

WE HAVE
THE RIGHT
TO EXIST

A Translation of Aboriginal Indigenous Thought

The first book ever published from an

Ahnishinahbeo'tjibway Perspective

by

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PREFACE

This book is written from an *Ahnishinahbæo'jibway* (pronounced *änish-e-nä-bee-o-t'chi-pwe*)¹ perspective, which is different from the Indian or Euro-American point of view. "We, The People" is a part of the meaning of *Ahnishinahbæo'jibway*, who are among the Aboriginal Indigenous people who have been a part of the land on this Continent since the beginning of Aboriginal time. This is how we have been explaining who we are for more than a century, but nobody could understand or interpret what we were saying. Part of the problem is that the Europeans see themselves as the discoverers of the land here, and in seeing their history this way, simultaneously define the Aboriginal Indigenous people as being an inconsequential cipher. The leaders of the European colonization of this Continent recognized our land and resources as wealth beyond their wildest dreams, and saw the Aboriginal Indigenous people as a barrier to the Europeans taking this wealth. The *Ahnishinahbæo'jibway* and other Aboriginal Indigenous people have always lived harmoniously, and did not have the Europeans' cultural and linguistic traditions of war and peace. Because we did not speak the Europeans' language of war, the Europeans had to add on to their old tradition of "rights of conquest," and develop new strategies for taking Aboriginal Indigenous peoples' immensely valuable property. These are explained throughout this book.

This book is based on the oral tradition of the *Ahnishinahbæo'jibway*, and on what my people are saying. It is supported by ten years of intensive research into the White man's² own documents relating to the history and genealogy of Red Lake Reservation, and by my lifetime of striving to understand the social fabric, values, ideals, language, and economic system of the people who call themselves Americans.

Some things in this book may not be comfortable for some readers, although I expect that there will be others who will say,

"yes, I've been saying that for years." Social engineering is never comfortable when seen from the other side. The how and why of what has been, and continues to be done to my people and to all Aboriginal Indigenous people needs to be brought out into the open. The world is changing, and in order to make this a better world, the reality of the Europeans' history on this Continent must be addressed.

The *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* say, "the Circle comes around," with the understanding that everything is connected and has consequences. As long as the people who call themselves Americans remain ignorant or in denial about who they are and about the historical foundations of their own society, the things that they are trying to ignore or hide will continue to fester, erupting in social pathology, ecological devastation, and an inexcusable waste of what all human beings have to contribute to this world.

My people did not invade Europe and try to crush the Europeans' religion, destroy their ecosystem, and socially engineer their lives. We have never harmed the Europeans. But, this land is my land. I have not only the right, but also the obligation, to speak out from my family, from the Bear *Dodem*, about what is being done on our land.

I am not an Indian; the Indian identity is an ugly caricature, created by the European immigrants to this Continent to discredit and stereotype the Aboriginal Indigenous people of this land. If the reader is looking for an "Indian Book," put this back on the shelf, because this book debunks the racist mythology of the Chippewa Indian identity. The word Indian is a European word of Latin derivation. *Indian* portrays Western European projections, and has no connection to the Aboriginal Indigenous peoples of this Continent. The mythology of Indians is crucial to Euro-Americans: to steal Aboriginal Indigenous peoples' land and resources, to hide the genocide committed against my people, and to re-define the context of European occupation of this land in ways that suit their leaders. The European category of Indian is presently being used in this way. At Red Lake, the

Chippewa Indians are a completely different group of people than the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*.³

I am *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*; I was born into the Bear Clan and *Dodem*. *Dodem* is a word in my language, also inflected as *Dodemian*, the most accurate English-language translation of which is "our extended family." Our patrilineally inherited *Dodems* are an important part of the identity of the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*. Some people who identify themselves as Chippewa Indians admit, "we don't use *Dodems* any more," and others try to claim so-called Indian Clans on their maternal line, through their great-grandmothers. These Chippewa Indians know that they have White fathers or grandfathers.

My patrilineal ancestors have lived on the shores of Red Lake for millennia. According to the birchbark scrolls and stone inscriptions of my people, this land has been the land of my ancestors since the beginning of humanity about a million years ago—long before Adam and Eve were conceived of, before Eden, before the Pyramids, before Christianity. My daughter, Nee-gah-nee-benais-êke, has a spear point made by her ancestors here. By Euro-Americans' own scientific documentation, this spear point was made more than 150,000 years ago.

The seven birchbark longhouses on the south shore of Red Lake, mentioned by an early English explorer, were those of the Bear *Dodem* of Be-kwa-kwan. These people are my great-grandfather's family.

My great-grandfather was known by his *Midé* title, Bah-se-nos, which cannot be translated precisely into English. Bah-se-nos was born about 1819 or 1820 at Red Lake. He was a spiritual man and spokesman for the Bear *Dodem*. He spoke the consensus of our family, the people of the Bear *Dodem*. The other *Dodems* (families) had their own spokesperson. He did not tell anybody what to do, because personal Sovereignty, respect for others, and good manners are an inherent part of *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* values. The Western Europeans did not know how to deal with our egalitarian society, so they created Blood Quantum Indians

and appointed hierarchical Indian Chiefs, and put their Indians under Trusteeship in order to keep them under control.

My great-grandmother, Bah-se-nos' wife, was Nay-bah-ne-cumig-oke, born about 1820. It is against *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* religion, and it is considered incest, to marry anyone who is even remotely related, either by blood or through the *Dodem*s. *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* men traditionally brought their wives from someplace else, because of the kinship ties within the local community. Nay-bah-ne-cumig-oke was born into another *Dodem*, but because of her marriage to my great-grandfather, she became a Clan Mother of the Bear *Dodem*.

Bah-wah-we-nind, the son of Bah-se-nos and Nay-bah-ne-cumig-oke, was my grandfather. He was born about 1857, and was also a *Midé* religious and spiritual man of the Bear *Dodem*. Bah-wah-we-nind never touched alcohol, and refused to speak English. I spent most of my formative years with my grandfather, until he died in 1935.⁴ He was six feet six inches tall in his moccasins, and embodied the Traditional *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* values. He lived his religion in every moment of his life. I never saw him raise his hand in violence, and never heard him raise his voice in anger. He lived an active life until he was more than eighty years old, and on his death-bed he sang with his *Dodemian* in the spirit world, the whole day before he died. His Death Song is a part of *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* religion and philosophy, our understanding that life and death are part of the same harmonious reality.

My grandmother was Ke-niew-e-gwon-ay-beak, born about 1848, baptized Catherine. She came from Leech Lake, and like my grandfather, had lost earlier families to the Europeans' diseases. She died when she was about seventy-two years old, before I was born. My father was born in 1903, a change-of-life baby born when his mother was in her fifties, and was her only child with Bah-wah-we-nind. My father, along with his older half-sister, was randomly assigned the surname Blake, in order to civilize them. My English name is Francis Blake, Jr., and I am the second generation with an English surname.

INTRODUCTION

WE, THE AHNISHINAHBÆÓ'JIBWAY AND THE EURO-AMERICANS: CHIPPEWA INDIANS

My patrilineal great-grandfather, Bah-se-nos, died in 1901, when he was in his eighties. Although millions of our people had died from the White man's diseases during the preceding three centuries, when Bah-se-nos was a young man in the early 19th century, the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* *Dodemian* at Red Lake still had a comparatively intact community. At that time, at least ten of our thirty-two *Dodem*s still survived. We lived our traditional life, and our permacultural subsistence base was unbroken. The wood buffalo, southern caribou, moose, deer, elk, bears, panthers, wolves, waterfowl and passenger pigeons abounded in our old-growth forests, swamps and meadows, and during the spawning seasons the rivers were so thick with fish that the water looked like it was boiling. Hunting and fishing have always been an integral part of *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* culture, and the carefully tended abundance of fish, game, and carnivores was a part of our traditional economic system.

Before the coming of the White man, the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* saw our Aboriginal Indigenous land as beautiful, abundant, conveniently accessible from three major river systems and near the center of this Continent. From an Euro-American perspective, however, we were at the periphery: beyond the Mississippi River Basin, at the far reaches of the Hudson's Bay watershed on the north slope of the continental divide. From their point of view, our powerfully invigorating winters were brutal and bitterly cold, and the awakening and rebirth of our lush verdant summers were punctuated by hordes of ravenous black flies and mosquitos. Hunting and fishing are not a part of traditional European or Euro-American mercantile culture, and the bounty-

ful fish and game inherent in our permaculture were not coveted by the immigrant peoples as economically valuable. They were interested in other of our resources: fur and later timber, but these are not unique to Red Lake. From the White man's point of view, Red Lake was an unpleasant, swampy backwater of the hinterland—this is why *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* have survived.

When my great-grandfather was young, the only Europeans within three days travel of Red Lake were several families of French and French Métis associated with the fur trade. During Bah-se-nos' lifetime, the United States Government gradually moved into the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* Nation, using the French people who were here as intermediaries, and also as a justification for further Euro-American incursions. As a part of this process, the United States Government lumped both *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* and French Métis into the hypothetical category of "Chippewa Indians." By putting two entirely different groups of people into one abstractly homogeneous category, they hoped to make the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* disappear. They used the French Métis Indians—European subject people with whom the Anglo-Americans had warred and won, as their rationale to occupy the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*. *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* non-violence is one of the fundamental precepts of our *Midé* religion.

The United States Government followed classical Western European occupation tactics: ¹ exploiting us economically, banning the use of our language, forcing us to change our names to English-language names, and outlawing our religion.

Bah-se-nos never gave up the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway Midé* religion, which was forced underground in the 1880's, and remains underground. He spoke powerfully in defense of the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*, and against the liquor which was being introduced into our community as a means of destroying our people. Bah-se-nos was an Aboriginal Indigenous person, not one of the Europeans' appointed Indian Chiefs. He is mentioned in Indian and White histories as an old "pagan" living in a "bark hut,"² which was the historians' derogatory way of describing

his traditional longhouse. My great-grandfather was knowledgeable about *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* medicines and herbs, but was inaccurately labelled by the Europeans as a "grand medicine man."³ Many of the things said and written about Bah-se-nos are not true, and were used to discredit him and other *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*.

Bah-se-nos was at the treaty negotiations of 1863, at the place called the Old Crossing on the French Pembina oxcart trail, between Thief River Falls and Red Lake. At that time, many Frenchmen were working as teamsters, hauling freight between the mostly French settlements at Pembina, North Dakota, and Minneapolis-St. Paul. The Old Crossing was a place where these people regularly stopped en route, analogous to a truck stop. This junction of two rivers had also been used for many thousands of years by the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* as a gathering place for giving thanks, autumn celebrations and socializing with neighboring Aboriginal Indigenous people. The United States Government held the treaty negotiations in the fall to coincide with the time that *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* would already be there. Along with the other *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* men, Bah-se-nos could not and did not sign the so-called treaty between the French Métis, whom the U.S. put into the persona of Chippewa Indians, and the English-Americans purporting to sell *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* land.

The unilateral Western European treaty of 1863 was not used by the Euro-Americans to claim eminent domain over *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* land. That claim had been made in 1481 by Pope Sixtus the 4th, in the Papal Bull of *Æterni Regis*, which unilaterally granted dominion of Christian nation-states over all land not owned by Christian Kings and Princes; and was reasserted in reference to this Continent in 1496 by the King of England, two hundred and forty-one years before Red Lake was mapped by any Europeans;⁴ and was reaffirmed by the United States Supreme Court in 1823:⁵

[T]he rights of the original inhabitants were . . . to a consider-

able extent, impaired. Their rights to complete sovereignty, as independent nations, were necessarily diminished, . . . denied by the original fundamental principle, that discovery gave exclusive title to those [European Christians] who made it.

While the different nations of Europe respected the rights of the natives, as occupants, they asserted the ultimate dominion to be in themselves; and claimed and exercised, as a consequence of their ultimate dominion, a power to grant the soil, while yet in possession of the Indian right of occupancy. . . . So early as the year 1496, her [England's] monarch granted a commission to the Cabots, to discover countries then unknown to *Christian people*, and to take possession of them in the name of England. Two years afterwards, Cabot proceeded on this voyage, and discovered the continent of North America, along which he sailed as far south as Virginia. To this discovery the English trace their title. . . .

Thus has our whole country been granted by the crown while in the occupation of the Indians. These grants purport to convey the soil as well as the right of dominion to the grantees. . . .

From an *Ahnishinahbæwôjibway* perspective, neither the King of England nor any other Christian sovereign had right or reason to do this anywhere in the world. The Europeans have never had any business stealing others' land. Although both Jewish rabbinical law and the Christian Bible exhort the faithful, "Thou Shalt Not Steal," this "was not intended to apply outside the community of the faithful."⁶ Many Euro-Americans have told me, "that all happened a long time ago. I'm not responsible for what my ancestors did." This may be so, but these people are still living here in disharmony, and they continue to define themselves, and their relationship to this land and to Aboriginal Indigenous people, in terms of this obsolete European medieval bigotry.

The foundation of the Indian treaties was explained by legal scholar Felix S. Cohen in 1942:⁷

[O]ur Indian Law originated, and can still be most closely grasped, as a branch of International law, and . . . in the field of international law the basic concepts of modern doctrine were all

hammered out by the Spanish theological jurists of the 16th and 17th centuries. . . .

The Western Europeans' ethnocentric understanding of property was not explained to the *Ahnishinahbæwôjibway* at the Old Crossing. The United States used their unilateral Indian treaty to claim fee patent of our *Ahnishinahbæwôjibway* land, opening most of it to White settlement as so-called public domain, and claiming the balance as being under their jurisdiction as an Indian reservation, which was synonymous with P.O.W. camp. When Bah-se-nos was in his forties, and his son—my grandfather Bah-wah-we-nind—was young, the United States Army began forcing both French Métis and *Ahnishinahbæwôjibway* onto the Reservations at gunpoint, killing those who remained outside the boundaries unilaterally established by the U.S.A. At that time, the State of Minnesota paid a bounty on what they called Indian scalps.

Bah-se-nos was about seventy when the Minnesota Chippewa Commission held meetings in July, 1889 at Red Lake. He listened to the Commissioner's presentation of the U.S. Congress' Act of January 14, 1889, also known as the Nelson Act. This unilateral United States statute mandated dividing up *Ahnishinahbæwôjibway* land, selling most of it to White settlers, and breaking up the rest by issuing parcels of land to French Indians as allotments under U.S. trusteeship. Bah-se-nos told the Commissioners that the *Ahnishinahbæwôjibway* could not and would not sell our land,⁸ but the Chippewa Creole in which the meetings were being interpreted was a hierarchical trade pidgin in which it was impossible to communicate *Ahnishinahbæwôjibway* concepts. Grandmother Earth, and Grandfather *Mide* are our identity: where we come from, who we are, where we go back to, our philosophy, everything that relates to us, connected together in harmony. We cannot sell our philosophy or our religion, our identity or our relations who share the Earth with us. We cannot sell land; the idea was sacrilegious then and it still is now.

The Commissioners for the Minnesota Chippewa Commission wrote Bah-se-nos' name on the Signature Rolls, forged his "X"

mark, and recorded their Métis interpreters' mistranslation of his name as "Brushing Off Flies."

The Métis people referred to themselves until recently, as French Canadians, or sometimes as Chippewa Indians. Most of these people came into *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* country during the time of the French fur trade, some as fur company employees and some as refugees from European violence.

Some Métis were employed by the United States Government as scouts and interpreters, although they only understood French, broken English, and the pidgin Creole⁹ language called Chippewa. The Métis interpreters called Bah-se-nos a "Blanket-Ass Indian," which they considered a derogatory term, but now these Métis' grandchildren are trying to steal my grandfather as their own.¹⁰ In part because of the ethnocentric way in which the Euro-Americans claimed eminent domain and land title on this Continent, the United States Government wanted the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* to assimilate into the European culture—as Indians, and they also wanted the Métis to assimilate into the Indian culture which the Europeans had created. Many of the leading French Métis families have been paid for a century by the U.S. Government to be Indians, and have accepted this personally damaging duplicity rather than being who they really are.

The United States Government built a log house for my great-grandfather, Bah-se-nos, saying that this was to civilize him. They cut down the forests which were a part of his religion, in order to build the log house. They told him, "be civilized like us . . . assimilate," but they invited neither the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* nor the White man's blood relatives, the Chippewa Indians, into their social class. The missionaries of civilization have not explained what they really mean by assimilation, and the Euro-Americans have never clearly defined what they mean by their designation, Indian.¹¹ *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* saw what the Whites were advocating as pure nonsense, foolishness motivated by greed.

Bah-se-nos lived in his birchbark longhouse his whole life.

When he died the U.S. Government burned his longhouse. Bah-se-nos died in the 1901 smallpox epidemic at Red Lake (the Europeans developed a vaccine for smallpox in 1792, and were immunizing many of their own people). The Catholic Priest, Father Thomas, claimed to have "baptized the old Pagan"¹² as he lay dying in his longhouse, which is false. Bah-se-nos was buried in the Bear Dodem family graveyard by my grandfather's house in Be-kwa-kwan. If my great-grandfather had been an Indian, and had not the *Midé* as his source of identity and strength, the Christians would have been able to baptize him, and they would have buried him in the Catholic cemetery. The Catholics told me, "you have to be baptized a Catholic to be buried in this hallowed ground," although they had stolen *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* sacred land to make their cemetery. We see the irony of such contradictions, from an *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* perspective. The Catholics misrepresented the date and cause of his death,¹³ in part because Bah-se-nos is alleged to have signed a 1902 land cession document after he was already dead.

My grandfather, Bah-wah-we-nind, lived during the most invasive phase of Euro-American occupation of *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* land, from the mid-nineteenth century into the 1930's. Bah-wah-we-nind was also alleged to have put an "X" on the 1889 Minnesota Chippewa Commission documents, in the same individual's Spencerian handwriting as that asserted to be his father's, with his name spelled as *Paw-waw-we-nind*, an incorrect age, and the mistranslation of "The One that is Mentioned." I spent my formative years with my grandfather, and remember these years in *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* rather than English. Despite what he had experienced in living through more than a half a century of genocide committed against our people and our *Dodemian*, Bah-wah-we-nind was a serene, kind, gentle and strong man. I write of his house as an island of love and harmony, for lack of English words which translate the deeper meanings in *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*. Much of this book is the legacy of my grandfather, and is written in his honor. Bah-wah-we-nind is my enduring role model. The people I hope to emu-

late are my grandfather, and my great-grandfather Bah-senos, and Om-be-geshig, my great-uncle. It takes a good man to fill their moccasins.

Ahnishinahbæó'jibway names are religious, given through the *Midé*. Chippewa Indian people have Christian names, European surnames, and genealogies traceable on their patrilines back to Eurasia and North Africa. Because of their White fathers, the Métis and other Chippewas do not have an *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* name, Dodem, and they do not have an *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* name, although they were often listed in the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs (B.I.A.) records under Indian pseudonyms. The White man forced European names on the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*. Their Indians, who already had White names, took Indian aliases.¹⁴ The Indian names used by the Chippewa Indian people come from several sources: some of them were stolen, like our language and pieces of our religion, assuming that the Aboriginal Indigenous peoples' objections would never be heard. Some of the Chippewa Indians at Red Lake have told me, "you're right, but—who's going to believe you?"

My father had an *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* name, but the United States Government made him use the name Francis Blake. The *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* men of my father's generation were the ones against whom the United States Government's most concentrated efforts at "Annihilation, Assimilation, and Termination" of Aboriginal Indigenous people were directed. "Pulverize the Tribal Masses"¹⁵ was the U.S. policy advocated by President Theodore Roosevelt. Aboriginal Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their parents and placed in boarding schools. The purpose of the boarding schools was explicitly stated in U.S. Government documents: to destroy Aboriginal Indigenous culture. They were run on a military basis, and discipline was brutal and sometimes lethal.¹⁶

Both the United States Government and the Church-run boarding schools forced the Christian religion and the English language onto the Aboriginal Indigenous children. As a child in

the boarding school, I was appalled at the violence in Christianity as it was told to us: crowning with thorns, whipping and scourging, nailing Jesus to a cross and then putting a spear into his heart, all of the gory details. These are terrible things to tell a little child. The *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* religion is non-violent. The beating, killing and crucifixion of Jesus Christ traumatized me and gave me nightmares.

The threads of violence are interwoven throughout Western European civilization, inseparable from both their Judeo-Christianity and their science. The clear-cutting of our forests is plundering our Cathedral, violently desecrating *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* hallowed ground. Darwin and Spencer's theory, "survival of the fittest," speaks of each species that goes extinct in a dog-eat-dog world. The Lislakhs¹⁷ do not see the totality in the Circle of Life. When you heedlessly destroy species around you, which are all inter-connected, when does it become your turn for extinction? You need those other species to survive.

Of the nearly eight thousand people presently defined by the United States Government as members of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians, only about two hundred are *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*. The rest are White and Métis people trapped by the Indian identity. Indians are a mythology created by the White man, who controls the definitions and stereotypes attributed to Indians. Many of the people externally defined as Indians live out the stereotypes and vicious labels of "drunken Indian," "lazy Indian," "dirty Indian," "stupid Indian," "violent savage." The United States Government has not taken responsibility for the damage they have caused to people by defining them as Indians.

The community in Red Lake was in chaos in the early 1900's. The United States Government deliberately brought in, and tacitly condoned, Métis bootleggers. The word was, "Have a drink, Nit-jii, or you're no friend of mine." Drugs are still used in the same way both at Red Lake and in the urban "red ghettos." Drugs and alcohol keep people in a condition of bare survival

and destabilize the community. As long as there is a chaotic community, people are so distracted by the struggles of day-to-day life they don't have a chance to organize, or to address root problems. The Euro-American chemical dependency sub-culture implicitly promotes substance abuse among the oppressed and dispossessed, and encourages those who take this deadly bait to blame themselves both for their addictions, and for the socially engineered conditions which engendered them.

In the 1920's and 1930's, much of life on the Reservation was an endless binge of bootlegging, home-brew and despair. Young children grew up believing that being an adult meant getting drunk. How many people got killed in the continual car wrecks; how many people died of other kinds of suicide? There were very few sober role models for the children, and there still aren't many good Indian role models. My father was brainwashed, tortured in school, and was caught up in the Indian stereotype. Although he was *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*, he was traumatized into being an Indian. The same kind of brainwashing was still done in the schools when I was compelled to go into boarding school in 1935. I struggled for years with the Indian identity. When I walked away from the artificial persona of Indian and reclaimed my real identity as *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*, it was a rebirth and homecoming. I had always known that there was something wrong with the Indian identity, but I couldn't put my finger on it. When I did the research and understood what had been done, I formally notified the Honorable Justice Thurgood Marshall of the U.S. Supreme Court that I am not an Indian, and sent Justice Marshall my Federal Indian identification papers. An enormous weight lifted.

My mother was a Métis woman from White Earth, Delia Lufkins. Her father, John Lufkins, was one of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' White Indian Chiefs, whose photograph was prominently displayed in the Detroit Lakes, Minnesota, Historical Society in 1981. Although she was a Métis, my mother married into the Bear *Dodem* when she married my father. She left her Indian identity, and became *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*, in accordance with

our traditions. Even though our traditional infrastructure was being torn apart, our Aboriginal Indigenous values remained. They are still here today. I had an older half brother, whom I met once (when my mother died), and a younger half brother, also my mother's son. My mother died of tuberculosis when I was very young, in 1931.

English is not my native language, and the structure, vocabulary, and thoughts of my *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* language are very different from English. The real world described in egalitarian Aboriginal Indigenous terms is very different from the abstract and idealized understanding inherent in hierarchical Lislakh languages such as English. I have never seen a book, other than this one, which accurately describes the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway*, in part because of the difficulties in translating between these two world-views. The Indian books written by Chippewa Indians, of which there are more than a few, are written from the Lislakh perspective of their White or Métis authors.¹⁸ Similarly, the anthropological works about the Chippewa are written by Europeans from their own point of view, and have nothing to do with Aboriginal Indigenous people.

In the Boarding School, all of us *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* children were violently punished for speaking our native language, even mentioning our relatives' names. We were forced to speak a very limited version of English. I was told I had to quit school after the eighth grade. The nun told me, "eighth grade was good enough for my father. It should be good enough for you." I could barely understand English, and couldn't read a page without turning to the dictionary several times. In the years since I left school, I have taught myself to speak and understand the language which our elders called "forked tongue speaking," and is now known as "crooked English." I still use the dictionary, but now I can use those ten-dollar words right back on the professors. They can't hide behind fancy language any longer—I and other *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* have learned enough English so

we can follow their thoughts anywhere, even into their linguistic abstract.

If I had a European father, I would not be writing this book. I would be a part of the European subject peoples. I would not have the understanding, which my grandfather gave me, of what it is to be *Ahnishinahbæóʔjibway* and of what life means from an *Ahnishinahbæóʔjibway* perspective.

I am Sovereign. I have a Clan and a *Dodem*. I am *Ahnishinahbæóʔjibway*. We, the People, still survive, and we have a right to exist as a Sovereign Nation on our own land. Our roots grow deep on this land. That is why this book is written.

This book has been painful to research and to write. The genocide of which I am writing is the genocide of my own people: my aunts and my uncles and my first cousins. Whole families of my relatives were killed, while the Métis and other Chippewa Indians, who are not from Red Lake and are not indigenous to this Continent, have multiplied like rabbits to replace us. It's profound, and it really hurts, and writing this book has, over and over again, drained away all of my energy. What is written in this book has to be brought out into the open, it has to be dealt with, and I am one of the few people surviving who can write it.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The inclusion of autobiographical material in this book was not my idea. The publisher and Dr. Joy wanted to know about my background, and after I sent it to them, the next draft of the book came back with my personal history included as most of this chapter. Focusing attention on one's self is something which is not done in *Ahnishinahbæóʔjibway* culture. Bragging and boasting are not a part of Aboriginal Indigenous values. This chapter is a part of this book as a compromise. Dr. Joy argued that many non-Aboriginal Indigenous readers did not know anything about the context of an *Ahnishinahbæóʔjibway*'s life, and that I needed to explain who I am.

I was born at Red Lake, sometime around June 6, 1928. At that time, Red Lake was still a P.O.W. camp for both the *Ahnishinahbæóʔjibway* and the French Métis. The Métis people had to get passes from the U.S. Indian Agent to leave the Reservation, and most of the *Ahnishinahbæóʔjibway* weren't supposed to leave at all. I was born in my grandfather's log house, on the shores of Red Lake at Ba-kwa-kwan, where my people of the Bear *Dodem* had lived in birchbark longhouses for many thousands of years.

The midwife who delivered me was Mrs. John Fairbanks.¹ I was born into the *Midé*, and my grandfather made sure that what was necessary within the *Midé*, was done at that time. The Christians put incredible pressure on *Ahnishinahbæóʔjibway* to convert, and when my father agreed to my baptism as a Catholic it was a choice of survival or death, but this Catholic ceremony did not cancel out the strength and power of the *Midé* and my identity into which I was born, Bear *Dodem*. This is immutably who I am. My mother died of tuberculosis on June 14, 1931, when I was about three years old. My father was also suffering from consumption. After my mother died, he was sent into the T.B. sanitarium run by the B.I.A. at Ah-gwah-ching, about seventy-five miles south of Red Lake.² My younger brother and I were

taken to the Catholic orphanage at St. Cloud in August, and spent about nine months there. The Catholics were trying to lay claim to us because they had baptized us. I remember the orphanage, and I remember very clearly when my grandfather and my dad came in the spring to take us back. That was one of the happiest moments in my life, seeing my tall grandfather, in his black reservation hat and the moccasins he always wore, in the waiting room of the orphanage. The moment I saw him, I shouted with joy, "Grandfather, Grandfather!" I called him in both *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* and English, and jumped right into his lap. I told my grandfather, "Let's go home."

We went to the railroad station in St. Cloud, and rode home on the train. We had to transfer in Bemidji, and at that time the train ran all the way into Redby. My French uncle, the widower of my dad's half-sister, came and got us at the station in Redby, and I rode in the rumble seat of his Model A Coupe to Red Lake. For most of the next four years I lived with my grandfather, who remains the most powerful role model of my life.

My grandfather, Bah-wah-we-nind, lived in *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* space and time. Our surviving *Dodemanian*, and the other *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* elders, were frequent visitors, often sitting long into the soft darkness of the night, smoking kinnikinnic, and talking and telling stories. A few times, some of the elders held me too tightly on their laps, and cried—for what had happened and all that they had lost, but also because a few *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* children were still alive, and there was hope for the generations yet to come.

We would go after water with a big wooden barrel on my grandfather's wagon, through the cedar swamps that bordered Red Lake, to the spring near the lakeshore. In the winter, he would cut his firewood with a crosscut saw, a buck-saw and an axe, and bring it home on his sleigh. We always had a good garden. My grandfather grew traditional *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* crops including squash, corn, potatoes, onions, and several kinds of beans. He used his ancient *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* technology of storing food underground for the winter, so that our

vegetables didn't freeze. The environment had not been demolished by logging, so we had plenty of fish, venison, partridges, rabbits, and pheasants to eat. My grandfather had maple sugar, and big bags of *mahnomen* ("wild rice"). We had everything we needed. The Euro-American monetary economy had barely penetrated the *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* community, and so we retained our Aboriginal Indigenous self-sufficiency. The only things money was good for were European goods which had been introduced here purporting to civilize us. We had not reached the point of dependency where these introductions were necessities. Our traditional economy had not yet been destroyed by Euro-American economic development and Indian tribal governments run by the White man in Washington, D.C. The Great Depression had very little impact on us.

The *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* of my father's generation went through a brutal compulsory education, and my father was a broken man who grappled with the European diseases of tuberculosis and alcoholism—and lost. He didn't understand hierarchical thinking, and he didn't speak enough English to have clear insight into the social engineering that was being done at Red Lake. I would have probably gone the same route, and been in the same predicament as my dad, if World War II hadn't provided me with the opportunity to leave the Reservation and get a perspective on what was happening to my people from the outside. At this point in my life I have the advantage of being able to stand in the context of either culture, and see from both the European and the *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* points of view.

My grandfather died in the spring of the year I turned seven, and my dad re-entered the tuberculosis sanitorium at Ah-gwah-ching. I saw him once more before he died in June of 1941. After my grandfather died, some Métis relatives moved into my grandfather's house, and took care of my brother and myself until September, when we were put into the Catholic boarding school at St. Mary's Mission, Red Lake. We were not put into the boarding school as orphans because there was nobody to take care of us; all of the *Ahnishinahbæō'jibway* children were taken

away from their families and put into the boarding schools³ under the U.S. Government's compulsory education mandate. The U.S. Government said that the boarding schools were meant to civilize us, but they intended to destroy us as a people—genocide. A large number of children died in these schools.

The policy-makers at the B.I.A. wanted me to leave my *Dodem*, to discard my ancient and beautiful Aboriginal Indigenous identity, and become their Chippewa Indian. The nine years I spent at St. Mary's Mission School as a political prisoner are covered in a later chapter. The United States Government said that they wanted to turn me into a White man, but they didn't do a very good job. When I got out of the eighth grade, I, like my *Ahnishinahbæwôjibway* classmates, could barely recognize the letters of the alphabet, and had very little language. We had been subjected to violent physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, and inevitably we internalized some of it. Many of my people are still struggling to identify and eliminate this externally imposed violence, and learning to deal constructively with our anger.

I was fifteen years old when I ran away from the Mission School, in June of 1944. This was during World War II, and labor was scarce. Jobs were easy to get, and I found work right away. People would come up to anyone on the street and ask them if they wanted to go to work. Recently, I was looking through the want ads in a newspaper from 1944, and it reminded me of that long-gone era when the demand was for labor rather than jobs.

When I was growing up, hardly anyone on the Reservation had any money. When the United States entered a wartime economy, people who had been out of work for years finally got a job. In the early years of World War II, White and Métis men would stand around town in the evenings with their hands in their pockets, and sift their silver quarters and half-dollars through their fingers so they jingled. They caressed their money as a symbol of self-esteem and security after long years of going without, and the noise they made with their pocket-change became a ritual of the continual status challenges of White male

culture. Social conditions have changed again, and people have become very discreet about the money they're carrying. I don't hear the sound of thirty pieces of silver any more.

I have always been curious about everything, and I have always wanted to learn all I could about the White man: to understand his values, his culture, and the reasons behind the way he acted. A Métis Indian friend and I had saved enough money for fare, and we got on the bus for Grand Forks, North Dakota. I remember the cafes and bars with signs, "no minorities or dogs allowed," but we didn't speak enough English to know what a minority was, so we went in and ate. In Grand Forks, we went down into the hobo jungles, visited with the hobos and ate Muligan stew with them. We hopped the freight cars, going from Grafton and East Grand Forks into the harvest fields, just to experience riding the boxcars because we had heard everybody else talking about it. We were young, eager to work, and had strong backs, and wherever we went we found jobs right away. We probably had access to less than four hundred words of any language.

One of the things which made a lasting impression on me, was the social classes among the tramps, hobos, and bums, although at that time I didn't understand how a hierarchical society worked. The *Ahnishinahbæwôjibway* are egalitarian people, without social hierarchy. The hobo was a romanticized guy who did odd jobs, an anachronism from the Depression. The hobos rode the boxcars and cooked in the hobo jungles. Beneath him, in the social order of those at the bottom of the White man's hierarchy, was the bum, and then at the very bottom was the tramp. The bums and the tramps ate in the jungles, too, but I remember seeing the bums treating the tramps with scorn.

I worked all through the Red River Valley, plowing and planting, harvesting and working in the potato houses and on a turkey farm. I usually stayed in little bunkhouses that had been built or remodeled for the migrant labor force, of which I was a part. Everybody worked from sunrise to sunset, six days a week, and during the planting and harvest seasons, long into the night. The

farm hands worked right alongside the farmer and his family. This was in the days when bundles of grain were still shocked and stacked by hand, and threshed on steam threshing machines which dated back to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Some of the farmers had made the transition to combines, but most of them still used draft horses. We fed the horses before we ate. In those years we worked hard, and farm families sat down together with the hired help to eat from a heavily loaded table. Those war years marked the close of one of the many facets of the Industrial Revolution, and with the end of World War II both the old threshing machines and the horses went out into the back forty, replaced by combines and a whole new infrastructure in which farm hands and most migrant laborers became obsolete.

In November of 1946, I took the train back to Bemidji, and joined the Army. I had tried to enlist earlier, but they told me I was too young. At that time, I didn't know that I was Sovereign and couldn't be drafted. I didn't even realize that I was not a U.S. citizen. Indians were made U.S. citizens in 1924, but in 1946 I hadn't learned enough English to figure out that I'm not an Indian. I enlisted, rather than waiting to be conscripted, because I figured that if I had to go, I might as well get it over with on my own terms. One of my Métis cousins had refused the draft, on the grounds that the treaty said, "no more war forever," that Indians could not pick up a gun or have matches. The F.B.I. came after him, and he went into the U.S. Army. The treaty he was misquoting was about land. His misunderstanding of what the treaty said was based on the misrepresentations of the treaty Commissioners, which were preserved in oral history.

When the Army finally took me in 1946, I was still so young that I needed the consent of a guardian. The recruiting office in Bemidji telephoned the Indian Agent at Red Lake, Mr. Bitney, who signed for me. The Army recruiters were laughing when they returned from the back office where they made the phone call, and said "yes, he gave permission as your guardian." I didn't know the B.I.A. had no jurisdiction over me, and enlisted

in the U.S. Army for the minimum of eighteen months.

I took my Basic Training at Fort Knox. Then, the U.S. Army sent me to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, the staging area for the European Theater of Operations. I was shipped out to Bamberg, Germany, where I had more schooling in the Military Police Academy. The Military Police assigned me two tutors in the German language: one on-base and one off-base. My off-base tutor was supposed to take me to museums and other places of German culture. He conversed with me in German, and sometimes explained in English. These tutors were assigned by the C.I.D. Intelligence training personnel at the Military Police Academy at Bamberg. When I finished my training, they assigned me to the 28th Constabulary at Hof, Germany. When I got to the 28th Constabulary, which was part of the former 6th Cavalry, one of the lieutenants called me an Indian, and laughingly asked, "how does it feel to be in Custer's old Cavalry unit?" At that time, I didn't know much about Custer.

In the Spring of 1947, Hof was on the border between the U.S. zone and the Russian zone of occupied Germany, within a few miles of Russian-occupied Czechoslovakia. The Autobahn to Berlin passed just outside of Hof, where the 28th Constabulary were border guards at "Checkpoint Charlie." In 1947, the roads at Red Lake were gravel, and more people travelled by horse and buggy than by car. Even the main highways in the upper Midwest were narrow two-lane roads. The Autobahn amazed me. I was impressed by how technologically far ahead of the Euro-Americans the Germans had come with their war culture. I remember standing on the overpasses and seeing Mercedes whiz by at 90 or 100 miles an hour on the Autobahn. I had never seen anything like the incredible war machine that Hitler built. We inspected the huge artillery built onto railroad flatcars, two of which were parked near Hitler's hide-out close to Garmisch, south of Munich on the Austrian border. The bores of these Big Berthas were so big that a jeep could drive through them.

After about a year of being stationed in Hof, the Army reassigned me to another outfit at Wieden, Germany, the 94th Con-

stabulary. We spent most of our time patrolling through the German countryside. We patrolled in Regensburg, Berchtesgarden and Nuremberg. Seeing the Germans as a defeated and occupied Nation crystallized my understanding of what was happening to my own people at home. It brought me to a painfully clear understanding of what the United States was doing to the Aboriginal Indigenous people here. The U.S. Army tried to program its recruits to hate both the Germans and the Japanese—their indoctrination was even more intense than the wartime propaganda directed toward the general U.S. population. Although I was wearing the uniform of the conquering and occupying army, I could feel the pain of the German people, and could not act with hatred toward them. I watched the other G.I.'s as they made the Germans get off the sidewalk and walk in the gutter, and the countless other humiliations the Army brass tacitly encouraged. As I learned more German and English, I became acutely aware of how patterns that I had known about fit together. I saw the parallels in the stooped gait and the inner defeat of the Germans and the people at home. Their screaming silence was deafening, as they walked with downcast eyes. I understood with painful clarity that it was the same kind of occupation in Germany and on the Indian Reservations. I understood the reasons why people in the White communities bordering reservations acted as though they hated us. I came to the realization that I had to do something about it, but first I had to come to grips with who I am, and reclaim my *Ahishinahbæó'jítwáy* identity that the United States had tried to take away in the boarding school.

During the winter of 1947-48, one of my assignments was to guard a coal-yard as the partner of a German police officer. As we stood at the coal-yard in the night, he reminded me, "*die Kinder...*" referring to the children who we could see stealing coal. It was cold that winter and there was no fuel for the German families to heat their homes. Who was I to begrudge the German children their own coal to keep warm? I shouted "*raus*" to the children to fulfill my duty. Then, the German police officer

and I went into the guardhouse, and let the children take the bits of coal that they needed. I had been in German families' homes where the only heat was the cattle kept underneath the house. One moment I was looking at the high technology of the Autobahn, and the next I was looking at technology that hadn't changed since medieval times. The Germans kept honey-wagons under their houses—instead of going into a cesspool the sewage went into the honey-wagon. When the wind was blowing just right, across the army barracks so that the U.S. occupation forces were downwind, the Germans dumped their honey-wagons, spreading the contents onto their fields as fertilizer. The stench seemed a pungent German protest of the U.S. occupation.

I shipped back to the United States, and mustered out of Camp Kilmer on September 15, 1948. I came home to the Reservation and drew my 52-20, which was \$20 a week compensation for returning veterans after World War II. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do.

When the money ran out, in the spring of 1949, I left the Reservation and went to Montana. The U.S. Department of Agriculture gave me a one-way train ticket to Silver Springs, Montana, to work at cutting pulp-wood. I worked there about a month, and then said "this is no life for me, climbing up and down mountains trying to cut down the forests," and so I packed my bags and hitchhiked into Great Falls, Montana. The next morning, I went to the employment office and got a job right away. My employer drove in from twelve miles out of town, and picked me up to go to work at his concrete block factory, where I worked almost three years.

Then, I went to Seattle and worked on a trout farm, and did some pulp cutting. I was studying the White man, and looking for somewhere I could comfortably assimilate into his world. I was offered a job on a fishing boat, salmon-fishing in Alaska, but I'd had enough of ocean-going boats in the military. When I came back from Europe on the troop-ship we went through a typhoon, after that experience I didn't want any more of being tossed around by huge waves. As we came into New York har-

bor, past the Statue of Liberty, a little short guy from the Texas Panhandle said to her, "you old bitch, if you ever want to see me again, you'll have to turn around." He wasn't about to ever get on a ship again, either.

I worked in Seattle in the winter and spring of 1950-51, then went back to Montana and worked as a gandy dancer on the railroad. I quit because almost all we did was load and unload tools onto the little hand-cars used by the crews, taking the car onto and off of the tracks for passing trains. I don't know how many times a day we loaded and unloaded all of the jacks and sledge-hammers and crow-bars and spike-pullers and tongs—it seems like we spent more time loading and unloading that little car than we did working.

I was twenty-three years old in the fall of 1951, when I came back to Minnesota and got married. I went to work for Land-O-Lakes in their chemical fertilizer factory. It was a dusty place. I worked there almost a year; then for the next several years I worked as a grocery warehouseman, loading and unloading trucks. In the fall of 1954 we moved back to Red Lake, and in February 1955, the Bureau of Indian Affairs gave us a one-way ticket to Oakland, California, dumping us off the Reservation on their relocation program. I worked testing wiring for General Electric, and in August we came back to Minnesota. There was no community life, no socializing, no way to find other Aboriginal Indigenous people, or even Indians. Everything was foreign and unfamiliar. Also, my wife missed her family.

In 1956, I spent about four months on the assembly line in St. Paul, putting together 1957 Fords. The Ford plant was a closed shop of the U.A.W. Union. I found out shortly that U.A.W. stood for "U Ain't White." When my probationary period was up, I was told to attend a Union meeting, and the Union fired me. I didn't see anybody except White men working at that Ford Plant then—not even as janitors. After I lost my job at the Ford Motor Company for being the wrong color, I drove tractor-trailer over the road: hauling furniture and lumber, until I hurt my back in the summer of 1959 unloading a trailer. I was laid up for

eighteen months and did odd jobs: carpentry, electrical work, plumbing.

In 1960, the Civil Rights Movement had started to gain momentum. Just before Christmas of that year, J.D. Holtzman came over to my house, and asked if I wanted to work for him. Holtzman was a Harvard Graduate, a retired Colonel who had been in the Army S.I.S., which during World War II was part of the Military Intelligence operations. Holtzman had a nursery, and he also had a store which sold Christmas ornaments from Germany year-round. Going into Holtzman's was like stepping into another world, where it was Christmas in old Europe all of the time. It was an astonishing, beautiful store, stocked with finely made arts and crafts from Germany, especially Bavaria. Holtzman also had a liquor store in downtown Minneapolis, where I stocked shelves, clerked, and delivered liquor to much of South Minneapolis. I worked for Holtzman full-time for a couple of years, as a general all-around handyman, and also chauffeured him around.

In 1963, I went back to driving truck, this time as a Teamsters Union 544 driver for Custom Cartage in Minneapolis. At the same time, I was attending meetings where we talked about social change, trying to find a way to apply the strategies of the Civil Rights movement to the problems of the "red ghetto." I continued working week-ends for Holtzman, helping him out when he needed me. Holtzman was a good man, a decent human being, and a mentor to me. I made a point of listening and remembering what he said.

I drove truck until 1970, and was teaching myself to read during the time that I was parked at the docks waiting for a load, or waiting for my turn to unload the truck. Sometimes I would spend half a day waiting at the dock, and so I kept an assortment of magazines and books and a dictionary with me in the truck. Whenever I got to a word I didn't know, I would look it up in the dictionary, and then write it down. I have always spent time observing people: their dialect, their accent, how they used their words and their body-language, what they said and what they

meant. The English language and the Euro-American culture are still foreign to me—although I understand the immigrant peoples fairly well by now, I'm still astounded by some of the things they think and do.

I was a part of the group which started the American Indian Movement in 1965. A.I.M. began as an alcohol self-help group. Due to our excessive drinking—living out the vicious White man's stereotype of "drunken Indian," about a dozen or so Indian and Aboriginal Indigenous people in South Minneapolis started our own Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. This grassroots alcohol group went beyond the standard A.A. Twelve Steps, and tried to deal with inequities in the Euro-American cultural fabric through social change, rather than by drowning our troubles in a bottle, or following the A.A. doctrine of simply living with the pain. The State saw where we were headed, and took this catalyst away from the community. They didn't want a bunch of recovering alcoholics like Pat St. Clair, who understands the racist heritage of Euro-American culture from the bottom up, making changes in the foundations of their hierarchical class system.

The State has centralized alcoholism programs, hiring chemical dependency experts who understand alcoholism in the theoretical abstract, rather than through experience. Pat St. Clair pulled himself out of the gutter on skid row, and knows every trick and scam of an alcohol addict. He has twenty-seven years of sobriety, and a deep personal commitment. In the 1970's, he used his own money to buy a half-way house—he gave people a place to get off the streets and a chance to sober up. There were a lot of professional Indian activists full of rhetorical concern, but when it came down to actually helping do something, none of them were there. Pat is a sober role model who really cares about the people he's working with, teaching them how to help themselves. He's worked for years without pay, cutting firewood to buy groceries and gas, because he's not a White-certified chemical dependency expert. If the State was really committed to solving alcohol problems, they would come to people like Pat.

The assumption is made in the field of chemical dependency that alcohol causes acute alcoholism. A.A. tells people, "you are an alcoholic, just one drink away from being a drunk," and puts the responsibility and blame on the individual. The mainstream A.A. gives many White people the tools they need to solve the personal causes of their alcoholism, and for these people the residue of social problems can then be resolved. But, for many non-whites, alcohol is a non-prescription medicine that people use to treat the symptoms of societal problems. Alcohol is addictive poison, but it is not what causes addictive behavior. The people who started A.I.M. understood that alcoholism needs to be addressed on both an individual and a structural level.

The mainstream A.A. program was designed by White middle-class Protestants, and meets the needs of those people. For a person who is not a part of that group, their A.A. meetings are almost like going into an empty room, or being treated as though you don't exist. If another White person asked those people if they were racist, they would probably say, "of course not." But, most of them don't know how to interact with non-White people, and have a very difficult time getting beyond the black-and-white categories of their language, the pervasive cultural images they have of people of other groups. Alcoholics Anonymous has helped a lot of people find sobriety, but more than a few A.A. groups have become social clubs and cliques, just like many churches, and are an uncomfortable place for outsiders. Because of their historical legacy, and the hierarchical structure and cultural dynamics of the society which engenders and defines them, A.A., the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Christian Churches are all racist institutions.

Dealing with personalities and individual racism will not solve the problems of structural racism, and name-calling and blaming other groups for being racist further entrenches the system. Many apparently racist individuals are operating within the context of the institution that they represent, and have no inkling of the racism that they convey. In order to address racism effectively, we must deal with the institutions that support the Euro-

American hierarchy, the underlying thought patterns that mold the institutions, and with the legacy of racism in the English language. The legislature, the police departments, the I.R.S., and the schools are all racist institutions because they are designed to favor the people in the upper levels of the social hierarchy—the Whites, whose ancestors brought their social system from Europe.

Western European thinking is hierarchical thinking, and because of this, individual racism is not the core problem. Until the Lislakh world view becomes integrated and desegregated on this Continent, the racism built into the Euro-Americans' language and culture will continue to be a problem. This racism is embedded in their imported Roman law. When all peoples of both genders become full and equal partners in the economic, policy and law-making structure, then this will be a better world. There were some particular incidents of outright racial discrimination at the Minneapolis Alcoholics Anonymous, and it became clear that the established White A.A. could not address our needs, and so we formed our own group. Our struggling for sobriety, and trying to solve the problems which confronted us in both the Indian and Euro-American culture was what gave birth to the American Indian Movement (A.I.M.).

The Métis and White Indians could not get away from their Euro-American values, and so the American Indian Movement eventually also became a racist institution, as have other Indian organizations. The Minneapolis Indian grassroots organizations of the 1960's and 1970's: the Indian Center, the Indian Health Board, the Indian Neighborhood Club on Alcohol and Drugs, the American Indian Movement, the Indian-run housing programs, were reformulated so they could be funded through centralized institutions in the White hierarchical context, and all of them eventually reverted into racist institutions which discriminated against Aboriginal Indigenous people and other non-Indians. One irony is that our tax dollars are being used to transform our grassroots organizations into centralized charities operating on a White agenda.

We who started the alcohol program which became A.I.M., came full circle on the problems we were trying to address. Even breaking away from the Whites did not address the problems which continue to confront recovering Aboriginal Indigenous alcoholics. The Indians are caught in the same hierarchical thinking as their White patrilineal relations. Indian is a dishonest identity, and until the people who try to be Indians come to terms with who they really are, they will remain caught in the Lislakh webs of racism and externally defined identities.

By the early 1900's, the *Ahnishinahbæó jibway* were already outnumbered by the Indians. There were only a few Aboriginal Indigenous people in A.I.M.—most of us still keep to ourselves, living quiet lives trying to survive, and don't join the Indians' organizations. Because they have hierarchical Lislakh values, the Indians set themselves apart, and even within their own group they get caught up in social manipulation, and end up spinning their wheels, competing with each other rather than joining together to solve their common problems. There is not one issue about which the Indians can gather together in solidarity.

People caught in the Lislakh paradigm have followed the pattern of escaping from being the victim of social problems, only to become the perpetrators. The Pilgrims escaped from religious persecution only to turn around and become intolerant themselves. One of the reasons for the intense discrimination against Aboriginal Indigenous people is that the immigrant Americans fear that we will do the same thing to them as they have done to us. They cannot conceive of anything else because this pattern is built into their language, and they have found no other way of thinking. But, the *Ahnishinahbæó jibway* and other Aboriginal Indigenous people are different—it is our job to break this vicious cycle. We cannot go the European route. Our philosophy is harmony and non-violence, and our egalitarian values preclude our having or wanting power over others.

For years, I struggled alone with the conflicts between the Indian pseudo identity and the Aboriginal Indigenous identity. I knew that there was something wrong, that there was a dif-

ference, despite what the Indians tried to tell me. I know who my people are, my *Dodemian*, and the other *Ahnishinahbæó'jítwáy*. But, there was no one with whom I felt I could discuss this, and at that time I had no idea how to go about getting the documentation to substantiate what I knew but could not explain clearly or prove. We, the *Ahnishinahbæó'jítwáy*, have always known that the Métis and White Indians were not our people, but had no independent proof of what the elders had told us when I was a child. The Métis called the Aboriginal Indigenous people *indianish*, a Chippewa word meaning "backwards" and "nobody," which was their way of saying that they were a different group of people. Their hierarchical thinking is very obvious when they try to put down the Aboriginal Indigenous people and say that Indians with White European ancestors are superior.

The Métis and Chippewa Indians are minorities, European subject people. The *Ahnishinahbæó'jítwáy* are completely outside of the Lislakh systems. We are not a minority, no matter how few our numbers, and we remain a Nation on our own land. This is one of the things which we, the *Ahnishinahbæó'jítwáy*, have been saying in our own language for more than a century.

The way I initially saw A.I.M., was that this organization was going to create a vehicle for Aboriginal Indigenous people to take back our identity, and re-empower ourselves and our community. As I look back on it now, this was a big mistake. The Whites have always picked the leaders for the Indian community, because they created the Indians.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, community organizations were springing up around the Cities—alcohol programs, health programs, education programs—which were attempting to address the problems in the communities, with the support of Johnson's War on Poverty (which was lost with heavy casualties). One organization asked me to address the Lutheran Synod, of which Paul Boe was Executive Director at that time, and present a proposal. A meeting was arranged, and Dr. Paul Boe flatly refused to even look at the proposal. He said, "Clyde Bellecourt is the leader in the Indian Community, and you have to get his

approval." We asked him, how did Clyde Bellecourt become the leader in the community? The Lutherans had unilaterally appointed him, democratically voted on him in their Executive sessions, and paid him to become the Indian Leader for the whole community. Externally choosing leaders of those defined as subject people is a classical strategy of Western European occupation under their Roman law of war and peace.

As soon as A.I.M. began to get outside funding from such organizations as the Lutheran Church, it was no longer an autonomous organization, and was caught up in a situation where those individuals who were favored by the White organizations were in positions of power within A.I.M. At that time, I did not fully understand the English language, and did not clearly see how Euro-American institutions manipulated and eventually took control of what began as a community grassroots organization.

From 1971 to 1973, I served as the Treasurer of the Minneapolis American Indian Movement. After the occupation of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, from February to May of 1973, I said to some of the people who had been made into Indian leaders, "We have their attention now. We don't need to demonstrate anymore; we can concentrate on making this a better community." The White-appointed Indian leadership of A.I.M. wanted personal glory in the media, and like many of their White relatives, did not and still do not have any idea of the meaning of community. I resigned from A.I.M. in June of 1973. I saw that A.I.M. was going to go nowhere because of the restraints put on the organization by the White community. The people who were supported as A.I.M. Indian leaders by outside White organizations, including the National Council of Churches, had Lislakh values. Although there are certainly some pressing and legitimate issues for the so-called Indian community, as long as these people are caught in the Indian identity, they are stuck and powerless.

As treasurer of A.I.M., the first thing I did was get a tax-exempt number as a non-profit organization, and straighten out our

accounts with the I.R.S. A.I.M. had been getting funding from the Lutheran Church, and we didn't even have a tax-exempt number. The I.R.S. told us that we owed them \$13,000 and unsuccessfully tried to close us down for back taxes which were incurred before I had anything to do with the finances. After straightening out A.I.M.'s bookkeeping, the priority for which I pushed was economic development, including such things as an A.I.M. grocery store in South Minneapolis.

I managed to get the first American Indian Movement Survival School started in Minneapolis. I really believed in A.I.M.'s rhetorical goals and objectives, particularly starting a school which addressed the needs of our people, rather than forcibly programming Aboriginal Indigenous children to fit the agenda of the White society. When a free school offered us desks, blackboards, books and other physical necessities for a school, I went and looked and said "I'll take it." I rented a U-Haul truck with my own money and rounded up every able-bodied guy I could find to help move the school equipment. After working for hours, we provided these people with an A.I.M. lunch, which at that time (we hadn't learned about good nutrition yet) was a baloney sandwich, potato chips, and pop. Everything, but the school bus was donated to us as a non-profit organization, and I bought the school bus on credit, until A.I.M. held the next board meeting, because there were two signatures needed on the check. When I presented it to the A.I.M. Board, they agreed unanimously to a school "in theory," and when I said that we needed to purchase a bus, they agreed to that, also. When I presented the check for the chairperson to countersign, she called me a "son-of-a-bitch." The White Indians hadn't wanted anything more than a goal of having a school. They wanted to get money to talk about it, rather than to see it really happen. However, the school was already open, and the momentum and support for the school were there in the community. A real school rather than a goal of a school, was breaking the implicit charter with the White liberal organizations, who wanted to support A.I.M. in working toward social change, but not in actually making structural chan-

ges to society. The kind of Indian leaders the White man supports are professional Indians who talk a fine speech, but who are European subject people. When it comes to reality, many of these externally-supported community leaders value their jobs and superficial prestige more than they do their own community, and can be manipulated into stealing from even their own children. B.I.A. Commissioner John Collier described these Indians as having a "white-plus psychology."⁴

Métis people have their own identity, and the capability of realizing themselves as a people in their own right, but they cannot do it from within the Indian identity, because that's owned by the White man. I can't speak for anyone else: it is up to each person to figure out who they are and chart their own destiny. The only thing that I will say is that the Indians are not the Aboriginal Indigenous people of this Continent, and that they do neither themselves nor us any good by pretending they are.

During the early 1960's, there was the Federation of Indian Organizations, which was later joined by A.I.M. During its first years, before A.I.M. was organized, that Federation wrote up a well-documented report about the problems in the community. Those same problems are still here. It seems the White hierarchy gives people from oppressed communities money to talk about the problems and selects the community leaders to publicly lament the problems, but never gives money or other support to solve the problems.

After I resigned from A.I.M., I devoted more attention to politics, still trying to make positive change from within the system. During the Jimmy Carter presidential campaign in 1975, my family and I did canvassing and door-knocking, and attended political meetings. After the election I left Minneapolis for Kansas City, Missouri, and worked there as a caretaker for the landlord of an apartment building, and as a jack-of-all-trades for an office supply company. In Kansas City, I was asked to help with the Longest Walk. I did not know what it was supposed to accomplish, but I helped with the Longest Walk through Kansas City. Now, I understand why this kind of demonstration is in-

evitably a charade and a waste of energy, although the participants feel a fleeting moment of release and unity.

The Aboriginal Indigenous spiritual elder who was with the Longest Walk in Kansas City was a Lakota man, Ernie Peters. A Methodist minister from the Kansas City upper crust, I think he was the coordinator for all of the Methodists in the area who had contributed funding to the Longest Walk, asked me if I could get an interview for him with Ernie Peters. I said I would try. When I asked Ernie Peters, he said, "yes," he would agree to meet him on a certain morning. So, I told the Methodist minister that he would have to bring tobacco, and when he heard about it, a Mormon minister also wanted to talk with Ernie Peters. Both ministers brought their tobacco. The Methodist minister was dressed up in his finest tailor-made suit and Florsheim shoes. The Mormon minister was dressed modestly; he was a more down-to-earth man. I introduced them. Ernie Peters was sitting on a log where he had set up an altar as the Plains peoples do. He was stripped down to the waist, with paintings on his body, and his long braids hung below his belt. Ernie Peters told the Methodist minister, "you are in my church, now. Here it is." He motioned with his hands in all directions, and said, "this is my church. The sky is the dome of my cathedral." He said, "I do not have fancy churches like you do, with all the gold in them. This is the way I live, humbly." Then I left them alone and did not hear the rest of the conversation.

I spent a few more years in Kansas City, and in 1981 I moved back to the Reservation and have been here ever since. I finally realized that I needed to become part of the land again, and regain my roots and my identity. I was born here, and I will die here. This is my land, my *Ahnishinahbawó'jibway* philosophy, my *Midé* religion, my place with Grandmother Earth.

After I came back to Red Lake, I drove school-bus for awhile. I then attended Bemidji State University, where I took a writing class and learned how to write in English.

In 1986, I was appointed chairman of the Economic Development Committee for the Red Lake Peoples Council, a grassroots

community organization on Red Lake Reservation. We tried to get community-owned economic development going on the Reservation, where the real unemployment rate remains over 90%, and the per-capita annual income is in the third-world poverty range.

We spent two years working with one of the top grantwriters in the State of Minnesota, who donated hundreds of hours of his time polishing and submitting grants for the Red Lake Peoples Council. Much to the distress of the grantwriter, we could not get any foundation funding. The Boards of the Foundations to whom we applied for seed money grants thought everybody on the Reservation was part of the same group of Chippewa Indians, and privately told the grantwriter that they had been "burned" by the U.S. Government-supported Indian Tribal Councils in this area, which they probably were. There seems to be plenty of grant money to study problems, to promote Indians, or to fund institutions which address the symptoms on the surface, but none at all for Aboriginal Indigenous grassroots organizations to address the problems on our own land, at the root causes.

We worked on a gardening project for several years. We focussed on the *Ahnishinahbawó'jibway* tradition of gardens in part because, for anybody, growing one's own food brings a person back in touch with the land. Connection to the land is the foundation of a healthy society. We were also addressing the serious health problems caused by poor diet, and wanted to change the cutting-the-forests-to-buy-supermarket-food economics which the B.I.A. has encouraged. As soon as community enthusiasm for gardens began to build, the B.I.A. started telling people they couldn't use land for gardens. Using rumors and innuendo, the B.I.A. also discouraged gardening by humiliating people who had gardens.

The Red Lake Peoples Council got a newspaper going. A number of people put sweat equity into starting a community paper. Access to the press has changed the politics and the political leverage of both the Indians and the *Ahnishinahbawó'jibway*. Bill Lawrence, who put an enormous amount of his own resour-

ces into the paper, is now the publisher and owner of the present *Ojibwe News/Native American Press*, which came out of the *Red Lake Independent*, the *Red Lake Times*, and the *Ojibway Times*.

I came back to the Reservation in 1981, with the intention of living the rest of my life on my own land. I wanted to live harmoniously with the Indian community there, so I played by their rules and applied to the Bureau of Indian Affairs and their Indian Tribal Council for Federally funded community services under the so-called Indian programs that would have been helpful: housing, employment, running water, electricity, eye-glasses. But, at the behest of the U.S. Government, the inter-related clique which forms the White Indian elite would only read me their so-called Indian laws: "you can't do this, you can't do that." The only service they wanted to give me was to boss me around, providing "law and order" in the sense of "we'll give you orders and tell you 'it's the law'." The law they were abusing was the blank-check plenary power claimed by the U.S. Congress over their subject Indians. Being blacklisted from employment and denied basic services is a colonial practice which is applied to Aboriginal Indigenous people using a foreign infrastructure to separate us from our land. The U.S. Government used their Indians to tell me I was not welcome to live on my own land, which has never been ceded or sold by my people the *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway*, whose land this is. As far as I am concerned, the so-called Indian government could leave tomorrow, and take their Indians with them. I have told the White people on the B.I.A.'s Tribal Council, "go play Indian some other place." Because I am not an Indian, I do not need, and I do not want U.S. Government Indian services.

The B.I.A. and the Tribal Council are classic examples of racist institutions. No matter who fills the positions, the structure of the institution compels them to behave in a racist way. Every election, contenders blame the incumbents for the problems, and nothing ever changes, because the racism is a part of the institutional structure, into the halls of Congress and beyond. The externally-supported positions of power within these institutions

corrupt even the best-intentioned people, dehumanizing them and making them take on the identity and values of the institution.

After being laid off from my once-a-week route in a dead-end school-bus driving job, because I wasn't one of the Indians the Bureau wanted on the Reservation, I decided enough was enough. I wrote a short letter to the school, about the ways in which the quality and safety of the school bus operations needed to be improved. Bob Hoag, who was at that time Superintendent of Schools, put my letter up on the school bulletin board, following the Bureau's old tactic of publicly humiliating people into not writing letters. For the last fifty years, whenever a person wrote a letter, it was circulated among the B.I.A.'s White Indian puppets, who then started vicious gossip about the letter-writer, shaming him back into the B.I.A.'s fold. This is one of the colonial strategies of social control used by the B.I.A. I was surprised when people started telling me they had read my letter and that they agreed with me. I lost my union job because of this letter, but the abuse made me angry, and I started writing more.

All of my life I have known that there were things wrong at Red Lake. But, the *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* have never had corroborating documentation to support what our elders told us: that most of the Indians, particularly the ones kept in power by the B.I.A., are not *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway*, most of them are not Aboriginal Indigenous people at all, and that they were brought into *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* land by the United States Government as an occupation force. In 1985, I started writing Freedom of Information Act letters to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as other writing. If the Bureau wanted to file, copy and circulate my letters, they were going to be busy. In 1970, A.I.M. calculated that there were eighteen U.S. Government bureaucrats directly involved in Indian Affairs for every Indian. I knew the Bureau keeps meticulous track of every Federally Recognized Indian, and uses their Indians as well as White bureaucrats to watch Aboriginal Indigenous people. As long as all those bureaucrats were going to feed on my resources and property, I figured I

might as well make them work for their money. I was also coming to appreciate the power of the written word.

The *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* now have new means of non-violently defending ourselves from the Indians, and from the White institutions which control those Indians. One of these is that a number of *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* are becoming fluent in English. Being able to defend ourselves in their language changes everything, as do the copies of archival documents which have circulated in the *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* community. Now, when the Indians start to act overbearing, all the *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* have to do is say, in the English language, "I know where you come from," and the would-be Indian bullies hang their heads and walk away without looking back.

A person outside of Aboriginal Indigenous traditions might not realize the deep significance of the *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* having access to historical documents—which should have always been available. History and genealogy are a part of our traditional oral culture, but because of the Métis and other Indians who have been packed on top of our community by the U.S. Government, it has been absolutely crucial to have this information in documentary form. Every community, and for that matter every individual, should be able to get information about their genealogy and their history, but the Bureau has consistently told Aboriginal Indigenous people that this information was confidential, or that the records had been burned.

The information which has been so vital to the community has also been kept away from the *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* in the past through financial engineering. In the lower socio-economic strata into which Aboriginal Indigenous people are channelled, there has not been the kind of money necessary to do extensive archival research. The U.S. Government has supported itself for two centuries by appropriating Aboriginal Indigenous peoples' resources and land—why would they fund the very people from whom they've been stealing to do research to uncover the details of their crimes? We acknowledge, and thank, the generous individuals whose support has made the research for this book

possible.

The U.S. strategy of Manifest Destiny was to completely annihilate the *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway*, obliterate every trace that we ever existed, and replace us with Indians. We caught them before it was too late. This research has allowed people to reclaim their pride and self-esteem. The *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway*, as well as the Indians, are strengthened by not having to live within a dishonest identity. This has to be made into a better world for the next generations. We must go back to a harmonious relationship with Grandmother Earth, to non-violence, and to our *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* values.

For the last few years, I've been writing a column for the *Ojibwe News/Native American Press*. Access to certain information has improved, some things we would have formerly had to twist bureaucratic arms with increasingly tough F.O.I.A. letters to obtain, are just faxed into the newspaper. The *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* say, "keep writing, you have helped us to find our own power and walk proud."

What the *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* have been saying for centuries, ever since we came into contact with the Euro-Americans, can finally be written in English. We have been saying it in *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway*, but nobody understood us.

We, the *Ahnishinahbæð'jibway* have a right to exist as a Sovereign people in our own land. We intend to press for international recognition of Aboriginal Indigenous peoples' autonomy, and restore our community to the harmonious and self-sufficient conditions we maintained for eons. We were self-supporting before the Europeans got here, and we will be self-supporting again. This is our land.

CHAPTER I

THE AHNISHINAHBÆÓ'JIBWAY

We, the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* are among the Aboriginal Indigenous peoples of this Continent. Our written history includes stone inscriptions¹ and birchbark scrolls which are part of our *Midé* religion, and describe our origins on this Continent early in the Pleistocene geological age. Before the European invasions, the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* Nation was composed of inter-related communities which centered around the Great Lakes, and along the network of water routes of the Great Lakes watershed,² the upper Mississippi watershed, and the upper Hudson's Bay watershed. Since the beginning of Aboriginal time, we lived in harmony with our neighbors. The *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* are a non-violent people who lived by gardening in conjunction with a permacultural subsistence base so closely in harmony with nature that the Europeans thought that our grain fields and orchards, and most of our other crops were wild. In the midst of carefully maintained abundance, we tended our homes, our gardens and our forests, fished and hunted, developed a profound oral literature, and travelled to trade or just to visit.

The *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* have always been here. The Western Europeans have written many mythologies explaining their Indians: that they came over the Bering Strait, that they came from outer space, that they came from the East Coast, that they ate up all the Hairy Mastodons (and then presumably went back to Europe to eat up the Hairy Mastodons there). The underlying assumption in even the most culturally sensitive history textbooks that children are forced to read in compulsory-education schools is that Columbus, the Vikings, and possibly Hwui Shan the Chinese discovered America,³ although some books try

to mollify their ethnocentricism with disclaimers such as "many scholars believe that it was the Indians who discovered the New World."

Some textbooks portray their mythological pre-Columbian Indians as living in extremely scattered settlements. A map in one such book shows 127 small Indian villages in the entire U.S., then the same book adds, "warfare had an important place . . . there were great battles involving many men."⁴ College science textbooks⁵ uncritically accept the unfounded assumption that "American Indian populations migrated from Asia," discounting any evidence to the contrary with explanations like "we could interpret this to mean that the [type B blood] mutation arose after the ancestors of the American Indians had left the Asian mainland. Through these kinds of analysis patterns of human migration and other anthropological interpretations have been made."⁶ Even acclaimed defender of Indians, Jack Weatherford, has to have "... human flesh in many of the tacos, tamales, and enchiladas,"⁷ although in a 1992 telephone conversation with us, he denied having written this.

The Western Europeans created the allegory of Indians, and whatever tall tales they want to tell in their fictions are their business. But—concealed behind the illusion of Indians is the archetype of modern ethnic cleansing: the near extinction of more than forty percent of the world's⁸ peoples; and these heinous crimes obscured by the nearly complete extirpation of the Aboriginal Indigenous peoples from the annals of Western civilization. We are consigned to the *terra incognita* of their linguistic maps: there is not a single word in the English language which means "the Aboriginal Indigenous peoples of this Continent." Neither the Euro-Americans nor their Indians know who the Aboriginal Indigenous people really are, and they will not say our real names. The Indians know that they have a dishonest identity, and that they are trying to steal what belongs to the Aboriginal Indigenous people. Inescapable evidence of our very real past and present existence is masked by the Indian

mythology,⁹ reinterpreted to fit the Indian stereotype, distorted, destroyed,⁹ and denied. The Indians serve the convenience of Western Civilization: by deliberately confusing the *AhnishinabāŌ'jibway* and other Aboriginal Indigenous people with their figment of Indians, the Euro-Americans hope to fill the void of exterminated peoples, deny the genocide of many millions of Aboriginal Indigenous peoples, evade the responsibility for the rape and plunder of our Continents, and justify their theft of this land.

The *AhnishinabāŌ'jibway* are among the peoples speaking an Aboriginal Indigenous language which European linguists have defined in their abstract taxonomy as Algonquin, which is not who we are. Anthropologists categorized us and our relatives as Woodland or Algonquin people. The Euro-Americans invented artificial Indian tribes, and gave these tribes names: Potawatomi, Menominee, Secotan, Salteur, Sauk and Fox, Cree, Blackfoot, Chippewa, Pillager, Pembina. . . . Then, they tried to force the *AhnishinabāŌ'jibway* into their abstract and artificial tribal structure.

Since time immemorial, the land of the *AhnishinabāŌ'jibway* and our close relatives stretched from the land now called North and South Dakota, to the Atlantic Ocean; from the sub-Arctic, south to where St. Louis is. There were no sharp borders between one group of people and the next. If a person's native language is one of the languages misnamed Algonquin, they can understand their relatives who speak other such languages.

AhnishinabāŌ'jibway understanding of space, place, and land is different from that of the Euro-Americans. We have a permanent relationship with specific places, defined partly in terms of our permaculture. My people of the Bear *Dodem* had a certain sugarbush, where we tapped our trees, made our sugar, and then stored everything we needed to make maple sugar from one year to the next. We harvested and processed our *mahnomen* in the same place, century after century. Our permanent residences—our community of longhouses—had been in the same place for millennia. There were specific places where we fished, where

our gardens were, where we hunted, where our fruits and nuts and medicines and everything else that we needed were maintained by our people. We did not go roaming around stealing from others, and what we took from our land was replaced. The *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* have a very long-term, harmonious and balanced relationship with the places and being of this land. This land, right here, is where my many-times-great-grandfather of the Bear *Dodem* was born about 27,000 B.C., where he lived and died, and where he was buried and went back to Grandmother Earth. This land is the land of his great-grandfathers back more than 40,000 more generations, and it is the land of his great-grandsons through about 900 more generations to myself. This land is the open, living textbook of *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* history, values, philosophy and religion, and my identity and my existence as *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* is a part of it. The *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* have a relationship to this land that the Euro-Americans do not understand.

The Euro-Americans define land as abstract, boxed into compartments of quarter-sections and town lots; eminent domain with militarily defended borders, survey grids, and property taxes. Their cultural definition of land is hierarchical: those at the top of their artificial structure claim ownership of city blocks with skyscrapers, exurban estates, country homes, and rental properties; and those at the bottom are urban nomads renting tenements or going homeless. The Euro-Americans' culture defines land by the abstract edges, as exploitable resources, space and chattel circumscribed by violently enforced lines. The *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* see land as life.

Rather than borders, we have always had links connecting peoples. *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* are born into the *Dodem* of their fathers. People of a particular *Dodem* are close relatives, related to all the other human beings of their *Dodem* and also related to their *Dodem* being. I am of the Bear *Dodem*, related to every other Aboriginal Indigenous person of the Bear *Dodem* (whether they are *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* or not), and also related to the Bears.

The word *Dodemian* or *Dodem* means "my relations." According to *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* values, a person cannot marry anybody to whom they are even remotely related: anyone of the same *Dodem*, or anyone who is even distantly "somehow related." The elders knew, and some still know, back for quite a few generations, who is related. *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* men have always married women from outside their birth communities. The Red Lake *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* genealogies include women who married into this community from the so-called Blackfoot, Cree, Inuit, Lakota, and other Aboriginal Indigenous Nations, as well as European and other immigrant women. Aboriginal Indigenous exogamy is very different from the in-breeding encouraged by the U.S. Government's Indian blood quantum.

A woman who marries an *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* man comes into the *Dodem* of her husband (somewhat analogous to a European woman taking her husband's surname), and lives with him on the land of which he is a part. This creates a network of relatives through each person's mother's side of the family and through the *Dodems*, which extended across the Continent in all directions. (Inheritance of the *Dodems* through the male line is very different from patriarchy, which along with patrilineal heirship, is defined in the glossary.)

As a part of the process of colonization, the United States turned the *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway* traditional social structure backwards for their Chippewa Indians, and enforced this reversal with U.S. Statutes. Forcing occupied peoples into matrilineal definitions of themselves is a Lislakh colonizing strategy, expressed in Judeo-Christian Biblical admonitions such as,

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east; and to the north, and to the south: and in thge and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."¹¹

Judeo-Christianity prescribes the elimination of all patrilineal descent that of Adam of Eden.

The technical anthropological terms for *Ahnishinahbæŏ'jibway*

social organization are *patrilineal* and *patrilocal*. The geographic power of the men was balanced by the political and social power of the Clan Mothers, the women elders. Everyone in the family respected and listened to the wisdom of these *Gi-ma-mā-nan*. We remain a *matriarchal* society. This kind of balance and linking of related groups of people generated a very harmonious foundation for Aboriginal Indigenous society as a whole. Because of the continual movement of women in marriage, all of the Aboriginal Indigenous people of this Continent are related.

Red Lake is at a crossroads, as can be seen clearly from any topographic map. The Continental Divide between the Hudson Bay watershed (Red Lake is the headwaters) and the Mississippi watershed is about twenty miles to the south of Red Lake; there is a lake on each side of the Divide, and a short portage between them. It is also easy to travel by water into the Great Lakes watershed from here. Red Lake is the junction of Aboriginal Indigenous trade routes that went from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rocky Mountains and beyond.

The ecological base of the *AhnishinabĒŌ'jibway* was permaculture: agriculture based on perennial crops, so closely in harmony with natural systems that the European upper class was terrified of it. Such permacultural subsistence bases are remarkably efficient. Very little labor was required for subsistence in our intact ecology.¹² Traditional *AhnishinabĒŌ'jibway* crops include *mahnomen*, maple trees, fruits, nuts and berries, fish and game, along with annual garden crops. We traded for salt, tropical shells (including *migis* cowrie), and certain dye plants, among other things. We made jewelry and some tools from copper; as well as stone tools sharper and more durable than the finest steel. We had writing.

Our forests were pine and mixed hardwoods, some of the trees thousands of years old, stretching as far as a person could travel in a month or more. The ground soft like a carpet; the water so clean you could drink it anywhere. There was plenty of everything a person might need right here in the lakes, forests and

meadows. Friends and relatives would welcome a visitor with hospitality everywhere—this is what the land of the *AhnishinabĒŌ'jibway* and our relations was like. There were deer and moose and wood-buffalo and caribou; there were passenger pigeons and turkeys and geese and so many ducks a person could hear the air rustle through their wings for miles, a whooshing sound that lasted long into the night as millions and millions of birds settled onto the lakes. Early European explorers remarked on the "abundance of game," which was an understatement considering the impoverishment of their own plundered homeland. There are a very few places on Red Lake Reservation and elsewhere in Northern Minnesota where a person can still see the ancient trails of the deer: some are worn nearly two feet deep into the ground. We were all part of a larger, inter-connected whole. Our land was a paradise.

Our elders, both male and female, have always been deeply respected in the *AhnishinabĒŌ'jibway* community. This is very different from European culture, in which age and gender polarization makes families more amenable to state control, and creates discontinuity in oral history. Our family relationships are harmoniously balanced, there is no authoritarian head of the family, and so there is no need for role reversal. The foundation of our egalitarian family inter-relationships includes mutual respect and a language which is both male and female. Because we have no hierarchy, there is no competition for authority in the family. We acknowledge each person's interests, abilities, and knowledge; and as a person ages, their experience and broader perspective becomes increasingly valuable to the community. Our elders were wise and loving teachers who knew our history and genealogy, and who knew about medicines and other herbs. They had a clear and useful understanding of community dynamics and practical psychology. We did not warehouse our old people, nor segregate them away from the rest of their *Dodemian*.

The relationship between men and women was complemen-

tary and based on respect for one another. The women have their own areas of expertise, and it is not my place to write about them. There are Aboriginal Indigenous women writers who will explain.

An *Ahnishinahbæo'jibway* is born into the father's *Dodem*, and a woman marries into her husband's *Dodem*. The *Dodems*, the *Midé* and Grandmother Earth are all part of a totality which includes religious philosophy, identity, values, life and death, and our inter-relationship with the land. The *Midé* goes beyond Western Civilization's definitions of religion and philosophy. It deals with harmony and reality, rather than with abstractions. There are parts of the *Midé* which are so profound that they are beyond human comprehension, and will always remain a Great Mystery. The *Midé* also goes beyond Western Civilization's Science. It cannot be explained in English. The *Midé* is so vast, it's impossible to describe how it makes me feel, but one of the words which comes to mind is humility. The *Midé* is a compilation of the wisdom of my people over the course of about a million years, as well as the tools for understanding reality. I see nothing that I would want to change, even if I could. I am just a translator for my people.

In the years when I was growing up, anthropologists and other social scientists were studying the Indians. When they asked about Aboriginal Indigenous religion, the Indians would say that "outsiders are not allowed" to know about the *Midé*, because they would exploit and commercialize it. The Indians used this strategy to hide their own ignorance of the *Midé*. This was before Indian Religion was enacted by Congress. The so-called Indian religions established under the Indian Freedom of Religion Act have nothing to do with the Aboriginal Indigenous religions, although policy-makers are pretending they are the same thing. The *Midé* is not secret—but enculturation into Western European civilization usually prevents people from seeing or understanding it. I have been present when *Midé* elders told interested and open-minded White people things

about the *Midé*, in English, and the person to whom the elder was talking did not realize they were being told anything.

Grandfather *Midé* encompasses a Sovereign
Ahnishinahbæo'jibway's personal relationships with the both the male and female aspects of the universe, in concert with Grandmother Earth. *Ahnishinahbæo'jibway* are named through the *Midé*, which is inseparably all of life. *Ahnishinahbæo'jibway* patrilineal *Dodems* are one of the religious mysteries I cannot change—and the United States Government cannot change or destroy them either, although they have tried.