it was basically about a half breed who's in the city, and he's lost . . . [and] trying to find himself. And then his Native ancestry and the spirits come to help guide him, . . . [and] he becomes whole and dances with the spirits. . . . He's dancing with the eagles and doing the Eagle Dance and doing all kinds of different stuff. . . . The storyline was horrible; I hated it.[32]

To add insult to injury, the man playing the role of the half-breed Indian possessed not a drop of Indigenous blood. "He was a white guy. He was Italian," laughed Yarholar. "Iron Eyes Cody."[33] Although the Oklahoma dancer got along well with the European actor, the fact that the lead role in the production went to a non-Indian only added to the hokeyness of the whole enterprise in his mind.

Yarholar learned much during his eight months away from home and returned to Oklahoma with a newfound maturity. The most valuable lessons he learned from the dance theater experience were the necessity of evaluating the content of a show prior to signing a contract and the importance of not compromising one's values for a paycheck. He admits that much of his

dissatisfaction with "Spirit" could have been avoided if he had only taken the time to learn more about it before signing on the dotted line.

> Once I [got to New York and] realized what the story was [it was too late]. And see that was part of me growing up and learning that I had to start reading . . . the fine print. All I saw was $1,400 a week, you know, [and] being a college kid, . . . that's *all* I saw. They sent me the script and I didn't read it. When I got up there and realized what the show was like, [I thought], 'Man, this just sucks.'[34]

Investigating a show before committing to it, while advisable, is not always possible, as we shall see shortly in the final installment of the Fancy Dancer's most memorable engagements.

Despite receiving poor reviews from at least one of its cast members, "Spirit" garnered critical praise as it played along the Eastern seaboard and into several Midwestern states. This did not correlate with sold-out shows, however, and the theater ensemble played to the sound of crickets chirping as often as it did to packed houses. If the production turned a profit seems highly unlikely; it is also unlikely that it mattered one bit to its creator and financier, Peter Buffett. Thus, it surprised Yarholar not at all that he received a call from Back Row Productions the following summer asking him to join the company for a reprise of the 2000 tour. A year wiser and with vision less clouded by dollar signs, the Fancy Dancer not only declined the offer but also let Buffett know exactly what he thought of the vacuous production. "They sent me a contract," Yarholar recalls, chuckling, "so I sent Peter a contract back, sent him a return contract. And it's funny to think of the things I did 'cause . . .

what was I thinking? I was a little twenty-year-old kid, . . . I'm still in college, broke kid, you know, and I . . . [wrote in the return contract], 'I'm not going to do this and I'm not going to do that.' [And] I really trashed the heart of his whole . . . show . . . kind of trashed his whole creative baby."[35] As expected, a return letter from Buffett soon arrived, and in it the musician stated that, owing to "creative differences," an amicable parting of ways was advisable.[36] Yarholar doubts that the "Spirit" mastermind lost any sleep over the matter. After all, Buffett still had billions in the bank and finding a less outspoken Native American dancer for his show would not have been difficult, especially at $1,400 a week.

Before concluding the interview with the Fancy Dancer, I asked him if he had ever turned down any events and, if so, his reasons for doing so. Expecting to hear about a Land-Run Celebration he had politely declined, I was caught off-guard by his response. "Here's one that I wish we [had] turned down. . . . This was a learning experience for me." Like the anthropologist in "Little Big Man," I edged the recorder slightly closer to the subject. Yarholar related that a few years ago, Steve Littleman (Cheyenne) had recruited him and Cecil Gray (Cheyenne/Kiowa) to perform at a show in Naples, Florida. Uncharacteristically reticent about the engagement, Littleman divulged only that they were going to a mansion in a very affluent part of Naples where he would sing and drum while Yarholar and Gray danced. On the day of the scheduled event, a car arrived at the plush hotel where the troupe was staying

to take them to their destination. As the group drove through a gated community filled with multi-million dollar homes, Yarholar felt as if they were entering "a whole different world"; only then did Littleman explain exactly what they would be doing.[37] "[A]s we're driving into that neighborhood," recounts Yarholar, "he [Littleman] said, 'These people are real rich, . . . they're so rich that they show off to one another by raising money—they do fundraisers. And they invite each other to their fundraisers and [the money] . . . goes to . . . a nonprofit organization.'"[38] At these extravagant parties, the wealthy hosts would attempt to bring in unique entertainment features that would both impress their guests and put to shame previous acts secured by their neighbors. Essentially, then, says Yarholar, "[W]e were the entertainment to one-up somebody. . . . I don't even know what the nonprofit was about, but it had nothing to do with Indians."[39]

Already uneasy about the event, the Fancy Dancer's concerns deepened as the group stepped out of the car in front of a mansion and were greeted by an impeccably-groomed poodle. It was not the dog's finely coiffed fur that caused the trio to do a double-take, however. Incredibly, bewilderingly, atop the head of the pooch sat a majestic warbonnet whose feathers flowed gracefully behind it as it ran. The woman sponsoring the party had apparently embraced its Native American theme a little too enthusiastically, creating an awkward welcome for her Oklahoma guests that did not auger well for the evening ahead. Littleman, unsure of how to react to the offending beast, did

the only thing he could do in such a situation, recalls Yarholar. “Steve . . . got real mad, . . . but it was so out there that he couldn’t do anything but laugh. And he was cussing and laughing at the same time. It was real funny.”[40]

Putting the circumstances of the engagement and the absurdity of their surroundings out of their minds, the three Oklahomans performed outdoors in the courtyard of the mansion as guests arrived and then moved inside to give a show during dinner. While many aspects of the engagement rubbed Yarholar the wrong way, the fact that the host failed to offer the performers a plate of food along with the rest of the guests particularly offended him. More than a case of discourtesy, the oversight was dehumanizing given the importance of food at Native gatherings. A host who failed to offer a guest food back in Oklahoma would probably indicate one of two things. He or she either did not like the guest or, more likely, the host was not Indian. Yarholar, reflecting on the unfortunate incident, attributes it to the different worlds from which the two groups hailed. “Of course they didn’t let us eat, ‘cause it was for the [invited] people. . . . We were [just] the work[ers].”[41]

In addition to *giving* several performances at the Naples fundraiser, the troupe also enjoyed *watching* one as a young Indigenous man whom I will refer to as “Wakonda” delivered a masterful performance as the MC/Indigenous spiritual guru for the evening. Probably in his late teens or early twenties, Wakonda certainly looked and acted the part. Movie-star handsome with a long braided ponytail and wearing a beaded buckskin suit, he

resembled, according to Yarholar, "Graham Greene . . . in *Dances With Wolves*."[42] More memorable than his appearance, though, says Yarholar, were the words he spoke and the manner in which they were delivered. "[H]e talked real deep, . . . and he was trying to be real wise with everything he said. . . . So when he was in his regalia, and he talked like that, it was like he stepped out of the seventeenth century or something."[43] Wakonda led off the fundraiser with a prayer in his Native language, but what followed next reeked of New Age, quasi-Indian charlatanism. "He had this whole speech part," recalls Yarholar, "'From all four directions' . . . it was the cheesiest thing you've ever heard, and they were all loving it. . . . They were eating it up, and he knew exactly what to do to *make* them eat it up. I mean, he was made for that."[44]

Following the conclusion of the event, the polished Native performer shared a ride back to the hotel with Littleman's group, and finally the real Wakonda emerged. The young man laughed about how easy it had been to dupe rich white people, using so much profanity that it made the Oklahoma trio uncomfortable. Wakonda, a master salesman of Indigenous clichés to Anglos was, in the end, "just a little thug," concludes Yarholar.[45]

The next morning, the Oklahoma trio sat in the lobby of the hotel waiting for Wakonda, who had agreed to take the airport shuttle with them the night before. When he never showed, the group headed for the airport without him. Yarholar does not know for sure what happened to the young man, but he

has a pretty good idea. At the previous night's festivities, Wakonda had been seen mingling with guests, especially those of the young female variety. Just how many phone numbers the Indigenous Don Juan procured is unknown. Yarholar is certain that he acquired at least one, though, that of a "smoking hot blonde" who had stared at the youthful performer "like he was Zeus" the whole evening.[46] Back at the hotel, Wakonda had received a call from the blonde while hanging out with Yarholar and Gray and had quickly left to meet up with her. The Fancy Dancers never heard from him again. The legend of Wakonda does not end there, however. Shortly after the Naples show, Yarholar asked one of his Lakota friends if he knew of a guy named "Wakonda." "I know a lot of guys that try to call themselves 'Wakonda,'" his friend replied, laughing as he explained that the word meant "God" in the tribal language they both shared.[47] Thinking back to the missed rendezvous in the hotel lobby with Wakonda, Yarholar could not help but laugh himself as he stated, tongue-in-cheek, "[We] left God."[48]

Looking back on his trip to Naples, the Fancy Dancer blames himself for blindly agreeing to assist his longtime friend, Steve Littleman, with the show without first getting some information on what the engagement would entail. Yarholar came away from the experience feeling a little dirty but, years later, he retains a sense of humor about the event. For example, when I asked him to clarify the number of dancers in the troupe, he answered, "Me, Steve, Cecil Gray . . . just two Fancy Dancers and a dog, two Fancy Dancers and a

poodle."[49] Yarholar turned serious, though, when discussing the lessons learned from the engagement:

> Just to really try to ask and inquire what kind of show it's all about, . . . what it's for, you know, 'cause it was quite the experience. I didn't like it. [I] pretty much felt like a dancing monkey. . . . I wish we turned that one down, just—for everything it stood for, plus how we were treated and everything we had to do. . . . It was degrading.[50]

The experience demonstrates that cultural performers, even with the best of intentions, cannot overcome the ignorance and myopia of certain audiences. Guests that evening probably went into the engagement knowing very little about Native culture and left with the same amount of knowledge. Sadly, what little they did learn, if it came from Wakonda, only served to confirm their stereotypes about Native Americans.

Far from the palm trees and warbonnet-wearing poodles of Florida, life returned to normal for the Fancy Dancer once he got back to Oklahoma. School, powwows, and shows consumed most of his time, and Wakonda became a distant memory. A number of years later while attending a powwow in Los Angeles, Yarholar found himself with some free time and decided to visit the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Strolling along the sidewalk, he casually glanced at the cars stopped at a traffic signal nearby and noticed something familiar about the driver of a high-end convertible. The man had dark skin, long hair, and wore sunglasses even though it was dark outside. He appeared to be a chauffeur for the middle-aged white lady who sat to his right, but whatever the relationship, Yarholar felt certain of the driver's identity:

> It was him [Wakonda] . . . just doing his thing. He was . . . schmoozing white folks. . . . And he pulled up to that stop light, and he had his shades on and everything, just all slicked back, and he saw me, and he went, 'What's up bro,' or something like that. . . . He recognized me, and I recognized him.[51]

The reunion, though fleeting, would not have happened had Yarholar and Wakonda not both been doing what they loved to do—and were good at.

When discussing what dance means to the Fancy Dancer earlier in this study, I alluded to the fact that powwow dancing and exhibition dancing differ in several important ways. Having been taught by a master dancer/showman (Brave Scout) and as a veteran of hundreds of powwows and shows outside the powwow arena, Yarholar is well qualified to discuss the dissimilarities between the two genres. Despite his impressive pedigree, though, he reiterates that he speaks for no one but himself in this analysis. A major point of departure between the two is the manner in which he prepares for each. Prior to a powwow, he prays and focuses his mind, body, and emotions for the intense atmosphere of the arena that he is about to enter. Yarholar also spends considerable time braiding his hair, applying paint to his face, and putting on his regalia. Before a show, on the other hand, he does not always "take the time to do all the detail and everything" because he is not going to be scrutinized like he would at a powwow, either by other dancers or by contest judges.[52] The effort he puts forth at powwows and the feelings he gets from them differ considerably from exhibition dances as well. Powwows are "more an expression of who you are and you enjoy [them more]," believes Yarholar.

"You put everything into it. There's so much respect and feeling involved, . . . and it's real. I guess that's the best way I can put it. In the arena, it's real. When you're doing . . . a performance, it's [just] a show."[53] This does not mean that he simply goes through the motions at paid engagements—he still feels as though he gives the audience "something good." "They're going to be entertained," he states with confidence, " . . . and when they're with me, they're going to be educated as well."[54]

The intent of the audiences at each event represents one last area of divergence between the two venues. At shows, says Yarholar, most people come to be entertained while a small percentage actually hopes to learn something about Native culture. Conversely, those who attend powwows do so to be a part of the event. As the Fancy Dancer explains, "There are people that come [to powwows] that . . . want to be entertained, but the heart of what a powwow is . . . is the relationship between the people that are dancing in that circle and the people that are watching. And then that drum and everything—it's all connected."[55] This helps explain why the synergy between onlookers and dancers that exists at powwows is rarely duplicated outside the arena setting. At powwows, folks are there to participate; at shows they are there to spectate.

For more than three decades, Cortney Yarholar has carried on the legacy of his great-grandfather, Sidney "Brave Scout" Moore, educating the public through dance and worshipping his Creator in the process. He feels

blessed to have been born into the family that he has and takes seriously his responsibilities as a Native American social worker, a husband and father, and a Fancy Dancer. The lessons he has learned in show business have not always come easily, but he is a better man for them. Yarholar realizes that the wealth of knowledge he has accumulated through the years pales in comparison to that of his elders. But what he does know will be passed on to his son, Jude, so that he, too, can continue the teaching and sharing of Indian culture with the rest of the world. When asked if he thought Jude would be a performer one day, Yarholar responded, "Yeah, if he wants to be." After thinking for a second, the Fancy Dancer corrected himself. "Actually . . . he already did a show . . . for a state children's mental health conference [Jude was one year old at the time]."[56] Amazed, I wondered aloud what his Grandpa Sid would think of the performance if he was still alive. "I think he'd be smiling, and I think he'd be tapping his cane," Yarholar answered. "I don't know, I think he'd be happy."[57] Of that, I have no doubt.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions

The American Indian groups and individuals under consideration for this work have all shared in the experience of being "on stage" before an audience. For some, the stage was an Indian encampment at a world's fair or a rodeo in Wyoming, for others a living history museum in northeast Oklahoma or a mansion in Florida. Almost always non-Indians made up the bulk of the audience and almost never did they enter such encounters free from preconceived notions about Native Americans gleaned from popular culture. Most of the Indigenous actors in these ephemeral dramas did not consider themselves as such, but I believe this study amply demonstrates this to be the case. They bluffed, cajoled, and, when necessary, confronted those responsible for presenting their image to outsiders in order to ensure that it was, in fact, an image of themselves that they could live with.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of working on this project has been discovering the dynamic nature of many of the events and venues detailed herein. Certainly templates existed for Indian exhibits at expositions, Indian fairs, Native princess pageants, and Indian tourist villages, but these generic outlines failed to account not only for the diversity of Native peoples but also the realities of life in Indian country. Thus, an Indian display at the Omaha Exposition, intended by Washington, D.C., bureaucrats to be a monument to successful assimilationist policies, instead became a showcase for the

endurance of Native cultural traditions and marked the acceleration of intertribal contact that would become a hallmark of twentieth-century Indian relations. It also revealed the constant give and take between (usually non-Indian) organizers and participants that helped shape the Omaha experience and later public performances that were conducted more on their own terms than one would think possible.

The negotiations that occurred offstage between Indians and Euro-Americans regarding how Native Americans would be portrayed at public events represents one area of public performance that I trust this study has shed some light on. Given the historically subordinate position of Indigenous peoples in U.S. society and the fact that most of these venues fell under the purview of non-Indians, one might assume that the Native participants simply did what they were told without question. That this did not happen is indicative of the considerable power Indians wielded over their own representation despite being treated as second-class citizens by the dominant society. Ahtone Harjo proved this by refusing to walk behind the 7th Cavalry Band in the All-American Indian Days parade. Cortney Yarholar, by exercising his right to choose feathers over buckskin in Peter Buffet's production, went toe-to-toe with the son of one of the most powerful men in America and came out victorious. And Indians in western Oklahoma and at Omaha, despite taking part in events overseen by the BIA and Anglo supervisors, carved out spaces where they could demonstrate pride in their

tribal heritage, create new forms of cultural expression, and subvert government policies detrimental to their American Indian identity without compromising who they were as a people.

Inevitably, as scholars point out and my own research seems to confirm, the practice of uprooting cultural traditions like dances and ceremonies from their home in Indian communities and transporting them to public spaces did not come free of consequences. Alterations born of necessity, expediency, or misguided notions of authenticity colored many aspects of the performance. While audience members may not have been aware of these subtle discrepancies, the Native performers themselves certainly did. At the Tsa-La-Gi Village for example, the Stomp Dance demonstrations so popular with visitors bore only a superficial resemblance to those that took place at the Stomp Dance grounds of northeast Oklahoma. Any Cherokee would recognize these differences, though this would not always translate into approval of the practice. Tourists, on the other hand, walked away from the demonstration thinking that they had just witnessed a "real" Stomp Dance. Had they in fact seen an *aspect* of authentic Cherokee culture? Yes. Had the photograph of Cherokee culture which they viewed in fact been cropped? Absolutely. And, so long as the cropping was being done deliberately and consciously by Cherokees themselves, how is an outsider to argue whether the results constituted a misrepresentation of reality or simply a selective rendering of it?

The Indigenous people who have appeared in the pages of this study all share a common characteristic besides the obvious one of being Indian: they have all shown a willingness to share aspects of their culture with others. Their desire to do so seems strange at first glance when one considers the lengths to which the federal government went to wipe out all vestiges of their culture and inculcate in them the values of "civilized" society. When one considers why they have done so, however, it makes perfect sense. Many have a deep sense of pride in their status as the original inhabitants of North America and feel they possess something of value to share with the rest of the world. Other reasons exist for taking part in dance demonstrations and parades, of course, but these have generally taken a back seat to the overall aim of promoting Indian traditions to a curious and often ill-informed American public.

Native people who have placed themselves in the spotlight (or been placed there) hold divergent views as to their roles as spokespersons for their tribes or all Indigenous people in general. For contestants in the Miss Indian America Pageant, the knowledge that they were representing the Navajo Nation or the Kiowa Tribe before the watchful eyes of both Indian and non-Indian spectators simultaneously filled them with pride and placed a great deal of pressure on them. And, if they happened to win the pageant, the thought that they were now acting as the voice for all Indian people became a burden that most felt only too happy to shed once their one-year reign concluded.

Jerry Bread, the former guide at the Ancient Village, never considered himself a mouthpiece for all Cherokee citizens. However, it is undeniable that his position as an authority on Cherokee history and culture played some role in shaping how thousands of non-Indian visitors viewed his people over the years.

One final point I wish to make about the public presentations of culture is its role, however small, in keeping traditional cultural practices vibrant and relevant. This does not mean that Wichitas would have stopped making grass houses if they had not been invited to construct one at the Omaha World's Fair or that Kiowas would have lost the ability to craft buckskin dresses without the impetus of the Miss Indian America Pageant. American Indian culture is far too resilient for that. Still, by introducing these aforementioned skills to younger generations of tribal members or altering other forms of cultural expression to make them more inclusive, Indian groups created a more hospitable environment for the perpetuation of their identity as a separate and distinct ethnic group in North America.

Some might question whether there is still a place in today's world for public displays of Indianness such as the ones discussed in this study. Live Indian exhibits at fairs and Indian roadside villages may appear best left in the past, artifacts of eras rife with scientific racism, misguided federal Indian policies, and Indigenous participants ill-equipped to counter the images of themselves presented to the public by non-Indian outsiders. If such displays

served only to degrade Native people and destroy the few battered remnants of cultural distinctiveness they had left after four centuries of contact with Euro-Americans, then I would have to agree they would be better off left in the dustbin of history. That I do not believe this to be the case represents a major reason why this dissertation came about. Whether the arguments laid out in the previous couple of hundred pages prove that Indigenous people "on stage" bore scant resemblance to the passive cultural sell-outs some period writers and scholars have portrayed them as, hopefully the following discussion on present-day public displays and performances will convince readers of the important place they occupy in Indian country today.

Based on events and individuals examined for this work, an "equation of representation" has emerged that indicates, to me at least, that the future of Indigenous public performance seems very bright indeed. It goes as follows: increased Indigenous input in representation, plus greater Indigenous political and financial capital, equals a more accurate portrayal of Native American people. While these self-portraits may not coincide with what the non-Indian populace believes a Choctaw, a Caddo, or a Chickasaw individual should look or act like, they nonetheless represent a depiction closer to reality than those ascribed to them in the past by persons pursuing personal agendas or who possessed skewed ideas of cultural authenticity. One need only watch local Oklahoma television stations a few minutes to see this representational sovereignty in action through tribally-produced commercials relating pride in

their distinct heritage and recounting their not insignificant contributions to the state's economy and infrastructure.

As Native Americans gain greater control over their public images, new challenges have emerged over where such demonstrations of American Indian identity should take place and who should present them. Instances of this can be found across Indian country, but I will relate an example from here in Oklahoma to illustrate this point. The first centers upon the appropriateness of performing Native dances in a casino setting. A few years ago, a friend who gave dance exhibitions to support his powwow habit signed a contract to perform at the Choctaw Nation casinos in Durant and Pocola with a troupe of dancers. Although he had given demonstrations since childhood in any number of uncomfortable settings, he had no idea how difficult it would be to perform at a casino. In addition to the often unappreciative audiences, the feeling he got when he walked off of the stage and across the gaming floor to the exit left him almost physically ill. The looks he received from the chain-smoking octogenarian at the slot machine or the good old boy at the poker table were hardly of the "culturally appreciative" variety. And, when casino management decided to allow alcoholic beverages at the dance demonstrations, this particular Straight Dancer, at least, decided to call it quits. He reckoned that retention of his soul trumped excellent income on this occasion.

Another issue raised by increasing tribal control over public presentations is whose image of traditional culture is the "correct" one to

portray? When conducting interviews with Caddo elders recently about song and dance exhibitions, I was not immediately aware that the tribe actually had two dance troupes that gave public programs: the Caddo Culture Club and Hasinai. While membership in each was not mutually exclusive and no Hatfield and McCoy-like feud could be discerned between the two organizations, definite differences in philosophy seemed to exist. The order and duration of the dances presented, the number of songs sung, and even dance regalia worn by Hasinai members contrasted markedly with that of their Caddo Culture Club counterparts. Is one group more historically accurate than the other? That is not for me, a noncitizen, to say. However, in my opinion, the fact that the Caddos have not one but two organizations actively perpetuating and showcasing traditional tribal ways is not a bad thing at all, whichever side of the debate one happens to fall.

When talking to Cortney Yarholar about his life as a showman, he brought up an interesting point about his great-grandfather Brave Scout. The legendary Otoe Fancy Dancer had decided to couple his public dances with lectures on Indian culture because either element alone simply did not have the power of the two combined. If he had only performed Indigenous dances, the audience would have been entertained but not informed; if he had only lectured wearing a suit and tie, there would probably have been no audience at all. By using public performance as a vehicle to deliver his message, he combated stereotypes about Native peoples in a disarming and engaging manner. And,

whether he realized it or not, he was utilizing a tool that more than a few of his forefathers have used in negotiations with colonial powers, the federal government, and other political entities to gain the other party's attention before presenting a case for their desired action. Essentially, Brave Scout discovered, as those before him had and those after him would, that when you danced, people listened.

It should come as no surprise that Brave Scout's great-grandson incorporates dance and public performance into his everyday work as a licensed social worker for Indigenous people in Oklahoma. He regularly encounters individuals who, for whatever reason, have become alienated from their families, tribal cultures, and society in general. One way in which he attempts to bring them back into this web of support is through dance, either by encouraging them to participate in tribal ceremonies or powwows, or by giving dance demonstrations (alone or with family members). Yarholar calls dance an "entry point" for reintroducing culture, and the sense of belonging attached to it, back into the lives of lost tribal members.

Yarholar also uses on-the-job dancing much like his Grandpa Sid did: to more effectively deliver a message. To this end, he is more selective about the venues at which he performs these days, choosing those that provide him with a platform to positively impact his people by giving him access to policy makers and power brokers in the Indian world. He has become a sort of "lobbyist in feathers," going to national conferences with "federal folks" in

attendance who have the power to "direct funds and direct policies" either beneficial or detrimental to his constituency. With this in mind, Yarholar chooses his words carefully and always delivers an entertaining dance program. "If there's somebody [there] that could do something about [problems in Indian country], I want to make sure that they get something good out of it so they can think, 'Well, maybe we need to think about, you know, [how] we're delivering these grant funds in this way,'" explains the social worker. Even if he is not always successful in these endeavors, he can walk away from them knowing he is carrying on his family legacy in a different but important way that Brave Scout would certainly approve of.

The role of contemporary public performance in maintaining or even recreating aspects of culture that have largely been forgotten deserves further study. Groups like Hasinai and the Caddo Culture Club are using public dance presentations to display cultural pride and to keep traditional practices vibrant by introducing them to younger generations of Caddos. For the Chickasaw Nation, the formation of a dance troupe has coincided with the resurgence of many cultural traditions and provided the impetus that led to the opening of a tribal cultural center in 2010. Formed in the early 1990s, the Chickasaw Nation Dance Troupe was responsible for bringing the first Stomp Dance to Chickasaw country in nearly sixty years when it hosted a benefit dance in 1996. Spencer Franks, a Seminole/Muscogee (Creek) elder who spoke at the event, told the audience that it made him feel good to cross the Canadian River

to attend a Chickasaw Stomp Dance after not having done so for many years. As more tribes exert sovereignty over their programs and services and have the financial resources to support cultural endeavors such as dance groups and tribal festivals, the number of opportunities for public displays of culture will undoubtedly increase.

In closing, I trust that the many Native groups and individuals discussed in this study can be appreciated for the part they have played in strengthening American Indian identity when it would have been easier and at times more expedient to have kept aspects of their cultures to themselves rather than present them to audiences who seldom appreciated what they were witnessing. For Indigenous people like Jerry Bread and Joyce Bear, being in the public spotlight pushed them to learn more about their tribal heritage and, as a result, today stand as acknowledged experts on, respectively, Cherokee and Muscogee (Creek) history and culture. And anyone with the temerity to accuse Cortney Yarholar of being a "sell-out" for dancing on stage in New York better be prepared to go toe-to-toe with him in a Fancy Dance competition for Schemitzun-like prize money. The point I am trying to make is that in order to step "on stage" and display cultural pride to the world, one must necessarily know who one is and from whence one came. These individuals may not possess the knowledge of their elders when they begin their public journeys, but if they continue on these paths, someday they likely will.

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Joyce Bear, interview with author, August 26, 2008, Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

Cortney Yarholar, interview with author, September 26, 2011 and August 17, 2012, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

APPENDIX

NOTES INTRODUCTION

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[1]Clyde Ellis, *A Dancing People: Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 62.
[2] John W. Heaton, *The Shoshone-Bannocks: Culture and Commerce at Fort Hall, 1870-1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 203.
[3] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1893-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 6. Other scholars have focused less on the imagery of Native Americans at fairs and expositions and more on the experiences of the participants themselves. For more on Indians at the 1876, 1893, and 1904 world's fairs, see L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996); Nancy J. Parezo, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); John W. Troutman, "The Overlord of the Savage World: Anthropology, the Media, and the American Indian Experience at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition" (M.A. Thesis, University of Arizona, 1997); and Robert A. Trennert, "Fairs, Expositions, and the Changing Image of Southwestern Indians, 1876-1904" *New Mexico Historical Review* 62:2 (April 1987). For more on Indians at the 1915 and 1935 world's fairs, see Mathew F. Bokovoy, "San Diego's Expositions as 'Islands on the Land,' 1915, 1935: Southwestern Culture, Race, and Class in Southern California" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Temple University, 1999).
[4] Paige Raibmon, "Theatres of Contact: The Kwakwaka'wakw Meet Colonialism in British Columbia and at the Chicago World's Fair" *Canadian Historical Review* 81:2 (June 2000), 189.
[5] Moses, *Wild West Shows*, 210-211.
[6] Patsy West, *The Enduring Seminoles: From Alligator Wrestling to Ecotourism* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998), 31.
[7] Ibid., 51.
[8] Christina Taylor Beard-Moose, *Public Indians, Private Cherokees: Tourism and Tradition on Tribal Ground* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 63.
[9] Ibid., 64.
[10] Bunny McBride, *Molly Spotted Elk: A Penobscot in Paris* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press,1995), 145.

NOTES CHAPTER ONE

[1] For an example of how Indians at the 1904 St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition shaped how they were displayed, see Nancy J. Parezo and John W. Troutman, "The 'Shy' Cocopa Go to the Fair," in Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Cultures*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 3-43.

[2] See Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 105-125; and Robert Bigart and Clarence Woodcock, "The Trans-Mississippi Exposition and the Flathead Delegation," *Montana the Magazine of Western History* 29 (October 1979): 14-23. Although Bigart and Woodcock offer an excellent overview of the Indian Congress and correctly state that signs of "intertribal communication" and "resistance to cultural change" were visible at Omaha, they also conclude that the congress was of more historical significance as an example of white racism at the turn of the century than anything else.

[3] Clyde Ellis, *A Dancing People: Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains*, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 19.

[4] Paige Raibmon, "Theatres of Contact: The Kwakwaka'wakw Meet Colonialism in British Columbia and the Chicago World's Fair," *The Canadian Historical Review* 81:2 (June 2000): 160.

[5] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 106-108.

[6] Robert A. Trennert, Jr., "Selling Indian Education at World's Fairs and Expositions, 1893-1904," *American Indian Quarterly* 13 (Summer 1987): 204-205.

[7] Ibid., 203.

[8] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 55, 63; Trennert, "Selling Indian Education," 210-212.

[9] Bigart and Woodcock, "The Trans-Mississippi Exposition and the Flathead Delegation," 16.

[10] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, August 16, 1898, p.8 c.3.

[11] L.G. Moses, *The Indian Man: A Biography of James Mooney* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 114-115.

[12] John A. Wakefield, *A History of the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition*, (Omaha: Self Published, 1903), 628.

[13] "A bill to provide . . .," Undated typescript, Indian Rights Association Papers, Reel 14, (Glen Rock, New Jersey: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1974).

[14] Wakefield, *Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition*, 628.

[15] James Mooney, "The Indian Congress at Omaha," *American Anthropologist* 1 (January 1899): 128.

[16] *New York Times*, July 8, 1898, p.2 c.4; *Omaha World Herald*, July 1, 1898, p.1 c.3.

[17] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (hereafter ARCIA)*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1898), 28.
[18] Bigart and Woodcock, "The Trans-Mississippi Exposition and the Flathead Delegation," 16.
[19] William A. Jones to Lee Patrick, March 22, 1898, Sac and Fox Agency Papers—Fair File, Oklahoma Historical Society, Reel 36.
[20] W. David Baird, "William A. Jones (1897-1904)," in Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola, ed., *Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824-1977* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 211.
[21] W.H. Clapp to William A. Mercer, July 21, 1898, Miscellaneous Letters Sent by the Agents or Superintendents at the Pine Ridge Indian Agency, 1876-1914, Microfilm (hereafter "M") 1229, Reel 36.
[22] W.P. Taber to N.S. Walpole, July 28, 1898, Records Created by Bureau of Indian Affairs Field Agencies Having Jurisdiction Over the Pueblo Indians, 1874-1900, M1304, Reel 7.
[23] N.S. Walpole to W.A. Mercer, July 23, 1898, M1304, Reel 7.
[24] Charles L. Cooper to John L. Gaylord, April 18, 1898, M1304, Reel 6.
[25] W.P. Taber to N.S. Walpole, July 28, 1898, M1304, Reel 7.
[26] W.A. Mercer to W.T. Walker, August 6, 1898, Kiowa Agency Papers—Fair File, Oklahoma Historical Society, Reel 49.
[27] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, July 22, 1898, p.12 c.3.
[28] Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition File #4412-D#6, Omaha Public Library, p.1-2.
[29] *Omaha World Herald-Evening*, September 9, 1898, p.3 c.4-5; September 15, 1898, p.3 c.5.
[30] *Omaha World Herald*, July 1, 1898, p.1 c.3.
[31] *Omaha Daily Bee*, August 6, 1898, p5 c.4-7.
[32] *Omaha Daily Bee*, September 21, 1898, p.7 c.4-6.
[33] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, August 5, 1898, p.5 c.3,5; August 13, 1898, p.3 c.3-4.
[34] *Omaha Daily Bee*, September 21, 1898, p.7 c.5.
[35] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, September 24, 1898, p.1 c.1.
[36] *Omaha World Herald*, October 8, 1898, p.4 c.6.
[37] *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 99 (1899): 135.
[38] Mooney, "The Indian Congress at Omaha," 131.
[39] *Omaha Daily Bee*, September 17, 1898, p.1 c.2.
[40] *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 99 (1899): 135.
[41] Bigart and Woodcock, "The Trans-Mississippi Exposition and the Flathead Delegation," 22.
[42] *Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil*, August 5, 1898, p.4 c.3-5.
[43] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, October 23, 1898, p.19 c.4-7.
[44] *The Indian's Friend* 11 (December 1898): 6.
[45] *Omaha World Herald-Evening*, August 1, 1898, p.5 c.1.

[46] Horace M. Rebok, *The Last of the Mus-Qua-Kies and the Indian Congress*, (Dayton: W.R. Funk, 1900), 62; Bigart and Woodcock, "The Trans-Mississippi Exposition and the Flathead Delegation," 16.
[47] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, October 7, 1898, p.5 c.4.
[48] Ibid., August 9, 1898, p.1 c.2.
[49] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, October 7, 1898, p.5 c.3-4.
[50] *ARCIA*, 1889, 191.
[51] *ARCIA*, 1896, 186.
[52] See Ellis, *A Dancing People*, 18, 56; Benjamin R. Kracht, "Kiowa Powwows: Continuity in Ritual Practice," *American Indian Quarterly* 18:3 (Summer 1994): 323.
[53] *Omaha World Herald*, August 5, 1898, p.2 c.1.
[54] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, August 13, 1898, p.3 c.3; August 17, 1898, p.1 c.2; September 1, 1898, p.5 c.3. *Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil*, September 2, 1898, p.5 c.1.
[55] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, September 8, 1898, p.4 c.4.
[56] Alice C. Fletcher, "Hae-thu-ska Society of the Omaha Tribe," *The Journal of American Folklore* 5 (April-June 1892): 140; Michael Stephen Kennedy, ed., *The Assiniboines, From the Accounts of the Old Ones Told to First Boy (James Carpenter Long)*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), 130.
[57] Fletcher, "Hae-thu-ska Society," 141-143.
[58] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, August 21, 1898, p.15 c.2-3.
[59] Ibid., September 22, 1898, p.5 c.5.
[60] ARCIA, 1886, 99; 1888, 65; 1890, 62; 1893, 201-202; 1894, 192-193, 276; 1895, 204.
[61] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning,* September 4, 1898, p.4 c.4-5; September 8, 1898, p.4 c.4.
[62] *Ibid.*, August 11, 1898, p.5 c3-4.
[63] W.A. Mercer to N.S. Walpole, November 23, 1898, M1304, Reel 7.
[64] L.G. Moses, "Wild West Shows, Reformers, and the Image of the American Indian, 1887-1914," *South Dakota History* 14:3 (1984): 199.
[65] L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 63.
[66] Founded in Baltimore around 1830, the IORM claimed to be the oldest fraternal benefit society Native to the United States. Certainly one of the strangest, its chapters assumed the names of Indian tribes (i.e. Mohawk #5) and dressed in buckskin outfits pattered after those worn by actual Indians.
[67] *Omaha World Herald-Evening*, August 11, 1898, p.6 c.1; *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, August 11, 1898, p.5 c.3-4.
[68] See Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 121-123; Bigart and Woodcock, "The Trans-Mississippi Exposition," 20-21.
[69] Robert M. Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 162.

[70] *Omaha Daily Bee-Morning*, September 29, 1898, p.4 c.6.
[71] Ibid., October 7, 1898, p.5 c.6.
[72] *The Word Carrier* 27 (August-September-October 1898): 1.
[73] *Omaha Daily Bee*, October 21, 1898, Wakefield Scrapbooks, p.122, originals at the Nebraska State Historical Society, microfilm copy at the University of Nebraska-Omaha library.
[74] Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians*, 139. While Moses states that all nine Indians were Oglala Lakota, the government report on the exhibit indicates that Rain-in-the-Face, a Hunkpapa Lakota, was a member of the group. See *ARCIA*, 1893, 395.
[75] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 95.
[76] *City and State*, July 20, 1899, p.7. *City and State*, a weekly newsmagazine edited and published by Herbert Welsh from 1895 to 1904, served to promote causes of the Indian Rights Association. See Orlan J. Svingen, "The Case of Spotted Hawk and Little Whirlwind: An American Indian Dreyfus Affair," *Western Historical Quarterly* 15:3 (July 1984): 283.
[77] *Southern Workman and Hampton School Record* 27 (October 1898): 8.
[78] Richard H. Pratt, *The Indian Industrial School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania* (Cumberland County Historical Society, 1908), 40.
[79] *The Word Carrier* 27 (November-December 1898): 30.
[80] W.H. Clapp to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 9, 1899, IRA Papers, Reel 14.
[81] W.A. Jones to Herbert Welsh, March 18, 1899, IRA Papers, Reel 14.
[82] *ARCIA*, 1899, 39; 1900, 18-20.
[83] Ellis, *A Dancing People*, 19, 54.

NOTES CHAPTER TWO

[1] United States Indian Service Bulletin, No. 1, "Indian Fairs," December 31, 1909, in Chilocco Fair file, Oklahoma Historical Society (hereafter OHS), Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
[2] L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1999), 212. For information about Native rodeos in conjunction with the Crow Fair and other fairs, see Allison Fuss Mellis, *Riding Buffaloes and Broncos: Rodeo and Native Traditions in the Northern Great Plains,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2003). For information on Native dancing at fairs, see Clyde Ellis, *A Dancing People: Powwow Culture on the Southern Plains*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003). For an excellent article on early Indian fairs in what would become the state of Oklahoma see Andrew Denson, "Muskogee's Indian International Fairs: Tribal Autonomy and the Indian Image in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Western Historical Quarterly* (Autumn 2003): 325-345.

[3] Frederick Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 306-307.
[4] The fair switched locations so as to keep Indians on both sides of the South Canadian River happy. Those living on the east side of the river had to cross over to get to Weatherford, while those living on the west side had to cross over to get to Watonga. At this time, there were no bridges spanning the South Canadian in Cheyenne/Arapaho country which made the crossing a bit of an adventure, especially after heavy rains.
[5] *Weatherford Democrat*, August 18, 1910, p.1 c.1-2.
[6] Intermediary chiefs refer to those individuals recognized by both their tribal constituents and federal agents as leaders based on their ability to provide services to the former and to aid the latter in implementing Indian Bureau policies (or at least *appear* to be helping to implement Bureau policies).
[7] Loretta Fowler, *Shared Symbols, Contested Meanings: Gros Ventre Culture and History, 1778-1985*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1987), 73-74.
[8] Donald J. Berthrong, "Legacies of the Dawes Act: Bureaucrats and Land Thieves at the Cheyenne-Arapaho Agencies of Oklahoma," *Arizona and the West* (Winter 1979): 337.
[9] Ibid., 338.
[10] Council between Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders with W.W. Scott, new agent replacing Frederick E. Farrell, June 19, 1914, (*Council Meetings of the Major American Indian Tribes, 1907-1971*), University Publications of America, Inc., Reel 13, Series I.
[11] Donald J. Berthrong, *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Ordeal*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1976), 231.
[12] Council between Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders and W.W. Scott, new agent replacing Frederick E. Farrell, June 19, 1914, (*Council Meetings of the Major American Indian Tribes, 1907-1971*), University Publications of America, Inc., Reel 13, Series I.
[13] Council between Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders and Supervisor Brown at the Cheyenne and Arapaho School, Darlington, Oklahoma, April 24, 1914, (Cheyenne and Arapaho Agency Records—Fairs, hereafter CAA—Fairs, OHS, Reel 45).
[14] *Colony Courier*, August 7, 1913, p.3 c.4.
[15] *Colony Courier*, August 10, 1911, p.6 c. 1.
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] Bess Rogers, "Big Jake's Crossing," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 38 (Spring 1960): 50. The crossing was located 20 miles southwest of Weatherford near the town of Cloud Chief.
[18] *Colony Courier*, June 30, 1910, p.6 c.3; July 7, 1910, p.6 c.1; July 14, 1910, p.6 c.2; *The Cheyenne and Arapaho Carrier Pigeon* (hereafter *Carrier Pigeon*), August 15, 1910, p.1 c.1-3 and p.2 c.1-3. Edited by Darlington Agent

William B. Freer, the *Carrier Pigeon* began publication in 1910 and ceased when Freer left the agency in 1912.
[19] *Carrier Pigeon*, August 15, 1910, p1. c.1-3 and p.2 c.1-3.
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] Loretta Fowler, *Tribal Sovereignty and the Historical Imagination: Cheyenne-Arapaho Politics*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2002), 72-75.
[22] *Watonga Republican*, June 4, 1913, p.1 c.5. As a rule, the president and secretary/treasurer positions went to Cheyennes, while the vice presidency went to an Arapaho.
[23] *Ibid.,* October 5, 1911, p.4. c.1-2.
[24] Anglo business owners in Watonga and Weatherford held a substantial financial stake in the fair. Had Indians boycotted the event, it would have been disastrous as well as embarrassing. Indians had much less to lose, though they would have missed out on prize money and an end of the summer gathering.
[25] *Carrier Pigeon*, June 1, 1911, p.2 c.1-3 and p.3 c.1.
[26] Byron E. White to William B. Freer, May 23, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[27] William B. Freer to George M. Norris, Chairman of Indian Fair Committee, Weatherford, May 31, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[28] 1910 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Chilocco Indians School—Fairs, OHS, Folder 8/1909-8/1920.
[29] *Watonga Republican*, August 7, 1911, p.4 c.3-6; 1912 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Kaw Indian Agency Collection, Western History Collections (hereafter WHC), Norman, Oklahoma, Box 30, Folder 4; 1913 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, CAA—Fairs, OHS, Reel 48.
[30] Walter F. Dickens to William B. Freer, May 31, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[31] *Weatherford Democrat*, September 1, 1911, p.2 c.2.
[32] Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, Box 14, Folder 7.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Undated list of sham battle participants, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[35] *Carrier Pigeon* 5/15/12 p.1 c.3; Receipt showing payment to Tom Lightfoot, 9/14/11, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[36] Freer to Small, November 4, 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[37] William B. Freer to Supts. White, Dunn, and Dickens, June 3, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47; List of Performers for Play, Undated, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[38] *Carrier Pigeon*, October 1, 1911, p.3 c.3.
[39] William B. Freer to Walter F. Dickens, January 3, 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[40] Undated list of Cheyenne and Arapaho Dancers, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.

[41] *Watonga Republican*, September 19, 1912, p.1 c.3. Adopted from the Northern Arapahos in Wyoming, the Crow Dance was a variation of the Omaha Dance which had developed around the Ghost Dance in the 1890s. It had no known connection with altering weather patterns. It is likely Washee knew it was going to rain, and, taking advantage of ignorant Anglos who thought all Indian dances were "rain dances," simply made up the story.
[42] Ibid.
[43] 1910 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Chilocco Indians School—Fairs, OHS, Folder 8/1909-8/1920; *Watonga Republican*, August 7, 1911, p.4 c.3-6; 1912 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Kaw Indian Agency Collection, WHC, Box 30, Folder 4; 1913 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, CAA—Fairs, OHS, Reel 48.
[44] *Carrier Pigeon*, October 1, 1911, p.2 c.3.
[45] Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, Box 14, Folder 7.
[46] Dickens to Freer, February 15, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47; Mary J. Freeman to Freer, September 28, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[47] Freer to Dickens, January, 28, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[48] George A. Hoyo Request for funds, August 8. 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47; Freer to Hoyo, August 9, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[49] *Colony Courier*, August 24, 1911, p.6 c.1.
[50] Cleaver Warden to Freer, August 5, 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47; Freer to Warden, August 6, 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[51] *Colony Courier*, September 1, 1910, p.6 c.4.
[52] *Calumet Chieftain*, September 22, 1911, p.4 c.4.
[53] Ibid.
[54] *Carrier Pigeon*, April 15, 1911, p.1 c4.
[55] *Watonga Republican*, August 17, 1911, p.4 c.3-6.
[56] 1913 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Premium List, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 48.
[57] *Indian School Journal* (March 1913): 308.
[58] 1910 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Chilocco Indians School—Fairs, OHS, Folder 8/1909-8/1920; *Watonga Republican*, August 7, 1911, p.4 c.3-6; 1912 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, Kaw Indian Agency Collection, WHC, Box 30, Folder 4; 1913 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Program, CAA—Fairs, OHS, Reel 48.
[59] *Colony Courier*, September 1, 1910, p.6 c.4.
[60] *Ibid.*, September 19, 1913, p.4 c.4.
[61] Walter G. West to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 6, 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 48.
[62] Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, Box 14, Folder 7.
[63] Undated Check Stubs from the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Fair Association, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 46; Undated Statement of Expenditures

Under Various Heads of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair Association, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 46. Usually these odd jobs paid $1.00 to $1.50 per day.
[64] Ibid; Undated List of Sham Battle Participants, Singers, and Dancers, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[65] Undated Check Stub from the Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair Association, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[66] Byron E. White to Superintendents Freer, Dickens, and Dunn, August 14, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[67] William B. Freer to John P. Logan, September 4, 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47; Logan to Freer, October 8, 1910, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 46.
[68] Albert Red Nose to William B. Freer, August 16, 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[69] Freer to Red Nose, August 19, 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[70] *Colony Courier*, June 13, 1912, p.6 c.2.
[71] *Ibid*., September 12, 1913, p.3 c.5.
[72] *Ibid*., October 9, 1913, p.4 c.4.
[73] William B. Freer to J.R. Eddy, August 4, 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.
[74] Mary J. Freeman to William B. Freer, May 13, 1911, CAA-Field Matrons, OHS, Reel 81. Without a letter from Freer, White Bird may not have been permitted to enter the Tongue River Reservation in Montana. At this time, Eddy suspected Southern Cheyennes of transporting mescal (it was actually peyote) to their northern relatives. This was why White Bird explicitly told Freer to mention in the introduction letter that he was "no mescal man."
[75] William B. Freer to Mary J. Freeman, May 25, 1911, CAA-Field Matrons, OHS, Reel 81.
[76] *Carrier Pigeon*, September 1, 1911, p.1 c.2.
[77] Dickens to Freer, October 12, 1910, CAA-Fairs, OHS Reel 46.
[78] *Watonga Republican*, September 14, 1911, p.1 c.5.
[79] *Ibid.*, September 7, 1911, p.1 c.4-5.
[80] Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, Box 14, Folder 7.
[81] *Colony Courier*, August 24, 1911, p.6 c.1.
[82] Fred S. Barde Collection, OHS, Box 14, Folder 7.
[83] *Weatherford Booster*, September 11, 1913, p.1 c.3-4.
[84] *Colony Courier*, October 2, 1913, p.4 c.3.
[85] *Ibid*., p.4 c.5.
[86] *Weatherford Booster*, September 18, 1913, p.1 c.5-6.
[87] Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola, eds, *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824-1977* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 243; L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 212-218.
[88] "Circular to Superintendents," *Indian School Journal* (June 1914): 312. The Commissioner suggested that these features be replaced with "slow mule races" or "athletic contests involving feats of strength and skill." Needless to

say, many Indians did not buy into Sells' vision of Native fairs and chose instead to dance and race their horses at Anglo fairs (for money) or on private property.

[89] Dickens was transferred to Red Lake, Minnesota, Freer was promoted to Supervisor of Indian schools in Oklahoma, and White retired.

[90] Walter G. West to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, October 6, 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 48.

[91] Farrell to Sells, November 13, 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 48.

[92] Willis E. Dunn to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, November 17, 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 48.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Dickens to Freer, June 8, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47; *Carrier Pigeon*, May 5, 1912, p.1 c.3; Statement of Cheyenne and Arapaho Fair Association for month ended September 30, 1913, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 48.

[95] Ibid.

[96] *Colony Courier*, October 2, 1913, p.4 c.5.

[97] Transcript of Council between Supervisor Brown and Cheyennes and Arapahos, April 24, 1914, CAA-Chiefs, OHS, Reel 45.

[98] Charles W. Edmister to Dickens, November 1, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.

[99] Dunn to West, October 2, 1912, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.

[100] Ebenezer Kingsley to Dickens, October 4, 1911, CAA-Fairs, OHS, Reel 47.

[101] Transcript of Council between Supervisor Brown and Cheyennes and Arapahos, April 24, 1914, CAA-Chiefs, OHS, Reel 45.

[102] *Watonga Herald*, September 7, 1911, p.1 c.3-4.

NOTES CHAPTER THREE

[1] Vernon Carstensen, "Meet Me At the Fair," *American West* 17 (May 1980): 11.

[2] "Indian Fairs," *Indians at Work* (August 1, 1935): 47.

[3] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1923* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1923), 21.

[4] Ibid., 21.

[5] United States Indian Service Bulletin, No. 1, "Indian Fairs," Dec. 31, 1909, 5, in Chilocco Fair file, Oklahoma Historical Society.

[6] L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 212.

[7] United State Indian Service Bulletin, "Indian Fairs," 5.

[8] Ibid., 6.

[9] Ibid., 6.

[10] Moses, *Wild West Shows*, 218.

[11] *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1924* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924), 13-14.

[12] *Daily Oklahoman*, 8/26/1923, p.1-D c.1.
[13] Ibid., p.1-D c.2.
[14] *Lawton Constitution*, 8/23/1925, p.6 c.3-4. Whether the grandstand and exhibit buildings were completed before the inaugural fair is uncertain, but they were certainly in use by 1925.
[15] *Daily Oklahoman*, 8/25/1929, p.1-D c.7.
[16] Ibid., p.1-D c.6-7.
[17] Ibid., 8/27/1931, p.16 c.3.
[18] "With the Indians at Craterville Park," *Inter-state Arts* (July-August 1931): 5.
[19] Ibid., 4.
[20] *Lawton Constitution*, 8/31/1931, p.1 c.5.
[21] Ibid., 8/21/1927, p.4 c.5.
[22] Ibid., 8/26/25, p.1 c.3.
[23] Ibid., p.1 c.4.
[24] Ibid.
[25] "The Only Fair of Its Kind in the World!," *Inter-state Arts* (July-August 1931): 4.
[26] *Lawton Constitution*, 8/28/1927, p.4 c.2 sec.2.
[27] Ibid., 8/30/1931, p.1 c.2.
[28] *Lawton Constitution*, 8/28/1925, p.1 c.3.
[29] Premium List, Craterville Park State Indian Fair Association, Craterville Park, Oklahoma, August 29-31, 1929, in C. Ross Hume Papers, Box 5, Folder 18, Western History Collection, University of Oklahoma.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] *Lawton Constitution*, 8/21/1927, p.1 c.4 and 8/25/1927, p.6 c.3.
[34] Ibid., 8/23/1925, p.1 c.6.
[35] *Lawton News Review*, 8/30/1928, p.3 c.7.
[36] *Lawton Constitution*, 8/26/1929, p.2.
[37] Premium List, Craterville Park, 1929.
[38] *Lawton Constitution*, 8/26/1929, p.2.
[39] "With the Indians at Craterville Park," 5.
[40] "Early Years of the American Indian Exposition of Anadarko, Okla.," 1, Unpublished, undated paper by Parker P. McKenzie, in Sec. X Files-Expositions, Oklahoma Historical Society.
[41] *Anadarko Tribune*, 9/24/1931, p.1 c.3.
[42] *Lawton News Review*, 9/15/1932, p.1 c.7.
[43] Ibid.
[44] *Anadarko Tribune*, 9/21/1932, p.1 c.4-5.
[45] "Early Years of the Exposition of Anadarko," 1.
[46] Ibid., 2.

[47] Ibid.
[48] *Anadarko Tribune*, 8/31/1932, p.1 c.7.
[50] Ibid., 9/21/1932, p.1 c.1.
[51] Ibid., p.1 c.4.
[52] Ibid.
[53] *Anadarko Daily News*, 8/12/1933, p.1 c.7.
[54] Ibid., 8/11/1933, p.1 c.4.
[55] Ibid., 8/22/1933, p.1 c.4.
[56] *Anadarko Tribune*, 8/16/1933, p.1.
[57] Ibid., p.1 c.6.
[58] Ibid.
[59] *Anadarko Daily News*, 8/22/1933, p.1 c.1.
[60] Ibid., 8/25/1933, p.2 c.2.
[61] Ibid., 9/14/1933, p.1 c.1.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 9/16/1933, p.1 c.3.
[64] Ibid., 9/15/1933, p.1 c.1.
[65] Ibid.
[66] *Anadarko Tribune*, 9/6/1933, p.1 c.1 sec.2.
[66] *Anadarko Daily News*, 9/15/1933, p.1 c.6.
[67] Ibid., 8/13/1934, p. 1 c.2.
[68] Ibid.
[69] *Anadarko American-Democrat*, 8/16/1934, p.1 c.7.
[70] *Anadarko Daily News*, 8/27/1934, p.1 c.3.
[71] *Anadarko American-Democrat*, 6/17/1934, p.2 c.5.
[72] *Anadarko Daily News*, 8/15/1934, p.1 c.3-4.
[73] Ibid., 8/11/1934, p.1 c.5.
[74] Ibid.
[75] *Anadarko Tribune*, 8/15/1934, p.1 c.4.
[76] *Anadarko Daily News*, 8/15/1934, p.1 c.2.
[77] *Anadarko Tribune*, 8/15/1934, p.1 c.1.
[78] *Anadarko Daily News*, 8/27/1934, p.1 c.3.
[79] "Early Years of the Exposition of Anadarko," 3.
[81] Muriel H. Wright, "The American Indian Exposition In Oklahoma," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 24 (Summer 1946): 161.

NOTES CHAPTER FOUR

[1] 1954 All American Indian Days Program, copy in author's possession.
[2] Wendy Kozol, "Miss Indian America: Regulatory Gazes and the Politics of Affiliation," *Feminist Studies* 31:1 (Spring 2005): 64-94.
[3] An annual event, the Sheridan Rodeo had been held at least since the 1930s.
[4] "Indian Community Relations Program Wins Award for Sheridan, Wyoming," *Amerindian* 1:4 (March-April, 1953): 1.

[5] Ibid.
[6] Hila Gilbert, *Making Two Worlds One and the Story of All American Indian Days*, (Sheridan, WY: Connections Press, 1986), 9.
[7] Ibid.
[8] "Four Freedoms Award to Sheridan," *Amerindian* 1:6 (July-August 1953): 2.
[9] Interview with Sharron Ahtone Harjo, February 14, 2006, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] 1955 AAID Program, Marriot-Rachlin Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Box 3, No Folder.
[13] Interview with Ahtone Harjo, February 14, 2006.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Interview with Ahtone Harjo Ahtone Harjo, February 23, 2006, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Interview with Harjo, February 14, 206.
[18] Phone interview with Barbara Hail, February 25, 2006.
[19] Interview with Richard Fitzpatrick, February 21, 2006, Norman, Oklahoma.
[20] Interview with Barbara Pappio Poe, March 11, 2006, Midwest City, Oklahoma.
[21] Interview with Ahtone Harjo, February 23, 2006.
[22] Ibid, February 14, 2006.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid, February 23, 2006.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

NOTES CHAPTER FIVE

[1] *The Amerindian*, 3:6 (July-August 1955): 4.
[2] Oconaluftee Indian Village brochure, undated, author's collection.
[3] *The Amerindian*, 3:6 (July-August 1955): 4.
[4] Oconaluftee Indian Village brochure, author's collection.
[5] *Talking Leaves*, 1:4 (September 1963): 11.

[6] CNHS 1963 Prospectus, American Indian Institute Collection, Western History Collections (hereafter WHC), Norman, Oklahoma, Box 1, Folder 50.
[7] Charles "Chief" Boyd, interview with author, November 11, 2008, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Cherokee Nation or Tribe of Oklahoma, Held on August 23rd in Tulsa, OK, Historic Oklahoma Collection-Cherokee Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1963-1966, Oklahoma Historical Society (hereafter OHS).
[12] Boyd, inverview.
[13] Marion Hagerstrand, interview with author, August 26, 2008, Tahlequah, Oklahoma.
[14] *Tulsa Tribune*, May 16, 1967, in American Indian Institute Collection, WHC, Box 4 Folder 14.
[15] *Cherokee Newsletter*, no date, and *Tulsa Tribune*, June 26, 1967, in American Indian Institute Collection, WHC, Box 4 Folder 14.
[16] Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Cherokee Nation, Held on October 26, 1968, Historic Oklahoma Collection—Cherokee Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 1967-1968, OHS.
[17] Ibid, June 27, 1970.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Jerry Bread, interview with author, August 5, 2008, Norman, Oklahoma.
[20] Tsa-La-Gi Guide's Manual, undated, 100, private collection.
[21] Program Development-Park Hill Project, Phase I-Indian Village, June 30, 1966, private collection.
[22] The Cherokee National Historical Society, Inc., Progress During 1966, private collection.
[23] Mildred Parks Ballenger to W.W. Keeler, no date, W.W. Keeler Collection, Cherokee National Historical Society Archives (hereafter CNHSA), Box 40, Folder 28.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Program Development-Park Hill Project, June 30, 1966.
[26] Marion Hagerstrand, interview with author, October 30, 2008, Tahlequah, Oklahoma.
[27] Boyd, interview.
[28] Jerry Bread, phone interview with author, August 30, 2011, Norman, Oklahoma.
[29] Boyd, interview.
[30] Jerry Bread, interview with author, August 12, 2008, Norman, Oklahoma; Tsa-La-Gi Guide's Manual, 85-6.

[31] Nancy Hope Smith to Martin Hagerstrand, October 1, 1966, W.W. Keeler Collection, CNHSA, Box 40 Folder 28.
[32] The Cherokee National Historical Society, Inc., Cherokee Cultural Center Status Report No. 1, December 31, 1965, private collection.
[33] Hagerstrand, interview, October 30, 2008.
[34] Ibid., August 26, 2008.
[35] Program Development-Park Hill Project, June 30, 1966; Tsa-La-Gi Guide's Manual, 100.
[36] Bread, interview, August 5, 2008.
[37] Ibid., August 12, 2008.
[38] The Cherokee National Historical Society 1967 Annual Report, private collection.
[39] Bread, interview, August 5, 2008.
[40] The Cherokee National Historical Society 1967 Annual Report.
[41] *Tulsa Daily World*, June 24, 1967, in American Indian Institute Collection, WHC, Box 4 Folder 14.
[42] Ibid., June 18, 1967, in American Indian Institute Collection, WHC, Box 4 Folder 14.
[43] Ibid., June 24, 1967, in American Indian Institute Collection, WHC, Box 4 Folder 14.
[44] *Cherokee Newsletter*, no date, in American Indian Institute Collection, WHC, Box 4 Folder 14.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Bread, interview, August 5, 2008.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Tsa-La-Gi Guide's Manual, 84.
[50] Betty Smith, interview with author, October 31, 2008, Tahlequah, Oklahoma.
[51] Bread, interview, August 5, 2008.
[52] Ibid.
[53] *Tulsa Tribune*, May 12, 1967, in American Indian Institute Collection, WHC, Box 4, Folder 14.
[54] Bread, interview, August 5, 2008.
[55] *Cherokee Nation News*, July 15, 1969, p.6.
[56] Smith, interview.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Hagerstrand, interview, August 26, 2008.
[60] Joyce Bear, interview with author, August 26, 2008, Okmulgee, Oklahoma.
[61] Smith, interview.
[62] Bear, interview.
[63] Bread, interview, August 12, 2008.

[64] Smith, interview.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Bread, interview, August 5, 2008. Dr. Bread assured me that no child labor laws were violated at Tsa-La-Gi and that kids merely played with one another and assisted their parents making articles at stations on occasion.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Bear, interview.

NOTES CHAPTER SIX

[1] Cortney Yarholar, interview with author, September 26, 2011, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Cortney Yarholar, interview with author, August 17, 2012, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
[7] Ibid.
[8] An impressive repertoire to be sure, Yarholar had been taught the dances by his Uncle Cricket (George Shields, Jr.) and Aunt Deb (Debbie Primeaux) who, of course, had learned them from their grandfather, Brave Scout.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Cortney Yarholar, text message to author, October 10, 2012.
[13] Yarholar, interview, August 17, 2012.
[14] Cortney Yarholar, text message to author, October 11, 2012.
[15] Yarholar, interview, August 17, 2012.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
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