

FROM
TOM KING (2012).

THE INCONVENIENT INDIAN:
A Curious Account of
Native People in North
America.

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TOO HEAVY TO LIFT

Few looking at photos of mixed-bloods would be likely to say,
“But they don’t look like Irishmen.”

—Louis Owens, *I Hear the Train*

INDIANS COME IN all sorts of social and historical configurations. North American popular culture is littered with savage, noble, and dying Indians, while in real life we have Dead Indians, Live Indians, and Legal Indians.

Dead Indians are, sometimes, just that. Dead Indians. But the Dead Indians I’m talking about are not the deceased sort. Nor are they all that inconvenient. They are the stereotypes and clichés that North America has conjured up out of experience and out of its collective imaginings and fears. North America has had a long association with Native people, but despite the history that the two groups have shared, North America no longer *sees* Indians.

What it sees are war bonnets, beaded shirts, fringed deerskin dresses, loincloths, headbands, feathered lances, tomahawks, moccasins, face paint, and bone chokers. These bits of cultural debris—authentic and constructed—are what literary theorists like to call “signifiers,” signs that create a “simulacrum,” which Jean Baudrillard, the French sociologist and postmodern theorist, succinctly explained as something that “is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals that there is none.”

God, I love the French theorists. For those of us who are not French theorists but who know the difference between a motor home and a single-wide trailer, a simulacrum is something that represents something that never existed. Or, in other words, the only truth of the thing is the lie itself.

Dead Indians.

You can find Dead Indians everywhere. Rodeos, powwows, movies, television commercials. At the 1973 Academy Awards, when Sacheen Littlefeather (Yaqui-Apache-Pueblo) refused the Best Actor award on behalf of Marlon Brando, she did so dressed as a Dead Indian. When U.S. Senator Benjamin Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne) and W. Richard West, Jr. (Cheyenne-Arapaho), the director of the American Indian Museum in New York, showed up for the 2004 opening ceremonies of the museum, they took the podium in Dead Indian leathers and feathered headdresses. Phil Fontaine (Ojibway) was attired in the same manner when he stood on the floor of the House of Commons in 2008 to receive the Canadian government’s apology for the abuses of residential schools.

I probably sound testy, and I suppose part of me is. But I shouldn’t be. After all, Dead Indians are the only antiquity that

North America has. Europe has Greece and Rome. China has the powerful dynasties. Russia has the Cossacks. South and Central America have the Aztecs, the Incas, and the Maya.

North America has Dead Indians.

This is why Littlefeather didn’t show up in a Dior gown, and why West and Campbell and Fontaine didn’t arrive at their respective events in Brioni suits, Canali dress shirts, Zegni ties, and Salvatore Ferragamo shoes. Whatever cultural significance they may have for Native peoples, full feather headdresses and beaded buckskins are, first and foremost, White North America’s signifiers of Indian authenticity. Their visual value at ceremonies in Los Angeles or Ottawa is—as the credit card people say—priceless.

Whites have always been comfortable with Dead Indians. General Phil Sheridan, famous for inventing the scorched-earth tactics used in “Sherman’s March to the Sea,” is reputed to have said, “The only good Indian I ever saw was a dead one.” Sheridan denied saying this, but Theodore Roosevelt filled in for him. In a speech in New York in 1886, some sixteen years before he became president of the United States, Roosevelt said, “I suppose I should be ashamed to say that I take the Western view of the Indian. I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn’t like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth.”

Which brings to mind that great scene in the 1994 film *Maverick*, in which Joseph, a Native con man played by the Oneida actor Graham Greene, spends his time pandering to the puerile whims of a rich Russian grand duke, played by Paul L. Smith. Smith is on a grand tour of the West and has become a bit bored with all the back-to-nature stuff. He has shot buffalo, lived with

Indians, communed with nature, and is casting about for something new and exciting to do with his time. Greene, dressed up in standard Dead Indian garb, asks Smith if he would like to try his hand at the greatest Western thrill of all.

"What's the greatest Western thrill of all?" asks Smith.

"Kill Indians," says Greene.

"Kill Indians?" says Smith. "Is that legal?"

Sure, Greene assures him, "White man been doing it for years."

So Greene gets Mel Gibson to dress up like a Dead Indian, and the grand duke gets to shoot him. The greatest Western thrill of all? You bet.

And you don't necessarily have to head west to find Dead Indians. In one of Monty Python's skits, a gas official comes into a British household with a dead Indian slung over his shoulder. The Indian, who isn't quite dead, turns out to be part of the special deal the homeowner got when he bought a new stove. The free dead Indian was "in the very small print," says the gas man, "so as not to affect the sales."

On the other hand, if you like the West and are the outdoors type, you can run out to Wyoming and pedal your bicycle over Dead Indian Pass, spend the evening at Dead Indian campground, and in the morning cycle across Dead Indian Meadows on your way to Dead Indian Peak. If you happen to be in California, you can hike Dead Indian Canyon. And if you're an angler, you can fish Dead Indian Creek in Oregon or Dead Indian Lake in Oklahoma, though the U.S. Board on Geographic Names recently voted to rename it Dead Warrior Lake.

Sometimes you can only watch and marvel at the ways in which the Dead Indian has been turned into products: Red Chief Sugar,

Calumet Baking Soda, the Atlanta Braves, Big Chief Jerky, Grey Owl Wild Rice, Red Man Tobacco, the Chicago Blackhawks, Mutual of Omaha, Winnebago Motor Homes, Big Chief Tablet, Indian motorcycles, the Washington Redskins, American Spirit cigarettes, Jeep Cherokee, the Cleveland Indians, and Tomahawk missiles.

Probably the most egregious example is Crazy Horse Malt Liquor, a drink that one reviewer enthusiastically described as "smooth, slightly fruity with an extremely clean, almost Zinfandel finish that holds together all the way to the dregs of the bottle. Personally we think the chief should be proud." That the Hornell Brewing Company would even think of turning the great Oglala leader into a bottle of booze should come as no surprise. Corporate North America had already spun the Ottawa leader Pontiac into a division of General Motors, the Apache into an attack helicopter, and the Cherokee into a line of clothing and accessories.

I once bought a pair of Cherokee underpants that I was going to send to my brother as a joke, but by the time I got them home and looked at them again, they had become more embarrassing than funny.

One of my favourite Dead Indian products is Land O' Lakes butter, which features an Indian Maiden in a buckskin dress on her knees holding a box of butter at bosom level. The wag who designed the box arranged it so that if you fold the box in a certain way, the Indian woman winds up *au naturel*, sporting naked breasts. Such a clever fellow.

Of course, all of this is simply a new spin on old notions. The medicine shows that toured the West in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries used Aboriginal iconography and invention to sell Dead Indian elixirs and liniments, such as Kickapoo Indian

Sagwa, a “blood, liver and stomach renovator,” Dr. Morse’s Indian Root Pills, Dr. Pierce’s Golden Medical Discovery, featuring the caption “Used by the First Americans,” White Beaver’s Cough Cream, Ka-Ton-Ka, and Nez Perce Catarrh Remedy.

All of this pales by comparison with the contemporary entrepreneurs who have made a bull-market business out of Dead Indian culture and spirituality. Gone are the bogus potions and rubs that marked the earlier snake oil period. They have been replaced by books that illuminate an alternative Dead Indian reality, by workshops that promise an authentic Dead Indian experience, by naked therapy sessions in a sweat lodge or a tipi that guarantee to expand your consciousness and connect you to your “inner Dead Indian.” Folks such as Lynn Andrews, Mary Summer Rains, Jamie Samms, Don Le Vie, Jr., and Mary Elizabeth Marlow, just to mention some of the more prominent New Age spiritual CEOs, have manufactured fictional Dead Indian entities—Agnes Whistling Elk, Ruby Plenty Chiefs, No Eyes, Iron Thunderhorse, Barking Tree, and Max the crystal skull—who supposedly taught them the secrets of Native spirituality. They have created Dead Indian narratives that are an impossible mix of Taoism, Buddhism, Druidism, science fiction, and general nonsense, tied together with Dead Indian ceremony and sinew to give their product provenance and validity, along with a patina of exoticism.

In the late nineteenth century, Kickapoo Indian Sagwa sold for fifty cents a bottle. Today’s Indian snake oil is considerably more expensive. In her article “Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances: New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality,” Lisa Aldred makes note of someone called Singing

Pipe Woman, in Springdale, Washington, who advertises a two-week retreat with a Husichol woman priced at \$2,450. A quick trip to the Internet will turn up an outfit offering a one-week “Canyon Quest and Spiritual Warrior Training” course for \$850 and an eight-night program called “Vision Quest,” in the tradition of someone called Stalking Wolf, “a Lipan Apache elder” who has “removed all the differences” of the vision quest, “leaving only the simple, pure format that works for everyone.” There is no fee for this workshop, though a \$300-\$350 donation is recommended. Stalking Wolf, by the way, was supposedly born in 1873, wandered the Americas in search of spiritual truths, and finally passed all his knowledge on to Tom Brown, Jr., a seven-year-old White boy whom he met in New Jersey. Evidently, Tom Brown, Jr., or his protégés, run the workshops, having turned Stalking Wolf’s teachings into a Dead Indian franchise.

From the frequency with which Dead Indians appear in advertising, in the names of businesses, as icons for sports teams, as marketing devices for everything from cleaning products to underwear, and as stalking goats for New Age spiritual flimflam, you might think that Native people were a significant target for sales. We’re not, of course. We don’t buy this crap. At least not enough to support such a bustling market. But there’s really no need to ask whom Dead Indians are aimed at, is there?

All of which brings us to Live Indians.

Among the many new things that Europeans had to deal with upon their arrival in the North American wilderness were Live Indians. Live Indians, from an Old World point of view, were an intriguing, perplexing, and annoying part of life in the New World.

My son's girlfriend, Nadine Zabder, a meat science major, once told me: "You can't herd them. They won't follow. And they're too heavy to lift." Nadine was talking about sheep, but she could have been talking about Indians, for the same general sentiment appears in early journals and reports. The good news, the writers agreed, was that they were dying off in large numbers.

Indians. Not sheep.

There is no general agreement on how many Indians were in North America when Europeans first arrived, but most scholars are willing to speculate that the new diseases that fishermen and colonists brought with them killed upwards of 80 percent of all Native people along the eastern seaboard. Conflicts and wars did their part as well, and, by the time the nineteenth century rolled around, the death of the Indian was a working part of North American mythology. This dying was not the fault of non-Natives. The demise of Indians was seen as a tenet of natural law, which favoured the strong and eliminated the weak.

George Catlin, who travelled around North America in the 1830s painting Live Indians, said of the tribes he visited that, "in a few years, perhaps, they will have entirely disappeared from the face of the earth, and all that will be remembered of them will be that they existed and were numbered among the barbarous tribes that once inhabited this vast Continent." General John Benjamin Sanborn, who was part of an Indian Peace Commission formed in 1867, echoed the common sentiments of a nation on the move. "Little can be hoped for them as a distinct people," said Sanborn. "The sun of their day is fast sinking in the western sky. It will soon go down in a night of oblivion that shall know no morning . . . No spring-time shall renew their fading glory, and no future know

their fame." The American newspaperman Horace Greeley, on a trip west in 1859, was not quite as kind as Catlin nor as eloquent as Sanborn. "The Indians are children," said Greeley. "Their arts, wars, treaties, alliances, habitations, crafts, properties, commerce, comforts, all belong to the very lowest and rudest of human existence . . . I could not help saying, 'These people must die out—there is no help for them.'"

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's 1855 epic poem *Song of Hiawatha* summed up the sentiments of most North Americans. At the end of the poem, as Hiawatha is getting ready to depart this world for the next, he tells his people to turn everything over to the Europeans. "Listen to their words of wisdom," Hiawatha intones in trochaic meters. "Listen to the truth they tell you." Longfellow's poem was romantic wishful thinking, but, more than that, it confirmed that Indians, understanding their noble but inferior nature, had willingly gifted all of North America to the superior race.

Problem was, Live Indians didn't die out. They were supposed to, but they didn't. Since North America already had the Dead Indian, Live Indians were neither needed nor wanted. They were irrelevant, and as the nineteenth century rolled into the twentieth century, Live Indians were forgotten, safely stored away on reservations and reserves or scattered in the rural backwaters and cityscapes of Canada and the United States. Out of sight, out of mind. Out of mind, out of sight.

All Native people living in North America today are Live Indians. Vine Deloria, the Lakota scholar and writer, didn't use the term "Live Indians" when he wrote his famous 1969 manifesto *Custer Died for Your Sins*. Instead, he talked about Native people

being “transparent.” “Our foremost plight,” said Deloria, “is our transparency. People can tell just by looking at us what we want, what should be done to help us, how we feel, and what a ‘real’ Indian is really like.” Deloria might as well have said that Indians are invisible. North Americans certainly *see* contemporary Native people. They just don’t *see* us as Indians.

When I was kicking around San Francisco, there was an Aboriginal photographer, a Mandan from the Fort Berthold reservation in South Dakota named Zig Jackson, who had a wonderful wit. For one of his photographic series, “Entering Zig’s Indian Reservation,” he took photographs of himself in a feathered headdress wandering the streets of San Francisco, riding cable cars and buses, looking in store windows. What he was after and what he was able to catch were the apprehensive and delighted reactions of non-Natives as they came face to face with their Dead Indian come to life.

Carlisle Indian Industrial School, an early residential school, took photographs of Indians when they first came to that institution and then photographed them after they had been “cleaned up,” so that the world could see the civilizing effects of Christianity and education on Indians. Not to be outdone, the Mormon Church, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), has for years maintained an impressive collection of photographs of Indian children, taken when the children were first brought into the church’s Home Placement Program. This was a program in place from 1947 to 1996, through which Native families were encouraged to send their kids off-reservation to live with Mormon families, the expectation being that these children would have a greater chance at success if they were raised and educated in White society. The purpose of the photographs was to track the

change in the children’s skin colour, from dark to light, from savagism to civilization.

Indeed, *The Book of Mormon* specifically teaches that dark-skinned Lamanites (Indians), as they accept Mormon gospel, will turn “white and delightsome.” At the 1960 LDS Church conference, the head of the church, Spencer Kimball, rejoiced that Indians were “fast becoming a white and delightsome people,” and that Indian children in the church’s Home Placement Program were “often lighter than their brothers and sisters in the hogans on the reservation.”

When I lived in Salt Lake City, I was privileged to see some of the Church’s Polaroids. Frankly, I couldn’t see much of a difference between the “before” and “after” shots, but then I wasn’t looking at the photographs through the lens of scripture.

In the late 1970s, I went to Acoma Pueblo and took the tour of the old village up on the mesa. One of the adobe houses had a television antenna fixed to the roof, and, as we walked through the narrow streets, we could hear the sounds of Daffy Duck and Bugs Bunny arguing over whether it was rabbit hunting season or duck hunting season. One of the women in the group, a woman in her late thirties from Ohio, was annoyed by the presence of the television set. This was supposed to be an authentic Indian village, she complained to the rest of the group. Real Indians, she told us, didn’t have televisions.

In 1997, I was invited to go to France for the St. Malo book fair. I’m not much for travel, but Helen wanted to go, and my friend the late Louis Owens and a number of other Native authors were going to be there, so I went. Now, at that time, I was sporting a moustache. My brother Christopher and I are polar opposites

when it comes to body hair. He got it all. I got none. He was able to grow a full beard when he was in his early twenties. I didn't bother shaving more than once a week until I was in my thirties. But I discovered that if I was willing to persevere for a year or so, I could grow a moustache. So I did. I was delighted with the damn thing.

But when I arrived in France, I was promptly told by a photographer, who was taking shots of all the Native authors, that I wasn't Indian. That's not exactly what she said. What she said was, "I know you're Indian, but you're not really Indian, are you?" This wasn't a problem with language. Her English was excellent. What she meant was that I might be Indian by blood and perhaps even by culture, but, with my splendid moustache, I was no longer an authentic Indian. Real Indians, she told me, with no hint of humour or irony, didn't have facial hair.

For us Live Indians, being invisible is annoying enough, but being inauthentic is crushing. If it will help, I'm willing to apologize for the antenna on that house at Acoma. I've already shaved off my moustache, so that should no longer be an issue. If I didn't live in the middle of a city, I'd have a horse. Maybe two. I sing with a drum group. I've been to sweats. I have friends on a number of reservations and reserves around North America. I'm diabetic. If you can think of something else I can do to help myself, let me know.

But I know that nothing will help. In order to maintain the cult and sanctity of the Dead Indian, North America has decided that Live Indians living today cannot be genuine Indians. This sentiment is a curious reworking of one of the cornerstones of Christianity, the idea of innocence and original sin. Dead Indians

are Garden of Eden—variety Indians. Pure, Noble, Innocent. Perfectly authentic. Jean-Jacques Rousseau Indians. Not a feather out of place. Live Indians are fallen Indians, modern, contemporary copies, not authentic Indians at all, Indians by biological association only.

Many Native people have tried to counter this authenticity twaddle by insisting on tribal names—Blackfoot, Navajo, Mohawk, Seminole, Hoopa, Chickasaw, Mandan, Tuscarora, Pima, Omaha, Cree, Haida, Salish, Lakota, Mi'kmaq, Ho-Chunk—and while this is an excellent idea, it has been too much for North America to manage. As with the Dead Indian, North America has, for a very long time now, insisted on a collective noun for Live Indians—Indians, Aboriginals, First Nations, Natives, First Peoples—even though there are over 600 recognized nations in Canada and over 550 recognized nations in the United States.

"Recognized." I like that term. Makes me feel almost real.

Dead Indians. Live Indians. You would think that these two Indians would be akin to matter and anti-matter, that it would be impossible for both of them to occupy the same space, but each year Live Indians and Dead Indians come together at powwows and ceremonies and art markets from Alberta to Arizona, Oklahoma to Ontario, the Northwest Territories to New Mexico. At the same time, with remarkable frequency, Live Indians cum Dead Indians show up at major North American social, artistic, and governmental events and galas to pose for the cameras and to gather up any political advantage that might be available.

I never wore a full feather headdress to protests or marches, but I did sport a four-strand bone choker, a beaded belt buckle, a leather headband, and a fringed leather pouch, and when I look

at the photographs from those years, the image of myself as a Dead Indian still sends a tremor up my spine.

For Native people, the distinction between Dead Indians and Live Indians is almost impossible to maintain. But North America doesn't have this problem. All it has to do is hold the two Indians up to the light. Dead Indians are dignified, noble, silent, suitably garbed. And dead. Live Indians are invisible, unruly, disappointing. And breathing. One is a romantic reminder of a heroic but fictional past. The other is simply an unpleasant, contemporary surprise.

Tony Hillerman, in his mystery novel *Sacred Clowns*, captures such a moment. In the book, he describes a Tano ceremony in which Jim Chee, a Navajo cop, watches real people, "farmers, truck drivers, loggers, policemen, accountants, fathers, sons, and grandfathers," dancing beneath the masks. Chee can see "the very real sweat glistening on their shoulders, a very ordinary Marine Corps anchor tattoo on the arm of the seventh kachina, the very natural dust stirred by the rhythmic shuffling of their moccasins." And all around, the tourists stand at the edges of the ceremony, looking right at the Live Indians, watching the Dead Indians appear in the plaza. Their cameras at the ready.

Let's be clear, Live Indians dance at powwows. And when we dance, when we sing at the drum, when we perform ceremonies, we are not doing it for North America's entertainment. Where North America sees Dead Indians come to life, we see our families and our relations. We do these things to remind ourselves who we are, to remind ourselves where we come from, and to remind ourselves of our relationship with the earth. Mostly, though, we do these things because we enjoy them. And because they are important.

I know that this sort of rhetoric—"our relationship with the earth"—sounds worn out and corny, but that's not the fault of Native people. Phrases such as "Mother Earth," "in harmony with nature," and "seven generations" have been kidnapped by White North America and stripped of their power. Today, Mother Earth is a Canadian alternative rock band, a Memphis Slim song, an alternative-living magazine, and a short story by Isaac Asimov. "In Harmony with Nature" is an Internet company that sells "nourishing products for home and body." It's also the website for a group of New Age lifestyle educators who offer products and instructions that will "support your transition towards a more holistic lifestyle." "Harmony with Nature" is a hypnosis session that you can download for only \$12.95 and which will "gently guide you into a rapturous sense of connection to the whole of natural creation."

"Seven Generations" is a Native institute designed to meet the educational and cultural needs of the ten bands in the Rainy Lake Tribal area. But it is also an Alberta-based company in the business of "unconventional oil and gas resource development," though I'm not sure how you can use "unconventional" and "oil and gas" in the same sentence without creating an oxymoron. There's a "Seven Generations" company out of Burlington, Vermont, that sells "naturally safe and effective household products," while an outfit called "Hellfish Family" will sell you a T-shirt that has a crucifixion scene on the back with "Seven Generations" at the top and "You Are Not My Christ" at the bottom for \$12.95.

And then there are the great Indian phrases. I don't know if Crazy Horse ever said, "Today is a good day to die," but I'm

told that “*Heghlu’meH QaQ jajvam*” means the same thing in Klingon. You can download Manowar’s “Today is a Good Day to Die” as a ringtone for your phone, and it is the opening line in the movie *Flatliners*.

Dead Indians. Live Indians. In the end, it is an impossible tangle. Thank goodness there are Legal Indians.

Legal Indians are considerably more straightforward. Legal Indians are Live Indians, because only Live Indians can be Legal Indians, but not all Live Indians are Legal Indians.

Is that clear?

Legal Indians are those Indians who are recognized as being Indians by the Canadian and U.S. governments. Government Indians, if you like. In Canada, Legal Indians are officially known as “Status Indians,” Indians who are registered with the federal government as Indians under the terms of the Indian Act.

According to the 2006 census, Canada had a population of about 565,000 Status Indians. The census put the total number of Native people in Canada at that time—Indians, Métis, and Inuit—at 1.2 million, but, in that year, at least 22 Indian reserves were not counted, and Statistics Canada admitted that it might have missed even more. Add to that the fact that many First Nations people refuse to participate in a census, seeing it as an affront to sovereignty. Besides, enumeration is not an exact science. So much depends on how it’s done and who is doing it. The number 1.2 million is probably too low. But even if there are 1.2 million Indians, Métis, and Inuit, it means that slightly less than 50 percent of all Native people in Canada are Status Indians.

In the United States, federal “recognition,” the American version of “Status,” is granted to tribes rather than individuals, and

in 2009, the government’s Federal Register recognized some 564 tribes whose enrolled members were eligible for federal assistance. The total number of individuals who are members of those tribes probably tops out at about 950,000, while the total number of Indians in the United States comes in at around the 2.4 million mark, though again, census figures being what they are, this figure could be lower. Or higher.

As I said, these numbers will never be accurate. But if they are close, it means that only about 40 percent of Live Indians in North America are Legal Indians. A few more than one in three. This is important because the only Indians that the governments of Canada and the United States have any interest in are the Legal ones.

“Interest,” though, is probably is too positive a term, for while North America loves the Dead Indian and ignores the Live Indian, North America *hates* the Legal Indian. Savagely. The Legal Indian was one of those errors in judgment that North America made and has been trying to correct for the last 150 years.

The Legal Indian is a by-product of the treaties that both countries signed with Native nations. These treaties were, for the most part, peace treaties. Wars were costly, and after a couple of hundred years of beating up on each other, Whites and Indians decided that peace was more profitable. All in all, it was a smart move. For both sides. And because of the treaties, Legal Indians are entitled to certain rights and privileges. They’re called treaty rights, and—with the exception of certain First Nations bands in British Columbia and some executive order reservations in the States—Legal Indians are the only Indians who are eligible to receive them.

A great many people in North America believe that Canada and the United States, in a moment of inexplicable generosity, gave treaty rights to Native people as a gift. Of course, anyone familiar with the history of Indians in North America knows that Native people paid for every treaty right, and in some cases, paid more than once. The idea that either country gave First Nations something for free is horseshit.

Sorry. I should have been polite and said "anyone familiar with Native history knows that this is in error" or "knows that this is untrue," but, frankly, I'm tired of correcting people. I could have said "bullshit," which is a more standard North American expletive, but, as Sherman Alexie (Spokane-Coeur d'Alene) reminds us in his poem "How to Write the Great American Indian Novel," "real" Indians come from a horse culture.

In Canada, Legal Indians are defined by the Indian Act, a series of pronouncements and regulations, rights and prohibitions, originally struck in 1876, which has wound its snaky way along to the present day. The act itself does more than just define Legal Indians. It has been the main mechanism for controlling the lives and destinies of Legal Indians in Canada, and throughout the life of the act, amendments have been made to the original document to fine-tune this control.

An 1881 amendment prohibited the sale of agricultural produce by Legal Indians in the prairie provinces, to keep them from competing with White farmers. An 1885 amendment prohibited religious ceremonies and dances. A 1905 amendment allowed the removal of Aboriginal people from reserves that were too close to White towns of more than 8,000 residents. A 1911 amendment allowed municipalities and companies to expropriate

portions of reserves, without the permission of the band, for roads, railways, and other public works. A 1914 amendment required Legal Indians to get official permission before appearing in Aboriginal costume in any dance, show, exhibition, stampede, or pageant. A 1927 amendment made it a crime to solicit funds for Indian claims without a special licence from the government. A 1930 amendment banned Legal Indians from playing pool if they did it too often and wasted their time to the detriment of themselves and their families. And, in 1985, an amendment known in Parliament as Bill C-31 was passed that allowed Native women who had lost their Legal Indian standing through marriage to regain that status.

Until at least 1968, Legal Indians could be "enfranchised," which simply meant that the government could take Status away from a Legal Indian, with or without consent, and replace it with Canadian citizenship. Technically, enfranchisement was proffered as a positive, entailing, among other benefits, the right to vote and drink. All you had to do was give up being a Legal Indian and become . . . well, that was the question, wasn't it. Legal Indian women could be "enfranchised" if they married non-Native or non-Status men. If Legal Indians voted in a federal election, they would be "enfranchised." Get a university degree and you were automatically "enfranchised." If you served in the military, you were "enfranchised." If you were a clergyman or a lawyer, you were "enfranchised."

If you look the word up in the dictionary, you'll find that "enfranchised" means "to be liberated." A Blackfoot friend once told me that "enfranchised" was French for "screwed." It's only funny if you're Indian. Even then, it's not that funny.

In the United States, Legal Indians are enrolled members of tribes that are federally recognized. That's the general rule. However, tribes control how their membership rolls are created and maintained, and eligibility for membership varies from nation to nation. Most base their membership on blood quantum. If you have enough Native blood in you, then you are eligible for enrollment, and, once enrolled, are a Legal Indian.

In Canada, loss of Status has been an individual matter, one Legal Indian at a time. A rather slow process. In the United States, where things reportedly move faster, the government, particularly in the 1950s, set about "enfranchising" entire tribes en masse. They started with the Menominee in Wisconsin and the Klamath in Oregon and, in the space of about ten years, they removed another 107 tribes from the federal registry. At that time, around 1.4 million acres of Legal Indian land were taken from tribes and sold to non-Natives. Over 13,000 Legal Indians lost their federal status and were reduced to being simply Live Indians.

Certainly the sentiment for the extinguishment of the Legal Indian has been around for a while. "I want to get rid of the Indian problem," said Duncan Campbell Scott, head of Canada's Department of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932. "Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department . . ."

In 1953, the Termination Act and the Relocation Act were concurrently passed by the United States Congress. Termination allowed Congress to terminate all federal relations with tribes unilaterally, while Relocation "encouraged" Native people to

leave their reservations and head for the cities. One might say that Termination provided for the death of the Legal Indian, while Relocation provided the mass grave.

In 1969, the Canadian government tried to pull a home-grown Termination Act—the 1969 White Paper—out of its Parliamentary canal. In that year, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau blithely intimated that there was no such thing as Indian entitlement to land or Native rights and suggested that it was in the best interests of First Nations people to give up their reserves and assimilate into Canadian society. The reaction was immediate and fierce. Almost every Indian organization came out against the plan. Whatever the problems were with the Indian Act and with the Department of Indian Affairs, Native people were sure that giving up their land and their treaty rights was not the answer.

Dead Indians, Live Indians, Legal Indians.

But all North America can see is the Dead Indian. All North America dreams about is the Dead Indian. There's a good reason, of course. The Dead Indian is what North America wants to be. Which probably explains the creation and proliferation of Indian hobbyist clubs, social organizations that have sprung up in North America and around the world as well, where non-Indians can spend their leisure time and weekends pretending to be Dead Indians.

There are Indian clubs in Florida, Texas, California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, New Mexico, and Arizona. There are Indian clubs in Russia, in Italy, in France, in Poland, in Hungary, and in most of the other eastern European and Scandinavian countries. In a 2003 article for *The Walrus* magazine, Adam Gilders estimates that each weekend over 60,000 Germans dress up like Indians and

head out for Indian camps to participate in powwows and sweats. Germany, it should be said, has a long history in the Indian business, a history exemplified by Karl May's adventure novels and the founding of Club Manitou in Dresden in 1910.

But everyone likes to blame the Germans for everything.

I haven't found any clubs in Canada yet, but would guess there must be a couple hidden away here and there. A friend of mine reminded me that, in this regard, Canada can claim Ernest Thompson Seton, who was responsible for the tradition of "summer camp" and the creation of the Boy Scouts. Seton was intrigued with Native people and used Aboriginal crafts and traditions as the centrepiece for his 1902 League of Woodcraft Indians, an organization that combined outdoor activities with Indian culture for the benefit of non-Native children. However, while Woodcraft Indians and the Scouts made use of what they saw as Indian content in their structures and performances, neither was an "Indian club."

Indian clubs are magnets for non-Natives who want to transform themselves, just for a day or two, into Dead Indians. Folks who attend go to dance and sing and participate in pipe ceremonies and sweats. They take on cool Indian names such as Black Eagle and Howling Wolf and Screaming Hawk, and if you ask them what in the hell they're doing, they will tell you with a straight face that they are trying to preserve the culture of North American Indians so it won't be lost.

The one thing that you can say about Indian hobbyists is that they take their fantasies seriously. Still, all of this dress-up, role-playing silliness has as much to do with Indians as an Eskimo Pie has to do with the Inuit.

The irony is that these clubs and the sentiments they espouse would be better served if Live Indians and Legal Indians somehow disappeared, got out of the way. After all, there's nothing worse than having the original available when you're trying to sell the counterfeit.

Live Indians. Legal Indians.

If you listen carefully, you can almost hear North America cry out, in homage to Henry II and his feud with Thomas à Becket, "Who will rid me of these meddling Indians?"

And, as luck would have it, Canada and the United States are working on a solution.