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SM-17

"The Red/Green Archipelago"

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Peter Bird Martin
Institute of Current World Affairs
4 West Wheelock Street
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755

Dear Peter,

I would like to discuss with you the renaissance of the Red Indian, and how it coincides with the restoration of holistic philosophies as ancient as the tall cedars and as fresh as the blossoms of the Enlightenment. I also want to explore some medieval aspects of the New Age, wherein we find resurrected visions of a quasi-feudal world order made up of many small nations, connected by trade and treaty relationships reminiscent of the Hanseatic League and the Iroquois Confederacy. I think we are talking about a revolution of sorts, a strange co-mingling of past, present and future concepts of political organization that is at the same time primitive and post-industrial.

In the vanguard of this ideological reformation we find a wide assortment of technopeasant manifestos (located in the fast-growing Eco-niche of your local bookstore) and a retinue of shaman-like mesmerists in the film and television industry disturbing our ethnocentric slumber and alerting us to the precariousness of civilization as we know it. In the background, behind the scenes, watch out for wild animals-- they'll get you thinking like a rebel and acting like an Apache. We should pay particular attention to the peregrinations of ravens, those squawking, big-beaked black birds that swoop over your shoulder in the North and serve as symbols of creation as well as foreboding in the literary cosmos of Native and non-Native Americans alike.

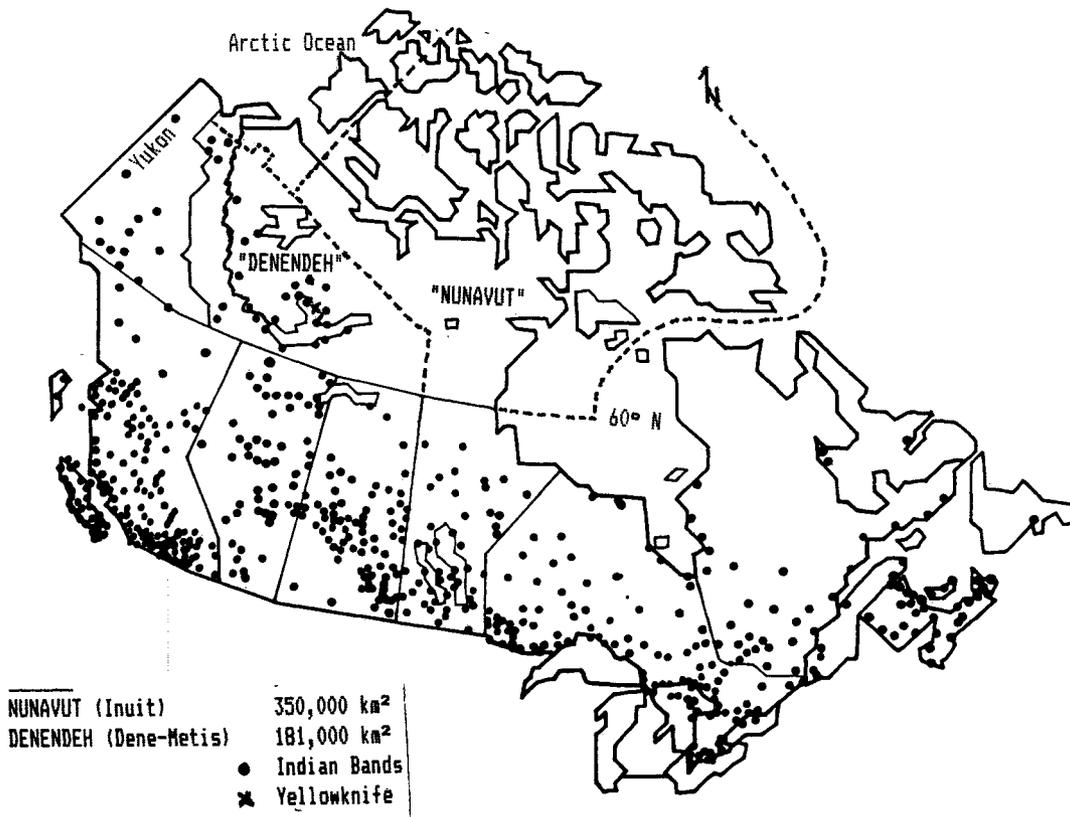
At times like this, I wish I were a storyteller. Since I am not, we will have to make do with a wordy exercise in mental mapmaking and some short tales about how race and political philosophy intertwine in the Canadian North and West.

Stephen Maly is an Institute Fellow studying the cultural and ethnic "nations" of Canada.

Since 1925 the Institute of Current World Affairs (the Crane-Rogers Foundation) has provided long-term fellowships to enable outstanding young adults to live outside the United States and write about international areas and issues. Endowed by the late Charles R. Crane, the Institute is also supported by contributions from like-minded individuals and foundations.

We start with Canada as it is (or at least as it appears to be): ten provinces, two territories, two "official" founding nations and languages (English and French), a federal state, a fiscal house of cards facing a chill wind. Canada has huge oil and gas reserves, one-fifth of the world's freshwater supplies, mountains of unexploited mineral resources, huge tracts of uncut trees, the spreading scars of clearcut logging, deepening stains of pollution, and a mostly urban mass public generally confounded by the country's political turmoil and profoundly worried about environmental disasters and economic catastrophe, whichever comes first.

Next, we take a look at what some of the Indian First Nations have proposed as a means of ensuring their own survival and development without tearing apart the economic and constitutional fabric of the country. Unlike the militant Mohawks in the East, who are fighting their way out of the Canadian constitution, the Dene (den-nay), Metis (may-tea) and Inuit (in-oo-it) peoples of the Northwest Territories are trying to stake out their respective lands and win favor for a respectable level of self-government without even dreaming of separate sovereign status. Likewise their diverse Indian cousins in the western provinces want to negotiate themselves into the federation, not out; they demand other Canadians' recognition of their fundamental rights and of their unextinguished title to land and resources so that they can become self-reliant contributors to the country's wealth and honor instead of impoverished wards of the state. "In the past," writes Canadian jurist Thomas Berger in the landmark study *Northern Frontier, Northern Homeland*, "special status has meant Indian reserves. Now the Native people wish to substitute self-determination for dependency."



Starting from these premises, we can envision Canada as it could be, a loosely-structured confederation of culturally distinct jurisdictions built upon the more stable foundation of three founding nations--English, French and Aboriginal--in which the whole, interconnected political economy is tending toward priorities that reflect a coalescence of traditional moral values and a shared understanding of ecology. In this picture, the map of Canada has many more squiggly dashed and dotted lines to denote permeable internal boundaries than we are accustomed to trace or take note of; it appears as if the coast-to-coast-to-coast (Atlantic-Pacific-Arctic) expanse of Canadian territory has been overlaid by a jumble of islands, some large, some quite small. We could call this scattering of Native habitats the archipelago of First Nations within the state of Canada. It signifies a re-rendering of one conventional perspective by the incorporation of other, older points of reference.

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Indians are Everywhere

Odd as it may seem, and few that the Native people are in number, we are surrounded by Indians. They keep cropping up at the periphery of consciousness and in the midst of everyday life. On our journey west from the Atlantic provinces to British Columbia, we came across a railway bridge near the Trans-Canada Highway in Ontario with the words "THIS IS INDIAN LAND!" painted in six feet high letters. As the summer rolled on, signs like this became commonplace.

Once during the two week period I spent working on a documentary film about the Alberta-Montana border the crew took a break from the August heat and plunged into the shallow, silty waters of the Milk River. It was at a place called Writing-on-Stone provincial park, a former haunt of the Blackfeet tribe, and an oasis of cool shade and sandstone pinnacles (called hoodoos) cut into the dry prairie landscape. I remember floating on my back, head down-river, and suddenly imagining a line of Indian horsemen obscuring the sun on the nearby canyon rim. Too many western movies in the memory bank, perhaps, but in my mind's eye I saw something about to happen.

A few weeks later I watched an Indian chief materialize out of thin air in a television commercial for a Pacific Northwest bank. (There were mountains, clouds, a voice-over about savings "for future generations" and what-have-you and then this ethereal Indian shows up like a father or conscience figure, moving silently across an alpine meadow.) Now I see Mazda advertising its Ford-built "Navajo" with all sorts of vision-quest allusions and I say to you it's not just an effort to compete with Jeep Cherokee but a trenchant sign of the times.

The signals are pervasive. I turn on the CBC radio and hear some "New Music" from a group called the Turtle Island String Quartet. I walk down the street in Vancouver and happen upon the branch office of something called the Turtle Island Land Trust, which turns out to be akin in purpose to the Nature

Conservancy in the States. (As you may know already, "Turtle Island is the name given to the North American continent a very long time ago.) I pick up three different newspapers and each one features a page-long analysis of how Hollywood finally got it right with Kevin Kostner's stunningly beautiful and uncondescending portrait of plains Indians in the film "Dances With Wolves." I go to the library and the first thing I see in the NEW BOOKS section is the Gaia Atlas of First Peoples, written by Julian Burger and published by Anchor/Doubleday. Subtitled "A Future for the Indigenous World," this global survey of aboriginal rights issues is part of a new series under the Gaia rubric. Gaia is a word for "Mother Earth" taken from Greek myths and it is very much in vogue. The "Gaian hypothesis" that the planet is a living organism--not a spaceship--has a growing number of adherents in the scientific community; it's old hat to most Indians. The invisible web that connects earthy-sounding strings and a not-for-profit real estate transaction is not hard to make in light of everything else we see around us--books and movies included--indicating that Green politics and Native spirituality is a synthesis whose time has come.

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The Color and Tone of Relationships

What is an Indian? It's easy to talk about redrawing the map of Canada, but where do you draw a jurisdictional line between people with mixed blood, mixed marriages, and mixed sentiments born of different schools of thought? Given all the historical differences and cultural diversity that subdivide Canadian aboriginals into hundreds of tribal groupings, is there such a thing as a Native Canadian "nation," or even a pan-Indian ideology? Is it safe, or sane, to contemplate the re-creation of self-determining administrative units based on factors of race and ethnicity?

Yes, there is a Native community of interests, a shared pattern of historical experience, and a common core of spiritual beliefs that resemble a "national" identity--it's as genuine and convincing, one might say, as Canada itself. The Native peoples generally think of themselves as separate nations, however; the Assembly of First Nations is more like the U.N. than a political party or a "national front" representing one cause. There is no single adequate response to Native demands, since they differ according to region, tribe, legal status, etc., but at the same time the entrenchment of aboriginal rights in the Canadian constitution is a goal shared by almost all the tribes. As for a connecting framework of assumptions and values, I found this Dene inscription near the entryway of the Prince of Wales Heritage Center in Yellowknife at least emblematic:

Being an Indian means being able to understand and live with this world in a very special way. It means living with the land, with the animals, birds and fish as though they were your sisters and brothers. It means saying the land is an old

friend that your father knew, your grandfather knew, indeed your people have always known.

Ancestralism does not fit my own mode of thinking; it's one of the things I find difficult to warm to wherever I find it in Canada, which is mostly among Indians and in the Maritime provinces. We non-Native westerners have shallow roots. I dug up an obscure, 1948 book entitled *America and Cosmic Man*, in which Wyndham Lewis made a point about indifference to origins that makes sense to me now:

"No American worth his salt should go looking around for a root. I advance this in all modesty, as a not unreasonable opinion. For is not that tantamount to giving up the most conspicuous advantage of being American, which is surely to have turned one's back on race, caste, and all that pertains to the rooted state?"

It seems backward and crazy to think seriously about sanctioning race as a valid criteria for belonging to a nation. I think of all the civil wars and civil strife outside the ambit of Canadian political history; I think of the protection from racial discrimination enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; but still, I have to face the fact that race is a cloudy category. Sometimes color doesn't even figure. It wasn't so very long ago (the early 1900s) that leading Quebec intellectuals made eloquent speeches about the French Canadian "race." Canadian Indians today sometimes speak of themselves as a race of people who were granted life and lands by the Creator "just like the Germans and Chinese and all the rest." Intermingle questions about blood relations with nationality and religion--as we must do when we talk about Israel, Tibet, the Hopis in the American Southwest or the Dene in the Canadian Northwest--and things get downright murky.

It's hard to say where color would leave off and ideology would take over in the Red/Green archipelago. I am reminded that one of Canada's most famous Indian conservationists, a man called Grey Owl, turned out to be an eccentric Briton who so thoroughly and convincingly imbued his adult life with the trappings of a Native that he fooled everyone for years, including the many "genuine" Indians he taught how to hunt and build canoes in the wilderness. Grey Owl (nee Archie Belaney), with much help from his Mohawk and city-bred wife Anajareo, raised orphaned beaver kittens named Rawhide and Jellybean who grew up to become documentary film stars. In the 1930s, Grey Owl gained an international reputation for advocating the preservation of wildlife habitat. As a green crusader the man was ahead of his time; as a fake Indian he represents an enduring conundrum.

The social and political contours of Canada's internal islands have yet to be surveyed with accurate instruments. How do you measure something that is taking shape in the mind but does not yet exist in the material world? This is the realm of the forward-looking political scientist, and I found one equal to the task of reconciling basic tenets of liberal democracy with

the two different approaches to self-government taken by Indians in southern Canada (British Columbia, for example) and those in the Northwest Territories. In a book entitled *Home and Native Land*, University of Alberta scholar Michael Asch presents convincing arguments for a "consociational" model of segmented autonomy (not unlike the situation in Belgium, where Flemish and Walloon have institutionalized power sharing arrangements) to accommodate Indian demands for a third order of government alongside that of provinces and the federal state. He makes a critically important distinction between "apartness" and apartheid, since the disreputable Bantustans of South Africa are what most people think of first when they hear talk about "ethnonational segments" living in their "traditional homelands" apart from the dominant society.

In the Nunavut proposal for an Inuit-controlled region in the eastern and central Arctic, and in the Dene/Metis design for Denendeh in the western zone (both words mean "our land" in aboriginal languages), the political tool for ensuring a Native preponderance of power, irrespective of the number of white immigrants from the South, is the residency requirement. The Inuit favor a three-year rule, while the Dene insist on ten. The reason for the disparity is obvious when you take into account the relatively hostile living conditions in the Arctic (where only the Inuit are truly at home) and the continued influx of southern Canadians to the milder, more accessible areas of the Mackenzie River basin. Three years on Baffin Island or in Rankin Inlet are enough to freeze southern comforts out of most newcomers and make them "go native" or go home. Likewise, after a decade of living in the sub-Arctic bush, or at a trading post like Fort Simpson, or even in the cocoon of conventional modernity that is downtown Yellowknife, the territorial capital, non-Native persons can be reasonably expected to have become "true Northerners," that is, they will have developed the same kind of deep attachments to the land that the Dene profess to have from birth.

This is not the time to go further into Asch's detailed defense of instituting types of Native self-government that non-Native Canadians could live with. I can leave this intellectual battlefield with provisional assurances that most of the really difficult theoretical aspects of setting up aboriginal jurisdictions have been dealt with in a serious and scholarly manner.

In the realm of public perceptions, questions of color and bloodline are not so easily transcended. "The race issue," I was told by a Native researcher at UBC, is a "red herring." I didn't get it. "One has to take the long view in this regard...Who can say what relations will be like in the future..." I still didn't get it. I found a Dene chief's explanation (this one written down) equally unsatisfying: "once land claims are settled, and we have self-government, we will not have much difficulty sorting out who our people are." Every time I ask whether non-Indians could "join" an Indian nation, the ambiguity of Native responses sets in early, and lingers like a dense fog. But then I stop to think there might be sensible humility in what seems like obfuscation. Only a

fanatic--a racist fanatic--would insist on exactitude in such a sensitive area of what remains, after all, an imaginary political geography. What meddlesome muddlehead would want to postulate tests for "Indianness" or predict the pace of interracial marriage and what problems such relations may pose for politicians?

Bill Wilson, President of the B.C. Congress of First Nations, always makes the point in his numerous speaking engagements that what Natives and non-Natives have to do is treat one another "with mutual respect and dignity." What both groups of people must overcome are entrenched racial prejudices; until now, he asserts (and nobody will disagree with him), the relationship has been marked by distrust and hostility. Most of the time the onus of racism falls on members of the white majority, but relationships are two-way streets, and on occasion you will get hefty hints that some Indians consider themselves racially superior to the rest of society. "They [white Canadians] can't build the kind of society that we the Native people can," a Dene leader remarked, "we have the solutions to how people can live in dignity, take care of the people, employ people."

At an International Writers Conference in Vancouver last month, a panel of mostly Native authors took questions from a mostly white audience. Nearly all of the inquiries were really thinly-veiled compliments to the celebrities and denigrations of bourgeois values; people were paying homage to a romantic conception of Indians as the salt of the earth. With much trepidation, a high school student asked why she always met with hostility whenever she tried to bridge the communication gap between herself and the Indians in her class. There was a lengthy pause--"Who wants to tackle this one?" asked the moderator, and then a Metis woman from Saskatchewan said "You must step back and take a good hard look at your culture, and think about it. Then, perhaps, you will begin to understand." The poor kid just stood there, waiting for more, but there wasn't any more. (Writers can be really stupid sometimes.)

It's hard to wrap a concrete meaning around the term respect. The word does not connote equality in any measurable or empirical sense. Respect is not affection, nor disdain; it rules out condescension and hostility, but it does not require deference or self-abnegation. I have witnessed one memorable demonstration of respect in the context of Indian-white relations in Canada. It was on film ("Dancing Around the Table," a National Film Board documentary about the failed constitutional conferences in the early 1980s.) Here's the scene: Native leaders are meeting with Canadian First Ministers in a cavernous congress center in Ottawa. As the morning session begins, one of the Indians starts chanting in his native tongue. Pierre Trudeau (then Prime Minister) interrupts to ask whether public prayer is to be on the agenda every day. The answer is yes, so Trudeau recites the Lord's Prayer. What we see and hear next is a simultaneous supplication to a higher authority, with an accompanying beat from a deerskin drum. There isn't much in the way of friendly feeling in the room, but there is a noisy measure of mutual respect. In a sense,

this brief, somewhat strained moment in the history of interracial relations in Canada was a reprise. Recounting fateful meetings earlier in the century, when treaties were hammered out, Indian historian Francis Alexis writes "The White man had the Bible and the Indians had the peace pipe, and they made a sacred covenant with the Great Spirit as a witness."

A Note About Scale

I am sitting at a large round table during the luncheon session of an Aboriginal Rights conference in Victoria. Dessert has just been served. The guest speaker, Musqueam Chief Wendy Grant, is being introduced by a representative from one of the sponsoring organizations. There is just enough time to wolf down the blueberry cheesecake and signal for coffee. The young guy next to me works for B.C. Hydro, the giant, provincially-owned energy utility. He has been describing the pre-negotiations stance his firm has taken with Indians who claim ownership to the lands traversed by high-tension wires and to water backed up behind several huge dams. It sounds like an interesting job, full of grand yet subtle complications. Next to him is a law student from the University of Victoria, gushing with insightful asides about the jurisprudence of salmon fishing. He sees big bucks on his career horizon. I ask him how long he thinks it will take to sort things out in British Columbia. "Thirty-five years, minimum," he replies. Then he bends forward over his coffee cup, looks both ways around the table--everyone but me, the Hydro agent, and an older guy across the table turns out to be a law student--gives us all a crafty grin, and says "we've got guaranteed jobs for the rest of our lives."

The elder man (he's about 50) seems out of place, ill at ease, not because he disagrees with what he's hearing, but because nobody seems interested in what he has to say about Native sovereignty. "What do they think they're going to do with a bunch of postage-stamp countries?" he mutters. "I suppose they think they will still be entitled to use our roads and bridges and get free medical care." He starts to shake his head. "And what are we going to do when they decide they'd like some assistance from a foreign government, huh?--I for one do not want to subsidize little tiny countries that will invite enemies of Canada to help them out." Nobody responds. Third-year law students aren't interested in this sort of stuff. I am, a little, but I don't say so. Time runs out. The speaker starts to speak about how science has shown that the most stable and enduring organisms are also the most complex. I write a little note to myself. It says "Look up Liechtenstein, Andorra, San Marino, the Vatican--tiny stable countries inside bigger ones."

Parallel Lives and Converging Values

There are deep cultural chasms separating Euro-Canadians from the Natives in their midst. Several times I have been told of the double-row wampum belt, a Mohawk artifact that symbolizes the way Indians and white people are supposed to relate to each other. There are two, long parallel rows of purple beads. At one point, they are connected by a short, perpendicular set of white beads. The belt represents two distinct peoples traveling down the river of time in different canoes, joined in treaties of friendship and mutual respect.

Parallel lines never meet. Indians refuse to be assimilated. Yet there is all sorts of evidence that Greens and Natives are on a convergent path. Aboriginal groups in the North, where hunting and fishing remain an essential part of life, have a natural inclination to use drainage basins as the basis for territorial boundaries; environmental engineers in the South are busily searching out ways to apply the concept of bioregionalism to community planning. Some Indian tribes are matrilineal; some feminists are on the same track. The Inuit sometimes engage their children in gender-switching when they are very young (little boys are taught to be girls for awhile, and vice versa); New Age thinkers often write about androgyny. The Indians believe in shamans and spirits; "white" witchcraft is on the rise, and you can find serious scientific papers on the "holographic paradigm," in which the solid world around us is described as an immaterial projection of mind. Heady stuff, this, and many of the seeming connections between ancient and modern modes of thinking may prove illusory, but not, I think, before they are woven into the fabric of an emerging ideology.

There is already a fairly firm foundation for the melding of Native values with those of the non-Native majority. Traditional Indian teachings prescribe the following: devotion to family and community (as the cornerstones of civilization), respect for elders (because they have experience); hostility to tyranny (no grown person can tell another what to do), consensus decisionmaking (discuss and discuss and discuss until the correct path is clear), the flexible circulation of elites (different chiefs for different tasks), share the wealth: this sounds familiar and progressive.

Such congruities are also evident in foreign affairs. The potlatch ceremonies of the Pacific coast Indians were in part a way for prominent people to increase their status by demonstrating a public-spirited generosity. Instead of military parades or shows of force, the mugwumps proved their greatness by showering everyone with gifts. There is sad irony in the fact that in the same month that the Canadian government cut back its funding to domestic Native organizations, it also forgave the multi-million dollar debts of several Third World countries and increased foreign aid to others. It was a potlatch-style maneuver, but it didn't do the Indians any good.

I sense an inherent danger in the confluence of traditional Native beliefs and the "spiritual ecology" mindset of the Green movement. "How would you feel," I asked an Indian acquaintance,

"if all your ideas about living in harmony with nature were adopted and in time internalized by the dominant society, while at the same time your political demands and the needs of your people were ignored? Are you afraid we whites will steal your virtues and leave you, doubly impoverished, to rot uncared-for on unkempt reservations, like in the States?"

He gave me a funny look.

"What?"

I went on to explain how I think it plausible that out of sheer necessity North American society will shift toward an environmentally sustainable way of life and all sorts of lip service will be paid to Indian people for their sage ideas about treating the land as if it mattered. But meanwhile Indian people themselves will go on living in squalor because nobody is really interested in spending a whole lot of time negotiating limited sovereignty and self-government with such a minuscule and powerless minority.

"Oh," he said. Maybe he didn't get it. Maybe he saw me as an enemy.

It will take a cascade of near-miracles to bring about the kind of Canada the Dene, Metis, Inuit and other aboriginal peoples have in mind. Indians will have to get their act together. Last month the framework agreement for the Dene comprehensive claim in the western sector of the Northwest Territories collapsed, partly because of a lack of agreement over the future boundary between Denendeh and Nunavut, partly because some members of the coalition decided it was better to settle land claims on fragmented, regional basis.

In early October I went to see Bill Erasmus, President of the Dene Nation, at his office in Yellowknife. We had a leisurely discussion about the future. He told me a Dene word (I've forgotten it now) that described the state of being in the outside world. (People in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon refer to everything south of the 60th parallel as "the outside.") Erasmus said the world is out of control; things have sped up too much. He looked out the window and said that to perceive this as a Native person is like seeing a collision about to happen down there on the street. There is nothing he can do about it, save to shout a verbal warning, but it is too late for that--the crash is inevitable.

I followed his gaze out onto the street below. (His office is two floors up.) There were no cars just then, but I saw a raven picking at the dried-up insides of an institutional size can of ketchup lying abandoned on the sidewalk. The chief's words sparked my recollection of a strange, powerful movie I saw a few years ago called "Koyaanisqatsi," in which all sorts of urban and industrial scenes are shown in fast motion. The word is Hopi, and it means "life out of balance."

Bill drew my attention to a huge map on his wall. It showed all the lands the Dene and Metis would like to govern

themselves, as a nation within Canada. Then he asked me if I had been out in the bush. (I had, the previous afternoon, driven a Rent-a-Relic Renault out to a beautiful place called Cameron Falls, where I spotted a bald eagle overhead and nearly stepped on a ptarmigan midway through his change into winter plumage.) I told him I was disappointed that I hadn't seen any caribou. He chuckled a little--I needed to drive a bit farther, I suppose--and then we talked a little about the importance of hunting to the Dene people. "People around here think we just wander around in the bush and if we get lucky, bump into a moose," he said. "I do things out on the land that people around here know nothing about." The phrase "people around here" referred primarily to non-Natives from outside, the relatively transient whites who come to Yellowknife to get away from all sorts of things but eventually go back to where they came from.

I knew what he was talking about. Two days before, I had eaten breakfast in a place called The Miner's Mess, where the eggs and hashbrowns are cheap and the mostly Indian clientele sit on benches at long tables, sort of like the ones you see in old movies about the Middle Ages. The arrangement was convivial. I talked with two Native teenagers who had just flown in on a friend's seaplane (Yellowknife is adjacent to Great Slave Lake) from an outlying settlement called Snowdrift. They told me how they were getting ready to spend most of the winter hunting and trapping. They could tell I was impressed.

Lunch that day was a Caesar salad at YK Pizza. I sat alone in a booth. Four white women from an office building down the street were seated at a nearby table. They had a very animated discussion that touched on many subjects: shopping trips to Edmonton, a just released video of "The Handmaid's Tale," (the film adaptation of Margaret Atwood's feminist novel), the price of tickets to Hawaii in February, and a mutual friend's "dream job" that consists of buying the complete furnishings--from curtain rods to carpets to bathroom fixtures--for pre-sold condominiums in Arizona.

I had dinner at the Explorer Hotel, a nice place. I was fortunate to be in the company of several members of the Territorial Assembly, including the Government Leader (a quasi-premier), his wife (an Inuk), a cheerful staff writer from **Reader's Digest** (Canadian edition) and a political scientist from the University of Toronto. We started with slices of smoked salmon and a muskox pate with cranberry gelatin. There was lots of wine. I was seated next to Marie, the only Native person present, and she asked me what I was doing in the North. I gave her my usual spiel about cultural nations. I said I found the Inuit people interesting.

She screwed up her face in obvious disapproval. "Interesting? You know what interesting means in my language, BOY? It means chicken wire, fences, walls." I wasn't sure what she meant.

Later on, she explained, sort of, that Inuit children are given names that have no sex orientation--they are gender neutral. She also referred to her father as "my son," her brother as

"sister," and of course to me again as "BOY." I was confused, and knew she was putting me down, but I wasn't sure whether or not she was putting me on as well. I had read about extended families, how everyone is related to everyone else in some Native communities. In the Inuit village of Pangnirtung, last summer, I had met up with a twelve year-old kid named Levon who subsequently introduced me to his uncle, a little guy who was only five. But Marie had me mystified, and I'm sure she knew it. I could never belong in her world, that much was clear. The best I could do that night in parting was to assure her that I did not find her very interesting.

All of this took place before I'd heard about the two-row wampum belt, and before the phrase "parallel lives" had entered my head, but now I have a sense of how it all fits.

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Timing Counts

Time does not seem to be on the side of the aboriginal peoples in Canada or anywhere else in the world. But their numbers are growing, faster than ours, and our time may indeed be running out. In the past two months I have heard smart, informed people say that the next ten years are absolutely critical to the survival of earthly civilization. Stephen Lewis, Canada's former ambassador to the United Nations, told a Greenish audience at the Vancouver planetarium that everything he has learned from his work with the international scientific community confirms his worst fears about global warming, the ozone layer, toxins in the environment: this is the decade for decisive action, or there many not be another. Whoever wrote Meryl Streep's lines in the PBS series "Race to Save the Planet" is sending the same urgent message. It's a chorus out there, and they are not singing an ode to joy.

At the same time, I hear faint but hopeful voices like that of Ontario Indian Affairs Minister Mark Krasnick who talked briefly in Victoria about his government's willingness to consider proposals to establish "domestic dependent nations" inside Canada's richest and most powerful province. He said "I think just maybe we are the generation that can make this thing work." Tantoo Cardinal, a Native actress who has a role in "Dances With Wolves," told *Maclean's* magazine that in her people's religious tradition it is prophesied that there will be a generation of white people who will be the Indians' friends. The Dene have a prophecy that tells them, in their own idiom, that the last shall be first and the first shall be last in the next millennium. White people are going to be forced to rely on the Natives for many things, or perish.

Hitherto slow moving forces of nature and humanity are coming together fast. In reconsidering the color and coordinates of the Red/Green Archipelago, I am reminded of one of the many Indian sayings worth stealing: "Let us behold the turtle. He moves forward when he sticks his neck out."

Cheers, Nevermore, *Stephen Maly*

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